Monday, November 13th, 2006

November 7th: I know from talking to many of you that you are expecting me to comment on the just concluded elections. And I would very much like to comply with that request. But this e-mail is a communication from a federal government office and as such there are a myriad of rules I must follow. One of them prohibits me from commenting on any elections past or future. Like many government regulations, I think that one is stupid. I can't imagine why commenting on an election that has already been completed is so bad. It's not like I can change the outcome. But the rules are what they are for now, so you will merely have to wait until you read something else I wrote in a blog or magazine or speculate as to my thoughts.

Since I will be a member of the 110th Congress, I will be continuing to write this periodic missive for at least another 2 years. I hope you will continue to enjoy receiving it.

Questions and Answers: The number of you who respond to this laptop report with questions and inquiries has been increasing of late and we are really behind in responding. Let me first apologize that we have not gotten back to you. We did not anticipate the volume of questions and we are going to have to restructure things in our office to get to them all. This will take a few weeks so please be patient. I do read all of the responses but I cannot reply to them all personally. So, I hope to have a rapid e-mail response team in place soon!

What's Next: As you know, control of both chambers of Congress will change hands in January. As I mentioned above I can't comment about why this happened without breaking the rules (heavy sigh). But I can tell you what will happen next. This is not an unusual event. Control of the House has changed parties 15 times in the 140 years since the end of the Civil War. That means that this sort of change has happened about once every 9 years on average.
So what now and what does it mean? At the date of this writing it looks like Democrats will have a majority in the House of about 231-204 which is almost exactly the reverse of the party split in the current Congress. That means that they have a substantial working majority and can pretty much do whatever they want without minority support.

The situation in the Senate is more complicated. There will really be 49 Democrats and 49 Republicans with 2 independents. One of those independents is now Congressman Bernie Sanders of Vermont who is an avowed socialist. He caucuses with Democrats and almost

always votes with them because their thinking is similar to his. The other independent is Joe Lieberman of Connecticut. On November 8th, Senator Lieberman sounded like a true independent but he now calls himself a "Democrat-Independent" and will caucus with Democrats also. The new majority in the Senate is likely to experience many of the same problems that the current majority did since it often takes 60 votes to get anything passed in the Senate. That means a minimum of 9 Republican votes.

In any event, the majorities have changed and democrats will now control all committee chairmanships and the agenda. What will that agenda be? That is uncertain. We heard a lot of hard rhetoric from Democrats over the last year that was very critical of many issues but which contained few if any proposed solutions. Furthermore, this new majority will face problems living up to the realities of that rhetoric. For example:

- They repeatedly decried the deficit and said it needs to be eliminated. But they have also been clear that they want to greatly increase spending. They can't do both without raising taxes. And raising taxes may dampen economic growth so that that won't work either.
- They can de-fund the war against Islamic fascism, as many have threatened to do. But will they really do that and risk having the terrorists regroup and rearm and then attack us again? The solutions in Iraq and Afghanistan are neither easy nor apparent. But the new majority can no longer just blame. They must now tell us what they are for.
- Will they really pass an immigration bill like the Senate bill that gives illegal aliens social security benefits, union wage protections and a path to citizenship?
- Will they really engage in numerous investigations intended to politically destroy the president while simultaneously calling for bipartisanship on their priorities?

Over the coming months, the answers to these questions will become apparent. You will have this missive to keep you informed as policies develop. And because last week's poll question overwhelmingly asked for more frequent very short updates on breaking news, we'll be bringing that to you too!

Until next week, I remain respectfully,

Congressman John Campbell

P.S. I am writing this on the plane, as I often do, flying from California to Washington. Just in case you think congressmen get special treatment at airport security, we don't. They confiscated my under 3 ounce liquids at the airport. Why? The clear plastic bag in which I had

put them was not a one quart sized clear plastic bag as required. It was a larger plastic bag. I protested. "What difference does the size of the bag make?", I inquired. "You can see all 3 bottles. They are all 2 ounces or under and only have full." Sorry, they replied. If the clear plastic bag is anything but a 1 quart plastic bag we have to seize them. So, the Department of Homeland Security now has some very fine contact lens solution, hand sanitizer and moisturizer. (Heavy sigh....again). I think I'll write my congressman. Oh wait, I guess I just did.