AP Article Related to Chris Christie Bridge Scandal (50+ News Outlets)

Matthew L Hale
TRENTON, N.J. — Although New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie wasn't charged Friday in the George Washington Bridge scandal, **his political problems** from the illegal, intentional lane closures may have gotten worse.

The good news for Christie was that U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman said that he expects no one else, beyond the three people implicated by his office, to face criminal charges in connection with the lane closures.

The bad news is, it is now law enforcement, not merely the media or political partisans, decrying what Fishman described as a political vendetta — one carried out on behalf of Christie's re-election by people he entrusted with high-ranking positions of power.

Christie's primary defense since the sinister origins of the September 2013 traffic jams first came to light: He didn't know.

Such an excuse is not very presidential, in the opinion of Claira Monier, a resident of Goffstown, N.H. Her view should matter to Christie, who has been courting Republican voters in her state's first-in-the-nation-presidential primary.

"If you're a president, you have to trust the people close to you. If you cannot appoint people that are trustworthy and ethical, that raises some issues about you being an excellent administrator," Monier said. "And I think the president of the United States has to be a top-notch administrator."

Early Friday, ending months of speculation, one of the architects of the politically motivated lane closures pleaded guilty to federal charges that he conspired to cause the traffic jams that gripped Fort Lee over four days during the busy first week of school.

David Wildstein, the former director of capital projects for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, admitted his role in causing the lane closures at the approach to the George Washington Bridge.
Wildstein also identified two alleged co-conspirators, Bridget Anne Kelly, a former deputy chief of staff to Christie, and Bill Baroni, the former deputy executive director of the Port Authority.

Kelly and Baroni denied any criminal wrongdoing following word of their indictment Friday, contending that Wildstein was lying. Windstein said the trio acted in concert, as part of a plant to punish the Democratic mayor of Fort Lee for not endorsing Republican Christie’s 2013 re-election.

All three — Wildstein, Kelly and Baroni — were longtime Christie insiders.

Brigid Harrison, Montclair State University political scientist, said it’s "almost irrelevant" that Christie didn't consent to the retaliation scheme; he enabled the atmosphere where people thought such conduct was allowed. She said Christie was already on shaky political ground and his opponents now have been handed a hammer.

"This is a real serious blow to his presidential bid," Harrison said. "It is not that a scandal of this type is insurmountable, but when you are at 4% of the GOP vote share nationally and key members of your staff are indicted, that is as close as you can come to a death knell."

Adding to the uncertainty is that there are likely more shoes to drop. Fishman was careful to limit his statements Friday to the GWB lane closures, not the other Port Authority issues his office is investigating, as evidenced by subpoenas disclosed by the authority.

Fishman made reference to unindicted co-conspirators who could be revealed later. Wildstein’s agreement to plead guilty to two counts of conspiracy was signed in January, so he has been cooperating with federal investigators for many months.
At least one avenue of inquiry led nowhere. Federal authorities told attorneys for public officials being investigated for possibly threatening to withhold Superstorm Sandy aid — unless a Hoboken development was approved — that their clients were in the clear.

But if charges are eventually brought against former Port Authority Chairman David Samson, for example, that would shine still more light onto Christie’s inner circle, as Samson was his 2009 campaign counsel. Some of the subpoenas issued in the wide-ranging investigations are focused on potential conflicts of interest in actions Samson took at the authority.

"Hillary Clinton is embroiled in scandal. Scott Walker is embroiled in scandal. But they're their party's front-runners," Harrison said. "If you're a stronger candidate, you can weather a storm like this. But the fact of the matter is that the governor is really damaged goods."

Christie's allies see things differently. They say investigations by the outside counsel hired by Christie's office, the state Legislature and the U.S. Attorney's Office all found he wasn't involved in the lane closures.

But few allies stepped forward to defend the governor: Only Christie's office and the Republican Party state chairman issued supportive statements, compared with 10 critical ones from Democrats.

