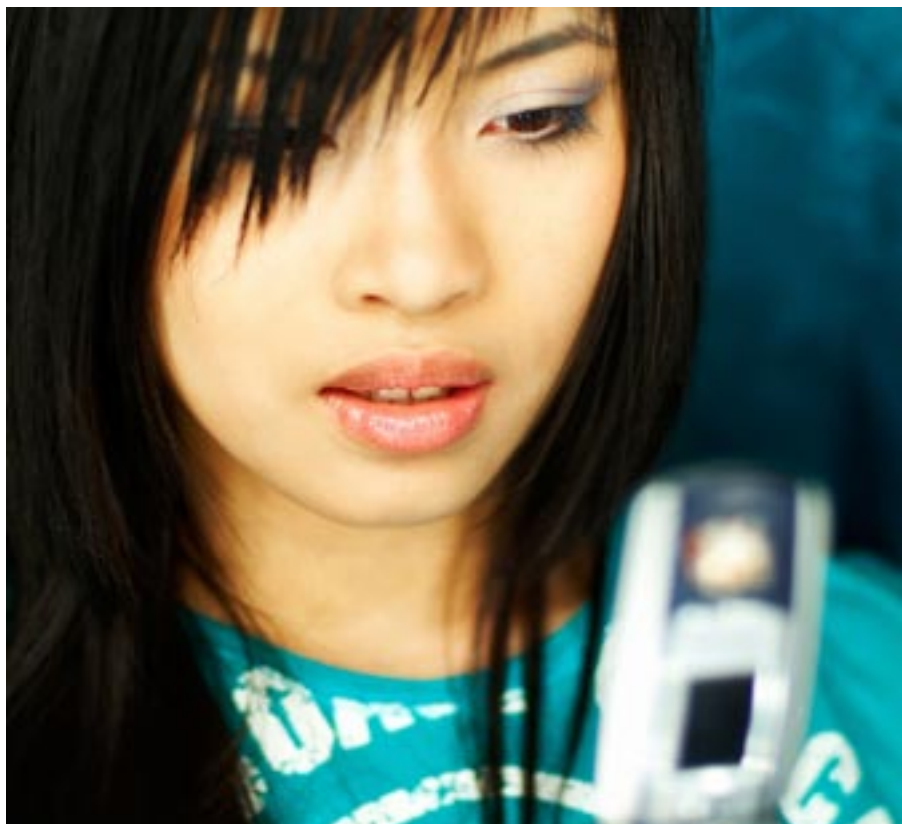


# Cyberbullying



August 20, 2007

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The next issue of Capitol Journal will be available on September 3rd.

## Top Story

*Since the tragic shooting at Columbine High School in 1999, more than half the states have passed bills aimed at stopping school bullying. But technology has made that job tougher, sending lawmakers back to the drawing board to address "cyberbullying."*

## SNCJ Spotlight

### Issues 2008: States still striking back at bullies

**K**ids heading off to start a new school year over the next few weeks will do so under a new reality. The school bully who steals lunch money and dishes threats is no longer restricted to the hallways or the playground. These days, bullies often lash out at their targets via e-mail, text messaging and the Internet, making it an even more challenging problem for parents and school officials to stop. And because many experts believe prolonged bullying has greatly contributed to a rash of school violence across

the nation in recent years, lawmakers continue to take steps aimed at stopping tormentors before their actions lead to tragedy.

Whatever form it takes, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) says bullying is an all too common experience for many students. NCSL notes a study performed by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) that indicates approximately 30 percent of American schoolchildren in grades six through 10 have been bullied or have bullied other children within one school semester. NCSL also points to another report released by the U.S. Secret Service in 2002 that found a strong link between the presence of bullying and school shootings and which urged that increased efforts be made to eliminate this negative behavior. According to NCSL, more than half of the states have enacted anti-bullying measures since 2001. Bullying prevention is also encompassed in the federal No Child Left Behind law.

States continued that trend this year. According to State Net education analyst Rebecca Truxall, at least 35 states mulled some form of anti-bullying legislation in 2007, with 14 adopting bullying-related statutes (See *Bird's eye view* on page 3). Most are similar to IOWA SB 61, approved this year, which calls for the establishment of state and school anti-harassment and anti-bullying policies, and also provides "criminal and civil immunity" to those who report incidents of harassment or bullying.

