

House Republican Press Release

September 18, 2008
Press Office: 860-240-8700

Opinion: Tom Brady and... elections



By State Representative John J. Ryan

Leaves will be turning before we know it, the football season is well underway, and this is an excellent time to start talking about what the future holds for the next (long year) session of the General Assembly commencing on

Jan. 7.

For instance, all the hand-wringing about the need for universal health care and the inadequacy of Gov. Rell's Charter Oak Plan has quieted down as providers are slowly and steadily signing up. And rumblings have already started on how does the impending deficit in our present fiscal year get resolved in the 2009 budget deliberations (I would worry about that Rainy Day Fund balance, folks, if I were you).

But is this "breaking news" or headline grabbing stuff, the fearless editor wants to know? Now our last column, on a likely musical chairs shuffle in the Connecticut political landscape was intriguing stuff, he chortles! It's election time! Then let's borrow Jed Lawrence's favorite opening, and:

SO... I was unfortunately looking something up at the Times Web site (no, the New York Times — and don't they have a horrible sports page, too? Where is the next Red Smith?) and I was confronted by some football column where the author was expressing horror when many of the denizens of the sports bar he was frequenting cheered lustily when New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady went down with a serious injury. Much worse still to the sensibilities of the New York Times writer, those cheering were unapologetic when confronted with their appalling lack of the slightest sportsmanship: "I'm glad he got hurt! He's a jerk anyway!" would have summarized the feelings of many of those yelping at the big screen TV.

Now I am not as much of a pro football fan these days; if anything, I occasionally follow the careers of fellow alumni (I am glad to see that Justin Tuck and John Carney are doing well with the "Mara-men," as Mark Bavaro did before them) so what does this have to do with this thing called "government"? I regret to tell you that the first thing that popped into my head was that this sad story of boorish sports fans gleeful over the painful injury of a star player from a competing team was, regrettably, the ideal analogy for modern American election attitudes.

Please do not infer that I have some naïve, idyllic view of past American campaign history. You can look up the origins of "Ma, Ma, where's my pa" if you want an example of so-called "negative campaigning" from more than a century ago. The robust give-and-

take of American politics (or you could peruse Roman history to the same purpose) has long been a given. But does it ever occur to us that poll after poll claims that the public hates negative campaigning, but objective campaign analysis shows that it often works.

I have confessed on only a few occasions when privately pressed by questioners that one of the most serious disappointments that arise from years of elective office is that I know, all too well, from extensive personal experience with other elected officials that one interacts and works with, that some (highly visible) elected officials are nothing more than shameless self-promoters, while others routinely and consistently pass legislation and get results for constituents. Why would I care? If there is an issue of any importance to “Rep. Ryan’s” constituents that needs support or cooperation from other officials, there is not much hope of success if you don’t know who actually is effective, trustworthy and knowledgeable from the person who will do absolutely nothing other than race to issue their credit-taking press release when some results are achieved! So I have to admit listening to endless election-year nastiness, even though I am not personally involved, is painful, to say the least. And to restrain yourself from confronting the mindlessly offensive comments of others who have never even met Candidate X, (much less worked on difficult projects with Candidate X) yet absolutely detest Candidate X, is challenging to say the least.

Can we effortlessly blame “the media,” or does the media (often — not always) merely reflect the most “marketable” viewpoints? Are we even remotely surprised that a presidential campaign sends squads of investigators to the home town to “dig for dirt” on an opponent? Or do the campaigns only sadly reflect the cynicism and distrust that permeates every pore of our own business and personal lives? For some reason, I am frequently asked if it isn’t true that “you can’t fight City Hall” and I usually reply of course you can, if you know what works and what doesn’t, and you are realistic about results. So if the next time you are aggravated at a campaign ad, as I will be for the next seven weeks at the offensive anti-Chris Shays TV commercials, all you have to do is switch the channel. When you see something that contains no positive, objective comment and only nasty, inaccurate, personal attacks, you can e-mail the publisher and point out that you (and your family, and friends) have ceased purchasing that periodical.

And when you hear a political comment that is offensive, and nothing else, chirp up. It is your government after all. After all, free speech is not required to be foul speech.

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 800-842-1423.

Ryan, a Republican, represents Darien and Rowayton in the State House of Representatives.