

# The Trouble with Term Limits



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● The next issue of  
 ● Capitol Journal will be  
 ● available on July 5th.  
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## Top Story

*Anti-incumbent fervor isn't the only thing driving veteran lawmakers from office these days — in 14 states, term limits are also creating a looming experience gap.*

## SNCJ Spotlight

### Legislative term-outs worry budget watchers

**M**ICHIGAN Sen. Gretchen Whitmer (D) was elected to office only four years ago. But there's a reasonably good chance that come next year, the 39-year-old will be MICHIGAN's most senior state senator.

Twenty-nine of the state's 38 sitting senators are barred from running for re-election this year by term limits, restricting them to two four-year terms. The senators who are eligible to return next year will have even less experience than Whitmer, who won her seat in a special election in March 2006.







said, is “a caricature presented by politicians who want to keep their jobs.”

But not all politicians consider term limits a bad thing necessarily. Termed-out OKLAHOMA House Speaker Chris Benge (R), for one, said his state’s 12-year aggregate legislative term limit has “brought a lot of fresh, new ideas into the system.” When informed of the number of lawmakers who will be termed out in MICHIGAN this year, however, Benge said, “Having that kind of turnover in one year might be a little much.” (STATELINE.ORG)

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

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# Budget & taxes

**R**ECESION RECKONING IN STATES: The Great Recession that struck the nation three years ago is now bringing a Great Reckoning to the states. With tax revenues still foundering, demand for government services rising and the flow of federal stimulus dollars slowing to a trickle, states are facing their third straight year of staggering budget deficits.

Since the 2008 fiscal year, state governments have closed more than \$300 billion in budget gaps, according to Corina Eckl, fiscal program director at the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL).

States have taken all the predictable steps. They’ve depleted their rainy day funds. In fact, by the end of the 2010 fiscal year, two-thirds of all the cash in state treasuries will be held by just two states, energy-rich ALASKA and TEXAS, while 14 states will likely have reserves of less than 1 percent of what they spend annually.

While avoiding broad tax hikes, states have also closed loopholes, cracked down on tax evaders and raised levies on vices like tobacco, alcohol, gambling, candy and soda. Nearly half the states have raised fees for higher education, legal services, licenses and park access as well.

As the deficits have dragged on, states have taken more desperate measures. Half have laid off public employees, while 22 have instituted unpaid furloughs. And at least 28 states have made across-the-board budget cuts, with some making deeper, targeted cuts as well.

But the states’ fiscal problems are about to get even worse. The Medicaid health care system, created by Congress, administered by the states and paid for by federal, state and local governments, is a jumble in the best of times. But Medicaid enrollments are growing rapidly. The number of enrollees is expected to grow next year by an average of 5.4 percent. Funding, however, isn’t anticipated to grow much at all. And while that might not be a big problem for a state like NEBRASKA, which is anticipating enrollment growth of just 2 percent, it could be disastrous for



ARIZONA, which is expecting an enrollment jump of over 17 percent. As Gov. Jan Brewer (R) pointed out in her state-of-the-state address this year, with revenues having sagged to 2004 levels, some have said “we should just adopt the 2004 budget,” but Medicaid rolls have grown by 475,000 since then.

Just as ugly a fiscal problem for states is public employee pay and benefits. The Pew Center on the States estimates states are at least \$1 trillion short of what they will need to keep their retirement promises to public workers. Two Chicago-area professors have actually placed the figure at \$3 trillion.

Consequently, the dreaded “B” word — bankruptcy — has been cropping up a lot lately in conversations about the fiscal health of cities and counties across the country, so frequently, in fact, that some investors are beginning to think municipal bonds are the next bubble that is about to burst. CALIFORNIA’s public employee unions are so worried about the prospect of widespread defaults releasing municipalities from their pension obligations, they are pushing for legislation to ban government bankruptcies.

The big question is, given these fiscal pressures, how will states make ends meet? Some will inevitably do it by tweaking taxes and killing innovative programs. KENTUCKY, for instance, is doing away with its juvenile drug courts, which invest resources on aggressive intervention and rehabilitation programs in the hope of saving money in the long run on incarceration.

