

# Opinion: Is time running out for Christie's presidential bid?

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HAVING ALREADY made the cut for the first Republican presidential candidate debate (he finished ninth among the 10 contenders eligible) Governor Christie is on the bubble again for participation in the CNN-sponsored debate at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, Calif., on Sept. 16.

With the ground rule essentially the same—the 10 candidate average will be invited—Christie will be in a cram line with a half-dozen others to secure 3 percent or a vote support. A difference of a little and a half a percentage point half national exposure and the opportunity to appear on an equal footing with the front runner or being relegated to the undercard preceding the main event.

For Christie, the stakes are high and his future at risk. A failure to qualify will intensify the current under-the-breath murmuring that he and his campaign team should come to terms with reality, and reach the painful and bitter decision to end the quest.

Falling out of the top 10 will produce a flurry of speculation among national media types that Christie has been reduced to fighting for table scraps with the likes of former Sen. Rick Santorum, Gov. Jon Jindal, former Gov. George Pataki, Jim Gilmore and Rick Warren, and Sen. Lindsey Graham.

He'll be lumped in with a group of individuals whose support ranges from zero to 2 percent and whose candidacies have already been written off.

In truth, Christie's candidacy was a long shot from the outset. He joined a field that eventually grew to 17, and he has failed to separate himself from the pack, consistently polling in the low single digits well off the pace of former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush; Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker; Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, Rand Paul of Kentucky and Ted Cruz of Texas; former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee; and Dr. Ben Carson, a neurosurgeon.

He's been surpassed by Ohio Gov. John Kasich and, coming off a strong performance in the pre-debate debate sponsored by Fox News Channel, former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carl Fiorina. If, as is widely believed, Roth wins a spot in the debate next month, it will further marginalize Christie and potentially squeeze him out of the top 10.

## The Trump factor

While Donald Trump has continued to hold the lead in national polling, the partisans who believe (hope?) his confrontational style of insult, flip-flop and half-truth, coupled with an absence of an substantive idea, will eventually become such an overwhelming arrangement that his campaign will self-destruct.

Voters, the more convinced, will come to their senses, overcome their infatuation with Trump, and realize that his securing the nomination will lead to an electoral disaster of epic proportions in 2016.

There is some validity to the argument that Trump's unexpected success damaged Christie more than an one-electing him as the rah-rah truth teller unbound by political correctness and willing to smash all the fine china in the drawing room to make his point.

It does not, however, logically follow that, should Trump flame out, Christie would experience a surge as the underdog supporter flowed to him. A bump for Christie would be negligible as the Trump coalition—such a pity—would likely splinter and disperse itself among the other half-dozen or so candidates with greater viability.

Even Christie's debate clash with Paul over the issue of government collecting communication data from American citizens ("Your answer is ridiculous," said the governor to the senator, and "You hugged Obama" said the senator to the governor), failed to produce an

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