

Game of chance:  
 hospital  
 acquired  
 infections



May 15, 2006

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Top Story

*This week, we check the progression of two very different issues previously covered in these pages — state efforts to deal with hospital-acquired infections (HAI's) and the ongoing evolution of post-Katrina LOUISIANA politics.*

**SNCJ Spotlight**

*Spotlight updates: Bad medicine and LOUISIANA politics*

**E**arlier this year, we reported on the issue of hospital-acquired infections (HAIs), the life-threatening — and largely-unreported — illnesses that millions of people pick up at U.S. hospitals each year (see “States reveal hospitals’ dirty little secrets” in the Feb. 20, 2006 issue of *SNCJ*). Since then, four states have passed legislation requiring healthcare facilities to report HAIs, joining eight states that

already have infection reporting laws on the books. And others may soon do the same.

According to State Net's legislative database, thirty-two states took up HAI bills this session. Several of those states, including ALABAMA, GEORGIA, IDAHO, MISSISSIPPI and WEST VIRGINIA, adjourned without making much progress on the issue.

But HAI legislation is still pending in many states, including CALIFORNIA, LOUISIANA, MASSACHUSETTS, NEW JERSEY, OKLAHOMA, TENNESSEE and WISCONSIN. And HAI bills have progressed to the second chamber in MISSOURI (HB 1099, which modifies the state's existing infection reporting requirements), OHIO (HB 197), SOUTH CAROLINA (SB 1318) and VERMONT (HB 258).

Last month, MARYLAND's SB 135 became law without Gov. Robert E. Ehrlich Jr.'s (R) signature. That measure will require an evaluation system established by the MARYLAND Health Care commission to include information about hospital acquired infections.

On the 3rd of this month, CONNECTICUT passed SB 160, requiring hospitals to report infections to the state's Department of Health, which will then make that information available to the public. The measure awaits the signature of Gov. M. Jodi Rell (R).

On the same day that Constitution State lawmakers approved SB 160, a very similar measure (HB 1741) emerged from the NEW HAMPSHIRE Legislature. And that bill is now sitting on the desk of Gov. John Lynch (D).

On May 4, the ALASKA Legislature adopted a resolution establishing a task force to develop recommendations for the reporting of HAI rates, which will present its results in the form of legislation next year.

And continuing the string, on May 5, COLORADO passed HB 1045, which will require hospitals to report HAIs to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, with that information ultimately being made available to the public by the COLORADO Department of Public Health and Environment. The bill's passage may provide some small comfort to COLORADO resident Tony Zalatan, whose horrific HAI experience drew national media attention to the issue.

## *The Week in Session*

States in Regular Session: CA, DC, DE, LA, MA, MI, NC, NY, OH, OK, RI, SC, TN, US

States in Special Session: CA "a", TX "c", VA "a"

States in Recess: KS, ME, NH, PA

States in Budget Hearing Recess: NJ

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

States Projected to Adjourn: AZ, MN, MO, WI

States Adjourned in 2006: AK, AL, CT, CO, FL, GA, HI, IA, ID, IL, IN, KY, MD, MS, NE, NM, SD, UT, VA, VT, WA, WV, WY

States in Special Session Adjourned in 2006: AR "a", AZ "a", LA "a", OR "a", TN "a"

Letters indicate special/extraordinary sessions

Source: State Net, 05/12/06

Our Oct. 10, 2005 Spotlight concerned the potential political ramifications of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita for the state of LOUISIANA. Seven months later, political change is looking only more certain for the Pelican State.

New Orleans Parish held its 2006 mayoral primary last month. And according to a study by Brown University, overall voter turnout was down about 17 percent from the primary election in 2002. The number of black voters was also down by 6 or 7 percentage points. While not entirely unexpected, considering the neighborhoods that were most damaged by the storms, that result is significant. "It's a very big change," said Brown sociologist John Logan. "If you look at most cities, across elections, this is the kind of number that always stays stable."