“It always will cost us more to remove [addicted criminals] from their communities and incarcerate them for years,” said District Judge Brandy Oliver Brown of Clark and Madison Counties.

A few state leaders, however, are trying to shape the current financial crisis into an opportunity for significant government reform. MICHIGAN Gov. Jennifer Granholm (D), for one, has called for an efficiency revolution in her state, which has been devastated by the shrinking of the U.S. auto industry. She has sold surplus property, eliminated unnecessary departments, boards and commissions, and coaxed thousands of senior teachers into retirement, with the intention of replacing them with fewer, younger teachers who receive less generous but more sustainable benefits.

“The 21st century economy is all about speed, access, intelligence and efficiency,” she said when she announced her latest round of restructuring.

## The week in session

**States in Regular Session:** CA, DC, DE, LA, MA, MI, NC, NH, NJ, NY, PA, PR, US

**States in Special Session:** CA “f”, CT “a”, PA “a”

**Upcoming Special Sessions:**

CT “a” regarding Citizens’ Election Program projected for 06/21/2010.  
 WV “b” regarding Education and Other Topics convenes 07/19/2010.  
 FL “a” regarding Energy Policy - TBA.  
 MO “a” regarding New Tax Incentives for Manufacturers - TBA.

**States in Skeleton Session:** OH

**States in Veto Session:** SC

**States Currently Prefiling or Drafting for 2011:** KY, MT, ND

**States Projected to Adjourn:** LA

**States Adjourned in 2010:** AK, AL, AR, AZ, CO, CT, FL, GA, HI, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, MD, ME, MN, MO, MS, NE, NM, OK, RI, SC, SD, TN, UT, VA, VT, WA, WI, WV, WY

**State Special Sessions Adjourned in 2010:** AZ “a”, AZ “b”, CA “e”, CA “h”, KY “a”, MN “a”, MS “a”, NH “a”, NM “a”, NV “b”, OR “a”, TN “a”, WA “a”, WI “b”, WV “a”

Letters indicate special/extraordinary sessions

— Compiled By JAMES ROSS  
 (session information current as of 6/18/2010)  
 Source: State Net database

“A 21st century government needs to be about the same things.”

INDIANA Gov. Mitch Daniels (R) has been an efficiency fiend. He’s privatized bureaucracies, sold a poorly managed toll road and even harvested the paper clips from state tax returns to reuse in government offices.

Some reform efforts haven’t fared as well, such as NEBRASKA state Sen. Rich Pahl’s proposal to merge many of his state’s 93 counties. The bill reportedly died, in part, because it was too blunt a commentary on the passage of small town America. But the consolidation may be inevitable. Only 16 of NEBRASKA’s counties have populations over 20,000, and two are home to fewer than 500 residents. (TIME)

**BUDGETS IN BRIEF:** State prison officials nationwide are reducing the number of inmates in solitary confinement, due to budget pressures, legal challenges and concerns about the punishment’s effectiveness. Solitary confinement was once among the fastest-growing conditions of incarceration, increasing 40 percent from 1995 to 2000, while the overall prison population during that period increased 28 percent, according to a study by The Commission on Safety and Abuse in America’s Prisons (USA

TODAY). • Duplicating the action of Moody’s Investors Services two weeks ago, Fitch Ratings downgraded **ILLINOIS’** credit rating from “A+” to “A,” due to the failure of state lawmakers and Gov. Pat Quinn (D) to pass a balanced budget addressing the state’s \$13 billion deficit. Among states, only **CALIFORNIA** now has a worse credit rating (CHICAGO SUN-TIMES). • **NEW YORK** Gov. David Paterson (D) torpedoed Lt. Gov. Richard Ravitch’s (D) plan to resolve the state’s budget crisis last week when he declared that he would not approve any borrowing, which was the centerpiece of Ravitch’s proposal. Paterson’s action underscored the growing tension between him and his lieutenant, whose appointment he fought for in court a year ago (NEW YORK TIMES).

