APPENDIX B

Submitted to the
New Jersey
Legislative Select Committee on Investigation
from Matt Mowers
From: Ben DeMarzo
Sent: Saturday, September 21, 2013 11:01 AM
To: Matt Mowers
Subject: From NJ.com: Bergen County Democratic Freeholder candidates call for investigation into George Washington Bridge lane closures


Sent via the NJ.com Android App.

From: Matt Mowers [matthew.mowers@republic.com]
Sent: Tuesday, December 10, 2013 10:40 AM
To: Ben DeMarzo

http://therun2016.com/christies-bridge-controversy/
Ted Mann from the WSJ just called asking about the GW Bridge because he had heard I was one of the individuals in the Gov's office who would talk to the Mayor of Fort Lee. I told him I would take down his number and get back to him later.

Not sure how you are handling or want handled. I don't plan to return his call on this unless you want me to.
Things are going pretty well. Raising money is always the biggest concern of course. The job is a lot of fun though. What are your thoughts on how it's all going?

Was a little distracted during that conf call at noon though - couple things with the bridge in jersey popped up (and not related to anything Kathy Sullivan wrote). May loop in with you quickly to catch up what was discussed.

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 13, 2013, at 8:08 PM, "rwilliams@gop.com" wrote:

> How are things going? You like the job?
> 
> Sent from my iPhone
Two numbers that explain why Chris Christie is taking so much heat

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie (R) has been getting an earful from Democrats lately.

New polling data released Thursday show why: Christie leads the prospective GOP presidential sweepstakes and stacks up best among his fellow Republicans against Democratic powerhouse and former secretary of state Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Ever since Christie cruised to reelection last month in his deep blue state like no Republican in decades, Democrats have sought to play catch-up. Their hope is to tar the governor’s image ahead of 2016 by casting him as a bully who isn’t bashful about punishing those who cross him. For his part, Christie wants to be seen as something very different: A problem-solver who can work across party lines.

The result of Christie’s strategy: He’s wildly popular — and not just in New Jersey. Two numbers tell the story: 48 percent and 16 percent.

A new CNN/ORC International poll shows Christie is easily the most competitive Republican against Clinton, who has not announced whether she will make another White House bid but is seen as the likely Democratic nominee, should she run.

Christie (48 percent) runs about even with Clinton (46 percent) among registered voters, putting him a tier above other potential GOP White House contenders. He runs even with Clinton among self-described moderates and holds a big lead among independents.

By comparison, Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) trails Clinton by eight points despite high name recognition following his 2012 run for vice president. Meanwhile, rising conservative stars like Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Tex.) and Rand Paul (R-Ky.) trail Clinton by 18 and 13 percentage points, respectively. Former Florida governor Jeb Bush (R) lags behind the Democrat by 21.
When stacked up against potential GOP competitors in a Fox News poll, there is more good news for Christie. He leads eight other Republicans with a 16 percent plurality among GOP respondents. In other words, Christie’s not only shaping up as the most electable Republican right now; he’s also scoring points among the party faithful.

Christie has not yet said whether he will run for president in 2016. But he could hardly ask for a more ideal launching pad if he does. In addition to winning a second term in a very Democratic state, Christie recently ascended to the position of chairman of the Republicans Governors Association. The job will enable him to travel the country and build deep inroads with donors and party power brokers.

Cognizant of the threat Christie presents to Clinton or whomever wins the Democratic nomination, Democratic strategists have begun to take on Christie with an intensity that was mostly absent during the effort to unseat him in New Jersey this year.

The emerging campaign to define the governor was apparent in a recent episode involving the closure of access lanes from Fort Lee, N.J., onto the George Washington Bridge into New York. Democrats argued Christie’s allies were doling out punishment against the mayor of Fort Lee, who did not endorse Christie in his reelection bid. Christie denied deploying any such tactics.

It’s not just Democrats who are expected to lead the charge against Christie as 2016 draws near. Conservatives unhappy with Christie’s stance on immigration (he recently signed a bill to allow in-state college and university tuition for New Jersey high school graduates brought into the country illegally as children) and his warm embrace of President Obama after Superstorm Sandy, among other things, are expected to ramp up criticism, too.

All of which reinforces a reality of the GOP hierarchy right now: Christie is at the top of the heap, and opponents from both sides are going after him hard.

The big question for the next year is whether Christie’s image fades under political pressure at a level he’s never seen before in his career, or he keeps his footing in a fluid Republican pecking order. The answer to that question could determine who has the upper hand when the race for the GOP nomination begins more officially in 2015.

**Fibits:**

Obama signed a sweeping defense policy law. He also signed a bipartisan budget deal.

On the health-care front, Obama signed up for insurance in the Obamacare exchange.

Republicans hold a five-point generic ballot lead, the CNN poll shows.

The daughter of New York City Mayor-elect Bill de Blasio revealed her history of substance abuse.

Americans For Prosperity is hitting Reps. Rick Nolan (D-Minn.) and Ann McLane Kuster (D-N.H.) with Obamacare ads.


Eliot Spitzer (D) and his wife are getting a divorce.
South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley (R) got a gun for Christmas.

Snoop Dogg + Secretary of State John Kerry = magic.

Must-reads:

"Utah Ruling Means No Respite for the Supreme Court on Same-Sex Marriage" — Adam Liptak, New York Times

"Health Care Tactics Split Republican Senate Rivals" — Bill Barrow, AP
From: Harrell Kirstein (via Twitter) [notify@twitter.com]
Sent: Tuesday, December 31, 2013 4:32 PM
To: Matt Mowers
Subject: Harrell Kirstein (@HarrellKirstein) mentioned you on Twitter!

Matt Mowers,
You were mentioned in a Tweet!

Harrell Kirstein @HarrellKirstein
Apparently @mowers being unable to jam #NH bridges w/ traffic ala Christie is doing next best thing: jamming twitter by tweeting at himself.
09:31 PM - 31 Dec 13

Forgot your Twitter password? Get instructions on how to reset it.
You can also unsubscribe from these emails or change your notification settings. Need help?
If you received this message in error and did not sign up for Twitter, click not my account.
Twitter, Inc. 1355 Market St., Suite 900 San Francisco, CA 94103.
From: Matt Mowers [matthew.mowers@]
Sent: Thursday, January 02, 2014 11:02 AM
To: Ben DeMarzo

Kathy Sullivan @NHKathySullivan Jan
Is this why Mr. Mowers so cranky?: Christie Ally Ordered To Testify In Bridge Scandal. talkingpoinstsmemo.com/livewire/chris.

..... #nhpolitics
From: Matt Mowers [matthew.mowers@wsj.com]
Sent: Friday, January 03, 2014 11:53 AM
To: Bill Stepfen
Subject: WSJ

Ted Mann from the wsj left a message at the office line for me. He had called a few weeks ago about the GWB issue. I don't plan to return the call but let me know the teams thoughts if they are different.

Sent from my iPhone
Also - apparently Shawn Boburg from the record called nhgop today. I'm assuming something gwib related.

On Mon, Jan 6, 2014 at 5:29 PM, Bill Stepien <b_stepien@...> wrote:
Not really. He's a smart guy...who may not be as important as 10 years ago, but is still respected (and always quoted in the NYT)

| From: Matt Mowers <matthew.mowers@...>
| To: Bill Stepien <b_stepien@...>
| Sent: Monday, January 6, 2014 5:19 PM
| Subject: Tom Rath

I'm having coffee with Tom Rath tomorrow morning. Any info you would be interested in from him?
'Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee,' Christie senior staffer writes, according to documents

By Matthew Arco | January 8th, 2014 - 9:30am

A member of Gov. Chris Christie's senior staff told a onetime Port Authority official in an email that it was "time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee" in August just weeks before a controversial lane closure, according to documents.

The documents, which were obtained by PolitickerNJ, show an email between Christie's deputy chief of staff for legislative and intergovernmental affairs, Bridget Anne Kelly, sent to a former executive at the Port Authority, David Wildstein.

"Got it," Wildstein responds to Kelly following her August 13 email to Wildstein, according to the documents.

The email was first reported by The Record.

Wildstein, a former editor of PolitickerNJ, has since resigned from the Port Authority.

An email sent to Christie's office for comment was not immediately returned.


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Sources: Bergen politico Kelly landed in administration because of trust of Stepien

By Max Pizarro | January 8th, 2014 - 1:32pm

Republican sources describe Bridget Anne Kelly as a Bergen County political expert who had Bill Stepien's trust when she coordinated the Christie campaign in 2009.

She went to the administration because Stepien trusted her based on her work in Bergen, two sources say.

According to documents obtained by PolitickerNJ, Kelly is Gov. Christie's deputy chief of staff who told Port Authority official David Wildstein that it was time for a traffic snarl in Fort Lee prior to the Port Authority ordering lane closures at the George Washington Bridge.

A former aide to Assemblyman David Russo (R-40), Kelly was "joined at the hip" to Stepien, both sources said.

A former deputy chief of staff to the governor, Stepien was Christie's campaign manager last year and is the party's nominee to succeed Sam Raia as state party chair.

Last year, he accepted an advisory position with the Republican Governor's Association.

A source close to Kelly said Stepien trusted her political instincts in Bergen in part because Kelly knew the territory in a very difficult political environment dominated by factions.

"Bill has always been her benefactor," one source said.

Kelly was still with Russo's office in 2009 when she started phone-banking for the Christie campaign.

"She had been involved in Bergen politics for a while and knew a lot of Bergen players," the source said. "She was a good asset for Bill, constantly [giving] him intel."

She went to the administration soon after Christie won his 2009 bid for governor.

Another source told PolitickerNJ that Kelly's ascent to the governor's inner circle surprised party members who believed long-time GOP loyalist Amanda Gasperino deserved a shot.
I just read that too. Very odd. Cardinale?

Sent from my iPhone

On Jan 8, 2014, at 1:42 PM, Ben DeMarzo <bendemarzo@...> wrote:

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By Max Pizarro| January 8th, 2014 - 1:32pm

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One of the lesser-discussed characters in today’s email revelations is Bill Stepien, Gov. Chris Christie's campaign manager and recent pick to head the state's Republican party.

What was his involvement in the George Washington Bridge scandal?

This is the man whom Christie chose last year as his liaison for the Republican Governor's Association, and just yesterday appointed as state party chair.

He's about as close to the governor as it gets. Yesterday, Christie hailed him as "the best Republican operative in the country."

Stepien was one of the players in these newly released emails, corresponding with David Wildstein, a top Christie appointee at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which controls the George Washington Bridge.

In response to the blowback over the Port Authority lane closures that caused deliberate traffic havoc in Fort Lee in September, Stepien inexplicably blamed the mayor, whom he called "an idiot."

Wildstein responded, "It will be a tough November for this little Serbian." (Fort Lee Mayor Mark Sokolich is Croatian, not Serbian).

Not an impressive exchange for one of the state's top Republicans.

It's not clear yet how much Stepien knew about what was going on. But he also has close ties to Bridget Anne Kelly, the Christie aide directly involved in planning the Fort Lee traffic snarl. She took over Stepien's former job as a deputy chief of staff when he left to become Christie's campaign manager last year.

Stepien is known as her benefactor. Would Kelly really have made such a move without checking with him first?

We won't know unless we ask: On the list of subpoenas to be handed out, lawmakers should definitely include Stepien.
The top aide to Gov. Chris Christie who was involved in the controversial George Washington Bridge lane closures in Fort Lee last year should be fired, said a Jersey City councilman and longtime critic of the Port Authority.

Rich Boggiano, who represents Ward C on the City Council, calls himself the "only person who’s ever won against" the Port Authority, referring to an old plan by the bistate agency to build railroad yards in Jersey City.

Boggiano said today that he had only heard a radio report regarding the emails that show top Christie aides knew about the lane closures and imply that the action was taken as political retribution against the Fort Lee mayor, who had declined to endorse the governor's reelection bid.

After hearing the content of some of the emails, particularly one in which Bridget Anne Kelly, a deputy chief of staff in Christie's office, wrote that it was "time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee," Boggiano was blunt.

"If that's true, then whoever did that should lose their jobs," he said. "They should be fired."

Another email from a Christie ally and ex-Port Authority official calling Fort Lee Mayor Mark Sokolich "this little Serbian" -- Sokolich is Croatian -- is "childish," Boggiano said.

Boggiano declined to condemn Christie over the emails.

"I'm not a great fan of his, but I don't think he had anything to do with it," Boggiano said.

Christie's office has declined to comment on today's release of the emails. Christie also abruptly canceled a press conference previously scheduled for today.
The Politics of A-holes

By: Erick Erickson (Diary)

The media that built up Chris Christie as the salvation of the GOP is turning on him in the lead up to Hillary Clinton’s Presidential campaign announcement. It is what it is. The media does this routinely.

The story of the day is Chris Christie’s staff behaving badly, possibly at his direction, to hurt elected officials who did not back Christie.

Private messages between Governor’s Christie’s deputy chief of staff and two of his top executives at the Port Authority reveal a vindictive effort to create “traffic problems in Fort Lee” by shutting lanes to the George Washington Bridge and apparent pleasure at the resulting gridlock.

Frankly, this is routine hardball politics that Republicans and Democrats alike engage in at the local level. Heck, the former mayor of Philadelphia once stopped paving sidewalks in front of people’s houses if they did not support him. In other areas, trash collection mysteriously stops. As a formerly elected municipal official, I can tell you first hand that local politics is far dirtier than national politics. This is just a taste of it.

The only difference is that Christie’s staff put it in emails, which was not smart.

But there’s more here and it is going to be the problem that haunts Chris Christie. I’m ambivalent on his run for the Presidency. But I don’t see him getting that far for the very reasons underlying this issue — he and his staff operate as divas.

I have had Congressmen, Governors, and the staffers of Congressmen and Governors tell me horror stories about dealing with Christie’s people. All of them seem to dread it.

One congressman told me he wanted to talk to Christie about a matter and the staff would not put him through and would not even give him the Chief of Staff to talk to.

A Governor told me that Christie’s staff treats incumbent governors as if they are low level staffers there to serve as Chris Christie’s advance team.

A Chief of Staff of a Governor once told me that Christie’s staff began lecturing the Chief of Staff’s Governor about the set up of an event and what that Governor needed to say. Both the Chief of Staff and Governor were rather hacked off by the arrogant tone.

