

February 15, 2010

SNCJ Q&A



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The next issue of
Capitol Journal will be
available on March 1.

Top Story

In our latest one-on-one conversation, SNCJ talks with MASSACHUSETTS Sen. Richard Moore (D) about his state's historic health care reform program and the surprising election of Scott Brown.

SNCJ Spotlight

A few words with: MASSACHUSETTS Sen. Richard Moore

MASSACHUSETTS Sen. Richard Moore (D) was one of the principal architects of the historic legislation that gave his state near universal health care coverage. With health care reform at the forefront of much of today's political discourse, we spent some time with him recently to learn a bit more about that program and the role it is playing in similar efforts underway in Congress.



SNCJ: You have said in the past that health reform is an ongoing process. In that regard, how is it working so far? What improvements, if any, do you feel need to be made?

Moore: It certainly is working in a couple of ways. We now have about 97 percent of our people with access to health insurance and health care, which is a result of both the original health care legislation we passed in 2006 and a supplemental bill we adopted in 2008. Those bills laid the foundation for both quality improvement and cost containment because if everybody is insured there is less cost-shifting going on, and then you can concentrate on keeping costs down and promoting quality. We have also adopted a statewide infection prevention program, established support for health information technology and helped to create an e-health institute that coordinates state and federal money for it. That will also help to further improve quality and contain costs as it develops.

There are also other things that we've done incrementally, including a 1988 plan that [then]-Gov. [Michael] Dukakis (D) authored, which would have been part of his universal health care plan if he had been elected president. So I think we're on target, and we've laid the foundation to do more. We have planted the seeds and those have started to produce some fruit, which I think demonstrates that you can't do it all at once. You've got to do it over a period of time and hopefully keep moving in the right direction.

SNCJ: Critics of Mass Health have said that it has runaway costs. What is your response to that?

Moore: My response is they don't really know what they're talking about. The Massachusetts Taxpayers Association, which is not exactly one of these liberal "tax-and-spend" groups, and which is funded primarily by the business community, says its costs are within what we planned for and it is working. We know some groups have never liked it, such as the single payer folks and the Libertarian types. Some of the foundations in DC and the West coast also don't like it because there's still too much government involvement for their philosophy. There are plenty of others who've tried to undercut it as well, but they're looking for problems rather than looking for the glass being much more than half full. Not only has it stayed within costs but it's maintained public support as well. The *Washington Post* did a survey after the U.S. Senate election, and a lot of the money Scott Brown got was from people that didn't like the President's health

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: 619

Number of Intros last week: 7,209

Number of Enacted/Adopted last week: 599

Number of 2010 Session Prefiles to date: 13,706

Number of 2010 Intros to date: 46,730

Number of 2010 Session Enacted/Adopted overall to date: 2,867

Number of 2009-10 bills currently in State Net Database: 154,487

— Compiled By JAMES ROSS
(measures current as of 2/11/2010)
Source: State Net database



for providing services at times when people are better able to get them, such as evenings and weekends. We're also looking at how we pay providers. Right now it is more lucrative to be a specialist than to be a primary care physician, but we need more primary care doctors than we need specialists. We need to reward people for encouraging people to stay healthy rather than just treating their diseases after they get sick.

Upcoming stories

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

- **State food stamp struggles**
- **Budget updates**
- **No Child Left Behind**

SNCJ: You mentioned the *Washington Post* poll. Given the support for health reform in your state — and the unpopularity of the Congressional proposals — should we just focus now on letting states work out their own individual plans?

Moore: I think there needs to be some national themes and standards, but a national plan is risky in that any such solution is a kind of a one-size-fits-all, which I don't think will work. The states are too different, and they all want to maintain control of their own insurance laws. We also want to control quality as much as we can without relying on the feds. From our perspective, it is also better not to have a national insurance mandate. We haven't seen any great migration of people out of our state because they don't want to be forced to buy insurance, but it would certainly remove that as a concern for the business community if it wasn't part of a national plan. Some standards would be good, but states need a reasonable level of flexibility and resources to reach those goals. I haven't read the entire 2,000 pages of the Congressional bill, but I don't think that was a major theme.

