

House Republican Press Release

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Special Session...yet another dud?



By State Representative John J. Ryan

Our last column took a look at some of the topics that got quite a bit of media ‘sizzle’ throughout this year’s legislative session, but went absolutely nowhere and fizzled out. Regrettably, one of the most aggravating facets of elective service is that much of the media is totally clueless about what happens in government and prints press release after press release from politicians announcing how this year they are going to cure the common cold, or save the wombats, or.....but there is no follow-up when nothing gets done, or no accountability when lame or silly excuses for failure are proffered. (“But teacher, the dog ate my homework!” or “Nobody told me it was due today!”) Unfortunately voters, unlike fantasy sports fans, pay little attention to results, and are oblivious to wins and losses.

So this would be a good point to look at some of the winners from this year’s Session, but we have not quite ‘closed the books’ on this season’s results. As we are going to press, the General Assembly is convening the Special Session (have you noticed that lately, your government rarely gets anything completed on time?) and there are still some open issues, so here goes....

- Conveyance tax “non-sunset”: the ostensible purpose of this Special Session is to enact yet another extension of this “temporary tax” (now THERE is an oxymoron for you!!) that was passed a number of years ago, and it is (again) scheduled to sunset at the end of this month. I have voted against this every time and expect to again; the point is not that “government needs the \$\$”, the point should be that there will never be enough money, and at least once in a while, the government should actually follow through and do what it said it was going to do. Of course, the points that the real estate brokers and others opposing the tax (that it discriminates against a group we should be assisting – home owners; and takes increasing amounts from sellers already pinched in a down market, etc.) are valid too.

- Gas tax relief : the most publicized topic today, and our high gas taxes are scheduled to go up again (a topic that our House Republican caucus has been trying to get the majority party to address in this Special Session); will anything good happen for consumers/taxpayers in the Special Session ? What about cash discounts for gas such as SB529 which I voted for in the General Law Committee?

- The “Do-something budget”: if you read this column you are aware that, as we did last year, the minority Republican caucus proposed a budget with a lengthy list of benefits (no tax increases, repeal of gas tax increase, funding of housing/Pilot tax abatement, phase out of the estate tax “cliff” and the business entity tax, etc. – see our summary at www.housegop.ct/gov) and that the majority party did everything possible during the regular session to prevent this alternative from coming up for a vote. Will the Special Session offer any real relief for taxpayers... or just more excuses?

- Vetoes, and overrides: you might have seen that Gov. Rell vetoed the minimum wage increase, and still has time on the procedural calendar to veto others that have the potential for significant cost increases. Will there be more vetoes as Rell tries to hold down spending? Will the Democrat majority attempt any overrides?

Finally, Connecticut got some unwanted notoriety over the weekend, as a horrific video of a 78 year old man being run over (and seemingly ignored) on a busy Hartford street made national news, and seemingly every media website in the country. The day after, there was a story about yet more shootings (one fatal) and at almost at the same time, there was a story about how the former Deputy Mayor of Hartford was savagely beaten and robbed on his way to breakfast. It requires no great insight to observe that the State’s Capitol, which saw it’s school system taken over by the State for a number of years not that long ago continues to have a wide variety of problems despite the hundreds of millions being continually poured into the city. And I have no doubt that there will be more proposals to spend more millions on more programs, requiring yet more taxes. Will taxpayers pay any attention? Will the media merely print the next round of press releases lauding the “new programs”? Or will anyone look at what works, and what doesn’t?

As always 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, and Hartford, CT 06106-1591, send me e-mail at John.Ryan@housegop.ct.gov or call my office toll-free at 1-800-842-1423.