

# Christie's speech rated very good, not great

By David Levinsky Staff writer | Posted: Thursday, August 30, 2012 5:45 am

New Jersey political watchers agree: Gov. Chris Christie's much-anticipated Republican National Convention keynote speech electrified the party's faithful and cemented him as a national Republican star.

But it won't likely be remembered among the all-time great political orations.

"It wasn't brilliant, but I thought it was very good," Stuart Koch, professor of political science at The College of New Jersey in Ewing, said Wednesday.

Koch said the 24-minute address showed off Christie's trademark bluntness and bravado as well as his softer side, highlighted by an homage to his late mother. It also contained the type of blistering criticism of President Barack Obama that's expected from a convention speech, along with a few "rhetorical flourishes" such as the governor's appeal to create a "second American century" of greatness.

"I thought he represented New Jersey well on the grand stage. There weren't any discernible weaknesses," Koch said.

Ross Baker, professor of political science at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, said Christie was uncharacteristically restrained and humble compared with his typical town hall stump speeches.

"It was a speech introducing himself to the country; that's what he wanted," Baker said. "He preserved the feistiness that he's famous for, but was more restrained. In that way, I thought it was different from the typical Christie speech."

Baker agreed that it was not a memorable address, but he said it successfully established Christie as the GOP's presidential front-runner in 2016 if Mitt Romney is unsuccessful this fall.

"It was not a great speech, but it did the job," he said.

Daniel Douglas, director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, said the speech was a bit light on praise for Romney and too crammed with Republican policy, but that Christie brought his usual energy and emotion.

"He brought a lot of energy to the hall, and people could see what Chris Christie is like," Douglas said.

He said the governor was most effective in the early part of the address, when he discussed his mother's influence.

"Being a storyteller — that's his strength and that's where he connects the best," Douglas said.

He predicted that Christie's speech, like most convention addresses, would be quickly forgotten.

"Bill Clinton in 1988 was a disastrous speech, and it didn't hurt him," Douglas said, adding that Christie "didn't do any harm" to his chances of being the GOP front-runner in 2016.

"Among convention speeches, there are only two or three you can remember during the last 30 years. That's a really high standard," he said. "I'd say (Christie) was more than adequate."