

House Republican Press Release

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Questions, questions, questions



By State Representative John J. Ryan

Our first post-election column, done with the idea of injecting a bit of levity into what is increasingly a strident, interminable and largely negative campaign process, gave out a few "awards" to highlight some of the highlights (or lowlights) of election 2006. So now we have no choice but to start looking at some of the possible ramifications for the 2007 season in the State Capitol.

Given the comfortable "supermajority" that the Democrat majority in the General Assembly now enjoys, they can literally do whatever they wish with the legislative agenda. (As MC Jed Lawrence would say): So.....

- ?? What approach do the Democrats wish to use with a hugely popular Governor Rell? Do they decide that "Hey, we got the votes" and just cruise ahead, pass all of their agenda, and politely ignore Rell? Or do they choose to take heed of Rell's large electoral mandate, and try to "make nice" and lead an effort at negotiation and bipartisan compromise? When the inevitable difference of opinion comes (e.g. easy example - on tax increases), do they become confrontational and dare the Governor to veto their proposals?

Maybe you saw the recent story that the State surplus for this fiscal year is already approaching an estimated half a billion dollars; maybe you saw the pre-emptive strike taken immediately in the media by Governor Rell's declaration that these surpluses should continue to go into our Rainy Day Fund and/or pay down debt? So.....

- ?? Was this just an opening volley by Governor Rell? Is this recognition of the old adage that who defines the issue usually succeeds? Or is Rell drawing a line in the sand on fiscal/budget topics in preparation for down-the road compromises on social policy issues? Or is she intending to take charge right from the start and govern with a mandate?

There is no question that the new "supermajority" will have its way on some issues. So....

- ?? What comes first, a party-line vote to "break the spending cap" and increase the amount to be spent in the budget? Which tax increases will be quickest out of the gate: a new "millionaire's tax" on top of the income tax, or a new "superconveyance tax" (a surcharge on real estate sales over, say, \$1 million) or a rate increase for the recently passed estate tax? Will there be a move to abolish the death penalty before or after a vote to approve same-sex marriage? Will there be a "game plan" on the order of issues, or is every possible topic up for grabs? Will the "supermajority" hang together or break into bickering between those who loved Lamont and those who stuck with Joe?

Do you remember (did you pay any attention to) all of the campaign promises? I personally heard (successful) Democrat candidates in our area make a few. So.....

- ?? Will there actually be an effort to repeal/modify/fix the horrendous existing affordable housing law {8-30g}.
- ?? Will Fairfield County transportation initiatives continue to remain a priority? Will the anti-lower Fairfield County estate tax be modified in any (positive) fashion? Or will these and other campaign pledges ("we will bring more \$\$ from Hartford back to our town!") be conveniently ignored?
The 2006 Session was the first in some years that actually stuck to the regular schedule, with no flurry of Special Sessions (e.g. extra innings) after Special Session. So.....
- ?? Will having TOO many Democrats in both House and Senate create an unmanageable mess? Will everyone want to be driving the bus? Will the leaders in the House actually coordinate with the leaders in the Senate and get things done, or will we be overrun with symbolic votes and posturing? Will there be a new raft of candidates for Governor, or will the Democrats leave Rell alone for now? Will Governor Rell be able to exploit differences and divide and conquer, and "go over the heads" of the legislature and directly to the public on key policy issues? And will we be babbling and arguing in Hartford over and over, month after tortuous month?

So many questions, so little time.....

Please feel free to contact me with your concerns and issues. As your state representative, it is my job, and my priority to represent you and to make sure that your needs and concerns are addressed at the capitol. You can write to me at Room 4200, Legislative Office Building, Hartford, CT 06106-1591, send me e-mail at John.Ryan@housegop.state.ct.us or call my office toll-free at 1-800-842-1423.