

Off The Fringe

Who Will Win?

POLITICAL ANALYST CHARLIE COOK
OFFERS UP HIS VIEW OF ELECTION

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

You probably care, whether greatly or mildly, about who wins the upcoming elections in November. That's because whoever wins — and which party ends up controlling the House and the Senate — could impact the industry in which you're employed.



But Charlie Cook said he doesn't care who is victorious in November. The veteran Washington, D.C.-based political analyst says he just wants to see some good old-fashioned excitement unfold.

"I just want to hear shoulder pads crack," Cook told members of the trade press earlier this year during a speech at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington as part of a Media Summit presented by BASF.

Cook said he can't predict who will win control of the House and the Senate in the U.S. Congress.

"I'm supposed to have a real good idea of what's going to happen, but I don't," said Cook, editor and publisher

of "The Cook Political Report" and columnist for the "National Journal." "This is a really confounding election."

Cook examined the election from two perspectives — the macro political approach and the micro political approach. When you look at it from the macro political approach — or from top to bottom — Cook said Republicans appear to be in eminent trouble.

"They're toast," Cook said. "This is going to be a truly horrendous election for them."

But when one looks at the election from the micro political approach, or from the bottom to the top, it appears the Democrats will have a difficult time gaining control of the House and the Senate. "When you look at it from that approach, where you look at each of the 435 House races and each of the 33 Senate races, it doesn't look so bad for the Republicans," Cook said. "They will probably lose some House and Senate seats, but they'll probably hold their majorities."

Several additional factors could and probably will impact each political approach, Cooke noted. When looking at the election from a macro political approach, the job-approval ratings of Congress and President Bush could prick the Republicans. Cook said the Gallup Organization has found that when Congress' job approval is more than 40 percent, the net seat change in the House is about five seats out of 435 seats. "That's nothing," Cook added. But when the job

approval rating is under 40 percent, the average turnover is a 29-seat loss, he said.

Then Cook recited several recent job-approval ratings for Congress from various polls. There was a 35, a 27, a 28 and a 23. "And that's just not the liberal news media speaking," Cook said. "Fox News had Congress at 25."

Mid-term election outcomes are also affected by a current president's approval rating, Cook said. Then he recited recent approval ratings for Bush, including a 32, a 33 and a 39. (Bush's approval ratings have dropped even more lately.)

In a president's second term, a 48 to a 53 rating is "OK," Cook said. A rating in the mid 40s is "Rodney Dangerfield/No Respect" territory, he added. A rating in the high 30s is "toxic," and a rating in the low 30s is "radioactive," Cook said. A below-30 rating is what Cook called "Nixon land."

With the Republican-controlled Congress and Bush receiving bad ratings, there's a good chance the Democrats could re-energize and reorganize to win back the House, Cook said.

Of course, most of Bush's low approval rating stems from the war in Iraq. "It's like a wet blanket hanging over the president and the party," he said.

Still, when examining the situation from the micro political approach, Cook said Democrats will need to run the table to win back the House and the Senate. "It sounds like a big feat for the Democrats to pull off," Cook said.

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Regarding bentgrass, the showpiece at Turf-Seed later in the week was the putting green. More than a few people slipped off a shoe or two to feel the grass.

Besides the explanation of current research on drought tolerance in Kentucky blues, the talk around Turf-Seed was its acquisition by the Scotts Miracle-Gro Co. Sure, mergers and acquisitions happen all the time, but this one has a bit of a back story: Turf-Seed founder Bill Rose has been a critic of Scotts' development of Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass, a genetically modified turf under consideration for deregulation.

Tours that week concluded at Turf Merchants Inc. TMI had a theme for its event — GSI: Grass Seed Investigation. In addition to a tour of the turf plots, participants could visit six different stations intended to separate fact from fiction regarding such topics as Texas bluegrass, DNA fingerprinting of Kentucky bluegrass, and the proper testing for annual and intermediate ryegrass contamination in perennial ryegrasses.

Oh, and about the pinot noirs? Just try one and you'll know what I'm talking about.

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