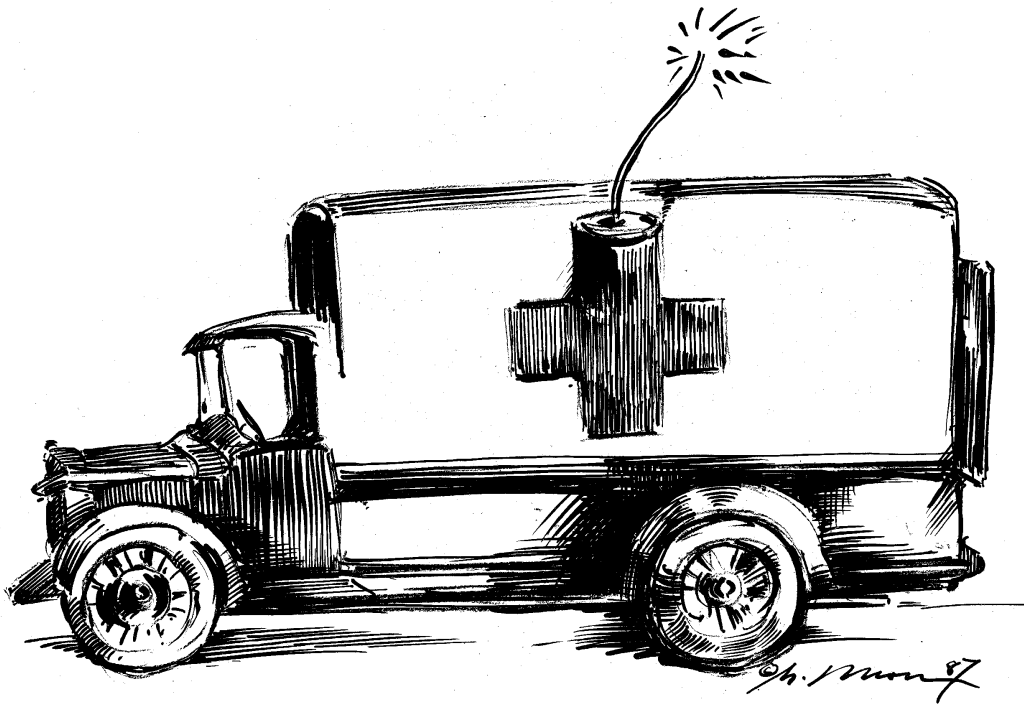


February 20, 2006

Bad medicine



Budget & taxes	
Bush budget shorts nine states	5
Politics & leadership	
Women not gaining in state government	7
Governors	
Schwarzenegger wants big bucks	9
Bird's eye view	3
Hot issues	12
Once around the statehouse lightly	15

Top Story

Hospitals pass on infections to millions of patients each year, leading to thousands of deaths. Many of these infections aren't reported because most of the nation's hospitals aren't required to do so.

SNCJ Spotlight

States reveal hospitals' dirty little secrets

Three years ago, Tony Zalatan, an active, 53-year-old, went to a COLORADO hospital for surgery to repair a heart murmur. Days after his operation, he developed a staph infection that led to a stroke, the failure of several organs, a 54-day coma and over twenty additional surgeries — including amputations of his left leg, his right foot and five fingertips.

As shocking as Mr. Zalatan's story is, it's not entirely unique. It is estimated that millions of patients at U.S. hospitals acquire infections each year — including staph, hepatitis, pneumonia and HIV — and thousands of those individuals are debilitated or die as a result. Most of the cases aren't actually reported because the majority of the nation's hospitals aren't required to do so. And most prospective patients have no way of finding out whether infections are a problem at their local hospitals because that information generally isn't made available to them. But according to the State Net database, lawmakers in more than 30 states are now reviewing bills seeking to bring hospital-acquired infections (HAIs) out into the open.

The most oft-cited estimate of U.S HAI rates comes from a 2000 report by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which placed the total number of infection cases at 2 million per year, with about 88,000 resulting in death. To place that into context, based on recent data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the CDC, more people die annually from HAIs than from auto accidents and homicides combined. Researchers at the Medical College of VIRGINIA posited in 2001 that HAIs of the bloodstream alone might be the eighth leading cause of death in the U.S.