— Compiled by **KOREY CLARK**

## Upcoming elections

6/18/2010 - 7/9/2010

06/22/2010

**California Special Primary**  
Senate District 15

**Mississippi Primary Runoff**  
US House (Congressional District 2)

**North Carolina Primary Runoff**  
Senate District 21  
US House (Districts 8, 12 and 13)  
US Senate

**South Carolina Primary Runoff**  
House Districts 38, 39, 41, 69, 87, 117 and 123  
Constitutional Officers:  
Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General,  
Superintendent of Education  
US House (Districts 1, 3, 4 and 6)

**Texas Special Runoff**  
Senate District 22

**Utah Primary Election**  
House (All)  
Senate 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 21, 22, 26, 28  
US House (All)  
US Senate

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# Politics & leadership

**T**EXAS DEMS SUE GREEN PARTY: The TEXAS Democratic Party filed a lawsuit last week against the state's Green Party, an ARIZONA-based Republican political consultant, a MISSOURI group called Take Initiative America Inc. and "unknown conspirators." The Democrats allege GOP consultant Timothy F. Mooney et al helped the Green Party qualify for TEXAS' general election ballot — for the first time since 2002 — as part of "an unlawful scheme" to "undermine the vote for Democratic candidates."

One candidate in particular the Dems are concerned about is former Houston Mayor Bill White, widely considered to be the strongest gubernatorial contender they have fielded in years. A Democrat hasn't been elected to statewide office in TEXAS since 1994. And although a Rasmussen Reports poll last month showed Republican Gov. Rick Perry with a 51 percent to 38 percent lead over White, the gap was only four percentage points in April.

Democrats fear that having a Green candidate on the ballot could hurt White in a close race by drawing away liberal voters, the same way that third-party presidential candidate Ralph Nader's presence on the ballot in 2004 diluted support for Democrat John Kerry to the benefit of Republican George W. Bush.

In fact, Democrats noted that Mooney and one of Perry's top political advisers, Dave Carney, were among the Republican consultants who helped Nader qualify for the ballot in several states.

Carney said he doesn't know anything about the TEXAS Green Party effort.

"I have not talked to the guy in years and was not aware of what he was doing with the Green Party," he said of Mooney.

A spokesman for Gov. Perry, likewise, said the governor's campaign "had nothing to do with the Green Party getting on the ticket."

TEXAS Green Party state coordinator Kat Swift, meanwhile, said she didn't consider accepting Republicans' help an ethical breach.

It may be a legal breach, however. TEXAS law prohibits contributions of more than \$500 from out-of-state committees as well as contributions made in another's name. And according to a June 6 report in the *Dallas Morning News*, Mooney arranged a signature-gathering effort, bankrolled by Take Initiative America, to collect nearly 92,000 signatures to qualify the Green Party for the TEXAS ballot. While Mooney estimated that the effort cost about \$200,000, he declined to specify where the money came from, claiming that as a tax-exempt corporation, Take Initiative America is not legally required to name its donors.

The Green Party has agreed to postpone submitting its list of candidates for 14 days while a judge considers the case. A hearing is scheduled for June 24. (WALL STREET JOURNAL)



**POLITICS IN BRIEF:** A three-judge panel of the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled last week that **WISCONSIN** judges can join political parties but cannot endorse candidates or directly solicit campaign donations. The state’s judges have been banned from joining political parties since 1968, but a U.S. District Judge overturned the ban on First Amendment grounds last year (MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL). • **CALIFORNIA’s** historic trial on Proposition 8, the Golden State’s ban on same-sex marriage, reached its final stage last week, when Chief U.S. District Judge Vaughn Walker heard final arguments from lawyers on both sides of the issue. The first federal test case in the nation of a state law forbidding gay marriage, it is widely expected to end up in the U.S. Supreme Court (SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS). • **ALASKA** Gov. Sean Parnell (R) has signed new disclosure requirements into law for those seeking to place initiatives on the state ballot. The requirements were backed by a number of mining interests following an initiative campaign against the controversial Pebble Mine about 200 miles southwest of Anchorage (JUNEAU EMPIRE). • **MINNESOTA** Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s (R) deputy chief of staff, Brian McClung, is leaving his post to form a new political fundraising organization backed by two of the state’s most powerful business interests, the Minnesota Business Partnership and the Chamber of Commerce. In light of the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision lifting the ban on corporate political advertising, the leaders of MN Forward hope to raise at least \$2 million for the upcoming elections, more than four times what the chamber raised from individual contributions in previous years (MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE).

