

July 14, 2008

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●
 ● The next issue of
 ● Capitol Journal will be
 ● available on July 21st.
 ●

Top Story

*A collection of bad
 luck, bad timing and
 bad planning has left
CALIFORNIA lawmakers
 with a plethora of
 budget and other woes
 that point to the Golden
 State enduring a long,
 bleak summer.*

SNCJ Spotlight

Fires, rising gas prices and other troubles in California

A collection of bad luck, bad timing and bad planning has left CALIFORNIA lawmakers with a lot of bad things to think about lately. Over the past three weeks, wildfires have scorched 631,000 acres and burned through at least \$112 million in state money. With the worst of the fire season still to come, and the state's costs for fighting fires already up 41 percent over last year, several fund-raising measures have been proposed. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's (R) 2008-09 budget plan, for



instance, calls for an insurance surcharge on all home and business owners that would raise \$130 million to help cover the state’s firefighting costs.

But some lawmakers have begun asking whether CALIFORNIA taxpayers are footing that bill to protect the state’s natural resources or to bail out homeowners who’ve chosen to build their homes in fire-prone areas.

“The fact is the residents of California are simply not paying enough for fire protection,” said Sen. Christine Kehoe (D). She believes that’s particularly true of

“The fact is the residents of California are simply not paying enough for fire protection.”

those who live in rural areas that are highly susceptible to fires. So she’s introduced a bill proposing that such residents pay an annual firefighting fee.

The idea is similar to one advocated by the state’s nonpartisan Legislative Analyst’s Office in a recent report, which stated: “Because the state provides a service — fire protection — that directly benefits a particular group...it is appropriate that those beneficiaries pay for a portion of the state’s cost for fire protection.” The LAO favors a property-tax surcharge on residents who live in areas protected by the state’s fire department, known as CalFire.

On top of the wildfires and the issue of who should pay for them, CALIFORNIA officials have also been worrying about the rising cost of gas. With one of the largest state fleets in the nation — 40,000 passenger vehicles and 10,000 medium- and heavy-duty vehicles — few states have likely been hit as hard at the pump as CALIFORNIA. The funny thing is no one really knows just how hard that is. The state’s 50,000

“As California begins to look at its needs, we really do need to get a handle on where our vehicles are, what our vehicles cost us, the maintenance on them, fuel use.”

vehicles are dispersed over 100 agencies with no central database tracking their use. Only 40 percent of the fuel for these vehicles is bought in bulk. The rest is purchased at commercial pumps with credit cards.

Sen. President Pro Tem Don Perata (D) said the state needs to do a better job of monitoring how much it’s spending “as we begin to pass \$5 gas,” and he called the Department of General Services, which operates about 15 percent of the state fleet, a “mess.”

Will Bush, director of the department, conceded as much at his recent Senate confirmation hearing.

“As California begins to look at its needs, we really do need to get a handle on where our vehicles are, what our vehicles cost us, the maintenance on them, fuel use,” he said.

But Bush also said a system to do that was in the works.

Factoring into both the fire and fuel issues is the state's looming \$15.2 billion budget deficit. Last week, the Legislature's majority Democrats proposed billions in tax increases to help bridge the gap, including a rollback of the dependent child income tax credit expanded in the 1990s, the creation of two higher income tax brackets for the state's highest wage earners and corporate tax hikes.

Republicans, however, pledged to deny the Dems' plan the votes needed to pass because raising taxes, they said, would be disastrous for families already struggling in a tough economy and possibly drive businesses out of the state.

