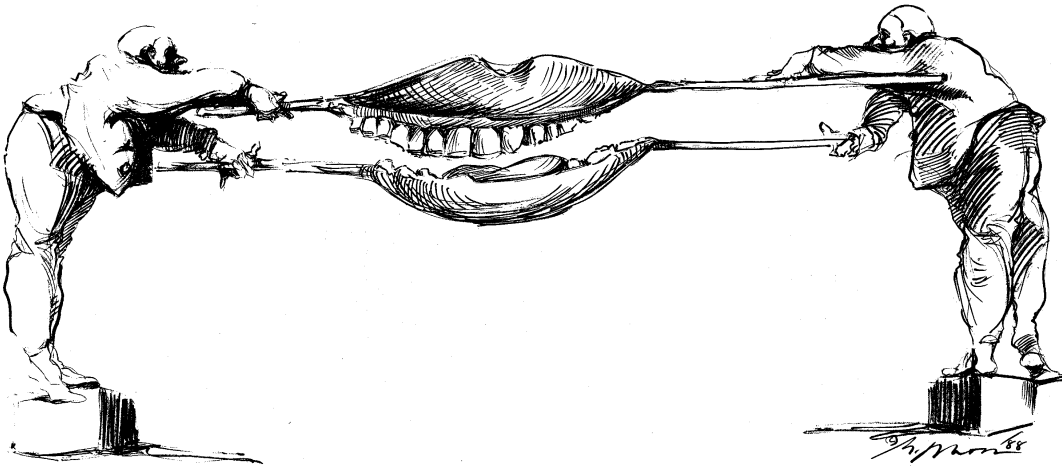


March 21, 2005

## Legislating academic freedom



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### Top Story

*Conservatives have long complained that college professors bully students into adopting liberal viewpoints. Now some lawmakers are turning that perception into legislation designed to force politics out of the classroom.*

## SNCJ Spotlight

### States ponder legislating "intellectual diversity"

Colleges and universities have for decades been viewed as bastions of liberal thinking. That perception has for just as long irked conservatives, who claim their viewpoint is often stifled by left-leaning professors seeking to indoctrinate students into the liberal camp. This argument has steadily gained traction, particularly as state legislatures have shifted to the right, leading states from CALI-

FORNIA to FLORIDA to introduce legislation this year that could dramatically alter what is and is not said in college classrooms.

At least 12 states are currently considering bills based at least in part on the Academic Bill of Rights (ABR), the brainchild of political activist and writer David Horowitz of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture, a Los Angeles-based conservative think tank. Horowitz developed the ABR, which purports to level the playing field for conservative students by forbidding college professors from bringing their political viewpoints into the classroom, as a means of lessening the impact of what he sees as a long-standing liberal bias by those teachers.

The ABR would, among other things, bar academic institutions from making their hiring, firing and tenure decisions based on a professor's political views. It would also prohibit teachers from grading their students — either positively or negatively — based on that student's political or religious beliefs, while requiring that curricula and reading lists in the humanities and social science disciplines reflect “the uncertainty and unsettled character of all human knowledge in those areas by providing students with dissenting sources and viewpoints where appropriate.”

States currently considering some form of this legislation include California, Florida, INDIANA, HAWAII, MASSACHUSETTS, MARYLAND, MAINE, MINNESOTA, OHIO, RHODE ISLAND, TENNESSEE and WASHINGTON. Congress has also taken up the issue under the heading of House Concurrent Resolution 318, sponsored by GEORGIA Rep. Jack Kingston (R). The Georgia Senate approved an Academic Bill of Rights last year in the form of a Senate Resolution. Taking a much different tack, MISSOURI House Bill 432, authored by Rep. Mark Wright (R), would abolish the tenure system as a means of forcing teachers to be more careful with their words and deeds.

Much of that support for the ABR has been spurred by stories of students being intimidated by professors who use poor grades and verbal attacks as weapons of retribution against students who disagree with them. Sen. Larry Mumper (R), the sponsor of Ohio's ABR legislation, Senate Bill 24, says in his view the problem is significant enough to warrant legislative action.

