

March 17, 2008

States Go It Alone



Budget & taxes **5**
 Congress considering college funding mandate

Politics & leadership **7**
 Indian gaming battle raging on Capitol Hill

Governors **8**
 Silver Lining in NY?

Bird's eye view **2**

Hot issues **10**

Once around the statehouse lightly **13**

● The next issue of
 ● Capitol Journal will be
 ● available on March 31st.
 ●

Top Story

With Congress so far not inclined to pass comprehensive immigration reform, the issue has seemingly fallen off the radar for the remaining presidential hopefuls. That has left it to the states to work out for themselves.

SNCJ Spotlight

The issue that didn't bark

Fans of Sherlock Holmes will remember a famous story in which “the curious incident of the dog in the night-time” provides a crime-solving clue. Because the dog failed to bark when a nearby racehorse was taken away, Holmes deduced that the dog must have known whomever took the horse.

A Cannon Perspective

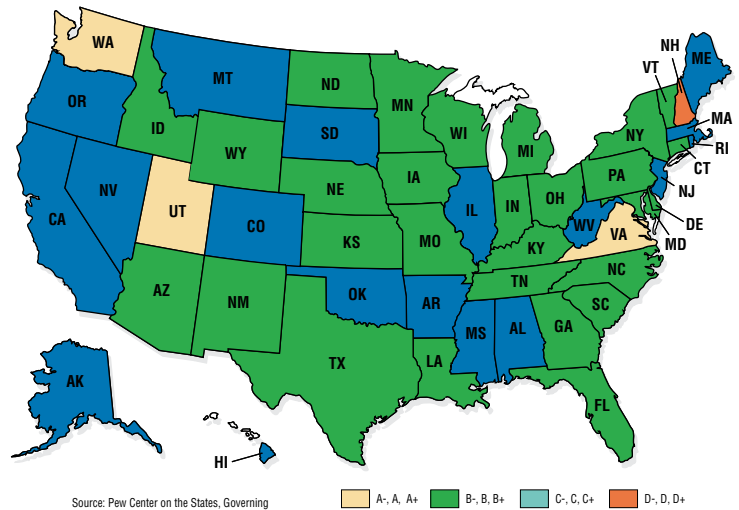


With Lou Cannon

In this year's presidential campaign, illegal immigration has been the equivalent of the non-barking dog. Early in 2008 candidates flocked to the U.S.-Mexican border to demand fencing and new controls. Pundits were predicting that the immigration issue could determine the identity of the Republican nominee. It didn't. Senator John McCain of ARIZONA, written off by many of these same pundits and distrusted by conservatives on immigration, came back from the political graveyard and soon clinched the GOP presidential nomination. This is the same McCain who last year worked with the Democratic icon, Sen. Edward Kennedy of MASSACHUSETTS, and also with President George W. Bush, in an attempt to forge a compromise bill that would have provided a road to citizenship for the estimated 12 million illegal immigrants living in the United States. Denounced as "amnesty," the bill died in the Senate.

The federal government's failure to find common ground on immigration prodded states to act, of which more in a moment. But in terms of national politics, McCain's emergence as the GOP man of the hour put immigration on the back burner. To be sure, McCain, did a bit of a tap dance, saying he had learned that it is necessary to "secure our borders" before doing anything else on immigration. This phrase, when linked to a "path to citizenship," has also become a mantra for Democratic presidential candidates Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, both of whom want the backing of Latinos and other immigrants without alienating voters who are worried about the porosity of U.S. borders.

Bird's eye view



States receive annual report cards

With the national economy in an undeniable slump, how state governments manage their resources is more critical than ever. That made the release this month of the Pew Center on the States' and Governing magazine's annual assessment of the states particularly timely. All 50 states received grades evaluating their performance in four areas: information, people, money and infrastructure. Overall grades ranged from A- to D+, with the average a B-, which 18 states achieved and 13 states surpassed. The states that got the highest marks are actively pursuing better management. WASHINGTON, for instance, holds public meetings, led by the governor, to evaluate government programs; UTAH utilizes a financial tracking system that provides instantaneous data to assist in decision-making; and VIRGINIA offers workers rewards for meeting performance goals. States at the opposite end of the bell curve, on the other hand, like NEW HAMPSHIRE, aren't closely managing their resources.