But many of these new measures also work to thwart a more modern bullying problem: "cyberbullies" who harass other students via cell phones and internet-based communications, including email, chat rooms, and online networking sites. A study conducted by Sameer Hinduja, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at FLORIDA Atlantic University, found that amongst 1500 Internet-using adolescents, over a third have been victimized through cyberbullying. In addition, 60 percent of respondents believe that online bullying is just as bad as bullying that occurs in person. Over the last two years, several states, including ARIZONA, MINNESOTA, IDAHO and SOUTH CAROLINA, have adopted laws that specifically bar using electronic communication to harass others.

Most of these measures place the onus for bullying prevention on school districts by requiring districts to either adopt new anti-harassment policies or amend existing rules. DELAWARE HB 7, for example, requires each school district and charter

## The week in session

**States in Regular Session:** CA, MA, WI

**States in Skeleton Session:** OH

**States in Perfunctory Session:** IL  
(Regular and Special Sessions)

**States in Special Session:** MO "a", IL "a", IL "b", IL "c", IL "d", IL "e", IL "f", IL "g", IL "h", IL "i", IL "j", IL "k", IL "l"

**States in Recess:** DC, NH, NJ, NY, PA, US

**Special Sessions in Recess:** CT "a", DE "a"

**States Currently Prefiling or Drafting for 2008:** FL, KY, OK

**States Adjourned in 2007:** AK, AL, AR, AZ, CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, HI, IA, ID, IN, KS, KY, LA, MD, ME, MN, MS, MT, NC, ND, NE, NM, NV, OK, OR, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VA, VT, WA, WV, WY

**State Special Sessions Adjourned in 2007:** AK "a", AL "a", FL "a", FL "b", HI "a", KY "a", MS "a", MT "a", NM "a", NV "a", WI "a", WV "a"

Letters indicate special/extraordinary sessions

— Compiled By JAMES ROSS  
(session information current as of 08/17/2007)  
Source: State Net database

school to establish a bullying prevention policy, with certain requirements such as reporting bullying to the state Department of Education. The UTAH State Board of Education also now requires school districts to define and address bullying in discipline plans in order to receive Safe and Drug-Free Schools funding. ARIZONA and OREGON have similar policies.

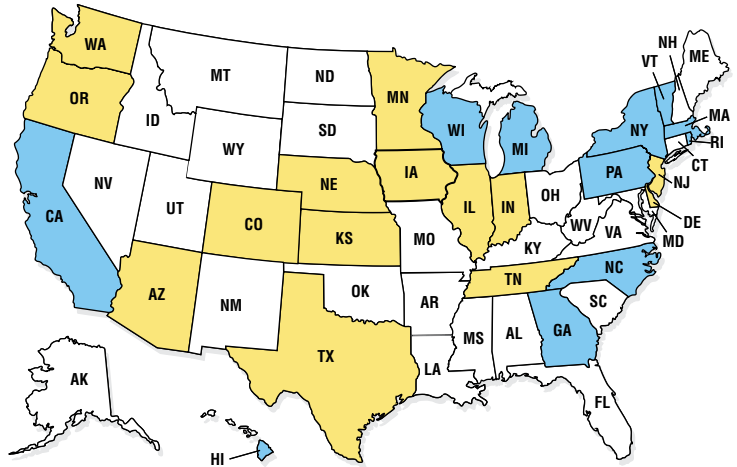
However, this dependence on school districts is not without problems. “Pushing the issues onto school districts results in a lack of clarity about legal standards because they don’t have one standard policy,” says Nancy Willard, Executive Director for the Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use (CSRIU). “There is confusion about what these new laws mean. Certain language included in the laws prevents school districts from intervening.”

States have also struggled over whether to offer specific protections for gay and lesbian

students. OHIO education officials, for example, recently removed a reference to “taunts based on ethnicity, gender, religion (and) sexual orientation” from the Buckeye State’s new model anti-bullying policy. And in 2006, CALIFORNIA lawmakers approved AB 606, a bill protecting Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) students. But Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) vetoed the bill, claiming it was unnecessary because state law already protects LGBT students. However, critics contend that pressure from social conservatives and religious groups has also helped to prevent bills like AB 606 from passing. Assemblyman Lloyd Levine (D), who authored the measure, has since introduced a similar measure, AB 394.