## *The Week in Session*

States in Regular Session: AK, AL, AR, AZ, CO, CT, DC, DE, FL, GA, HI, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MS, MT, NC, ND, NE, NH, NJ, NV, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA (House), RI, SC, TN, TX, US, VT, WA, WI, WV

States in Skeleton Session: OH

States in Recess:  
CA, CA "a", PA (Senate)

Currently Prefiling:  
LA (Drafts for 2005)

States Projected to Adjourn: KY, SD

States Adjourned in 2005: DC "z", IL "z", MA "z", NM, NY "z", UT, VA, WY

States in Special Session  
Adjourned in 2005: DE "c", FL "a", MD "a", MS "a", WI "a", WV "a"

Letters indicate special/extraordinary sessions

Source: State Net, 3/18/05

“I have received complaints over the years from students who have had their academic freedoms violated and do not believe that the universities are doing enough to rectify the problem,” Mumper says. “It is my goal to open up the classroom to all points of view and allow individuals to freely express themselves without the fear of discrimination.”

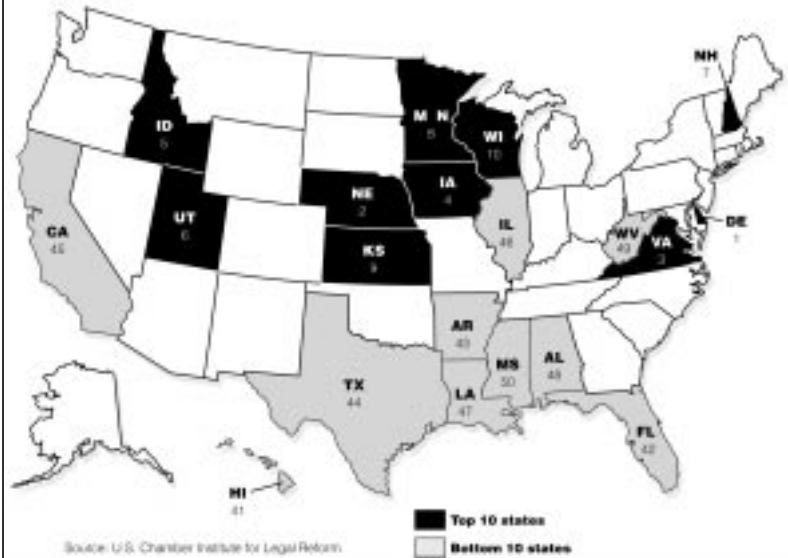
Horowitz himself testified this month in favor of SB 24, citing numerous cases of what he considers to be discrimination from campuses around the nation.

“It is not an education when a mid-term examination contains a required essay on the topic, ‘Explain Why President Bush Is a War Criminal,’ as did a criminology exam at the University of Northern Colorado in 2003,” Horowitz said at the hearing. “It is not an education when a professor of property law harangues his class on why all Republicans are racist as happened at the Colorado University Law School in 2004.”

Horowitz also denied the ABR is aimed solely at protecting conservative viewpoints, testifying, “It is the task of professors — whether they are politically left or politically conservative — to teach students *how* to think and not *what* to think about matters that are controversial.”

Ryan Anderson, a senior General Management and Marketing major at California State University Sacramento (CSUS), says he has also experienced situations like those Horowitz describes.

## Bird’s eye view



### *Litigation environment not the same in all states*

An overwhelming number of American businesses say the fear of frivolous lawsuits in a state could affect important business decisions at their company, according to a new report conducted by Harris Interactive for the United States Chamber of Commerce and the U.S. Chamber Institute for Legal Reform. The 2004 State Liability Systems Ranking Study, compiled from interviews with more than 1,400 senior corporate attorneys across the country, ranks each state based on how “reasonable and fair” each is perceived to be by U.S. companies. Respondents were asked to grade states in eight categories, including treatment of class action lawsuits and judges’ impartiality and fairness. According to those grades, DELAWARE has the fairest litigation environment; MISSISSIPPI has the worst. The accompanying map shows the top and bottom 10 states in the survey. To view the full report with scores and grades for each state, please visit the Institute for Legal Reform Web site at <http://www.instituteforlegalreform.com/>.







ifies the premise that students should “expect an examination of diverse beliefs and ideas, whether those ideas confirm or challenge one’s existing views,” and would also protect professors and students pursuing “knowledge and the expression of ideas” from legislative interference. The bill is currently in the Colorado Senate Committee on Education.

