Parties should focus more on toasters, less on $4.6 million Aston Martins

I am writing this article one week before the Nov. 2 election — you are reading this article just after the election. I know there will be a new governor — you know who he is. You will have seen a clear message sent from an electorate that is frustrated with many of the issues before us. You will know, to some degree, what that message is.

I have two options here: I can guess as to the outcome and pontificate as to how I knew, or I can suggest I have some idea of what the problem was in the first place and offer solutions for the new leadership regardless of the election results. I could also go with Option C and write about the Edgewater Hotel or the new library or trains, because in the Capital Region we have not heard nearly enough on these topics. I am going for option ...

Jobs and stability — the issue is not about talking about jobs, nor is it about creating jobs. It is about creating enough stability in the economy to convince consumers to buy toasters, cars and homes. This stability in turn creates jobs, and those jobs in turn create stability. Fairly simple, really.

Strangely enough, this stability most often comes from instability in government. Eight years under a liberal president and conservative congress gave us job growth, declining deficits, corporate expansion and Monica as the big issue. We saw much of the same under a reverse scenario, conservative president and liberal congress, until one group regained control and we saw the wild party that allowed banks to write loans people could not afford, companies to build infrastructure and product beyond consumer demand, and growth in financial markets that went beyond stability to instability and eventual collapse. We even saw the ponzi scheme raised to a Wall Street art form.

Before I start to sound too liberal, we need not have a long memory to see the concerns created when new leadership, again one sided, offered deficit spending as a solution, unfunded new social programs, long-term tax concerns, jobs stimulated by money that could not last, and government intervention if you were “too big to fail” and a failure to see your plight if you were too small to notice.

Another observation, sans Monica, I could be talking about the 1920s and ’30s, the ’40s and ’50s, the ’60s and ’70s, or the 1980s, when we became far more efficient at mood swings and got it all done in a single decade.

This phenomenon also happens at the state and local levels.

Remember, the real issue is “toasters for everyone.” We cannot afford the unemployed sitting at home watching a 1964 Aston Martin used in the early James Bond films selling for $4.6 million to Cincinnati banker Harry Yeagy. Sorry, just saw that on the news. Back to toasters. We need to create a marketplace that instills confidence in consumers, jobs that create the consumer, and companies to supply the consumer. This is not solely a social issue, nor is it uniquely a less-government-less-tax issue. It is, in fact, a people issue.

My observation is that the political agendas of the parties have lost focus on the people, or at least most of the people. We cannot rely on tax breaks for the wealthy to solve social problems, nor can we rely on social programs to create jobs. We need both in moderation: Tax incentives to create long-term jobs and programs to help create long-term stability.

So, as you read this, a new governor will take the helm, and look to a new legislature to focus on an agenda crafted from campaign rhetoric and promises made to a handful of people who brought them to office. They will also have real challenges before them, budget deficits, job growth, retaining businesses, attracting new businesses, foreclosures, declining home values, managing federal dollars and many more. The question is which will they focus on, the challenges or the agenda? I am suggesting that this will have a lot to do with the balance of power.

Here is my solution, in advance of the election: Never ever give one party control; it shifts the focus from us (the people) to an agenda, and an agenda, any agenda, is never very good for us. Finally, remember that more than toasters, the real dream is that every American be given the chance to someday buy a 1964 Aston Martin for $4.6 million.