

How Much Will Change?

Written by Lou Gehrig Burnett
Wednesday, 07 November 2012 09:45 -

Do Not Discount The Impact of Congress

Editor's Note: The following column was written prior to Tuesday's presidential (and other) election.



What is it that most voters want from an election? Change – if they are unhappy with their current financial and social situation.

But here's the thing. There is only so much a president can do in that regard. Congress plays a pivotal role in every legislative scenario.

We have seen what has happened with a Democratic majority in the U.S. Senate and a Republican majority in the U.S. House of Representatives – gridlock.

It is likely that situation will continue no matter who is elected president. Political analysts are predicting that the Democrats will keep control of the Senate, perhaps by a 52-48 margin, and Republicans will keep control of the House.

So don't expect much change coming out of our Nation's Capitol. If President Obama is re-elected, expect the Republican House to oppose every one of his initiatives.

If Romney is elected, expect payback from the Democratic Senate by opposing everything he

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proposes. Remember when Senate Republican Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said his party's top priority was making sure Obama was not re-elected?

Romney keeps talking about his ability to work across the aisle with members of the opposite party. He obviously has never experienced the situation on Capitol Hill.

Here in the Bayou State

It is a foregone conclusion that Republican Mitt Romney will capture Louisiana's eight electoral votes. States get one electoral vote for each U.S. House District, plus two for the U.S. senators from the state.

The Bayou State has been red for the past three presidential elections. The last time a Democratic candidate for president carried the state was Bill Clinton in 1996.

Every incumbent U.S. House member appears headed for re-election, including 4th District Republican U.S. Rep. John Fleming of Minden. He is being opposed by Libertarian Randall Lord and is expected to win a third two-year term easily.

There is one exception. Because the state lost a Congressional district as a result of the 2010 Census, going from seven to six House Districts, two Republican incumbents find themselves running against each other in District 3 in south Louisiana.

The race between Jeff Landry, who represented the 3rd District, and Charles Boustany, who represented the eliminated 7th District, is a fierce battle by the two candidates to stay in Congress.

Landry, seeking his second term, is the favorite of the Tea Party. Boustany, seeking his sixth term, is viewed as the more moderate of the two candidates.

The race is reminiscent of the one which took place in north Louisiana in 1992 when the state went from eight House Districts to seven.

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Fifth District U.S. Rep. Jerry Huckaby, a Democrat, was forced to run against 4th District U.S. Rep. Jim McCrery, a Republican, who won.

In that political shake-up, 8th District U.S. Rep. Clyde Holloway, a Republican, lost his seat as well.

Jindal strikes again

One has to wonder just how long our state legislators will let Republican Gov. Bobby Jindal bully them. After all, the little dictator is a lame duck, his approval ratings are on a steady decline, and he spends most of his time out of state looking for a national position.

It's time for our elected representatives to step up and show a little courage. Is a committee position that important that they will bow down to the governor's every whim? Maybe there is hope on the horizon.

Case in point: Jindal's obsession with privatizing the operations of the Office of Group Benefits (OGB) barely escaped being killed by members of the House Appropriations Committee last week.

The governor had to direct his minions to pull the issue from consideration before a vote could be taken by the committee.

Yes, you guessed it. Jindal retaliated by removing Rep. Cameron Henry, R-Metairie, from the vice chairmanship of the committee because he was one of those pushing for a vote on the privatization plan.

The governor's lackey, House Speaker Chuck Kleckley, R-Lake Charles, notified Henry that he was no longer a member of the Appropriations Committee.

Henry said he was "disappointed, but not surprised" because Jindal and Kleckley were trying to

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stack the committee with “yes-men and yes-women.”

But the vindictiveness did not stop there. Also removed from the committee was Rep. Joe Harrison, R-Houma.

Both Henry and Harrison were among 16 members of the Appropriations Committee who voted to try to force a vote on the privatization plan of the Office of Group Benefits. A majority of the committee appeared ready to vote down the privatization plan.

That’s when the Jindal administration pulled the proposal from consideration and the governor apparently directed his Speaker of the House to oust Henry and Harrison from the committee.

This was the second attempt by Jindal to get the privatization plan approved, which state Attorney General Buddy Caldwell ruled was required before the governor can proceed with outsourcing functions of OGB.

So, the governor is trying to stack the committee to ensure approval of his plan. But if he keeps axing members who disagree with him, those members may eventually be in a majority.

Two new talk shows

Two new radio talk shows are up and running in northwest Louisiana on The Promise 90.7 FM. The call-in shows premiered on November 5. They are:

*Talk of the Town with Tom Pace, an award-winning broadcast veteran of more than four decades. The show left radio two years ago and was streamed on the Internet after being on the air for 10 years. Pace said he is thrilled to be returning to the airwaves. The show airs Monday through Friday from 6-7 p.m.

*Crossfire with Ed Baswell, who spent 22 years on local television, the majority of that time at KTBS-TV. He recently retired after serving 15 years as the Public Information Office for the Bossier Sheriff’s Office. The show airs Monday through Friday from 7-9 a.m.

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Callers can engage the hosts of both shows and voice their opinion by calling 318-550-2000 during each program's broadcast.

In addition to 90.7 FM, simultaneous audio streaming can be heard around the world at <http://www.promisetalkradio.org>.

I have been a guest on both shows – by phone with Baswell and in the studio with Pace. The studio is a first-class set-up.

Of course, neither show will be successful without sponsors. Pace is seeking sponsors for his evening show. If interested, call him at 318-426-8080 for more information.

Hopefully, local businesses will help both of these shows, hosted by quality radio personalities, survive.

Lou Gehrig Burnett is a seasoned veteran of national and local politics. He publishes Fax-Net Update, a weekly political newsletter.