

COLUMNLEFT

A Delay for DeLay? No Way!

January of even-numbered years is usually a time when Congress reconvenes for its second session of the term after a much needed break for the holidays (do we really need to name all the holidays?) This year appears to be different. Although the Senate will reconvene to start the hearings for Supreme Court nominee Samuel Alito, the House of Representatives will remain dark until the end of January.

What is special about January 2006 to cause the House of Representatives to delay the opening of its second session? The answer appears to be that "former Majority Leader Tom DeLay is under indictment." The Republican Party is hoping against all odds that, by the end of January, DeLay will be able to resolve his legal issues and reclaim his leadership post. This maneuver is done at the expense of all Americans, Republicans and Democrats alike.



BY ALON BARLEVY, PH.D.,
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DeLay tried to get his case thrown out of court, and was partially successful when the judge threw out one of the three counts in the indictment (conspiracy to violate election laws), but allowed the more serious charges of money laundering and conspiracy to commit money laundering to go to trial. The justice system should now be allowed to take its course and DeLay should be given his day in court.

Regardless if DeLay is innocent or guilty, the people deserve that their elected officials tend to the issues of the day. One issue of pressing importance is the Patriot Act. Passed in a haste following the attacks of September 11 four

years ago, the Act expired on December 31, 2005. Many aspects of the Act are vital to homeland security. Some provisions, such as the ability to check an individual's library record without a court order, are very controversial and are seen as giving too much power to the government. Lawmakers could not resolve their differences prior to the winter recess, so they floated a proposal to temporarily extend the Patriot Act, as is, for an additional six months to resolve the disputes. House Judiciary Chair James Sensenbrenner would have none of that, and agreed for the Patriot Act to be extended for only one additional month. How can lawmakers work out those complicated issues if they are not in session?

Unfortunately, the Patriot Act is only one small example of the pressing business that needs the attention of our elected officials. The people's business is far more important than the career of any one particular lawmaker. It is shameful that the leaders of the Republican Party care more about power and prestige than the job that they were elected to perform, or the people who elected them.

Text of Article

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