



SHENANIGANS

Shifting the spotlight from the buttoned-up, straight-laced world of politics to the fun, tawdry side of Washington

February 12, 2008

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Dingell's valentine

Make no mistake — not that you would — but Rep. John Dingell is definitely running for re-elex again.

We presume the Michigan Dem is running for a multitude of reasons, a fringe benefit of which happens to be that a year from Thursday — Valentine's Day, mind you — Dingell will officially become the longest-serving House member ever, beating out the late Mississippi Dem Jamie Whitten. Next year, his time serving will be 53 years, two months and 14 days.

Lest we need reminding, right now he holds the title of longest currently serving member of the House, and he is also known as The Dean.

When we note that the milestone will take place next year, he responds with a casually cool: "Eh. Yeah, it will." But don't be mistaken, he's energized about the whole thing. As a man who likes to talk in bullet point/number form — "No. 1; No. 2" — he rattles through what has to happen. "I'm excited," he tells Shenanigans but adds: "First of all, it isn't here yet, and second of all, understand this is not how long I serve but how well I serve.

"There's an election coming up in November," he notes. "We're doing the things that are necessary to run: We're maintaining a campaign staff, we're raising money, we're talking to our friends," he says systematically. But all of this requires three things. No. 1: "The concurrence of the wonderful people of the 15th District. They have to decide I'm worth having another two years. Then I have to see what the lovely Deborah [his wife] says on the issue — though I think that's been resolved. And the last is the good Lord, who decides these things — we have to see what he says about it."

As for his constituents, it's a smart gush, gush, gush. "They're loyal as dogs" — in a good way, he says — "they're decent, they're patriotic from their shoelaces up and have decency down to their bones, and they've been good to me. I hope they can agree that I've tried and I've had a few modest successes."

Ah, back to V-Day. "It's kind of peculiar, isn't it?" he says of the milestone date. Speaking of, what does he plan to do on this forced romantic holiday? "The lovely Deborah is a very difficult woman to deal with on [these] things. First of all, I plan to get her a Valentine's card. Secondly, I'll tell her she is the most gorgeous, wonderful woman in the world and the greatest wife any man has ever had, and third of all, I'll have to figure out what she wants. And that's the most difficult part of the whole business."

Has he ever failed? (Hey, it's been 26 years. Lot of potential there.) "Put it this way: I've never failed miserably, but I've had a few incidents where my success didn't reach my goals."

It's cliché, but that ain't the case in his day job. He remains modest: "Being the longest-serving member, I got a lot of hoops to jump through before I get there."

