

## Political Notes: DGA Update – 4.28.09

**2009**

### **New Jersey**

This race remains highly competitive, with former U.S. Attorney Chris Christie leading Governor Corzine somewhere between 5 and 8 points in recent polling.

However, Christie, who has made corruption his main issue in the campaign, has stumbled in the last few weeks. It has come to light that:

Christie used his office to reward his friends, former employers and campaign contributors with multi-million dollar no-bid contracts that have cost the taxpayers millions. In one case, Christie even gave a no-bid contract to the lawyer who chose not prosecute his brother, Todd, in a stock fraud case but did prosecute more than a dozen other people. After promising not to accept any more campaign contributions from lawyers who received no bid contracts from him, Christie still attended a fundraiser with one of them.

Moreover, Christie's record of invading privacy is coming to light. He authorized the warrantless surveillance of people using their cell phones – even after federal authorities recommended against the practice.

These issues, coupled with a strong challenger candidate in former Mayor Steve Lonegan, have produced a very real Republican primary race. In February, a Quinnipiac poll showed Christie leading Lonegan 40-19. The same poll, released last week, showed a 46-37 lead for Christie. Lonegan has moved the numbers enough on Christie that the Christie campaign has decided to go up with a negative radio spot targeting Lonegan. Conversely, Freedom's Defense Fund, an independent expenditure that operates nationally for many Republican candidates, has targeted Christie in the Republican primary. Expect Christie to emerge from this primary very bruised from Lonegan, if at all.

From here, Christie will face a well-funded Corzine campaign that, in conjunction with help from the state party and DGA, has added over 400,000 new Democrats to the voter rolls since February 2008 in a state that already leans heavily Democratic.

### **Virginia**

In Virginia, the race to replace Tim Kaine as the state's next top Democrat remains close. Former DNC Chair Terry McAuliffe, former State Rep Brian Moran, and State Senator Creigh Deeds remain locked in a very close primary. The latest public poll in the state, a SurveyUSA poll conducted for WJLA-TV found McAuliffe with 38 percent of the Democratic primary vote. State Senator Creigh Deeds and former state Del. Brian Moran were tied at 22 percent. We expect this to be a low turnout primary, and the campaign with the best field operation holding an advantage over the others.

On the Republican side, former AG Bob McDonnell has not had the free ride he expected. His fundraising has been unusually slow for a candidate with no primary, to the point the RGA had to give him \$1.2 million earlier this month. DGA has set up Common Sense Virginia, a PAC that has highlighted some of Bob McDonnell's record, or lack thereof, on issues like jobs and education, through earned media and online opportunities. CSV will also conduct some paid media between now and the June 9 primary.

Whoever emerges from the Democratic primary on June 9 will have to reload quickly, as national Republicans look to regain their footing by winning Virginia, a state the party winning the White House the preceding year has lost every election since Nixon.

## 2010

From 2009, we move into a cycle that features 36 races in 2010. Our political team at DGA has spent the better part of the last year preparing for 2010 by meeting with candidates and state parties, working with national and state-level allies on field plans, and engaging earlier than ever with research and polling in states. And while there are several open and challenger races I want to highlight later, it is important to note that the DGA's first priority is defending our incumbent Governors.

In **2010** there are **36 races**. There are a total of **16 open seats**:

- 9 are currently Democratic: Kansas, Maine, Michigan, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Wyoming
- 7 are currently Republican: Alabama, California, Georgia, Hawaii, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota

There are a total of **20 incumbents eligible** to seek reelection:

- As many as 10 *Democrats* will seek reelection: Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois\*, Iowa\*, Maryland, Massachusetts\*, New Hampshire\*, New York\*, Ohio, Wisconsin\*
- As many as 10 *Republicans* will seek reelection: Alaska, Arizona, Connecticut\*, Florida, Idaho\*, Minnesota\*, Nebraska, Nevada, Texas\*, Vermont\*

Moving east to west, in Maryland, the incomparable Governor O'Malley is running for re-election. Governor O'Malley has been on the frontlines of implementing the Recovery Act and his successful first term continues to ward off top-tier challengers.