Now, however, a backlash to this approach has developed among business groups that contend it is unfair to ask them to bear the expensive burden of verifying legal citizenship. (See “A Growing Divide,” SNCJ, Feb. 11) A legal challenge promoted by the Chamber of Commerce is pending in OKLAHOMA. In KANSAS, responding to proposals that would impose penalties on employers, Amy Blankenbiller, president of the KANSAS Chamber of Commerce told a state House committee: “We are not interested in being responsible in the business community for solving a social concern.” In a like-minded vein, Republican Govs. Mitch Daniels of INDIANA and Haley Barbour of MISSISSIPPI have assured business groups in their states that they will carefully examine any bills that reach their desks to make certain they are fair to employers.

Historically, public concern about illegal immigration has waxed and waned with economic conditions. Mexican immigrants, including some U.S. citizens, were rounded up and deported during the Depression. A few years later, with American young men off to war, U.S. authorities were frantically importing Mexican workers to harvest crops that were rotting in the fields. Current anxiety about illegal immigrants roughly tracks the increase in U.S. job losses.

Anxiety aside, a combination of pressures may be reducing illegal immigration on the U.S. southern border. These pressures, in addition to state laws, include a beefing up of the U.S. Border Control, construction of 302 miles of fence along the border, and a new federal law increasing civil fines for employers who hire illegals. One sign that the border flow has slowed is that remittances sent home to families from Mexicans working in the United States increased only 1 percent in 2007 after growing by 17 percent in 2006. (NYT, 2/26/08). Advocates of immigration maintain that these remittances, totaling nearly \$24 billion, show that immigrants contribute to Mexico’s stability and therefore to U.S. national security.

Given its economic significance and emotional nature, illegal immigration will doubtless continue to be a subterranean issue in American politics even if it lacks primacy in the presidential campaign. It was a divisive issue well before 1892, when Conan Doyle wrote “Silver Blaze,” the story about the dog that didn’t bark. This mystery, which has a crackling good plot, is available in nearly every Holmes anthology. For those of you who don’t know the story, I won’t spoil it by revealing the ending. As to the presidential campaign itself, the ending remains to be written.

—Lou Cannon

Budget & taxes

NORTHEAST SLOTS REVENUE DOWN: New Englanders' gambling fever has apparently broken. Slots revenues were down more than 6 percent at CONNECTICUT's casinos, Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun, in the five months that ended Jan. 31, compared to the same period in 2006-07. And at Twin River in RHODE ISLAND, per machine earnings were off by 6 percent in the last three months, forcing operators to shut down two restaurants on weekdays.

Experts say the trend is partly due to the national economic slump, which is impacting the gambling industry nationwide. But they say it is also a sign that the region's casinos are beginning to exhaust the steady supply of gamblers who have fueled the industry's rapid growth over the last decade.

"We're getting an indication of market saturation," said Arthur Wright, an economist at the University of CONNECTICUT who has been tracking the casino industry for years.

The trend could hinder MASSACHUSETTS Gov. Deval Patrick's (D) plan to license three casinos in the Bay State, which would virtually double the number of slot machines in New England.

William Eadington, director of the Institute for the Study of Gambling and Commercial Gaming at the University of NEVADA at Reno, said a big test is coming in May, when Foxwoods opens its \$700 million MGM Grand casino. Eadington said there's a chance the 1,400-slot-machine facility could draw new customers and not hurt business at Mohegan Sun and Twin River.

"If not, then the market is saturated," he said. (BOSTON GLOBE)

AZ LAWMAKERS EXCHANGE BLOWS WITH GOV: Earlier this month, ARIZONA's Republican-controlled Legislature approved a bill (HB 2857) that would have frozen about \$580 million in state spending, pending a broader fix for the \$1.2 billion shortfall projected for the current fiscal year. Last Tuesday Gov. Janet Napolitano (D) vetoed the bill, calling it "wholly inadequate" for dealing with the state's budget problems.

"We cannot congratulate ourselves and think we have made progress by piecemeal attempts like House Bill 2857. We fool no one," she wrote in a letter explaining her veto. "Arizonans deserve a comprehensive fiscal plan that resolves the expected budget deficits of fiscal year 2008 and 2009."