Another senior staffer told me that after dealing with Christie for an event, they decided they’d rather focus on drawing celebrities for instate functions because the riders and demands of celebrities tend to be much easier to deal with.
This was always going to be Christie’s problem. People want a winner. And they want an a**hole. But they want the person to be their a**hole, not an a**hole who tries to make everyone else his whipping boy.
News Alert

Christie says he was 'misled' by aides on traffic jamming

In a statement released late Wednesday afternoon, Christie said he had no knowledge that his top aide helped arrange traffic jams as retribution for a Democratic mayor. He promised there would be punishment. "What I've seen today for the first time is unacceptable," he said. "I am outraged and deeply saddened to learn that not only was I misled by a member of my staff, but this completely inappropriate and unsanctioned conduct was made without my knowledge."

Christie said the people of New Jersey "deserve better."

Read more at:
http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/e-mails-suggest-christie-aides-jammed-traffic-for-political-revenge/2014/01/08/7cd161ce-7879-11e3-af7f-13bf0e9965f6_story.html
From: Matt Mowers [matthew.mowers@]
Sent: Wednesday, January 08, 2014 5:40 PM
To: Ben DeMarzo

Ryan Lizza @RyanLizza15m
I don't think there has been a sufficient amount of attention to the fact that the person at the center of this scandal is named Bridget.
TRENTON — Fifteen months ago, when she was still a relatively unknown staff member in Gov. Chris Christie’s office, Bridget Anne Kelly sent out this tweet:

“(Irish singer) Enya is the only thing that made the 2 hours of traffic tolerable today.”

Despite Kelly’s aversion to traffic, she apparently had no problem causing others to sit in it.

It was her more recent reference to traffic that has put Kelly at the center of the George Washington Bridge lane-closing controversy that has reverberated across the nation.

In what some are calling a “smoking gun” that foreshadowed apparent political payback to the Fort Lee mayor for not supporting Christie, Kelly sent this now infamous eight-word email to Port Authority executive David Wildstein on Aug. 13:

“Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee.”

What followed was the closing of local access lanes to the George Washington Bridge from Sept. 9-13.

Suddenly, a Christie staffer who was only a household name in her own household — a diminutive blonde-haired mother of four from Ramsey — was the next subpoena target of Assemblyman John Wisniewski (D-Middlesex) as his Transportation, Public Works and Independent Authorities Committee attempts to find answers to the bridge controversy.

Described by someone who worked directly with her as “competent,” “pleasant” and “a good mother,” Kelly, 41, a $114,000-a-year deputy chief of staff for legislative and intergovernmental affairs, suddenly found herself on the bad side of a governor known for his fiery temper.

“I am outraged and deeply saddened to learn that not only was I misled by a member of my staff, but this completely inappropriate and unsanctioned conduct was made without my knowledge,” Christie said in a statement today without naming Kelly.

According to the governor’s website, Kelly became a senior staffer in April and previously was director of intergovernmental and legislative affairs, where she oversaw the “day-to-day operations of the Christie Administration’s outreach efforts to elected officials at all levels of government, faith-based and community organizations and trade associations.

“Bridget joined the Christie Administration in 2010 as Director of Legislative Relations where she managed the Administration’s relationship with the 120-member Legislature and their legislative staff,” according to the website.

Kelly was a legislative aide to Assemblyman David C. Russo, a Republican from Bergen County, where Fort Lee is located, and became his chief of staff in 2002.
U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-9th Dist.), whose district also includes Fort Lee, said he knows Kelly from her days as an aide to Russo and doubted she was the architect of lane closures that caused traffic headaches but also hampered public safety efforts, according to local officials.

"I don't know who the person is that gave the ultimate order," Pascrell said, "... When you see the emails, she didn't just wake up one morning and decide, 'Let's screw up the traffic in Fort Lee.'"

Kelly came to Trenton in 2010 after Christie beat then-incumbent Democrat Jon Corzine. She had coordinated Christie's strong showing in Bergen County for the governor's campaign. Attempts to reach Kelly today were unsuccessful.

Kelly, whose maiden name is Daul, graduated from Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, Md., with a bachelor of arts degree in political science.

On a Mount St. Mary's Class of 1994 reunion blog five years ago, she noted that she had two daughters and two sons born between 1996 and 2006 and was living "only across town from where I grew up, and three of the kids are at the grammar school that I attended."

Her Twitter page was largely benign, with retweets of political figures and pictures of her children. Her last tweet that wasn't a retweet was a year ago, when she wished her son a happy 13th birthday.

The page went dark later today.

Kelly's August email set off a string of emails and events that stunned even hard-gristled New Jersey political veterans.

"Today actually shocked me — and I thought I was beyond that," said state Sen. Loretta Weinberg (D-Bergen).

"This is pretty shocking," said Brigid Harrison, a political science professor at Montclair State University, who described the email as "a smoking gun."

Harrison said she was stunned that otherwise smart people put what they did into emails that could be retrieved, and said the episode cuts against the image Christie had cultivated among New Jerseyans as different brand of politician.

"This comes across as kind of petty seventh grade politics: 'You didn't support me for class president, so I'm gonna get you,'" she noted.

And if you really want to rile up New Jerseyans, have the residents of the most-congested state wait in more traffic.

Said Harrison: "Now, when you sit in traffic on the George Washington Bridge, you wonder, 'Who pissed off the governor today?"'
January 9, 2014,

To All Our Friends and Supporters:

'Healthy' & Happy New Year

Little Sisters of the Poor is a group of Catholic nuns who run nursing homes for the elderly. The Little Sisters argue they should not be forced to offer health care coverage that violates their religious convictions. But, because they are non-denominational in their efforts, e.g., they help the poor and dying of all religions, the Obama administration inexplicably extrapolates that they aren't religious enough to qualify for a church exemption and wants to force them - under Obamacare - to dispense services (abortions, contraception, etc) which violate their calling (and their core religious convictions). Especially galling is the fact that the President has been constantly re-writing the law (and the Constitution along with it) by, among other things, handing out exemptions to his friends every five minutes.

Even left-leaning, Obama-nominated Supreme Court Justice, Sonia Sotomayor, literally, at the eleventh hour, on December 31, just before the January 1st implementation of the Obamacare law issued an order saying: The government is "temporarily enjoined from enforcing against applicants the contraceptive coverage requirements imposed by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act."

When contacted to ask the sisters how one could help them fight against the Government Goliath who is still trying to force their compliance, I received the following email [the emphasis is mine]:

Sr. Lawrence Mary <colbaltimore@littlesistersofthebpoo.org>
to: Jeffrey Mw <jeffreymw

date: Mon, Jan 6, 2014 at 11:15 AM
subject: RE: Sister Lawrence - Can we help your efforts RE: Last night's conversation

Dear Jeff,
Thank you for your e-mail; I'm sorry that it is only now that I am able to answer you. We are grateful for your support and your desire to help us. We think that the best way you could assist us right now would be to support the wonderful organization which is representing us, the Becket Fund (becketfund.org). These people do all their work for religious liberty bro bono, and we would be so happy to be able to support them by finding friends who could do so. You can see their website and probably donate directly from there, or if you prefer, you could send your help here but marked clearly for the Becket Fund.

Once again, let me thank you for your help....God bless you!

Sr. Lawrence Mary

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After reading a Wall Street Journal article "Bridge Emails Pose Questions for Christie" (WSJ, 1-8-14) I'm sure many Americans are eager for the follow up:

"Bridge Emails, Lying to Congress and Trampling the Constitution"

James Clapper, the Director of National Intelligence lies to a Congressional Committee, in March, 2013, when he was asked by Democratic Senator Ron Wyden, Ore.: "Does the NSA collect any type of data at all on millions or hundreds of millions of Americans?" He answered: "No, sir."

A coalition of Republican lawmakers formally introduced Articles of Impeachment, on 11-19-13, against Obama's disgraced Attorney General Eric Holder, who stands accused of perpetrating multiple high crimes and misdemeanors - including lying to Congress - largely stemming from the gun running scandal into Mexico known as "Fast and furious" which has led to at least one U.S. border agent's murder.

The IRS targets Tea Parties for "additional scrutiny" and finally apologizes and President Obama offered: "...if the reports are true, then that's outrageous and there's no place for it -- and they have to be held fully accountable." Still waiting.

Congress is also still being stonewalled by the Obama administration from getting the truth over the four Americans killed - including our Ambassador, Chris Stevens - in Benghazi, on 9-11-2012 (Hint: it wasn't because of an anti-Muslim video).

To cap off a dismal political year, Obama is 'awarded' Politifact's (the fact-checking Web site) "Lie of the Year" for his now infamous: "If you like your health care plan, you'll be able to keep your health care plan. Period!" Already over six million folks - soon to be tens, or hundreds of millions - believe that.

Where's the righteous Democratic and Main Stream Media outrage over all of that?

Yes, an over-zealous Christie staffer makes a mistake. Yes, it was wrong and there will be accountability - something that seems to be almost non-existent in the White House despite the dozens, hundreds, thousands? of Obama administration hires (and acolytes) who have done a lot worse.

When Governor Christie was asked directly about the GWB incident, he owned up and said: "What I've seen today for the first time is unacceptable." So the ball is in his court but, in the meantime,
let's get over the bridge traffic fiasco and get onto things that matter to the entire country!

Please join our meeting which will highlight the need for our elected friends to continue to court votes from the disparate demographics we have invited: Hispanics, Millennials, doctors (others to be announced).

WHEN: Monday, January 20th
6:45 - 9pm-ish
(doors open at 6:30 and meeting will start promptly at 7pm!)

WHERE: VFW
750 Rte 10W
Whippany, NJ 07981

Congressman Leonard Lance (NJ - 7th CD) will present a recap of his activities and the Republican outlook for 2014 and 2016 election cycles. "Leonard" has been lionized by the media with prominent appearances on Fox News; Judge Jeanine. and has also appeared on Hannity with noted Tea Party Conservative, Texas Congressman, Louis Gohmert. He was among a handful of Legislators who recently questioned HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius as to why some 800,000 New Jerseyans could lose their insurance over such minor changes in grandfathered policies as a $5 change in the co-pay because they are considered to be "substantial changes" made to the policy under Obamacare regulations.

Alieta Eck, MD, Pharmacy in NJ and Louis, MO. She has residency and is provider of medical John Eck, founded free clinic for the poor 400 patients per volunteer physicians Alieta testified before Congress, in 2004, the United States, and discussed ways to from overusing the
emergency room. Dr. Eck served as president of AAPS, in 2012.

As many of you know, Dr. Eck ran in the Special Republican Primary for the US Senate from New Jersey in August, 2013 and is currently contemplating a run for Congress, in 2014.

When William "Hank" Lyon joined the freeholder board in March, 2012, he was, at 24, the youngest freeholder in New Jersey. Hank was then elected to fill a two-year unexpired term on the board in November 2012. Hank is now Chairman of the Budget Committee and liaison to the Department of Human Services. He serves as a member of the Capital Budget Committee, the Airport and Railroad Advisory Committees, and the Board of School Estimate for the County College of Morris and the Morris County School of Technology. He is a lifelong resident of Morris County, works in the family business (restaurants and real estate) and graduated cum laude from the College of the Holy Cross (Physics and Economics). Hank is a regular church-goer who also enjoys reading, staying active at the gym and spending time with family and friends.

Many of his peers had previously voted for Democrats. Now, however, following the mass defections by Millennials from the Democratic Party and their disavowing Obama's "Lie of the Year" ["if you like your healthcare plan - or doctor - you can keep it...period!" - Forbes, PolitFact, etc] Hank is in an ideal position to advise Republican leadership how best to communicate meaningfully with his peers!

Daniel Garza, is a self-described Christian and Executive Director of The Libre Initiative. His former life included stints as: White House Staffer, Univision Anchor, and Farmworker. His Father shared his appreciation for America which has stayed with him and can be paraphrased: "You can make it [here] with just three things; God, good credit, and freedom."

The LIBRE Initiative's National Strategic Director recently appeared on Fusion TV to discuss and support to the new "Dreamer" legislation enacted in New Jersey with the backing of Governor Christie. http://tinyurl.com/ou8thzm

Daniel is a frequent guest on both Fox TV and Glenn Beck and we are proud to welcome him to our podium as a colleague and friend!

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.
Again, our best wishes for a wonderful 2014!

We hope to see many of you at this meeting.

Jeff
Welcome to Wonkbook, Ezra Klein and Evan Soltas's morning policy news primer. Send comments, criticism, or ideas to Wonkbook at GMail dot com. To read more by Ezra and his team, go to Wonkblog.

**Wonkbook's Number of the Day:** 10 percentage points. That's how much the supplemental poverty rate, the most accurate official measure of poverty, fell between 1967 and 2012, largely as a result of government transfer payments. It now stands at 16 percent.

**Wonkbook's Graph of the Day:** Which government programs have done the most to reduce poverty? Which don't do much at all?

**Wonkbook's Top 5 Stories:** (1) Republicans want to be poverty warriors; (2) the Fed is OK with saying goodbye; (3) Obamacare, now in calm waters; (4) appropriators gonna appropriate; and (5) governors gone wild.

1. **Top story: A new War on Poverty?**

   One in three Americans slipped below the poverty line between 2009 and 2011. "The "official" poverty rate was 15 percent in 2012. That number gives the impression that poverty is a bright line, that roughly one sixth of the country is poor and the rest are not poor. But that's a bit misleading. As a new report from the Census Bureau shows, a much, much larger subset of people slip in and out of poverty all the time. For instance: Between 2009 and 2011, nearly one third of the country -- 31.6 percent -- fell below that official poverty line for at least two months. By contrast, only 3.5 percent of the U.S. population remained poor for that entire period." Brad Plumer in The Washington Post.

   **Explainer:** Everything you need to know about the war on poverty. Dylan Matthews in The Washington Post.

   **Rubio:** War on Poverty has been lost. "Among the changes to the system Rubio proposed was a plan to consolidate federal funding for anti-poverty programs into the
one agency and give those funds to the states. The key to addressing poverty, Rubio emphasized in his high-profile speech, is decentralizing. "These Flex Funds would be transferred to the states so they can design and fund creative initiatives that address the factors behind inequality of opportunity" closer to home, Rubio said... He also said he would introduce legislation to replace the earned income tax credit with a "federal wage enhancement for qualifying low-wage jobs." "Jackie Kucinich in The Washington Post.

Primary source: The full text of Rubio's speech as prepared for delivery.

Longread: "The Height of the Net," by Oren Cass, who was Mitt Romney's domestic-policy director. It's worth reading it now, because you'll be hearing about it, and its arguments, again and again from Republicans. National Review Online.