In New York, Governor David Paterson has hit the reset button on his campaign and is rebuilding his capacity and infrastructure. He launched a new Web site and released a Web ad last week to raise money for a re-election bid. He plans to tour the state extensively in coming weeks.

In Massachusetts, Governor Deval Patrick is also focused on governing in a difficult budget climate and in implementing the Recovery Act. State Republicans there also have a very weak bench, with no credible challenger emerging.

In New Hampshire, a state that has 2-year terms, Governor John Lynch has indicated he will not seek the open US Senate seat in 2010 and continues to have approval ratings above 70% consistently.

Recent polling in Ohio has shown Governor Ted Strickland defeating any potential Republican opponent by double digits, while Governor Chet Culver of Iowa looks to be in good shape for reelection with a 56% approval rating.... Even garnering a 45% approval rating among Republicans!

In Wisconsin, Governor Jim Doyle has been barnstorming around the state, announcing new job-creation and job training plans. We believe he's in a particularly strong position to hold his seat.

Illinois Governor Patrick Quinn has raised about \$250,000 for a re-election bid while he focuses on closing the state's \$11.6 billion budget deficit.

Governor Bill Ritter has continued to see his numbers increase as his vision for the New Energy Economy has created jobs across the state. Further, GOP Attorney General John Suthers, the last remaining statewide elected Republican, has decided against challenging Governor Ritter in 2010.

Finally, in Arkansas, Governor Mike Beebe continues to defy all Governors, by maintaining a re-elect percentage in the mid-70's.

And although we face our share of challenges in 2010, we also have some states that are primed for a Democratic pickup.

Starting in the far west, Hawaii, in which Congressman Neil Abercrombie has decided to run, remains a top pickup. Abercrombie will face Honolulu Mayor Mufu Hannemann and State Senate President Colleen Hanabusa in the race to pick a nominee to challenge Linda Lingle protégé Duke Aiona. Whomever emerges, expect a race that leans heavy in our favor.

We have seen some movement in California, as LG John Garamendi has decided not to seek the Governorship, and will instead seek the U.S. House seat being vacated by Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher. This will most likely leave a three-man race for the Democratic primary, with Attorney General Jerry Brown currently leading the Democratic field. LA Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsome, who formerly announced last week, will also seek the Democratic nod and will face a self-funder from the Republican side, as former Ebay CEO Meg Whitman and Insurance Commissioner Steve Poizner battle out what looks to be the most expensive primary in California history.

Both Nevada and Arizona continue to look prime for a pickup as weak Republican Governors will face an electorate that has been surging in the favor of Democrats in the last two cycles.

In the east, we think Rhode Island continues to be a strong possibility of a pickup, even with Lincoln Chaffee running as an independent.

Both Connecticut and Vermont are blue states that have Republican Governors with no term limits. Although both Jody Rell and Jim Douglas have been able to hold on through the last few cycles, their running for reelection is not certain. If either of these Governors decided not to seek another term, both states would lean heavily in Democratic favor.

Georgia, Florida, and South Dakota are three states we may be able to put into play depending on our candidate recruitment successes. In Florida, Governor Charlie Crist looks more and more like a Senate candidate every day and is expected to announce his decision late next week. In Georgia last week, Republican LG Casey Cagle, long seen as the GOP frontrunner, suddenly dropped out of the race. This race looks to be competitive no matter what, and will only be enhanced by the potential entry of former Democratic Governor Roy Barnes. And in South Dakota, a potential Stephanie Herseth Sandlin entry into the race would all but solidify a Democratic steal in the state.

Also, Texas is looking to house an incredibly tough primary between Gov. Rick Perry and Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison.

As evidenced, the unbelievable number of races, as well as the high cost of many high profile and competitive campaigns, makes it IMPERATIVE for the DGA to be able to continue to rely on allies like you to be able to equip our political department, campaigns, and candidates with the resources to be successful in the next year and a half.