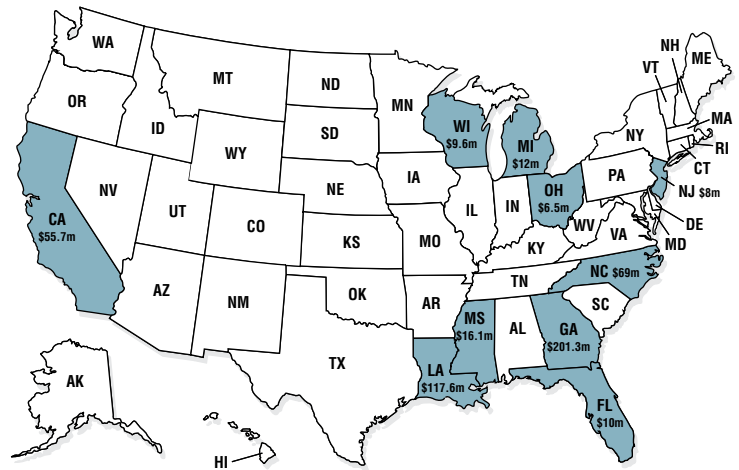
"I guarantee you it will be a troubled and very challenged proposal on the Assembly floor," said Assemblyman Roger Niello (R), a member of the legislative conference committee that worked on the plan. "After we're done (rejecting the tax increases), we can all go back to square one to figure out how we get a supermajority vote on this budget."

Democrats proceeded to draw their own line in the sand, saying they'd done all they could to cut spending without hurting education and health care, and they would only consider alternative revenue proposals at this point.

The Legislature has already missed its June 15 constitutional deadline for passing a balanced budget for the fiscal year that began July 1. And it looks like the state is headed for another lengthy standoff — unless the two sides head the advice of Gov. Schwarzenegger.

"You know, I have always been against tax increases," he said. "But I always want to keep everything on the table, because you cannot go into negotiations and say don't talk to me about this, don't talk to me about that. You have to be open-minded, and that's the only way you can get a compromise done."

Bird's eye view



Source: Detroit Free Press, Associated Press, U.S. Census Bureau, World Institute for Strategic Economic Research

States doing brisk business with Iran

The talk toward Iran has gotten increasingly tough over the course of the Bush administration. But despite Iran's being part of the "axis of evil" — and economic sanctions that have been on and off for nearly three decades — U.S.



trade with the country has fared pretty well during the Bush years, according to an analysis of Census Bureau data by the Associated Press. The top 10 states have exported more than \$500 million in agricultural commodities, medicines and other goods that have been exempted from the sanctions. GEORGIA topped the list of exporters, and cigarettes topped the list of exports. Other notable shipments included brassieres, bull semen, fur clothing, musical instruments and possibly weapons. The accompanying map shows the top 10 exporters and the dollar amount they exported from 2001 through 2007.



There has been at least one bright spot this month for public officials in the Golden State, however. And it came from an unlikely source: Proposition 13, CALIFORNIA’s 30-year-old property tax cap law, oft-lamented by cash-strapped local governments for limiting property tax increases to 2 percent per year even when real estate prices have soared.

Last week, however, county assessors across Southern California began reporting that despite declining real estate values with the housing slump, overall tax collections were up compared to last year, and the tax-cap law appeared to be largely responsible.

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“The big factor is Prop. 13,” said Los Angeles County Assessor Rick Auerbach.

The law allows the 2-percent increases to be assessed even in housing downturns, and local governments had evidently taken advantage of that fact.

Jack Kyser, the chief economist for the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corp., said the revenue numbers showed that Prop. 13 is actually an economic “stabilizer” that not only keeps homeowners’ tax bills from soaring but also keeps local governments’ tax revenues from plummeting.

(WALL STREET JOURNAL, SACRAMENTO BEE, LOS ANGELES TIMES)

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

Budget & taxes

COURT NIXES FL CASINO DEAL: Last fall, when FLORIDA Gov. Charlie Crist (R) was negotiating a gambling compact with the Seminole Indian Tribe, critics warned that he needed legislative approval to make a deal. But Crist pressed ahead and forged an agreement allowing the Seminoles to offer Vegas-style slot machines and table games like blackjack and baccarat prohibited by state law. The tribe has since installed slot machines at six of its seven casinos and paid the state \$60.4 million as part of its \$100 million obligation for this year.

Last week, however, the FLORIDA Supreme Court proved the critics right, striking down that compact.

“The governor has no authority to change or amend state law,” the court unanimously ruled. “Such power falls exclusively to the Legislature.”

House Speaker Marco Rubio (R), who filed the suit that led to that ruling, said, “The court’s decision is a victory for our constitutional system of checks and balances.”

Crist’s former chief of staff, George LeMieux, who was the state’s lead negotiator on the compact, said the fault was the Legislature’s for failing to pass a law ratifying the deal.