Farm bill talks nearing conclusion with about $9 billion in food stamp cuts. "Plans call for eliminating $9 billion in funding for food stamps -- formally known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) -- over the next decade, according to several aides familiar with the negotiations who are not authorized to speak publicly about the details. The cuts are a compromise between a proposed $4 billion reduction approved by the Democratic-led Senate in June and nearly $40 billion in cuts approved by the GOP-controlled House as Republicans sought to overhaul eligibility requirements for SNAP. Aides said House and Senate lawmakers sought cuts to SNAP by focusing on what they call the "heat-and-eat" loophole." Ed O'Keefe in The Washington Post.

...What is 'heat-and-eat'? "If a state gives a resident as little as $1 a year in heating assistance, it allows that person's household to automatically qualify for an average of $1,080 in additional food stamps annually from the federal government. That's what 14 states, including New York and California, and the District of Columbia have done." >Alan Bjerga in Bloomberg.

White House picks first five economic 'Promise Zones.' "The official said chosen areas are: San Antonio, Texas; Philadelphia; Los Angeles; Southeastern Kentucky; and the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. The White House has said the initiative will focus on reducing crime in high-poverty areas, attracting private investment to replace "distressed" housing with "mixed-income" housing, ensuring that more students graduate from high school and providing tax incentives to stimulate economic growth." Aaron Blake in The Washington Post.

@damianpaletta: Sen Rubio proposes consolidating ALL federal anti-poverty money into one agency, which would direct money to states with flexibility.

'Great Society' agenda led to great -- and lasting -- philosophical divide. "On the 50th anniversary of President Lyndon B. Johnson's declaration of a War on Poverty, Republicans and Democrats are engaged in a battle over whether its 40 government programs have succeeded in lifting people from privation or worsened the situation by trapping the poor in dependency... With battles underway over extending long-term unemployment benefits and raising the minimum wage, leaders of both parties are feeling a new urgency to address the issue of rising income inequality, as well as the economic insecurity that many in the middle class are feeling. But to a large degree, that means coming to terms with a political legacy that reaches back to the 1960s." Karen Tumulty in The Washington Post.

Why progress against poverty has slowed. "Low wages should be a national concern, as globalization and technology have tag-teamed to devastate the buying power of families who struggle annually to pay the bills and raise their children. But the pesky poverty rate isn't just a measure of low wages. It's sticky high partly because the government's best efforts to get cash to working families have been offset by the fact that Americans are--for a variety of reasons--working less." Dereck Thompson in The Atlantic.

...And why you should forget about the concept of the 'poverty rate.' "[F]or such an influential and obsessed-over number, there's widespread agreement that the government's standard poverty measure is deeply flawed, and it almost certainly understates how much the social safety net has improved U.S. living standards over time...The poverty line itself is sort of the shag carpet of economic indicators--a poorly-aged, 1960s throwback. It was first set during the Johnson administration at three times the cost of a basic diet because, at the time, the typical family was thought to spend about one-third of its income on food. Since then, it has mostly been adjusted for inflation rather than our changing spending habits, which today are geared less towards groceries, and more towards things like housing and healthcare...Our current approach to calculating poverty is so full of holes that, for the past few years, the Census Bureau has produced an alternative number known as the "supplemental poverty measure" or "SPM"--which is bone-dry government speak for "the statistic you should really be paying attention to."" Jordan Weissman in The Atlantic.

@CEABets: Research shows childhood poverty is self-perpetuating--solve it now and save $500 billion in foregone income, cost of crime & health costs

Eric Cantor and Bill de Blasio exchange fire over schools and educational opportunity. "Calling school choice the best route out of poverty, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor took aim at New York City's new mayor on Wednesday for his cooler stance toward public charter schools and warned that Republicans may hold congressional hearings on the education policies of Democrat Bill de Blasio's administration. In a speech at the Brookings Institution, Cantor (R-Va.) said that New York made great progress in offering choice to students under former mayor Michael Bloomberg (I), who grew the number of public charter schools from seven to 123 in 12 years." Lyndsey Layton in The Washington Post.

The head of the U.S. Chamber of Congress doesn't think income inequality is a real thing. "Thomas J. Donohue, the longtime chief executive of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, sounded like an income inequality skeptic at his annual State of American Business address in Washington on Wednesday. When a reporter observed at a news conference after his 36-minute talk that he seemed to be calling the whole concept of income inequality into question, he responded with a non sequitur, applauding what the Obama administration is doing in pushing trade agreements. "If there is inequality," Donohue said, well then, the White House is addressing it all wrong...Martin Regalia, the chamber's chief economist, said income inequality is "not as bad as many of the statistics show -- you have to use the right numbers."" Melinda Henneberger in The Washington Post.

@Goldfarb: Repeat after me: Poverty, inequality, mobility, wage stagnation,
unemployment, and growth are all different things!

**Big business says only education can fix inequality. It's just not sure what that means.** "Donohue wondered, in his speech, why Americans weren't more upset about the state of their education system. "Where is the outrage? Where is the urgency?" he lamented... One would think, given his assessment of the magnitude of the problem, that Donohue would have a detailed set of proposals for reform. But when reporters followed up in a news conference, asking what kinds of change he'd like to see, Donohue rambled vaguely... Donohue's "training" mantra is more about deflecting attention from solutions that are hard for companies to stomach toward those that aren't their responsibility to deal with." *Lydia DePillis in The Washington Post.*

**BARRO: There is no Republican antipoverty agenda.** "Republicans aren't really having a policy discussion about poverty at all. They're having a messaging discussion. Some want to pick up Jack Kemp's "baton" of talking about social mobility and free enterprise. Social conservatives want to talk about the importance of families to alleviating poverty. Rand Paul wants to add more "anti-government broadsides" to the message. What all these Republican approaches have in common is that they aren't policy ideas at all, or they're policies that won't do anything about poverty. The one exception I can see is Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah)." *Josh Barro in Business Insider.*

**WILCOX: If you really care about ending poverty, stop talking about inequality.** "Inequality itself is not a particularly potent predictor of economic mobility...Harvard economist Raj Chetty, a principal investigator at the Equality of Opportunity Project, has pointed to economic and racial segregation, community density, the size of a community's middle class, the quality of schools, community religiosity, and family structure, which he calls the "single strongest correlate of upward mobility."" *W. Bradford Wilcox in The Atlantic.*

**YGLESIAS: How marriage fights poverty.** "If you look up the Federal Poverty Guidelines you'll see that the way it works is that one person is poor if he or she earns less than $11,490. But due to household economies of scale, the FPG says that for two people to be non-poor they need to make $15,510 not $22,980. Indeed, the poverty line for a family of three is only $19,530--less than double the poverty line for one. Basically poverty is $11,490 for the first person plus $4,020 for each additional person...Which is to say that marriage "lifts" families out of poverty not by increasing their incomes but by reducing what the federal government assumes their expenses to be." *Matthew Yglesias in Slate.*

@mattyglesias: Shorter conservatism: Fight poverty by encouraging marriage by enforcing legal discrimination in who can get married.

**YORK: Caring about poverty is a waste of political energy for Republicans.** "President Obama almost never talked about poverty in the last election. He just didn't mention it. Instead, in speech after speech, rally after rally, commercial after commercial, Obama and his fellow Democrats targeted the great American middle class, wracked by economic anxieties and concerned about maintaining its style of life in a terrible economic downturn. For Democrats, the election was middle class, middle class, middle class...[T]he new strategy ignores the (at least rhetorical) lesson of the Democrats' recent successes: When it comes to winning votes, it's all about the middle class." *Byron York in The Washington Examiner.*
DOUTHAT: How Republicans should talk about poverty. "If you were to build a rhetorical frame around some of the better policy ideas floating around on the right-of-center these days, it probably wouldn't be neatly divided into a "message on poverty" and a "message for the middle class." Instead, it would talk about how this new right-of-center agenda would offer the same kind of thing to Americans below the poverty line as it does to Americans anxiously holding on to their place in the middle class: Not a conservatism of "compassion" (that Bush-era frame was always a mistake, even when the substance was decent), but a conservatism of respect, in which benefits and tax credits are tied to effort, responsibility, family, work, in ways that apply up and down the income ladder." Ross Douthat in The New York Times.

Debate: The National Review has rounded up many conservative perspectives on the War on Poverty. Read more here.

COHN: Lessons from the front. "To summarize and (grossly) simplify, programs designed simply to provide money or benefits have worked well, particularly for the elderly and children. Programs designed to realize more complicated goals, like developing better skills, haven't. A shift in the structure of benefits, in order to reward work and penalize dependency, boosted the supports for the employed but took away some for the unemployed." Jonathan Cohn in The New Republic.

KONCZAL: How to win support for fighting poverty. "[P]rograms that are seen as being rights given to all citizens or that are related to work are more widely embraced. They enjoy stronger funding, broader support, and are enjoyed without stigmatization compared to programs related to needs...Meanwhile, if we quickly want to provide income support, programs like expanding and updating a child tax credit will likely go far and also be politically popular enough to win bipartisan support. This could guarantee a minimum income for families with children, a result which is both feasible and effective for providing support." Mike Konczal in The New Republic.

CROOK: Obama's misguided theory of social injustice. "The president's rhetorical departure thrills progressive Democrats. It folds poverty, lack of opportunity and the supposedly ill-gotten gains of the rich into a unified theory of economic injustice. This theory aligns with the way progressives see the world. They also feel it's good political marketing. Which of these claims is more energizing: The poor stay poor as the rich get richer, or the poor stay poor because the rich get richer? Progressives are right that poverty, opportunity and fairness each deserve close attention, and conservatives are wrong in preferring (with rare exceptions) to ignore all three. But Democrats are wrong to bundle the issues together." Clive Crook in Bloomberg.


Top opinion

RUBIN: Sound fiscal policy would be more spending now, less on entitlements later. "Such a regime should be enacted now to stabilise, or preferably reduce, the ratio of debt-to-gross domestic product over 10 years, and protect discretionary spending. Implementation, designed in ways difficult to undo, should be deferred for a limited period to allow for recovery. Fiscal discipline could provide room for reasonable stimulus to create jobs." Robert Rubin in The Financial Times.
KLEIN: What liberals don't get about single payer. "A health-care system that followed international best practices would direct the government to set rates. Or it would let insurers band together and negotiate rates collectively -- a practice called "all-payer rate setting." But it wouldn't need to eliminate private insurers. It's good for consumers to have a choice of insurers, who have real incentives to innovate and devise better ways to keep customers healthy and costs down. It's health-care providers -- not insurers -- who have too much power in the U.S. system." Ezra Klein in Bloomberg.

GIFFORDS: Gun control must rally on. "Enhance enforcement by passing a law making gun trafficking a serious crime with stiff penalties. Make it illegal for all stalkers and all domestic abusers to buy guns. Extend mental health resources into schools and communities, so the dangerously mentally ill find it easier to receive treatment than to buy firearms. And even as we lay the groundwork for expanding background checks, pass strong incentives for states to ensure the background-check system contains the records of the most dangerous and violent among us." Gabrielle Giffords in The New York Times.

DIONNE: Marijuana injustice needs to end. "I have come to believe that we should legalize or at least decriminalize marijuana use. The way we enforce marijuana laws is unconscionable. The arrest rates for possession are astoundingly and shamefully different for whites and African Americans. The incongruence between what our statutes require and what Americans actually do cannot be sustained." E. J. Dionne in The Washington Post.

MEYERSON: Obamacare is working. "A larger share of Californians will be able to afford regular medical check-ups than Texans. A smaller share of Californians is likely to be bankrupted by the expense of major medical treatment than Texans. When the law's tax penalties take effect, a smaller share of Californians will be subject to the penalties that come with the individual mandates than will Texans. In the coming years, a smaller share of California hospitals will face financial risk for indigent care than hospitals in Texas, where fewer of the sick and poor will be covered by Medicaid." Harold Meyerson in The Washington Post.

Old fashioned interlude: Recipes from 1888.

2. Central bankers still want to be as boring as dentists

The Fed has signed off on a gradual unwinding of its bond-buying effort. "The Federal Reserve's decision in December to taper its bond-buying campaign reflected increased confidence in the economy and continued uneasiness about the stimulus effort, according to an official account of the December meeting..."Participants generally anticipated that the improvement in labor market conditions would continue, and most had become more confident in that outlook," the account said. "Against this backdrop, most participants saw a reduction in the pace of purchases as appropriate at this meeting and consistent with the committee's previous policy communications."" Binyamin Appelbaum in The New York Times.

...The fear of an asset bubble has gotten real enough to push away economic problems that are here today, like the output gap. "Federal Reserve officials in December turned their attention to the risk of dangerous financial bubbles emerging as they scanned a brightening economic outlook and formulated a plan to gradually wind
down their bond-buying program this year. While officials agreed that threats to financial stability were modest, the issue was at the center of wide-ranging discussions about emerging threats to the economy..."Several [Fed officials] commented on the rise in forward price-to-earnings ratios for some small-cap stocks, the increased level of equity repurchases, or the rise in margin credit," the minutes showed. "One pointed to the increase in issuance of leveraged loans this year and the apparent decline in the average quality of such loans." Jon Hilsenrath and Victoria McGrane in The Wall Street Journal.


U.S. private sector adds more jobs than expected. "U.S. businesses added jobs at a quick pace last month, notably in construction, according to a tally of hiring released Wednesday. Private-sector payrolls increased by 238,000 positions in December, according to the national employment report compiled by payroll processor Automatic Data Processing Inc. and forecasting firm Moody's Analytics." Kathleen Madigan in The Wall Street Journal.

Maybe the U.S. economic recovery isn't that disappointing, after all. "We're doing pretty well! Or at least, pretty well by the standards of countries emerging from banking crises. Of 100 systemic banking crises in the United States and around the world, Reinhart and Rogoff found that it takes an average of eight years for per-capita GDP to fully recover. Of the 12 countries directly hit by the global financial crisis that began in 2007, the United States and Germany have both returned to their pre-crisis levels of per-capita GDP." Neil Irwin in The Washington Post.

U.S. oil exports have been banned for 40 years. Is it time for that to change? This paper by Blake Clayton of the Council on Foreign Relations lays out the basic case: The energy landscape today is very different from the 1970s. Domestic production of crude oil is now on the upswing, thanks to shale fracking and other improved drilling techniques in places like North Dakota's Bakken formation or Texas's Eagle Ford Formation. Right now, Clayton notes, the export ban is actually hurting these upstart producers. Companies in North Dakota and Texas are producing lighter, sweeter types of crude oil and can't find enough refiners to process it. That's because many Gulf Coast refineries are set up to process heavier types of crude." Brad Plumer in The Washington Post.

Memes of memes interlude: Headlines Against Humanity.