The governor also pointed out that the measure cleared the House and Senate on party-line votes.

The GOP majority was incensed.

"It wasn't supposed to be comprehensive," House Speaker Jim Weiers (R) said of the bill. "It was a tool that was extended and it was a tool that was rejected."



The following day Republicans took their revenge, passing HB 2043, imposing a freeze on state hiring, despite the governor’s having imposed a hiring freeze of her own last month. The GOP measure is broader because it covers offices the governor doesn’t have authority over, such as the state courts.

The kicker was that this time the Republicans passed the measure with bipartisan support. (ARIZONA REPUBLIC [PHOENIX])

CA DEMS FAIL TO PASS OIL TAX: Making good on CALIFORNIA Senate leader Don Perata’s (D) vow two weeks ago to raise taxes instead of cutting school funding, as Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) has proposed (see CA SENATE LEADER VOWS TAX FIGHT in March 10 issue of *SNCJ*), the Democrat-led Assembly took up a bill last week to tax oil companies. The bill, sponsored by

Assembly Speaker Fabian Nuñez (D), called for a 6 percent tax on oil extracted in the state as well as a 2 percent tax on “windfall profits.” GOP legislators decried the move as a political stunt. “Everyone knows they’re trying to paint Republicans

“Everyone knows they’re trying to paint Republicans as the bad guys sticking up for the evil oil companies.”

as the bad guys sticking up for the evil oil companies,” said Assemblyman Alan Nakanishi (R), “while the Democrats ride up on their white horses” to rescue the schoolchildren. That was, in fact, the way Democrats framed the issue. “It’s time for a reality check,” said Assemblyman Charles Calderon (D). “Do we spare our children, or do we support special privileges for oil companies?” Ultimately the vote fell pretty much along party lines, 45-30, but that was short of the two-thirds majority required to pass tax measures. (SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS, LOS ANGELES TIMES)

BUDGETS IN BRIEF: The IDAHO Senate Commerce and Human Resources Committee approved legislation last week that would cap medical benefits for current government retirees and eliminate them altogether for workers hired after June 2008. Supporters say the bill would decrease the state’s unfunded medical liability from \$442 million to \$136 million over the next eight years (IDAHO STATESMAN [BOISE]). • In special session last Wednesday, the LOUISIANA House voted 101-2 to raise the state’s annual cap on spending and then voted unanimously to spend last year’s \$1 billion surplus on transportation projects, coastal restoration and other needs. The session, called by Gov. Bobby Jindal (R) to address the surplus issue and cut business taxes, was expected to conclude by the weekend (TIMES-PICAYUNE [BATON ROUGE]). • The CALIFORNIA Assembly approved a bill (SB 344) that would allow cities and counties to buy back their own bonds to shelter them from the current volatility in the municipal market. The bill headed back to the Senate for concurrence (SACRAMENTO BEE). • The KENTUCKY House unanimously



passed a bill (HB 2) last week that would provide tax credits for energy-efficiency improvements to homes and businesses. The bill headed to the Senate (KENTUCKY POST [COVINGTON]). • Despite the downturn in the national economy, 2007 was one of the most profitable in a decade for TEXAS insurers, spurring calls for state action on homeowner rates. Overall the industry paid out 36.5 percent of premiums last year, well below the 58 percent average loss ratio cited by experts as a good indication of profitability (DALLAS MORNING NEWS). • VIRGINIA House and Senate negotiators agreed last Wednesday to a \$77 billion state budget, setting the stage for adjournment of the session the following day, five days beyond its scheduled adjournment (RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH). • FLORIDA lawmakers approved \$512 million in cuts to the current year’s budget. But new estimates show that at least \$3 billion may have to be slashed to balance the state budget for the year that begins July 1 (MIAMI HERALD).

— Compiled by KOREY CLARK

Politics & leadership

FLORIDA DEMS PITCH ‘DO-OVER’ PRIMARY: Last Thursday, FLORIDA’s Democratic Party proposed a plan to redo the Jan. 29 presidential primary effectively nullified by the Democratic National Committee because it was held earlier than party rules allowed. Under the plan, Democrats would revote on June 3 either by mailing in a ballot or by going to one of 50 election offices that would be set up around the state. And Democratic Party donors would foot the estimated \$10-12 million bill for the election instead of taxpayers.