But even more noteworthy for Logan was the shift in voting strength among specific neighborhoods. For instance, voter turnout in flood-ravaged eastern New Orleans and the Lower 9th Ward

was about 73 percent and 58 percent of 2002 levels, respectively. Turnout in the equally-devastated neighborhood of Lakeview, however, was about 94 percent of what it was in 2002. Meanwhile, voter turnout increased only modestly in neighborhoods that stayed high-and-dry, and actually remained well below levels in the 2004 presidential election. "In the neighborhoods where people are probably back in their homes and living close to normal lives, I thought they'd be turning out like gangbusters," said Logan. "I thought they'd turn out like the last presidential race,

## Bird's eye view



### States burying funeral protests

A series of caustic protests at the funerals of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan has moved 16 states this year to severely restrict those demonstrations, with many more states poised to soon join them. According to the State Net database, 34 states have considered such bills in 2006, with MINNESOTA Gov. Tim Pawlenty (R) last week becoming the latest governor to sign one into law. These proposals are a direct reaction to vitriolic protests by the Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, KANSAS, which claims the soldiers' deaths are God's punishment on the U.S. for its tolerance of homosexuality (see Feb. 13 SNCJ, *Speaking ill: how much is too much?*). Most of these measures force demonstrators to stay at least 500 feet away from funeral services for a specified time before and after a funeral service. The accompanying map shows the states that have considered funeral protest restrictions this session.





of the supplemental spending bill banning publicly-funded abortion and requiring the collection of data on minors who obtain the procedure without parental approval (MINNESOTA PUBLIC RADIO [ST. PAUL]). • The **SOUTH CAROLINA** Senate approved a property tax reform plan last Tuesday that is based solely on county-by-county referendum. With the measure differing sharply from the tax-swap plan passed by the House back in March, the outlook for resolution of the issue in conference committee is uncertain (STATE [COLUMBIA]). • **ALASKA**'s 2006 legislative session ended last week without a potentially lucrative overhaul of the state's oil tax, when the Senate refused to agree to the plan passed by the House. The issue will now be rolled into a special session called by Gov. Frank Murkowski (R) to consider a new gas pipeline contract (ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS). • Early last Wednesday morning, **KANSAS** lawmakers passed a three-year, \$466 million education funding plan, the largest school funding increase in state history. Now they will have to wait and see if that's enough to satisfy the state Supreme Court, which ruled last year that the Sunflower State's schools were underfunded (WICHITA EAGLE). • **NORTH CAROLINA** Gov. Mike Easley (D) said he will call on state lawmakers who are convening this week for their short budget session to freeze the state gas tax. The tax currently stands at 29.9 cents-per-gallon, making it the sixth-highest in the nation (WINSTON-SALEM JOURNAL). • **COLORADO** lawmakers said last week that they have reached an agreement with Gov. Bill Owens (R) on the state's badly-underfunded public employee pension system that will allow them to avoid a special session. The deal will place more public employees into defined-contribution plans, which do not mandate fixed pension payouts and are therefore generally less costly than more traditional defined-benefit plans, and also shrink the Public Employees Retirement Association board from 16 members to 15 (ASSOCIATED PRESS, DENVER POST).

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

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## Politics & Leadership

**E**LECTION PROBE LAUNCHED IN OH: OHIO Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell (R) has ordered an internal investigation into the major problems encountered during the primary election two weeks ago, such as the inoperability of optical scanning machines in one county that forced a six-day, round-the-clock hand count of 15,000 absentee ballots. Election officials have blamed voting-machine manufacturer Diebold Elections Inc. for the troubles, but a



spokesman for Diebold said its machines worked fine in 47 other OHIO counties. And voter advocates said the election problems had more to do with inadequate poll-worker training. Meanwhile, the state Democratic Party has called for a “special master” to oversee the probe instead of Blackwell, whom the party claims has “numerous” conflicts of interest, including his pursuit of the governor’s office. (CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER)

