

House Republican Press Release

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Primaries and Prognostications



By State Representative John J. Ryan

The summer is slipping away too quickly, we have yet another Special Session scheduled for the end of this week, and primary season has come and gone, which merits some discussion. The regular election seasons really begins heating up after Labor Day, but first, let's talk about dollars.

-Surplus quadruples? : If you needed any proof that the monitoring and management of government dollars is an inexact science at best, you recall our last column expressed surprise that it appeared we were going to eke out a 20-something million \$ from the just-concluded fiscal year. Now that the projected surplus number seems to be more in the \$80 million range, we have a real rush to decide how to spend it! I will not restate my thoughts on what yours truly would do, but there are calendar issues in play, in addition to the spending instinct, and the arguments over what "worthy cause" to actually spend on.

The calendar issues are two-fold: first, if not allocated (think "spent" by September 1, the surplus \$ rolls into the Rainy Day Fund, and then becomes procedurally much more difficult to actually get the spending approved. And then there are those national political conventions coming up soon, and some politicians want to be at the conventions ("Hi Mom! Look, I'm on TV!") instead of Hartford, so this becomes more interesting. Stay tuned.

-Primary results: Among the assorted primaries around the State on Tuesday, August 12, there were some 19 legislative primaries, a significant chunk of which were in the inner cities such as Hartford and Bridgeport. Why so much activity there, you ask? The reality is that Connecticut's 'big cities' are examples of single-party rule; there has not been a Republican legislator elected in years. In other words, in those districts, it boils down to: win the primary and you are elected.

So what happened? It seems only one incumbent legislator lost, Bill Keeley in the 129th District in Bridgeport, to challenger A. Grogins; in all other instances, incumbents won. If you want a flavor of the political doings in Bridgeport, where

there was a primary for nearly every General Assembly seat, you can peruse Ken Dixon's 6.13 story "Keeley loss blamed on Finch's revenge" in the Connecticut Post online, which give you some ideas in far more space than we have, to the world of Bridgeport politics!

-Prognostications: As we indicated, primaries in the big cities are not usual, and are symptomatic of the fighting between the local Democratic factions. And a primary when there is an 'open seat' (meaning no incumbent running for re-election) is also hardly unusual. But a primary that attracted some interest from Hartford watchers occurred in the 80th House District (Southington-Wolcott) where Democrat incumbent 'Corky' Mazurek won 563-489 to be on the November ballot against a newcomer backed by the liberal Connecticut Citizens Action Group and the liberal Working Families Party. Is this yet another sign that there will be even more efforts in the future to move the (hardly conservative/moderate) Democrat majority caucus further to the pro-union, more liberal wing of their party?

And also, do you recall the efforts over the last decade "to open up the system" and make it easier for candidates to qualify for, and conduct primaries? In that context, it certainly was quite interesting to note the very low turnout in many primary races, despite predictions to the contrary (e.g. in Hartford, only 16% of eligible Democrats voted). Even more ironic, in my humble opinion, were stories such as in the Aug. 14 Advocate "Big primary defeat raises questions" concerning the predictable Himes win in the Democrat 4th Congressional primary where local registrars of voter questioned the costs involved of lopsided win/low turnout primaries! I assume that it is now just a matter of time before another good government task force gets going on studying (again) our State's primary system!

So in our next column, we should have an idea of where those surplus dollars ended up! And don't forget sales tax-free shopping week! See you in September.

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@housegov.ct.gov or call my office toll-free at 1-800-842-1423.