The CDC also reported in 2000 that HAIs add nearly \$5 billion to U.S. healthcare costs each year, largely as a result of the extra hospital days required to treat them. "Our greatest concern is the illness and death that result from these infections," stated the CDC's William Jarvis, M.D. "But the economic costs are also quite high, and provide another compelling reason to reduce the number and severity of healthcare-associated infections."

There is evidence that suggests infection rates and treatment costs might actually be even higher than the CDC's estimates. The agency's figures were extrapolated from information provided by a small subset of the nation's hospitals — 315 of the 4,900 total in 2000 — that participate in a confidential, voluntary reporting program initiated in 1970. One indication that the group of participating hospitals may not be a representative sample is a report released last year by the PENNSYLVANIA Health Care Cost Containment Council (PHC4) affirming that the state's 173 general acute care hospitals spent \$2 billion treating HAIs in 2004, which casts some doubt on the CDC's \$5-billion-

The Week in Session

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

States in Special Session:
AZ "a", CA "a", LA "a", TN "a"

States in Recess: RI

States in Budget Hearing Recess:
DE, PA

Special Sessions in Recess:
OK "a", PA "a"

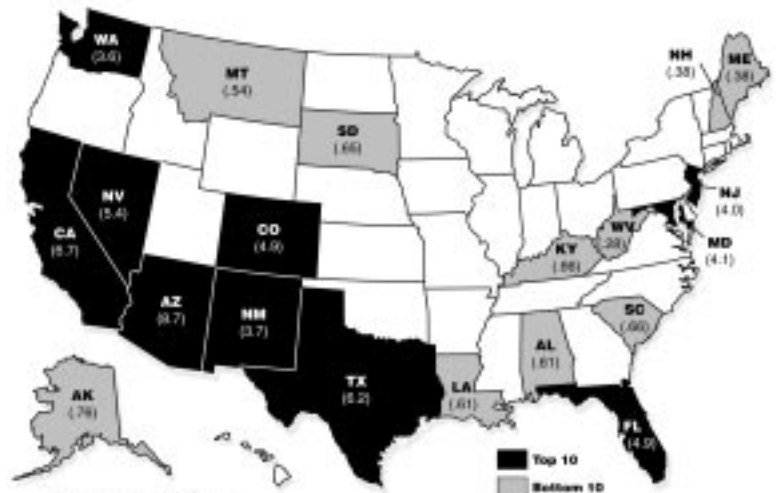
Letters indicate special/extraordinary sessions
Source: State Net, 02/17/06

per-year estimate for the nation as a whole. (The number of infection-related deaths that PHC4 reported for the year — 1,793 — was more in line with CDC’s estimate. PHC4 also reported that HAIs increase the average cost of surgical visits from \$30,000 to \$391,000 for Medicaid patients and from \$28,000 to \$258,000 for patients who are privately insured.)

Based on the spotty data that is available, the HAI problem appears to be getting worse. The health-care watchdog group HealthGrades estimated last year that between 2000 and 2003, the number of HIA cases rose by 20 percent. One reason for the increase may be that bugs have become more resistant to antibiotics, due to over-prescription of those drugs. “It’s harder to fight these things today than it was years ago,” said Beryl Vallejo, vice president of quality for Colorado-based Centura Health. Another possible cause might be that hospitals have cut back on staff, leaving the remaining doctors and nurses overworked. “When you are too busy, that’s when you get sloppy. You don’t wash your hands as you should or you don’t put the gloves on when you should,” said Betsy Marville, an intensive care nurse in West Palm Beach, FLORIDA.