“The goal is we want schools to treat all students the same,” says Alex Traverso, Levine’s communications director. “It doesn’t make sense to include a program without LGBT students.”

## Bird’s eye view



Source: State Net

Note: IL and NJ bills are pending governor's signature

Approved Pending



### States battle bullies

Dealing with schoolyard bullies was once considered just another part of growing up. But since the tragic shootings at COLORADO’s Columbine High School in 1999, more than 30 states have passed bills intended to stop bullying before it leads to a similar fatal outcome, including

14 this year. Most measures require school districts to develop strict anti-bullying policies and allow school officials greater latitude in disciplining students who verbally or physically assault others. But the growth of e-mail, text messaging and Internet sites has spurred lawmakers and educators to begin updating their policies to also guard against “cyberbullying.” Sexual orientation has also come into play, with several states mulling bills that specifically protect gay and lesbian students from harassment. The accompanying map shows states that passed some form of anti-bullying measure this year as well as those with measures still pending.



While most states are addressing the bullying issue by creating stricter policies and penalties for harassing behavior, some are also working on a kinder, gentler approach. HAWAII, for instance, recently adopted HCR 55, a resolution to integrate peace education into the school curriculum in which education officials involve lessons from institutions like the Pacific Buddhist Academy and the Spark M. Matsunaga Institute for Peace. Many states have similar education programs in place in an effort to stopping bullying before it starts.

While it is unlikely that any single solution will stop bullying entirely, states will undoubtedly continue their efforts in the coming year. According to the State Net database, at least 11 states have pending or carryover anti-bullying measures still under consideration, either for this year or 2008, and several more are expected to introduce new measures as well.

— *By Marney Randle*

*SNCJ Editor Rich Ehisen contributed to this story.*

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## Budget & taxes

**FEDS SEND NYC MAYOR MIXED SIGNALS ABOUT TRAFFIC PLAN:**  
 As part of his plan to reduce traffic in New York City largely through the creation of the nation’s first broad-based congestion pricing plan, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg requested \$179 million from the federal government to help cover the estimated \$223 million cost of installing a computerized system for monitoring and imposing fees on motorists traveling through the busiest parts of Manhattan. Last week, the U.S. Department of Transportation said it would actually provide \$354 million to the Big Apple. But only \$10 million of that sum was designated for Bloomberg’s congestion pricing initiative. The other \$344 million was earmarked for the construction of two new bus depots and other mass transit improvement projects.

That news was somewhat odd, considering Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters’ apparent enthusiasm for Bloomberg’s proposal, which she called “brash and bold” when she announced her department’s aid agreement with New York City last Tuesday. And it is even more peculiar given that the agreement stipulates that the city will only receive the \$354 million in federal funds if the Legislature and City Council agree to a traffic reduction plan that includes at least an 18-month congestion pricing pilot program.

“It’s puzzling if you listen to the transportation secretary today about how important congestion pricing was to the plan,” Rep. Anthony D. Weiner (D), an outspoken critic of the idea, said following the announcement. “But obviously it



wasn't important enough to fund it." Weiner added that "It creates a very difficult sell, I think, for the mayor." Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver (D), likewise, suggested that the agreement leaves the door open for the Legislature to consider alternatives to Bloomberg's plan.

For his part, Bloomberg downplayed the federal government's lack of financial support for his proposal. "I think that rather than look at the money we didn't get, we should look at the money we did get,"

he said at a press conference. "It's a unique opportunity for New York, and we should really say, thank you." He also indicated that he was open to other ideas but felt that congestion pricing was key to the feds because they're

hoping New York can serve as a model for other cities. "The terms of the grant are that if we don't implement that plan we proposed to them, or a plan that does the same thing but also includes some kind of pricing thing, because that's what they want to use as a demonstration, then we're not going to get any money," he said.

