

The presidential election is only a few weeks away. Who will you vote for?

Barack Obama has pushed his aim-to-change message. But are you concerned about

Obama's inexperience to lead the country?

John McCain has announced his intent to get the country back on track. But speaking of inexperience, are you concerned about McCain's selection of Sarah Palin as his running mate?

I like Obama, but I don't know if he can change everything he wants to change. McCain is one tough SOB, but will he be too tough? Joe Biden seems like a viable vice presidential candidate. But is Sarah Palin? Yeah, she's a great speaker and has the ability to connect, but is that enough?

I recently returned from Washington, where RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment) held its annual meeting. RISE's members include pesticide and fertilizer producers, suppliers and distributors for the golf course maintenance industry. To no surprise, most everybody was talking about the election.

There is definite concern about what could happen within the green industry if either candidate is elected, especially Obama. As one golf course superintendent put it so matter-of-factly recently, "A Republican president usually means fewer environmental regulations being initiated."

If that's the case, more environmental regulations are probably coming because Obama will most likely win the election. That prediction comes from David Crow, the president of DC Legislative & Regulatory Services, who spoke at the RISE meeting. Crow knows politics like Tiger knows getting up and down for par.

Crow says McCain will keep it close until the end, but Obama will win by 5 percent. Crow says he doesn't see "the energy, the spirit, the drive or the will of the Republican party" to match that of the Democratic party.

That's not all the bad news for the Republicans. Crow also expects the GOP will lose 20 to 25 seats in the House of Representatives and five to seven seats in the Senate.

The Democrats already control the House

If Democrats Rule, What's Coming?

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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and Senate, and the party will have even more clout if Crow's prediction is true. And if Obama is elected, the Democrats will have hit the trifecta. So much for vetoes.

Crow says he expects Obama's first 100 days will be an "absolute blitzkrieg" of bills involving climate change, environmental policy and energy issues. Apparently, Obama is a golfer, but a hack (he's like most of us!). Being a liberal, he probably doesn't prefer the perfection of some courses. It will be interesting to see if he brings an anti-pesticide mentality to the table. If he does, things could change in the golf course maintenance industry.

The good news is the specialty pesticide industry has a solid relationship with Debbie Edwards, director of the Environmental Protection Agency's office of pesticide programs. Edwards, whose position is not by appointment, has spoken at the past two RISE meetings. "I do believe — and it's clear — that pesticides have a real and important place in society in the United States," she has said.

Hopefully, the Democrats will look long and hard at any pesticides before making any rash decisions about banning them. Hopefully, they will see the effort — in terms of time and money spent on research and development — that the basic pesticide manufacturers have devoted to making pesticides safer. I've heard more than one university researcher comment on how amazed they are with the low toxicities of some of the new active ingredients in pesticides.

Of course, it's more imperative than ever that the golf course maintenance industry — from superintendents to pesticide manufacturers — let their voices be known on this topic. Tell anyone who will listen that you make and use pesticides responsibly.

This is no time to sit idly by.