

Can governors stop overseas job migration?



March 29, 2004

Budget & taxes	
Budget madness spreads to MD	4
Politics & leadership	
CA pro-voter effort moves forward	7
Across state lines	8
Hot issues	12
Once around the statehouse lightly	15

Top Story

The pressure to produce jobs is growing for several governors, many of whom are now using executive action to stop American companies from shipping government contract work to cheaper locales overseas.

Governors Spotlight

Outsourcing vexes governors into executive action

Last week MICHIGAN Gov. Jennifer Granholm (D), MINNESOTA Gov. Tim Pawlenty (R) and MASSACHUSETTS Gov. Mitt Romney (R) all issued executive orders designed to coax, cajole and in some cases force American companies who wish to earn state contracts to keep their workforce local. The trio's actions become

the latest in an ongoing fight by state governments to prevent companies from shipping jobs to India and Mexico, where wages are often a fraction of those paid in the United States.

Granholm made news early in the week by issuing two directives that require the Michigan Dept. of Management and Budget to proffer state contracts primarily to Michigan-based companies that employ American workers. The governor, who says her state has lost 170,000 manufacturing jobs over the last three years, said the directives mean that if there are comparable bids for contracts from both in-state and out-of-state companies, the contract will go to the Michigan company. Granholm added that the state will also factor in any offshore operations the company conducts when awarding contracts.

The governor also scoffed at Republican suggestions that her directives were primarily election year politics that won't do much to protect American jobs, telling *CBS News* that "If I'm grandstanding, then I'm grandstanding for the home team."

Romney also is feeling the pressure of job loss at home, as Massachusetts labor officials say more than 200,000 positions have evaporated since 2001, with 50,000 of those coming since Romney took office. Romney's response came last week with a three-pronged \$2 million "anti-outsourcing" initiative that would give \$8 million in loans to local companies looking to stay in the Bay State; make available another \$10 million in grants for those companies that create 250 or more jobs in the state; and offer \$11 million worth of grants to companies that hire laid-off employees who have been unemployed for at least a year.

Romney's action was also not met with universal applause, as Democrats groused that his directive was more about public relations than saving jobs. Rep. Peter Larkin (D) complained Romney previously vetoed from the budget at least \$12.5 million of the money he now wants to use on the initiative, and said Democrats would prefer more money be spent on worker training.

The battle is also hot in Minnesota, where Democrats think the governor is not being tough enough on companies that outsource to foreign countries. At issue is that Pawlenty's order only encourages state agencies to consider "best value" when evaluating goods and services — i.e., American-made — when awarding contracts rather than requiring companies to employ Americans. The order would, however, require that businesses with state ties reveal any offshore operations and agree not to shift any state work to those operations unless they receive state approval. But none of Pawlenty's directive is binding, which

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ID, IN, ME, NM, SD,
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clearly rankles Democratic lawmakers, who say the governor is not taking strong enough action. The Senate responded by approving a bill that prohibits Minnesota from doing any business with companies that send jobs out of the country. The bill's author, Tom Bakk (D), says Minnesota needs an "all-out ban on shipping state tax dollars overseas."

VERMONT Gov. Jim Douglas (R) is also tackling outsourcing after it was revealed last week that at least one state vendor was sending some of its work to a site in India. The revelation sparked the administration to launch an intense review of hundreds of millions of dollars in state contracts to see if any other jobs are being sent out of the country.

Similar reviews are underway in states across the country as a glut of legislation that would ban offshore outsourcing has hit legislatures in 35 states, with a total of 139 bills introduced so far in 2004. CALIFORNIA's 11 pending bills lead the pack, followed by NEW YORK and WASHINGTON with nine each, according to StateNet's legislative database. (STATENET, STATELINE.ORG, BOSTON GLOBE, DULUTH NEWS TRIBUNE, ASSOCIATED PRESS, CBS NEWS, DETROIT FREE PRESS, RUTLAND HERALD)