At a minimum, Christie now knows more about the GWB scandal's scope as he mulls whether to run for president, said Joseph Marbach, the incoming president of Georgian Court University and a former president of the New Jersey Political Science Association.

"It certainly is a poor reflection on the part of any leader when you've got folks working for you either operating without your consent or without your knowledge, particularly when they're engaged in wrongdoing, as apparently Wildstein was, and it remains to be seen what Baroni and Kelly's roles have been," Marbach said.
Bill Baroni, former deputy executive director of the Port Authority. (Photo: Julio Cortez, AP)

He added: "You could certainly be criticized about how you're managing your office. To the governor's credit, when he apparently did find out, he took action in relieving people, Kelly in particular, of their jobs. But is that too little, too late? I guess that's what people will have to evaluate."

Baroni and Kelly were indicted on conspiracy and wire fraud charges. Both made lengthy statements Friday in which they maintained their innocence and lashed out at Wildstein. Wildstein's lawyer repeated assertions that the governor knew about the lane closures and that there was proof to that effect.

Christie's campaign hopes aren't over, said Seton Hall University political scientist Matthew Hale. The latest developments did not contradict what's been known for 16 months. And so long as wealthy donors like Home Depot cofounder and billionaire Ken Langone continue to back him, fundraising through the early states, in the GOP primaries, won't be an issue.

"He has an easy answer to everything that we heard today, and that is that everything that came out today is something that we already know, that we already heard. He's got a response, and I think that means he can keep going," Hale said. "We didn't see a smoking gun."

"I don't by any stretch think he's got a good shot," Hale said, "but I think he has a shot."

That will depend on early-state voters like Monier. She attended Christie's recent speech in New Hampshire about Social Security and Medicare and thought it was excellent. But Monier said she has too many questions right now about Christie to support him, at least until those issues play out.

"Every time something negative hits the news, it raises questions about Christie and the stereotypes some of us in New Hampshire have of New Jersey politicians," Monier said. "Whether it's true or not, it does exist. It raises concerns. It will take away from his message."
NEW JERSEY PAYS
Residents have paid about $10 million in legal costs related to the closure, according to an AP review of documents from the Legislature and the Department of Law and Public Safety. The largest share — about $7.3 million — went for the governor's outside counsel, the law firm Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, which produced a report that cleared the governor of a connection to the politically motivated lane closure. But the Democrat-led Legislature has also racked up some $1 million in legal fees. The state also accrued costs for outside legal counsel used to represent state employees involved in the probe. Mark Sokolich, the mayor of Fort Lee, whose town was ensnared in traffic and who was the target of the political retribution scheme, says the borough's legal fees have topped $200,000.

FEDERAL DOLLARS?
It's unclear exactly how much federal cash has gone into the probe. Fishman said his office does not track how much the investigation costs, but added that every investigation is different and has requires differing amounts of resources. "It has been my policy for the five and a half years I have been U.S. attorney to make sure that every investigation, no matter how large or how small or how high profile or how under the radar, gets exactly the resources that it needs to make sure that when we are done we can say proudly and fairly that we have done the best job that we can," he said.

RESOURCE DRAIN
The indictment charges that Kelly and Baroni used Port Authority property worth at least $5,000 as part of the scheme to exact political payback. The documents do not estimate the worth of using the Port Authority's resources, but they allege Kelly, Baroni and Wildstein ordered engineering reports as part of a cover story about a traffic study to divert lanes on the George Washington Bridge, one of the busiest in the world.

POLITICAL PRICE TAG
As Christie weighs a White House bid, some political observers say the financial cost of investigating the scandal probably won't have much of an effect on voters' opinions. "It's probably not a very big deal in the grand scheme of things," said Fairleigh Dickinson University political science professor Peter Woolley. "People have a picture of what happened ... and the picture is already worth many thousands of words, maybe 10 million."
Seton Hall University political science professor Matthew Hale said many people already have firm opinions on the scandal and the cost isn't likely to anger them further. "Most people in New Jersey just throw up their hands on the amount of money that gets spent on crazy stuff," he said. "It's not new.
NEWARK, N.J. — New Jersey Governor Chris Christie's former deputy chief of staff Bridget Kelly and Bill Baroni, a former deputy executive director at the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey, were indicted for their roles in creating traffic jams in September 2013 near the George Washington Bridge.

