

House Republican Press Release

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New Year's Resolutions, for Government?



By State Representative John J. Ryan

January is here already (I admit, I will not miss 2007), Santa is mailing out all of those MasterCard, Visa and American Express statements to you, and you have probably made some New Year's Resolutions, which of course you will totally forget in a matter of days. But will your government make the same resolutions as always, or will the 2008 General Assembly be revisiting old issues? So let's take a quick look at some of the issues on the legislative front burner, and you can decide for yourself:

- **Gov. Rell reprising 'property tax cap plan:** I assume you saw last week's news items that the Governor wants to try this one again, namely proposing that cities and towns limit property tax increases annually to no more than 3%. Of course, there are a number of arguments one can make for this notion which would certainly help beleaguered big-city residents who have the highest mill rates, but I think that it is safe to assume that given the continuing make-up of the legislative Democrat "supermajority" in both Senate and House in Hartford, this proposal has as much likelihood of success as my prospects in an NBA slam dunk competition.

- **Death penalty abolition:** this perennial topic did not come up in last year's session, but with the recent legislation in New Jersey, who knows? (Keep in mind that this is a 'short session' this year, which means less time in the regular session for "big issues".)

- **"3 strikes/repeat offenders" criminal legislation":** We are in Special Session on this topic now as a result of the horrific Cheshire home invasion murders a few months ago, but what proposals will actually come up for a vote.....we'll see.

- **Conveyance tax sunset, Estate tax "fix" or reduction, Car tax repeal:** See 'property tax cap' above; I would certainly be delighted to be wrong on my guess that absolutely nothing happens.

- **Affordable Housing override fix:** If you recall my column on the various bills that we addressed and passed out of the Planning & Development Committee, I assume that once again there will be a lot of talk and “proposals” and in the end, that 8-30g zoning override statute will not be touched.

- **Sheff case/inner-city education:** the Sheff vs. O’Neill case on reducing racial isolation of Hartford schoolchildren is now 18 years old and still going; an interesting related topic (outlined in the series of news stories in late October of last year with headlines like “State turns to academies to curb student dropouts” or “Dropout factories have educators searching for solutions”] is whether the State will continue to pour hundreds of millions into inner-city school systems, or will actually try to achieve some progress by expanding successful programs like charter schools.

- **Surplus/spending \$:** We recently noted that the surplus is currently projected in the \$100-\$150 million range for this fiscal year, but now assorted experts are saying that some tax revenues will be less than expected, such as our estate tax. So are people resolving not to die this year (which is certainly not good news for Jed Lawrence !) or are wealthy taxpayers (meaning lower Fairfield County residents) doing tax planning or becoming Florida residents as a direct result of Connecticut’s high taxes ? Hmmmmm.....

So what do you think? Will Hartford be making the same old resolutions again this year?

Hopefully you, the consumer of government services (and the one that pays for them) can resolve to pay more attention to what your government is doing this year!

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.

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