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Christie Says Tough Talk Would Continue

Gov. Chris Christie promised to lead New Jersey with the same aggressive style if he wins a second term, while his re-election opponent, Democrat Barbara Buono, pledged Tuesday to remain independent from party bosses who have been sitting on their hands during her campaign if she becomes governor.

Christie and Buono squared off for 90 minutes during their second and final debate at Montclair State University. The election is Nov. 5.

As he did in the first debate with Buono last week, Christie again refused to rule out a run for the Republican nomination for president in 2016. If that happens, it's unlikely he would finish his term.

Christie did promise to lead with the same blustery style that has catapulted him to national fame, saying occasionally calling people out is "part of who I am." Christie once called a veteran who challenged him at a town hall an "idiot" and has long been known for his strong language.

Christie, 51, said that has not kept Republicans and Democrats from working together under his leadership.

Buono, 60, said the governor's name-calling is disrespectful and divisive.

Christie has dominated the race so far. He's raised as much as he's allowed to under a public campaign finance program, while Buono lags far behind. A report released Tuesday by the state Election Law Enforcement Commission found that spending from outside groups is closer, though it still favors Christie.

Outside groups spent close to \$10 million to promote Christie going back to the June primary, the commission reported. Buono benefited from about \$8 million in independent spending, though a portion of that money is directed at influencing state legislative races.

He's also been endorsed by dozens of locally elected Democrats, with the highest profile official, Essex County Executive Joe DiVincenzo, seated in the front row on Christie's side.

Christie said he's proud of his cross-party appeal, while Buono criticized his relationships with DiVincenzo and South Jersey party boss George Norcross III as "the worst kind of bullying and bossism."

Democratic power brokers abandoned Buono, with DiVincenzo publicly endorsing Christie and Norcross focusing his fundraising on South Jersey legislative and local races.

When Christie accused her of opposing legislation that would stop retiring government employees from cashing out unused sick pay because she's ``in the pocket'' of public-sector unions that support her, Buono shot back out of turn.

``I'm not in the pocket of anyone," she said.

Earlier Tuesday, Buono released a summary from her doctor of 20 years showing she's in excellent health and fit for office.

Both candidates agreed to release medical reports at last week's debate.

Christie's office has not responded to requests for his records.

He underwent weight-loss surgery in February.

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