David Wildstein, another former ally of Christie, pleaded guilty Friday to conspiring to tie up the traffic to punish a local mayor and is cooperating with prosecutors.

While Wildstein didn't implicate Christie, his lawyer said outside the courthouse that "evidence exists" the Republican governor knew of the plot as it took place.

"There is a lot more that will come out," attorney Alan Zegas said. "Christie knew of the lane closings while they were occurring, and evidence exists to establish that."

Paul Fishman, the U.S. Attorney for New Jersey, declined to answer numerous questions about Christie's role, but appeared to exonerate the governor in carefully chosen words that he essentially repeated several times.

"Based on the evidence available to us today, we are not going to bring further charges on the bridge case," Fishman said.

In pleading guilty, Wildstein said the plot was intended to punish Mark Sokolich, a Democrat and mayor of Fort Lee, New Jersey, for not endorsing Christie's re-election campaign. Wildstein pleaded guilty to two conspiracy counts in federal court in Newark.
Baroni and Kelly decided to deliberately punish Sokolich by cutting the number of local lanes from three to one "all under the false pretense of a traffic study," according to the indictment.

They caused the reductions "to start on the first day of the school year in Fort Lee" in order to maximize the congestion and choking the streets with backed up traffic, prosecutors said.

They created the "sham story" of a traffic study in order to be able to use Port Authority property to reduce the number of lanes, according to the indictment.

Wildstein’s plea is the first conviction in a 16-month U.S. probe of the incident. The four-day closure triggered an investigation of the governor's aides and appointees as he readies a potential run for president.

Christie, 52, has worked to repair the political damage of the bridge scandal as his popularity has waned in recent months. He has denied any knowledge of the plot to close the access lanes.

**Wildstein, a high school classmate of Christie, poses a threat to the governor, said Matthew Hale, a political science professor at Seton Hall University.**

"If Mr. Wildstein has given that evidence to the prosecutors, I think it's the end of Christie's presidential aspirations and it may be the end of him as governor," Hale said. "I don't think he can recover from that."

The George Washington Bridge is the world's busiest. It's run by the Port Authority and connects New Jersey to Manhattan and New England via Interstate 95.

The plot came to light with the publication of an e-mail sent a month before the 2013 closures by Kelly.
"Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee," Kelly wrote on Aug. 13, 2013. "Got it," replied Wildstein, then the interstate capital projects director at the Port Authority.

Christie said on Jan. 9 that he was "blindsided" and "embarrassed and humiliated" by members of his team. He fired Kelly and cut ties to Bill Stepien, a political adviser.

A law firm commissioned by Christie, Gibson Dunn & Crutcher and its lead lawyer, Randy Mastro, blamed the plot on Kelly and Wildstein, saying in a March 2014 report that the pair acted for an undetermined "ulterior motive" in punishing Sokolich.

State lawmakers spent almost a year trying to figure out what the governor and members of his administration knew and when, issuing dozens of subpoenas and holding hearings that gripped the state capital of Trenton.

Their report last December also pinned blame on Kelly and Wildstein, while saying some key questions remained outstanding, including why Kelly sent Wildstein her "traffic problems" email. It asked whether they acted on their own or with the knowledge and approval of anyone else

Pickup:


http://www.sddt.com/News/article.cfm?SourceCode=20150501faa&_t=ExChristie+Allies+Indicted+as+Bridge+Scandal+Probe+Widens+1#.VUd4RvlVhBc
Ex-Christie ally pleads guilty in Bridge-gate. Whither governor's 2016 plans? (+video)

David Wildstein, a former high school classmate of Gov. Chris Christie, pleaded guilty Friday to the first charges handed down in the Bridge-gate scandal.