(NEW YORK TIMES)

**"I think that rather than look at the money we didn't get, we should look at the money we did get."**

**KATRINA AID FUELING INLAND CONDO BOOM:** There's a luxury condo boom taking place right now in Tuscaloosa, ALABAMA. Units near the University of ALABAMA football stadium with granite countertops, oversized bathtubs and such "Bama decor" as crimson-colored couches are going for up to \$1 million a piece. And the developers who are building them are receiving generous tax breaks

for doing so, thanks to a federal law passed in 2005 to stimulate construction in the Hurricane Katrina-ravaged states of ALABAMA, LOUISIANA and MISSISSIPPI.

**"It's a joke. It was supposed to be about getting people... to put housing in New Orleans, LOUISIANA, or Biloxi, MISSISSIPPI. It was not about condos in Tuscaloosa."**

The Gulf Opportunity Zone Act of 2005, or GO Zone, provides tax-free bonds to

developers of big commercial projects like hotels and allows real estate investors who buy property in the GO Zone to depreciate their purchases at an accelerated rate for tax purposes. Under the law, an investor who purchases a \$300,000 condo, for example, can write off more than \$155,000 of that cost in the first year. One local real estate agent who specializes in condo sales in Tuscaloosa estimates that about 10 percent of the total number of condo sales in the city currently derive from the GO Zone depreciation benefit.





**SCHWARZENEGGER SHOWS GOP LAWMAKERS CARROT AND STICK:** With CALIFORNIA's budget impasse threatening to spoil his plans to take up healthcare reform before the Legislature adjourns next month, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) went on the offensive last week. First, he boarded his private jet and flew to the hometown of Sen. Abel Maldonado, the only Republican senator who voted in favor of the budget that was approved by the Assembly, whom the governor praised as "an extraordinary leader." Then it was on to the district of Sen. Dave Cogdill, a leader of the GOP holdouts, whom Schwarzenegger accused of holding up the budget process with endless demands. "All of a sudden, now we've got to work on this, we've got to work on that," he said. "So they are adding things. We say today don't keep adding things. You are hurting people. People in CALIFORNIA are suffering. Lay off. Pass the budget." GOP political consultant Bill Whalen says that with Schwarzenegger's approval rating among Republican voters far above that of legislators — and with his ability to raise millions of campaign dollars while the Republican Party is broke — "He's still the kingmaker for those who have aspirations for higher office." But so far, Senate Republicans aren't showing any signs of budging. "We're trying to get the most responsible budget we can," said Senate Republican Leader Dick Ackerman," who added, "I don't think he should be criticizing Republicans. If he wants to criticize the Legislature as a whole, that I could understand." (LOS ANGELES TIMES)

**BUDGETS IN BRIEF: KANSAS** Gov. Kathleen Sebelius (D) sent a letter to **MISSOURI** Gov. Matt Blunt (R) two weeks ago warning that **KANSAS** lawmakers might retaliate against a new **MISSOURI** law eliminating the income tax deduction **KANSAS** residents who work in **MISSOURI** have been allowed to claim for the property taxes they pay in their home state. Blunt responded with a letter to Sebelius pledging to work towards repealing the new law next session (ASSOCIATED PRESS, ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH). • Two long-term care facilities have filed a lawsuit against the state of **CALIFORNIA** for failing to pay them tens of thousands of dollars in Medi-Cal payments they are owed. The suit is believed to be the first stemming from the state's ongoing budget impasse (SACRAMENTO BEE). • The **MAINE** Legislature has set up a virtual suggestion box to solicit ideas about how to save the additional \$10.1 million necessary to balance the state's \$6.3 billion, two-year budget (ASSOCIATED PRESS, BOSTON GLOBE). • **ILLINOIS** Gov. Rod Blagojevich (D) signed legislation late Monday night — two months after it was passed — authorizing 9.6 percent pay increases for himself, lawmakers and other state officials, breaking a campaign pledge he made last year to veto any such pay hikes. The governor's office confirmed the action through an e-mail sent to journalists with no further comment from the governor or his staff (CHICAGO SUN-TIMES). • The following day the **ILLINOIS** governor vowed to cut \$500 million in "pork" from the \$59.5 billion budget passed by the Legislature two weeks



ago and redirect the money to the health care initiatives that had been gutted from the spending plan approved by lawmakers. The governor refused to answer questions about his scheme, including whether the Constitution gives him the authority to take such unilateral action (CHICAGO SUN-TIMES). • State officials in MASSACHUSETTS informed thousands of tax evaders and child support scofflaws last week that the state intends to use their abandoned property to pay off their personal debts. By crosschecking their databases, the state treasurer’s division of abandoned property and the Department of Revenue’s tax and child support divisions were able to identify close to 10,800 matches, representing more than \$2.5 million (BOSTON GLOBE).