“I think this is the only thing that the state party can do at this point,” said Democratic Party Chair Karen Thurman.

The response from the Democratic presidential candidates was no better than lukewarm. The Clinton campaign preferred “to honor the elections that have already taken place,” according to Clinton spokesman Phil Singer, although he added, “If that’s not possible, we believe that there should be a re-do of the vote.”

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Barack Obama had a few more reservations.

“It’s not just me, but the entire FLORIDA House delegation, including Clinton supporters, that have expressed

concern,” he said. “In OREGON they have a mail-in system, but it’s something that’s been in place a long time and they’ve scanned all the signatures of all the registered voters so there’s a verification system in place. I know some of the FLORIDA folks



are also concerned that since there's such a large number of FLORIDA residents who don't live in FLORIDA during the summer that they would all be missing in this."

Still, Obama said, "We will abide by whatever the DNC decides."

Thurman set the deadline for deciding the fate of the plan for March 17 but said, "If the candidates don't agree, this is a non-starter."

"If the candidates don't agree, this is a non-starter."

"I don't know, but I have a feeling this is probably getting closer to 'not' than 'yes,'" she said. (BLOOMBERG.COM, BALTIMORE SUN)

POST-9/11 REPORTING RULES SNARE SPITZER: In a roundabout way, the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks may have contributed to the downfall of NEW YORK Gov. Eliot Spitzer (D). In the aftermath of the attacks, the Bush administration adopted rules requiring banks to file reports on transactions exceeding \$10,000 and "suspicious activity reports" on transactions that look like money laundering. Banks have been complaining ever since about the burden of filing the reports, which number over half a million per year, but they've helped boost the number of public-corruption convictions substantially. According to the Justice Department, in the eight years from 1993 through 2000, it obtained 287 such convictions. But in the six years from 2001 through 2006, the number of convictions rose to 332. And as a result of his alleged dalliance with a high-priced call girl, evidence of which appears to have turned up on one of those "suspicious activity reports," Spitzer could end up boosting the department's eight-year totals in both categories. (WALL STREET JOURNAL)

POLITICS IN BRIEF: The IOWA Senate passed a bill last week (SB 2355) that would give residents the legal right to take unpaid time off to participate in the presidential caucuses. Hillary Clinton had criticized the state because the caucuses, held in the evening, disenfranchise voters who work at that time (DES MOINES REGISTER).

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

Governors

SILVER LINING IN NY? The stunning end of NEW YORK Gov. Eliot Spitzer's (D) 14-month reign produced a torrent of emotions among Empire State lawmakers of both parties — shock, disbelief and anger chief among them. But a new tone has also taken tenuous hold: hope that the change from the perpetually confrontational Spitzer to the far more personable and even-tempered

David A. Paterson (D) will produce a calmer, more conducive work atmosphere in the Albany statehouse.

Praise for Paterson's low-key, collaborative style began to flow freely almost immediately after the shocking allegations that Spitzer had been implicated in a high-end prostitution ring came to light early last week. Those accolades continued when Spitzer made his resignation official on Wednesday, perhaps none more notable than

from Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno, one of Spitzer's fiercest opponents.

"We are going to partner with the lieutenant governor when he becomes governor, and David has always been very open with me, very forthright," Bruno said. "I look forward to a positive, productive relationship as soon as possible."

But while everyone believes the atmosphere will be more collegial than it has been over the last year, many Republicans

voiced concern over what kind of leadership Paterson will bring the office.

Republicans like Sen. Michael Nozzolio, for instance, were quick to point out that Paterson is considered to be much more liberal than his predecessor. "I like him as a person, but on most issues he is way to the left of Eliot Spitzer," Nozzolio said. That includes issues like reforming the state's drug laws, which he strongly supports, and the death penalty, which he vehemently opposes.

Lawmakers like Sen. Dale

Volker, who represents rural Erie County, also openly wondered if Paterson, a New York City native who represented Harlem in the Senate, would be sympathetic to

the needs of upstate residents. Volker called Paterson "one of the brightest people I have ever met," but also noted that the new governor "was born and brought up in Manhattan, and you don't expect those kind of people to love western NEW YORK — except as it benefits the rest of the state."

