

## South Jersey residents, politicians divided on 'Bridgegate'

By WALLACE McKELVEY and STEVEN LEMONGELLO Staff Writers | Posted: Thursday, January 9, 2014 11:33 pm

"Bridgegate" and Gov. Chris Christie's two-hour press conference addressing alleged reprisals by his staff dominated both media coverage and the conversations of ordinary people Thursday.

The investigation into traffic delays at the George Washington Bridge in Bergen County gained national attention due to Christie's position as a possible 2016 Republican presidential candidate, political analysts said. The ensuing scrutiny could affect his viability long-term, although members of his party lauded his response so far.

"This press conference is a stopgap measure, not a solution," said David Greenberg, a professor of history and media studies at Rutgers University. "So far, he can probably feel good about today, but he's not out of the woods by a long shot."

Local residents interviewed at a Pleasantville shopping center, however, were divided on their view of Christie himself.

"I think he's an honest man, and he uncovered the people who were guilty," said Ruth Johnson, of Galloway Township.

Janice Tozer, of Egg Harbor Township, said: "I like Christie. It's good that the governor got rid of that lady if she's the one who did it. I think (the media is) doing something against Christie because they don't want him to be a (presidential) candidate against Hillary Clinton. I like her too, but they're trying to discredit him because they don't want him to be her competition."

Dorothy Williams, of Absecon, was more cynical.

"These things happen all the time," she said. "I just think he got caught up in a bad situation."

"But I don't think that deputy chief of staff came up with these ideas all by herself," added her husband, John Williams, about Kelly.

"I don't think she's the whole, sole person who initiated the situation," Dorothy said.

Tyrone Harmon, of Pleasantville, just seemed frustrated with the apparent pettiness of it all.

"That tit-for-tat nonsense, it makes no sense," Harmon said. "That's for kids, man. If you get into politics, you have to put personal opinions to the side, or else the people at the bottom will get screwed over."