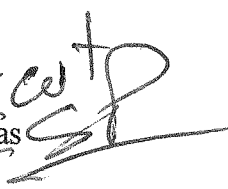


Community Comment
January 15, 2016
Sam Pennisi

Presidential

We are about three weeks from the first round of primary voting at the state level. The first are the Iowa caucuses. This antiquated system of selecting a nominee is hardly indicative of who the eventual standard bearer will be. In the republican party, for example, the past two winners were not even close when it came time to vote in the states that mattered. Most people can't remember who they were. But the Iowa experience says a lot about the candidates ability to clearly began to make the case for their run for the top job. It also gives all of us a look at the kind of on the ground organization they have in place. Even at, or maybe especially at the Presidential level, a candidate needs to have the local infrastructure in place. The get out the vote machine is key to winning. It takes many dedicated volunteers to make a good showing. Winning Iowa isn't everything but a poor showing does not build a lot of confidence going forward.

On the heels of Iowa comes New Hampshire. This is a small state and is also not critical but this gives us are first look at more traditional voters. It answers some questions like who is showing up to cast a ballot/ Does either party seem excited and turn out in high numbers? How are the candidates getting their message across? Do the votes reflect the polling that's been done for more than a year now? Does the on the ground effort seem as good as that in Iowa? The winner of New Hampshire can claim some degree of momentum. This is not as significant when a candidate is from a neighboring state, such as Bernie Sanders. But winning New Hampshire would still be a boost for Bernie. On the Republican side, the picture should be more clear about who will be left in this large field. The Republicans have an interesting primary cycle on their hands. Donald Trump continues to lead in the polls but even Governor Nikki Haley expressed concern for his approach and message and named him by name. Considering that she ran as a Tea Party candidate, the future is hard to read. So, these two first primary exercises should cut thru the fog.



Tuesday, President Obama held his last State of the Union speech before congress and the American public. To be sure, the rest of the world was also watching. A speech like this is important, not just in the substance, but in the tone and breath as well. We are split as a nation but some things are just the facts.

Global climate change is real and happening. What I don't get is why some of us are ok with polluting our home without regard to the consequences. This world is all we have. Billions of people live on or close to the oceans. For nearly two hundred years we have fouled our land, our waters, and our air and now it's coming back to bite us. We did this and we can undue at least some of the damage. We not only have technology that can help, but we can create whole new industries and jobs along the way.

The American auto industry is back with gusto. When Obama came into office, many said let them go under. We didn't and they are solid once again. We have an economy. We avoided catastrophe on a global scale and eight years later are still the most robust economy in the world. Now we need to deal with wage stagnation and income disparity that is way out of whack. And unemployment is back to pre crash levels.

We are better for Mister Obama's leadership. We would be further ahead if Congress acted like adults and cooperated with real ideas instead of road blocks. That won't work anymore.

Get real

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.