

September 17, 2007

Gambling Fever



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The next issue of Capitol Journal will be available on October 1st.

Top Story

Once upon a time, gambling casinos could only be found in Las Vegas or Atlantic City. Then came river boat casinos and Indian gaming. Now, with revenues often in short supply, states have jumped onto the casino bandwagon with both feet.

SNCJ Spotlight

States hooked on gambling

Thirty years ago, gamblers looking for more than just a quick fix had to travel to either Las Vegas or Atlantic City to get it. Now, legalized gambling — from lotteries and card rooms to full-blown casinos — is available in every state but HAWAII and UTAH. And this year, a number of states sought to significantly expand their offerings.

In May, INDIANA became the 12th state to allow slot machines at horse racetracks and MARYLAND and MICHIGAN are both in the running to

become number 13. ILLINOIS is considering allowing three more casinos within its borders, including one in Chicago. CALIFORNIA Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R), meanwhile, endorsed pacts to expand Indian gaming in his state and FLORIDA Gov. Charlie Crist (R) is in talks to do the same.

But KANSAS made the biggest move this year, enacting legislation (SB 66) that will make it the first state to own and operate Las-Vegas style casinos. Although private contractors will manage the four planned casinos' day-to-day operations, "KANSAS will own the operation, including the buildings," said Keith Whyte of the National Council on Problem Gambling. "This is a radically different model for the United States," he said, pointing out that government ownership of casinos is not uncommon in other countries but adding that it poses a potential conflict-of-interest problem.

KANSAS Gov. Kathleen Sebelius (D), however, maintained that her state's new law "ensures not only the highest possible financial return, but also the toughest regulation." She emphasized that casino workers will be employees of the gambling contractors and not the state.

Still, the stakes are high. KANSAS will pull in 22 percent of its casinos' annual revenues. And while that take is not likely to come anywhere near the \$1 billion NEVADA draws from its 8 percent cut of the business of its 274 casinos, it could constitute a sizeable chunk of the Sunshine State's total revenues on an ongoing basis.

Seventeen states now derive more than 5 percent of their total annual revenue from gambling, and it makes up over 10 percent of the revenue in four of those states: LOUISIANA (10.9 percent), WEST VIRGINIA (12.1), SOUTH DAKOTA (17.7) and NEVADA (36.6). Faced with the ever-rising costs of health care and education, as well as a looming downturn in the economy, more states could soon be joining those ranks.

Turning to gambling to boost state coffers is not without its challenges for lawmakers, however. Last year, for instance, voters in OHIO, NEBRASKA and RHODE ISLAND rejected ballot measures that sought to expand gaming. And Gov. Crist is encountering stiff resistance to his plan to expand Indian gaming in the Sunshine State from legislative leaders there.

The week in session

States in Regular Session: DC, MA, MI, PA, US, WI

States in Skeleton Session: OH

States in Perfunctory Session: IL (Regular and Special Sessions "a"- "p")

States in Special Session: CT "a"

States in Recess: NH, NJ, NY

Special Sessions in Recess: CA "a", CA "b", DE "a"

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

States Adjourned in 2007: AK, AL, AR, AZ, CA, 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", KY "b", MN "a", MO "a", MS "a", MT "a", MT "b", NC "a", NM "a", NV "a", UT "a", WI "a", WV "a", WV "b"

Letters indicate special/extraordinary sessions

— Compiled By JAMES ROSS
(session information current as of 09/14/2007)
Source: State Net database



But relatively speaking, gambling is “a painless source of revenue for states,” says Richard McGowan, a professor at the Carroll School of Management at Boston College who has written several books on the subject. “I don’t know where it will stop.” (STATELINE.ORG, STATE NET)

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

Budget & taxes

FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION BILL LOADED WITH PORK: The fatal bridge collapse in MINNESOTA six weeks ago that spurred Congress to address the nation’s dire infrastructure problems wasn’t enough to disrupt business as usual on the Hill. The transportation and housing bill passed by the Senate last Wednesday contained \$2 billion in “earmarks,” including funding for a peace garden in NORTH DAKOTA, a baseball stadium in MONTANA and a bike path in MINNESOTA.

Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OKLAHOMA), a staunch opponent of earmarks, reproached his fellow lawmakers: “No one in America seriously believes that bike paths, peace gardens and baseball stadiums are more important national priorities than bridge and road repairs.” The day before the measure passed, Coburn had proposed an amendment barring spending on any pet project until every structurally unsound bridge was fixed. The amendment was rejected, 82-14.

