

February 9, 2004

No longer on
the outside



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*Now on the
State Net Web site*

2003 State Session
Recaps showcasing
the legislative wrap-up
in each state.

Top Story

Gay politics has come a long way, from criminal sanctions to anti-discrimination laws and now domestic rights and marriage. All along the way, CALIFORNIA has been at the forefront of change.

SNCJ Spotlight

The new frontier for gay politics

Gay politics has come a long way, from criminal sanctions to anti-discrimination laws and now domestic rights and marriage. While the issue is still a flashpoint for partisan politics nationally, CALIFORNIA is in the forefront of change.

In the 29 years since California decriminalized homosexual sex, California's gay community has made a quantum leap. After ousting the

government from their bedrooms, gay leaders have worked with increasing success to get homosexuals the full rights of other citizens.

Nationally, gays are making dramatic legal and cultural progress. Sitcoms and even reality shows now feature gay characters, while a landmark MASSACHUSETTS high court decision has ruled that same-sex couples can't be excluded from marriage. At the same time, President Bush and national Republicans are fighting back by considering a constitutional amendment that will prevent same-sex marriages.

Since 1975, numerous California gay leaders have transformed themselves from activists seeking change from the outside to insiders who occupy offices in the corridors of power. California has the first official gay caucus of legislators in the nation, including four Assembly members and one state senator.

Even in California, though, the issue of gay rights remains divisive. Three years ago, opponents of the idea successfully passed Proposition 22 with 61 percent of the vote, which was aimed at preventing gay marriages by stating marriage is only between a man and a woman.

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Budget & taxes

OREGONIANS VETO TAX HIKE: OREGON voters overwhelmingly rejected Measure 30 last Tuesday, reaffirming their opposition to a tax increase and adding momentum to the national anti-tax movement. The referendum on the \$1.2 billion tax hike passed by the Beaver State Legislature last year lost by a 3-to-2 margin, an even more resounding defeat than the one suffered by a smaller tax referendum back in Jan. 2003. Lawmakers appear to have gotten the message this time. "The voters have clearly spoken," said Senate President Peter Courtney (D), a sentiment that was echoed in a written statement by Gov. Ted Kulongoski (D). Supporters had hoped to convince Oregonians that Measure 30's passage was necessary to protect essential services. The measure's failure will trigger \$545 million in automatic budget cuts on May 1, which will significantly impact public schools, the state's health insurance plan for the working poor and police crime labs. Opponents contended the measure would have cost the state jobs and hurt the economy. Its defeat is a major victory for national tax groups that helped defeat a tax increase in ALABAMA last fall and were hoping to send a message to other states considering similar action. (STATELINE.ORG, STATESMAN JOURNAL [SALEM], ASSOCIATED PRESS, WASHINGTON POST, OREGONIAN [PORTLAND])

PA GOV RELEASES BUDGET: PENNSYLVANIA Gov. Ed Rendell (D) introduced his 2004-05 budget plan last week. The \$22.7 billion proposal would increase spending by about 4% — mainly for higher education, mass transit, libraries and other programs hit hard by last year's cuts — funded by higher revenues from the Keystone State's improving economy and a significant increase in the state income tax that took effect Jan 1. Rendell told lawmakers the plan was "less risky" than the budget he proposed last year, which included over \$1 billion in taxes and \$650 million in new education programs. But the 2004-05 plan is still likely to face problems in the General Assembly. For one thing, the \$250 million Rendell is seeking for education greatly exceeds the \$175 million Republican leaders agreed to in lengthy budget

discussions back in December. But an even more contentious issue is the governor's proposal to borrow more than \$2 billion for environmental protection and economic development programs, which drew immediate criticism from the Republican leadership. "It's borrow, borrow, borrow, spend, spend, spend, and it's wrong, wrong, wrong," said House Majority Leader Sam Smith (R). (PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER, PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE)

BUSH BUDGET MIXED BAG: There was good news and bad news for two of the nation's most populous states in President Bush's 2005 budget plan. The \$2.4 trillion budget proposal contains no significant increase in federal funding for CALIFORNIA, despite Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's (R) repeated appeals to Washington for help with the state's budget mess. The governor had hoped the budget would address the disparity in federal funding for California he contends is the result of the federal government's use of inequitable formulas to distribute many of its grant programs, particularly Medicaid. It will now be up to the state's Democratic congressional delegation to try to remedy that situation. The one bright spot for California in the president's budget is the significant increase in homeland security spending. With its many potential targets for terrorist attack, the Golden State may garner a considerable portion of that money. NEW YORK is another state likely to benefit from the \$1.4 billion Bush has earmarked for homeland security, particularly given the administration's decision to alter its formula for distributing that money to provide more aid to high-threat areas. (SACRAMENTO BEE, ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE)