By Harry Bruinius, Staff writer MAY 1, 2015

NEW YORK — About a year and half ago, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie’s close-knit team had a carefully thought-out plan to prove his bipartisan mettle and show how a Republican could dominate a state of Democratic blue.

Governor Christie had one of the more talented young campaign managers, Bill Stepien, who helped orchestrate his landslide win in 2013 and was mapping a nationwide path toward the prize of 2016. And with a tell-it-as-it-is tough-guy Jersey panache, Christie was set to head the Republican Governors Association, crisscrossing the country and raising oodles of cash for fellow GOP heads of US states. With a pocketful of favors and political capital to spare, they hoped, he could prove he could carry the Republican torch with broad bipartisan appeal.
And then: “Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee.” It was a text from Christie’s close deputy, Bridget Kelly, an aide at the governor’s side most of the time. “Got it,” replied David Wildstein, a director at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which runs the George Washington Bridge.

And so the Bridge-gate scandal intervened.

On Friday, Mr. Wildstein, a former high school classmate of Christie, pleaded guilty to the first charges handed down in the scandal. For 16 months, Paul Fishman, the US attorney for New Jersey, has been probing the actions of the governor’s team and the motives behind the lane closures that caused traffic problems in Fort Lee, N.J. The closures are widely presumed to be a dirty trick against the Fort Lee mayor, a Democrat who refused to join the bipartisan Christie slate of endorsements.

Christie said he barely knew Wildstein, who was appointed to his post by the governor’s close ally at the Port Authority, Bill Baroni. The chairman of the bi-state commission at the time, David Samson, was one of the governor’s closest advisers and a long-term mentor.

“I don’t think that has anything much to do with me,” Christie said during a press conference in New Brunswick, N.J., on Wednesday. “That matter will take its natural course and will be dictated by the folks who are investigating it, and I don’t have anything to do with that.”

But Wildstein’s attorney suggested last year that “evidence exists” that the governor was aware of the lane closures. On Friday, political observers are set to see if such evidence will be presented, with Mr. Fishman holding a news conference at 1 p.m.

Christie has steadfastly denied that he knew anything of the closures at the time. But his original close-knit team has been decimated. Mr. Stepien, who knew of the closures offhand, resigned when the scandal began. Ms. Kelly, fired. At the Port
Authority, Wildstein, Mr. Baroni, and Mr. Samson each resigned in measures of disgrace.

And Christie’s once-wild popularity in the state, as well as among fans across the country, has waned. Even though he broke records raising cash for Republican governors, his presidential fundraising is presumed to be tepid, just like his nationwide standings in polls. The once-promising path to 2016 has hardly gone according to plan.

“If Mr. Wildstein has given that evidence to the prosecutors, I think it’s the end of Christie’s presidential aspirations, and it may be the end of him as governor,” Matthew Hale, professor of political science at Seton Hall University in South Orange, N.J., told Bloomberg Business. “I don’t think he can recover from that.”

Pickup:

Ex-Christie Ally Readies For Guilty Plea Over Lane Closures
by David Voreacos

9:24 AM EDT
May 1, 2015

David Wildstein, right, arrives with his attorney Alan Zegas at federal court for a hearing in Newark on May 1, 2015. Photographer: Mel Evans/AP Photo

David Wildstein, a former ally of New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, entered the federal courthouse in Newark as he prepares to plead guilty to his role in traffic jams he ordered near the George Washington Bridge, according to a person with knowledge of the matter.

Wildstein’s plea would be the first conviction in the 16-month U.S. probe of the September 2013 incident, which lawmakers said was done to punish a local Democratic mayor. The four-day closure triggered an investigation of the Republican governor’s aides and appointees as he readies a potential run for president.
U.S. District Judge Susan Wigenton will hold a proceeding at 11 a.m. in the case, U.S. Attorney Paul Fishman said Friday. Fishman will hold a press conference at 1 p.m. on the probe.