WALKER REJECTS VOUCHERS, ANGERS GOP: UTAH Gov. Olene S. Walker's (R) first bill-signing session resulted in a slew of approved legislation, but one of her few vetoes drew the ire of a host of conservative Republicans in the Legislature. At issue was House Bill 115, legislation that would have granted disabled Beehive State schoolchildren a state subsidy to attend private schools. Senate President Al Mansell (R) expressed shock at the governor's decision, saying the HB 115 was "designed purely to help children. I'm surprised the governor didn't want to help children." Others characterized Walker's move as a "cave-in" to education bureaucrats and teachers' unions. Walker was nonplused by the criticism, saying her decision was a compromise and noting that she left the \$1.5 million allocated for the program intact. She will reallocate the money at a later date. While the veto angered some, others praised her for several bills she did sign, including one that banned using state funds to pay for abortions and another that overturns a state university ban on handguns. Observers say Walker's support of those bills probably did more to benefit her relationship with the state's conservative base than the voucher veto did to harm it. (SALT LAKE TRIBUNE)



SCHWARZENEGGER NOT BLOWING SMOKE: CALIFORNIA Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) has not been easy to figure out...for either friend or foe. Schwarzenegger’s political stances often clash with traditional GOP values, particularly in regard to gay rights and abortion policy, but perhaps most puzzling of the “Governator’s” incongruities is his unwillingness to take campaign funds from tobacco companies. It certainly isn’t a lack of affection for the product — the cigar-loving Schwarzenegger is renowned for handing out specialized cigars, selling custom-made and autographed humidors and appearing on the cover of *Cigar Afficionado Magazine*. He even set up a smoking tent outside his Capitol office so he can light up during breaks from his duties. But savvy insiders note this is only one of Schwarzenegger’s many quirks when it comes to campaign contributions, noting that while he rejects tobacco dollars, he gladly takes money from alcohol producers. He also accepts no money from the California Medical Association, but thousands from HMOs. Nothing, again, from Indian casinos, but plenty from real estate developers. Arnold-watchers shrug it off, saying its just further evidence of the governor’s personal style, or as California Common Cause director Jim Knox calls it, “part of the fascinating and evolving and not completely consistent framework” for how Schwarzenegger approaches fund-raising. (SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS).

GOVERNORS IN BRIEF: A recent Albuquerque Journal poll showed NEW MEXICO Gov. Bill Richardson (D) with a favorable rating among 61% of those surveyed. Only 20% had an unfavorable view (SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN). • WASHINGTON Gov. Gary Locke (D) signed legislation designed to fend off closures of Evergreen State military bases. The military is the state’s fifth largest employer (IDAHO SPOKESMAN-REVIEW).

The Week in Session

States in Regular Session:
AK, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, IA, ID, IL, KS, KY, MA, MD, MI, MN, MO, MS, NE, NH, NJ, NY, OH, OK, PA, RI, SC, TN, US, VT, WI

States in Special Session:
ME “b”, VA “a”, WI “d”

States in Recess:
AL, AR “b”, CA “d”, CA “e”, HI “a”

Currently Prefiling:
LA, MT(Drafts for 2005)

States Adjourned:
CA “a”, CA “b” CA , CT “a” CT “b”, DE “a”, IN, LA “a”, MD “2003 session”, ME, NM, SD, UT “c”, UT, VA, WA, WA “a”, WA “b”, WA “c”, WV, WY

Letters indicate special/extraordinary sessions
Source: State Net, 3/22/04

— Compiled by RICH EHISEN

Budget & taxes

BUDGET MADNESS SPREADS TO MD: Following the lead of their counterparts in VIRGINIA, delegates in the MARYLAND House introduced a bold budget proposal last week which could lead to a major battle that keeps lawmakers at the statehouse well beyond the session's scheduled April 12 adjournment. The proposal, sponsored by House Speaker Michael E. Busch (D), calls for more than \$1 billion in new taxes, including a temporary income tax hike for the state's wealthiest residents and the first sales tax increase in almost 30 years. The House plan is vastly different from both the Senate's budget proposal — which includes much more modest tax increases — and Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich's (R) slot-machine gaming plan, setting up a showdown between the three. Ehrlich didn't hesitate to take up the fight, calling the House proposal "veto bait" and hinting he would convene a special session if it was approved. But Busch, contending that the Senate plan would leave the state with a \$1 billion shortfall next year and that tax increases provide a much more stable source of revenue than gambling, moved ahead with his plan, pushing it through two committees within a couple hours of its introduction. Although Busch vowed he would get his proposal through the full House — with Democrats holding 98 of the chamber's 141 seats — many of his fellow party members, particularly those from rural districts, where taxes are a particularly tough sell, oppose the plan. Others questioned the timing of the proposal, Del. Peter Franchot (D) saying he feared that Busch's intent was to persuade Ehrlich to accept his tax package in exchange for passing the governor's slots bill, which is scheduled for hearing in the House this week. The entire episode loosely parallels developments in Virginia, where House delegates earlier this month introduced a last-minute budget proposal that kicked off that state's ongoing budget feud. (WASHINGTON POST, BALTIMORE SUN) **The MD House approved the Busch proposal after Capitol Journal went to press.*

