In most years, business at the State Capitol is relatively slow during summer and early fall. It’s been a little different this year, however, as conversation on several topics have percolated and could even lead to a bit of action before the end of leaf-peeping season. Here’s a quick grab bag that summarizes some of the discussion that’s been happening.

**Ban on sales of new gas-powered vehicles**

As I described in this space previously, the state’s Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) has proposed regulations that would ban the sale of new gas-powered vehicles by 2035. Yes, that’s under 12 years from now, and a recent public hearing allowed residents statewide to share their thoughts on the topic. They ranged from support, steeped in concerns for the environment, to stern opposition driven by worry over consumer costs and doubts about the (slow) proliferation of charging stations and the capacity of our already-strained electrical grid. The most noteworthy news from the hearing came via testimony provided by Eversource, which put a more than $2.5 billion price tag on the heavy-duty grid infrastructure upgrades that would be required to meet demand driven by the mandate. The legislature’s Regulations Review Committee—a bipartisan panel of lawmakers that has the final say on proposed regulations and will meet this fall. Stay tuned.

**Looming tax on employers**

An issue familiar to Connecticut employers has returned: the state’s Unemployment Trust Fund that’s used to cover the benefits paid to jobless individuals could run out of money. If that happens, it will force the state to borrow money from the federal government to pay those benefits, and the burden of paying back loan—with interest—would fall to employers. Over the last couple of years, I’ve argued that the General Assembly and Governor should use more of Connecticut’s substantial surplus to help steer Connecticut clear of this predicament. Given persistent fears about the possibility of a recession that would impact our state’s economy, this knife’s-edge situation is quickly becoming a priority issue.

**Tax relief for parents**

Over the next few months, expect to see more talk about the implementation of a permanent child tax credit, a push from legislative Democrats that would allow taxpayers to lower their tax liability to zero and collect a refund from the state. My opinion? If a family doesn’t owe taxes after some of the credit is applied, they shouldn’t get a refund by using remaining credit value to get a benefit refund when they haven’t paid anything in. Instead, we should pursue a child tax deduction that would simply reduce total taxable income. Last session, Republicans offered a $2,000 per-child deduction in our budget plan. It’s a path that hews to the basic purposes of tax collection—to fund the operations of government.

**Presidential Primary date change: Bipartisan agreement**

It’s possible that we’ll hold a special legislative session to take up a concept upon which Republicans and Democrats agree: rescheduling our state’s presidential primary from the last Tuesday in April to the first Tuesday in April. It would make Connecticut more relevant in the discourse and process involved in determining who carries the banner for each party in the general election. During the 2023 legislative session, a bill to make the change passed through the House of Representatives unanimously, but the clock ran out on State Senate members before they could hold a vote. To have an impact on the 2024 presidential nomination process, we’d need to make the change now for scheduling purposes rather than waiting until the next legislative session that begins in early February.

As always, feel free to contact my office about these topics or any other issue tied to state government: 860-240-8700, vincent.candelora@housegop.ct.gov

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