SNCJ: Much has been made of Scott Brown's election to fill Ted Kennedy's Senate seat. Do you consider that a wake up call for Democrats in MASSACHUSETTS? For Democrats nationally? For the president?

Moore: The real impact is that a nice guy who people liked got elected to the U.S. Senate. He ran a very good campaign and his opponent [MASSACHUSETTS Attorney General Martha Coakley] didn't. He didn't have any help from either the state or national Republican parties until about a month before the election. In fact, all of the parties, Democrat and Republican, figured the seat was going to automatically stay with the Democrats anyway and they wouldn't spend any money. But he had a good campaign and got his message out. She ran a bad campaign and apparently didn't have a message, or at least didn't get it out.

There is a lot of voter anger, but it isn't directed only toward the Democrats. Nationally I have seen it both ways. They are not that much happier with Republicans. If Republicans just keep saying no to everything without having some kind of positive agenda themselves, then they won't be able to capitalize on this either.

Interestingly, polling shows that health care didn't really play that big of a role here other than it helped him bring in money from out of state, where some





conservatives thought [Brown's election] could derail either health care or President Obama's agenda overall. But in-state, polling shows it was that people simply liked him. So I think it would be a mistake to read too much into it. But I do think it is a lesson to incumbents in both parties to take every opponent seriously, even a candidate who might otherwise be viewed as weak or even on the fringe. And everyone needs to listen more to what people are saying. Even before Scott Brown, people were asking me, "Why aren't we doing more about jobs and the economy? That should be our priority." In that regard, I don't think the president or the Congress did a very good job of attaching the importance of health care to the economy. Solving the rising of health care costs probably takes some time, and I think people looked at that and said, "Yes, that's important, but our jobs are more important right now and we should be addressing that."

— By RICH EHISEN

For more of our conversation with Sen. Moore as well as a collection of some of our recent articles please visit the State Net blog, At Issue in the States, at <http://statenet.typepad.com/>

Budget & taxes

CALIFORNIA BUDGET MORASS SPURS REFORM PUSH: Last year, budget impasses in CALIFORNIA forced the state to issue IOUs to creditors and credit agencies to downgrade the state's rating to the lowest level in the nation. With this year promising to be another one full of budget bickering, two groups are pushing ballot initiatives aimed at reforming the state's budget process.

The bipartisan group California Forward is backing an initiative for the November ballot that would allow legislators to pass budgets by a simple majority instead of the two-thirds vote currently required. CALIFORNIA is one of just three states that requires a supermajority, and with Democrats making up 64 percent of the Legislature, much of the budget process ends up being spent trying to rustle up Republican votes.

Another group, Repair California, which has ties to the business community, is gathering support for a constitutional convention in 2011 to reform not only the budget process but the electoral process and other facets of state governance as well.

"The odds are long" for both groups, said Larry Gerston, a political scientist at San Jose State University. Ballot initiatives are tough to pass in CALIFORNIA against well-funded opposition, and opponents are lining up to fight the proposals.



Statehouse Republicans will oppose California Forward's initiative for obvious reasons. And the anti-tax Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association said it would fight Repair California's proposed constitutional convention because it could result in the repeal of Proposition 13, the state's 32-year-old law capping property tax rates.

But the two initiative campaigns maintain that extreme voter discontent could enable their measures to overcome the odds. A recent poll by the nonpartisan Public Policy Institute of California showed that 83 percent of likely voters believe there's a big problem with the state's budget process.

"People are much angrier about CALIFORNIA government than they've ever been in recorded polling history, and because there's a critical mass of reform measures on the ballot, they're less likely to get lost in the shuffle," said Thad Kousser, a political science professor at Stanford University's Bill Lane Center. (WALL STREET JOURNAL)

STRICT-LIQUOR STATES LAYING OFF

BOTTLE: When Prohibition was repealed back in 1933, the federal government granted states the authority to regulate the sale of alcohol. Numerous states took it up on the offer, taking the view that by operating retail stores or distributorships themselves they could control consumption and reduce the social consequences.

But several of those states are now considering shifting the job of selling liquor to private industry in order to save money and raise revenue. Alcohol sales are a particularly attractive target right now because they tend to remain relatively stable during economic downturns.