The Week in Session

States in Regular Session:

AK, AZ, CA, CO, GA, HI, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MS, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NY, OH, OK, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, US, UT, VA, VT, WA, WI, WV

States in Special Session:

AR "b", WI "d"

States in Recess:

CA "d", CA "e"

Currently Prefiling:

AL, FL, LA, MT(Drafts for 2005), WY

States Adjourned:

AZ "b", CA "a", CA "b", CA "c", CT "a", CT "b", DE "a", FL "e", MD "2001 session" z, NC "a", NC "b", NJ "2001 session" z, NM "a", TX, UT "c", WA "a", WA "b", WA "c"

Letters indicate special/extraordinary sessions

Source: State Net, 2/2/04

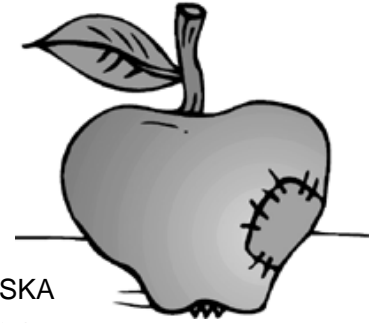


VA LAWMAKERS PORK UP BUDGET: The main focus of the VIRGINIA General Assembly in the opening weeks of the legislative session has been closing the \$1 billion gap in the state's budget. But that did not stop House lawmakers from proposing \$8.1 billion in additional spending for local

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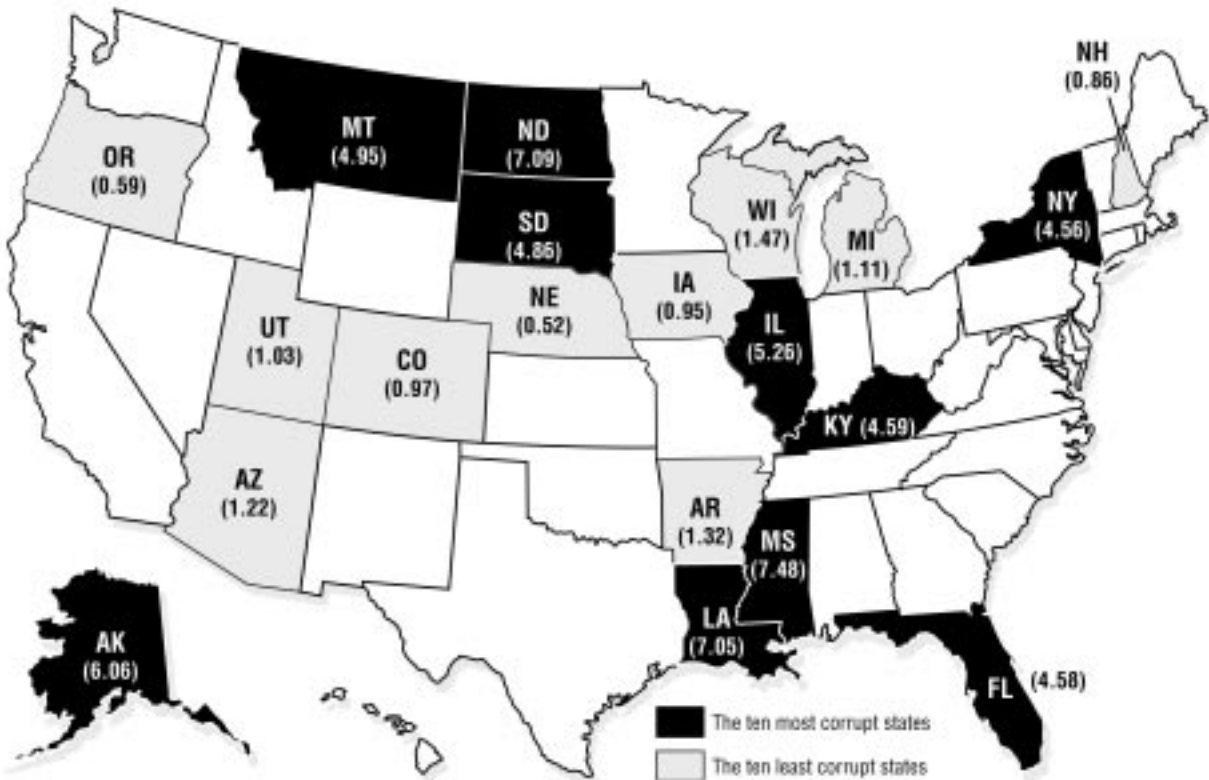
Bird's-eye view