Betsy McCaughey of the Committee to Reduce Infection Deaths, a group that advocates for public reporting of HAIs, pointed out another major cause for concern. “Hospitals that lack the discipline and training to stop ordinary bacterial

Bird’s eye view



States, Congress debate immigration solutions

There are an estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States, and seemingly as many schools of thought on how to resolve this sensitive issue. Congress is weighing several options, including both a guest worker program designed to help immigrants legally get into the country and a border fence aimed at keeping them out. Many states are also working on their own solutions, including more border patrols and special police units designed to track and arrest illegals (see *Govs Tackle Illegal Immigration* in the Jan. 16 SNCJ). Although the highest concentration of undocumented immigrants is in the states along the U.S.-Mexico border, several East Coast states, including MARYLAND and NEW JERSEY, are among the top 10. The accompanying map shows states with the highest and lowest numbers of illegal immigrants, noted as a percentage of state population.



infections from spreading from patient to patient are unprepared for the larger challenge of stopping avian flu or bioterrorism pathogens from sweeping through their institutions,” she said.

Studies show, however, that HAI rates can be reduced through the implementation of infection control measures, such as administering antibiotics to patients prior to surgery, improving hand washing techniques and operating room procedures, and monitoring patients after they are discharged. A review of several studies published in the *Journal of Hospital Infection* in 2003 found that such measures could reduce nosocomial infections (the medical community’s term for HAIs) anywhere from 10 to 70 percent.

That encouraging news, combined with the alarming statistics about the growing costs of HAIs in dollars and lives, have spurred states to take action. Since 2003, eight states have mandated the reporting of HAIs: Florida, ILLINOIS, MISSOURI, NEBRASKA, NEVADA, NEW YORK, Pennsylvania and Virginia. All but Nebraska’s and Nevada’s laws require the information to be made available to the public — on a phased-in basis, at the very least — in the belief that “sunshine” will lead to improvement. “All the hospitals are aware that people are watching now,” said Dr. Paul Barach, a member of an HAI advisory panel for the state of Florida. “They will want to look good.”

The “sunshine” approach has proven successful in the past, particularly in reducing death rates for certain surgical procedures. For example, mortality rates for coronary artery bypass graft surgery (CABG) in Pennsylvania, where that information is made available to the public, have dropped 48 percent over the past 10 years, outpacing improvement rates in states without public reporting.

But Marc P. Volavka, the executive director of PHC4, which publishes the state’s public HAI reports, suggests that the public may not be as significant an inducement to improvement as generally believed. Volavka says PHC4’s data is used far more by hospitals and physicians for gauging quality improvement efforts than by consumers and businesses for selecting providers.

That point was echoed in the comments of University of Pennsylvania Chief Medical Officer and Senior Vice President P.J. Brennan, M.D. “With or without the public data, hospitals can implement effective infection control interventions. They have the expertise, and what needs to be done is well-established. What is needed is leadership support,” he said. Pittsburgh Regional Healthcare Initiative Managing Director Peter I. Perreiah identified a few of the things which make that support hard to come by, stating, “There will be resistance by accountants to save money, and by staff who have to make the changes, while hospital administrators have to get physicians on board.”



scription service that monitors federal-state payments, while most states would see modest increases in funding, nine — CALIFORNIA, HAWAII, MASSACHUSETTS, MICHIGAN, NEW JERSEY, NORTH DAKOTA, OREGON, RHODE ISLAND and SOUTH DAKOTA — would see a drop. Massachusetts faces the largest decrease, about \$827 million, or 10.9 percent, with most of the decline (\$758 million) coming from a reduction in federal funding for the state’s

Medicaid program. Meanwhile, the biggest winner under the Bush plan, MINNESOTA would see a \$610 million increase in its Medicaid allocation. FFIS Executive Director Marcia Howard said the changes in federal Medicaid funding actually reflect shifts in state Medicaid expenditures, as federal Medicaid dollars are allocated on a matching basis. Howard also said that apart from Medicaid, it is largely population shifts that drive federal funding formulas, so states that are attracting more residents are getting a larger share of the federal pot. “You’ll start to see a movement of funds out of the Northeast and Midwest into the South and the West as the population there continues to grow at above average rates,” she said. (STATELINE.ORG)