VIRGINIA's new Republican governor, Bob McDonnell, made the issue a key plank of his campaign last year, claiming the state could generate \$500 million in short-term revenue by privatizing its liquor stores. VIRGINIA Sen. Mark Obenshain (R), has introduced legislation that would require the state to auction off its retail licenses. The state would still collect taxes on liquor sales as well as annual licensing fees.

In WASHINGTON, Sen. Tim Sheldon, a Democrat, proposed legislation calling for the privatization of the state's liquor distributorship and retail system. That proposal, which would have raised an estimated \$350 million over five years, has

The week in session

States in Regular Session: AK, AL, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DC, GA, HI, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MS, NE, NH, NJ, NM, OH, OK, PR, RI, SC, SD, TN, US, UT, VA, VT, WA, WI, WV, WY

States in Recess: DE(JFC Budget Hearings), MI(Senate Only), NY, PA(Budget Hearings), RI

States in Special Session: CA "f", CA "h", OR "a", WI "b"

Upcoming Special Sessions: NV (02/23/2010 RE: Budget and Revenue)

States in Budget Hearings: DE, PA

States Currently Prefiling or Drafting for 2010: FL, LA, MT, ND

States Projected to Adjourn: NM (02/18/2010)

States in Special Session Projected to Adjourn: WI "b"

State Special Sessions Adjourned in 2010: AZ "a", CA "e", TN "a"

Letters indicate special/extraordinary sessions

— Compiled By JAMES ROSS
(session information current as of 2/12/2010)
Source: State Net database

since been watered down in committee. Now it only directs the state liquor board to study ways to increase efficiency and revenues. Gov. Christine Gregoire (D) has indicated she won't support privatization proposals anyway, at least this session. But Sheldon said he plans to continue his push.

Privatization proposals are also being considered in NORTH CAROLINA, MISSISSIPPI and VERMONT.

The efforts are being resisted by religious groups. VIRGINIA's measure, for instance is being opposed by the Virginia Assembly of Independent Baptists, representing about 500 Baptist churches.

"We oppose anything that we think would expand the sale and use of alcohol," said Jack Knapp, the group's executive director and lobbyist.

Labor groups, reluctant to see the elimination of state jobs, are another source of opposition.

Liquor companies, meanwhile, have remained neutral on the issue. While some company officials have said privately that privatization might lead to more outlets, the companies are probably trying to avoid getting into a public battle with anti-alcohol forces. (WALL STREET JOURNAL)

PA GOV PROPOSES LOCKBOX FOR STIMULUS OFFSET FUNDS:

PENNSYLVANIA Gov. Ed Rendell (D) has asked state lawmakers to consider raising more than \$530 million in new revenues during fiscal 2010-11 and placing them in a lockbox until the 2011-12 fiscal period to offset the anticipated loss of federal stimulus funds and a spike in the cost of public employee pension funds. The increased revenues would be generated by new levies on cigars, smokeless tobacco products and natural gas drilling. Rendell also suggested that 74 current exemptions to the state's 6 percent sales tax should be eliminated and the tax rate cut to 4 percent. Current sales tax exemptions for food, clothing and prescription drugs would remain in effect. The governor's suggestions came with his presentation of a proposed \$29 billion 2010-11 general fund budget. (STATE NET)

BUDGETS IN BRIEF: Businesses in at least 35 states will have to pay more in unemployment insurance taxes this year, according to the National Association of State Workforce Agencies. The median increase will be 27.5 percent, with employers in some states, such as **HAWAII** and **FLORIDA**, seeing as much as a ten-fold jump (CNN MONEY). • The recent snowstorms in much of the mid-Atlantic region are exhausting some states' entire winter cleanup budgets. **VIRGINIA**, for instance, has already spent both the \$79 million it budgeted for winter snow removal and the additional \$25 million available for emergencies, and **MARYLAND** has gone through about \$57 million of the \$60 million it budgeted (WALL STREET JOURNAL, STATELINE).

— Compiled by KOREY CLARK

organizations are reporting,” McNulty said. “It’s not coming from the *Times*.”