Picking out the bad apples



Which state is the most corrupt? According to a new report from the Corporate Crime Reporter (CCR), a Washington D.C.-based newsletter, that honor falls to MISSISSIPPI, with NEBRASKA earning the title of least corrupt. The report based its findings on a review of all federal public corruption convictions in each state between 1993 and 2000, as determined by statistics from the Department of Justice. Those numbers were then compared to each state's 2002 population to calculate the overall rate of corruption convictions per 100,000 state residents. State and local prosecutions are not factored into the study. The map below shows the ten most and least corrupt states as ranked by their rate of convictions. To learn how each state fared visit the CCR Web site at <http://www.corporatecrimereporter.com/>

Source: Corporate Crime Reporter



State Net Capitol Journal



projects and programs. The spending proposals include requests for \$2 million for the “Great Dismal Swamp Interpretive Center,” \$500,000 for two museums in Richmond and \$650,000 to eradicate zebra mussels from a quarry in Prince William county. More than half of the proposals came from Democrats, who make up only about a third of the chamber. And of the requests submitted by Republicans, nearly half came from members who had signed anti-tax pledges. House Appropriations Chairman Vincent F. Callahan Jr. (R), who has the task of wading through the requests and weighing their merits, reminded lawmakers on the floor that they would need to find some money if they wanted their projects funded. If the comments of Del. Christopher B. Saxman (R), who chairs the House Cost-Cutting Caucus, are any indication, lawmakers aren’t that serious about their proposals. “People who want something from government should have a chance to make their case,” Saxman said. “So I put mine in — if they go, they go; if they don’t, they don’t.” (WASHINGTON POST)

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

Politics & Leadership

LAWMAKERS CALL FOR ETHICS REFORM: CONNECTICUT legislative leaders unveiled their plans for the upcoming session last week, the day before Gov. John G. Rowland (R) delivered his annual State of the State address. But while Rowland avoided any mention in his speech of the ethical lapses that have resulted in the first impeachment investigation of a sitting governor in the state’s history, the Democratic and Republican lawmakers focused squarely on that issue. Topping the list of legislative priorities announced by both parties were plans to strengthen the state’s ethics laws, including provisions to extend the statute of limitations and increase penalties for ethics violations, and reform the bidding process for state contracts. Lawmakers have plenty of other concerns, including medical malpractice, education and the environment, and many have said publicly that they will not let the impeachment proceedings prevent them from pursuing those issues. But privately, some say it will be difficult to focus on other matters while the investigation is ongoing, particularly with several senior lawmakers serving on the impeachment committee. (NEW YORK TIMES)

IL GOP PROPOSES HOUSECLEANING: Republican lawmakers in ILLINOIS have proposed merging two statewide offices and abolishing a third to help bridge the state’s projected \$1.5-2 billion budget gap. The GOP filed two



constitutional amendments last Monday, one of which would merge the offices of comptroller and treasurer, while the other would do away with the position of lieutenant governor. State Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka, who spearheaded the amendment to consolidate the office of comptroller with her own, estimates that the merger could save the state as much as \$15 million per year. And the GOP estimates that dissolving the office of lieutenant governor could save the state at least \$2.5 million annually. House Minority Leader Tom Cross (R) also pointed out that since the office has only one duty under the Illinois Constitution — succeeding the governor in the event of his death — lieutenant governors often have "nothing to do." The GOP said the proposed amendments would have bipartisan support, with similar legislation having been pushed by the Democrats in the past. (QUAD-CITY TIMES)