— Compiled by KOREY CLARK

## 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: 22**

**Number of Intros last week: 204**

**Number of bills enacted/adopted last week: 385**

**Number of prefiles to date: 38,999**

**Number of Intros to date: 159,403**

**Number of enacted/adopted overall to date: 39,028**

— Compiled By JAMES ROSS  
(measures current as of 08/16/2007)  
Source: State Net database

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# Politics & leadership

**CALIFORNIA TO CONSIDER WINNER-TAKE-SOME PLAN:** By virtue of its size, CALIFORNIA’s decision to hold its presidential primary four months earlier than usual next year is likely to have a significant impact on the nominating process. But that may not be the only influence the Golden State has on the 2008 election.

This month, a measure was submitted for the state’s June 2008 ballot — Initiative No. 07-0032 — that would end the practice of awarding all 55 of its electoral votes to the candidate who receives the most votes statewide and

**“We are talking about a regular change in favor of Republicans roughly equal to winning OHIO. If this passes, it will have tremendous impact....”**

instead apportion them on a congressional district-by-district basis.

The effect of the initiative could be huge. In 2004, for instance, President Bush lost CALIFORNIA by a margin of

about 1.2 million votes. But he actually carried 22 of the state’s 53 congressional districts. That many additional electoral votes would have made it unnecessary



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# Governors

**CORZINE SAYS NJ WILL WORK WITH FEDS TO TRACE GUNS:** Gov. Jon Corzine (D) announced an agreement with federal officials last week that will enable all NEW JERSEY police departments to use a federal database to track the origin of every gun recovered from a Garden State crime scene. The agreement with the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) is the first of its kind in the nation, and will allow State Police to have direct access to gun-purchase records so they can look for patterns in the flow of weapons on the state's streets.

The agreement marks a significant change in how police use the database, which includes a wealth of information about confiscated weapons, including the name of a gun's first buyer, date of sale, and the retailer from which it was purchased. The ATF has been keeping such records for years, but because federal law restricts the data to agencies involved in "bona fide criminal investigations and prosecutions," the agency previously shared the information with only the local law enforcement department that recovered a weapon. The new agreement is a direct result of the ATF reinterpreting the law to allow broader police access. Corzine welcomed the change, which was six months in the making.

"We missed data that we would be able to track backward to identify purchasers, the date of purchase and who actually might have ultimately been distributing guns on the street to be used in the crime," Corzine said during a news conference announcing the venture, adding that the agreement "will allow us to pursue, arrest and prosecute the purchasers and sellers of illegal guns that have plagued our streets and communities for far too long." (STAR-LEDGER [NEWARK], PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER)

**PERRY PLANS BORDER DOMINATION:** Armed with \$110 million in new funding approved by lawmakers last spring, TEXAS Gov. Rick Perry (R) is planning to dramatically beef up security along the state's border with Mexico. The new program, known for the moment as "Operation Border Star," will involve dozens of local, state and federal law enforcement agencies, including the U.S. Customs and Border Protection patrol, National Guard, the Coast Guard, TEXAS Department of Public Safety aircraft, state parks and wildlife officers, sheriffs' deputies, and local and state police. It will also extend west into five NEW MEXICO border counties and include more intensive U.S. Coast Guard patrols along the TEXAS Gulf Coast as far north as Corpus Christi.

