



METRO

Was Bridgegate a fight over judges?

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Chris Christie (left) and State Sen. Loretta Weinberg (right) Photo: ZumaPress (left) and Warzer Jaff (right)

The mayor of Fort Lee may soon fade back into obscurity.

Democrat Mark Sokolich may not have been the real target of “Bridgegate.”

It could well have been a big, fat, Chris Christie hissy fit aimed at New Jersey Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg over the Democrats’ blocking of his state Supreme Court nominees, a new parsing of the e-mail evidence suggests.

Weinberg’s district is centered in Fort Lee.

Just one day before his Deputy Chief of Staff Bridget Anne Kelly sent an e-mail to the Port

Authority requesting “traffic problems in Fort Lee,” Christie railed at a press conference about how Weinberg and other Democrats planned to challenge his reappointment of tenured Supreme Court Justice Helen Hoens.

“I simply could not be party to the destruction of Helen Hoen’s professional reputation,” a fuming Christie told reporters at an Aug. 12, 2013 at a press conference after he decided to remove Hoens, a Republican, from the bench in order to spare her the ordeal of being challenged.

“I was not going to let her loose to the animals.”

Kelly fired off her now-infamous email — “Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee” — the morning of Aug. 13.

The email connection was first made by MSNBC’s Rachel Maddow Thursday night.

Christie had been feuding with Weinberg and the Democrats over Supreme Court nominations dating back to 2010, when the governor torpedoed the reappointment of Justice John E. Wallace Jr.

“People are speculating now why this was done. The whole thing is bizarre,” Weinberg told The Post.

As a longtime politician, she said, the idea of political payback doesn’t surprise her.

But I can’t get it through my head,” she said, “who said this is a way to exact retaliation on somebody: cause a traffic jam in Fort Lee.”

She said Christie’s Aug. 12 tirade “sort of rolled off our backs because we’re kind of used to this behavior.” But she was insulted by the attack.

“Calling the people who were elected to run the state Senate ‘animals.’ We disagree with him therefore we are animals.”

“It is the kind of culture [Christie] has presided over,” Weinberg said, of the GWB lane closure scheme.

“This is a governor who signed an anti-bullying law. I often wonder if he ever read it.”

Weinberg also believes there's more to the GWB story. “The governor hasn't come clean yet,” she said.

The initial theory was that Christie wanted retribution against Sokolich for not endorsing the Republican governor in his re-election campaign.

“This has been going on for four months,” Weinberg said. “It didn't emerge the day before yesterday.”

“Either he didn't want to know or he knows and he's not telling the truth.”