

## Silicon Valley titans, including Dems, send Christie cash

By Matt Katz

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*I waded through Christie's campaign finance reports for Sunday's Inquirer. This is what I found:*

TRENTON - The hottest new trend in Silicon Valley isn't inventing a gadget, developing an app, or investing in an IPO.

It's giving to the governor of New Jersey.

Gov. Christie has collected \$289,150 from those involved in California's technology industry, an Inquirer analysis of his campaign records shows. That's a remarkable figure for a Republican running for reelection in a state 3,000 miles away - especially coming from a constituency that typically favors Democrats.

A cofounder of PayPal and the founder of DropBox. The CEO of LinkedIn and the CFO of Yahoo. Top vice presidents at eBay and Microsoft. Christie's donor list is a who's who of the most important, deep-pocketed people of the Internet, indicating that he is tapping a vein of wealth to help him in his reelection bid this year and, possibly, in a 2016 presidential run.

Christie's Facebook friend, Mark Zuckerberg, the billionaire who founded the world's leading social network, is the lead supporter. The Inquirer analysis of donors, which includes tech executives, investors, and their immediate relatives, showed that nearly \$80,000 came from those affiliated with Facebook.

Much of that haul likely came at a Christie fund-raiser that Zuckerberg held at his Palo Alto house in February, marking the billionaire's first official foray into politics. One hundred people showed up - with 25 more left at the door on a waiting list.

But why the interest? More than a half-dozen tech titans refused to speak for this article or didn't return calls and e-mails.

A spokeswoman for Facebook would only point to the fact that Zuckerberg and Christie "have a long relationship dating back to their work together on the Newark schools." (In 2010 Zuckerberg made a \$100 million matching grant for Newark, which Christie and Democratic Mayor Cory Booker have used toward education initiatives.)

One explanation for Christie's dot-com cash is, simply, Zuckerberg.

"They may be giving because Mark Zuckerberg said, 'Come to my house and give money,' and they want to do business with [Zuckerberg] in the future," said Jessica Levinson, a professor at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles who specializes in campaign finance.

Bill Palatucci, the governor's campaign chairman who went along for the fund-raiser, acknowledged the draw.

"You go to Mark Zuckerberg's house, he's going to bring his friends and colleagues," he said. But they were also interested in Christie: "Just to be frank, I think there was a plain curiosity factor."

Christie has tremendous star power for a governor, and Palatucci said Christie fielded questions for more than an hour on education, the future of the Republican Party, and the fiscal crises facing states. There were "20-something-year-old men and women who were like, 'Governor, you have it right, that's why we want to support you, we want to help you,' " Palatucci said.

Campaign-finance experts see nefarious motivations.

Perhaps the donors think a potential President Christie would enact favorable policies on capital gains and stock options, experts said.

Or maybe they want to continue to see him push for online gambling, as he has done in New Jersey. At least two donors are leaders in the online-gaming industry.

Regardless of any specific agenda, Daniel Newman, president of MapLight, a nonpartisan group that researches money's influence on politics, said donors were simply "buying access and influence."

For example, he said, technology companies want more data-sharing in an effort to increase profits, but consumers have privacy concerns. Yet consumers don't have the money to write \$3,800 checks for a night at Zuckerberg's house.

"It's the funders who get more meetings; it's the funders who get the calls returned; it's the funders who shape the agenda of government," Newman said.

And many of those funders live in California. Presidential candidates make regular trips there even though the California delegates usually aren't in contention. Instead, they come for the cash.

Christie's foray into Silicon Valley is a recognition of the region's potential should he defeat his expected Democratic gubernatorial challenger, State Sen. Barbara Buono, in the fall. If he could tap more money from Silicon Valley than Democrats have in the past, he could use it as a 2016 presidential campaign ATM to counter Democratic money from liberal Hollywood.

"I think this is a group and a generation that has been less politically involved, but we may be seeing that changing," Levinson, the professor, said of the tech industry. "They're tycoons,

they're aging, and they're getting wealthier. . . . While they may wear sweatshirts and flip-flops, they have a lot of money they want to protect."

In the past, Silicon Valley's wealthy donors have favored Democrats. President Obama received more than double the amount Republican Mitt Romney got from the computer and Internet industry in the 2012 campaign, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

Christie may be cracking that Democratic hold.

Reid Hoffman, the founder of LinkedIn, gave Christie the state maximum \$3,800 donation despite donating \$1 million to a pro-Obama political action committee.

Mark Pincus, founder of Zynga - which makes mobile games like "Words With Friends" - donated \$2,000 last year to the liberal whom conservatives love to hate, Nancy Pelosi, Democratic minority leader of the House, according to MapLight. But this year, Pincus gave the maximum donation to Christie.

Billionaire venture capitalist John Doerr, an early investor in Google and Amazon, is a heavy Democratic donor along with his wife, Ann. They also spent \$2.1 million in 2010 to defeat a California ballot measure that would have suspended air-pollution laws, according to MapLight. And yet they gave a combined \$7,600 to Christie, who is despised by environmentalists in New Jersey.

Indeed, some of the young T-shirt-clad donors at Zuckerberg's house may have differed with the governor on his antigay-marriage and antiabortion positions, Palatucci acknowledged. But "what they were very clear about is that we need to fix this country's fiscal outlook."

"Every young person I was introduced to all had a business card that said 'CEO' on it," Palatucci said. "So clearly a very successful crowd, and very much an entrepreneurial crowd."

And for Christie, a crowd of potential dollar signs for years to come.