

When the holiday ends, the political strife begins



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By DEREK HADDER, Staff Writer, 977-4933, 1025 W. Monday, September 17, 2007

Labor Day is the traditional start of the campaign season, simultaneously the end of the summer vacation season. It's time to get down and get serious.

And because one of the most contested races will again take place in the region, area residents can expect an even more heightened campaign season this fall.

Labor Day is when the television ads, public appearances and news releases begin. It's when Samir Amin, chairman of the William I. Miller Center for Public Policy at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey,

The electorate gets frustrated at about this time, too, she said, as it is blanketed by campaign ads. Statewide, Gov. Jon S. Corzine, a Democrat, has spent much of the summer doing so with his Republican challenger, Chris Christie.

The Corzine camp raised questions about Christie's involvement in ads, statements and through associates about contracts to all... U.S. Attorney, conversations with leading national and state Republicans while still in office and his driving record.

At the same time, Christie and associates... recession at his feet.

But polls released Sept. 1 showed the skirmishing had little effect. One by PwC and Diabian University asked Christie to give a percentage point lead...

He remains to still be leading in the polls despite being significantly outspent by Corzine through the

summer.

Christie said the campaign had been saving most of its funds for the final months of the campaign every day until the election.

The Corzine camp will continue to raise creative marketing ideas to outpace Governor

Sean Darcy said, saying that as more state residents get to know him, they have reservations

But the race will hinge on economics, Darcy said.

At the end of the day, this election is going to come down to who is best prepared to lead New Jersey's economy through the national recession," Darcy said.

The third man in the race, independent Chris Dargatzis, said Friday he was glad that 10 percent of people in the state already knew who he was, according to polls.

Dargatzis, who has positioned himself as an alternative candidate, was optimistic after summertime campaigns by Corzine and Christie that he said served to "depress, discourage and disgust people."

He said attention must be paid to issues, including the budget, that will be decided in

Herman J. Saatkamp Jr.

"Who has the most realistic approach to the budget is the big question," he said. "It's not enough to talk about the issues and have some ideas."

BY THE END OF THE YEAR, THE GOVERNOR WILL SEE HIMSELF THE STATE'S TOP PICK TO LEAD

May County.

The state political news Web site Politics NJ recently ranked the district represented by freshman Assemblyman Matt Milam and Nelson Allen, D-Cape May County, as the best one that "leans Republican."

It had previously been rated a tossup and is the only district in the state where the site says the

chances of Republican challengers Mike Donohue and Frank Conrad.

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Michael Muller, who heads the Democratic Assembly Campaign Committee, said

optimistic about Allen and Milam, but that district is not a tossup.

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Donohue and Conrad have tried to tie Albano and Milam to Corzine, but Mulloy said voters would make independent selections.

Staff Writer Tom Barlas contributed to this story.

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