State lawmakers could begin to feel pressure next year from folks who count greatly on Social Security benefits.

We’re talking about the next year, which also is an election year.

They might call it something else, but there is a real possibility that Congress will reduce Social Security retirement benefits through the back door.

Some politicos on the Potomac want to fiddle with how benefits are calculated, so as to have the same effect as reductions. For the purposes of sound bites they will be called “formula adjustments” or “calculation reforms,” or anything but what they are intended to be.

How could Gov. Dave Heineman and the Legislature provide some relief?

Nebraska is one of only 14 states that collect income tax on Social Security benefits.

Obviously the Legislature could eliminate or reduce the state tax that oldsters and others pay on those benefits.

The highly regarded Kiplinger Newsletter publishes a list of state Tax Heavens and Tax Hells for retirees.

Nebraska is on the Tax Hell list. A key reason is the state’s policy of taxing Social Security income.

Lieutenant Governor will seek top job

Who is Nebraska's lieutenant governor? Hardly anyone who isn't a follower of state politics can tell you. And it's that way in virtually every state – voters very seldom keep track of their lieutenant governors.

That usually only changes when a lieutenant governor announces a bid for the top job when the incumbent is going to leave office.

Nebraska Lieutenant Governor Rick Sheehy, 51, has announced he'll seek the GOP nomination to be the state's next chief executive.

Regardless of incumbency, a lieutenant governor seldom has significant name recognition among the electorate.

What Sheehy does have is the endorsement of Gov. Dave Heineman, accompanying party connections, and the connections and experience that come with having been a two-term mayor of Hastings, as well as a city councilman.

Might a Tea Party type emerge to challenge Sheehy in the primary?

Stay tuned.

Bruning leads GOP senate fundraising

Attorney General Jon Bruning leads the field of Republicans seeking the 2012 nomination for the U.S. Senate. At last report, Bruning had some $1.3 million on hand. State Treasurer Don Stenberg and state Sen. Deb Fischer are nowhere near that level.

The national Republican Party has made incumbent Democratic Sen. Ben Nelson the No. 1 target for 2012. That means whoever wins the GOP nod will likely be able to count on plenty of bucks for the general election.

Meanwhile, Nelson has raised nearly $3 million as he prepares for an expected effort to win a third term.

Heineman endorses amendment to U.S. Constitution

Gov. Dave Heineman has endorsed the call for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution to require a balanced federal budget except in times of war or national emergencies.

It's a philosophical stand that touts a political mindset. Such an amendment is extremely unlikely to happen in your lifetime, even if you were born yesterday and live to be 120. And you'd have to be born yesterday to think Congress would offer the states a constitutional change that couldn't be circumvented about as easily as a campaign promise.

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