Christie, 52, who has seen his popularity wane in recent months, has worked to repair the political damage of the scandal. A plea by Wildstein, 54, once a top appointee at the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey, could be a new setback.

Wildstein’s attorney, Alan Zegas, has said “evidence exists” that Christie knew of the lane closures when they happened, gridlocking traffic in nearby Fort Lee. Wildstein, a high school classmate of Christie, poses a threat to the governor, said Matthew Hale, a political science professor at Seton Hall University.

Presidential Aspirations

“If Mr. Wildstein has given that evidence to the prosecutors, I think it’s the end of Christie’s presidential aspirations and it may be the end of him as governor,” Hale said. “I don’t think he can recover from that.”

Christie denies knowledge of a plot to close two of the three local-access lanes to the world’s busiest bridge, which is run by the Port Authority and connects New Jersey to Manhattan and New England via Interstate 95.

The plot came to light with the publication of an e-mail sent a month before the 2013 closures by a former deputy chief of staff to Christie, Bridget Anne Kelly.

“Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee,” Kelly wrote on Aug. 13, 2013. “Got it,” replied Wildstein, then the interstate capital projects director at the Port Authority. He ordered the lane closures and monitored their progress at the bridge on the first day.

Speaking to reporters Wednesday after Bloomberg News first reported Wildstein’s planned guilty plea, Christie repeated what he said at a news conference Jan. 9, 2014. He said he had no advance knowledge of the lane closures.
‘Blindsided’

“I don’t expect that anything’s going to be different than what I said on Jan. 9,” Christie said.

At that earlier news conference, Christie said he was “blindsided” and “embarrassed and humiliated” by members of his team. He fired Kelly and cut ties to Bill Stepien, a political adviser.

The closures paralyzed traffic in Fort Lee, delayed emergency crews and caused exasperation during the first week of the school year. Mayor Mark Sokolich repeatedly sought an explanation from Bill Baroni, a former deputy executive director at the Port Authority who ignored his pleas for help. Sokolich said he was being punished, and he didn’t know why.

Wildstein and Kelly monitored the mayor’s reaction until the shutdown ended early on the fifth day. Port Authority Executive Director Patrick Foye, an appointee of New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, a Democrat, ordered the lanes reopened in an e-mail that said state and federal laws may have been broken.

Baroni and Wildstein, who both said the lane closures were part of a traffic study, resigned in December 2013 amid an intensifying investigation by state lawmakers.

Wally Edge

Wildstein, a former mayor of Livingston, New Jersey, was also a political blogger who wrote under the name Wally Edge.

A law firm commissioned by Christie, Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP and its lead lawyer, Randy Mastro, blamed the plot on Kelly and Wildstein, saying in a March 2014 report that the pair acted for an undetermined “ulterior motive” in punishing Sokolich.

Mastro’s firm charged taxpayers $7.4 million for its work.

State lawmakers, meanwhile, spent almost a year trying to figure out what the governor and members of his administration knew and when, issuing dozens of subpoenas and holding hearings that gripped the state capital of Trenton.

Their report last December also pinned blame on Kelly and Wildstein, while saying some key questions remained outstanding, including why Kelly sent
Wildstein her “traffic problems” e-mail. It asked whether they acted on their own or with the knowledge and approval of anyone else.

Punitive Measure

“The evidence clearly suggests that the lane closures were intended as a punitive measure directed against Mayor Sokolich,” stated the report by the law firm Jenner & Block LLP. “What the committee cannot say for certain is whether the closures were intended as retribution for the mayor’s failure to endorse Governor Christie or some other, unknown reason.”

They acted with “perceived impunity” in an environment at the governor’s office and the Port Authority, in which they felt empowered to act with “little regard for public safety risks or the steadily mounting public frustration,” according to the report.

Fishman has also been investigating the role of former Port Authority Chairman David Samson in the lane closures. Additionally, he’s looking at weekly flights that United Continental Holdings Inc. offered between Newark Liberty International Airport and Columbia Metropolitan Airport in South Carolina, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) from a house in Aiken that Samson’s wife owns.