3. Has Obamacare made it into calm waters?

Insurers push Obamacare payment deadline to late January. "Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois and three more BCBS plans that are part of the privately held Health Care Service Corp chain have moved the first payment deadline to January 30 from January 10. All of the plans are sold through the federal website HealthCare.gov, which had a December 24 deadline for customers to enroll and be guaranteed coverage by January 1 in 36 states. Others, including Aetna Inc, said they were still considering this Friday to be the payment deadline." Caroline Humen in Reuters.
Massachusetts wastes a third of all health spending. "Main drivers of excess spending included patients returning to hospitals for preventable reasons and emergency-room visits that better primary care could have warded off, the state's Health Policy Commission concluded, citing data from 2012. The commission estimated between $14.7 billion and $26.9 billion in wasteful spending that year, representing between 21% and 39% of total health expenditures...The Massachusetts commission was formed under a 2012 state law designed to control health-care costs by setting a target for growth in health spending and allowing penalties when providers exceed the target." Jon Kamp in The Wall Street Journal.


Great news for Obamacare: Americans are bored with it. "Those who have watched other insurance expansions come and go offer two theories. One is that the coverage people signed up for is, by and large, working. And it's a whole lot less exciting to write about things that work as they're supposed to than things going haywire, as was the case with HealthCare.gov's initial rollout. This is the more optimistic theory of Obamacare boredom: The law is working, thus leaving us reporters with few screw-ups to write about...Another possibility is that the problems just haven't cropped up quite yet." Sarah Kliff in The Washington Post.

Self-explanatory interlude: A pointless but beautiful diagram a day keeps nobody away.

4. Appropriators gonna appropriate

Appropriators fight to beat clock. "Lawmakers scrambled Wednesday to maintain their momentum and complete writing an omnibus spending bill by Friday. House Appropriations Committee Chairman Hal Rogers (R-Ky.), however, acknowledged that some sort of short stopgap measure will now be likely to avoid a Jan. 16 shutdown...Yet Rogers said negotiators are clearly making progress, with eight of the 12 parts of the omnibus done." Erik Wasson in The Hill.

Senators debate extension of unemployment benefits. "The Senate on Wednesday haggled over competing proposals to extend unemployment benefits for the longtime jobless, with negotiators searching for a compromise that could extend the insurance program for a longer period than currently envisioned. Republicans, who provided a key bloc of six votes to keep the legislation alive Tuesday, offered several different proposals for offsetting budget cuts that would match the more than $6.4 billion it would cost for a three-month extension of the benefits program. Democrats continued to oppose the alternative budget cuts to justify such a short extension, but they opened the door to finding cuts if the extension was longer." Paul Kane in The Washington Post.

The IMF has become a bargaining chip in this year's appropriations game. "Who'd have guessed it but there's the International Monetary Fund in the middle of the omnibus bill talks -- a potential bargaining chip for House Republicans but also a symbol of divisions in the party given the right's suspicion of such international organizations...The IMF quota increase for the U.S. is $63 billion. But the Congressional Budget Office estimates that the added cost is just $315 million since the money is not new but is being reallocated within funds already approved in 2009.
and scored then by the CBO. On the world stage, the transaction looms bigger -- for the fund itself and Washington's leadership role... In this case, the IMF quota increase and reforms stem from a deal that the U.S. shaped itself in talks with the G-20 nations in Seoul in November 2010. Three years later, the pact can't be fully implemented because Washington has a veto share of the vote in the IMF and has yet to meet its part of the bargain. President Barack Obama bears some blame for dragging his feet and not asking for the money until after his 2012 reelection was secured. Time is now running short, and with it, the patience of allies." David Rogers in Politico.


5. Governors gone wild

Chris Christie faces scandal over traffic jam in Fort Lee, N.Y. ordered by his aides. "The mystery of who closed two lanes onto the George Washington Bridge -- turning the borough of Fort Lee, N.J., into a parking lot for four days in September -- exploded into a full-bore political scandal for Gov. Chris Christie on Wednesday, when emails and texts revealed that a top aide had ordered the closings to punish the town's mayor after he did not endorse the governor for re-election. "Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee," Bridget Anne Kelly, a deputy chief of staff to Mr. Christie, emailed David Wildstein, a high school friend of the governor who worked at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which runs the bridge. Later text messages mocked concerns that school buses filled with students were stuck in gridlock: "They are the children of Buono voters," Mr. Wildstein wrote, referring to Mr. Christie's opponent Barbara Buono." Kate Zernike in The New York Times.


Christie's problem is that he's really, truly a bully. "Christie inhabits a rare space in American politics: He's a bully. He's followed around by an aide with a camcorder watching for moments in which Christie, mustering the might and prestige of his office, annihilates some citizen who dares question him... He's someone who uses his office to intimidate people and punish or humiliate perceived enemies... What's dangerous for Christie, though, is that now every political reporter in the country will begin believing rumors of his punishments and hunting down evidence of his retaliation. And things Christie was able to do before to wide applause -- like berate a schoolteacher and then have his staff upload it to YouTube -- will begin feeding a very different kind of narrative. Chris Christie rose because he's a bully. It might be why he falls, too." Ezra Klein in The Washington Post.

About that bullying meme. "One of the key raps on Christie is that he's a "bully" and that he engages in naked power politics. That rap hasn't hurt him with voters -- until now -- because they perceived Christie as bullying people who deserved to be bullied and using strong-arm political tactics to make New Jersey's government work better. Christie's governing style led to bipartisan agreements on budgets and employee benefits reform, and the targets of his ire were unpopular: teachers' unions and distrusted municipal officials. But now we're seeing an example of Christie's team doling out punishment in a way that was both incompetent and petty. This isn't just about the Christie administration engaging in unseemly retributive politics; it's about them being bad at it." Josh Barro in Business Insider.
Christie just blew his chance at being president in 2016. "Several things come together to make this scandal especially devastating to Christie. One is that it's very easy for voters to understand: He punished a town because its mayor endorsed his rival. There are no complex financial transfers or legal maneuverings to parse. Second, it fits into a broader pattern of behavior... Why would they circle around a candidate teeming with corruption scandals, when they could instead nominate a more conservative alternative with a more attractive personal image? What reason, at this point, does any Republican have to nominate Christie?" Jonathan Chait in New York Magazine.

Why Christie's story still doesn't make sense. "Here's what I don't buy. Let's stipulate that this hare-brained scheme was hatched by Christie's staff and appointees without his knowledge. Therefore, he didn't know about the lane closures or their motivations before Sept. 13, when Port Authority Executive Director Patrick Foye (a New York appointee) started complaining about them. There have been 117 intervening days, during which Christie accepted the resignations of two of his Port Authority appointees who are caught up in this scandal. I assume he and his top staff have had a lot of conversations during that time, trying to figure out exactly what happened in Fort Lee. Did his people really manage to keep him in the dark for that entire time such that he's shocked today?" Josh Barro in Business Insider.

Maine's governor wants to make it easier for children to work. "Maine Gov. Paul LePage (R) said Tuesday that state regulations governing child labor are hurting the state's economy, according to the Portland Press Herald. "We don't allow children to work until they're 16, but two years later, when they're 18, they can go to war and fight for us," LePage said at an agricultural trade show, according to the paper. "That's causing damage to our economy. I started working far earlier than that, and it didn't hurt me at all. There is nothing wrong with being a paperboy at 12 years old, or at a store sorting bottles at 12 years old." Easing restrictions on child labor -- which date back to 1847 in Maine -- instills a better work ethic among the state's children and provides a learning opportunity for those who may not be cut out for school, LePage argued." Niraj Chokshi in The Washington Post.

Reading material interlude: The best sentences Wonkblog read today.

Wonkblog Roundup

One in three Americans slipped below the poverty line between 2009 and 2011. Brad Phumer.

Big business says only education can fix inequality. It's just not sure what that means. Lydia DePillis.

Chris Christie's problem is that he's really, truly a bully. Ezra Klein.

Everything you need to know about the war on poverty. Dylan Matthews.

The Fed had no idea if the taper would terrify markets. Neil Irwin and Ylan Q. Mui.

Great news for Obamacare: Americans are bored with it. Sarah Kliff.

Kale was so much bigger in the 1990s. Lydia DePillis.
Maybe the U.S. economic recovery isn't that disappointing, after all. Neil Irwin.

U.S. oil exports have been banned for 40 years. Is it time for that to change? Brad Plumer.

Et Cetera

Longread: How the NSA almost killed the Internet. Steven Levy in Wired.


Alaska could become the third state to legalize marijuana—as soon as August. Niraj Chokshi in The Washington Post.

Got tips, additions, or comments? E-mail me.

Workbook is produced with help from Michelle Williams.

Follow Ezra Klein:
News Alert

Watch Chris Christie's news conference live at 11 a.m. ET

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie (R) will hold a news conference in Trenton on Thursday morning to address revelations that a senior aide and two top political appointees forced days of traffic jams as apparent political retribution against the Democratic mayor of Fort Lee, N.J.

Watch live video of the news conference at 11 a.m. ET and follow our live blog for the latest updates from New Jersey.

Read more at:
what's up with this lane closure BS
From: Ryan Williams [rwilliams.gop]
Sent: Thursday, January 09, 2014 11:04 AM
To: Matt Mowers
Subject: Re: Wow

I thought Stepien would hold on since his emails weren't that bad.

On Thu, Jan 9, 2014 at 11:02 AM, Matt Mowers <matthew.mowers@w.org> wrote:
kind of figured this might be the case...for both.

On Thu, Jan 9, 2014 at 11:00 AM, Ryan Williams <rwilliams.gop@w.org> wrote:
nyp.st/KCSYNT

CONFIDENTIAL TREATMENT REQUESTED
I thought he would be asked to withdraw his name for chairman but hang on at rga...apparently not

On Thu, Jan 9, 2014 at 11:03 AM, Ryan Williams <rwilliams.gop@wistia.com> wrote:
I thought Stepien would hold on since his emails weren't that bad.

On Thu, Jan 9, 2014 at 11:02 AM, Matt Mowers <matthew.mowers@gmail.com> wrote:
kind of figured this might be the case...for both.

On Thu, Jan 9, 2014 at 11:00 AM, Ryan Williams <rwilliams.gop@wistia.com> wrote:

News Alert

Christie apologizes for bridge scandal, fires top aide

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie (R) apologized for the bridge scandal that has engulfed his administration and announced that he has fired his deputy chief of staff after revelations that she and two top political appointees forced days of traffic jams as apparent political retribution against the Democratic mayor of Fort Lee, N.J. Christie also said he has told campaign manager Bill Stepien not to apply to become state party chairman or to work with the Republican Governors Association, which Christie is taking over.

Read more at: 
Larry Sabato @LarrySabatoSm
The most valued press interview in the next 48 hours will be fired Christie aide Bridget Kelly.
She won't talk to the press

On Jan 9, 2014 11:55 AM, "Matt Mowers" <matt.mowers@motherjones.com> wrote:
Larry Sabato @LarrySabatoSm
The most valued press interview in the next 48 hours will be fired Christie aide Bridget Kelly.
FYI

-------- Forwarded message --------
From: Ryan Williams <rwilliams@gop.com>
Date: Thu, Jan 9, 2014 at 3:14 PM
Subject: Re: Scott on Christie
To: John DiStaso <jdistaso@unionleader.com>

He's at Party HQ 225-9341 today. But he isn't going to comment on his old boss.

Here's a statement from Jennifer if needed:

"Governor Christie demonstrated leadership by taking responsibility, holding the staffer who ordered the lane closures accountable, and openly and honestly answering every question about this issue. His actions stand in sharp contrast to Democrats like Senator Jeanne Shaheen and Congresswoman Carol Shea-Porter who have refused to discuss why they lied about the disastrous consequences of ObamaCare and refused to apologize for misleading their constituents." - Jennifer Horn

Here's what Duprey posted on Facebook:

Steve Duprey
Christie: 'I am embarrassed'

How refreshing - a politician who admits a mistake, takes responsibility for those on his team who lied to him, and corrects course. If we had more of that in politics and in Washington in particular, this would be a better country. Leadership requires humility, willingness to admit error and determination to make amends. This was leadership.

On Thu, Jan 9, 2014 at 2:50 PM, John DiStaso <jdistaso@unionleader.com> wrote:
got a cell phone for Mowers?

thanks.

Post Partisan: It's the lies that hurt the most

Chris Christie does a good grovel. He apologized and apologized, admitted responsibility -- the usual buck stops with him stuff. It was, all in all, a terrific performance, apparently heartfelt and convincing but where the New Jersey governor was most persuasive is where he noted where he had gone wrong: Somehow his staffers thought they could lie to him.

Read full article >>

Petri: Three top moments from Chris Christie's
morphing traffic
study news
conference

It is hard to pick a favorite line from the marathon Chris Christie news conference on the subject of the political vendetta/traffic study/traffic study that morphed into a political vendetta/political vendetta that morphed into a traffic study] conducted by two of his appointees and a senior aide that closed several lanes of the George Washington Bridge for a few days in September. It was full of memorable moments. Given that it ran approximately twice as long as "Lawrence of Arabia," with only moderately fewer displays of ego, it would have to be. Among the best:

Read full article >>

Rubin: GOP gets a break on two more House seats

Dave Wasserman of the Cook Political Report sees two recent House Democrats’ retirement announcements as another positive sign for the GOP:

Every time Democrats take a small step forward, is seems as if they are jolted a few steps back. Twin retirements by nine-term Democratic Reps. Mike McIntyre (NC-07) and Carolyn McCarthy (NY-04), first reported by Politico, more than offset PA-06 GOP Rep. Jim Gerlach’s retirement earlier in the week and add to Democrats’ existing challenges heading into 2014.

NC-07 moves from the Lean Democratic column to the Likely Republican column, while NY-04 moves from the Solid Democratic column to the Lean Democratic column.

Read full article >>
Post Partisan: The Insiders: Trouble for Christie is just getting started

When I read Carter Eskew’s prescient Jan. 2 blog post, “Chris Christie actually had a bad year. Here’s why,” which included the idea that the bridge lane-closing story was serious and underreported, I admit that I dismissed Carter’s views because I did not believe that the office of the New Jersey governor would “shut down lanes of the George Washington Bridge… simply to retaliate against a public official that annoyed him.” Like Christie just said in his press conference, I did not think anyone would be so stupid as to create chaos on the open road and expect not to get caught.

Read full article >>

Sargent: Senators close in on way to pay for unemployment benefits

Senate Democrats are closing in on an agreement to pay for an 11-month extension of unemployment benefits with spending cuts that would not go into effect for at least a decade, sources tell me. This would probably be acceptable to liberals, because it would sustain a lifeline for the jobless right now, while pushing off any damage the “pay for” would do deep into the future.

