

# MONTH IN REVIEW

*Official Newsletter of FOCUS Government Affairs*



## Election Season

Election Day, November 8, is almost upon us. In all likelihood, Connecticut—the land of steady habits—will live up to its moniker as we do not expect any drastic changes in the political landscape. Recent polls have indicated that incumbents Governor Lamont and U.S. Senator Blumenthal are leading by double digits over their respective challengers Bob Stefanowski and Leora Levy. The most interesting race worth watching continues to be CT-05 as Congresswoman Jahana Hayes (D) is trying to fend off George Logan (R). Polls have indicated this is a true toss-up. If Logan wins, he will be the first Republican Congressman from Connecticut since 2008.

At the state legislature level, Democrats are expected to retain majorities in both the House and Senate. The House is currently 97-54 Democrat and while they may lose up to 10 seats, they will likely retain a fairly large

majority. The Senate is 23-13 Democrat. There are some true toss-up races in the CT State Senate elections, so it's possible we could see a 3-seat swing in either direction, which would still leave Democrats in control of the Senate. Connecticut has typically been resistant to so-called "red waves" in the past, but if one peaks at the right time the possibility always exists that we could see tighter margins.

We will also have new faces in our Constitutional offices. Historically, the offices of Comptroller, Treasurer, Attorney General, and Secretary of State have easily been won by Democrats. William Tong is running for re-election for Attorney General, and it appears State Rep. Sean Scanlon will be elected Comptroller. State Rep. Stephanie Thomas will be elected Secretary of State, and CT Democratic Party Vice-Chair Erick Russell will be elected Treasurer.

## **Early Voting on the Ballot**

On Nov. 8, Connecticut voters will also be asked a question that could change when people head to the polls for future elections. The question will appear on the ballot as follows, "Shall the Constitution of the State be amended to permit the General Assembly to provide for early voting?" Early voting would allow people to vote in person before Election Day. Legislators previously approved asking Connecticut voters whether they should move forward in considering early voting, and that question is appearing on the ballot this election cycle. Answering Yes would allow lawmakers to vote on whether they would want early voting in the state of Connecticut. They'd have to change the wording in our state constitution to do that. That's also when lawmakers would decide how soon early voting would start and other circumstances surrounding early in-person voting. A confusingly-worded early voting question was on the CT ballot in 2014 where it failed by 4 percentage points.

## **Uncontested CGA Races**

We know for sure the names of 39 candidates for the Connecticut General Assembly who will be elected on Nov. 8 as they are running in uncontested races. There are another three candidates expected to win easily that are facing challenges from minor party candidates. This accounts for a

substantial 28% of the 187 elected members of the General Assembly. These seats go uncontested because their districts are so lopsided, meaning the only test at the polls comes if there is a primary. Factors such as a newer sensitivity to work-life tensions arising from irregular hours and so-so pay, combined with political factors such as polarization and districts newly drawn to discourage competition leaving many races uncontested this year. These factors may also have resulted in 30 incumbents deciding not to run for re-election this year. Between the turnover this year, 2020, and 2018, it looks like nearly half of the legislature will have fewer than 4 years of experience when we start the 2023 legislative session.

## **Special Session Set for after Election**

State legislative leaders are likely to call a special session shortly after the November elections to extend Connecticut's gasoline tax holiday through the winter months and discuss Covid pay for essential workers, according to House and Senate leaders. The gas tax holiday, which was initially set to run from April 1 through June 30 and was eventually extended to Nov. 30, also included fare-free service on Connecticut transit buses. The Democratic majority in both chambers also would use a session in late November or early December to add money to a badly underfunded bonus program for private-sector workers who staffed essential services during the coronavirus pandemic. Neither Looney nor Ritter committed to a specific date, but both said the extension their caucuses are considering likely would keep the gas tax holiday in place through February or March. And if federal funding for winter energy assistance programs isn't enhanced, Democrats also would consider boosting state resources in this area, as well.

## **TODAY IN CONNECTICUT HISTORY**

Today in 1902, former race car driver Andrew Riker, personally drove the first production model of the luxury \$4000 Locomobile, four-cylinder, gasoline-powered car he had designed, engineered and manufactured in Bridgeport into New York City to present it to its new owner.