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CHRIS CHRISTIE: CITIZENSHIP FOR UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS 'EXTREME'

By Heather Haddon
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New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie on Monday rejected a proposed pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants as "extreme," and sought to draw a contrast between himself and Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton.

In an interview on Fox News, the potential Republican 2016 presidential candidate said that while he once supported a path for undocumented immigrants to become citizens, his experience as governor of New Jersey had led him to change his position.

"I've learned over time about this issue and done a lot more work on it," Mr. Christie told interviewer Megyn Kelly. "Just immediately going to a path to citizenship, as Hillary Clinton is proposing to do, is just pandering politics."

Earlier this month, Mrs. Clinton said she would push for legislation including a path to citizenship, in a bid to maintain Democratic dominance among Hispanic voters. She also said she would work to expand President Barack Obama's executive actions protecting some people in the U.S. illegally from deportation.

Mr. Christie, in contrast, said Monday he would immediately reverse Mr. Obama's executive actions if he were to run and be elected.

The New Jersey Republican also defended his standing in New Jersey, saying recent polling showing the majority of New Jersey residents don't favor him running for presidential suggested voters don't want him to leave the state.

"They want me to stay," Mr. Christie said.

He also said the next president should not be a one-term senator, a remark that was at once a barb against Mr. Obama and three of his potential Republican rivals.

Also Monday, Mr. Christie called for the reauthorization of the Patriot Act as it currently stands and criticized any attempts to scale back the bulk collection of American phone records by the National Security Agency.

When asked at a town-hall meeting Monday how he could beat Mrs. Clinton, Mr. Christie said his ability to defeat his Democratic challenger and win re-election in 2013 demonstrated his ability to run against a liberal woman in a blue state. Mr. Christie said that made him unique among the 2016 Republican presidential field.

"That experience of campaigning under that kind of stress in that atmosphere, against that kind of opponent, prepares you extraordinarily well to be able to run against Secretary Clinton, if that's what I choose to do," Mr. Christie said during the town-hall meeting Monday evening.

Mr. Christie defeated State Sen. Barbara Buono with 61 percent of the votes. Ms. Buono was considered a weak candidate and had far less money than Mr. Christie had raised.

Ms. Buono didn't respond to a request for comment.