BUDGETS IN BRIEF: Last week, the **PENNSYLVANIA** House unanimously rejected a Senate property-tax-cutting proposal similar to one it rejected two months ago. The action continues the stalemate between the two chambers over how much, and how, to reduce the tax. The Senate wants to lower it, using gambling revenue and an increase in the local income tax, while the House is advocating a deeper cut, financed by an increase and expansion of the sales tax and a hike of the personal income tax. Legislative leaders are hoping to come up with a compromise by the time they return from their three-week break next month for budget hearings (ASSOCIATED PRESS, PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER). • Doctor and hospital visits for the treatment of illnesses caused by secondhand smoke cost **MARYLAND** \$600 million last year, according to a new study by researchers at Johns Hopkins University. The study was conducted in part to counter the claims of bar and restaurant owners that a proposed smoking ban would have a negative impact on the Old Line State economy (CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE). • In what can surely be viewed only as a dubious achievement, **WASHINGTON** law enforcement officials announced last week that they confiscated more than 135,000 marijuana plants in 2005 — enough to make pot the Evergreen State’s No. 8 agricultural crop. No word if anyone is yet pushing to change the state nickname to the “Evergreenbud” State

Upcoming Stories

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

- Raising the minimum wage
- Health care workers: The right to say no?
- Illegal immigration: Targeting employers
- Public pensions



(LOS ANGELES TIMES). • The **ARIZONA** Senate approved a variety of tax breaks last week, including a measure that creates a pre-school sales tax holiday during the first seven days of August each year. Senate Bill 1152 would eliminate the state's 5.6 percent sales tax on computers, software, school supplies and clothing purchased during that week, with a cap of \$1,000 on computer purchases and \$50 on clothing items. Another bill, SB 1149, would allow people 65 and older who meet certain income limits to register one vehicle without paying the state tax (**ARIZONA DAILY STAR** [TUCSON]). • **IDAHO** Gov. Dirk Kempthorne (R) announced that China has become the Gem State's largest trading partner, purchasing over \$554 million in Idaho products in 2005. That marks the first time an Asian nation has been Idaho's top trading partner since Japan purchased \$327 million worth of goods in 1997 (**IDAHO STATESMAN** [BOISE]).

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK & RICH EHISEN*

Politics & Leadership

WOMEN NOT GAINING IN STATE GOVERNMENT: Back in 1998, women — who make up about half of the population of the U.S., according to recent Census data — held fewer than a quarter of the top jobs in state governments across the country. Eight years later, they hold about the same percentage of those posts. According to a study by the Center for Women in Government & Civil Society at the University of Albany, between 1998 and 2005, the percentage of women in state government leadership positions, including statewide elected office, state judgeships and top state agency posts, rose little more than a percentage point, from 23.1 percent to 24.7 percent. “In 40 percent of the states, when you look across the top leadership positions in all three branches of government, women’s shares have remained level or increased very modestly,” said Judith Saidel, who led the study. The percentage of female state legislators increased a scant .8 percent over the last eight years, from 21.8 percent to 22.6 percent. Women’s gains in the judiciary, however, were somewhat more substantial. In 1998, 22 percent of the states’ top judicial posts were held by women. As of last year, the percentage had increased to 27.7, and women occupied two or more judicial leadership posts in over half of the states and served as chief justice in 15. Likewise, the percentage of women in top executive branch positions rose from 27.9 to 32.2. But only eight states — **ARIZONA**, **CONNECTICUT**, **DELAWARE**, **HAWAII**, **KANSAS**, **LOUISIANA**, **MICHIGAN** and **WASHINGTON** — currently have female governors. And just fifteen of the



nation's lieutenant governors are women. "After reporting for almost ten years these very modest gains for women, I have come to believe it is a very persistent social phenomenon," Saidel said. "The problem does not appear to be going away." She said one reason might be that women are pursuing opportunities that have opened up in business and philanthropy instead of careers in government and politics. She also suggested that women might not seek office because they believe the demands of public service would take away too much of their time with family — a post-feminist spin on the old glass-ceiling defense that "a woman's place is in the home." (ASSOCIATED PRESS, TIMES UNION [ALBANY])