Known to Samson and others as the “chairman’s flight,” it left Thursday afternoons and returned Monday mornings, running from September 2012 to April 2014.
Questions remain on who else was involved in GWB saga, status of ex-Port Authority chairman

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BY SHAWN BOBURG AND JEFF PILLETS
STAFF WRITERS | THE RECORD

U.S. Attorney Paul Fishman said "others" were involved in the lane closings besides the three charged, but wouldn't say who.

It all started with lane closures at the George Washington Bridge.

But several investigations that grew out of the controversy — some unrelated to the traffic jams in Fort Lee — did not end with Friday’s announcement of criminal charges related to the bridge mess.

And if prosecutors find wrongdoing in those other cases, it could mean more fallout for the Port Authority and the Christie administration.
U.S. Attorney Paul Fishman on Friday offered details about the alleged lane-closing plot that a special grand jury had been examining for nearly 16 months. The probe ended with one former ally of Governor Christie’s pleading guilty and two others indicted.

What Fishman didn’t mention and refused to discuss at a news conference was that records show the same grand jury has been examining a wide range of evidence focusing on former Port Authority Chairman David Samson, including whether he asked United Airlines to initiate a direct flight route between Newark and an airport near his weekend home in South Carolina in exchange for approval of projects United wanted at Newark Liberty International Airport.

A source familiar with that part of the investigation said on Saturday that it is continuing and that with prosecutors still collecting evidence, any resolution could be weeks or months away. Also continuing is an inquiry by the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office and the Securities and Exchange Commission into how $1.8 billion was transferred from the Port Authority to New Jersey for repairs to the Pulaski Skyway and other New Jersey roads, a source familiar with that investigation said on Saturday.

GWB scandal archive: Click here to read all of The Record's past coverage

A spokesman at the U.S. Attorney’s Office said Saturday on that it will not “confirm nor deny the existence of any investigation.”

As far as Samson is concerned, some legal experts say the silence on Friday about the investigation into his actions only intensifies the anticipation that began to build last month when Samson announced he was retiring from the law firm he founded. That firm, Wolff & Samson, also changed its name to Chiesa Shahinian & Giantomasi.

“It feels like this is a pause in the middle of the story,” Rutgers law Professor Stuart Green said about Friday’s indictment. “We don’t know what’s going on with David Samson, in particular. He is the link that everybody is looking for.”

Wildstein cooperates

Revelations on Friday that former Port Authority executive David Wildstein had agreed to plead guilty to charges related to the bridge scandal and to cooperate with federal prosecutors also fueled speculation that Wildstein is providing prosecutors with information on other Port Authority matters beyond the bridge matter. Wildstein worked closely with Samson.
Court records show that federal prosecutors offered Wildstein a plea agreement on Jan. 12. That is around the time that the Port Authority and United Airlines received subpoenas from Fishman’s office for information relating to Samson and the United flight, agency sources and a spokeswoman for the airline had previously said.

Samson, once a towering figure in New Jersey politics who became one of Christie’s closest confidants, resigned his post at the Port Authority after the bridge scandal but has not been found to have been involved in its planning or execution.

But in the course of investigating the lane closings, federal prosecutors began examining whether the non-stop flight between Newark and Columbia, S.C., was requested by, or offered to, Samson in exchange for favors to United. A spokesman for Fishman did not respond to a request for comment on Saturday.

Asked whether Samson was aware of any continuing investigation into his activities, Samson’s spokeswoman, Karen Kessler, said, “We have not and will not comment on any speculation or rumors as it relates to these issues.”

The flight route was initiated in September 2012, when Samson was chairman of the Port Authority, the regional transportation agency that operates the region’s airports. Samson referred to it as the “chairman’s flight,” one source said, and he often took the flight between New Jersey and his weekend home in South Carolina. One leg of the twice-a-week flight left for Columbia on Thursday evenings; another returned to Newark on Monday mornings. The flight, typically half full, was canceled three days after Samson resigned in March last year.