The transportation bill now has to be reconciled with the version approved by the House, which includes earmarks for, among other things, a mule and packer museum in CALIFORNIA. (USA TODAY)

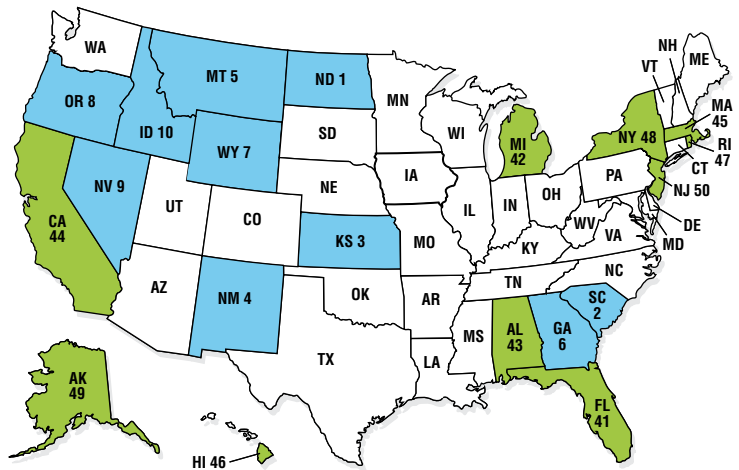
BLAGOJEVICH SUES HOUSE — AGAIN: For the second time in as many weeks, ILLINOIS Gov. Rod Blagojevich (D) has filed a lawsuit directed at his state’s House, an extension of his ongoing feud with House Speaker Michael Madigan (D). Late last month, the governor sued the speaker for defying his calls for a special session. Last week, Blagojevich sued the House clerk — who reports to Madigan — for failing to record the \$463 million in cuts he made to the state budget, which would force the House to vote on whether to restore the cuts within 15 days. “The recent actions of the Clerk of the House of Representatives directly contravene the express language of the ILLINOIS Constitution and prevent the governor from faithfully exercising his constitutionally mandated obligations,” the lawsuit states. Madigan’s spokesman countered that the 15-day rule doesn’t apply to spending bills. “They ought to read the constitution,” he said. “I don’t know that anyone thinks the 15 days applies to appropriations.” (STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER [SPRINGFIELD])



BUDGETS IN BRIEF:
CALIFORNIA Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) called special sessions last week on health care for the uninsured and water storage, two key issues lawmakers failed to get to during the just-completed regular session (SACRAMENTO BEE). • **MINNESOTA** Gov. Tim Pawlenty (R) called for a special session last week to address aid for the southeastern part of the state devastated by flash flooding last month. Although seven counties were declared federal disaster areas, federal aid will not be sufficient to cover the millions of dollars in damage (ST. CLOUD TIMES). • **MASSACHUSETTS** Gov. Deval Patrick (D) is exploring the possibility of leasing state bridges and roads — including the **MASSACHUSETTS** Turnpike and Big Dig tunnels — to private companies to cover the state’s \$19 billion transportation funding deficit (BOSTON HERALD).

• **ILLINOIS’** Toll Highway authority announced nearly \$755 million in new construction projects last week. The projects will be funded primarily by the \$636 million the quasi-independent agency expects to take in this year from I-PASS users (CHICAGO TRIBUNE).

Bird’s eye view



Source: The Reason Foundation

Best roads Worst roads



Roads better, but gridlock remains

The state of America’s urban interstates is improving, but traffic congestion is not. So says a recent survey conducted by the CALIFORNIA-based Reason Foundation, which measured the performance of state-owned roads and highways from 1984 to 2005 across a dozen different categories, including traffic fatalities, congestion, pavement condition, bridge condition, highway maintenance and administrative costs. According to that study, the condition of the nation’s roads has improved by 31 percent since 1998, with the best located in NORTH DAKOTA. The survey also found, however, that more than half of U.S. interstates are now mired in gridlock. Drivers in CALIFORNIA, MINNESOTA, NEW JERSEY and NORTH CAROLINA suffer the worst in that regard, with 70 percent of their respective highways considered to be congested.

