

OPINION: MURPHY AND GUADAGNO AND THEIR GUBERNATORIAL BAGGAGE

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While Murphy is burdened by Corzine's ghost, Guadagno is shadowed by Christie's presence



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CORZINE
GUADAGNO
CHRISTIE
MURPHY

At the same time, both come to the campaigns with baggage. Oddly enough, it's baggage of the same sort.

Both face the task of putting sufficient distance between themselves and their political associates — Murphy from fellow Goldman Sachs alumnus and former Gov. Jon Corzine and Guadagno from Christie, arguably the most unpopular governor since Jim Florio 27 years ago.

The memory of Corzine showering millions of dollars on county parties in 2005 to chase potential competitors out of the race remains reasonably fresh. It surfaced yet again earlier this week with the revelation that Murphy channeled his inner Corzine by contributing \$1.15 million to local and state party organizations while loaning \$10 million of his own funds to his campaign.

To be sure, the issue hasn't damaged his primary candidacy, not so much because he's effectively fought off the accusations of trying to buy the nomination, but because the county chairs — recipients of the Murphy largess — aren't about to abandon him or suddenly decide to withhold the organizational support that he needs to be Ged b an andi — md G him n mecesh.aaaaaaaaaaaaE

Once the money spigot opens and remains open, drinking from it becomes a hard habit to break.

While Murphy is burdened by Corzine's ghost, Guadagno is shadowed by Christie's presence.

While his dismal public approval standing is of his own making, Christie impacts the Guadagno candidacy simply by her visibility as his second in command since 2010.

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While Murphy and Guadagno have their obvious political crosses to bear, both would serve themselves well to acknowledge it and conduct campaigns on those issues most troubling to voters and taxpayers.

Both would benefit from addressing, among other things, the state's record high property taxes; need for a more equitable school aid formula; growing unfunded liability that threatens the solvency of the public pension system —and fostering an environment to encourage steady economic growth and job creation.

For now, though, it's safe for Murphy and Guadagno to book a hotel ballroom for the traditional unity breakfast the morning after the primary.

Carl Golden served as press secretary for Republican Gov. Thomas Kean for eight years and as communications director for Republican Gov. Christie Whitman for three years. He is currently a senior contributing analyst with the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University.