CA ASSEMBLY SPEAKER STEPS DOWN: Speaker Herb Wesson (D) relinquished control of the CALIFORNIA Assembly, after a short two-year stint in the position. Wesson, whose most recent accomplishment was a deal with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) to place two budget-rescuing measures on the March ballot, is being forced out of office by term limits. While fellow lawmakers praised him at a three-hour send-off last week as a fair and considerate leader, critics say he failed to take on the Golden State’s most serious problems. Bruce Cain, director of the Institute of Governmental Studies at UC Berkeley, blamed California’s term limits law, which makes it impractical for legislators to take on complex or unpopular issues that aren’t likely to show results in the six years they are allowed to serve. Wesson is being replaced as speaker by Assemblyman Fabian Nunez (D), who has the potential to run the chamber for five years, the longest anyone has served in the post since Willie Brown (D) — the self-proclaimed “Ayatollah of the Legislature” — was term-limited out of office in 1995 after 14 years as speaker. (LOS ANGELES TIMES)

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

Governors

B LANCO MAKES ETHICAL APPEAL: New LOUISIANA Gov. Kathleen Blanco (D) has informed her staff that she expects them to adhere to a higher standard of ethical behavior than even that required by Pelican State law. The directive was recently relayed to more than 80 members of Blanco’s administration by Andy Koppin, the governor’s chief of staff. Koppin, who served in a similar position for former Gov. Mark Foster (R), was joined in

the presentation by two members of the state's Ethics Board. The trio laid out a variety of ethical do's and don'ts on everything from taking gifts (coffee cups and key chains are ok) to accepting meals from special interests (not okay). Koppin, who also noted that he could not remember ever having such a meeting under Foster, said the new governor is just trying to be sure her staff knows what is expected of it. Louisiana was recently named the third most corrupt state in the nation by Corporate Crime Reporter, a Washington D.C.-based political newsletter (See Bird's Eye View). (THE ADVOCATE [BATON ROUGE])

EHRlich LOOKING TO END SMART GROWTH? One year after going to bat to save the Old Line State's Office of Smart Growth from the budget axe, MARYLAND Gov. Robert Ehrlich (R) has now proposed to abolish the office by folding it into the state's Department of Planning. If so, it would mean the end of one of the most visible programs enacted under former Democratic Gov. Parris N. Glendening, who pushed the state to the forefront of what was then a national movement toward anti-sprawl urban planning. Environmentalists say the proposal is an indication that Ehrlich is not dedicated to land preservation and revitalization of older communities, a charge his office denies. Ehrlich spokesperson Chuck Gates says the concept of smart growth is not being abandoned, just reorganized in a more cost effective way. Gates also emphasized that no other state has a separate entity devoted solely to smart growth planning. (BALTIMORE SUN)

Quote ...

"Evidence establishing his guilt is overwhelming, and his conversion to faith and his mentoring of others, while commendable, do not diminish the cruelty and destruction he has inflicted on so many. His is not a case for clemency."

CA Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) explaining his denial of a clemency hearing to a convicted murderer scheduled for execution this week.

SCHWARZENEGGER DENIES CLEMENCY: CALIFORNIA Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) has already faced a multitude of tough decisions during his short, tumultuous time in office, but probably none more so than the one he made recently to deny clemency to a convicted murderer scheduled to be executed on Feb 10. Schwarzenegger, whose most famous movie character was a robotic killing machine called "the Terminator," cited the heinous nature of the crime in his statement regarding the decision. The condemned man, 46-year-old Kevin Cooper, was convicted of murdering two adults and two children in the San Diego area after



escaping from prison in 1983. One child was also seriously injured, but survived. The refusal was hailed by some and condemned by others, including several of the governor's Hollywood peers. But Schwarzenegger was undeterred, even refusing to grant Cooper a clemency hearing. Schwarzenegger is the first Golden State governor to deny such a hearing since the death penalty was reinstated there in the 1970's. (SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE)

GOVERNORS IN BRIEF: ARIZONA Gov. Janet Napolitano (D) has called for a comprehensive investigation into the state's prison system in the wake of a 15-

... unquote

"The governor is clearly ramming this through. He knew there was a groundswell of support for Kevin Cooper."