## *Upcoming Stories*

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

- Minimum wage
- The battle over Plan B
- “Fair share” health care

**POLITICS IN BRIEF:** Last week, the **ARIZONA** Supreme Court released an opinion explaining its decision months ago to deny the stay of a lower court ruling that ordered the removal of **ARIZONA** Rep. David Burnell Smith (R) from office on Jan. 26 for violating campaign finance laws. The opinion, written by Vice Chief Justice Rebecca White Berch, stated that Mr. Smith’s claim of constitutional immunity from civil proceedings during the legislative session was groundless because he had brought it before the courts himself. “A legislator may not seek the court’s intercession solely for the purpose of keeping alive a case that would remove him from office, then claim immunity from participating in the very case he brought,” wrote Justice Berch (ARIZONA CAPITOL TIMES [PHOENIX]). • In other legal action in **ARIZONA**, several Latino advocacy groups have filed suit in federal court to overturn the 2004 voter-ID law enacted by Proposition 200. The groups allege the measure’s requirements for proof of citizenship when registering and identification when voting disproportionately impact minority voters (ARIZONA REPUBLIC [PHOENIX]). • With his first veto of the year, **NEW HAMPSHIRE** Gov. John Lynch (D) killed a bill last week that would have required Granite State residents to show photo ID in order to vote. Lynch said that the allegations of voter fraud in 2004 which prompted the legislation were unfounded (CONCORD MONITOR). • Petitions have been submitted in **MISSOURI** for citizen initiatives to raise the minimum wage, hike the tobacco tax, restrict the use of eminent domain, limit government spending, constitutionally protect stem cell research and restore Medicaid programs that were cut last year. If all six measures make the ballot, it would break the state record of five, set in 1940 (ASSOCIATED PRESS, KANSAS CITY STAR). • **CONNECTICUT** kicked off legislative hearings last week into allegations of illegal campaign fund-raising by top aids of Gov. M. Jodi Rell (R). While Democratic and Republican lawmakers are pretty worked up over the election-year affair, polls indicate the state’s voters aren’t nearly as interested. “I think it’s inside baseball and people don’t see it as a big deal,” said Douglas Schwartz, director of the Quinnipiac University Poll (NEW HAVEN REGISTER). • Six state programs



are among the 18 finalists for Innovations in American Government awards, given each year by the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government. The programs include **CONNECTICUT**’s Supportive Housing Pilots Initiative, which provides affordable housing and other services for the homeless, and **WISCONSIN**’s Green Tier, which encourages businesses to improve their environmental standards (STATELINE.ORG). •

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

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# Governors

**H** EINEMAN UPSETS GRIDIRON LEGEND: Incumbent NEBRASKA Gov. Dave Heineman (R) knew he would have to “do everything right” to best “living legend” Tom Osborne in the Cornhusker State’s GOP primary last week. By all accounts, he succeeded beyond even his own expectations in edging the wildly popular former University of NEBRASKA football coach. In doing so, Heineman, a long-time Republican Party operative and state office holder, greatly enhanced his own near-legendary reputation as a consummate political strategist and tactician.

Heineman’s win shocked observers who expected Osborne to roll to victory in the same manner his Cornhusker squads regularly demolished opponents in winning three national championships under his tutelage. But while that scenario played out perfectly in Osborne’s three Congressional races, it never came to fruition against Heineman, who refused Republican Party overtures early on to step aside and allow Osborne room to run unfettered by primary competition. Even after Heineman’s refusal, many still believed Osborne’s aura of invincibility would carry the day.

But questions about Osborne’s health – he had a heart bypass in 1985 – and his support for in-state tuition for the children of illegal immigrants and refusal to sign a referendum to save elementary-only schools did not play well with the broad spectrum of Republican voters. In contrast, Heineman, a former lieutenant governor and state treasurer, gained the public support of the Nebraska Farm Bureau, Nebraska Right to Life and the National Rifle Association, three major forces in state GOP politics, as well as popular U.S. senator Chuck Hagel (R). Heineman also had the advantage of having constructed a record of achievement over the last 15 months, one that included major new job creation legislation, and presiding over tax cuts earlier this year. He now moves on to face Democratic nominee David Hahn, a 50-year-old Lincoln attorney and Internet entrepreneur, in the November general election. (LINCOLN JOURNAL STAR, OMAHA WORLD-HERALD)