Read full article >>

Wemple: The Record nails Christie story

Martin Gottlieb, editor of the (Bergen, N.J.) Record, has a lot of great things to say about his employer. Though his newsroom has had to deal with a bit of shrinkage over the years, it’s still robust, with a head count of about 200. While newspaper owners in recent decades have sold out to big chains, says Gottlieb, his people have stayed firm, sticking with the industry. Stephen Borg is the fourth generation of his family to serve as publisher of the Record, the northern New Jersey paper that’s often referred to as the Bergen Record. And committed, local ownership has its benefits, says Gottlieb.

Read full article >>
Post Partisan: Chris Christie: Me-me-mea culpa

We saw two sides of Gov. Chris Christie at his fall-on-the-sword news conference today. One side was humble and contrite. The other side displayed the feistiness that made him a Republican Party star. And both sides were held together by Christie’s healthy sense of self.

Rubin: Christie’s marathon press conference

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie’s press conference was a remarkable political event, stretching beyond the 90-minute mark. The conference was filled with candid and robust apologies such as this:

We are so used to witnessing waffling, evasion and double-talk from politicians that a confession this long, detailed and emotional is entirely unexpected.

Post Partisan: Chris Christie scandal is here to stay

What is it about New Jersey and highways? They’ve inspired Bruce Springsteen (man, there’s an opera out on the Turnpike), and they provide a proud badge of identity for people who live in the state who can simply identify each other geographically and culturally with one question: What exit? But the Garden State’s turnpikes and parkways have been much less kind to its governors. In the 1990s, two of Gov. Jim Florio’s top aides were investigated by the Securities and Exchange Commission for supposedly steering turnpike bond business to favored underwriters. And former governor Jon Corzine was almost killed and almost killed others in an April 2007 crash in which state officials tried to hide the fact that the state trooper driving his SUV was doing 91 mph, forcing people to swerve out of the way, and that the governor was not wearing a seat belt.

Sargent: Chris Christie stares into political
abyss

Chris Christie, staring into the abyss of political death, just wrapped up a lengthy presser at which he made an ambitious effort to convert bridge-gate into a showcase of his own hands on crisis management.

Read full article >>
From: Ryan Williams [rwilliams@gop]
Sent: Thursday, January 09, 2014 3:21 PM
To: Matt Mowers
Subject: Fwd: Scott on Christie

Gave him your cell since he was complaining. Just don't comment if he rings you. Let Jennifers statement and duprey stand. Not conflict of interest with them.

---------- Forwarded message----------
From: Ryan Williams <rwilliams@gop>
Date: Thu, Jan 9, 2014 at 3:19 PM
Subject: Re: Scott on Christie
To: John DiStaso <jdistaso@unionleader.com>

I don't care if you have his cell number. Its

Just letting you know he's at the office and thats the best way to get him today. But he likely won't comment on this.

On Thu, Jan 9, 2014 at 3:17 PM, John DiStaso <jdistaso@unionleader.com> wrote:
Of course he's not. But the ED of the NHGOP should allow a political reporter at the state's largest newspaper to have his cell phone number, no? He should at least take the call I'd think and say that he has no comment. But whatever.

From: Ryan Williams [mailto:rwilliams@gop]
Sent: Thursday, January 09, 2014 3:15 PM
To: John DiStaso
Subject: Re: Scott on Christie

He's at Party HQ 225-9341 today. But he isn't going to comment on his old boss.

Here's a statement from Jennifer if needed:

"Governor Christie demonstrated leadership by taking responsibility, holding the staffer who ordered the lane closures accountable, and openly and honestly answering every question about this issue. His actions stand in sharp contrast to Democrats like Senator Jeanne Shaheen and Congresswoman Carol Shea-Porter who have refused to discuss why they lied about the disastrous consequences of ObamaCare and refused to apologize for misleading their constituents." - Jennifer Horn

Here's what Duprey posted on Facebook:

Steve Duprey
Christie: 'I am embarrassed'

How refreshing- a politician who admits a mistake, takes responsibility for those on his team who lied to him, and corrects
course. If we had more of that in politics and in Washington in particular, this would be a better country. Leadership requires humility, willingness to admit error and determination to make amends. This was leadership.

On Thu, Jan 9, 2014 at 2:50 PM, John DiStaso <jdistaso@unionleader.com> wrote:
got a cell phone for Mowers?

thanks.

From: Ryan Williams [mailto:rwilliams@gop]
Sent: Thursday, January 09, 2014 1:59 PM
To: John DiStaso
Subject: Scott on Christie

Gov. Chris Christie acquitted himself well in his “Bridgegate” news conference, and emerged undead. He said he had “no knowledge or involvement” in the apparent scheme by his political operatives to take revenge on a New Jersey mayor who refused to back him in the 2013 election. He had “no involvement,” in the four-day-long traffic jams they arranged on the George Washington Bridge. Learning of it left him feeling “blindsided,” “embarrassed,” “humiliated” and “stunned by the abject stupidity that was shown here.” He claimed personal responsibility, announced the firing of a top staffer, apologized to the state, and said he’d go to Fort Lee to apologize to the town and its mayor. Instead of leaving the podium at the end of his statement he stayed for a barrage of questions. The appearance went almost two hours. You can make mistakes, lose your focus and poise, when you let the press exhaust itself asking questions of you; it took guts and brains to pull it off.

He made some mistakes. There was a lot of “I” and “me” even for a modern politician. He tends toward solipsism and is too interested in his feelings. At times he seemed to see himself as the victim, when the victims of course were the state’s commuters, including children on school buses.

It was reminiscent of President Obama’s sighing, a few months ago, that he’d been “burned” by the rollout of ObamaCare. Actually America got burned. If only he, so much more powerful and consequential than a New Jersey governor, ever faced a barrage of questions.

The news conference saved the day but didn’t solve the problem. This is a rolling story and phase two is coming. We may soon see the March of the Redacted—steady revelations and rumors as to who else was texting, emailing about, aware of, or in on the scheme. A lot of reporting will be done, and Democrats will have a field day after four years of not being able to lay a hand on him. Mr. Christie will experience in the concrete a political rule he knows in the abstract: “Friends come and go, but enemies accumulate.” The fired deputy chief of staff, Bridget Kelly, and others who have stepped down or aside in the scandal, may or may not talk, and may or may not back up the governor. Did staffers and appointees think they were carrying out the boss’s wishes or did they just go rogue? Why did Ms. Kelly set the lane closure scheme into motion at 7:34 a.m. on an August morning, and why did a Port Authority official who was a Christie appointee agree to the plan, with no questions or requests for clarification, one minute later?
The Washington Examiner’s Byron York, during the news conference, tweeted his cool-eyed read. There are only two possibilities—“he’s innocent or he’s a Clinton-level liar.”

If everything the governor said stacks up, he’ll wind up diminished but the story will fade. If it doesn’t—if there are new revelations or questions that cast him in a dark light—he’ll be finished as a national figure.

His uphill fight for the GOP presidential nomination in 2016 just got uphiller. Those Republicans who didn’t quite like him for other reasons have something new to hang their antipathy on.

How lucky is Hillary Clinton? Mr. Christie was leading her in the polls. If he got through the nomination he’d be a real threat.

I end with a thought about staffers and operatives in politics. They’re increasingly important. More and more these political players are weighing in on serious policy questions that affect how America is run. As Bob Gates makes clear in his memoir, political players in the Obama White House were to an unprecedented degree involved in foreign policy. That will be even more true in the future, whoever runs it.

Here’s a problem. Policy people are policy people—sometimes creative, almost always sober, grounded, mature. But political operatives get high on winning. They start to think nothing can touch them when they’re with a winner. They get full of themselves. And they think only winning counts, because winning is their job.

The ones who are young lack judgment, but they don’t know they lack judgment because they’re not wise enough. So they don’t check themselves.

They vie with each other for Most Loyal. They want to be admired by the boss. They want to be his confidantes. They want to be the one he trusts to get the job done. You can get in a lot of trouble when you’re like that.

There’s an ethos of wise-guy toughness among these staffers and consultants, and they often try to out-tough each other. That’s how dirty tricks happen.

It’s also how policy is hollowed out, by too many people thinking only of immediate political gain and not something bigger.

A bit of this ethos is traceable to the late GOP operative Lee Atwater, who worked in the Reagan and first Bush campaigns. Lee was a political guy who wanted to be appreciated as a significant player, so he bragged to the press about the wicked things he’d done. That allowed Democrats and journalists to tag him and say the GOP doesn’t win on the issues, it wins because it’s brute and ugly and tricks everybody. Lee didn’t mean for that to be their line! He just wanted respect, wanted people to understand political professionals are important.

The documentary “The War Room,” about the 1992 Clinton campaign, also made a contribution. It celebrated the toughness of operatives who yell on phones and warn people they’ll pay a price for coming out against the boss.

That was a generation ago. Young operatives are still re-enacting what they saw, and acting out what they see in a million other movies and shows—“Scandal,” “The Good Wife.”
There's a twist on this you can see in the Christie story. You read the emails and texts his operatives were sending, and you realize: This is TV dialogue. It's movie dialogue. They get everything off the screen, not real life, and they're imitating the sound of tough guys.

Those emails and texts, they were "Sopranos" dialogue. "Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee" is pure Tony. "Got it" is pure Silvio. "I feel bad about the kids," is druggy Christopher, or maybe Adriana. "They're the children of Buono voters" is Paulie Walnuts, in all his aggression and stupidity.

Christie operatives are not the only ones in politics who talk this way. And they all do it not because they're really tough but because they think that's how people like them—rock-'em sock-'em operatives—would talk. They don't have the brains, heart or judgment of people who've lived a life because they haven't all lived a life. They're 30 or 40 and came of age in a media-saturated country. They saw it all on TV. They saw it on a screen.

They sometimes forget they're not in a TV show about callous operatives who never get caught. They're in life, where actually you can get caught.

Advice for politicians: Know who they are, and help them mature. If you don't, they'll do goofy things, bad things, and they'll not only hurt us. They'll hurt you.
EARLIER ON THE FIX:

The 10 things you need to know about Bridge-gate

Chris Christie’s press conference was amazingly long. But where does it rank in history?

The conservative backlash against Chris Christie, and why it matters

Chris Christie did everything right today. But Bridge-gate is still a very real problem for him.

The best worst U.S. map ever

Brosurance vs. beer pong: ‘The Daily Show’ explores the Obamacare fight (VIDEO)

Why legal marijuana is popular, but lawmakers still pass on grass

Marijuana is on fire -- this much we know.

A CNN/Opinion Research poll earlier this week was the latest to show a spike in support for legal weed. CNN, Gallup and the Pew Research Center all now show a clear-to-sizeable majority of Americans support Americans' right to toke as they please -- as high as 58 percent in Gallup's polling.

Despite the surge in popularity, though, we have yet to see basically any major politicians jumping on board. Indeed, it’s tough to name any big-name elected officials who support it -- let alone someone who might run for president in 2016.

Maryland Gov. Martin O’Malley (D) and House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) this week became the latest lawmakers to just say no, as their state weighs legalizing marijuana.

They have been joined in recent weeks by New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez (R),
CA Jerry Brown not sold on legalizing marijuana: "I think we ought to kind of watch and see how it goes in Colorado."

-- Reid Wilson (@PostReid) January 9, 2014
">California Gov. Jerry Brown (D) and New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo (D).

So ... pot is popular ... and politicians like to be popular (it kind of helps them win elections) ... so why isn't anybody jumping on-board with legalizing recreational marijuana?

Well, a few things are at play here.

1) Marijuana's popularity is very new

Politicians are in the business of sustainability, not embracing the latest fad. So before something becomes part of a politician's platform, he or she wants to make sure it has staying power and isn't just a passing fancy. Pot has jumped double-digits in the last year in some polls, and while all the movement in recent years is in one direction, that kind of quick movement is exceedingly rare and potentially unpredictable.

There's also the matter of whether or not it's going to work. The fact is that Colorado and Washington, whose voters legalized marijuana in the 2012 election, are entering uncharted territory as they implement their new laws.

You can bet that any governor or lawmaker who might, in his or her heart of hearts, support the idea of legal weed is more than happy to see Colorado and Washington take a stab at it before they do. If it fails miserably (you thought we were going to use another play-owords here, didn't you?), it's not their problem and they'll know that they should steer clear in the future.

2) The payoff is minimal

As with issues like guns and immigration, the support/oppose polls don't necessarily tell the whole story. While a majority supports legalizing marijuana, lawmakers might stand to lose more than they stand to gain by supporting it. That's because issues like this are all about intensity.

While polling on intensity of marijuana support is limited, consider this: Pew's poll last year showed just 12 percent of Americans had used marijuana in the past year, while 32 percent said it was morally wrong to do so. So those who are morally opposed to the use of the drug are nearly three times as plentiful as those who actually use the drug.

Now, that's not to say that nobody who doesn't use marijuana doesn't feel strongly about it. Indeed, an issue like gay marriage shows that plenty of people who aren't directly affected by a potential change in the law can still be pretty passionate about it. But marijuana isn't exactly a huge civil rights issue.

3) It's not a hot-button issue, period

Above, we suggested that marijuana isn't really a big deal for supporters, but the fact is that it's not really a big deal for opponents right now, either. Colorado's and Washington's moves to legalize marijuana are viewed as slightly less than trivial at this point. (And politicians generally want to be seen as serious and committed to top-of-mind issues.)
While the real-world consequences are definitely real, it's not national security, it's not really an economic issue, and it's not -- as we discussed above -- a major civil rights issue.

(We're sure people will disagree with all three of those statements, but the fact is that it's not a huge issue on any of these three fronts.)

In an era in which the United States is still trying to right the economic ship and figure out what to do on issues like immigration, marijuana is still a lower-tier issue. That doesn't mean supporters won't be successful in getting their states to pass ballot measures, but it does mean lawmakers are much more likely to stay focused on more time-sensitive and pressing issues.

**Fixbits:**

Ed Gillespie (R) has told Republicans he will challenge Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.).

Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) launched his first ad.

Former New Jersey governor Tom Kean (R) said questions remain about the New Jersey bridge scandal.

Priorities USA will have new leadership.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) raised more than $35 million for Democrats last year.

Businessman Mike McFadden (R) raised $780,000 during the last three months of 2013 for his campaign against Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.).

Rep. Mike Simpson (R-Idaho) raised about four times as much as his primary opponent, attorney Bryan Smith, during the fourth quarter of 2013.

Dennis Rodman said he was sorry.