According to planning documents, the program's goals are complete "domination" of the border at pre-planned times and places by using what state Office of Homeland Security director Steve McCraw called an "overwhelming presence" of law enforcement officers to deter anyone looking to smuggle drugs or people into the country. Lone Star State Rep. Rick Noriega (D) expressed reservations about using



state money to pay for the plan, saying border security is a federal responsibility. “Clearly, there is a need for increased boots on the ground because we have people running narcotics and human beings. That’s a very real issue. The other side is it’s a shame that we as TEXAS taxpayers are having to pay for something twice,” Noriega said. (EXPRESS-NEWS [SAN ANTONIO])

## Upcoming stories

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

- **Exotic mortgages**
- **Retail health clinics**
- **Family leave**

### GOVERNORS IN BRIEF: A LOUISIANA

judge rules that Gov. Kathleen Blanco (D) must testify about her response to Hurricane Katrina during the impending negligent homicide trial of the owners of a New Orleans nursing home where 35 people perished. Blanco’s lawyers said it was the first time a sitting governor has been compelled to testify in a criminal trial (TIMES-PICAYUNE [NEW ORLEANS]). • **IDAHO** Gov. Butch Otter (R) said last week that he wants Gem State lawmakers to make staging dogfights a felony. Although dogfighting is illegal in every state, **IDAHO** and its northern neighbor **WYOMING** are the only states where it is considered a misdemeanor rather than a felony (IDAHO STATESMAN [BOISE]). • **UTAH** Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. (R) said he expects the Beehive State will have an active role in investigating the cause of a recent mine collapse that trapped six miners. Huntsman said he has also conferred with **WEST VIRGINIA** Gov. Joe Manchin (D) to discuss ways to respond to the disaster, adding that he is interested in looking into reasserting state oversight of mine safety. The federal government has managed mine safety since the passage of the 1977 Mine Act (SALT LAKE TRIBUNE). • **NEVADA** Gov. Jim Gibbons (R) said last week that the Mexican government has offered to pay health care costs of Mexican nationals residing in the Silver State. Gibbons said that nationals would be eligible for the program regardless of their legal status in the United States and would participate by registering with the Mexican consulate in Las Vegas. A similar program is currently being tested in **NEW YORK** (RENO GAZETTE-JOURNAL). • **FLORIDA** Gov. Charlie Crist (R) created the 21-person Energy Action team, tasked with persuading the Sunshine State Legislature to lower greenhouse gas emissions and lessen reliance on fossil fuels. The group is comprised of legislators, academics, utilities representatives, environmentalists and business leaders (ST. PETERSBURG TIMES).

— *Compiled by RICH EHISEN*

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# Hot issues

**B** **USINESS:** The \$245 billion **CALIFORNIA** Public Employee Retirement System (CalPERS) announces it will scrap its policy of barring investments in politically volatile emerging foreign markets. The fund, the world's largest public employee pension manager, says it has lost out on \$200 million in potential profits because it missed enormous market run-ups in China and other countries that have been off limits (SACRAMENTO BEE). • **NEW YORK** Gov. Eliot Spitzer (D) vetoes legislation that would have barred credit card companies from using a person's delinquency with another credit card company as a reason to raise their interest rate or impose a fee. Spitzer said that 90 percent of the credit cards issued in the Empire State come from out-of-state institutions not subject to the law (TIMES UNION [ALBANY]). • Still in **NEW YORK**, Spitzer signs legislation that requires public and private employers with more than 20 workers to allow them three hours of time off a year to donate blood (TIMES-UNION [ALBANY]). • Finally, Spitzer also signs legislation that will allow small Empire State liquor producers — those producing no more than 35,000 gallons annually — to conduct on-site tastings (POST-STANDARD [SYRACUSE]).

**CRIME & PUNISHMENT:** The **MAINE** Supreme Court upholds a Pine Tree statute that mandates drivers receive a blood alcohol and drug test when a motor vehicle accident results in a fatality. The ruling overturns a lower court's decision that the law was unconstitutional (BOSTON GLOBE). • The **NEW JERSEY** Supreme Court rules that a Garden State law making it a crime to leave the scene of an accident where someone is injured or killed is constitutional. Opponents claimed the statute violated citizens' Fifth Amendment right to remain silent (STAR-LEDGER [NEWARK]). • **ILLINOIS** transportation officials approve the installation of red-light cameras in the Prairie State. About 50 cameras are expected to be installed around the state (CHICAGO TRIBUNE). • **CONNECTICUT** corrections officials begin fitting all parolees out on first- and second-degree burglary convictions with radio frequency electronic monitoring devices. The new system was part of an edict from Gov. M. Jodi Rell (R) after a recent home invasion robbery by two parolees resulted in a triple homicide (BOSTON GLOBE).