“It’s easy to be a critic. It’s easy to file lawsuits,” LeMieux said. “But governors have to act, and this governor was in a position where they (the federal government) told him he had to act or they would give slot machines to the Seminoles and the state would receive nothing. We’re now in a position where that might actually happen.”

What does actually happen next is uncertain. Crist could ask the state Supreme Court for a rehearing or appeal the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court. The Seminoles could also seek a federal court opinion. Or the U.S. Department of Interior’s Bureau of Indian Affairs, which approved Crist’s deal, could get involved. The Legislature could also move to launch negotiations of its own with the tribe.

The only thing that did appear likely was that the games would stay in the casinos for the time being.

“The suit challenged the power of the governor to enter into a compact with the tribe without the approval or ratification of the Legislature,” said Barry Richard, an attorney for the Seminole Tribe. “It was not about whether or not the games could proceed.” (ST. PETERSBURG TIMES)

BUDGETS IN BRIEF: FEMA announced last month that it will no longer hand out ice to victims of storms but will leave that task to states, although it said it would reimburse states for some of the costs they incur. The agency said it will only provide ice in medical emergencies or life threatening situations (STATELINE.ORG). • **ILLINOIS** Gov. Rod Blagojevich (D) slashed \$1.4 billion in funding for health care, education, social services and transportation from the unbalanced \$59 billion budget sent to him by lawmakers. “I did their job for them. I balanced the budget,” Blagojevich said (CHICAGO TRIBUNE). • **NEW JERSEY** officials said

The week in session

States in Regular Session: CA, DC, MA, MI, NC, US

States in Recess: IL, NJ, NY, PA

States in Special Session: AK “d”, CA “c”, MS “a”, PA “a”

Special Sessions in Recess: CA “a”, CA “b”, CT “b”, CT “c”

States in Skeleton Session: OH

States in Perfunctory Session: IL
Special Sessions “a”-“v”

States Currently Prefiling or Drafting for 2009: KY, MT, ND, NV

States Adjourned in 2008: AK, AL, AZ, CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, HI, IA, ID, IN, KS, KY, LA, MD, ME, MN, MO, MS, NE, NH, NM, OK, RI, SC, SD, TN, UT, VA, VT, WA, WI, WV, WY

State Special Sessions Adjourned in 2008: AK “c”, AL “a”, AR “a”, CT “a”, DE “a”, KY “a”, LA “a”, LA “b”, ME “a”, NC “b”, NH “a”, NV “a”, OR “a”, VA “a”, VA “b”, WI “c”, WI “d”, WI “e”, WV “a”, WV “b”

Letters indicate special/extraordinary sessions

— Compiled By JAMES ROSS
(session information current as of 07/11/2008)
Source: State Net database

last week they are considering leasing some lanes of the New Jersey Turnpike to private firms to help fund major transportation improvements without major toll increases. Under one proposal, privately operated lanes would be designated exclusively for truck and bus traffic, while another would create “express lanes” for motorists willing to pay a premium for reduced traffic (STAR-LEDGER [NEWARK]). • **NEW JERSEY** also expanded its FamilyCare health-insurance program last week to cover more low-income families and every child in the state. The move is a first step toward ensuring all the state’s residents have health insurance by 2011 (ASSOCIATED PRESS, PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER). • Also in **NEW JERSEY**, Gov. Jon Corzine (D) signed legislation last week authorizing the state to borrow \$3.9 billion for school construction, a controversial move because voters aren’t being asked to approve the plan, despite the governor’s call to stop selling bonds without the public’s consent. Corzine reportedly allowed this borrowing because it is backed by income tax collections and because the state has failed to comply with court orders to build schools in the state’s poorest districts (ASBURY PARK PRESS). • Twelve cents of every \$1 paid for health insurance in **MASSACHUSETTS** — \$1.3 billion a year — goes toward 26 state-mandated benefits, including maternity, mental healthcare, infertility and diabetes services, according to a report commissioned in 2006 as part of the state’s near-universal health insurance law and released last week. Insurers and small business groups said the report shows mandates are helping to drive up the costs of healthcare (BOSTON GLOBE). • **PENNSYLVANIA** Gov. Ed Rendell (D) signed a \$28.2 billion state budget this month, four days after the state deadline. The budget boosts spending by 3.9 percent by relying on state borrowing rather than raising taxes or fees (PITTSBURG TRIBUNE REVIEW). • Despite spending six extra days in Richmond, **VIRGINIA** lawmakers adjourned their special session last week without agreeing on a transportation funding plan (TIMES-DISPATCH [RICHMOND]). • With fuel costs up 35-40 percent since last year, schools are scaling back bus service, and at least 86 districts across the nation have switched to four-day weeks, according to the National School Boards Association (USA TODAY). • **KENTUCKY** has released nearly 900 prison inmates since the end of May to save the state \$30 million over the next two years. Although the inmates were parole violators who had been sent back to prison, more than 200 of them were originally incarcerated for murder, rape, burglary and assault (COURIER-JOURNAL [LOUISVILLE]).

