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Golden: The big budget squeeze
Sunday, January 3, 2010
Last updated: Sunday

Whether these moves at Christie's disposal can reach the magic number — whatever that may be — to close the budget gap is problematic. His relations with the Legislature are apt to be contentious occasionally as he deals with a Democratic leadership resistant to cutting state aid, or offending organized labor, or hacking away at cherished programs that they've supported for years.

Government exists increasingly in a poll-driven environment, a condition that benefits Christie since the governor's office is the driver of public opinion, the place where the frame of reference for public debate is established and translated into support or opposition.

He is in the best position to set the agenda for change, to emphasize the point that his victory was a victory for change in the way government has operated.

The megaphone he'll pick up in 16 days is larger and louder than that available to anyone else. Governor's office pronouncements have a definite "Attention, people of Earth!" quality about them.

As 2010 unfolds, he'll need every bit of attention he can attract.

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