Fishman, in an hourlong news conference on Friday, refused to say if Samson or any other figures related to Christie, besides the three named Friday, remain under investigation for issues apart from the lane closings.

But in response to questions, Fishman acknowledged that “others” who were not indicted were involved in the alleged scheme to enact political revenge against Fort Lee Mayor Mark Sokolich, a Democrat, for resisting overtures to endorse the Republican Christie’s 2013 reelection bid. But he said he expected no more charges related to the bridge conspiracy allegedly carried out by Wildstein, former Port Authority Deputy Executive Director Bill Baroni, and Christie’s former deputy chief of staff, Bridget Anne Kelly.
Matthew Hale, who teaches political science at Seton Hall University, said lingering questions about Samson and the role played by other top aides not named in the bridge indictment could undermine what is a short-term win for the governor, who has repeatedly said he did not authorize or plan the lane closures or know about them while they were happening.

“Without a clear smoking gun, the governor can survive, and he can rightly say, ‘Hey, we didn’t learn anything new today that contradicts what I said all along,’” Hale said. “But there are a lot of questions still out there.”

Those questions, as well as the bridge case — should it proceed to trial — could take a political toll, some say.

“There is a kind of odor that has sprung up around this governor and what we learned [on Friday] will only reinforce it,” said Julian Zelizer, a Princeton University professor of political science and public affairs. “People will see these indictments and ask, ‘Is that the kind of executive Chris Christie is? Is that who he surrounds himself with?’”

Fishman, without saying if he referred any findings to authorities in Trenton, also made it clear that state prosecutors would have wider jurisdiction to investigate some issues. Democrats, including those who served on the special legislative panel investigating the lane closings, seemed poised to pounce on the government’s assertion that Baroni knowingly misled the state panel.

“You can be sure the Democrats will now raise new questions, and Samson will be right in the middle of that,” Hale said.

Samson, 75, is a Republican and Trenton insider who has served in key positions for both Republican and Democratic governors, including a two-year stint as attorney general during the McGreevey administration.

He served as the chairman of Christie’s transition team after the governor was first elected, and Christie appointed him to lead the Port Authority. He was elected chairman of the agency’s board of commissioners in February 2011 and resigned on March 28, 2014, amid controversy over whether he had any role in agency decisions that benefited his law firm’s clients.

One of those involved a park-and-ride lease the Port Authority approved under Samson’s watch.
The Record reported that Samson voted to reduce NJ Transit’s lease on a Port Authority-owned park-and-ride lot in North Bergen from $907,000 a year, to just $1. At the time, NJ Transit was paying Samson’s law firm $1.5 million for advice on how to maximize profits from such operations, which included the North Bergen lot.

After the news report, Samson said he had meant to recuse himself from the vote, which wasn’t taken in public, and a Port Authority attorney said a clerical error was to blame for documents that showed Samson had approved the lease deal. The controversy led the Port Authority to change its procedure for tallying commissioner votes, making it more public and transparent.

Samson has denied any wrongdoing, but he has not cooperated further with a legislative probe or a review commissioned by Christie’s office since he resigned from the Port Authority. He invoked his Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination in response to a subpoena from state lawmakers seeking documents about the lane closings. And he declined to be interviewed by a team of attorneys hired by Christie’s office to review the matter.

The federal Securities and Exchange Commission is working with the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office’s investigation of the Port Authority’s $1.8 billion financing of repairs to the Pulaski Skyway and other New Jersey roads. The Port Authority has disclosed in bond documents that it received subpoenas from the office of Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance related to the Pulaski Skyway funding.

The Port Authority is prohibited by law from paying for projects unrelated to its own facilities. Port Authority lawyers initially raised concerns about the legality of the proposal to shift the money to the New Jersey roads, records show. But Christie administration officials and Christie appointees at the agency insisted. Port Authority lawyers labeled the projects repairs to access roads to the Lincoln Tunnel to legally justify the spending, even though the roadways are miles away from the tunnel and do not connect to it directly.