CO LAWMAKERS REJECT GOV'S DEAL: Republican legislative leaders in COLORADO turned down an offer from fellow Republican Gov. Bill Owens to take control of \$35 million in unallocated federal tax-relief money in exchange for ending their constitutional challenge of his spending authority. The decision came after two weeks of negotiations between the legislative leaders and the governor over which branch has the authority to decide how federal money is spent. With the budget due today, the leaders had been



hard-pressed to decide the matter quickly, but Rep. Brad Young (R), chairman of the budget committee, said the decision became much easier when budget writers determined the \$35 million wouldn't be needed to balance the budget. The issue will go before the Colorado Supreme Court this week, with taxpayers footing the bill. (DENVER POST)

TAX-SHY CHAMBERS DUEL IN KY: With only days left in the KENTUCKY legislative session, Gov. Ernie Fletcher (R) is still awaiting a vote on the tax plan he proposed three weeks ago. But the House and Senate have been going to great lengths to avoid being the first to do so, fearing a political backlash. Last week, a Democratic lawmaker, Sen. Ernesto Scorsone, essentially filed Fletcher's tax plan as a floor amendment to a bill in the Republican-controlled Senate, trying to force the chamber to vote on the issue. The measure was actually a House bill — HB 249, concerning the taxation of military death benefits — which the Senate amended with the expectation that the House would reject it and a free conference committee would be convened, where Fletcher's tax plan could be addressed jointly. But in order to get around the forced vote on the governor's plan, the Senate instead created a substitute bill that contained everything but Scorsone's amendment and then ruled the amendment was not applicable to the substitute. (LEXINGTON HERALD-LEADER)

BUDGETS IN BRIEF: VIRGINIA lawmakers took a break from their stalled budget negotiations last week. But they managed to find disagreement even on that issue, with the Senate determining to reconvene after three days and the House electing to take off twice as much time (WASHINGTON POST). • HAWAII Lawmakers who are considering a five-year extension of the state's Act 221 high-technology tax credit program learned last week from the state Department of Taxation that at least 20% of the claims for credits under the program potentially violate criminal or civil law. When lawmakers asked why they hadn't heard that information earlier in the session, state tax director Kurt Kawafuchi replied that he'd simply never been asked specifically about the scope of Act 221 abuses (HONOLULU ADVERTISER). • The U.S. Supreme Court declined to review a decision by the NEVADA Supreme Court that temporarily allowed taxes to be increased by a simple majority in the Legislature instead of the two-thirds supermajority specified in the state's constitution. The state court's ruling had come in response to a budget impasse in the Legislature during the 2003 session (LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL). • A Democratic lawmaker in ARI-



ZONA who has opposed legislation aimed at denying services to immigrants has proposed a resolution urging the U.S. Congress to impose a tax on electronic money transfers to Mexico — which totaled \$14.5 billion in 2003 — to fund health care for immigrants in the states (ARIZONA REPUBLIC).

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

Politics & Leadership

CALIFORNIA PRO-VOTER EFFORT MOVES FORWARD:
Lawmakers in CALIFORNIA have taken up a pair of initiatives aimed at granting the state’s voters more say in the political process, measures that have the support of some influential backers. One of the initiatives would bring the open primary election back to the state. The open primary system was adopted by initiative in 1996 and embraced by the state’s voters in 1998 and 2000, but subsequently declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court. The measure sponsored by a bipartisan group that includes State Controller Steve Westly (D) would establish a system similar to WASHINGTON’s “Top Two” primary — adopted recently in response to a constitutional challenge to its own longstanding “blanket primary” — in which voters would be able to pick whichever candidate they wanted regardless of party affiliation, with the top two vote-getters advancing to the general election. Westly said the initiative would give Californians “the right to vote for whomever they want” and increase voter turnout, “two things every Californian wants.” Critics, however, argue that a top-two primary would shut minority parties out of the general election, thereby limiting voter choice. But supporters say they’ve already gathered far more than the 598,105 signatures needed to get the measure on the November ballot. And the campaign has garnered a number of prominent financial backers, including Reed Hastings, founder of DVD rental company Netflix, Charles Munger, one of financial guru Warren Buffet’s top executives and John Moores, University of California regent and owner of the San Diego Padres.

