

Hail to the Chief

This November, Californians will go to the polls to elect lawmakers who will play a significant role in how we do business. Throughout this year, I will address the various national, state and local races that will profoundly impact our industry. The first of this series focuses on the presidential election.

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President/CEO



This is a pivotal time for our industry.

Our industry is being crushed by over regulation. Regardless of size retail grocers are feeling the impact of overreaching lawmakers, especially in California. And although the President doesn't make laws, whomever occupies the White House this January will have a significant impact on our industry.

With President Obama terming out, there is no obvious frontrunner for the world's most powerful position. That's not good news for Democrats. Since the modern two-party era (beginning in 1856), the party of a termed-out president typically loses the next election.



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Now predicting who will win in November is a waste of time and editorial space.

And it would be foolish to even try. I believe there is more uncertainty in this year's race, at this point in time, than in any previous presidential election.

Obviously, another four years of the same won't be good for our industry. Eight years of the Obama Administration has tipped the balance between labor and management so far to labor's advantage that another Democratic president will have an extremely negative impact on our industry and will likely hamper future growth.

The 114th Congress (2015-2017) gave the Republicans control of both the Senate and the House for the first time since 2007. However, bipartisan politics remains in full play as the president continues to push his own agenda with little getting accomplished.

In sizing up the frontrunners it's clear Donald Trump will be pro business. Some believe if he's successful in the early races he may try to move back to a more sane, for lack of a better word, position than he has been advocating.

Hillary Clinton on the other hand seems more like a mainstream politician. She will be liberal, pro-labor, and push a strong domestic agenda which means more of the same for our industry.

It will be very interesting to see how business legislation will move (or not move) if we have a Republican Congress and President. What will happen to the Affordable Care Act? What about tax reform, swipe fees, country of origin and menu labeling, and the Food Safety Modernization Act? What about the president appointed National Labor Relations Board?

While both Trump and Clinton are considered the popular favorites, at press time, both candidates were feeling significant heat from their nearest rivals.

What is interesting is that both the far right and far left appear tired of "political correctness" and seem to be gravitating toward a Trump or Bernie Sanders because they say what others won't.

And then there is the latest wild card – Millennials. It will be interesting to see how they vote in the two early caucuses – Iowa and New Hampshire.

The point is, despite the fact that many say California's vote won't matter because of the timing of the electoral process, we should care about the presidential election. Could it be that with a Republican sweep, pro business legislation and reform just might stand a chance?

No matter who enters the Oval Office, they are going to have to be willing to compromise with Congress to get it done.

Hang on because you can be assured it's going to be a wild ride! ■