Hagedorn, of course, introduced his bill before the firestorm surrounding the controversial essay published by Colorado University ethnic studies professor Ward Churchill became national news. Churchill’s essay, written in the hours immediately after the World Trade Center attacks and recently published with a collection of other works by Churchill, claimed 9/11 was justified and that those people killed were “little Eichmanns,” a reference to the notorious Nazi who oversaw the murder of more than 6 million Jews in concentration camps during World War II. Once publicized, that essay drew instantaneous rage from people across the nation, including Colorado Gov. Bill Owens (R), who called immediately for Churchill to be fired from his \$94,000-a-year job. The university refused, citing Churchill’s tenure. Owens has continued to pressure the university regents to terminate Churchill’s contract, and some Colorado legislators have suggested completely cutting off state funding to the professor’s department. The controversy has also likely ensured that Owens will veto SB 85 if it clears the Legislature.

Although Churchill’s enemies have been pouring out of the woodwork for months, he has acquired at least one seemingly odd bedfellow. Bradley Shipp, the national field director for Students for Academic Freedom, a Washington D.C.-based student-led organization that acts as a clearinghouse for students that support movements like the ABR, says his group does not support Owens’ attempts to have Churchill fired.

“Ward Churchill has a right to say what he is going to say. He shouldn’t be fired for that,” Shipp says. “But we do think students should be afforded the same level of freedom in the classroom as a Ward Churchill.”

Shipp also says that the Colorado University system has done a good job of trying to address the concerns that students have over intellectual diversity on both sides of the political fence.

“This situation [with Churchill] is in some ways a good thing because it shines the light on the entire issue of academic freedom in the classroom,” Shipp says. “It also reinforces our opinion that there is no reason for teachers in certain subjects to discuss politics.”

— By *RICH EHISEN*

# Budget & taxes

**S**LOTS ONCE AGAIN A LONGSHOT IN MD: Two weeks ago, MARYLAND's House of Delegates passed slot machine gambling legislation for the very first time, giving gambling proponents a slim hope that legalized slot-machine gaming might finally be coming to the Old Line State. But that hope was dashed last week when a Senate committee rejected the House plan and replaced it with a more expansive proposal the Senate passed last month. The Senate has passed similar bills the last two years, only to see both die in the House. Although the House finally passed a slot machine bill, Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller (D) and Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. (R) objected to several elements in the measure, such as how many machines would be allowed and how locations for the machines would be determined. Miller said he's willing to talk the issue over with House leaders, but acknowledged that "If they want to kill the bill, they can kill the bill." And, according to House Speaker Michael E. Busch (D), it's likely that's just what they'll do. Busch said he didn't think the delegates would be willing to consider any other slots proposals. In fact, he said he doubted he could even get a majority to pass the House slots plan a second time. Ultimately, Busch said, the Senate "had the chance to embrace a bill that would be supported by the administration and signed into law. They missed their opportunity." (BALTIMORE SUN)

**BUDGETS IN BRIEF:** A sales tax on newspapers was stripped from a comprehensive tax bill in the **TEXAS** House last week after drawing fire from news executives for targeting newspapers and not other media. Several House members — including a couple of Republicans — had suggested the tax was a punitive response from House Speaker Tom Craddick (R) to unflattering press coverage, an allegation he has flatly denied (SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS). • International law firm Kirkland & Ellis LLP has volunteered to provide free legal assistance to the **TENNESSEE** Justice Center, which is seeking to block the state from cutting 323,000 enrollees from the TennCare health coverage program. Kirkland & Ellis has ties to major drug manufacturers, including Schering-Plough, Bayer and Abbott Laboratories (ASSOCIATED PRESS, TENNESSEAN [NASHVILLE]). • **MISSISSIPPI** lawmakers struck a deal late last Sunday night to keep the state's Medicaid plan afloat through June. Under the plan proposed by the House and approved by the Senate, the state will borrow money from its tobacco trust fund and use the 2 percent cash reserve set aside



