

Back from the Holidays

Written by David Specht Jr.
Wednesday, 09 January 2013 08:31 -

Gun Control, Elections Coming During This Year



We hope your holidays were merry and bright and that your New Year will be a safe, healthy, and prosperous one.

The seasonal merriment was interrupted by the horrific tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, and by an ever-increasingly dysfunctional Congress trying to keep us from going off the fiscal cliff into insolvency.

Hopefully, what happened at Sandy Hook will give courage to our lawmakers to close loopholes in our gun laws and not be so afraid of the National Rifle Association (NRA), the most powerful lobby in Washington.

I am always befuddled by gun enthusiasts when they proclaim that “guns don’t kill people, people kill people.” It stands to reason that if these people didn’t have guns, they wouldn’t kill people.

Is there really a need for any individual to have a semi-automatic rifle? Should gun shows be more tightly regulated? Are more intensive background checks needed? These are issues Congress will have to deal with this year in the wake of Sandy Hook.

And with 94 new members traversing the Halls of Congress, let’s hope that they can make an

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impact — however minimal – on restoring civility and the art of compromise to the legislative process.

The 113th Congress is the most diverse ever, and it will have a lot of controversial issues on its plate. Let's hope it can do a better job than the 112th Congress.

Looking ahead locally

It will be an "off year" in 2013 for elections. But this is Louisiana, so there will still be issues and races on the ballot at various times during the year.

The big deal will be Bossier City elections for mayor and city council members, which will take place on April 6. Qualifying is February 13-15.

The only definite change will be in Council District 4 where longtime Councilman David Jones is not seeking re-election. No announced candidates yet.

Popular Mayor Lorenz "Lo" Walker will likely be unopposed as he seeks a third four-year term. Also seeking re-election will be Councilmen-at-Large David Montgomery and Tim Larkin, District 1 Councilman Scott Irwin, District 2 Councilman Jeff Darby, District 3 Councilman Don "Bubba" Williams, and District 5 Councilman Larry Hanisee.

No candidates have publicly announced for Jones' seat, but politicians in Bossier City say that Hanisee will probably be opposed by Tommy Harvey, who he defeated by two votes in a special election in 2011. They also think that Irwin may draw opposition.

Bossier City is still awaiting clearance on the new lines for its city council districts from the Louisiana Secretary of State and the U.S. Department of Justice.

Judicial race on tap

It is also likely there will be a judicial race on the ballot either on April 6 or May 4. Second Circuit Court of Appeal Judge Gay Gaskins is retiring. Caddo District Court Judge Jeanette Garrett has already staked a claim for the seat and is a heavy favorite to win the Appellate

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Court robe.

This election would include voters in parts of Caddo and all of DeSoto and Red River parishes.

Taxing propositions

In addition, there will tax propositions for the city of Shreveport and the Caddo School Board on the April 6 and/or May 4 ballots. It is also possible that the Caddo Commission could ask voters to eliminate term limits and approve other changes to its charter on May 4.

Legislature faces challenges

Let's not forget that the Louisiana Legislature will go into session from April 8 until June 6, facing financial woes for the sixth consecutive year.

There will be a \$1.2 billion budget gap that has to be dealt with, so legislators and the governor will butt heads over whether to raise taxes, fees, and/or college tuition to fill the budget hole.

The battle over changes in the education and healthcare systems of the state will also be a highlight of what promises to be a contentious session.

Looking way ahead

On the distant political horizon is the U.S. Senate race in 2014, but expect things to heat up this year for that political plum.

Democrat Mary Landrieu, Louisiana's senior senator, will definitely be targeted by the Republican Party as she seeks a fourth six-year term.

In an e-mail message to supporters, Landrieu had a three-word message to anyone who is thinking of running against her: "Bring it on!" That should end any speculation about whether she is running for another term.

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Three Republicans are already making noises about wanting to challenge Landrieu.

A likely candidate is U.S. Rep. Bill Cassidy of Baton Rouge, who represents the 6th Congressional District. Most political analysts believe he could be the major challenger for Landrieu.

Also expressing an interest in the Senate race is U.S. Rep. John Fleming of Minden, who represents the 4th District, and former U.S. Rep. Jeff Landry of New Iberia, who lost his seat because of reapportionment.

The big elephant in the room (no pun intended) is Republican Gov. Bobby Jindal. He didn't get the vice presidential nod from GOP candidate Mitt Romney, and since Romney lost, no cabinet position is in his future.

Most political gurus believe Jindal, who is the chairman of the Republican Governors Conference, is more interested in a presidential run in 2016 rather than the U.S. Senate seat.

Add to that his declining job approval rating because of state issues with education, healthcare, and the budget, and Jindal could have even more cause for pause on a run for the Senate.

One thing is for sure. It will be a spirited – some say nasty – and expensive Senate race on all fronts. It will be interesting to see if the Louisiana Republican Party tries to have only one Republican in the race.

The election once again will be under the Open Primary system rather than having party primaries. It is unlikely that a viable Democrat will oppose Landrieu, but one can expect there will be some minor candidates on the ballot as well.

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