The ongoing controversy did little to buttress Paterson’s stature among his fellow Democrats, many of whom have openly voiced their desire that he not run for re-election in November in order to make room for Lt. Gov. Andrew Cuomo (D) to seek the job instead. None of the state’s top Dems, including Cuomo, offered any comment on his fight with the *Times*. The only support, oddly enough, came from GOP gubernatorial candidate Rick Lazio, who claimed the situation had left the Capitol “paralyzed by rumor and innuendo.”

Lazio even expressed empathy for Paterson’s situation. “I don’t think anyone trying to get their job done deserves this kind of phantom threat,” he said.

None of which has apparently deterred Paterson from moving ahead with his plans to run again. He is expected to officially announce his re-election campaign within the next few weeks (ALBANY TIMES-UNION, ASSOCIATED PRESS, WALL STREET JOURNAL)

GOVS DEFEND TOYOTA: A quartet of governors last week defended automaker Toyota and accused the federal government of a conflict of interest in its public reaction to the company’s current high profile troubles. All four governors — Democrat Steve Beshear of KENTUCKY and Republicans Haley Barbour of MISSISSIPPI, Bob Riley of ALABAMA and Mitch Daniels of INDIANA — hail from states where the auto giant has production plants. In a letter sent to their Congressional representatives, the governors complained that, “despite the federal government’s obvious conflict of interest because of its huge financial stake in some of Toyota’s competitors, it has spoken out against Toyota, including statements U.S. government officials have later been forced to retract,” a reference to comments made by Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood that he later backed off from. The govs also lambasted the media for its coverage of the situation, calling it “unfortunate,” “unfair” and “questionable.” Toyota has come under significant scrutiny over its recall of more than 8 million vehicles since September, mostly to fix problems that could lead to unintended acceleration. (DETROIT NEWS)

Upcoming elections

2/11/2010 - 3/4/2010

02/16/2010

Alabama Special Runoff

House District 40

Mississippi Special Election

Senate District 36

New Hampshire Special Election

Senate District 16

02/23/2010

Florida Special Election

House District 58

Georgia Special Election

House District 19

03/02/2010

Connecticut Special Election

House District 120

Texas Primary Election

House (All)

Senate Districts 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 22, 25, 29

Constitutional Officers: Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Comptroller of Public Accounts
US House (All)

Virginia Special Election

House District 41



GRANHOLM SAYS CARP PROPOSAL IS ALL

WET: Governors Jim Doyle (D) of WISCONSIN and Jennifer Granholm (D) of MICHIGAN met at the White House with Obama administration officials last week to discuss possible actions to deal with the expected invasion of Asian carp into the Great Lakes. ILLINOIS Gov. Pat Quinn (D) also participated via a conference call. The meeting came at Granholm’s request, but the Wolverine State governor left the meeting unhappy over the proposed federal solution, which includes a plan to control, but not close, the Chicago-area shipping lock operations that could allow the carp access to Lake Michigan. Granholm and other state officials want the locks permanently closed, claiming the carp will potentially destroy the Great Lakes ecosystem and threaten the \$7 billion tourism and fishing business connected with it. The Supreme Court last month rejected a lawsuit seeking that closure. Granholm called the federal plan “unsustainable.” (CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR)

In case you missed it

Teacher furloughs have cut HAWAII’s school year by 10 percent, giving it the fewest education days in the nation. With public discord growing, the governor, lawmakers and education officials are at an impasse over how to get kids back into school.

In case you missed it, the article can be found on our Web site at http://www.statenet.com/capitol_journal/02-08-2010/html

EXECUTIVE ORDERS: NEW JERSEY Gov. Chris Christie (R) issued EO

No. 12, which places a freeze on the Garden State’s affordable housing regulations for 90 days. The order also establishes a five-member task force to review the effectiveness of the Council on Affordable Housing panel and the law that created it (PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER). • ARIZONA Gov. Jan Brewer (R) issued EO 2010-06, which bars the state from enacting any emission-reduction plan from the Western Climate Initiative and orders a review of all of its efforts to curb climate change (ARIZONA REPUBLIC [PHOENIX]). • CALIFORNIA Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) signed EO S-03-10, which establishes the new position of chief information officer for all state agencies and departments. The order also gives the state’s CIO authority over all IT infrastructure and shared services (CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR’S OFFICE).