Upcoming elections

07/10/2008 - 07/31/2008

07/15/2008

Alabama Primary Runoff

US House

(Congressional Districts 2 and 5)

Georgia Primary Election

House (All)

Senate (All)

US House (All)

US Senate (Chambliss)

07/29/2008

Oklahoma Primary Election

House (All)

Senate (Odd)

US Senate (Inhofe)

US House (All)

— Compiled by **KOREY CLARK**

Politics & leadership

OFFICIALS INVESTIGATE POSSIBLE VOTING FRAUD IN AL: Federal and state election officials are investigating allegations of voting fraud in three predominantly black counties in ALABAMA that played a role in the struggle for civil rights in the 1960s.

A local biracial citizens group, the Democracy Defense League, has submitted affidavits describing several instances of citizens being paid for their votes and voting multiple times in the same election. And ALABAMA Secretary of State Beth Chapman (R) has suggested that the absentee ballot process may have been abused

“The Republican Party has an unscripted mandate to target Democratic counties, and African-Americans particularly.”

during the June 3 primary, pointing out that in one county, Perry, a quarter of the voters cast absentee ballots, six times the state average.

The accusations come at a time when Republican officials across the country have been calling for stricter ID requirements at the polls, which Democrats contend is merely an effort to diminish Democratic voter turnout, leading some to suggest that the allegations in ALABAMA are politically motivated.

“The Republican Party has an unscripted mandate to target Democratic counties, and African-Americans particularly,” said Albert Turner Jr., a Perry County commissioner.

But not all Democrats agree with him.

Perry County District Attorney Michael W. Jackson, a Democrat and the first African-American to be elected to that office, called last month for a federal

“Just the volume, the sheer number of it. For there to be that many, it’s suspicious. When you get the absentee ballots, it’s a lot easier to pull that off, forge their names, vote for them.”

investigation into possible voter fraud involving absentee ballots.

“Just the volume, the sheer number of it,” Jackson said. “For there to be that many, it’s suspicious. When you get the absentee ballots, it’s a lot easier to pull that

off, forge their names, vote for them.” He added, “It certainly needs to be looked at, because given the historic significance of Perry County, we want to make sure candidates and the public have a fair process.”

Several other Perry County residents, a third of whom live below the poverty line, said they’d seen votes bought by local officials.

“I’ve been standing around when they come and do it,” said Kisha Cole. “They say, ‘I gotcha,’ means they’re going to handle you when you sign your ballot, give you \$20-\$30.” Another resident, Chris Steadman, said: “Well, yeah, I’ve accepted it. \$100, \$50. It’s pretty common. Ain’t no jobs around here. I know it’s wrong.”

Perry County happens to be the place where an Alabama trooper shot and killed a young local activist one night in 1965, which led to the Voting Rights Act that enfranchised blacks throughout the South.

The incongruity wasn’t lost on the county’s residents.

“You’re sitting in the seat of civil rights,” said Carol Warnick. “These people fought for it. And now their vote is being taken from them.” (NEW YORK TIMES)

VETERAN PA SENATOR LEAVES OFFICE EARLY: Thirty-year PENNSYLVANIA Sen. Vincent Fumo (D) announced this month that he is leaving office before the end of his term this year in order to prepare to fight federal corruption charges.