Lance Lindsey, executive director for Death Penalty Focus, decrying the governor's decision. (SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE)

day ordeal that featured two corrections officers being held hostage by prisoners (ARIZONA REPUBLIC). • An attempt to override a veto by WISCONSIN Gov. Jim Doyle (D) of legislation that would have allowed Badger State residents to carry concealed weapons failed by one vote. The deciding vote was cast by Republican Gary Sherman, who voted in support of the bill just three months ago. Sherman said he changed his mind because he felt fellow Republicans were seeking the override only to embarrass Doyle (MIL-

WAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL). • **CORRECTION:** *The January 26 Capitol Journal mistakenly identified Mike Leavitt as the governor of UTAH. Leavitt is actually the new head of the federal Environmental Protection Agency. Utah's governor is Republican Olene S. Walker.*

— Compiled by RICH EHISEN

Hot Issues

A BORTION: A federal judge rules that VIRGINIA's law barring late-term abortion is unconstitutional. The law, passed last year, makes it a crime for doctors to perform partial birth abortion procedures. State officials say they will appeal the decision (WASHINGTON POST).

BUSINESS: The KENTUCKY House unanimously approves HB 319, a bill that would require equal treatment for Bluegrass State banks in other states and "foreign" banks in Kentucky. It moves to the Senate (COURIER-JOURNAL [LOUISVILLE]). • **DELAWARE** makes corporate data for all of the state's 580,000 incorporated businesses available online. The information had previously only been available via a 900 number or in person (BURLINGTON FREE PRESS).

grants from attending the state's public colleges and universities. It would also force colleges to remove illegal immigrants already attending those schools. It moves to the full House (WASHINGTON POST).

ENVIRONMENT: The **WEST VIRGINIA** Senate approves HB 4022, a bill that would effectively ban All Terrain Vehicles (ATV's) from any paved roads. It goes back to the House for further consideration (CHARLESTON GAZETTE).

HEALTH: A package of bills that would, among other things, mandate that Medicare pay for in-home care for the elderly passes its first test in a **VERMONT** House committee. The three-bill package moves to the full House (RUTLAND HERALD). • The **KENTUCKY** House also touches on in-home care by approving HB 116, which will allow some state Medicaid recipients to choose their care providers. It moves to the Senate (COURIER-JOURNAL [LOUISVILLE]). • The **NEW YORK** Assembly approves a bill that would allow an oral "morning after" contraceptive to be sold over the counter without a prescription. It moves now to the Senate, where similar legislation died last year (NEW YORK TIMES). • More than 12,000 **MINNESOTA** residents log on to a state-run Web site that provides information on how to purchase low-cost prescription drugs from Canada. It was the first weekend of operation for the site, which has the blessing of Gov. Tim Pawlenty (R) (MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE). • A **FLORIDA** House committee approves HB 333, legislation that would bar lawsuits against fast food restaurants from plaintiffs who say the junk food has made them obese. Lawsuits seeking damages from fast food suppliers have been filed in both **CALIFORNIA** and **NEW YORK** (ST. PETERSBURG TIMES).

POTPOURRI: An **IOWA** House panel approves legislation that would make it a crime to bring a cellular phone with photographic capabilities into locker rooms, bathrooms or other public places where people disrobe. It moves to the full House (QUAD CITY TIMES). • The **KANSAS** House gives the green light to HB 2522, legislation that would prohibit private ownership of electronic devices that can change traffic lights from red to green. The bill motors on to the Senate (KANSAS CITY STAR).



— Compiled by RICH EHISEN

SNCJ spotlight

Continued from page 2

The opponents of the measure say that gay rights advocates in the Legislature have become so unrestrained that they have overreached. Eventually, they believe these new laws will spark a backlash.

"People weren't paying attention to legislation over the past few years," said state Senator Pete Knight (R), one of the backers of Proposition 22. "These bills haven't affected people yet. Eventually, people will begin to understand the damage they can do. They'll wake up and want a change."

Although California doesn't have the most extensive civil rights for gays and lesbians in the nation, many gay activists say it does rank near the top. States, however, have approached the issue differently.

The Massachusetts high court's ruling said discriminating against same-sex couples that want a marriage license is unconstitutional, opening the door for a same-sex couple to be treated entirely the same under state law. VERMONT's high court had previously reached a similar decision, prompting the Legislature and then Governor Howard Dean to create a separate category for same-sex couples called civil unions, which confers fewer rights than full marriage. HAWAII and California established a third category, domestic partnerships, that allows same-sex couples some rights and benefits.

California is unique in that its Legislature acted independently to expand gay rights without pressure from court decisions.

"In the last four years California has made tremendous strides in protecting its LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender citizens]," said Geoffrey Kors, executive director of Equality California, a gay rights organization. "California did it on its own."