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

## Upcoming stories

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

- **Time to bag plastics?**
- **Pension problems**
- **Budget updates**

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# Governors

**SCHWARZENEGGER GAINS HUGE PENSION VICTORY:** CALIFORNIA Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) earned a major political victory last week when four of the state’s powerful public employee unions, including those representing state firefighters and California Highway Patrol officers, agreed to his call for a substantial rollback in pension benefits. Schwarzenegger has made pension reform a keystone of his legislative efforts this year, threatening to not sign the state budget without it.

Under the new deal, the retirement age for Highway Patrol officers and firefighters would rise to 55 for new hires. Retirees at that time would receive 3 percent of the average of their highest three years of pay multiplied by their years of





economy. Ritter seemed to be speaking mainly to a potential Republican governor, noting that “I would hope that [a Republican] would understand the wisdom of [these efforts] because the environmental issues are significant. If a Republican doesn’t see that as a mainstay, they could also look to the energy diversity and understand that that is a national security issue,” he said, adding, “We built this based on energy security and national security. The third part of it has to do with economic development and job creation. If a Republican really cares about job creation, this is the space to be in.” Ritter’s comments came at a signing ceremony for a group of energy-related bills, including HB 1333, which will provide grants to community colleges for green-workforce job training; SB 180, which will create a panel to develop SMART grid technology to integrate multiple sources of energy and distribute those reliably; and HB 1267, which exempts third-party, independently-owned residential solar facilities from property tax. (COLORADO GOVERNOR’S OFFICE, COLORADO INDEPENDENT)

**GIBBONS VOWS ACTION TO THE END:** Voters in the NEVADA

Republican gubernatorial primary may have given Gov. Jim Gibbons the boot, but the often-cantankerous governor has no plans to ride off quietly into the sunset. While shouldering the blame for his defeat — “It’s no one’s fault for getting un-elected other than the candidates themselves,” he said last week — he also made it clear he intends to pursue his agenda for the full length of his term.

“I have six months of work here as governor of the state,” he said. “I’m going to try to continue the work we’ve started on a lot of programs.” He also noted a sense of relief over being done with the election itself, adding, “And I no longer have to crowd a weekend of campaigning in.”

Gibbons’ senior staff, which critics contend has long crafted the bulk of his legislative agenda while he has secluded himself at his Elko ranch, says the governor

will launch an all-out effort to reshape Silver State government in a much more conservative image before leaving office on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011. Those actions will include issuing executive orders, directing department heads and pursuing lawsuits to challenge lawmakers’ budget authority.

“Last time I checked, the term he was elected to was for four years,” Chief of Staff Robin Reedy said. “You want us to sit in chairs? Put tape over our mouths? Duct tape our hands? That’s not the staff we have.”

Among the proposals his staff is considering are closing the 140-year-old Nevada State Prison in Carson City, pushing a ballot initiative opening up the collective bargaining process between the state and public employee unions and challenging the constitutionality of the Interim Finance Committee, which oversees state spending when the Legislature is out of session. The plan also includes crafting a new budget

**“You want us to sit in chairs? Put tape over our mouths? Duct tape our hands? That’s not the staff we have.”**



for 2011, which is expected to face a shortfall of as much as \$3 billion. Gibbons has promised to work with both gubernatorial candidates, Republican Brian Sandoval and Democrat Rory Reid, in preparing that budget, but Reedy made it clear that cooperation will only go so far.