The longtime minority party chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Fumo has wielded considerable influence over state funding. And even his adversaries acknowledge that he usually managed to get what he wanted, despite not being a member of the chamber’s GOP majority.

Last year, however, federal prosecutors indicted Fumo on charges that he defrauded the state Senate and used the staff of a nonprofit group to do personal and political work for him. His trial begins in September.

“I will miss it terribly. I spent half my life here and I spent it here with every fiber in my body,” Fumo said of his time in office. “I’ve loved it, I’ve hated it. I’ve had great experiences and very sad ones.”

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

STATES DEAL WITH GLUT OF NEGLECTED PROPERTY: The national foreclosure crisis has done more than harm the economy and push thousands of people from their homes — it has also created a glut of abandoned and neglected properties that have become ripe targets for metals theft, drug crimes and vandalism. In addition, a recent Temple University study indicates that abandoned properties lower the value of nearby homes by as much as \$7,600.

To help combat that situation, many states now require banks and other mortgage lenders to better care for the properties they repossess, with several more states considering similar measures. Over the last year, 15 states have considered such bills, with INDIANA, KENTUCKY, OHIO, TENNESSEE, and WYOMING adopting them into law. Last week, CALIFORNIA joined them when Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) signed SB 1137, a measure that requires property holders to maintain a foreclosed home’s exterior or face a fine of up to \$1,000 per day. In a statement after the bill cleared the Assembly, bill author and Senate Pro Tem Don



they can to help legal immigrants in the state, but I'm not for putting any of our taxpayers' money into anything that deals with illegal immigrants because they're breaking the law," said Jim Rizoli, director of Concerned Citizens and Friends of Illegal Immigration Law Enforcement. "I don't understand how they can do that with a good conscience." (BOSTON GLOBE)

PALIN PUSHES SECOND PIPELINE: ALASKA Gov. Sarah Palin (R) announced last week that the state will partner with Enstar Natural Gas Co. to build a pipeline to provide affordable gas to rural parts of the Last Frontier. Palin said the state may eventually invest as much as \$3 billion into the development of that line, which would complement a much larger proposed pipeline to carry North Slope gas

into Canada and the Midwest. The secondary pipeline would be a fraction of the size of the one she endorsed under the Alaska Gasline Inducement Act of 2007, or AGIA. That line is expected to carry around 4.5 billion cubic feet per day, while the smaller in-state line, which Palin calls "AGIA lite," would carry only about 460 million cubic feet.

"It's great that they do whatever they can to help legal immigrants in the state, but I'm not for putting any of our taxpayers' money into anything that deals with illegal immigrants because they're breaking the law."

ALASKA lawmakers are currently considering whether to award Canadian oil giant TransCanada Corp. a state license and a \$500 subsidy to build the larger interstate line. (ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS)

GRANHOLM SUPPORTS NEW CONSTITUTION: MICHIGAN Gov. Jennifer Granholm (D) said she endorses rewriting the state's constitution, but she's not as sure that a proposed ballot measure backed by some of the state's top Democrats is the way to do it. That proposal, backed by a group called Reform Michigan Government Now, would revamp many of the constitution's political provisions, including cutting pay and benefits for elected officials. Granholm said she prefers such a sweeping revision be handled through a constitutional convention, and further suggested she would support legislation to put a constitutional convention proposal on the November ballot to compete with the current reform initiative. No such legislation is in the works, however, and Granholm herself admitted that she hasn't really given the idea much thought. (DETROIT FREE PRESS)

EXECUTIVE ORDERS: LOUISIANA Gov. Bobby Jindal (R) issues EO 08-21, which directs state health officials and the Governor's Program on Abstinence "to promote abstinence education with parents or legal guardians

and to develop an aggressive campaign targeting” both adolescents and parents (STATE NET). • **VIRGINIA** Gov. Tim Kaine (D) issues EO 73, which creates the Governor’s Commission on Immigration, which will “study the costs and benefits that immigration is having on the Commonwealth” (STATE NET). • **OHIO** Gov. Ted Strickland (D) issues EO 2008-17S, which allows all military personnel, their spouses and dependent children to pay in-state tuition rates at Buckeye State colleges and universities (CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER). • **PENNSYLVANIA** Gov. Ed Rendell (D) issues EO 2008-05, which restores the PENNSYLVANIA Health Care Cost Containment Council, a state agency that assesses data on the cost and quality of health care. The agency was recently closed down when lawmakers did not authorize new funding for its operation. The governor’s order is good through November (PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE).