During his five years in office, California Gov. Davis (D), whose views often remained a mystery to liberal party activists, was clear in his commitment to gay rights, signing legislation banning discrimination against gays in schools, establishing a domestic partners registry for same-sex couples and allowing state unions to bargain for health benefits for same-sex partners.

Davis also signed AB 205 in 2003, which vastly expands the rights and responsibilities of domestic partners, treating them nearly the same as married

In the Hopper

State Net's database tracks tens of thousands of bills in all 50 states at any given time. Here's a snapshot of what's in the legislative works:

- **Number of prefiles/intros this week:** **8,967**
- **Number of prefiles/intros overall in 2003:** **215,613**
- **Number of bills enacted/adopted this week:** **397**
- **Number enacted/adopted overall in 2003:** **43,794**

— Compiled By GINA HUMMELL
(2003 data current as of 2/2/04
Source: State Net

couples in critical areas of state law, including child custody, child and spousal support and property acquisition.

Under the law, which doesn't take effect until 2005, partners won't have to testify in court against each other, but they will have an obligation to pay each other's debt. They also must list the income of their partner when applying for need-based benefits. Further, partnerships that last longer than five years or include children have to be dissolved in court, using the same divorce laws that apply to married couples. He also signed a bill requiring businesses that contract with the state to treat domestic partners the same as spouses when it comes to benefits.

Politicians like Davis are increasingly aware that there is political profit in recognizing the gay community. Next to African-Americans, gay voters are the most loyal Democrats, according to a variety of exit polls. Further, gays make up 10 percent of the vote in a Democratic primary in California and nationwide. Nationally, all the major candidates for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination favor some form of domestic partnership for same-sex couples, although none of the major candidates has endorsed gay marriage. Gay and lesbian activists have also become regular and generous donors, and have organized a wide variety of political and lobbying groups. Gay activists have also learned how to access governmental assistance and get more involved in local and partisan politics.

But it hasn't been easy. Assemblyman John Laird (D-Santa Cruz), an openly gay member of the Legislature who has held various elected offices, believes that gay elected officials have to meet higher standards. "I've always felt I had to be significantly better than other politicians to get elected," he said.

State Senator Sheila Kuehl (D-Santa Monica), the first openly gay state legislator to be elected in California, has established herself as one of the more popular and effective legislators at the Capitol. In the 2002 elections, she led a group of Democrats who succeeded in electing more liberal legislators, including the first openly gay male lawmakers, Democrats Mark Leno and Laird. Now, Kuehl is a contender to replace Senate President pro Tempore John Burton, who will be termed out of office this year.

Art Cronney, a lobbyist for the Committee on Moral Concerns, which opposes gay rights bills, said he believes gays have succeeded in part because they have improved their public image.

During the 1980's, he said, young, rowdy men dressed in flamboyant clothes used to descend on the Capitol each year to try to help pass a gay rights bill. Their appearance contributed to the view that gays were on the margins of society and didn't have to be taken seriously. Now gays are often represented by men and women in business suits, who could just as easily be at home in a corporate boardroom as a gay rights rally.

The increasing success of gay rights is also a reflection of greater public support. In 1977, the non-partisan California Field Poll reported that only 28 percent of voters favored same-sex marriage. In 2003, that number had climbed to 42 percent.

The 2003 poll also reported widespread support for domestic partnership laws, including 61 percent who support allowing committed same-sex couples to receive benefits from each other, such as pension, health and dental coverage, family leave and death benefits.

Still, Knight, whose son is gay, believes the Legislature is far more tolerant of same-sex couples than the public. "It's not in the best interests of the state to change the definition of marriage. What if three people come in and want to get married? How are you going to refuse them?" he said.

Knight said he has dropped his plans temporarily to try to collect enough signatures to put AB 205 before voters in a referendum. But he believes his court challenge will knock out the new law on the grounds that it violates Proposition 22 by changing the definition of marriage. Governor Schwarzenegger (R) has said he supports gay rights and domestic partners, but he opposes the comprehensive domestic partners law signed by Davis because it is too close to marriage. On a plane ride in December, however, Schwarzenegger told Assemblywoman Christine Kehoe (D), who headed the gay and lesbian caucus last year, that he wouldn't support overturning AB 205. She's not sure how he'll view other issues.