Another initiative, being crafted by Assembly Republican leader Kevin McCarthy, would bring an end to the Legislature’s control over reapportionment, the redrawing of legislative districts every 10 years in conjunction with the federal census. Currently, California’s legislative districts — like those of most states — are drawn in a way that protects the majority party and discourages

Continued on page 10

Across state lines

Kid population wavers, but seniors keep coming

The number of elementary school-aged children is decreasing in many states, falling by almost 250,000 nationwide since 2000, according to a recent report from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Only 14 states experienced an increase in their elementary school-aged population, defined as children between the ages of 5 and 13. Ironically, ARIZONA (66,000), NEVADA (35,000) and FLORIDA (88,000) — states long considered to be havens for the retired — are among those that actually increased their number of younger school-aged kids. TEXAS led the way with 125,000 additional younger students since 2000. The Lone Star State (3.1 million) currently ranks behind only CALIFORNIA (4.8 million) in the total number of 5 to 13-year-olds, while WYOMING (59,331) has the fewest. ALASKA has the highest proportion of its population in this group, with its 95,079 elementary-school-aged children representing 15% of the total student population.

But while the line on younger people is wavering, the rolls of the elderly (aged 65+) are climbing rapidly. Many states, including Texas, Arizona, Florida and NORTH CAROLINA experienced significant growth in their 65+ population, with the report showing an overall increase of more than 900,000 nationally. This increase has some states concerned over how rising numbers of elderly will affect the need for government-supplied services. Arizona Gov. Jane Napolitano (D), for one, has directed her administration to begin studying how the state will address this issue. Napolitano has mandated that all Arizona state agencies develop what she calls the Aging 2020 plan to determine how the state will serve its increasing elderly population, and to estimate how that population will affect the state's workforce.

The report revealed no major surprises in total population figures, as California again leads the nation with 35.5 million people, followed by Texas (22.1 million), NEW YORK (19.2 million), Florida (17 million) and ILLINOIS (12.7 million). The chart below shows the population figures for each state in five categories. To review the full report and statistical breakdown please visit the U.S. Census Web site at <http://www.census.gov/>.

