

07/20/2010



Carte's Votes: Hoppy's Commentary

Talkline Host Hoppy Kercheval

Carte Goodwin, West Virginia's newest U.S. Senator, will be sworn in Tuesday and given barely enough time to learn the location of the Senate bathroom before he has to vote on important legislation.

The first comes shortly after he takes office today (Tuesday): a vote whether to continue the extension of unemployment benefits for nearly two years. Jobless benefits are normally 26 weeks, but they have been extended to 99 weeks because of the recession.

Democrats, urged on by President Obama, want the extension to continue, using \$34 billion in borrowed money to pay for them. Republicans want half of the money to come from the unspent stimulus.

Goodwin is expected to provide the 60th vote necessary to block a Republican filibuster. That vote will likely play well back home in West Virginia because of a lackluster economy and high unemployment, but it's lousy economics.

Borrowing \$34 billion adds to the ballooning deficit and creates a disincentive for work. "Workers are less likely to look for work, or accept less-than-ideal jobs, as long as they are protected from the full consequences of being unemployed," Michael Tanner, a senior fellow at the libertarian Cato Institute, told the Washington Post.

In addition, Washington's out-of-control spending will not be Goodwin's concern. He's not running for the seat and his term as "Senator-till-November" will long be over before the full consequences of Washington's profligate spending are realized.

Then Goodwin will have to vote whether to approve another \$40 billion in emergency war funding, mostly to pay for the surge of 30,000 additional troops in Afghanistan. The House of Representatives has tacked another \$23 billion in stimulus spending to the war funding bill.

The question for Goodwin will be whether he wants a "clean" bill that only includes money for the ongoing fights overseas or whether he supports legislation that includes even more domestic spending.

One way or another the bill is going to pass, otherwise the military will have to begin an immediate drawdown in Afghanistan.

Finally, and most critically in the early days of Goodwin's brief tenure, will be his support or opposition to an energy bill.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid is making one last effort before the August recess to

pass legislation that will include caps on carbon emissions that target coal-fired power plants. The legislation would ruin West Virginia's economy which depends heavily on coal.

West Virginia needs a "no" vote from Goodwin—and, of course, Sen. Rockefeller as well—to protect a vital part of West Virginia's economy. Politically, a "yes" vote by Goodwin on the energy bill would damage Gov. Manchin who is responsible for Goodwin being in Washington.

Under different circumstances Carte Goodwin would have been able to go to Washington, hang a few pictures on the wall, try out a bowl of the famous bean soup that's on the Senate restaurant menu every day and get adjusted to the new digs before delving into weighty matters. Instead, he's been tossed into the maelstrom of Congress with important issues hanging.

And West Virginia is watching.

User Comments

Posted by **ovieotus** on 07/20/10 at 9:57 AM

It's funny how it's Obama's and the Democrats policies such as the failed stimulus bill, etc, that cause the job loss, yet they want to borrow more money for unemployment. I fear that extending the unemployment benefits will cause Obama to continue to stand in the way of job creation. Obama doesn't realize that the private sector is supposed to provide the jobs, not the government. As long as he continues borrowing and borrowing for unemployment, he has no incentive to let the economy work as it should.

Posted by **wv resident** on 07/20/10 at 8:52 AM

No he will not vote HIS conscience, he will vote MoJo's conscience! Discussion before leaving town: Mr Goodwin: "Ok governor, what did you want me to do for this one? And let me get this right, we know you want this seat so we all want to follow your lead. Oh Governor, I so appreciate your kindness in this situation and your faith in me. I promise Governor, I WILL NOT let you down!" Mojo, (patting Mr. Goodwin's head): "Good boy....You will do as I say, You know You owe me, now Run boy Run! Head to Washington and forge the path for your Master!"

Posted by **bushwacked** on 07/20/10 at 8:13 AM

This is also a time to test Hoppy's genuineness in his new role as deficit fighter. Given his positions during the last administration, we have reason to be skeptical. Hoppy has bravely taken a stand against providing those lazy people a check because they refuse to take a job picking fruit. I for one would like to see the guys from the Cato Institute take a job picking fruit. They would for the first time be doing something useful. But Hoppy's test is what position will he take as the Bush tax cuts expire. If he is truly concerned about the deficit, he would take a position of letting them expire and returning to the tax levels that we had the last time we were running budget surpluses. I think it would be foolish to raise

taxes at a time when the economy is so fragile, but I also think cutting spending at this time is foolish. If Hoppy is a true deficit fighter, he will agree with the Concord Coalition and call for allowing the tax cuts to expire.

Posted by **TD** on 07/20/10 at 7:23 AM

The new senator needs to vote yes on unemployment. It's hard for me to understand the Republican position, and apparently your position Hoppy, Sen Kyle(R) said last week tax cuts for the wealthy should stay in place even if they add to the deficit but we can't add to the deficit to give the unemployed financial help. Surely the Goodwin and Manchin disagree.

As for war funding, I saw an interview with envoy Richard Holbrooke last week that has renewed my temporary support for continuing the effort in Afghanistan. I think we finally have a real plan in place, if we don't see real progress by next summer we should declare victory and leave.

We desperately need an energy plan, something that gets us away from sending \$1 Billion per day overseas with \$100 million per day going to Iran. This will also force the industry to solve the carbon emission problem with coal, that's the key to coal's future. In reality, if you support using coal you should support the energy bill.

Posted by **wawarnick** on 07/20/10 at 5:18 AM

Hoppy,

Mr. Goodwin should vote with the Republicans on the unemployment bill. There is no reason on earth why the funds for extending the unemployment benefits can't ALL be taken from elsewhere in the budget. We have borrowed more than enough from future generations to keep ourselves more comfortable. Its time to cut spending in Washington. They could have extended the benefits already if they could bring themselves to compromise. This is a perfect example of the Democrats adn Obama's arrogance. Obama talked a good talk about change we could believe in but went straight to the typical Democrat tax, borrow and spend plan. In the end power corrupts and absolute power corrupts. absolutely.

Posted by **CaptainQ** on 07/20/10 at 12:11 AM

Don't worry, Hoppy. Carte Goodwin is his own man! He will vote his conscious, and by that I mean he'll vote EXACTLY the way Reid and Obama WANT him to vote. What does he have to lose? He's not running for the seat in November (at least he said so publicly) so he could vote FOR Cap and Tax like every good, loyal, lapdog Democrat should. What does he care?

I hope (for our sakes) Carte will vote the way the people here he is representing want him to, against Cap and Tax, but I wouldn't hold my breath. The only bright side to this situation is that Carte can focus 100% on the job and 0% on reelection.

Let's hope and pray for the best here, folks.

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