Although the departure of Davis probably means the golden era for gay rights is over, many say that the movement will remain a lasting force in California politics. Most legislators, even conservatives, oppose discrimination against gays, even if they don't want to extend new rights to homosexuals. Further, conservative opponents rarely, if ever, demean gays in floor speeches, legislators say.

California Assembly member Mervyn Dymally (D) believes that even if Kuehl doesn't win the Senate's top job, eventually a gay legislator will become the Assembly speaker or Senate leader. The current gay and lesbian legislators are "very respectable and they're very able," he said.

Dymally calls gay rights laws such as AB 205 "inconceivable" back in 1975. "It was like an unborn baby," he said. "We didn't think that this was even possible."

— By *BILL AINSWORTH*

A longer version of this story originally appeared in the January 2004 edition of California Journal magazine.

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Once around the statehouse lightly

WHITE RABBIT SYNDROME. Rep. Shawn Mitchell was late, was late, for a very important date. So, the COLORADO Republican invoked a rare procedure that allowed his committee to end testimony on a bill and vote on whether to send it to the full House for consideration. The committee subsequently killed the bill. The bill? A Democrat-sponsored measure that would have banned legislators from also working as paid political consultants. Two of Mitchell's committee colleagues, both Republicans, would have been affected by the ban. According to the Denver Post, Mitchell was in a hurry because he had a lunch date with a lobbyist.

JOB SECURITY. Want a little employment insurance in case your current job doesn't pan out? Then do what former Rep. Juba Diez did in LOUISIANA — create a job for yourself elsewhere. Years ago, reports The Advocate of Baton Rouge, Diez, who once served as chair of the House Transportation Committee, was instrumental in creating a \$70,500-a-year slot as legislative liaison for the state Dept. of Transportation. Last month, Diez, defeated for re-election last fall, was appointed to the very same job by department Secy. Kam Movassaghi.

TRAVELING COMPANIONS. When Senate Pres. Jim King climbed aboard a private plane for a trip to Las Vegas, NEVADA, for Super Bowl weekend, he knew that fellow FLORIDA Sen. Alex Diaz de la Portilla would also be aboard. But the two Republican lawmakers told the St. Petersburg Times that they were surprised to find Billy Cypress also hitching a ride. Cypress is chairman of the politically potent Miccosukee Tribe, which a year ago unsuccessfully tried — with King's help — to strip state and local law-enforcement agencies of jurisdiction on tribal land. Just a coincidence, says King. No state business was conducted, he insists. Except a few words about renewed support for Cypress' bill. That's all. No problem. Don't worry about it.

UNGUIDED MISSILE. Political observers in MARYLAND are amused, if nothing else, by the antics of House Del. Donald Dwyer Jr., a first-term Republican who, in a brief career, has sued a fellow delegate, accused nine Democratic colleagues of casting "anti-American" votes and falsely accused the mayor of Annapolis of being anti-war. Last month, notes the Baltimore Sun, Dwyer added to his reputation for unconventional politicking by inviting the defrocked chief justice of the ALABAMA Supreme Court, Roy Moore, to address the Maryland House. Moore was bounced from his job last fall for refusing a court order to remove a monument of the Ten Commandments from his

courthouse — a form of “judicial activism” Dwyer apparently finds appropriate.

FORE! OR, PERHAPS FIVE! That’s how many times a month RHODE ISLAND state Sen. John Celona golfed last spring and summer, with the tab paid for by lobbyists. According to The Providence Journal, many lawmakers and other state officials are routinely treated to meals and golf by high-powered special interests with business before state agencies — including the Legislature. The revelations have prompted some lawmakers to breathe new life into the state Ethics Commission, which has not filed a conflict-of-interest complaint against a public official in over five years.

HOME FIELD ADVANTAGE. The place to stay for this summer’s Republican National Convention at Madison Square Garden in Manhattan (NEW YORK, not KANSAS) is the Sheraton New York Hotel and Towers. Last week, the GOP National Committee met in Albany (New York, not GEORGIA) to hand out coveted hotel assignments. And guess which state delegation got the Sheraton? New York, of course.

-- By A.G. BLOCK

Executive Editor: A.G. Block — editor@statenet.com

Editor: Melanie Smith — editor@statenet.com

Associate Editor: Rich Ehisen — editor@statenet.com

Associate Editor: Korey Clark — editor@statenet.com

Graphic Design: Richard Hansen, Heather Conway

©2004 State Net ISSN: 1521-8449

a publication of
STATE NET. 
www.statenet.com

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