— By RICH EHISEN

**2003 Census Bureau estimate of number of adults,
older people and school-aged children in states**

State	Total pop.	5-13 years	14-17 years	18 and over	65 and over
AL	4,500,752	556,543	254,066	3,392,779	592,181
AK	648,818	95,079	45,530	459,529	40,598
AZ	5,580,811	760,280	322,860	4,061,499	714,467
AR	2,725,714	340,289	155,783	2,043,701	377,682
CA	35,484,453	4,818,333	2,057,613	26,064,483	3,764,870
CO	4,550,688	569,561	255,417	3,397,937	441,371
CT	3,483,372	431,073	193,000	2,647,997	470,689
DE	817,491	100,123	44,781	618,649	106,896
FL	17,019,068	1,968,979	900,279	13,094,945	2,897,383
GA	8,684,715	1,138,915	498,606	6,387,956	826,506
HI	1,257,608	146,599	65,470	960,466	169,346
ID	1,366,332	184,822	85,673	994,305	155,652
IL	12,653,544	1,630,458	713,633	9,422,938	1,507,377
IN	6,195,643	813,117	360,618	4,591,742	763,059
IA	2,944,062	346,891	164,934	2,250,634	433,618
KS	2,723,507	344,667	161,147	2,028,426	353,585
KY	4,117,827	499,140	224,085	3,123,645	512,381
LA	4,496,334	580,789	272,338	3,318,779	524,348
ME	1,305,728	144,927	74,592	1,018,982	188,385
MD	5,508,909	697,054	316,531	4,130,817	624,980
MA	6,433,422	750,097	339,328	4,946,304	856,982
MI	10,079,985	1,300,657	590,506	7,541,065	1,236,501
MN	5,059,375	623,931	298,813	3,810,605	609,396
MS	2,881,281	378,840	171,878	2,120,013	349,407
MO	5,704,484	705,169	329,604	4,297,142	759,980
MT	917,621	107,048	55,216	701,847	125,160
NE	1,739,291	217,663	102,431	1,298,451	232,387
NV	2,241,154	296,565	121,390	1,659,757	250,787
NH	1,287,687	156,952	76,073	981,456	154,174
NJ	8,638,396	1,087,928	476,113	6,506,779	1,123,842
NM	1,874,614	250,211	118,369	1,372,580	225,266
NY	19,190,115	2,288,879	1,028,817	14,657,367	2,488,959
NC	8,407,248	1,043,324	454,020	6,319,805	1,016,214
ND	633,837	72,962	36,881	487,010	93,837
OH	11,435,798	1,421,753	653,236	8,620,509	1,516,771
OK	3,511,532	433,596	200,508	2,633,289	461,133
OR	3,559,596	428,696	196,870	2,710,424	453,568
PA	12,365,455	1,437,205	688,838	9,534,761	1,901,764
RI	1,076,164	125,533	57,005	832,115	150,797
SC	4,147,152	512,213	234,178	3,123,648	511,732
SD	764,309	96,203	47,632	568,883	109,040
TN	5,841,748	697,470	314,345	4,447,269	726,683
TX	22,118,509	3,085,416	1,347,574	15,878,347	2,175,256
UT	2,351,467	358,412	154,196	1,608,540	203,007
VT	619,107	70,016	36,403	481,661	80,132
VA	7,386,330	900,989	406,549	5,587,563	833,427
WA	6,131,445	757,157	349,799	4,634,864	690,583
WV	1,810,354	196,491	93,116	1,419,453	277,220
WI	5,472,299	669,441	324,267	4,139,405	711,987
WY	501,242	59,331	30,724	390,169	59,963

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



competition. McCarthy says that of the 80 Assembly races scheduled this year, as few as three could be competitive. McCarthy wants to change that by turning over the district redrawing job to an independent panel. While his proposal — Assembly Constitutional Amendment 3 — faces slim odds, it does have one powerful ally: Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. The Republican governor, who’s had some success with initiatives recently — winning overwhelming support for his budget measures, Prop. 57 and Prop. 58, earlier this month — has endorsed McCarthy’s proposal, stating, “Electoral districts should be drawn for the benefit of voters, not political intrigue and advantage.” But Bruce Cain, a political science professor at the University of California, Berkeley and a leading authority on redistricting, doubts the initiative would significantly diminish partisan gridlock, arguing that voting patterns in the Legislature merely reflect the state’s growing ideological split. “This is the whole two-culture thing,” Cain said. “Our society has become more polarized.” (SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE)

Quote ...

“Whether it’s the loss of one job or a thousand jobs, it’s a very real issue for all of us.”

—**MASSACHUSETTS Gov. Mitt Romney explaining his motivation for proposing a \$29 million plan to curb the outsourcing of American jobs to foreign countries.**

BLANCO-DEFYING LAWMAKER PUNISHED: While LOUISIANA Gov. Kathleen Blanco (D) demonstrated a notable even-handedness and willingness to compromise in her successful effort to guide a package of key tax bills through a special session of the Legislature two weeks ago, her chief ally in the House, Speaker Joe Salter (D), showed considerably less generosity last week, stripping Rep. Troy Hebert (D) of his chairmanship of the House Insurance Committee. Salter said the reason for Hebert’s dismissal was his opposition to one of Blanco’s tax bills, HB 1, during the session. Some House members — including Hebert himself — saw the move as a sign that the governor has too much influence over the Legislature. “Let there be no doubt that this Legislature must work with the governor, but let there be no doubt that the Legislature should never work for the governor,” Hebert said. (TIMES-PICAYUNE [NEW ORLEANS])

SINE DIE: NEW MEXICO’s 30-day session that ended Feb. 19 earned mixed reviews from special interest groups and lawmakers alike. Business groups praised the passage of a high-wage tax credit for jobs created in urban and rural areas and the repeal of the gross receipts tax on medical services, but were less enthusiastic about elimination of the gross receipts tax on food and the Legisla-

est teachers union, which together spent about \$13 million mainly to fight the deep cuts in education and health care proposed by Gov. George Pataki (R). It was apparently money well-spent because the Legislature opted to raise taxes and scale back the governor's cuts (ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE).