LA LAWMAKERS STORM OUT OF STORM SESSION: Last Monday, after losing a vote on a bill to allow New Orleans evacuees to vote at satellite locations around LOUISIANA, and then failing to immediately end the special session on storm recovery which began last week, all 23 House members of the state's Legislative Black Caucus walked out of the chamber. "It was an embarrassing display of racism clouded behind some arguments that didn't make any sense at all," said Rep. Jailia Jefferson (D), sponsor of the defeated election bill (HB 14). One of those arguments was that the state had already provided a "liberalized" absentee voting plan for displaced residents and that the upcoming New Orleans elections — for mayor, city council and other offices — were too important to complicate with a "pilot program" involving computer links between Orleans voting records and the registrars of 10 other parishes. "If everything doesn't work entirely right we could end up messing up the election in the city of New Orleans," said House and Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman Rep. Charles Lancaster (R). And Rep. Peppi Bruneau (R) maintained that HB 14 created "equal protection" problems because voters displaced to other states would not have the same opportunity to vote. But despite feeling that Lancaster and Bruneau were making excuses, caucus members agreed to return to work the following day (ADVOCATE [BATON ROUGE])

AT THE POLLS: Residents of VIRGINIA's Jefferson County finally have a representative in the state Senate: former Rep. Perry Clark (D). Clark's special-election victory over Republican newcomer Debbie Peden last week ends a year-long dispute over the Old Dominion's 37th District Senate seat, which began after the state Supreme Court ruled that the winner of that seat in the 2004 general election, Republican Dana Seum Stephenson, did not meet the state's residency requirements. In another contest decided last week, Clark's vacated 37th District House seat was claimed by Ron Weston. (COURIER-JOURNAL [LOUISVILLE])



POLITICS IN BRIEF: Last Tuesday, the **LOUISIANA** Senate unanimously passed a pair of bills (SB 8 and SB 9) consolidating New Orleans' multiple levee boards into two authorities, one on either side of the Mississippi River. The centerpiece legislation of the second storm-recovery special session called by Gov. Kathleen Blanco (D) had stalled in the upper chamber days after a challenge to its original recommendation that the levee boards be combined into a single authority (TIMES-PICAYUNE [NEW ORLEANS]).

• True to their word two weeks ago (see **POLITICS IN BRIEF** in the Feb. 13 issue of *SNCJ*), Republican legislative leaders convened and promptly adjourned both houses of the **WISCONSIN** Legislature last Tuesday without taking up Gov. Jim Doyle's (D) proposal to provide \$6 million in heating assistance for residents making less than \$40,000 a year. The leaders vowed, however, to work with the governor to come up with a plan that one of them said "can actually work" (ASSOCIATED PRESS, JANESVILLE GAZETTE). • Labor activists in **OREGON** are seeking to form a new political party to represent working people. They intend to call it the Working Families Party, after a party of the same name that was formed in New York in 1998 (STATESMAN JOURNAL [SALEM]).

Quoteable

"Whether you like it or not, you have to raise the money to buy the TV ads that win elections...And the greater danger is what you actually saw last year, which is when you're dramatically outspent and your opponents can define you in inaccurate ways."

— **GOP strategist Rob Stutzman explaining why CALIFORNIA Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) wants to raise a \$120 million campaign war chest for his re-election bid in the fall.**
(LOS ANGELES TIMES)

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

Governors

SCHWARZENEGGER WANTS BIG BUCKS: During his ill-fated "Year of Reform" campaign last fall, **CALIFORNIA** Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) chided reporters who questioned why he was seeking to do so much so fast, telling them to "think big." Although the governor took a significant blow to the chin in that election, he apparently has not given up on his mantra as he has set a fundraising goal of more than \$120 million for the November election. That sum, if achieved, would come close to the total amount raised and spent by the entire field of candidates in the 2002 governor's race. The stunning rebuke at the polls is apparently the impetus for his lofty new goal. Opponents — mostly labor unions — spent over \$100 million to defeat the four measures Schwarzenegger championed, leading GOP strategist Rob Stutzman to call the new goal "doable and necessary" for the

governor's re-election bid. "There's no reason to think that much can't be spent again, if not more, to try to beat the governor," Stutzman said. Schwarzenegger is targeting up to \$65 million each for his own re-election campaign and for the California Republican Party in order to boost the statewide GOP ticket. That won't be easy, given that this fall's election will be the first under the state's new campaign donor limits, which generally cap donations at \$44,600 for the primary and general election combined. Even if reached, the \$65 million still falls short of the \$78 million raised by his predecessor, Democrat Gray Davis, for his successful 2002 re-election bid. Candidates in that race spent a total of \$130 million, second only to the all-time national record of \$140 million spent in the 1998 NEW YORK election won by incumbent George E. Pataki (R). (LOS ANGELES TIMES)

