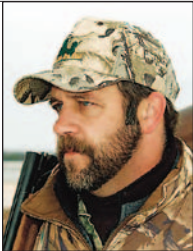


CAPITOL COMMENTS



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It's Time to Deliver on Promises

After we endured months and months of obscenely expensive television, radio, mail, newspaper, and social media advertisements for candidates across the country, the nation decided to reelect Barack Obama as president of the United States. Democrats

retained control of the Senate, and Republicans retained control of the House of Representatives. Some might say we simply confirmed the political status quo and gridlock within the DC Beltway. It is too early as of this writing to judge. However, I believe that the status quo has been profoundly shaken and looming fiscal challenges will unite political adversaries out of necessity, if not desire.

Election results indicated that demographic change within the United States effectively rearranged the electoral map and future campaign strategy. The growing minority segment of the U.S. population has spoken, and I believe both political parties will turn an attentive ear to their voices. Immediately after the election concluded—an election based ostensibly on jobs and the economy—the talk turned primarily to immigration reform and the “fiscal cliff.” Promises of compromise and

bipartisanship accompanied the end of the election just as surely as night follows day. This time, however, I think bipartisanship will enjoy an extended honeymoon. The decisions that must be made by the end of this year with respect to tax extensions, cuts, reform, and the federal debt limit are, again, unprecedented. Remember, Congress already kicked this can down the road. Financial markets reeled as members of Congress played Russian roulette with our nation's economy

ideology and spin was the signal that business as usual in Washington has become unacceptable to the American public.

Tackling our challenges will be messy. It will take a messy bipartisan process to determine appropriate levels of defense spending, entitlement spending, discretionary spending, federal deficits and federal debt limits. Once members of Congress face the potential impact of budget sequestration cuts in their own districts and the changing face and attitudes of their constituents, I believe they will take positive action. There is nothing like the incentive of money and votes to spur elected politicians to action. And by the way, legislators know that the road on which they have kicked the proverbial “can” becomes a dead end by the close of 2012. Individually, legislators must realize that collectively they have been largely ineffective. The challenge will be for political party leaders to truly lead their troops. They should remind themselves that the national Super PAC's impotence to influence the 2012 campaign outcomes provides a clear lens and focus for politicians to pay attention to local issues and local constituents.

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and the world's financial system. This time around, the “can” is being watched more intently by financial markets, foreign countries, and I hope, the American public. Prior to 2012, the term “sequestration” was not commonplace outside of Washington, DC.

The budget sequestration trap that Congress set for itself has become water cooler discussion across the nation. All Americans have a personal stake in the decisions made in the next two months, whether it is in terms of personal taxes or the federal programs on which we have come to depend.

For all these reasons, bipartisanship must prevail. Call me an eternal optimist (which I am not), but I believe that the political leadership in our nation's capital received a clear message—the public expects them to actually deliver the good government for which they were hired. Notwithstanding the minor changes that occurred in the House and Senate, what I heard amongst the noise of political

In conclusion and setting aside my Pollyanna view, I would note that a change in leadership at key federal agencies (e.g., Interior and Agriculture) should not be a surprise. Should the current secretaries decide to move onto the next chapter of their careers, we need to pay close attention to the nominees and their agendas for these critical natural resource agencies. The work of the American Wildlife Conservation Partners and the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council will provide the glue and structure to bridge leadership changes within an administration just as they have done between administrations. In spite of the annoyance and weariness associated with campaign season, the process that determines the leader of the United States and the orderly assumption of that leadership should be an inspiring and prideful experience for all Americans. We have heard promises before; however, the recent promises of bipartisanship have taken on an enormous level of importance as we face the critical challenges that confront our nation in 2013. ■