**FLETCHER INDICTED:** A long-running investigation into political patronage allegations resulted in KENTUCKY Gov. Ernie Fletcher (R) being indicted last week on three misdemeanor counts alleging that he directed an illegal conspiracy to place his political allies in state jobs at the expense of those who might oppose him. Fletcher was charged with one count each of criminal conspiracy, first-degree official misconduct and violating the prohibition against political discrimination. He is the first governor of either party in KENTUCKY to be indicted. The misconduct charge could land Fletcher in jail for 12 months, although that is unlikely. The two other counts carry a penalty of 30 days to six months in jail, forfeiture of state office, and a ban on holding any state job for five years. Fletcher has already pardoned 14 members of his administration also indicted in the probe, but said he has “no intention” of pardoning himself. The question now becomes whether, if convicted, Fletcher would be forced to resign. State law says that an officer or employee of the Commonwealth who is convicted of a crime “shall forfeit his office or position.” Lawyers for Attorney General Greg Stumbo’s office declined to officially interpret the law, but Stumbo spokesperson Vicki Glass said “it is the position of the office that the statute means what it says.” (COURIER-JOURNAL [LOUISVILLE]).

**SCHWARZENEGGER FINALLY SHOWS SCHOOLS THE MONEY:**

CALIFORNIA Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) agreed last week to repay Golden State schools billions of dollars he had borrowed to balance the state budget in recent years. If approved by the Legislature, the plan would dole out an extra \$2.9 billion to schools over the course of seven years, starting in 2007-08, while also hiking spend-

*Upcoming Elections*

(05/11/06 - 06/01/06)

05/16/2006 Kentucky Primary Election  
House (All)  
Senate (Even)  
US House (All)

05/16/2006 Oregon Primary Election  
House (All)  
Senate 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 24, 26  
Constitutional Officers:  
Governor  
US House (All)

05/16/2006 Pennsylvania Primary Election  
House (All)  
Senate (Even)  
Constitutional Officers:  
Governor, Lieutenant Governor  
US House (All)  
US Senate (Santorum)

05/23/2006 Arkansas Primary Election  
House (All)  
Senate (All)  
Constitutional Officers:  
Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Treasurer, Attorney General, State Land Commissioner  
US House (All)

05/23/2006 Idaho Primary Election  
House (All)  
Senate (All)  
Constitutional Officers:  
Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Treasurer, Attorney General, Superintendent of Public Instruction, State Controller

05/30/2006 North Carolina  
special runoff if needed  
Senate 031

ing a total of \$2.8 billion in the 2005-06 and 2006-07 budgets over what the governor proposed in January. The move could also serve dual purposes for Schwarzenegger — ending a lawsuit brought against him by the powerful CALIFORNIA teachers lobby for renegeing on his promise to pay back the money and taking away a powerful campaign tool that Democrats and their supporters would have surely used against him in his bid for reelection in November. “There’s no question in my mind that there’s a political effort underway to neutralize as much opposition as possible,” said Assembly Speaker Fabian Nuñez (D). “I don’t think the administration lives in fantasy-land. They know they’re going to have strong opposition in November. But this is a way to soften the blow. And if they can soften the blow enough, they think they’re looking at the governor’s reelection.” (LOS ANGELES TIMES, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER)

## Corrections

In the “Once Around the Statehouse Lightly” section of our May 8 issue, we inadvertently left the editorial term “(sic)” after the use of “ARKANSAS’S.” This of course means an unusual or incorrect spelling, which is in fact not the case here. The note was supposed to have been removed in the editing process, but alas, all eyes missed it...except for those of many of our readers. Thank you all for bringing it to our attention. We regret the error.