GOVERNORS IN BRIEF: MASSACHUSETTS Gov. Deval Patrick (D)

proposed a plan that would give the Bay State governor sweeping authority to review and reject rates charged by hospitals, physician groups, medical imaging centers and insurers. Patrick said the new powers would make health care more affordable, particularly for smaller companies and their workers. Lawmakers must approve the proposal, which is expected to receive strong opposition from health insurers and providers (BOSTON GLOBE).

— *Compiled by RICH EHISEN*

Hot issues

B **USINESS:** The **ALABAMA** Senate approves SB 36, legislation that would require contractors for the state to make public all of their subcontractors. The bill, which is now in the House, would apply only to contracts over \$7,500 (HUNTSVILLE TIMES). • The **GEORGIA** Senate endorses HB 168, a bill that would phase out “access charges” that communications companies charge each other for cross-state calls. The measure would also end state oversight of how the companies work with each other. It has returned to the House (ATLANTA JOURNAL CONSTITUTION).

CRIME & PUNISHMENT: The **MISSISSIPPI** House approves HB 1122, a bill that would prohibit hot rod enthusiasts from outfitting their vehicles with nitrous oxide, a chemical compound used to increase the output of engines by allowing them to burn more fuel than normal. Violators would face a fine of up to \$1,000 and 48 hours in jail. The measure returns to the Senate, which approved it last year (MEMPHIS COMMERCIAL APPEAL). • The **IOWA** House approves HB 2233, which would allow 18-20 year olds to petition to have a drinking offense expunged from their records provided they have not had a similar offense in two years. It moves to the Senate (RADIO IOWA [DES MOINES]). • **NEBRASKA** Gov. Dave Heineman (R) approves the Cornhusker State’s three-drug protocol for lethal injection, clearing the way for the state to resume executing condemned prisoners. The rules enact L 36, a law approved last year that ended use of the electric chair in favor of the injection process (OMAHA WORLD-HERALD).

EDUCATION: The **NEW MEXICO** Senate endorses SB 132, the Hispanic Education Act, which would create an office within the state Public Education Department to specifically focus on closing the achievement gap between Hispanic and Anglo students. The House approves a similar measure, HB 150. The two measures must now be reconciled before one goes to Gov. Bill Richardson (D), who has said he will sign it into law (SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN). • The **OREGON** House unanimously approves HB 3628a, which would allow the state school superintendent to enter into contracts with non-profits to teach the Mandarin dialect to Beaver State students. Under the bill, which is now in the Senate, the cost of the program would be paid by the Chinese Ministry of Education (STATESMAN-JOURNAL [SALEM]). • The **SOUTH CAROLINA** Senate Education Committee approves HB 3297, legislation that would ban schools from selling high-fat, high-sugar foods and drinks, whether in the cafeteria, canteen or hallways, during school hours. It would also set nutritional guidelines for school lunch programs higher than

U.S. Department of Agriculture standards. The measure now goes to the full Senate (CHARLESTON POST & COURIER).

ENVIRONMENT: The **OREGON** House endorses HB 3613a, which would extend a ban on oil drilling in state waters for 10 more years. The state has jurisdiction over ocean waters to three miles off the Beaver State coast. It moves to the Senate (STATESMAN-JOURNAL [SALEM]). • Still in **OREGON**, the House approves HB 3674, which allows some pre-1995 power plants fueled by biomass or municipal solid waste to be counted against the state’s goal of utilities obtaining 25 percent of their power from renewable sources by 2025. It is now in the Senate (STATESMAN-JOURNAL [SALEM]). • The **NEW MEXICO** House rejects HB 276, the so-called “bad actor” bill that would have given state environmental regulators the power to consider a company’s past crimes and regulatory punishments in other states when deciding whether to revoke or deny an air quality permit (NEW MEXICO INDEPENDENT).

HEALTH & SCIENCE: The **IDAHO** House approves HB 391, a bill that would require the Gem State to sue the federal government over any health insurance mandates meted out by Congress. The measure moves to the Senate (IDAHO STATESMAN [BOISE]).