**Must-reads:**

"How damaged is Chris Christie?" -- Dan Balz, Washington Post

"Firing of Stepien deprives Christie of a key counselor" -- Matea Gold and Robert Costa,

Follow The Fix:

Washington Post
Welcome to Wonkbook, Ezra Klein and Evan Soltas's morning policy news primer. Send comments, criticism, or ideas to Wonkbook at Gmail dot com. To read more by Ezra and his team, go to Wonkblog.

Wonkbook's Number of the Day: 1.7 million. That's the number of documents Edward Snowden took, according to a leak of details from a Department of Defense report.

Wonkbook's Graph of the Day: Here's the graph the Fed is thinking about right now. Rising yields on two- and three-year Treasuries show that markets think monetary policy will tighten far more quickly than promised.

Wonkbook's Top 5 Stories: (1) the year for NSA reform; (2) how you finish the two biggest trade deals in U.S. history; (3) the mess of the UI extension; (4) what good news on Obamacare sounds like; and (5) Bridgeghazi.

1. Top story: Could NSA reform end up the biggest policy issue of 2014?

Behind the scenes, White House preoccupied by NSA surveillance controversy. 
"[I]n public, President Obama has focused this week on income inequality, touting initiatives to help the poor and unemployed. But in private, the president and his top aides have spent more time dealing with another issue. Obama met Thursday with a bipartisan group of lawmakers to update them on his review of the National Security Agency's vast surveillance program. A day earlier, he huddled separately with top intelligence officials and a White House advisory panel on privacy issues and civil liberties. He also called German Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose mobile phone had been tapped by the NSA, and invited her to Washington..." [H]is top lawyer, White House Counsel Kathryn Ruemmler, met with privacy advocates Thursday, and executives from the nation's largest Internet companies were scheduled to visit the White House on Friday." David Nakamura in The Washington Post.

What Obama is about to propose for the NSA. "President Barack Obama is leaning
toward extending broad privacy protections to non-U.S. citizens and is seriously considering restructuring the National Security Agency program that collects phone-call data of nearly all Americans, officials familiar with the process said on Thursday. Mr. Obama plans to unveil these and other changes to surveillance programs as soon as next week, the officials said." Siobhan Gorman and Carol E. Lee in The Wall Street Journal.

@mattyglesias: Time for someone at the NSA to leak all their info on this [Christie bridge scandal] and unify our scandals.

Intel panel: DOD report finds Snowden leaks helped terrorists. "Edward Snowden's leaks about National Security Agency programs have put U.S. troops at risk and prompted terrorists to change their tactics, according to a classified Pentagon report. House Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Rogers (R-Mich.) and ranking member Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-Mich.) said that the Pentagon report found a significant portion of the 1.7 million documents Snowden took were related to current U.S. military operations." Jeremy Herb in The Hill.

Obama, lawmakers discuss whether to end NSA collection of Americans' phone records. "President Obama met Thursday with senior lawmakers on opposing sides of a debate about whether to end the National Security Agency's collection of Americans' phone data. The 90-minute meeting came in the wake of a report by a presidentially appointed review group that concluded that the program, which gathers billions of phone call toll logs, "was not essential" to preventing terrorist attacks. The group recommended that the data be held instead by the phone companies or a private third party" Ellen Nakashima in The Washington Post.

@ChadPergram: PATRIOT Act author Jim Sensenbrenner after Obama mtg: I'm not so sure that the president thinks we need legislation (to reform the NSA)

NSA and GCHQ activities appear illegal, says EU parliamentary inquiry. "The 51-page draft report, obtained by the Guardian, was discussed by the committee on Thursday. Claude Moraes, the rapporteur asked to assess the impact of revelations made by the whistleblower Edward Snowden, also condemns the "chilling" way journalists working on the stories have been intimidated by state authorities." Nick Hopkins and Ian Traynor in The Guardian.

@interfluidity: so, suppose a guy like Chris Christie--let's just say with staff like Chris Christie's--headed an executive branch that included the NSA.

As automakers tap smartphone technology, concerns grow about use of drivers' data. "The growing alliance between Silicon Valley and Detroit has executives in both places excited over the technological and money-making opportunities. But the fast-emerging trend also has raised questions about whether consumers will be able to control the massive trove of personal data that cars are expected to generate in the coming years. U.S. laws are vague about who can harness all that information. Can law enforcement use the data to prove that a driver was speeding? Will hackers be able to get personal data from Web-connected cars? Can consumers stop Google from tracking them as it seeks to sell targeted ads?" Cecilia Kang and Michael Fletcher in The Washington Post.

FRIEDERSDORF: The NSA leaks are about democracy, not just privacy.
"[T]here is inherent value in citizens being given access to information when it informs their judgments about public policy. Information of this sort is a prerequisite for meaningful civic participation. There ought to be a strong presumption in favor of making it public, especially when the policy at issue is as significant and controversial as targeted killing... The unstated assumption behind a lot of national-security-state defenders and Snowden critics is that the public has no proper role in deciding any of these questions, because the information needed to make sound judgments is properly classified." Conor Friedersdorf in The Atlantic.

**Music recommendations interlude:** This is a great YouTube playlist of all the Seventies songs in the movie "American Hustle."

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**Top opinion**

**KRUGMAN:** The war over poverty. "The narrative went like this: Antipoverty programs hadn't actually reduced poverty, because poverty in America was basically a social problem -- a problem of broken families, crime and a culture of dependence that was only reinforced by government aid. And because this narrative was so widely accepted, bashing the poor was good politics, enthusiastically embraced by Republicans and some Democrats, too. Yet this view of poverty, which may have had some truth to it in the 1970s, bears no resemblance to anything that has happened since." Paul Krugman in The New York Times.

**SUNSTEIN:** A new War on Poverty needs correct facts. "[S]ome programs have especially big impacts. All by itself, for example, the earned income tax credit reduced child poverty by no less than 5 percentage points in 2012. Food and nutrition programs had almost as large an effect. In 1967, the impact of such programs was close to zero." Cass R. Sunstein in Bloomberg.

**ABRAMOWITZ:** Political independents don't really exist. "[T]he large majority of independents are "closet partisans" who consistently support only one party's candidates. They call themselves independents and many of them register as independents when given an opportunity, but they vote like partisans... 87 percent of independent Democrats (i.e., independents who lean Democratic) voted for Barack Obama while 86 percent of independent Republicans voted for Mitt Romney. Moreover, 78 percent of independent Democrats voted a straight ticket for president, House of Representatives and U.S. Senate, as did 72 percent of independent Republicans." Alan Abramowitz in Politico.

**Opinion interviews:** A health industry expert on 'the fundamental problem with Obamacare.' Robert Laszewski speaks with Ezra Klein. This sociologist has a plan to make America more like Sweden. Lane Kenworthy talks with Dylan Matthews. The Washington Post.

**RITHOLTZ:** The best housing program you've never heard of. "Of all of the various government housing programs run by various federal agencies, [the Home Affordable Refinance Program] is the most effective and efficient one out there...[A]fter HARP was modified in 2011, refinances increased significantly. The total number of avoided foreclosures has passed 3 million. What does the HARP 2.0 program actually do? It takes people who are underwater in a variety of expensive, or ill-advised or even predatory mortgages, and allows them to refinance their homes into
traditional conforming 30-year fixed mortgages. A broad assortment of "interest-only" mortgages, 2/28 teaser rates, adjustable-rate interest-only loans are eligible under the program." Barry Ritholtz in Bloomberg.

BROOKS: Movement on the right. "I'd invite you, for example, to cast your eye over the new issue of National Affairs, the right-leaning policy journal edited by Yuval Levin. You'll find nine different articles that hang together coherently around what could well be the dominant style of conservatism of the coming years. This is the conservatism of skeptical reform. This conservatism is oriented, first, around social problems, not government...But the emerging conservatives begin their analysis by looking at concrete problems: how to help the unemployed move to where they can find jobs; how to help gifted students from poor families reach their potential. If you start by looking at these specific matters, then even conservatives conclude that, in properly limited ways, government can be a useful tool. Government is not the only solution, but it is also not the only problem." David Brooks in The New York Times.

COHN: The young are alright. "Thanks to analysis from Jonathan Gruber, the MIT economist who was an architect of both the Massachusetts and federal reforms, we know that enrollment was slow to get rolling in Massachusetts--and that, relatively speaking, healthy people came into the system late. Now Gruber has done a new analysis, breaking down enrollment specifically by age, and provided it to the New Republic...Over the course of the first year, the proportion of young people (in this case, ages 19 to 34) who had obtained health coverage through the Massachusetts insurance exchange grew. In other words, they were more likely to sign up late." Jonathan Cohn in The New Republic.

TYSON: For once, a bit of optimism has arrived. But let's be real: it's just a bit. "Optimism about the future should also be tempered by recognition of where the economy is today and what it has lost since the recession. Even with more rapid growth this year, output and employment will remain far below pre-recession trend lines for several years. Output fell 8 percent relative to its noninflationary potential in 2008-9 and is now around 10 percent lower than what was judged to be its potential in 2007." Laura D'Andrea Tyson in The New York Times.

This is just great interlude: Now you too can have a business card like Chen Guangbiao.

2. How you finish the two biggest trade deals in U.S. history

Trade bill to open debate on globalization as Congress demands more oversight. "Lawmakers have proposed a bill that would narrow the Obama administration's room to negotiate new free-trade agreements, demanding that sensitive issues such as currency manipulation be covered in future treaties and deepening congressional oversight of the process. The legislation, introduced Tuesday by three of the top lawmakers on U.S. trade policy, would give the administration a green light to complete new trade pacts covering an important swath of Asia and Latin America and all of the European Union -- the most significant such agreements in a generation...The measure requires that future treaties set ground rules for how countries manage their currency values -- a sensitive issue for any sovereign state that may be difficult to build into a trade agreement with countries as diverse as Japan and Peru. It also asks for limits on the role of state-owned enterprises, and it would allow any member of Congress to attend trade negotiating sessions." Howard Schneider in The Washington
**Post.**

**Explainer:** What is "trade promotion authority" or "fast track"? *Lydia DePillis in The Washington Post.*

More economists are taking the 'glass half-full' view on U.S. growth. "Record exports and the smallest trade deficit in four years. Healthier consumer spending, including the strongest annual increase in automobile sales since 2007, spurred by a booming stock market and an improving housing sector. And a slow but steady pickup in job creation that has pushed unemployment to its lowest level since 2008. The confluence of all these forces in recent weeks has prompted economists to sharply revise their expectations for growth in late 2013 and early 2014, and prompted hopes that a more sustained economic expansion has finally arrived. The newfound optimism will face its first test on Friday, when the Labor Department reports the latest data on unemployment and job creation in December." *Nelson D. Schwartz in The New York Times.*

**Jobless claims fall by 15,000.** "Initial claims for jobless benefits, a measure of layoffs, decreased by 15,000 to a seasonally adjusted 330,000 in the week ended Jan. 4, the Labor Department said Thursday. That was the lowest level in more than a month. Economists had expected 335,000 new claims for the week...The four-week moving average for claims, which evens out bumpy week-to-week data, fell by 9,750 to 349,000." *Eric Morath in The Wall Street Journal.*

**Federal Reserve faces prospect of bond market showdown over rates.** "Bond traders are bringing forward their expectations of when the Federal Reserve will start to tighten policy, leading to a jump in short-term US borrowing costs. Recent economic data have pointed to a gathering American recovery, and could result in a showdown between policy makers and the Treasury market...[T]he upbeat tone of recent economic data is testing the bond market's belief that the central bank is in no hurry to start tightening policy after the gradual withdrawal of QE is completed, probably later this year." *Michael Mackenzie in The Financial Times.*

**What should we call Chris Christies bridge scandal? interlude:** Bridgeghazi? Bridgegate? Blagojebridge? WikiLanes?

3. The fight to extend unemployment benefits has turned into a real mess

**Showdown vote ahead on Senate Democrats' bill to extend jobless benefits.** "Democrats offered a roughly $18 billion proposal that would extend the benefits through most of 2014, and Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.) scheduled a showdown vote on the new proposal for next Monday...The new Democratic plan would extend the emergency unemployment program until mid-November (the original proposal was for three months)." *Paul Kane in The Washington Post.*

**Here are some more key policy details.** "The law that expired in December provided federal aid to supplement the 26 weeks of unemployment benefits provided by most states. The expired law provided up to 47 weeks of additional payments; the new Reid proposal would scale that back to a maximum of 31 weeks. To partially offset the cost, the bill included a proposal—similar to one backed by President Barack Obama and a broader one introduced by Mr. Portman—to eliminate a kind of "double dipping" by cutting off Social Security disability benefits to people if they are also collecting..."
unemployment benefits. Most of the cost of the bill, some $17 billion, would be offset by postponing for one year the expiration of across-the-board spending cuts, known as the sequester, that apply to mandatory spending programs, including payments to health providers under Medicare. "Janet Hook in The Wall Street Journal.

**Jobless benefits are not a priority for House Republicans.** "House Republicans are showing little appetite, urgency and interest in extending the program, and are hinting that they are content to let the issue disappear if the Senate fails to pass its own legislation... Some Republicans think the nation is awash with unoccupied jobs, others are wary of shuffling more government money to the unemployed and nearly every GOP lawmaker wants to see seismic changes to the way benefits are administered." Jake Sherman in Politico.

**Reid is burning bridges trying to get the bill through -- and to an extent that it's hurting the bill.** "With his strong-armed change to the filibuster rule and an iron-fisted control of the Senate floor, Senator Harry Reid has engaged in the greatest consolidation of congressional power since Newt Gingrich ruled the House, unleashing a bitterness that may derail efforts to extend unemployment insurance. Mr. Reid of Nevada, the majority leader, on Thursday dismissed all proposed Republican amendments to the unemployment extension, even those drafted by Republicans who had handed Democrats a victory on Tuesday by voting to take up the bill." Jonathan Weisman in The New York Times.

<strong>Trains are a cool hobby interlude: Check out these cool ones in history.</strong>

**4. What good news on Obamacare sounds like**

**Obamacare is giving a big boost to Georgia's health IT industry.** "Politically, Georgia is fighting the health law at every turn. Gov. Nathan Deal, a Republican, has chosen not to expand Medicaid, and the state's insurance commissioner publically vowed to obstruct the Affordable Care Act. But that doesn't mean Georgia isn't seeing a financial benefit from the law. Take the company called PreMedex. Founder and president Van Willis knows that just a few years ago, a company like his would've been a hard sell -- impossible, even. The two-year-old company contracts with hospitals and doctors' offices to call patients after they're discharged. Under the Affordable Care Act, hospitals are penalized if Medicare patients are readmitted within a month for several specific illnesses." Jim Burrell in Kaiser Health News.

