



Friday, July 17, 2009

MANAGEMENT

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Centerpiece

This week, GCSIntel sat down with Rep. Mike Simpson, Democrat from Liberty Township. The following are excerpts from a conversation with Simpson about the state budget.

Q. Are you concerned at all with what's happening with the budget after what you went through two years ago?

A. I am concerned, but I'm not at a heightened concern that we're going to go through the same thing. I think you've got people here who went through that, and we're not going to let that happen. Plus, from what I've seen and some of the discussions we've had, you're seeing a lot more across-the-aisle – not only across-the-aisle in the House but across-the-aisle with the Senate – discussions taking place.

There are going to be differences. There are philosophical differences, but I think we'll end up with a budget. I don't think we will go into shutdown; I think we'll end up with a budget.

Q. How much do you feel you've grown into the job over the course of the last two years? Do you feel like you've learned a lot?

A. Yeah, the way that it was structured with the budget boot camps leading up to the budget crisis and then actually living through the budget crisis, it all actually helped mold a better game plan for the future, so I think it was a good experience.

I think that's going to play a huge part for the people that are here now, that lived through that to make sure that experience doesn't happen again. I personally feel like I've learned an enormous amount in the last two years as a result of that.

Q. Do you have any plans down there [in your district] – you're only in your second term now – are you thinking beyond your next term as a member of the House?

A. No, I'm not, and this question came up because of the whole special [election] in the Senate, and I looked at this whole thing and I said, 'You know, I was elected to a job and I'm going to focus on this job.' I'm not even going to think about the 'what-ifs' three years down the line.

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My objective right now is to have as much good input as possible and help craft a good budget for this cycle and then, obviously next year, worry about the next term. As far as looking past the third term, no -- I'm not even giving it a thought at this point.

GCSEye On The Capitol

State Jobless Rate Jumps To 15.2 Percent

The state's unemployment rate for June was reported on Wednesday and leaped up by 1.1 percent from May's rate of 14.1 percent.

The report showed that Michigan had a total of 740,000 unemployed workers last month – the highest number of unemployed workers since 1976 when government began counting that particular stat. As a percentage, 15.2 percent is the highest unemployment rate since May 1983.

According to the Department, unemployment increased by 59,000 over the month, while total employment fell by 35,000. At 15.2 percent, the June 2009 jobless rate came in a whopping 7.1 percent higher than the 8.1 percent recorded in June 2008.

Mike Cox Shows At Hearing

Attorney General Mike Cox defended the autonomy of his office this week by showing up at a session of the House Judiciary Committee where chair Rep. Mark Meadows (D-East Lansing) was going to consider a resolution to subpoena certain records from Cox's office related to how the Attorney General handled a recent settlement.

Back in March, the committee questioned Deputy Attorney General Carol Isaacs on the settlement. Apparently not satisfied with her explanation, Meadows (on April 2) introduced legislation (HB 4799) to basically take away most of an AG's authority to promulgate legal settlements.

Presumably, Meadows could do this without fear of tying the hands of future Democratic AGs because the legislation would never get through the GOP-controlled Senate anyway.

The bill was on the agenda for today's hearing, but at the last minute Meadows let everyone know he had decided not to take it up. He then opened the hearing by making the decision public.

Michigan Factoid:

The 19 chandeliers in the Capitol in Lansing are one of a kind and designed especially for the building by Tiffany's of New York. Weighing between 800-900 pounds apiece they are composed of copper, iron and pewter.

The Week Ahead

Expect discussion of the budget to continue as lawmakers settle into their slower summer schedule of sessions as leaders continue to work out budget targets.

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