



## Opinion: In a bid for the top job, Christie will have to go all in

christie.JPG

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, a likely Republican 2016 presidential candidate, gestures during an event at the University of New Hampshire in Manchester, N.H., May 12. *(AP Photo/Charles Krupa, file photo)*

**Times of Trenton guest opinion column** By **Times of Trenton guest opinion column**

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**By Carl Golden**

Kenny Stabler, free-spirited quarterback of the Oakland Raiders in the 1970s, was asked by a reporter his understanding of the following quote by author Jack London:

"I would rather be ashes than dust! I would rather that my spark should burn out in a brilliant blaze than it should be stifled by dry-rot. I would rather be a superb meteor, every atom of me in magnificent glow, than a sleepy and permanent planet. The function of man is to live, not to exist. I shall not waste my days trying to prolong them. I shall use my time."

Stabler, who once said he studied his team's playbook by the light from the jukebox, pondered the question for a moment and replied: "Throw deep."

In ramping up his undeclared but increasingly likely candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination, Gov. Chris Christie appears to have become a student of both the erudite London and the freewheeling Stabler.

With a series of policy speeches on issues ranging from dramatic revisions in Social Security and Medicare to unyielding support for the ongoing massive private data collection by government, Christie has embraced the "throw deep" strategy in an effort to win the hearts and minds of voters in a free world.

Standing out from the crowd, rising above the others and drawing notice, interest, attention, money and power, is the essence of "throw deep."

To succeed, it's necessary to portray his rivals as timid, poll-driven and focus group-tested souls fearful of what they'd do to change the direction of the nation.

While his subtle digs at frontrunners Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker and former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush have been effective, neither one, at least not publicly, Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul, who has tangled with Christie before, has been able to challenge Christie over the data collection issue.

Drawing on his experience as U.S. attorney, Christie has staked out an exceptionally hard-line position that while snooping activities are an essential tool in the fight against terrorism and there have been no proven cases where liberties were violated.

He's characterized opponents as misguided and their arguments as ridiculous baloney. Reaching into his repertoire of colorful descriptive phrases, he offered the rather macabre observation that "you have no civil liberties."

Paul has adopted an equally feet-in-concrete position against renewal of the Patriot Act, which authorizes

contending there is no evidence it has thwarted any terrorist plots and is a blatantly unconstitutional intrusion into the private lives of American citizens.

If Christie makes the cut for the initial candidates' debate in August by finishing somewhere in the top 10 as measured by average polling strength, there's no doubt he'll square off with Paul over the issue in full view of millions of viewers and voters.

Christie's speeches on entitlement reform, greatly strengthened and vastly more expensive military capability, and dramatic changes in the nation's tax code are part of his overall strategy of playing off his self-description as the "tell it like it is" governor who's twice won election in a solidly Democratic state.

He initially referred obliquely to his opponents as lacking the backbone to address these issues directly, but has since moved into more direct confrontations, including naming names.

He's gone against the grain of conventional wisdom that to offer ideas and propose solutions is to invite criticism and pushback, and he's been the target of both.

He hasn't made significant headway, though, and he continues to lag in polls, stuck in the second tier and often failing to even receive a mention in news accounts and commentaries by the national media.