Both parties will also be keen to see what part, if any, of Spitzer's agenda Paterson chooses to adopt for his own. Paterson attempted to answer at least some of those questions during a press conference last Thursday, the first since his ascension became assured. Paterson indicated that he, like Spitzer, opposes tax hikes to help close the state's looming \$4.4 billion budget deficit and that he still supports Spitzer's proposed \$1 billion economic boost for upstate NEW YORK.

Paterson, who will become NEW YORK's first black governor and the nation's first legally blind chief executive, also showed a sense of humor, something rarely

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"I like him as a person, but on most issues he is way to the left of Eliot Spitzer."



seen from the ultra-stern Spitzer. When asked if he had ever solicited a prostitute, Paterson drew laughs by answering, “Only the lobbyists. That’s why we want campaign finance.” (NEW YORK TIMES, ALBANY TIMES-UNION, REUTERS, WALL STREET JOURNAL, USA TODAY)

GOVERNORS IN BRIEF: Governors Bob Riley of **ALABAMA**, Charlie Crist of **FLORIDA** and Sonny Perdue of **GEORGIA**, all Republicans, boycotted a Congressional hearing last week on their growing tri-state water feud. The trio said other matters prevented them from attending the hearing (MACON TELEGRAPH). • **CALIFORNIA** Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) called on the state Supreme Court to reverse a recent power court ruling that parents must possess a valid teaching credential if they plan to home school their kids. Schwarzenegger said that he will push legislation to change the law if it is not overturned on appeal (LOS ANGELES TIMES). • **WEST VIRGINIA** Gov. Joe Manchin (D) said he supports a plan to offer an elective hunting course in public schools. Manchin initially opposed the proposal because it called for the course to be mandatory (REGISTER-HERALD [BECKLEY]).

— *Compiled by RICH EHISEN*

<p>Upcoming elections 03/13/2008 - 04/03/2008</p> <p>03/18/2008 Rhode Island Special Primary Senate 020</p> <p>03/25/2008 Florida Special Primary House District 55</p> <p>South Carolina Special Election House District 92</p>

Hot issues

BUSINESS: The **WASHINGTON** Senate approves HB 2647, which would bar the sale of toys that contain excessive levels of lead, cadmium and phthalates. It moves to Gov. Christine Gregoire (D) for review (SEATTLE TIMES). • Still in **WASHINGTON**, the Senate endorses SB 5751, a measure that would allow select grocery stores to hold beer and wine tastings if the products are locally produced. It also moves to Gov. Gregoire (SEATTLE TIMES). • The **CALIFORNIA** Senate approves SB 1115, legislation that would prohibit doctors from considering age, race or genetic factors in determining the size of workers’ compensation benefits for employees who suffer job-related disabilities. It moves to the Assembly (SACRAMENTO BEE). • The **IDAHO** Senate unanimously approves a bill that would increase the minimum fine for operating a wilderness outfitting or guide service without a license from \$100 to \$1,000. Violators would also face a year in jail. The measure moves to Gov. Butch Otter (R) for review. • The **NEBRASKA** Senate gives first-round approval to LB 853, legislation that would extend from



two years to five years the time period in which a person with a stranger oriented life insurance policy, or STOLI, cannot sell that policy (LINCOLN JOURNAL-STAR).

- The **GEORGIA** House kills HB 1318, which would have required that billboard companies be compensated when local governments force them to move or take down a sign (MACON TELEGRAPH).
- The **KENTUCKY** House rejects HB 526, which would have barred mining companies from blasting the tops off of mountains in order to get to coal deposits (COURIER-JOURNAL [LOUISVILLE]).
- The **OKLAHOMA** House approves legislation that would require retailers to sell only “fire safe” cigarettes, those that automatically extinguish when left unattended. It moves to the Senate (OKLAHOMAN [OKLAHOMA CITY]).
- The **PENNSYLVANIA** Senate endorses a package of bills that would, among other things, eliminate prepayment penalties on home loans below \$200,000 and require mortgage lenders and brokers to be licensed by the state. They move to the House (MORNING CALL [HARRISBURG]).