VILSACK SUPPORTS CIVIL UNIONS, NOT GAY MARRIAGE: IOWA Gov. Tom Vilsack (D) said last week that he would support a proposal to create civil unions for same-sex couples in Iowa. But Vilsack, who is also thought to be considering a presidential run in 2008, also said he doubts the deeply-divided Hawkeye State Legislature will send him such legislation. He also reconfirmed his own opposition to gay marriage, saying, "I think we ought to honor commitment. I think we ought to value it in this society because there's too little of it. But I don't think we necessarily have to redefine marriage to do it." Vilsack said same-sex couples should have access to the same legal rights as do married couples, including hospital visitation, inheritance, child custody and insurance benefits. Civil unions, he said, could provide those rights without affecting the definition of marriage. His comments drew criticism from same-sex marriage supporters, who called on Vilsack to fully support legalizing gay marriage. Republican leaders in the evenly split Senate are pushing for a constitutional amendment that would replace the state's current defense-of-marriage statute with a law banning same-sex marriage. A similar bill passed last year in the House, but Senate Democrats, who share control with the GOP, have so far resisted efforts to bring the amendment to a vote. (QUAD-CITY TIMES [DAVENPORT])

BUSH VOUCHES FOR VOUCHERS: FLORIDA Gov. Jeb Bush (R) announced his support for a proposed ballot measure that would amend the Sunshine State constitution to allow state money to be used for private school vouchers. The state Supreme Court recently ruled that spending public funds on vouchers is unconstitutional. The wording of the proposal is still being constructed, but Bush and several Republican legislative leaders have vowed to have it ready by the beginning of the session on March 7. Bush made his announcement to a crowd of around 4,000 supporters in front of the Capitol, but that didn't impress voucher opponents.



“You’ve got 4,000 people up here, but the majority of people are either saying, ‘We don’t want vouchers’ or are saying, ‘The Supreme Court has spoken, let’s move on.’ There’s a group of people out there who can’t take no for an answer,” said Sen. Les Miller (D). (ST. PETERSBURG TIMES)

EXECUTIVE ORDERS: TENNESSEE Gov. Phil Bredesen (D) signed Executive Order 33 last week establishing the Governor’s Interagency Alternative Fuels Working Group “to develop a comprehensive state alternative fuels strategy for Tennessee.” The order calls for immediate steps to establish interim state standards for biodiesel that will provide an adequate level of quality assurance for biofuels blending and distribution until national standards are finalized (STATE NET, CHATANOOGAN). • **MISSOURI** Gov. Matt Blunt (R) issued Executive Order 06-09, which permanently establishes the state Homeland Security Advisory Council. Blunt formed the Council last year to coordinate homeland security planning at both the local and state level and to expedite grant funding (STATE NET, ST. LOUIS BUSINESS JOURNAL).

GOVERNORS IN BRIEF: ILLINOIS Gov. Rod Blagojevich (D) said he wants the state to invest \$100 million in stem cell research over the next five years. He said some of the money could come from the Prairie State’s portion of the national tobacco suit money and from ending tax breaks for some offshore companies (ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH). • A federal court ruled last week that **MARYLAND** Gov. Robert Ehrlich (R) did not break the law when he ordered his employees to stop speaking to the Baltimore Sun newspaper. The newspaper sued over the edict, claiming it violated their First Amendment rights. The court disagreed, saying government officials are free to choose the reporters to whom they provide information. The Sun says it will not appeal (WASHINGTON POST). • A Quinnipiac University poll last week showed **CONNECTICUT** Gov. M. Jodi Rell (R) with an 81 percent approval rating, up slightly from the 78 percent rating she had a month ago (BOSTON GLOBE). • **ALABAMA** Gov. Bob Riley (R) is also enjoying big numbers, as a recent Mobile Register-University of South Alabama poll showed him with a 2-to-1 lead over his nearest GOP primary rival, former