**GOVERNORS IN BRIEF:** **ALASKA** Gov. Frank Murkowski (R) called the Legislature into special session to debate a 300-page contract between the Last Frontier State and a trio of major oil companies that are considering building a \$20 billion pipeline to carry North Slope natural gas to the Lower 48 states (ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS). • **ILLINOIS** Gov. Rod Blagojevich (D) said last week that not only he will reject any pay raise state lawmakers enact for his office, but he will also veto any raise they give themselves. The House recently rejected a 9.6 percent pay hike, but Senate President Emil Jones (D) said his chamber will consider its own pay raise proposal in the fall (CHICAGO TRIBUNE). • **FLORIDA** Gov. Jeb Bush (R) warned that another bad hurricane season could lead to the “devastating” collapse of the Sunshine State’s insurance industry. Bush said that while the state has committed almost \$500 million to hurricane readiness measures, the ultimate burden of hurricane preparedness still falls on residents (SOUTH FLORIDA SUN-SENTINEL [FT. LAUDERDALE]). • A new poll by Lansing-based research company EPIC/MRA shows that **MICHIGAN** Gov. Jennifer Granholm (D) trails Republican challenger Dick DeVos 46 to 45 percent. It is the first time she has trailed a political rival in a head-to-head comparison since 2001 (DETROIT FREE PRESS). • **COLORADO** Gov. Bill Owens (R) declared a state of emergency for Centennial State farmers who had their irrigation wells shut off as a result of a recent state engineer ruling. The declaration means that farmers who suffer economic losses from the lack of water will be eligible for federal aid (DENVER POST).

— Compiled by RICH EHISEN

# Hot issues

**B**USINESS: The **KANSAS** House and Senate overwhelmingly endorse a measure that would require cities, counties and state agencies to get legislative permission before they could force individuals or businesses to sell their property for economic development projects. The proposal goes to Gov. Kathleen Sebelius (D), who has not indicated if she will sign it (**LAWRENCE JOURNAL-WORLD**). • Eminent domain is also the issue in **MISSOURI**, where the House and Senate send Gov. Matt Blunt (R) a measure that would allow local governments to take private land for economic development, but would force them to pay 25-50 percent more than market value. Blunt is expected to sign it (**ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH**). • Still in **MISSOURI**, lawmakers approve a measure that would bar industrial loan companies from having any deposit, loan office or bank branches in the Show Me State. Industrial loan companies are a special type of bank that allow non-financial companies to take deposits, make loans and engage in other banking business without being regulated by the Federal Reserve. The legislation heads to Gov. Matt Blunt (R) for review (**KANSAS CITY STAR**). • **GEORGIA** Gov. Sonny Perdue (R) vetoes legislation that would have allowed Peach State residents to take home opened but unfinished bottles of wine from restaurants. Perdue said he vetoed the measure because he felt it would violate the state's open container law (**ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION**).

**CRIME & PUNISHMENT: ARIZONA** Gov. Janet Napolitano (D) signs legislation that requires a minimum of 15 days in jail for a first prostitution or pandering offense. Further offenses can lead to up to 180 days of jail time (**ARIZONA REPUBLIC [PHOENIX]**). • **MINNESOTA** Gov. Tim Pawlenty (R) signs legislation that makes it a misdemeanor for anyone to protest or picket within 500 feet of a funeral, memorial service or burial with the intent of disrupting the ceremonies. Violators can be charged with a misdemeanor (**ST. PAUL PIONEER PRESS**). • The **OHIO** House also endorses a funeral protest ban, HB 484, which says demonstrators must stay at least 300 feet from memorial proceedings. It moves to the Senate (**CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER**). • Lawmakers in **KANSAS**, however, reject a similar proposal to regulate funeral protests after the House and Senate cannot agree on whether to exempt streets, sidewalks and other public spaces from the funeral buffer zone (**WICHITA EAGLE**). • **ILLINOIS** Gov. Rod Blagojevich (D) announces he will sign legislation that would make the Prairie State the first in the nation to require criminal background checks on all current and incoming nursing homes residents. The measure will also force the homes to segregate sex



offenders and violent felons identified by the security checks (ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH).

**EDUCATION:** The **CALIFORNIA** Senate approves SB 1437, a measure that would require Golden State history textbooks to include the contributions of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. **CALIFORNIA** is the nation's largest buyer of textbooks, with annual spending topping \$400 million.

The bill now moves to the Assembly (SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS). • The **MISSOURI** House endorses a proposal to create an Internet-based “virtual” public school that would link students to teachers and textbooks by computer instead of a traditional classroom. The school would begin in time for the 2007-08 school year with a student enrollment of about 500. The bill goes to Gov. Matt Blunt (R), who has not indicated if he will sign it (NEWS TRIBUNE [JEFFERSON CITY]).