each year for emergencies (SUN HERALD [BILOXI]). • Also in **MISSISSIPPI**, the House came under scrutiny last week when it approved a \$112 million bond package that included \$500,000 for a fledgling company with no permanent address. House Ways and Means Chairman Percy Watson (D) said the company, M-Quality Inc., is a 4-month-old “humanitarian group” that will operate in the Caribbean (CLARION-LEDGER [JACKSON])). • The Democratic majority in the **WASHINGTON** Senate laid the groundwork for a tax increase last week by drafting an amendment that would nullify part of a voter initiative passed in 1993 (I-601) requiring a two-thirds vote to increase taxes. The amendment (SB 6078) would require only a simple majority to raise taxes, effectively preventing the Republican minority from blocking an effort to do so (SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER). • For the first time in nearly a half century, the **SOUTH CAROLINA** House unanimously approved a state budget. The feat was made possible by \$300 million in extra revenue this year that allowed budget writers to appease just about every lawmaker (POST AND COURIER [CHARLESTON]). • **NEW YORK** Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno (R) and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver (D) took a step toward passing the first on-time budget in twenty years by securing a “conceptual agreement” on a spending plan that adds \$1.5 billion to Gov. George Pataki’s (R) \$105.2 billion proposal. But observers say there’s still a lot of work to be done before the April 1 deadline (NEW YORK POST).

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

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# Politics & leadership

**D** EMS STILL POWERLESS BUT LESS COMBATIVE IN FL: Holding just 36 of the 120 seats in FLORIDA’s House, Democrats are as impotent in the chamber as ever. But lately they don’t seem too troubled about that. Observers say this is because they’re finally getting a little respect. New House Speaker Allan Bense (R) — unlike other recent House leaders — has made an effort to generate a collegial working relationship with Democrats, giving them greater access to the budget process and to the Republican leadership in general; they’ve even received decent parking spots. “We’re in the worst position that we’ve ever been in, and I feel like I’m in the best position I’ve ever been in,” said Democratic Rep. Ron Greenstein. Bense’s position is that “Just because someone’s a Democrat or a Republican doesn’t mean that they’re not a productive member and a bright member of the Florida House that has

ideas and thoughts.” His equanimity may stem from the fact that the Panhandle district he represents is dominated by registered Democrats; he was a Democrat himself until 1989. Whatever the reason, his approach has Democrats rethinking their usual combative tactics. “We’ve thrown rocks, we’ve yelled at the top of our lungs, and we’re not rewarded by the voters. We lost seats every year,” said Democratic House Leader, Rep. Chris Smith. The chamber’s key Democrat says his party will likely choose their battles more carefully this session, avoiding strident positions on social issues like prayer in school and abortion restrictions. “Those aren’t winning issues. We don’t want to get sucked into those fights,” he said. The Democrats have enjoyed some recent political successes, like last year when they shamed the Republicans into covering more children under KidCare, the state’s subsidized children’s health insurance program. And this year — with help from some Republicans — they shamed Gov. Jeb Bush (R) into providing more money for the state’s Medically Needy program. Given those victories, the Democrats’ strategy the next two years, according to Sen. Walter “Skip” Campbell (D), will be “amiable confrontation on the issues that need to be confronted.” (ST. PETERSBURG TIMES)

**WA GOV CASE POSES CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** The Republicans’ legal challenge to Democrat Christine Gregoire’s 129-vote victory in WASHINGTON’s 2004 gubernatorial election could pose some ethical problems if it reaches the Evergreen State’s highest court. Virtually all of the state’s nine Supreme Court justices have ties to the candidates or other participants in the case. One, for instance, received \$300,000 in contributions during his last two campaigns from the Building Industry Association of Washington, which supported Republican candidate Dino Rossi and is actively assisting in the effort to nullify Gregoire’s win. The husband of another was a contributor to Gregoire, who helped that same justice fight off calls to resign when she was arrested for drunken driving in 2003. A third has sued the state twice over professional conflicts with Gregoire, and claims that she tried to frame him for an ethics charge when she was attorney general. While the case still has to be heard by a lower court, some of the lawyers involved have said they wouldn’t rule out asking justices with potential conflicts to disqualify themselves if the case comes before them. “The decisions in this case should be made by someone who everyone agrees is unimpeachable,” said Kevin Hamilton, one of the lawyers for the Democrats. (SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER)



