Pennsylvanians might reasonably expect that the political world would take a breather from campaigns following almost two years of non-stop presidential campaigning. After running nationally more than one million commercials and spending an estimated six billion dollars, everyone should be ready for a rest. Silly you!

In fact, the next political campaign is already underway—it started the day after the presidential election. We speak, of course, of the already frenzied maneuvering for position in the Keystone state’s upcoming 2014 gubernatorial election. For the first time in modern times, an incumbent governor is all but certain to face serious opposition for re-election to a second term. Some of it might come from his Republican party; more of it will likely come from opposition Democrats.

Without further ado, these are the names most likely to surface in the next several weeks and months as Pennsylvania prepares to elect its next governor.

REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES

- **Tom Corbett** - Corbett enters the race as the weakest incumbent for reelection since 1970 when governors became eligible to run for a second term. His job performance numbers in many recent polls are in the mid 30’s and his budget cuts have drawn heavy fire from both Democrats and Republicans. Moreover, some blame his political leadership for the Republican Party’s poor statewide showing in November’s election. Compounding the governor’s problems is the debate over his handling of the notorious Sandusky investigation while he served as attorney general. The incoming attorney general has promised a thorough review of that case. Yet, for all this trouble, Corbett still is arguably the favorite in 2014. As incumbent, he commands enormous organizational, financial and political resources to support his reelection. In addition, Pennsylvanians seem to prefer electing governors from the party out of power in Washington.

- **Corbett’s Possible Opponents** – The GOP’s prospect of losing control of the governorship raises the possibility incumbent Corbett will draw a primary opponent. The question is who might actually do it. After November’s election, there are no Republican statewide office holders available to launch a possible challenge. Consequently, the most likely Corbett opponents would be state lawmakers, including perhaps the Majority Leader of the state House, Mike Turzai or the Majority Leader of the state Senate, Dominic Pileggi or chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Jake Corman. But legislative gubernatorial candidacies historically have been problematic even in open seat races.

- **Outside possibilities** – Other GOP possibilities are sparse. No incumbent Republican congressman is likely to challenge Corbett and the big city mayors are Democrats. One outside possibility is
emergence of an independently wealthy “outside” challenger as we have just seen in the U.S. senate race. But more likely, Corbett gets a “pass” free from serious opposition and an unobstructed path to renomination.

DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES

Moving from possible Republicans to possible Democrats, the list grows exponentially. Not a few Republicans worry that Corbett could be defeated, but far more than a few Democrats are certain of it. At least 12 Democrats are potential Corbett opponents, and the number could grow. Here, in no particular order, are those now believed to be among the strongest contenders.

- Ed Rendell, former governor, current pundit and sports commentator. Few doubt that Rendell would be a formidable opponent in 2014, but he has consistently ruled himself out.
- Rob McCord, incumbent state treasurer, prolific fund raiser, skilled campaigner and possibly the favorite of the Democrat establishment. His largest handicap now is probably lack of statewide name recognition.
- Kathleen Kane, newly elected attorney general, proven campaigner, one of the more exciting political figures to emerge on the state scene in many years. Her inexperience in state politics might be her biggest challenge, and she would be in office only a few months before announcing.
- Former congressman Joe Sestak, darling of state progressives, an impressive, impassioned campaigner and proven fund raiser. Sestak’s U.S. Senate loss in 2010 may hurt him, but he brings considerable assets to the race.
- U. S Senator Bob Casey, the son of a popular two term governor, now twice elected to the U S Senate, and a grass roots favorite among rank and file Democrats. Casey seems highly unlikely to run. If he did run, however, he would prove difficult to defeat.
- Josh Shapiro, current chair of the Montgomery County commissioners, draws high marks because of his leadership in the state’s third largest county. He is widely recognized as a future statewide candidate, but his youth probably means he waits a few years more.

To this “A” list of potential Democrats can be added additional prospective candidates either less likely to run or somewhat less likely to win. Among this group is Congresswomen Allison Schwartz, Philadelphia businessman Tom Knox, state Senator Daylin Leach, Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter, Allentown Mayor Ed Pawlowski, Auditor General elect Eugene DePasquale and former gubernatorial candidate Dan Onorato.

This is the preliminary lineup for both parties. Two years is several lifetimes in politics and much can change between now and November 2014. What’s unlikely to change, however, is that Pennsylvania is poised to have its most spirited gubernatorial reelection campaign in more than half a century.

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