IMMIGRATION: A panel of the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals rules **OKLAHOMA** can enforce a state law requiring state contractors and agencies to use a federal database to verify their workers are in the country legally. The court also ruled, however, that federal law supersedes a provision in the statute that punishes employers who terminate an authorized employee while keeping or hiring an undocumented worker for a similar position. The law’s author is considering asking to have the full court review the decision (OKLAHOMAN [OKLAHOMA CITY]).

SOCIAL POLICY: The **VIRGINIA** Senate approves SB 66, a bill that would define a state non-discrimination employment policy that includes the category of “sexual orientation” along with race, religion, gender and disabilities, among other classifications. It moves to the House (VIRGINIAN-PILOT [NORFOLK]). • The **KENTUCKY** House approves HB 285, which would require that police officers, doctors, day care workers and others who work with children receive training in recognizing child abuse. It moves to the Senate (COURIER-JOURNAL [KENTUCKY]).

POTPOURRI: The **MISSISSIPPI** Senate approves SB 2153, a bill that would allow residents with a concealed weapons permit to bring their handguns into most Magnolia State restaurants, bars and parks unless those entities specifically ban them.



The measure fires off to the House (MEMPHIS COMMERCIAL APPEAL). • The WASHINGTON Senate approves SB 6207, a bill that would allow golf carts on public roads. Local municipalities would have final say over where those vehicles would be allowed, though carts would not be authorized on roads where the speed limit exceeds 25 miles per hour. The measure hums quietly off to the House (OLYMPIAN).

— Compiled by RICH EHISEN

Once around the statehouse lightly

THIRD TIME’S THE CHARM: It’s an election year, so that must mean author and musician Kinky Friedman is once again running for public office in TEXAS. But unlike recent years, Friedman is not trying to grab the governor’s chair. As the *Dallas Morning News* reports, this time he is running for state agriculture commissioner. And what does the cigar chomping, black hat-attired Friedman bring to the race? Aside from support from his good buddy Willie Nelson, not a whole lot, say critics, who gripe that he isn’t even actively involved in the ag business as the law requires. True, but he does have something no other candidate can claim: a college concert tour and a new television show, *Texas Roadhouse Live*. Oh, and a great campaign slogan: “No cow left behind.”

MORE KINKY THAN KINKY: Friedman is not the only candidate bringing some “kink” into the political ring this year. Two other quasi-celebs, each known more for their salacious history than their public policy expertise, are also getting into the game. As the *Sacramento Bee* reports, Prince Frederic Von Anhalt, the latest of Zsa Zsa Gabor’s many husbands, has announced a run to replace termed-out CALIFORNIA Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. Anhalt, who made tabloid headlines two years ago for claiming to be the father of the late tabloid queen Anna Nicole Smith’s child, plans a campaign that includes lifting state bans on Cuban cigars, marijuana and same-sex marriage. Meanwhile, *CBS News* reports that erstwhile “Manhattan Madam” Kristin Davis, who arranged former NEW YORK Gov. Eliot Spitzer’s hook-ups with hookers, is considering a run at her famous client’s old job. And her platform? Legalizing pot, gay marriage and prostitution. What, no cigars?

SPEAKING OF NOVICES: Anhalt, Friedman and Davis are clearly not the only candidates who may need a civics brush-up. As the *Los Angeles Times* reports, former Hewlett Packard CEO Carly Fiorina, who is running for a U.S. Senate seat



in CALIFORNIA, recently suggested the state should consider filing for bankruptcy as a way of dealing with its gaping \$20 billion budget shortfall. The only problem is that under federal law, states cannot file for bankruptcy. A Fiorina spokesperson insists her boss was taken out of context. The candidate herself later called the law “a technicality.”

SPEED THE PLOW...OR NOT: Alas, the iconic IOWA citizen soldier will spend at least another year fending off a misplaced plow. As noted in this space a while back, one Hawkeye State lawmaker recently introduced a bill to change wording on the official state seal that refers to the soldier standing with “a plow in his rear.” Alas, as the *Des Moines Register* reports, lawmakers have opted not to plow ahead with the proposal to change the reference to something with less connotation in the modern world. Mary Mascher, who heads the committee assigned the bill, considered it a low priority, preferring to focus instead on budget bills. “We plowed it under,” she said.

— *By RICH EHISEN*

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