In the hopper

At any given time, State Net tracks tens of thousands of bills in all 50 states, the US Congress and the District of Columbia. Here’s a snapshot of what’s in the legislative works:

Number of prefiles last week: 222

Number of Intros last week: 369

Number of bills enacted/adopted last week: 687

Number of prefiles to date: 21,037

Number of Intros to date: 86,621

Number of bills enacted/adopted overall to date: 24,368

— Compiled By JAMES ROSS
(measures current as of 07/10/2008)
Source: State Net database

GOVERNORS IN BRIEF: Saying that high fuel prices are forcing some families to choose between food and heat, four New England governors sent letters to President Bush, the presidential candidates, U.S. House and Senate leaders and their congressional delegations asking for an increase in the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. Governors John Baldacci of **MAINE**, Deval Patrick of **MASSACHUSETTS** and John Lynch of **NEW HAMPSHIRE**, all Democrats, were joined by **RHODE ISLAND** Gov. Don Carcieri (R) in asking for a boost in fuel-assistance funding to \$1 billion this year, up from last year’s \$252 million for the six-state region (BOSTON HERALD). • **LOUISIANA** Gov. Bobby Jindal (R) vetoed HB 1337, legislation that would have created an exception to state conflict-of-interest laws to allow public servants to enter into transactions to obtain “a governmental service...under the same terms and conditions as applicable to a member of the general public.” Jindal called the bill unnecessary (ADVOCATE [BATON ROUGE]). • **RHODE ISLAND** Gov. Don Carcieri (R) suggested last week that the U.S. Attorney’s office should look into whether Providence Mayor David Cicilline is breaking his oath of office by failing to uphold Carcieri’s executive order requiring state police and prison officials to identify illegal immigrants for possible deportation. Cicilline accused the governor of “playing politics” (BOSTON GLOBE). • **HAWAII** Gov. Linda



Lingle (R) issued her state-record 53rd veto last week, the most since Lingle vetoed 50 measures in 2002. But Aloha State lawmakers this session also issued a total of 17 overrides, almost three times as many as the six overrides they managed in 2002 (HONOLULU ADVERTISER). • **ARKANSAS** Governor Mike Beebe (D) released \$200,000 from the Governor's Emergency Fund to assist development of a state trauma system. The money will be used to enhance communication and coordination among hospitals and emergency medical services (DAILY CITIZEN [SEARCY]). • **FLORIDA** Gov. Charlie Crist (R) has announced he is getting married. Crist is currently the only bachelor among male governors (LOS ANGELES TIMES).

Upcoming stories

Here are some of the topics you will see covered in upcoming issues of the State Net Capitol Journal:

- **Nuclear power**
- **Prison health care**
- **No Child Left Behind**

— *Compiled by RICH EHISEN*

Hot issues

B **BUSINESS:** In **CALIFORNIA**, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) signs SB 1137, which requires Golden State mortgage lenders to contact home borrowers to discuss loan modifications by phone or in person before entering foreclosure proceedings. The law also bars lenders from beginning a foreclosure for at least 30 days after that contact. In addition, tenants of rental homes must receive 60 days written notice to vacate a property once it is foreclosed. The law takes effect immediately (SACRAMENTO BEE). • **PENNSYLVANIA** Gov. Ed Rendell (D) signs legislation that requires cigarettes sold in the Keystone State to be fire-safe, which self-extinguish when left unattended. The law goes into effect next January (PATRIOT-NEWS [HARRISBURG]). • **HAWAII** Gov. Linda Lingle (R) also signs legislation that requires all cigarettes sold in the Aloha State to be fire-safe by October 2009 (HONOLULU ADVERTISER). • Back in **PENNSYLVANIA**, Rendell signs SB 949, a bill that, among other things, creates the state Coal Mine Safety Board, which will have the authority to write new mine safety regulations that do not require approval from the legislature or the governor (HERALD STANDARD [UNIONTOWN]). • **NEW YORK** Gov. David Paterson (D) signs legislation that allows the manufacture and sale of wine-flavored ice cream. The new product would be no more than 5 percent alcohol and not available to those under 21 (NEW YORK TIMES).

