

# OPINION: FAITH IN GOVERNMENT, THE REAL CASUALTY OF BRIDGEGATE

CARL GOLDEN | FEBRUARY 20, 2014

As more and more troubling details emerge, it become all the more difficult for New Jerseyans to have confidence in their leaders



There can be no doubt on the part of anyone now that the multiple investigations into Bridgagate and the allegations of improper behavior associated with it will continue for months.

There is simply no end in sight as a squadron of attorneys joust and skirmish on behalf of their clients; a legislative committee pores over all manner of documents while threatening action against those who've decided to ignore committee subpoenas; potential witnesses invoke their Fifth Amendment right; and the

U.S. Attorney sends FBI agents into the field to interview key figures in the scandal.

Presumably, at some distant point in the future, the public will learn who was responsible for closing access lanes to the George Washington Bridge in Fort Lee; whether Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno really did threaten to withhold relief funds In the meantime, however, public confidence in the belief will spread and harden that the officials they've elected and the staffs those officials have entrusted with helping to govern instead chose to place personal gain and the misplaced exercise of power above their sworn duties and responsibilities.

The proper role of government -- that of an institution to create, strengthen, and nurture an environment in which citizens can live safely and thrive economically -- has already been undermined and, the longer the investigations, the greater the chances the institution will crumble further.

Each time the scandal narrative appears to have lost momentum, another document surfaces, another allegation is made, or another incident is uncovered by the media, providing the spark to propel the storyline back onto front pages and newscasts leads.

The public conversation is driven by suggestions that political insiders stood to reap an enormous windfall through secret knowledge of proposed government actions. Or that government authority was abused by those who -- given a level of power they hadn't experienced before -- used it to

When the rationale offered by officials of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey that the closures were a part of a traffic study collapsed, the issue quickly escalated, ensnaring the governor's office directly and leading to the very public reputation-shredding and dismissal of a member of the governor's staff and the chairman of his reelection campaign.

Since then, it's spread to other high-ranking staff in the governor's office and the Port Authority, to authority police officers and their union leadership, and to political allies of the administration.

The blizzard of news accounts