**Maryland's plan to upend healthcare spending.** "The Obama administration is set to announce Friday an ambitious health-care experiment that will make Maryland a test case for whether aggressive government regulation of medical prices can dramatically cut health spending. Under the experiment, Maryland will cap hospital spending and set prices -- and, if all goes as planned, cut $330 million in federal spending. The new plan, which has been under negotiation for more than a year, could leave Maryland looking more like Germany and Switzerland, which aggressively regulate prices, than its neighboring states. And it could serve as a model - or cautionary tale - for other states looking to follow in its footsteps." Sarah Kliff in The Washington Post.

**Medicaid is nearly free health care. Will people move for that?** "[S]hould we expect a widespread migration from the states who fail to expand Medicaid into those that are participating? New research suggests it's unlikely: Previous expansions of the public program, coupled with the geographic clustering of non-expansion states,
suggest that cases like Workman's will be the exception rather than the rule..."The
takeaway, I think, is that as states are considering whether to expand Medicaid it's
unlikely they'll see an influx of beneficiaries if they expand," says Aaron Schwartz, a
doctoral candidate at Harvard who published the new paper in the journal Health
Affairs. "Based on past experience, we don't see any effects on migration." *Sarah

**Survey: Most of the uninsured haven't been to HealthCare.gov yet.** "The survey
from Enroll America, a nonprofit with close ties to the Obama administration that is
aiming to sign people up, found seven out of 10 uninsured people in the United States
haven't visited an ObamaCare online exchange yet...In addition, 81 percent said they
didn't know March 31 is the open enrollment deadline, after which they would be
subject to the individual mandate penalty, if they remain uninsured. Sixty-nine percent
said they weren't aware that tax subsidies and financial help might be available for
them, and 59 percent said they didn't know anything about plans that may be available
in their state." *Jonathan Easley in The Hill.*

**Obamacare will cover breast-cancer drugs.** "Certain medications that are intended
to prevent breast cancer will be fully covered under Obamacare, in new guidance set to
be issued by the Department of Health and Human Services Thursday morning.
Women at increased risk of breast cancer can receive so-called chemoprevention
drugs, including tamoxifen and raloxifene, without a co-pay or other out-of-pocket
expense." *Amanda Terkel in The Huffington Post.*

**White House stops short of veto threats on House healthcare bills.** "The Obama
administration stopped short Thursday of threatening to veto House bills to require
officials to tell people if their personal data has been compromised through
ObamaCare, and to require weekly reports on the health law's implementation. The
White House said in two Statements of Administration Policy that it opposed both
bills, one of which is set for a Friday vote in the House...Weekly reporting
requirements on both enrollments and the operation of the HealthCare.gov website
would require "unfunded, unprecedented, and unnecessary reporting requirements" on
the health insurance exchanges, it said in one statement." *Pete Kasperowicz in The
Hill.*

**Writerly interlude:** *John McPhee on structure.*

5. *We're calling this Bridgeghazi, right?*

**Christie apologizes for scandal, fires deputy chief of staff, ousts top political aide.**
"A contrite New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie apologized Thursday for a scandal that
threatens his political future, announcing that he had fired a senior aide and banished
his top campaign adviser for their roles in days of traffic jams orchestrated to punish a
small-city Democratic mayor. Christie at once accepted responsibility as the state's
chief executive but also insisted he had no involvement in shutting down a pair of
access lanes to the heavily trafficked George Washington Bridge over four days in
early September. The Republican governor said he was "blindsided" by this week's
release of e-mails and text messages detailing his office's role in the plot to create
severe gridlock in Fort Lee, N.J." *Robert Costa and Philip Rucker in The Washington
Post.*

**U.S. attorney's office reviewing GWB lane closings to see whether federal law**
violated. "U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman has been asked to review the lane closures at
the George Washington Bridge in Fort Lee last September to determine whether
federal laws were violated. The review, prompted by a referral from the Port Authority
Office of Inspector General, is considered a preliminary look to determine if a full-
blown investigation is warranted. If a criminal investigation is undertaken, charges
ranging from interfering with the right of state travel to obstruction of justice to
criminal negligent homicide could be lodged, legislators and legal experts said on
Thursday. Another outcome: lawsuits filed by commuters or business owners who
were impacted by the massive traffic snarl." Peter Sampson and Karen Sudol in The
Bergen, N.J. Record.

Firing of Stepien deprives Christie of a key counselor. "In Chris Christie's circle of
advisers, few were as close to the governor as Bill Stepien. He managed both of the
New Jersey Republican's winning campaigns for governor, helped shape Christie's
tough-guy-on-your-side image and was expected to take a top role in an eventual
White House bid. But when Christie cut him loose Wednesday evening, the governor
didn't so much as speak to him. Christie's decision to oust Stepien and another top
adviser implicated in the burgeoning scandal over George Washington Bridge lane
closures demonstrated the blunt force that Christie is willing to use to contain a crisis,
even if it means exiling members of his innermost circle." Matea Gold and Robert

Reading material interlude: The best sentences Wonkblog read today.

Wonkblog Roundup

Maryland's plan to upend health care spending. Sarah Kliff.

Congress is considering whether to allow Obama to finish two massive trade deals.
Lydia DePillis.

NASA wants to keep the International Space Station going until 2024. Is that a good
idea? Brad Plumer.

Three insane ways marketers will reach you in the future. Lydia DePillis.

This sociologist has a plan to make America more like Sweden. Dylan Matthews.

A health industry expert on 'the fundamental problem with Obamacare.' Ezra Klein.

Medicaid is nearly free health care. Will people move for that? Sarah Kliff.

Et Cetera

How legalizing pot squeezes police funds for fighting drugs. Zuzsa Elinson in The
Wall Street Journal.

Got tips, additions, or comments? E-mail me.

Wonkbook is produced with help from Michelle Williams.
From: Matt Mowers [matthew.mowers@...]
Sent: Friday, January 10, 2014 2:25 PM
To: Ben DeMarzo

Ryan Lizza @RyanLizza2m
Source: New bridge docs refer 2 meeting b/w Christie & Dave Samson, his Port Authority appointee, days before "time for some traffic" email.
They meet all the time

On Jan 10, 2014 2:25 PM, "Matt Mowers" <matthew.mowers@***.com> wrote:
Ryan Lizza @RyanLizza2m
Source: New bridge docs refer 2 meeting b/w Christie & Dave Samson, his Port Authority appointee, days before "time for some traffic" email.
I know - makes me think there's nothing in these emails

On Fri, Jan 10, 2014 at 2:25 PM, Ben DeMarzo <bendemarzo@bendemarzo.com> wrote:

They meet all the time

On Jan 10, 2014 2:25 PM, "Matt Mowers" <matthew.mowers@matthew.mowers> wrote:

Ryan Lizza @RyanLizza2m
Source: New bridge docs refer 2 meeting b/w Christie & Dave Samson, his Port Authority appointee, days before "time for some traffic" email.
Wiz already plucked the best ones, doesn't mean they won't try to get bk emails

On Jan 10, 2014 2:26 PM, "Matt Mowers" <matthew.mowers@...> wrote:
I know - makes me think there's nothing in these emails

On Fri, Jan 10, 2014 at 2:25 PM, Ben DeMarzo <bendemarzo@...> wrote:
They meet all the time

On Jan 10, 2014 2:25 PM, "Matt Mowers" <matthew.mowers@...> wrote:
Ryan Lizza @RyanLizza2m
Source: New bridge docs refer 2 meeting b/w Christie & Dave Samson, his Port Authority appointee, days before "time for some traffic" email.
There is a tiny glimmer of hope amid the ruins of Syria.

Syria’s conflict has produced the world’s biggest refugee crisis since 1945, for which $6.5 billion in international aid has been sought. Polio has reemerged, and there are shortages of clean water, food and medical supplies.

Read full article >>
Post Partisan: 6 humorous visuals on Chris Christie

1. The New Yorker Cover

Barry Blitt on his cover, “Playing in Traffic,” for next week’s
@NewYorker: http://t.co/KQpo8BhODFP
pic.twitter.com/qAop6Ux8Lz

— New Yorker News Desk (@tnynewsdesk) January 10, 2014

Read full article >>

Sargent: Dems call GOP bluff on jobless benefits

Harry Reid is now set to allow votes on a “reasonable number” of amendments to legislation extending unemployment benefits that GOP Senators are pushing for, his office tells me.

Republicans had been furious with Reid for blocking their amendments, and he got pummeled today by tough pieces in the New York Times and Wall Street Journal over his opposition to letting them move forward.

Read full article >>

Petri: Gmai’s new ‘feature’: e-mails from strangers!

Maybe it’s time for a new Google model. “Don’t be Evil” is too broad and over-arching. I would settle for a simple “Don’t be creepy.”

This morning I received an e-mail from a total stranger, in Romanian, which, when Google-translated (thanks, Google! How helpful!), reads as follows:

Read full article >>

Wemple: New Yorker gives Christie cover
treatment

Barry Blitt on his cover, “Playing in Traffic,” for next week’s
@NewYorke: http://t.co/KOosBbOBFP
pic.twitter.com/qAop6UX8L7

— New Yorker News Desk (@tnynewsdesk) January 10, 2014

Pundits everywhere have spent the last two days analyzing the optics of the Fort Lee-George Washington Bridge lane closure crisis for brash New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie. Could he really have not known about this? Did he spend too much time at his press conference yesterday talking about himself, and not enough about the inconvenienced residents of Fort Lee? What does this all say about a man touted as a presidential challenger in 2016.

Read full article >>

Wemple: PunditFact whacks MSNBC’s Rachel Maddow over Koch issue

Last fall, PolitiFact, which fact-checked MSNBC host Rachel Maddow, launched PunditFact, which is fact-checking MSNBC host Rachel Maddow.

In a massive check, PunditFact, a project of the Tampa Bay Times and the Poynter Institute, examined the controversial remarks that Maddow made on her Jan. 2 program -- decrying a Florida law that required welfare applicants to submit to drug testing; a federal judge had struck down the statute three days earlier. In tracing the law’s history, Maddow repeatedly smashed a “Koch brothers-affiliated group” for promoting and defending the law, referring to the political entities backed by industrialists Charles and David Koch. That group was the Naples, Fla.-based Foundation for Government Accountability (FGA).

Read full article >>

Post Partisan: Justice Dept. makes the right decision on same-sex marriage in Utah

The Justice Department announced that the more than 1,300 same-sex couples who married in Utah are legally married in the eyes of the federal government. “I am confirming today that, for purposes of federal law, these marriages will be recognized as lawful and considered eligible for all relevant federal benefits on the same terms as other same-sex marriages,” Attorney General Eric Holder said.
in a statement. "These families should not be asked to endure uncertainty regarding their status as the litigation unfolds." His decision comes days after Gov. Gary Herbert declared these unions would not be recognized at the state level. Holder’s action is as welcome as it is expected.

Rubin: December jobs lull

The December jobs report was rotten. The economy created only 74,000 jobs, and 347,000 people left the workforce, thereby lowering the unemployment rate to 6.7 percent. That said, the number is entirely out of sync with two months of job numbers and a jump in gross domestic product.

Wemple: Roger Ailes told tall tale about belly dancer, boa constrictor: New book

In an appearance today on “CBS This Morning,” Gabriel Sherman, the unauthorized biographer of Fox News chief Roger Ailes, took aim at a central part of the network boss’s history. The issue concerns a great anecdote from Ailes’s early years as a professional. It was January 1968, and Ailes was executive producer of the Mike Douglas Show. Booked to appear on the Jan. 9 program was then-presidential hopeful Richard Nixon. Ailes ended up face-to-face with Nixon in his office, an encounter that came about via strange circumstances.

Rubin: Does Hillary Clinton have a Mitt Romney problem?

Hillary Clinton may have a Mitt Romney problem. It is not merely a function of her wealth and isolation from the real world. (She and Bill Clinton are treated like royalty and operate behind a phalanx of security.) Rather, she is uniquely unable to criticize potential opponents on points on which they may be the most vulnerable.
Chris Christie’s traffic study excuse didn’t even make sense

At New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie’s garment-rending press conference Thursday, the humble traffic study got its moment in the spotlight. “I don’t know if this was a traffic study that morphed into a political vendetta or a political vendetta that morphed into a traffic study,” Christie said, claiming ignorance to explain why he didn’t put the [...]  

The Beatles were the Mitt Romney of the 1960s, and other policy lessons from the Fab Four

Fifty years ago next month, The Beatles piled onto Pan Am Flight 101 out of Heathrow, and a few hours later descended on America. As the anniversary approaches, expect to see a lot of iconic old video: of John, Paul, George and Ringo flopping their mop-tops on "The Ed Sullivan Show," of onlookers crowding [...]  

The Target hack gets worse: Phone numbers, addresses of up to 70 million customers leaked

Target has updated its estimate of the number of customers affected by a massive data breach last month, saying that the personal information of as many as 70
The biggest question facing the U.S. economy: Why are people dropping out of the workforce?

The U.S. labor force is still shrinking rapidly. Back in 2007, 66 percent of Americans had a job or were actively seeking work. Today, that number is at 62.8 percent — the lowest level since 1977: U.S. Labor Force Participation Rate: Why has the participation rate been dropping in recent years? There are a couple big [...]

The depressing psychological theory that explains Washington

Dylan Matthews's "Five conservative reforms millennials should be fighting for" isn't just an admirably intricate piece of trolling. It's a perfect illustration of why you can't take Washington's policy debates at face value. You can't understand what's happened to Congress in recent years if you don't understand what Matthews did in that piece. A bit [...]

The young and the Obamacare-less: A guide to freaking out over young adult enrollment

Health insurer Humana announced late Thursday that the age mix of Obamacare shoppers wasn't exactly what the insurance plan had hoped for, with fewer-than-expected young adults signing up in the first three months of open enrollment. The insurer said in filings that the mix of enrollees in the 14 states where it sells has been [...]

Why was this jobs report so bad? Blame health care, accountants and, uh, the performing arts

The December jobs report was a stinker, with only 74,000 net new jobs reported to have been added that month. But what sectors are the culprits? What industries underperformed in job creation, leading to the disappointing result? To answer, we looked at the recent trend of each of the major categories of employment — their [...]

CONFIDENTIAL TREATMENT REQUESTED
The chicken market is so hot right now. Why can’t I trade on it?

