

Why This Surprise Endorsement May Boost Chris Christie in Key Primary

The publisher of an influential newspaper in the early voting state of New Hampshire said on Sunday the paper had endorsed Republican Chris Christie in the U.S. presidential contest because of his experience and potential to take on rival Donald Trump.

The New Hampshire Union Leader officially endorsed Christie on Saturday, with publisher Joseph McQuaid calling Christie “the guy who can take the fight” to Trump, who since July has maintained a commanding lead over the crowded Republican field.

“Americans seem to be fed up with Washington and they’re looking for somebody who speaks with the ‘bark off,’ as we say in New Hampshire. And I think Christie does that, but as we said in the editorial, he does that knowing what he’s talking about as opposed to some others who don’t,” McQuaid said on Sunday on NBC’s “Meet the Press.”

McQuaid compared Trump and Christie’s shared penchant for blustery speech, but argued that Christie has the experience to defend the U.S. from the Islamic State, as well as defeat Hillary Clinton in the general election.

“If there’s an insider who’s an outsider, it’s Christie,” he said. “He’s a Jersey guy who shoots from the lip, but he knows what he’s talking about. And I think people are going to buy that.”

The latest parallel comes amid months of comparisons between the two loud-talking, Republican New Englanders for their similarly brash style of speak.

As Trump has catapulted to the top of the Republican heap,

Christie has polled in the single digits in national surveys.

Just 4 percent of Republicans polled nationally would back the New Jersey governor for the party's nomination, compared to 31 percent support for Trump, according to a Nov. 27, five-day rolling Reuters/Ipsos survey.

New Hampshire voters cast some of the earliest votes in the 2016 presidential primaries, so the high-profile endorsement could lift Christie's struggling campaign.

Still, even with the local importance of the Union Leader, the paper's highly sought-after support does not always translate to a groundswell in support for the candidate chosen.

In 2012, the publication endorsed Republican Newt Gingrich for the party's nomination, which Gingrich ultimately lost to former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney.

Reuters' five-day rolling average sample size ranged from 464 to 347 respondents between Nov. 22 and Nov. 27, with a credibility interval of 5.2 to 6.1 percentage points. {eoa}

(Reporting by Alana Wise; Editing by Ros Russell and Chris Reese)

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