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

Hot Issues

B **USINESS:** The **NEW JERSEY** Senate passes “smart growth” legislation that would establish mandatory green belts and allow local governments to control development. Gov. James E. McGreevey (D) says he will sign it if it gets to him (NEWARK STAR-LEDGER). • Still in **NEW JERSEY**, a Senate committee approves a bill that would create a multi-million fund to help Garden State physicians pay escalating medical malpractice premiums. It now goes to the full Senate (TRENTON TIMES). • A federal judge approves a deal between **OKLAHOMA** and WorldCom Inc. that settles criminal charges brought by the Sooner State in connection with the company's 2002 bankruptcy. In exchange for dropping the charges WorldCom has promised to bring 1,600 jobs to the state over the next 10 years (WASHINGTON POST). • An **OKLAHOMA** Senate committee endorses HB 2661, a bill that would cap attorney's fees and non-economic damages in class-action lawsuits. It heads for review in the full House (THE OKLAHOMAN [OKLAHOMA CITY]). • The **KANSAS** Senate tentatively approves a bill that would bar Sunflower State cities and counties from using eminent domain as a means for taking private property under the auspices of “public good.” It must pass another vote before it can go to the House (LAWRENCE JOURNAL-WORLD).

CRIME & PUNISHMENT: The **CALIFORNIA** Senate backs SB 1164, legislation that would ease restrictions on journalists who seek to interview prisoners. Journalists cannot currently use wire-bound notebooks, cameras or tape recorders when speaking with prisoners. It moves to the Assembly (SAN DIEGO UNION TRIBUNE). • An **INDIANA** court rules a Hoosier State law allowing judges to add up to 10 years onto the prison sentence of repeat sex offenders is unconstitutional. A new law must now be addressed in the next legislative session (INDIANAPOLIS STAR). • A **MINNESOTA** Senate panel decisively rejects a proposal to reinstate the death penalty. Gov. Tim Pawlenty (R) supported the measure, which would have allowed Gopher State voters to decide the issue later this

year (DULUTH NEWS TRIBUNE). • **WEST VIRGINIA** Gov. Bob Wise (D) vetoes SB 656, a bill that would have made it a separate crime to commit acts of violence against a fetus (CHARLESTON GAZETTE). • The **IOWA** Senate, on the other hand, approves just such legislation by passing SF 2254, which criminalizes the murder of a fetus at any stage of development. It does not apply to legal abortions. It now goes to the House (DES MOINES REGISTER). • **WASHINGTON** Gov. Gary Locke (D) signs HB 2771, a measure that makes harassment and stalking via the Internet a crime, punishable by up to a year in jail (SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER).



EDUCATION: A **HAWAII** Senate committee passes legislation that would waive half the tuition costs for native Hawaiians and provide a full waiver for those natives deemed financially needy. It moves to the full Senate (HONOLULU STAR-BULLETIN). • A **MINNESOTA** Senate committee endorses a proposal to halt the state's implementation of the federal No Child Left Behind law. It moves next to the full Senate (MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE, ASSOCIATED PRESS). • The **OHIO** Legislature sends Gov. Bob Taft (R) legislation that would require public universities to provide students and parents with information about meningitis (AKRON BEACON-JOURNAL). • A **KENTUCKY** Senate committee approves HB 188, a bill that would allow state universities to keep private the names of school donors unless a contributor wants disclosure. It moves to the Senate (COURIER-JOURNAL [LOUISVILLE]). • Fourteen states request that the Bush administration allow them to use alternative methods for showing academic gains under the No Child Left Behind law. In a jointly-authored letter to U.S. Education Secy. Rod Paige, the states said schools showing academic gains under their statewide system should escape a failing designation under the federal law, even if that progress falls short of the law's requirements (CONTRA COSTA TIMES).

