

## **governor's race**

**Posted: Sunday, January 13, 2013 12:01 am**

With each passing day, the air of desperation surrounding the New Jersey Democratic Party's efforts to settle on a gubernatorial candidate grows thicker.

Senate President Steve Sweeney, himself a potential candidate, has travelled around the state meeting with Essex County Sen. Richard Codey - the man he deposed as Senate president in a bitter contest two years ago - and Congressman William Pascrell, D-8th, of Passaic County, to gauge their interest in challenging Gov. Chris Christie.

At the same time, State Chairman and Assemblyman John Wisniewski convened a conference call of the 21 county chairpersons only to get an earful of grouching about a decision-making process that is damaging and embarrassing the party.

With Middlesex County State Sen. Barbara Buono the only declared candidate, the restlessness of party leaders has begun to resemble a "Stop Buono" movement.

A few chairmen have expressed concern that Buono would

**/ Democrats are looking \_\_\_\_\_e over**

Sweeney has pretty much taken the same posture.

Both are loath to surrender what they currently possess to take on a cause that, while not hopeless, is highly problematic.

Codey has been in the Legislature for 40 years and clearly enjoys it, and Sweeney occupies the top spot in the Senate. Neither is eager to step aside, only to be remembered by history as a gubernatorial candidate who kept the margin of his defeat sufficiently reasonable so that the party's other candidates on the ballot didn't suffer.

While at the moment Christie seems nearly unbeatable, he faces issues of governance that could put a serious dent in his job approval rating in the coming months.

Economic growth remains anemic at best, unemployment continues to remain stuck well above the national average and higher than surrounding states, tax revenues have fallen so far short of projections that a deficit of as much as \$750 million looms.

The prospect of cuts in the current budget as well as program reductions in the upcoming budget