**EDUCATION:** Sunshine State education officials begin posting the misconduct records of **FLORIDA** teachers on a state Web site. The information will include complaints, dispositions and sanctions, if any, which can range from letters of reprimand to license revocations (SUN-SENTINEL [ORLANDO]).



**ENVIRONMENT:** Citing potential public safety issues, **NEW YORK** Gov. Eliot Spitzer (D) vetoes legislation that would have allowed Segway scooters to travel on bike lanes, park trails and road shoulders just like bicycles (TIMES UNION [ALBANY]).

**POTPOURRI:** A **VIRGINIA** circuit court rules that the state’s new bad driver fees, which can reach as high as \$3,000, are constitutional. Opponents claim the fees are illegal because they do not apply to out-of-state drivers. The ruling applies only to Henrico County. Most observers anticipate the matter will ultimately be decided by the state Supreme Court (WASHINGTON POST).

— Compiled by **RICH EHISEN**

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# Once around the statehouse lightly

**WHO NEEDS MONEY ANYWAY?** When utility refunds, paychecks or other payments go astray, they usually find their way to the state controller’s office. The state of **FLORIDA** is in fact holding onto 7 million unclaimed accounts totaling more than \$1 billion. And as the *Miami Herald* notes, it should not be surprising that in a state with lots of glitterati, a few of the names on that list are of the celebrity variety, with notables including the likes of actors Burt Reynolds and Wesley Snipes, sports stars Joe Namath and Pete Sampras and wrestler Hulk Hogan. But it isn’t just absent-minded and apparently overpaid celebrities for whom money is no object. Both Gov. Charlie Crist and his predecessor Jeb Bush also have unclaimed cash waiting with the state, as do the state chairmen of both major political parties. But don’t worry about Crist getting shortchanged. State CFO Alex Smith says that now that she knows her boss has money coming to him — a whopping \$69.70 — she will make sure to hand him a check during an upcoming Cabinet meeting.

**STOPPING THE SCOURGE...**or something like that. States have in recent years been on a mission to stop people from using the Internet to hunt real live game from the comfort of their desk. As reported by the *Wall Street Journal*, the idea was originally broached by a **TEXAS** man who wanted to set up just such a business. But public outcry ended that plan before it started, and since then more than 30 states have outlawed the practice and no other such business person has stepped forward to start such a service in any other state. But the fact that Internet hunting has been all but blown away has not stopped animal rights groups from continuing



to send thousands of mailers urging recipients to help put an end to the practice. In other words, they want lawmakers to pass laws to stop something that doesn't actually exist and which, to the best of anyone's knowledge, is not in the works anywhere. Okay.

**SPEAKING OF SCOURGES...**or, rather, not speaking of them. By now we all know that in 2005 Hurricanes like Katrina and Dennis didn't do the Gulf Coast any favors. But as the *Biloxi Sun Herald* reports, city officials along the ALABAMA Gulf Coast have since taken the word "hurricane" completely out of their lexicon. It seems that focusing on a message of recovery from the big storms wasn't help bring back the area's usual \$2 billion annual tourist trade, so all mention of it went buh-bye. A hurricane is now referred to as a "tropical occurrence," all the better for attracting tourists — also known as "cash dispensers."

**NEVER HAD TEACHERS LIKE THIS:** The benefits of school field trips have apparently taken a dramatic upturn of late, at least in Gary, INDIANA. According to the *Northwest INDIANA Times*, a recent teacher-led outing to a career conference in Nashville, TENNESSEE saw four high school students come home with \$1,200 worth of souvenirs, including five iPod portable audio players. The two teachers in charge also bought themselves clothes and other goodies, all of which they billed back to the school system. Alas, an audit by state education officials caught the purchases. The teachers have been ordered to pay the school back.

— By RICH EHISEN

## In case you missed it

The tragic bridge collapse in MINNESOTA has states scrambling to check the safety of their own bridges. But with transportation dollars in short supply, lawmakers may have to turn to tax hikes to rebuild crumbling infrastructure.

In case you missed it, you can read the article on online at [http://www.statenet.com/capitol\\_journal/08-13-2007/html](http://www.statenet.com/capitol_journal/08-13-2007/html).



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