TLE POST-INTELLIGENCER). • A measure that would fine political candidates for lying about legislators’ voting records stalled in the **OKLAHOMA** Senate last week when it fell a few votes short of the 25 it needed to pass. Although the bill’s sponsor, Sen. Glenn Coffee (R), managed to keep the bill alive on a procedural motion, he conceded that even if it does pass, it would only penalize candidates for lying about voting records. They would still be able to “lie about anything else,” he said (SHAWNEE NEWS-STAR). • A **NEVADA** Assembly elections panel unanimously approved a constitutional amendment (AJR 13) that would allow legislators — rather than just the governor — to call a special session and determine its agenda if a majority agreed. Nevada is one of 12 states in which lawmakers cannot call their own session and one of nine in which they cannot set the session’s agenda (LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL). • The recent resignation of **CALIFORNIA** Secretary of State Kevin Shelley over allegations that he used his office to advance his own political career has spurred a bipartisan legislative effort to make the office nonpartisan. Of three proposed bills, the most sweeping is SB 11 by Sen. Debra Bowen (D), which would bar the officeholder from endorsing or opposing any candidate for public office or ballot measure. Another — SCA 4 by Jeff Denham (R) — would amend the state Constitution and require the approval of voters (SACRAMENTO BEE). • The **MINNESOTA** Senate approved a bill last Monday that would relax restrictions on reporters who wish to observe voters on election day. Under the provisions of a law enacted last year — considered one of the most restrictive in the nation — journalists are required to obtain written permission before entering a polling place and must limit their visit to 15 minutes. A companion measure in the House is moving more slowly (ASSOCIATED PRESS, STAR TRIBUNE). • A **GEORGIA** House member was publicly chastised by Speaker Glenn Richardson (R) last week for disrupting a special Saturday session of the General Assembly. Rep. Alisha Thomas Morgan (D) refused to leave the House podium when her allotted time had expired and then began singing a civil rights anthem over Richardson’s banging gavel in protest of a bill passed the night before requiring voters to show a photo ID before casting their ballot, a mandate she said would deny some black people of their right to vote (ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION).

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

# Hot issues

**B** **USINESS:** The **IDAHO** Senate approves legislation that would require all Gem State building contractors to be licensed by the state. Currently, only subcontractors like plumbers, electricians and HVAC installers must be registered. The measure heads to Gov. Dirk Kempthorne (R) for review (IDAHO STATESMAN). • **IOWA** Gov. Tom Vilsack (D) signs legislation that removes price controls on local phone service in the Hawkeye State. The bill takes effect this summer (SIOUX CITY JOURNAL). • An **ALABAMA** House committee votes to make it illegal for video stores to sell children video games that have been rated “Mature” or “Adult” because of sexual or violent content. The measure moves to the full House (BIRMINGHAM NEWS). • The **ILLINOIS** House approves a measure that would require retailers to place a large warning decal on the package of any video game deemed to be unsuitable for children. It moves to the Senate (DAILY HERALD [ARLINGTON]).

**CRIME & PUNISHMENT:** A **TEXAS** Senate committee signs off on a measure that would give Lone Star State juries the option of sentencing murderers to life in prison without parole. Jurors currently can only sentence convicted killers to death or life in prison with the possibility of parole for 40 years. It heads to the full Senate (DALLAS MORNING NEWS). • The **ILLINOIS** House approves a measure that would require Prairie State juries to find convicted murderers guilty beyond all doubt before they could sentence them to death. It moves to the Senate (DAILY HERALD [ARLINGTON]) • The **WEST VIRGINIA** House endorses a bill that would make it a separate crime to harm or kill an unborn child while in the act of assaulting its mother. The measure goes to Gov. Joe Manchin (D), who has vowed to sign it (REGISTER-HERALD [BECKLEY]). • The **ARIZONA** Senate overwhelmingly approves SB 1240, which would allow first-time DUI offenders to equip their vehicle with an ignition interlock device for one year in place of receiving a suspended license. Interlocks prevent intoxicated drivers from starting their car. It moves to the House (ARIZONA REPUBLIC).

