



# THE VIEW

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## THROWING ANOTHER LOG ON THE POLITICAL FIRE

BY

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When you awaken from your long winter's nap look for the political machine to be in overdrive. It seems that at every level of our unique system of Democratic governance there are two evenly matched sides with each trying to get the other into a life-threatening "choke hold".

When the founding fathers left Philadelphia back in the 1780's they hoped against hope that they had discovered that one best means of compromise that could accommodate many differences of opinion. James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay even fretted at length in the Federalist Papers over what they feared would be the destructive influence of faction. Their concerns were to no avail as the most factional elements of all - political parties - began to form almost before the ink was dry on the new constitution.

The fact that the Constitution was a document of compromise that provided for a representative government could hardly have lead anywhere else other than to a government in which we continually endeavored to elect representatives who reflected our varied ideologies as closely as possible. When the electorate is evenly split the pressure is on both sides to avoid yielding an inch at any point. This is the political world in which we find ourselves.

This fact will brought to all of our doorsteps beginning with the Iowa Presidential caucuses on January 3. Never has a Presidential campaign lasted so long with so many candidates on both sides and in which no one can predict who will be either of the major parties' nominees. The Iowa caucuses will kick

off a grinding series of 33 presidential primaries and caucuses that should or could, but might not, determine who the party nominees will be. Wouldn't it be interesting in this age of technology and "get it done" approaches to all we do for one or both parties to wind up with a brokered convention? It might be fun for political conventions to join the Electoral College (see the 2000 Presidential Election) in a return to usefulness after their benediction had been pronounced.

The fight certainly isn't confined to the national level. In fact, mark your calendar for January 8. That is not only the day of the long awaited New Hampshire Presidential primary, but it is also the day the Mississippi legislature will gavel into session, and the epic vote for Speaker of the Mississippi House of Representatives will take place. While there was a time that this contest would have been plenty interesting, it takes on added intrigue now that Republicans of that party lead by Governor Haley Barbour are 100 percent aligned behind one candidate, and the vast majority of the Democrats, the majority party in the House, are clearly aligned behind the incumbent Speaker. The selection of a speaker will mark the commencement, not the conclusion, of a daily contest between the two parties. What was that that Madison and his colleagues said about factions?

What about the race to fill Trent Lott's seat for United States Senator from Mississippi? Perhaps by this date in early January an election will either be scheduled for March or April, or it will be designated to be held in November along with the other regularly scheduled general election contests or the question of which if any of those dates will be in the hands of the Mississippi Supreme Court for interpretation of the relevant statute. This could be a precedent-setting decision based on Governor Barbour's claim that he possesses sufficient Executive Privilege to set the election at the same time as the November election versus the position of Attorney General Jim Hood that setting the election beyond the 90-day period specified by the statute would be in defiance of the law. This issue is made all the more intriguing because of a race that is expected to draw strong Democrats, equally strong Republicans and it is being debated between a Republican Governor and an ideological rival, the Democratic Attorney General. And, by the way, the solution may result in contests for not one, but two, open seats for the United States House of Representatives.

So far we've only discussed the series of events through the middle of January. All of this activity will only be the beginning of a series of Democratic and Republican standoffs that now cover the political landscape from the

courthouse, through the statehouse to the White House. In addition to all else unusual about our form of government, who would have known that representative government and the passions of factions would be so compatible?

Get that winter's nap out of the way because once January 2008 arrives you don't want to miss a thing.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

### **WILLIAM MARTIN WISEMAN, Ph.D**

William Martin Wiseman is Director of the John C. Stennis Institute of Government and Professor of Political Science at Mississippi State University. He received his Ph.D in 1986, his MPPA in 1980, his MS in 1974, and his BA in 1973, all awarded from Mississippi State University. In addition to his duties at Mississippi State, Dr. Wiseman is a guest professor at Jackson State University. Dr. Wiseman's areas of academic interest include American government, intergovernmental relations and federalism, county and municipal management, public personnel administration, and innovations in state and local government management.

Wiseman is a sought-after speaker on state and local government, state and local politics, political theory and rural development. Often a guest editorial writer in Mississippi daily and weekly newspapers, he can also be relied upon to evaluate federal, state and local election results for all media.

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