Email: boburg@northjersey.com and pillets@northjersey.com
ABC Radio Hits:

Matt Hale 5-1-15
Total Number of Clips: 4

Utah's Morning News With Grant Nielsen and Amanda Dickson
Time: May 1, 2015 10:04 AM EDT (UTC-0600)
Local Broadcast Time: 8:04 AM MDT (UTC-0600)
Call Sign: KLAX (KSL)
Market: U.S. Radio

...officer involved shootings ads and body camera sales day recruiting the lie about the lie is the new lie for some in the media. How does one of the largest makers of the body camera suddenly increase its sales this quarter, even as their sales last year fell?... City and a few other Utah police agencies have both or does not the mayor... last year thinking they were too expensive, but it could become more affordable soon. Justice department announcing a twenty million dollar... for smaller police agencies. Are these the same police agencies that are buying these cameras? In my news... chaos news radio... is to see a political ally of New Jersey Governor Chris Christie. He today he is expected to plead guilty to charges involved in the release of lane closures near Bridge Gate. In twenty thirteen, political science professor, Matt Hale, says the ally has always maintained that there is evidence that Christie knew of the closings. But today, investigators say they have, pretty much the end of Governor Christie's presidential aspirations of lane closures... were between New Jersey and New York...

No Program Name Available
Time: May 1, 2015 6:01 PM EDT (UTC-0600)
Local Broadcast Time: 6:01 PM EDT (UTC-0600)
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Market: U.S. Radio

...will mean to think that b.a. b. anarchy will go to Baltimore going against that. That's twenty Baltimore using smart phones kids as young as six months doctors, and others say bad parenting kids in the high humidity in. Gre... news only our where's the bridge gates near... former Chris Christie aide, Elias. It could be possible it could be... former Chris Christie aide, Elias. It could be possible it could be... The New Jersey Governor Chris Christie's political... on the George Washington Bridge. In two thousand thirteen, evidence against them being provided by another former Christie aide, Elias. It could be possible it could be charges against him. He is a political science professor at Seton Hall University in New Jersey. So in clearly said that this was for political retribution that he were negative. Governor Christie that is not seeing the governor Christie knew about it and if he were negative governor Christie authorized...

Charlie Sykes Show
Time: May 1, 2015 19:04 AM EDT (UTC-0600)
Local Broadcast Time: 5:04 AM EDT (UTC-0500)
Call Sign: WTMJAM (WTMJ)
Market: U.S. Radio

...it also exact...to sanction my employees in our highlight focus. Unfair command... use a common sense to however people are not supposed to be out on the streets. Please stay home with marches and rallies planned over the weekend. There are twenty-five year old Freddie Gray. The... evidence against them being provided by another former Christie aide, Elias. It could be possible it could be charges against him. He is a political science professor at Seton Hall University in New Jersey So in clearly said that this was for political retribution that he were negative. Governor Christie that is not seeing the governor Christie knew about it and if he were negative governor Christie authorized...

No Program Name Available
Time: May 1, 2015 6:01 PM EDT (UTC-0600)
Local Broadcast Time: 6:01 PM EDT (UTC-0600)
Call Sign: WBT (WBT)
Market: U.S. Radio

...will mean to think that b.a. b. anarchy will go to Baltimore going against that. That's twenty Baltimore using smart phones kids as young as six months doctors, and others say bad parenting kids in the high humidity in. Gre... news only our where's the bridge gates near... former Chris Christie aide, Elias. It could be possible it could be... former Chris Christie aide, Elias. It could be possible it could be... The New Jersey Governor Chris Christie's political... on the George Washington Bridge. In two thousand thirteen, evidence against them being provided by another former Christie aide, Elias. It could be possible it could be charges against him. He is a political science professor at Seton Hall University in New Jersey. So in clearly said that this was for political retribution that he were negative. Governor Christie that is not seeing the governor Christie knew about it and if he were negative governor Christie authorized...