CRIME & PUNISHMENT: The **WYOMING** Legislature approves HB 137, a so-called “castle doctrine” measure that would allow citizens to legally assume that anyone who breaks into their homes means to do them harm and provide people who kill others in self-defense immunity from lawsuits. It moves to Gov. Dave Freudenthal (D) for consideration (CASPER STAR-TRIBUNE).

EDUCATION: The **VIRGINIA** General Assembly endorses legislation that directs state education officials to determine whether the Old Dominion should opt out of adhering to the federal No Child Left Behind law. If yes, the state Board of Education must propose a plan for doing so by summer of 2009. It goes to Gov. Tim Kaine (D) for review (WASHINGTON POST).

- The **ARIZONA** Senate unanimously endorses legislation that would allow diabetic students to inject themselves with insulin while on school grounds. It moves to the House (ARIZONA REPUBLIC [PHOENIX]).
- The **WASHINGTON** Senate gives final approval to SB 6483, which would authorize Evergreen State schools and other state-run institutions to buy fresh produce and meats from in-state farmers even if locally grown products cost more than cheaper processed or canned products. It moves to Gov. Christine Gregoire (D),

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: 441

Number of Intros last week: 3,549

Number of bills enacted/adopted last week: 1,635

Number of prefiles to date: 15,372

Number of Intros to date: 63,353

Number of bills enacted/adopted overall to date: 6,041

— Compiled By JAMES ROSS
(measures current as of 03/13/2008)
Source: State Net database



who is expected to sign it into law (SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER). • Still in WASHINGTON, the state Supreme Court rules that random drug testing for student athletes is unconstitutional. The court determined the testing could only be done for cause and with a warrant (SEATTLE TIMES).

Upcoming stories

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

- **Pharmaceutical gifts to doctors**
- **National energy corridors**
- **Spin Life insurance**

ENVIRONMENT: The KENTUCKY Senate approves SB 196, which would allow the state to enter into agreements with private property owners for the use of land for such recreational activities as horseback riding, all-terrain vehicle use, hunting and fishing. It moves to the House (COURIER-JOURNAL [LOUISVILLE]). • The ARIZONA House approves HB 2753, which would require off-highway vehicle owners in the Grand Canyon State to buy an annual sticker that would provide funding for establishment and maintenance of trails and enforcement. The measure motors off to the Senate (ARIZONA REPUBLIC [PHOENIX]). • The MISSOURI Senate gives preliminary approval to SB 759, which would require that 5 percent of the diesel fuel in the state include biodiesel, which can be made from vegetable oil or animal fat. It faces another vote before it can move to the House (ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH).

HEALTH & SCIENCE: The NEW JERSEY Assembly approves AB 873, which would allow Garden State resident to take up to six weeks of paid leave to care for a newborn or a sick relative. It must return to the Senate for another vote (STAR-LEDGER [NEWARK]). • The IDAHO House kills legislation that would have created a licensing system for midwives who help in home births (IDAHO STATESMAN [BOISE]). • The IOWA House approves HV 2539, which sets a goal to provide health coverage for all Hawkeye State children by Dec. 31, 2010. It moves to the Senate (DES MOINES REGISTER). • A MINNESOTA House kills legislation that would have required health officials to collect body mass index data on all Gopher State children. Opponents said that doing do would shame overweight kids (BRAINERD DISPATCH).

IMMIGRATION: An IDAHO House committee rejects legislation that would have required employers to verify their workers' immigration status. Employers who knowingly hired illegal workers would have faced fines and a loss of business license (IDAHO STATESMAN [BOISE]). • UTAH Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. (R) signs SB 81, which will force public employers and their contractors to verify the legal status of workers, and enlist local law enforcement agencies to help enforce federal immigration statutes. It also makes it a crime to harbor or transport illegal immigrants (SALT LAKE TRIBUNE). • The TENNESSEE Senate approves SB 2849, a measure that would allow employers to require that only English be spoken



in the workplace. It migrates to the House (MEMPHIS COMMERCIAL APPEAL).
 • Still in **TENNESSEE**, House and Senate committees approve legislation (SB 252 and HB 66) that would bar illegal immigrants from accepting pay for work performed in the Volunteer State. If passed into law, undocumented workers could be required to forfeit any earnings, face up to six months in jail and be fined up to \$500. The measures are likely headed to floor votes in both chambers (TENNESSEAN [NASHVILLE]).