**EDUCATION:** The **ARIZONA** House gives passing grades to HB 2079, a measure that would allow some Grand Canyon State community colleges to give baccalaureate degrees. The bill graduates to the Senate (ARIZONA REPUBLIC). • Still in **ARIZONA**, the Senate okay’s SB 1506, a bill that would allow parents to receive up to \$4,500 per child to send them to private or parochial schools. An



identical bill is expected to pass any moment in the House, which would send the measure to Gov. Janet Napolitano (D) for review (ARIZONA REPUBLIC). • The **MICHIGAN** Senate pledges its unanimous support to a bill that would require Wolverine State public schools to set aside time each day for students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. The measure would not force students to say the pledge if they or their parents object. The bill now goes before the House (DETROIT FREE PRESS).

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## Quote...

“We need to protect children. This bill helps parents keep violent and explicit video games out of their children’s hands.”  
 — **ILLINOIS Rep. Paul Froehlich (R) explaining his support for a bill that would require retailers to place warning labels on certain video games despite concerns the bill is unconstitutional.**

**ENVIRONMENT:** The United States Senate approves language in a federal budget bill that would allow oil drilling for the first time in **ALASKA**’s Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The Senate must still approve the overall bill, which would then need to be reconciled with a version passed by the House, approved again in the Senate and signed by President Bush before any drilling could begin (NEW YORK TIMES). • An **ALABAMA** Senate committee unanimously approves a bill that would require state officials to measure pollution affecting minority populations before considering industrial permits. It now goes before the full Senate (BIRMINGHAM NEWS). • The **WASHINGTON** House endorses HB 1397, which would require the Evergreen State to adopt the same automotive emissions standards used in **CALIFORNIA**. The Golden State mandates that all new cars and light-duty trucks sold in or after 2016 produce much lower emissions levels than are currently allowed. Eight other states have also adopted California’s standards (SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER). • The **IDAHO** Senate approves House Bills 152, 153 and 154, measures that settle a century-and-a-half old dispute

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## ... unquote

“If we’re sworn to uphold the Constitution, how can we vote for something that’s unconstitutional?”

— **ILLINOIS Rep. John Milner (R) explaining his opposition to the measure. DAILY HERALD [ARLINGTON]**

with the Nez Perce Tribe over water rights granted to them in an 1855 treaty. The bills — which cede annual rights to 50,000-acre feet of water in the Clearwater River, \$80 million in cash, 11,000 acres of land and a pledge from state and local governments to provide millions of dollars more for fish habitat and other environmental improvements in exchange for the tribe giving up claims to all other water rights — now go to Gov. Dirk Kempthorne (R), who has said he will sign them into law (IDAHO STATESMAN).





The **WASHINGTON** Senate gives the nod to SB 5160, which would bar drivers from talking on their cell phones while driving. The measure now rings over to the House (SEATTLE TIMES). • The **KANSAS** Senate endorses a measure that would require all minors to wear seat belts or to ride in special safety seats. The measure would impose a \$60 fine for violating the law. It moves to the House (LAWRENCE JOURNAL-WORLD). • The **NEW JERSEY** Senate unanimously approves SB 1510, which would bar motorized scooters known as “pocket bikes” from Garden State streets and sidewalks. It scoots off to the Assembly (STAR-LEDGER [NEWARK]). • A **MICHIGAN** Senate panel approves SB 297, a bill that would let motorcyclists who have met certain conditions ride their bikes without helmets. Helmetless riders would have to have been licensed for two years or have taken an authorized safety course. It goes to the Senate (DETROIT NEWS).

## *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 2005 prefiles last week: 807

Number of 2005 Intros last week: 8,767

Number of bills enacted/adopted last week: 1,517

Number of 2005 prefiles to date: 28,277

Number of 2005 Intros to date: 116,127

Number of enacted/adopted overall in 2005: 7,341

— Compiled By GINA HUMMELL  
(Measures current as of 3/17/05)  
Source: State Net

**POTPOURRI:** The **OREGON** House endorses HB 2549, a bill that would allow Beaver State residents to build houses on agricultural land without being or becoming farmers. The bill would also speed up building for property owners who file claims under Measure 37, the state's new property rights law. The bill migrates to the Senate (OREGONIAN [PORTLAND]). • An **ILLINOIS** House committee approves a measure that would ban semiautomatic assault rifles. The committee also endorses a proposal to allow crime victims and their families to sue gun dealers they claim have knowingly sold weapons to criminals. The measures shoot off to the full House (DAILY HERALD [ARLINGTON]).

