



CRAWFORD

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Looking ahead to better government

by Jim Crawford

The 116th Congress will have to focus on moving the people's business forward. There is much to do, but it will require bi-partisan cooperation, a common purpose, and a commitment to the rule of law.

Both Democratic and Republican leaders have articulated support for a wide-reaching infrastructure package to repair roads and bridges and to modernize harbors and rail systems. Likewise, reauthorization of the farm bill has broad support. It will likely have to have provisions to offset the disruptions caused by the administration's tariff war. Both will cost money.

EDUCATION

Education has gone nowhere under the 115th Congress. House leaders will no doubt send a robust program forward to the Senate, where its final form will be hammered out. Again success depends on appropriations.

TAXES

Tax reform and deficit reduction will be harder to achieve in the next two years. Moderate Republicans in the Senate will hold the balance of power. Those who will not be up for re-election in 2020 will be courted heavily by everyone to either endorse or thwart the budgets coming from the House of Representatives.

IMMIGRATION

Immigration reform, despite the fear-mongering and racial enmity fostered by some, is likely to be realized because both sides agree on increasing security and implementing a fair process for applicants. There will be no discussion of amnesty for all undocumented people, but protections for DACA may be part of a bargain. Pressure to fund a mega-wall will persist, but it is a symbol for improved policing of the southern

border. Practicality will win out here.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Criminal Justice reform will no doubt get some attention, but sadly falls as a priority in the legislature when other issues dominate headlines and headspace. Hopefully, leaders in both parties will quietly and steadily work with professionals, advocates, and those impacted by crime to incrementally improve the administration of justice in this Congress. Advice from the courts is best heeded here.

INVESTIGATION AND IMPEACHMENT

Congress must cease its abetting of the crimes of the current executive. It is the people's only shield to protect the Constitution and the rule of law.

As the evidence of exactly how Russians hacked the DNC, how Roger Stone used Jerome Corsi to solicit the assistance of Julian Assange to publish the data, how Michael Flynn promised to lift Russian sanctions, and how Michael Cohen offered Vladimir Putin a free penthouse reveals the outline of high crimes, one man stands in the center of the cabal. He in turn has engaged in obstruction of justice by crafting false statements (for his son), by direct conversation (to Comey and Sessions) and a long series of public tweets directed at witnesses in federal investigations.

The president must be held accountable for the tax evasion and fraud committed by his family for his benefit for years. He must answer for current violations of the emoluments clause of the Constitution. The electorate and world must confront how his personal interest beats out national interest in regards to Saudi princes and Russian oligarchs.

You deserve better. You voted for better. You will get better government.

Dr. Jim Crawford is the Commissioner from District 4 and the past Chairman of the Chatham County Board of Commissioners.

Predictions for the new divided government

by Bill Crawford

Now we have a formally divided government again. The split between the establishment Republicans and the Trump Republicans served that division function for the last two years, coming together only rarely. Nancy Pelosi is well on her way to becoming House Speaker again, parceling out favors and Committee memberships in a way that would make any Chicago Daley proud. Unfortunately for her, this will not serve to ameliorate many of the passionate freshman coming in, who are up for turning things over and starting fresh. I think it might be best to break down what is coming by subject.



BILL CRAWFORD

HEALTH CARE

Now the Democrats will get a taste of how complicated it is to clean up after ACA. Now that it is not a tax mandate and the atmosphere for insurance competition is a little looser, the addition of preexisting conditions into the mix will still ensure rising premiums, now that we are clear that there is no going back on preexisting. Eventually we will have to get unweaned from employer based plans and convert to personal and portable ones. But this Congress will not have anything to do with that. Nothing gets done.

IMMIGRATION

The part about securing the border is a non-negotiable with Trump's base, they all think that any solution to all those already here that wasn't added to control over who was coming in on the border would turn the whole thing into a joke, just like what happened with the agreement in 1986. It would seem to be simple enough to parcel out \$25 billion to get that done, and deals will be considered. But enough of the Democrats do not want anything that would make Trump look good, so ultimately, nothing gets done.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The prospects for getting a large public investment package done to deal with our decaying airports, bridges and highways is probably the only thing that actually has a better chance of passing with the new majority.

TAXES

There are not enough votes for a significant

rollback of the 2017 tax package, but an effort will be made to redo or restructure the \$10,000 limit on SALT (State & Local Tax) deductions. This will become more difficult when many in the high tax states where this is such a concern will realize when they do their taxes next year that the new standard deductions cut quite a bit off this for the middle to upper middle class and the tax hit is not as big as they thought it would be.

INVESTIGATION AND IMPEACHMENT

The votes for impeachment are either close to already there or not. The subpoena work of the House Oversight, Banking and Intelligence Committees will gather what they can and, along with Mueller's final report, will serve to justify that vote. The hope is that, even in absence of a Senate conviction, this can become an election issue in 2020.

The best they will get is a potential data dump of past Trump tax returns, which will turn out to be a confusing pastiche of creative accounting designed to avoid taxes and still pass an IRS audit. The President has been high on the IRS radar since his Atlantic City Casino days and the idea of something new coming out that would become a bipartisan impeachment issue is not plausible. Some elements of the Democrat octogenarian leadership will try to smooth this over and hold off an impeachment vote, but chances are they will be overruled by the newer members.

THE 2020 PRESIDENTIAL RACE

This will end up being 2016 in reverse. Trump will roll over any primary challengers he meets (like John Kasich) and the Democrat debates will look like the crowded GOP ones from two years ago. The only difference will be that Trump won with his unique style and the field of Democrats in '20 will all be competing to be the spirit of Bernie Sanders, who many Democrats regarded as the strongest candidate that could have run against Trump.

Next year will be a long, unorganized slog. If the economy continues to expand, Trump will win reelection. If there is a new recession, all bets are off.

Bill Crawford was Republican candidate for Mayor of Pittsboro in 2009 and 2103; Republican candidate for County Commissioner in District 2 in 2012.

To the Editor

Thank you for running the series on the dedication of the Pittsboro Confederate monument in 1907.

Unlike much that has been written recently about UNC's Silent Sam Confederate monument, including emotional responses from both sides of the issue, Will Sexton's articles

are a calm, researched story of Chatham County folks who commemorated the deaths and losses they suffered in the Civil War. (Of course at that time an essential part of the county, its African-American citizens, had not yet gained their equal rights and opportunities many people thought the Civil War

would bring about. Their struggle to secure those rights in another remarkable story.)

Sexton's writing is a snapshot of 1907 Chatham County history. Thank you for the articles that we, in 2018, can all learn.

— Neil Smith, Pittsboro

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We need articles and press releases in Spanish and English. Photos are welcome also, with caption information in both languages. Email them to editor@chathamcountyline.org