“We’re happy to listen to anyone’s ideas,” she said. “But the fact is we have an obligation to build the budget. And we’re going to do it with the existing revenue we have.” (LAS VEGAS SUN, NEVADA APPEAL [CARSON CITY])

**GOVERNORS IN BRIEF: ARIZONA** Gov. Jan Brewer (R) demanded that state Attorney General Terry Goddard (D) step down from defending the state in lawsuits challenging SB 1070, its new anti-immigration law. Brewer said Goddard’s publicly stated opposition to the law has created a conflict of interest and that the bill gives her the power to name legal counsel of her choosing. Goddard has so far declined (ARIZONA REPUBLIC [PHOENIX]). • **MAINE** Gov. John Baldacci (D) issued Executive Order 15, which creates an 11-member working group to study the standards by which police can stop all-terrain vehicle (ATV) users on private lands. The group will include state fish and game and public safety officials, landowners and ATV associations (BANGOR DAILY NEWS). • **KANSAS** Gov. Mark Parkinson (D) issued Executive Order 10-04, which creates a commission to study and reduce the Sunflower State’s high school dropout rate (KANSAS GOVERNOR’S OFFICE).

— *Compiled by RICH EHISEN*

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## Hot issues

**B** **BUSINESS:** The **LOUISIANA** Senate gives final approval to SB 595, a bill that prohibits insurance companies from canceling or not renewing policies of homeowners with corrosive Chinese-made drywall. It moves to Gov. Bobby Jindal (R) for review (NEW ORLEANS TIMES-PICAYUNE). • **ILLINOIS** Gov. Pat Quinn (D) signs HB 6349, a bill requiring at least 90 percent of the workers for entities receiving state funds or funds administered by the state for public works projects to be Prairie State residents (ILLINOIS GOVERNOR’S OFFICE). • Still in **ILLINOIS**, Quinn signs SB 107, which allows telecommunications companies that offer local phone service to change service packages and pricing plans without approval from the state Commerce Commission (ILLINOIS GOVERNOR’S OFFICE).

**CRIME & PUNISHMENT:** The **MASSACHUSETTS** House approves HB 4102, Gov. Deval Patrick’s (D) proposal to bar Bay State residents from purchasing more than one gun per month. Violators would face a fine up to \$1,000 or a 30-month



jail sentence on a first offense, and a maximum \$5,000 fine or five years in prison on a subsequent offense.

The measure, which would also allow state and local officials to share information for doing background checks on gun purchasers and bar most people from owning a machine gun, goes to the Joint Judiciary Committee (BOSTON GLOBE). • The **LOUISIANA** Senate unanimously approves a heavily-amended version of HB 1264, which would make it a crime to spray graffiti on historic buildings and Pelican State landmarks. Violators would face a mandatory \$1,000 fine and up to two years in jail. The House rejected these amendments, so the bill goes to a joint conference committee (NEW ORLEANS TIMES-PICAYUNE). • Still in **LOUISIANA**, the Senate approves HB 1357, which would bar “sexting,” sending lewd images via a cell phone or similar device. This version would exempt minors from receiving jail time for violating the law, though adults could face fines and imprisonment for sending nude images to minors. The measure goes to a joint conference committee (NEW ORLEANS TIMES-PICAYUNE). • **ILLINOIS** Gov. Pat Quinn (D) signs HB 5214, which allows counties statewide to create special judicial courts for military veterans who may have mental health or substance abuse disorders. The courts would deal with veterans charged with non-violent crimes, with the option to order defendants into mental health and substance abuse screenings and treatment programs (ILLINOIS GOVERNOR’S OFFICE).

**EDUCATION: MISSOURI** Gov. Jay Nixon (D) signs SB 772, which removes a Show Me State law that required investments in the state’s Higher Education Savings Program to be held for at least one year. The bill’s supporters say the new law is intended to spur parents to save more for their children’s college education (ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH). • **NEW HAMPSHIRE** Gov. John Lynch (D) signs HB 1523, which gives Granite State public schools until January 2011 to draft detailed policies for combating bullying and cyber-bullying. Acts covered by the law extend to bullying incidents off school grounds if they interfere with school events or operations (UNION LEADER [MANCHESTER]).