— *Compiled by RICH EHISEN*

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# Once around the statehouse lightly

**MUSIC'S LOSS** is politics' gain — at least in MARYLAND. According to the *Baltimore Sun*, Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley has decided to leave the Irish Rock band he's led for the past 16 years. Too busy, O'Malley told fans via his Web site. Does being top dog in Baltimore take up that much time? No, but running for governor might, and ambition doesn't always mix well with night jobs, especially when one needs to spend evenings raising money on the rubber-crab cake circuit.

**WHEN A RUMOR GETS GOING**, setting the record straight is like turning around an aircraft carrier. At least, that's what a former NEW HAMPSHIRE legislator discovered when she held a recent party. The rumor? That Jane Kelley was dying of "nose cancer" and had held a fundraiser to pay for her funeral, including cremation. The reality, according to the *Boston Herald*? Kelley's party was a spoof on recent statehouse scandals as guests dined on "Curried Favor," "Kickback Ribs" and "Graft Beer." Is Kelley, a breast cancer survivor, dying? No, says her daughter, although she will some day be cremated and have her ashes spread in a cranberry bog. That way, her daughter says, "We can say Mom is on the sauce, or Mom is in the can."

**JITTERY IN NEBRASKA.** The long arm of African law reached into NEBRASKA recently to whack one Wayne Richard McGuire. According to The Associated Press, McGuire was about to be hired by the state Health and Human Services System as mental-health program director before someone informed the state that McGuire had once been convicted of a very high-profile murder. The murder in question, however, was not committed in the United States but in a remote region of Rwanda. And McGuire was convicted in absentia by a Rwandan court. The victim? Dian Fossey, whose life as a wildlife researcher was depicted in the film "Gorillas in the Mist." McGuire was a fellow researcher at Fossey's camp and was one of two men charged in her death. The other, a local tracker, was convicted and later died in prison. McGuire, who returned to the U.S. before the investigation was finished, was accused of stealing Fossey's research — a charge he considers "a joke." Even an HHS spokesperson characterized McGuire's conviction



as “not valid.” That didn’t prevent Nebraska officials from beating a hasty retreat. After the conviction surfaced, the state withdrew its job offer.

**MAKING IT OFFICIAL.** How far down into “stuff” will legislators drill to designate an official state whatever? Waaay down, according to Stateline.org. WYOMING wants the jackalope to be official state mythological creature. The Venus flytrap may soon be NORTH CAROLINA’s official state carnivorous plant. SOUTH DAKOTA named fry bread the official state bread, although it showed enormous restraint by refusing to designate Tyrannosaurus Rex as state dinosaur. (Triceratops already is official state fossil.) ALABAMA has an official state booze — Conecuh Ridge Alabama Fine Whiskey — but is considering repealing its status after the company founder pled guilty to selling a case of the stuff to a minor. And then there are the somewhat befuddled folks in NEW MEXICO. Last week, we cited a story about the Land of Enchantment’s official state motto, *Crescit Eundo*, literally translated as “It Goes as It Grows.” No one knows quite what that means, so a lawmaker introduced legislation to change it to *Crastina Accipe*, or “Respect the Past, Embrace the future.” A Senate committee approved the bill but changed the proposed language to *Gracias a Dios por Mississippi*, which means “Thank God for Mississippi.” They didn’t specify the river or the state. New Mexico also is toying with naming the hot-air balloon as official state aircraft. Next, someone will suggest that hot-air ballooning be named the official state tort.

— By A.G. BLOCK



**Editor:** Rich Ehisen — [capj@statenet.com](mailto:capj@statenet.com)

**Associate Editor:** Korey Clark — [capj@statenet.com](mailto:capj@statenet.com)

**Contributing Editor:** A.G. Block — [capj@statenet.com](mailto:capj@statenet.com)

**Editorial Advisor:** Lou Cannon

**Correspondents:** Richard Cox (CA), Steve Karas (CA),  
Bruce McKeeman (CA), Kelli Walter (FL), Linda Mendenhall (IL),  
Lauren King (MA) and Ben Livingood (PA)

**Graphic Design:** Richard Hansen, Heather Conway

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