Upcoming Elections

(02/16/06 - 03/09/06)

02/21/2006 Michigan special primary
Senate 023

02/28/2006
Alabama runoff or special general
House 031

02/28/2006 New York Special Election
House 008, 017, 059, 067, 074, 139
Senate 060

02/28/2006 Texas Emergency Special
House 106

03/07/2006 Texas Primary Election
House (All)
Senate (All)

state Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore (MOBILE REGISTER). • **NEW YORK** Gov. George Pataki (R) decided against working to repeal a newly passed law that would create a Web site so consumers can compare prices of popular prescription drugs at their neighborhood pharmacies. Pataki said his original decision was motivated by the belief that the federal government was going to make such information available (POST-STANDARD [SYRACUSE]).

— Compiled by RICH EHISEN

Hot issues

B **USINESS: RHODE ISLAND** Gov. Don Carcieri (R) allows legislation that raises the state minimum wage to become law without his signature. The current wage of \$6.75 will go to \$7.10 in March and to \$7.40 on Jan. 1 (PROVIDENCE JOURNAL). • The **SOUTH DAKOTA** Senate unanimously approves HB 1080, which says that local governments cannot use eminent domain to take property for private development. It also stipulates that acquired land not used for the stated purpose after seven years must be offered for sale to the original owner of the property. The measure moves to Gov. Dave Freudenthal (D), who is expected to sign it into law (RAPID CITY JOURNAL). • Eminent domain is also big in the **VIRGINIA** House and Senate, which both pass legislation that would allow local or state governments to take private property only for public benefit. Those measures now cross on their way to the opposite chamber (VIRGINIAN-PILOT [NORFOLK]). • **MASSACHUSETTS** lawmakers pop a cork on legislation that allows in-state wineries to sell their product directly to consumers. The measure also allows restaurants to re-seal opened bottles of vino so consumers can take leftovers home with them. The vote from lawmakers overrides an earlier veto from Gov. Mitt Romney (R) (BOSTON GLOBE).

CRIME& PUNISHMENT: Youth corrections officials in **HAWAII** settle a federal lawsuit by agreeing to take measures to stop harassment of gay juvenile prisoners. The agreement includes, among other things, a commitment to develop suicide prevention and intervention procedures and to protect wards from physical and sexual abuse (NEW YORK TIMES). • The **ARIZONA** House approves HB 2392, a measure that would allow Grand Canyon State residents to use deadly force against an intruder who illegally enters a home or vehicle, regardless of whether they believe they are in danger. The measure fires off to the Senate (ARIZONA REPUBLIC [PHOENIX]). • An **IOWA** Senate committee endorses HF 2027, which would make human trafficking illegal in the Hawkeye State. The

stores would be exempt. It moves to the Senate (ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS [DENVER]). • The **VIRGINIA** Senate also votes to snuff out smoking in restaurants and virtually all other public places. Senate Bill 648 now goes to the House (WASHINGTON POST). • **MASSACHUSETTS** becomes the second state in the nation to order Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer, to carry emergency contraception pills at all of their in-state stores. **ILLINOIS** also requires Wal-Mart pharmacies to carry the so-called morning after pill (CHICAGO SUN-TIMES).

In case you missed it:

A series of caustic anti-gay protests by a KANSAS church congregation at the funerals for U.S. war casualties has spurred more than a dozen states to introduce legislation this year seeking to greatly limit such demonstrations. But while most observers are appalled at the vitriolic nature of the protests, others worry that in the zeal to stop them, lawmakers may be trampling everyone's First Amendment rights.

In case you missed it, the article can be found in the archives section of our Web site at http://statenet.com/capitol_journal/02-13-2006.