CRIME & PUNISHMENT: In **NEW YORK**, Gov. David Paterson (D) signs legislation that expands a state law which criminalizes the use of brass knuckles as

weapons to include the use of plastic knuckles as well (NEW YORK TIMES).

• Still in **NEW YORK**, Paterson says he will also sign legislation that allows people who are dating, including those in same-sex relationships, to seek protection from abusers in family court. Current law allows such orders only against current or former spouses (NEW YORK TIMES). • **SOUTH CAROLINA** Gov. Mark Sanford (R) signs legislation that allows motorcyclists and bikers to run red lights if the sensor that controls the signal doesn't detect their vehicle and change the light to green within two minutes (GREENVILLE NEWS).

EDUCATION: The **TEXAS** Attorney General says that a proposed statewide Bible course for public schools would not violate the First Amendment. The course would be voluntary for high school students. It is scheduled to take effect in the 2009-10 school year (SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS). • **NEW YORK** Gov. David Paterson (D) signs legislation that bans smoking in all public college and university residence halls (DEMOCRAT & CHRONICLE [ROCHESTER]). • **CALIFORNIA** education officials approve a new policy that by 2011 will require all eighth-graders in public school to take Algebra 1. Officials say failure to implement the new requirement would have disqualified the state from several federal programs and placed most Golden State middle schools on a list of failing campuses that could ultimately be restructured from the bottom up (SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE).

ENVIRONMENT: The **HAWAII** Legislature overrides Gov. Linda Lingle's (R) veto of SB 2843, a measure that requires manufacturers of electronic devices like printers, fax machines and scanners to collect and recycle those products (HONOLULU STAR BULLETIN). • Still in **HAWAII**, Lingle vetoes SB 2933, which would have made it illegal for homeowners associations to bar residents from using clotheslines to dry their laundry. Lawmakers were unable to override the veto (HONOLULU STAR BULLETIN). • **MICHIGAN** Gov. Jennifer Granholm (D) signs legislation that approves the Wolverine State's participation in the Great Lakes Basin Compact, which commits the eight Great Lakes states to consider as a group requests for bulk diversions of water from those waterways. Under the Compact, a single governor can block such a diversion. **MICHIGAN** is the last of the eight states to sign off on the deal, which must still be approved by Congress and the president before it can go into effect (DETROIT FREE PRESS).

HEALTH & SCIENCE: In **NEW JERSEY**, Gov. Jon Corzine (D) signs legislation that requires all Garden State children 18 years and younger to have health coverage within a year. The new law also expands the state's HMO-style health-care program FamilyCare to parents earning up to twice the poverty level, or about \$42,000 a year for a family of four. It currently cuts off at 133 percent of poverty (ASBURY PARK PRESS). • **PENNSYLVANIA** Gov. Ed Rendell (D) signs



HB 1150, a bill that requires private insurers to cover medically necessary treatments for individuals with autism up to age 21. Coverage is capped at \$36,000 per year (WALL STREET JOURNAL). • The **NORTH CAROLINA** Senate approves legislation that would bar smoking in all state-owned or leased cars. The measure moves to Gov. Mike Easley (D) for review (RALEIGH NEWS & OBSERVER).

In case you missed it

For almost half of U.S. workforce, getting sick means losing precious income they can rarely afford to go without. But as we reported in the July 7 issue of SNCJ, several states are considering bills to require employers to give workers a minimum number of paid sick days each year.

In case you missed it, the article can be found on our Web site at http://www.statenet.com/capitol_journal/07-14-2008/html

IMMIGRATION: Joining a growing list of states with similar measures, **MISSOURI** Gov. Matt Blunt (R) signs HB 1549, legislation that requires employers to verify the legal employment status of every public employee; allows for cancellation of state contracts for contractors if they hire illegal immigrants; requires public agencies to verify the legal status of applicants before providing welfare benefits; criminalizes the transportation of illegal immigrants for exploitative purposes; and enacts provisions to punish employers who hire illegal immigrants, including the loss of their business license. The measure also bars the creation of sanctuary cities in the Show Me State (JOPLIN GLOBE).