You might not have noticed yet, but there’s a calamity underway in the beef market: Cattle futures have reached record highs, driven by smaller herds that have been winnowed by years of drought. Over time, that will make beef more expensive on the shelf. But at least in the shorter term, the retailers that sell [...] 

The unemployment rate fell to 6.7 percent. Don’t celebrate.

Groan. Ugh. Sigh. Select your own preferred annoyed grunt in response to the December employment report, which in one instant made a lot of the progress the U.S. economy has been showing the last few months look more questionable. The nation added only 74,000 jobs in December, the weakest showing since the start of 2011, [...] 

Wonkbook: Could NSA reform be the big policy issue of 2014?

Welcome to Wonkbook, Ezra Klein and Evan Soltas’s morning policy news primer. To subscribe by e-mail, click here. Send comments, criticism, or ideas to Wonkbook at Gmail dot com. To read more by Ezra and his team, go to Wonkblog. Wonkbook’s Number of the Day: 1.7 million. That’s the number of documents Edward Snowden took, according to a [...] 

Follow Ezra Klein:
From: Matt Mowers [matthew.mowers@]
Sent: Friday, January 10, 2014 5:02 PM
To: rwilliams@gop Williams
Subject: Fwd: You aren't commenting on any of this stuff are you.

Begin forwarded message:

From: Kevin Landrigan <klandrigan@nashuatelegraph.com>
Subject: You aren't commenting on any of this stuff are you.
Date: January 10, 2014 4:03:28 PM EST
To: Matt Mowers <mowers@nhgop.org>, Kevin Landrigan <klandrigan@nashuatelegraph.com>

Matt
If any of these Dem statements are incorrect, please point them out.


Questions this brewing scandal raises:

Will the NHGOP's top staffer be the next person named in Christie's growing scandal?

Will BridgeGate be the first thing NH voters learn about Christie?

Has Christie or anyone else called Matt Mowers to ask about Bridget Kelly yet? Christie mentioned multiple times that senior staff and staff connected to Kelly would be interviewed.

Was Mowers response for recruiting the Fort Lee Mayor's endorsement? Was he on emails contemplating political revenge for his refusal to endorse?
Just right back and say

Off the record: I'm not commenting on my old boss, but just for reference, of course I wasn't called. I was a mid level campaign operative, not a senior staffer in the governors office.

I wouldn't say anything about the emails, because you never know if you might be on some kind of email that they pull up in those documents.

Also send him Jennifer's statement on the record:

"Governor Christie demonstrated leadership by taking responsibility, holding the staffer who ordered the lane closures accountable, and openly and honestly answering every question about this issue. His actions stand in sharp contrast to Democrats like Senator Jeanne Shaheen and Congresswoman Carol Shea-Porter who have refused to discuss why they lied about the disastrous consequences of ObamaCare and refused to apologize for misleading their constituents." - Jennifer Horn

On Fri, Jan 10, 2014 at 5:01 PM, Matt Mowers <matthew.mowers@nhgop.org> wrote:

Begin forwarded message:

From: Kevin Landrigan <klandrigan@nashuatelegraph.com>
Subject: You aren't commenting on any of this stuff are you.
Date: January 10, 2014 4:03:28 PM EST
To: Matt Mowers <mowers@nhgop.org>, Kevin Landrigan <klandrigan@nashuatelegraph.com>

Matt
If any of these Dem statements are incorrect, please point them out.

Here is the transcript from Christie's presser: http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/transcript-chris-christies-news-conference-on-george-washington-bridge-scandal/2014/01/09/d0f4711c-7944-11e3-8963-b4b654bce9b2_story.html?Post+generic=%3Ftid%3Dsm_twitter_washingtonpost

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And another email, this one sent on the last day of the lane closures to Kelly from Christie aide Christina Genovese Renna, relayed a call another aide, identified only as Evan, took from Fort Lee Mayor Mark Sokolich.

The email, also forwarded to Wildstein, said Sokolich called the governor’s office to complain, saying “he has no idea why Port Authority decided to do this.”

“He simply can’t understand why that would be the case however, because he has always been so supportive of the governor,” the email said. “Sokolich explained that the Council wants to organize a press conference with picketers at the foot of the bridge.”

“The Mayor feels he is about to lose control of the situation and that he looks like a [expletive] idiot,”” the email said.

Wildstein responded: “call me when you have a moment.”
Not sure why I'm referenced as a top legislative staffer - for this time - I'm ok with it though

Sunday, January 12, 2014

**NH legislative staff member has connection to Christie scandal**

Kevin Landrigan
Could New Hampshire’s top legislative staffer be stuck in the middle of New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie’s bridge scandal?

Let’s review a few facts relating to Matt Mowers:

Former superior: Deputy Chief of Staff Bridget Kelly was the staffer Christie threw under the bus for “lying” and denying any knowledge about the lane closures on the George Washington Bridge.

From 2010-13, Kelly was director of Christie’s intergovernmental and legislative affairs.

From 2010 until April 2013, Mowers was a regional director in the office Kelly ran.

Mayoral endorsements for Christie: Mowers was in charge of Bergen County, home of Fort Lee, and he tweeted often throughout the spring about local officials he recruited to embrace Christie’s re-election campaign.

Some of those tweets were Democratic officials Mowers had helped steer to Christie, who was able to close the sale with a telephone call or personal visit.

Will Christie interview him? During a two-hour press conference, Christie said he would speak with all senior and campaign staff members with connection to Kelly about their knowledge of the matter. Will those interviews include one with Mowers?

We can answer that one – there’s no way Mowers will be called in and asked about this.

Mowers had declined to comment since the scandal broke, and did so Friday in response to emails from The Sunday Telegraph seeking a response to these and other questions.

GOP State Chairwoman Jennifer Horn, of Nashua, issued this statement.
“Governor Christie demonstrated leadership by taking responsibility, holding the staffer who ordered the lane closures accountable, and openly and honestly answering every question about this issue,” Horn said.

“His actions stand in sharp contrast to Democrats like Senator Jeanne Shaheen and Congresswoman Carol Shea-Porter, who have refused to discuss why they lied about the disastrous consequences of Obamacare and refused to apologize for misleading their constituents.”

Meanwhile, the other GOP figure Christie tossed to the side of the road had his own New Hampshire connections.

Christie said Bill Stepien should no longer be a candidate for state party chairman and should be fired as a consultant to the Republican Governors Association that Christie heads. Stepien had been Christie’s campaign manager.

Stepien led the grass-roots campaign in New Hampshire for President George W. Bush’s re-election in 2004. Four years later, he played an even bigger role in the campaign of Arizona Sen. John McCain.

**Horn offers lone voice**

Any guesses which was the only state Republican Party Twitter account that sent out an “attaboy” message on Thursday after Christie’s two-hour news conference?

If you said New Hampshire, you’d be right.

“@GovChristie showed leadership by taking responsibility.” Horn tweeted through the state party’s account. “Unlike @SenatorShaheen who refuses to take responsibility 4 her ObamaCare vote."

We checked more than 40 state GOP twitter accounts on Friday and partisan opponents looked at the rest, and none of them jumped to Christie’s aid in the hours that followed Christie’s nationally televised news conference from Trenton, N.J.
From: rwilliams.gop
Sent: Sunday, January 12, 2014 11:22 PM
To: Matt Mowers
Subject: Is this you in this NYT story?


Sent from my iPhone
Check out the WSJ

Sent from my iPhone

On Jan 12, 2014, at 11:22 PM, "rwilliams.gop" wrote:

>
> Sent from my iPhone
Hi All,

Matt is identified in this Wall Street Journal article as the contact between the Christie campaign and the Fort Lee Mayor.

We are likely to get a number of press calls as a result. Do not discuss this or give any statement of any kind to anyone. All callers should be referred to Ryan Williams.

It could turn out to be a bit of a difficult week ahead of us. Keep your heads down, focus on what you need to get done and as I said, refer any press calls to Ryan.

Thank you all - keep up the great work.

Jennifer

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: "Ryan Williams" <rwilliams@fp1strategies.com>
Date: Jan 12, 2014 11:43 PM
Subject: <no subject>
To: "Jennifer Horn" <jenniferhornnn...>
Cc:


--
Kevin R. Miller
Rutgers University School of Law
kmiller818

CONFIDENTIAL TREATMENT REQUESTED
Key Point: Mr. Scofield was approached by Matt Mowers—who was the campaign's regional political director—including

Top NHGOP Staff at Heart of Christie Scandal: Approached Fl. Lee Mayor for Endorsement

Subject: Top NHGOP Staff at Heart of Christie Scandal: Approached Fl. Lee Mayor for Endorsement

To: Brian <brian@thehill.com>

Date: January 13, 2014 4:13:1 AM EST

From: Harrell Kristen <kristen@nhc.org>

You know this was coming.

Sent from my iPhone

Sent: January 13, 2014 9:14 AM

Forward: Top NHGOP Staff at Heart of Christie Scandal: Approached Fl. Lee Mayor for Endorsement

Subject: Top NHGOP Staff at Heart of Christie Scandal: Approached Fl. Lee Mayor for Endorsement

To: [Redacted]

From: Matt Mowers
State officials initially said the lane closure was part of a traffic study. Official records show, however, that the lane closure was ordered by the Democratic mayor of Jersey City, who did not endorse Christie for governor.

One question is whether Christie and his chief of staff, Bridget Anne Kelly, knew about the lane closure and whether they took any action to prevent it from being implemented.

The next question is whether Christie's allies in New Jersey, including his former chief of staff, took any action to prevent the lane closure from being implemented.

Those who have cooperated, while a few who spoke out and others who have been interviewed, say they feel locked out of the investigation.

Meanwhile, Christie has been the target of a federal investigation into his role in the traffic scandal. Christie has not been charged with any crimes and has denied any wrongdoing.

In his last remarks, Christie slammed the investigation as a political fix, saying it was a 'political witch hunt.' Christie has called for the investigation to be ended, and he has said he will not seek re-election in 2017.

New Jersey Republican Gov. Chris Christie's ability to secure endorsements from Republican activists and politicians has been questioned.

By HEATHER HADDON

Traffic Scandal Pushes Spotlight on Christie's Allies in Campaign
WSJ: New Jersey Gov. Christie's Aides Pressed Hard for Endorsements

The lane closure has become a symbol of the Christie administration's alleged efforts to punish its political enemies.

The lane closure was implemented in late 2013, and it was not lifted until the middle of 2014. Christie has denied any knowledge of the lane closure and has said it was a decision made by his transportation director.

The lane closure was implemented during a period when Christie was running for re-election and was facing criticism for his handling of the George Washington Bridge scandal.

Christie has denied any knowledge of the lane closure and has said it was a decision made by his transportation director.

The lane closure was implemented during a period when Christie was running for re-election and was facing criticism for his handling of the George Washington Bridge scandal.
The Republican, according to people familiar with the discussions, Mr. Christie spoke at Mr. Fubop's inauguration in July. And the Democrats' campaign gave early indications it might endorse Mr. Fubop, elected in May, was seen as a pragmatic rising star—and potential Christie ally—in the state's second-largest city.

Jersey City's Democratic Mayor Steve Fubop said there was swift retaliation when he failed to endorse Mr. Christie. Ms. Kelly and Messrs. Stepien and Snowe's didn't respond to requests for comment.

Mr. Sokolich was approached by Matt Mowers—who was Mr. Christie's campaign manager and senior adviser helped organize the endorsement effort. Mr. Christie also hired Bridget Anne Kelly, the deputy chief of staff, who wrote in a recently released email weeks ahead of the June primaries: "I'm here for some traffic problems in Fort Lee."

The endorsement would be welcome, according to a person familiar with the conversations. Mr. Sokolich has said he was never directly asked to endorse Mr. Christie. Mr. Sokolich was approached by Matt Mowers—who was the campaign's regional political director—indicating an endorsement would be welcome, according to a person familiar with the conversations. Mr. Sokolich has said he was never approached by Mr. Sokolich, who didn't endorse the government. Mr. Christie in a news conference last week denied any advance knowledge of the street closures, which he said may have been a "political vendetta," by his aides against the mayor of Fort Lee, N.J., Mark Sokolich, who didn't endorse him.

Mr. Sokolich's lawyers have been told to issue a notice this week whether to reassert their subpoena power for the investigation, and more subpoenas could be issued to Mr. Christie's staff as early as Monday.
"It was not that easy to tell him no," Ms. Zimmer said.

politics. The governor, she said, asked her to endorse his re-election.

Mr. Stepien. The conversation began with talk about securing federal money for Superstorm Sandy damage then lunched to

The mayor of Hoboken, Dawn Zimmer, said she was invited to the state capital in February to meet with Mr. Christie and

had approved about $190 million in economic development funding for Jersey City projects.

continued to work with Jersey City over the course of time since he's been mayor," Mr. Christie pointed out that the state

asked about Mr. Fulop during his news conference Thursday. Mr. Christie said they have had disagreements but "we've

night after mayor Fulop".

help during the Sandy mess. In Fort Lee, "Radio silence," one Christie ally wrote. Regarding Mr. Sokolich, "His name comes

Mr. Fulop's name surfaced when Christie representatives discussed in emails how to respond to Mr. Sokolich's pleas for

Cuomo.

Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, a dispute agency. Mr. Christie jointly controls with New York Gov. Andrew

Jersey City issues has been unfruitfully rejected over the last six months, along with countless requests we made to the

Since then, he said, "nearly every single meeting we have requested with the commissioners with regard to productive

several state commissioners were canceled.

Mr. Fulop decided against endorsing the governor. Within an hour of relaying this decision, the mayor said, meetings with

commissioners, who hold the purse strings for many Jersey City services,

The Christie campaign in phone calls, according to one person familiar with the discussions, offered new access to state
former Republican Gov. Thomas Kean. Mr. Kean's 1995 victory included wins in every municipality in the state but three.

Mr. Christie's push for Democratic Party support was unusual in New Jersey, but followed the example of his mentor, President in 2016. Said Ben Dworshak, director of the Republican Institute for New Jersey Politics at Rider University, "This Republican, though the greatest share of voters have no party affiliation."

Mr. Christie dreamed of being Senator Barbara Boxer with 60% of the vote, including nearly a third of New Jersey voters who deserted themselves as liberal. The state has about 700,000 more registered Democrats than Republicans. He helped build an above-politics image for Mr. Christie.

On Thursday, Mr. Christie said his campaign asked hundreds of Democrats for their support—so many he didn't know their names in all of New Jersey. "They've been great to work with and never hinted at an endorsement," he said.

Other mayors who didn't endorse Republicans blamed officials'LANhypertext insertion(s) reference(s):a different town after Sandy. They've been great to work with and never hinted at an endorsement," he said.

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