HOMELAND SECURITY: The **LOUISIANA** House endorses HB 61, which would create a new Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness in the Governor's Office. The measure, which would strip the state's military department of its authority over homeland security and emergency preparedness, now goes to the Senate (ADVOCATE [BATON ROUGE]). • The **ARIZONA** House endorses legislation that would require Gov. Janet Napolitano (D) to follow through on a proposal to increase the number of National Guard troops made available to help stop illegal immigration at the state's border with Mexico. Napolitano made the proposal earlier this year. The measure migrates to the Senate (LOS ANGELES TIMES). • The **GEORGIA** House gives its okay to a measure that would add a 5 percent surcharge onto wire transfers from illegal immigrants. The "Illegal Immigrant Fee Act" would require customers to show proof they are in the United States legally or pay the surcharge. It moves to the Senate (MACON TELEGRAPH).

SOCIAL POLICY: A **FLORIDA** Senate panel rejects a proposal to repeal a law that bans homosexual couples from adopting foster children (ST. PETERSBURG TIMES). • The **IDAHO** Senate approves a constitutional amendment that would ban gay marriage in the Gem State. The proposal has already cleared the House, so it now will go before voters on the fall ballot (IDAHO STATESMAN [BOISE]). • A **NEW HAMPSHIRE** House committee rejects a proposed constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage. State law already bans same-sex marriage (BOSTON GLOBE).

paper. You no longer would be able to claim an academic degree you hadn't earned, or fail to tell an employer that your degree came from an unaccredited source. Motive for the bill: A Seattle-area sheriff last year tried to boost his salary by touting a degree from an Internet diploma mill. Of equal concern is the finding that half of the 463 people with "degrees" from a diploma mill worked for the federal Department of Defense. Probably in charge of procuring body armor.

ZIN IT: It may come as a surprise, but CALIFORNIA — home to the nation's most robust wine industry — does not have an official wine. That may be smart, given that the state's vineyards and wineries produce a wealth of varietals and vintages. But as the *Los Angeles Times* reports, a San Francisco Bay Area lawmaker wants to single out zinfandel as the Golden State's golden variety. Democratic state Sen. Carole Migden is pushing the notion, calling Zin "the quintessential California wine." Not everyone agrees, however. Those who specialize in cabernet sauvignon and chardonnay, among others, have objected. And what about pinot noir? After all, how many hip and successful movies have been made about a wine obsession?

SAY, WHAT? DEPARTMENT: Many states have enacted laws over the years prohibiting anyone not engaged in law enforcement from bringing a firearm to within 100, 200 or 500 yards of a school. So, what is one to make of Urban Middle School in WISCONSIN? For 68 years, reports the *Sheboygan Press*, the school has been the site of a public indoor shooting range. "It's really a fluke," says the local school superintendent, who adds that the range is available only during non-school hours. The range has been in operation since it opened in 1955 and is legal under training guidelines issued by the school district.

— By A.G. BLOCK

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 2006 prefiles last week: 725

Number of 2006 Intros last week: 6,456

Number of bills enacted/adopted last week: 824

Number of 2006 prefiles to date: 12,676

Number of 2006 Intros to date: 51,970

Number of enacted/adopted overall in 2006: 3,777

— Compiled By JAMES ROSS
(Measures current as of 02/16/06
Source: State Net)



Editor: Rich Ehsen — capj@statenet.com

Associate Editor: Korey Clark — capj@statenet.com

Contributing Editor: A.G. Block — capj@statenet.com

Editorial Advisor: Lou Cannon

Correspondents: Richard Cox (CA), Steve Karas (CA),
Bruce McKeeman (CA), Linda Mendenhall (IL),
Lauren King (MA) and Ben Livingood (PA), Jeff Kinison

Graphic Design: Richard Hansen, Heather Conway

©2005 State Net ISSN: 1521-8449



You've just read State Net Capitol Journal,
the insider's source for political and legislative news
in the 50 states.

State Net Capitol Journal is published 40
times annually and delivered over the Web or
e-mail.

For a FREE subscription, visit our Website at
www.statenet.com and click on the "Register Now" icon.
Or, call us at 916.444.0840.