**ENVIRONMENT:** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announces it has granted protection under the Endangered Species Act to a dozen species of rare flies found only in **HAWAII**. The 106 species of picture-wing flies are each specially adapted to a particular island and habitat, ranging from arid areas to rain forests. The flies are named for the intricate markings on their clear wings and are known for their elaborate performances when protecting their territory or courting a mate (HONOLULU STAR-BULLETIN).

**HEALTH & SCIENCE:** The **VERMONT** House and Senate agree on a measure that would extend health care insurance to up to 96 percent of state residents by 2010. The new insurance plan will be sold by private companies, with the state subsidizing the premium cost for those who can't afford it. The program will be funded by increases in the cigarette tax and a \$365-per-employee annual fee on businesses that do not provide their workers with insurance. The measure heads to Gov. Jim Douglas (R), who helped negotiate the deal (ASSOCIATED PRESS). • The **FLORIDA** House and Senate endorse a bill that would allow foster kids that reach adulthood without being adopted to receive Medicaid coverage through age 19. The measure, which would ensure former foster kids continue to receive vital medications, moves now to Gov. Jeb Bush (R), who is expected to sign it

# Quoteable

“Growing up, all I knew about was Betsy Ross, Betty Crocker or Betty Boop. Since my name wasn't Betty, I thought I was toast.”

—**CALIFORNIA state Sen. Sheila Kuehl (D), the first openly gay member of the Golden State Legislature, on why she authored legislation that would require history textbooks to include the contributions of gays and lesbians. (SACRAMENTO BEE)**

(ORLANDO SENTINEL). • **OKLAHOMA** Gov. Brad Henry (D) signs SB 806, which legalizes tattooing. The Sooner State is the last in the nation to legalize the practice. The ink, however, doesn't become fully dry until Nov. 1 (OKLAHOMAN [OKLAHOMA CITY]).

**HOMELAND SECURITY:** A group of private citizens says it will begin building a coiled and razor-edged barbed wire security fence on private land on the **ARIZONA**-Mexico border as a way to prevent illegal immigrants from crossing into the U.S. The Minuteman Civil Defense Corps, a civilian group, says it is also considering building the fences in **CALIFORNIA**, **NEW MEXICO** and **TEXAS** (ARIZONA DAILY STAR [TUCSON]).

**SOCIAL POLICY:** The **KANSAS** House and Senate overwhelmingly approve a proposal to set 15 as the minimum marriage age in the Sunflower State. The measure walks down the aisle to Gov. Kathleen Sebelius (D), who has said she will sign it (LAWRENCE JOURNAL-WORLD). • **ILLINOIS** Gov. Rod Blagojevich (D) issues an executive order allowing all gay state employees in the executive branch of Prairie State government to sign up their partners for state health benefits. About 100 employees are expected to take advantage of the directive (DAILY HERALD [ARLINGTON HEIGHTS]).

**POTPOURRI:** The **RHODE ISLAND** Senate unanimously approves a proposal to ban drivers younger than 18 from using a cell phone while behind the wheel. Violators would face a loss of license and up to a \$250 fine. It drifts over to the House for review (PROVIDENCE JOURNAL). • A **LOUISIANA** House panel rejects HB 1171, a proposal that would have allowed the public to peruse the records of dozens of agencies under the Governor's Office, from the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness to the Pet Overpopulation Advisory Council (ADVOCATE [BATON ROUGHE]). • The **KANSAS** House and

## *In the Hopper*

State Net's database tracks tens of thousands of bills in all 50 states at any given time. Here's a snapshot of what's in the legislative works:

Number of 2006 prefiles last week: 374

Number of 2006 Intros last week: 1,369

Number of bills enacted/adopted last week: 1,312

Number of 2006 prefiles to date: 17,796

Number of 2006 Intros to date: 86,001

Number of enacted/adopted overall in 2006: 19,744

— Compiled By JAMES ROSS  
(Measures current as of 05/11/06  
Source:State Net)



Senate approve a measure that would seal all information about who applies for, receives or is denied a concealed weapon permit in the Sunflower State. It heads to Gov. Kathleen Sebelius (D), who is expected to veto it (KANSAS CITY STAR).