ENVIRONMENT: Wildlife officials in **WISCONSIN** remove the timber wolf from the state's endangered species list. The wolves remain on the federal list, but are expected to be removed next year (MILWAUKEE JOURNAL-SENTINEL). • A **FLORIDA** House panel endorses legislation that would require public utilities to dramatically reduce emissions. It now goes to the House floor for

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Once around the statehouse lightly

SPA TO THE STARS. It takes a lot to knock CALIFORNIA Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger off top billing, but the actor-turned-Governator has been bounced from his perch as the most prominent politician to vacation in central IDAHO. That title now belongs to MASSACHUSETTS Sen. John Kerry. Kerry and Schwarzenegger own lavish compounds not far from each other north of Ketchum — home of the tony Sun Valley ski resort. As the *Idaho Mountain Express* reports, Kerry descended on the place recently while taking a break from his breakneck campaign and brought an entourage that dwarfed anything Schwarzenegger could muster. Included was a newly-assigned Secret Service detail, campaign staff and the obligatory gaggle of reporters from the national media. Not only that, but a battalion of local volunteers was enlisted to provide support for Kerry's army, with Idaho House Min. Leader Wendy Jaquet lending her Ketchum home as headquarters for the volunteer effort. Kerry spent his week off snowboarding, skiing and generally running the media ragged. Reporters, by the way, were housed 15 miles away in the town of Hailey.

OH, RATS! Christian Alf can climb back on his ladder this week. That's because the 17-year-old Tempe, ARIZONA, high school student was the focus of an intense lobbying effort at the state Structural Pest Control Commission. According to *The Arizona Republic*, Alf responded to an infestation of roof rats by offering his services to anyone who wanted their roof vents and pipes covered with wire mesh. His fee: \$30. That was enough for the commission to issue a cease-and-desist order under the guise that he wasn't licensed. Alf claimed he was trying to help the community by doing work that his elderly clients couldn't do for themselves. A sharp letter to the commission from the nonprofit Institute for Justice, plus a plethora of phone calls from potential clients, changed the commission's mind.

GOVERNMENT 101. If you are looking for a way to grandstand, best check to see that your platform doesn't contain a few loose timbers. Last week, CALIFORNIA state Controller Steve Westly trumpeted that he could save the cash-strapped state up to \$400 million by using performance audits to show how state programs could more effectively spend state money. Unfortunately, as Westly discovered a day later, performance audits are conducted all the time by another state

official — the State Auditor, who, *California Journal* reports, issued a press release to remind Westly that her office has been doing precisely that for 32 years.

RAIN ON THE PARADE. Every year, NEW HAMPSHIRE Democrats gather for an annual St. Patrick’s Day breakfast in Manchester. The event is supposed to be for laughs, but this year, reports *The Union Leader*, the state Democratic Party chairwoman carried out a less-than-humorous bombing run over GOP Gov. Craig Benson, calling him incompetent and a disgrace. That brought a few groans from the audience, which was expecting jokes like that from attorney Bill Shaheen, who quipped that the George W. Bush Library had burned down and “it burned both books.” After a pause, he added, “and George wasn’t done coloring the second one.”

WHATEVER YOU DO ... DON’T DIE. Otherwise, notes *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, GEORGIA might zing your estate for Medicaid pay backs. Called an “estate recovery” provision, the notion is part of the state’s 2004-05 budget package as proposed by Gov. Sonny Perdue. Under the provision, the state would be repaid for nursing home and other services rendered to Georgians. Is the Peach State being nasty and cruel? Not really; 48 other states already do it.

CASPER DID IT. Like most states, PENNSYLVANIA prohibits legislators from voting for bills by remote control. But according to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, ghost voting — casting a vote when a lawmaker is absent from the floor — is an accepted bi-partisan practice in the Keystone Legislature. Only the method varies. One House member shoved a wad of paper onto his “yea” button. Others use paper clips, pen caps and pennies. And, of course, there is the tried and true human method — getting another legislator to press your button, thereby creating *two* violations of the law for the price of one.

THE DUKE OF OIL. Many news organizations reported last week that the Bush Administration is unlikely to stop pumping oil into the nation’s strategic reserve despite the fact that gasoline and diesel fuel prices have skyrocketed past the \$2 barrier, with little relief in sight. In years past, administrations often have released oil from the reserve to ease market shortages that drive up the price of fuel — especially in election years when voters get grumpy pumping gas. So, what’s driving the Bush policy? The official answer: the threat of terrorism and the war in Iraq. Whatever. Terrorism or Iraq, the policy amounts to a price support for the oil industry.

— By A.G. BLOCK



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