**ENVIRONMENT: RHODE ISLAND** Gov. Don Carcieri (R) signs HB 8083, which gives the state’s Public Utilities Commission 45 days to approve or deny an agreement between the state’s largest utility and its preferred offshore wind power developer. The Ocean State is attempting to become the first in the nation to develop

## In the hopper

At any given time, State Net tracks tens of thousands of bills in all 50 states, the US Congress and the District of Columbia. Here’s a snapshot of what’s in the legislative works:

**Number of Prefiles last week: 116**

**Number of Intros last week: 883**

**Number of Enacted/Adopted last week: 816**

**Number of 2010 Session Prefiles to date: 19,622**

**Number of 2010 Intros to date: 84,694**

**Number of 2010 Session Enacted/Adopted overall to date: 24,656**

**Number of 2009-10 bills currently in State Net Database: 184,240**

— Compiled By JAMES ROSS  
(measures current as of 6/17/2010)  
Source: State Net database



an offshore wind farm project (PROVIDENCE JOURNAL). • **ALASKA** Gov. Sean Parnell (R) signs HB 306, which establishes the goal for the Last Frontier State to generate 50 percent of its electricity through renewable resources by 2025, primarily through hydroelectric projects. Parnell also signs SB 220, a measure that, among several things, creates an energy efficiency grant fund, emerging energy technology fund, renewable energy production tax credit, and an energy use index. The measure additionally calls for an energy efficiency audit on state buildings, with 25 percent to receive upgrades (ALASKA GOVERNOR’S OFFICE).

## In case you missed it

Women have for years been slowly clawing their way into the political pipeline. But in last week’s primaries, a host of female candidates and current officeholders leapt out of the trenches and directly to the forefront of their parties’ national aspirations.

In case you missed it, the article can be found on our Web site at [http://www.statenet.com/capitol\\_journal/06-14-2010/html](http://www.statenet.com/capitol_journal/06-14-2010/html)

**HEALTH & SCIENCE:** **ILLINOIS** Gov. Pat Quinn (D) signs HB 5764, legislation that requires Prairie State hospitals to have plans and procedures in place to gain access to locked bathrooms in a patient’s room. The bill grew out of the case of an **ILLINOIS** man who could not be reached with medical aid after he collapsed in a locked hospital restroom in **NEVADA**. The man later died (THE SOUTHERN [CARBONDALE]). • **HAWAII** officials announce plans to launch Basic Health Hawaii, a new health plan for low-income non-citizens. The plan, which begins July 1, will be available to low-income legal aliens who have lived in the Aloha State for less than five years (PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS [HONOLULU]).

**SOCIAL POLICY:** The **LOUISIANA** Senate and House endorse HB 1247, which would bar health insurers from covering abortions except in cases where the procedure is needed to save the mother’s life. The bill, which would still bar abortions in cases of rape or incest, moves to Gov. Bobby Jindal (R) for review (NEW ORLEANS TIMES-PICAYUNE). • Still in **LOUISIANA**, the Senate approves HB 1370, which would allow state health officials to close down an abortion clinic that poses an “immediate or imminent threat” to the health and safety of its patients. It would also allow officials to revoke or refuse to renew a license for abortion clinics that have been found to violate any state laws. It moves to Gov. Bobby Jindal (R) for review (NEW ORLEANS TIMES-PICAYUNE). • Also in **LOUISIANA**, the House and Senate endorse SB 53, which would strip deadbeat parents of their slot machine winnings of \$1,200 or more. State officials would forward those winnings to the parent who is owed back child support. The proposal moves to Gov. Bobby Jindal (R) for review (ADVOCATE [BATON ROUGE]). • **FLORIDA** Gov. Charlie Crist (I) vetoes HB 1143, a bill that would have required Sunshine State women seeking an abortion to view an ultrasound and listen to a doctor describe the images unless they signed a form to opt out. The bill also included a provision to bar the use of any public funds to pay for elective abortions. Crist called the measure an “inappropriate burden on women seeking to terminate pregnancy” (ST. PETERSBURG TIMES). •



The **NEW YORK** Senate endorses a trio of bills that would make the Empire State the last in the nation to allow no-fault divorce. The primary measure, SB 3890, would remove a state law requiring one of the parties in a divorce case to assume fault for the dissolution. The two related measures are SB 7740, which would require the use of post-marital income guidelines for any monetary awards or alimony, and AB 7569, which would require judges to award counsel fees — in which the wealthier of the spouses is ordered to pay the legal bills of the other — earlier in the divorce process. All three bills move to the Assembly (NEW YORK TIMES).