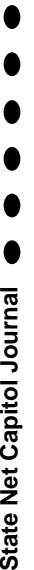
— Compiled by RICH EHISEN

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# Once around the statehouse lightly

“WHAT WE HAVE HERE is a failure to communicate,” so said Lucas Jackson in a bit of movie lore. And now, MICHIGAN Gov. Jennifer Granholm and her hubby get to utter those immortal words to about a dozen people who — in one way or another — work for Granholm or her political allies. According to the *Detroit Free Press*, Granholm last week discovered that a home she and her husband formerly owned had been hit with a lien by the state’s Unemployment Insurance Agency. Reason: the first couple had failed to file unemployment compensation insurance reports for their live-in nanny and owed more than \$800 in penalties and interest to an agency within Granholm’s own administration. More to the point, the situation had been lingering for more than a year because no one in several bureaucratic niches had bothered to forward notices to the governor’s new address or inform her or her husband about either the lien or the problem. They were brought into the loop by a reporter from the Associated Press and, of course, by the embarrassing story that reporter was about to file.

**CUTTING A SWATH TO JAIL:** If you plan on traveling soon to OHIO, stay sober behind the wheel — even if the “wheel” is steering something other than a car or truck. That was a lesson learned the hard way by Dondi Bowles, reports the *Cleveland Plain-Dealer*. Bowles was arrested not long ago on his third “OVI” — operating a vehicle under the influence. Vehicle in question: lawn mower. Seems Bowles was piloting his landlord’s riding mower toward a drug-



store about a mile from his home in the hopes that the nature of his vehicle would help him avoid yet another drunk-driving charge. Unfortunately, in the Buckeye State, the definition of “vehicle” is expansive and includes “everything on wheels or runners,” says the Highway Patrol. Bowles was arrested and sent to jail until his hearing June 20.

**THE FOREVER BOY:** Peter Pan has surfaced, and he’s living in WISCONSIN. More specifically, notes the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, he’s a senior at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. Unfortunately for university officials and many of his classmates, this Peter Pan has been a senior for nine years. Johnny Lechner entered UW as a freshman back in 1994, which means he should have graduated in 1998 or 1999. But he’s still there, still enrolled and taking classes, with no immediate plans to step out into the world beyond. Apparently, the availability of women and parties — plus the “celebrity status” Lechner has earned simply by enrolling every fall — is too much to give up. UW deans thought they were rid of him this year but Lechner decided at the last minute to come back in September. Seems he’s never studied abroad.

**WHAT WOULD IKE THINK?** The to-do in Springfield, ILLINOIS, last week concerned a five-pointed star etched into the concrete at a new playground. According to the *ILLINOIS State Journal-Register*, some people found the star “distressing” because it can be interpreted as a sign of the occult. Those people complained to the parks’ department, which altered the design to make it appear more like a pinwheel. So, then, five-pointed stars are now deemed offensive. Better inform the, uh, Pentagon because every military officer above the rank of colonel or captain wears at least one of the nasty little symbols.

**MAN’S BEST “ACCESSORY USE”** In CONNECTICUT, that would be your dog. Depending on where you live, notes the *Hartford Courant*, your little furry friend might be in violation of local zoning ordinances thanks to a recent decision by the state supreme court. In a specific case, a pet owner — who kept 14 dogs on her nine-acre parcel — will be forced to get rid of 10 of the animals because she is in violation of a local law that limits “accessory uses” of the property. Dogs seemed to be singled out in this case because the same law allows the owner to keep as many as 24 horses on the same property.

### In case you missed it:

Homeland security continues to be one of the most important — and contentious — issues states face. In our April 10 issue, we discussed this critical topic with New York state Sen. Michael Balboni (R), author of the Empire State’s primary anti-terrorism law and a leading voice on many state-federal task forces charged with shaping our national homeland security policy.

In case you missed it, the article can be found on our Web site at [http://statenet.com/capitol\\_journal/04-10-2006](http://statenet.com/capitol_journal/04-10-2006).

