

House Republican Press Release

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Predictions.....and Predictable



By State Representative John J. Ryan

In last week's column, we outlined some of the key issues that Governor Rell emphasized in her session-starting Budget Address, and we had the temerity to toss in a brief prediction about each. The truth is (which the press is totally oblivious to much of the time) that what happens around the State Capitol is pretty easy to predict, if you pay attention to the obvious, and have any experience with history (too bad I can't translate that into handicapping Super Bowl results !)

So now that we are in the third week of the Session, what is happening?

-DOT : Governor Rell's plan to shake-up DOT, predictably got good reviews from editorial writers around the state, naturally, because they were effortless editorials to write....."new initiatives" are an easy story, "shaking up bureaucracy" always reads well, and you could probably take out stories about the state's transportation issues from 10 and 20 years ago and merely change the dates, but insightful analysis from our print media on why the components of Rell's proposals are actually a good idea...from Connecticut newspapers ?

And my prediction that there would be much "wringing of hands" about Rell's plans will be accurate and was not difficult to make, because one of the oldest of truisms in Hartford decade after decade is that the legislative supermajority party will have as one of it's chief worries the defense of any tinkering with their most important constituency, that army of unionized State employees! It will be interesting to see how this topic actually moves along, or goes nowhere despite its merit.

-Taxes/spending/surplus: Did you see last week's stories that (again, predictably in my view) those same folks concerned about our state employee unions announced a plan for "economic stimulus" by giving away most of this year's projected surplus (which latest prognostications having said surplus now shrinking not growing) with a refund plan of \$100 to \$290 payments "for individual filers earning up to \$42,500 and joint filers earning up to \$80,000". Governor Rell promptly pooh-poohed the giveaway plan, but did we note those print editorial writers wondering aloud if A) Isn't a good thing that we are one of the few states that is projecting ANY surplus, and isn't it prudent to not spend it ? B) How much "economic stimulus" is generated by a whopping \$100 or \$200 per

taxpayer? C) Doesn't the economy of Fairfield County generate much of this surplus (i.e. tax overpayment?) and/or D) would many Fairfield County taxpayers get any money from this scheme?

-the start of session PR blitz: A regular feature of the beginning of every session is the wave of PR "puff pieces" that the print media publishes without question/comments that Legislator X, who really does care deeply, this year will be taking on Big Issue Such-and-such ! The media of course never follows up later on what didn't happen on the Big Issue or why it did not happen. If you are an astute, veteran observer, you are aware that some legislators announce every year how the affordable housing problems will be "fixed this session". If you recall, two of last year's big issues were "zone pricing" on gasoline, and how hedge funds needed State regulation; nothing happened on either topic last year. And have you noticed that this year a "hot issue" will be the subprime mortgage mess, and will our State take on fixing the problem all by itself?

We continue to hope that a knowledgeable, informed voter will observe what happens, figure out the difference between PR and results, and why in a legislative system, things do and do get done!

And I hope you noted last week's editorial in this paper "Bad idea" on the Governor's property tax cap proposal... I thought that the second sentence "the state should tend to its own business and let municipalities take care of theirs" was a brilliant attempt at wry humor (since the reality is that exactly the opposite is what always happens – ever hear of the term "unfunded mandate"?) until I read on and realized that our well-meaning editor whiffed on the entire political context of Rell's proposal, and what was actually going on here! So maybe we can create a new feature (Cablevision already does it) for a "response op-ed" on the message Gov. Rell is trying to send, and the forces really at play with this good idea. We can always hope.....

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.