SOCIAL POLICY: The **OKLAHOMA** House endorses HB 2709, legislation that would require abortion providers to perform an ultrasound before terminating a pregnancy. It moves to the Senate (OKLAHOMAN [OKLAHOMA CITY]).

POTPOURRI: The **MICHIGAN** Senate approves SB 82, which would require all children under eight years-old and less than 4 feet, 9 inches tall to be secured in a federally approved child safety or booster seat when traveling in a car. It moves to the House (DETROIT FREE PRESS). • **TENNESSEE** lawmakers approve legislation that would require veterinarians to sedate pets before using intercardiac euthanasia, a procedure in which sodium pentobarbital is injected directly into an animal’s heart. It moves to Gov. Phil Bredesen (D) for review (TENNESSEAN [NASHVILLE]). • **WYOMING** Gov. Dave Freudenthal (D) signs HB 57, which would bar government officials from confiscating guns from law-abiding citizens during emergencies (CASPER STAR-TRIBUNE).

— Compiled by *RICH EHISEN*

Once around the statehouse lightly

FROM CRUSADER TO CRUCIFIED: Rare is the occasion these days when some industrious business person doesn’t try to make a quick buck off someone else’s misery. Seemingly just hours after an affinity for high-priced hookers blew NEW YORK Gov. Eliot Spitzer out of office, Reuters reports that Internet sites were already marketing T-shirts and hats that poke fun at his predicament. Most reference “Client 9,” the call girl service’s alleged code name for Spitzer, though some have cheeky commentary like “Spitzer: Witness for the Prostitution” or “Don’t Blame Me, I voted for Client 8.” One designer even pimps their offerings with the tag line, “Look like a governor in this stylish CLIENT 9 design.” Many others are not suitable for print here.



YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT? Recent public furor over humans forcing animals to fight to the death for their amusement and wagering pleasure has sent most lawmakers scurrying to publicly oppose such barbaric activities. Most, but not all. According to State Net, HAWAII Rep. Rida Cabanilla last week introduced House Concurrent Resolution 180, which implores the United Nations to “officially commemorate cockfighting as a global sport,” saying it “has a very long and cherished tradition in many cultures across the planet.” Cabanilla also wants copies of the resolution sent to, among others, President George W. Bush and U.S. Sect. of State Condoleeza Rice. This isn't Rep. Cabanilla's first venture into controversial legislative waters. A few years back she proposed a bill that would have forced teachers to be weighed every six months, with sanctions against those deemed to be too heavy. That one didn't go anywhere either.

In case you missed it

States and municipalities say Wall Street's bond rating system is costing them money that could be put toward desperately needed road repairs and other pressing needs, and they want it to change.

In case you missed it, the article can be found on our Web site at http://www.statenet.com/capitol_journal/03-10-2008/html

SON OF A SON OF DROOPY DRAWERS: FLORIDA state Sen. Gary Siplin hates the way many young men these days like to wear their pants hanging down past their backside, a style known as “jailin” due to its origins in how inmates often choose to wear their prison garb. For the last three years, Siplin has tried to outlaw the outlaw look, making him the butt of more than a few jokes from fellow lawmakers. This year, reports the *Orlando Sentinel*, has been no different. When Siplin's latest measure came up for a vote, Sen. Dave Aronberg proposed an amendment to exempt refrigerator repairmen and plumbers. Siplin, however, may yet have the last laugh. Unlike his first two tries, this year's measure, SB 302, received first round approval from the full Senate. One more positive round and the measure heads to the House.

NO CUPCAKE HERE: CALIFORNIA Assemblyman Paul Cook turned 65 last week, prompting official well wishes from colleague Tom Berryhill. As the *Sacramento Bee* reports, Berryhill also spilled the beans on Cook's nickname, “Cupcake.” Berryhill acknowledged that such a soft moniker seems odd for Cook — a former Marine with a slew of combat medals to his credit, including a Bronze Star and a few Purple Hearts — but explained that Cook, also a former college professor, got the handle from students who thought their tough guy teacher was “a real softie.” That part was news to Assemblywoman Bonnie Garcia, one of those former students. “We never called him Cupcake,” Garcia protested, noting that Cook was famous for giving students “three hours of homework every day.”

— By RICH EHISEN



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