SOCIAL POLICY: PENNSLVANIA Gov. Ed Rendell (D) signs HB 1693, which defines a “social worker” as someone who holds a current license under the act or has received a bachelors degree or higher from an accredited school or program of social work or social welfare. The measure also makes it unlawful for someone to present themselves as a social worker without meeting the official definition of that position (PENNSYLVANIA GOVERNOR’S OFFICE).

POTPOURRI: LOUISIANA Gov. Bobby Jindal (R) signs HB 455, legislation that makes the fleur-de-lis an official state symbol. Jindal also signs HB 5, which makes the first Sunday after the start of hurricane season a day of remembrance for the victims of hurricanes Katrina and Rita (ADVOCATE [BATON ROUGE]). • **NEW YORK** Gov. David Paterson (D) vetoes legislation that would have authorized a medal for veterans of the Cold War. Paterson said doing so could cost the Empire State \$18 million. He also noted that Congress had rejected a similar proposal 10 years ago ((DEMOCRAT & CHRONICLE [ROCHESTER]).

— *Compiled by RICH EHISEN*

Once around the statehouse lightly

PEDAL POWER: If sky-high gas prices have got you down, MICHIGAN Gov. Jennifer Granholm has a solution: ride a bike. But unlike some pols that say one thing and then do another, Granholm is actually practicing what she preaches. As the *Lansing State Journal* reports, the 49-year-old governor is riding her bike into the office two days a week to save a few bucks on gas. Not that Granholm is in the tank financially — her pedal pushing is part of a program she has created to help Wolverine State residents find ways to share rides, find the cheapest gasoline and use alternative transportation. And yes, the gov’s security guys get to pedal right along with her. So if you are tooling around Lansing and want to catch Granholm in action, just look for the stylishly-dressed woman on a bike...surrounded by all the beefy guys in dark suits and sunglasses.

DON’T SHOOT: After seeing his previously pristine image take a beating over an extramarital affair he had with a TV reporter, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa — a presumed candidate to replace termed-out CALIFORNIA Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2010 — is closely watching his Ps and Qs these days. As the *Los Angeles Times* reports, the mayor’s image consciousness was on full display at a recent press conference. To commemorate the opening of 15 Los Angeles Unified School District pools to the public during the summer, Villaraigosa was supposed to fire a starter pistol to launch a group of high school kids into an Olympic-size pool. Alas, the mayor refused to be photographed holding a gun, “even a fake one.” Instead, he grabbed a microphone and started the madness by counting to three. Funny, all those fake guns and violence didn’t seem to hurt the current governor a bit.

MISSING IN ACTION: What if you held an award ceremony and none of the honorees showed up? Well, MISSOURI Gov. Matt Blunt found out for himself last week. As the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reports, Blunt was on hand at the Capitol recently to honor four Show Me State police officers for bravery in the line of duty. A whole herd of reporters were there as well. Unfortunately, however, the police officers themselves were nowhere to be found. It seems that nobody ever bothered to tell them about the ceremony. So, with an anxious governor fidgeting about and nobody to pin a medal on, the event was cancelled. A Blunt spokesperson said the four officers will be honored at a later date.



FOLSOM BRIDGE BLUES: Until 1956, most people not living in or near the tiny Northern CALIFORNIA town of Folsom probably didn't even know it existed. That year a then-neophyte country music singer named Johnny Cash recorded the song *Folsom Prison Blues*, an ode to a fictional inmate of the town's very real state prison. That song — and a later live album Cash recorded at the prison — made Cash and Folsom famous around the world. So it is understandable why many residents wanted to name a new bridge across the American River the Johnny Cash Skyway in honor of the late singer, who died in 2003. But as the *Sacramento Bee* reports, city fathers rebuffed the idea, deciding that since they are spending \$30 million in city funds to build it, the bridge should have Folsom in the name. Fair enough, but you have to admit that Folsom Lake Crossing doesn't have quite the same flair.

— By RICH EHISEN

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