**POTPOURRI:** The **DELAWARE** Senate approves HB 229, legislation that would ban drivers in the First State from chatting on their cell phones unless they use a hands-free device. Violators would face fines ranging from \$50 to \$200. The bill, which would also bar drivers from sending or reading text messages while behind the wheel, returns to the House (SUSSEX COUNTIAN [GEORGETOWN]).

— Compiled by RICH EHISEN

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# Once around the statehouse lightly

**A FEELER FOR THE REPEALER:** Being against all things government is tres chic these days, even among those who have their own grand aspirations to govern. Take, for instance, U.S. Senator Sam Brownback of KANSAS, who is seeking to become his home state’s governor. As the *New York Times* reports, candidate Brownback has been floating the idea of creating a Sunflower State “Office of the Repealer,” which would be tasked with ditching what he sees as the scads of useless, over-the-top laws and regulations that are choking the life out of good Kansans. “We need to look a lot more like TEXAS and less like CALIFORNIA,” he says. So what specific laws does Brownback want to get rid of? Uh, he isn’t saying. But he is still pretty sure there are too many.

**PUNCHY POL GETS KO’D...BY VOTERS:** It was the punch seen around the world: Republican ALABAMA Sen. Charles Bishop landing a roundhouse right to the head of his Democratic counterpart, Sen. Lowell Barron. The 2007 dustup on the Senate floor became a *YouTube* sensation, with Bishop later expressing regret and saying, “That’s not how grown people should act.” As the *Tuscaloosa News* reports, it was just one of many confrontations Bishop had with colleagues over the years, and the event pretty much faded away. Or at least it did until Bishop



recently faced off in the GOP primary for a House seat against Richard Baughn, a virtual unknown with barely \$15,000 in his campaign coffers. This time, Bishop took the unexpected smackdown, with voters delivering a stunning knockout defeat that he says will end his political career. Republican Party leaders deny the punch played a role in the loss, saying Bishop just underestimated his challenger.

## At Issue in the States

Want to learn more about State Net, our legislative experts or the Capitol Journal staff? Visit our blog, <http://statenet.typepad.com/at-issue-in-the-states/>. It's a great way to find out in a flash what's going on in statehouses across the country...like yours!

**RICHARDSON HELPS HAN SOLO GO DUO:** Much like his former boss, President Bill Clinton, NEW MEXICO Gov. Bill Richardson has always had an affinity for Hollywood. The gov has hosted shindigs at his Santa Fe spread for Tinseltown royalty numerous times over the years, and he is a frequent visitor there in his persistent efforts to pitch his state as a great place for movie making. But Richardson took it all to a new level last week, presiding over the nuptials between movie hero Harrison Ford, who made his mark playing characters like Han Solo in the Star Wars movies, and his TV-star fiancée, Calista Flockhart. As the Associated Press reports, Richardson got some help from state Supreme Court justice Charles Daniels, who made the whole affair legit. The gov declined to give any details of the event.

**OPTIMISM NEED NOT APPLY:** Things are tough everywhere, but nowhere worse than in MICHIGAN. Fiscal woes have hammered the Wolverine State, where the 13.6 percent unemployment rate is 4 percent higher than the national average. With the car industry on the ropes and manufacturing jobs gone the way of the Dodo, optimism is in short supply, particularly in the race to succeed termed-out Gov. Jennifer Granholm. All seven candidates — two Dems and five Republicans — have instead taken a decidedly pessimistic tack in this year's campaign, forgoing the usual promises of better times ahead in favor of a more blunt, "we're in deep doo-doo" message. As the Associated Press reports, gov aspirants want to avoid a repeat of Granholm's often-rosy — and unrealized — predictions of the state's fiscal future. As an ad for GOP candidate Rick Snyder puts it, "We've tried happy talk. ... And we're 50th out of 50th. Dead last."

— *By RICH EHISEN*

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