— Compiled by **KOREY CLARK**

Politics & leadership

S TATE DEMS TAKE DNC TO TASK: Last week, FLORIDA and MICHIGAN Democrats issued an official response to the Democratic National Committee’s threat that it would sanction them for defying the party’s primary scheduling rules. Sixteen members of the states’ congressional





delegations dispatched a letter to DNC chairman Howard Dean chastising him for holding them to a standard that was not being applied equally to NEW HAMPSHIRE, which has publicly declared that it also plans to hold its primary ahead of its party-designated date of Jan. 22. “We are proud Democrats, insisting on fairness, and we will fight the selective enforcement of our party’s Delegate Selection Rules,” the letter stated.

DNC officials contend that unlike their counterparts in FLORIDA and MICHIGAN, NEW HAMPSHIRE Democrats haven’t officially changed

their primary date yet. But despite the logic of that argument, the DNC may be starting to feel some heat. State Democrats like FLORIDA Sen. Steven A. Geller

“The DNC apparently wants us to campaign on the slogan of ‘Make sure not a single vote counts.’”

have begun urging party members not to support the national committee. “The DNC apparently wants us to campaign on the slogan of ‘Make sure not a single vote counts,’” he said. And Geller already appears to have gotten one major

contributor on board: Wayne Hogan, a Jacksonville trial lawyer, who canceled a DNC fund-raising event he was organizing and said he will now contribute directly to candidates (DETROIT NEWS, NEW YORK TIMES)

Upcoming elections	
09/13/2007 - 10/04/2007	
09/18/2007	Florida Special Election House District 16
09/25/2007	Massachusetts Special Primary House 1st Suffolk District
10/04/2007	Tennessee Special Primary Senate District 10

CA CITIES, COUNTIES SPEND BIG BUCKS AT CAPITOL: The

biggest spenders when it comes to lobbying the CALIFORNIA Legislature aren’t manufacturing interests, oil companies or even the state’s powerful labor unions. They are the 150 local governments spread across the state, which spent nearly \$40 million on lobbying last year. Los Angeles County alone spent about \$1.7 million.

All that spending doesn’t always pay off. The cities and counties often lose major battles, such as a recent one that failed to prevent lawmakers from diverting \$1.3 billion from local transportation projects to fund state programs.

Some question whether there’s any need for local governments to lobby the Legislature when they are already represented there. Dan Jacobson, a lobbyist for

“There is no reason to spend all of this money on lobbyists.”

Environment CALIFORNIA, points out that Los Angeles County, for instance, is represented by “what some would argue are the most

powerful legislators in the state,” including Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez (D). “There is no reason to spend all of this money on lobbyists,” he said.

Dan Carrigg, legislative director for the League of CALIFORNIA Cities counters that lobbying allows cities and counties to level the playing field with private



interests, which, unlike local governments, can contribute big money to legislators' campaigns. Los Angeles County's head lobbyist, Dan Wall adds that the successes — such as the \$1 billion in transportation funding he and others secured for counties last year — more than pay for the costs. And he suggests that lobbyists like himself also serve a defensive role. "The counties are the favorite solution for the state of CALIFORNIA to balance the budget." (LOS ANGELES TIMES)

POLITICS IN BRIEF: Two NEW JERSEY assemblymen resigned last week after being arrested in an FBI corruption sting, which netted 11 public officials across the state (PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER).

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

Governors

SCHWARZENEGGER WARNS CA GOP TO SEEK THE MIDDLE...OR ELSE: CALIFORNIA Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) had a harsh message for his GOP colleagues during the Republican Party's recent state convention: get to the middle or become "relegated to the margins of CALIFORNIA's political life." The speech received a standing ovation from the more than 1,200 delegates in attendance, but it also earned a harsh rebuke from the Party's conservative base.

Drawing on a similar speech made by Ronald Reagan in 1967, Schwarzenegger said the Party's failure to court independent and moderate voters is causing

"Since 2005, we've lost 370,000 registered Republicans statewide. In just the last eight months, our numbers have declined by 120,000. In movie terms, we are dying at the box office. We are not filling the seats."

membership to take an "astonishing" nosedive that threatens to make it irrelevant in what has traditionally been a Democratic-leaning state. While noting the state's rapid rise in the number of independent voters, the governor also cited statistics that show 30 of the Golden State's 32 Republican

Assembly districts lost registered Republicans this year. "Since 2005, we've lost 370,000 registered Republicans statewide. In just the last eight months, our numbers have declined by 120,000. In movie terms, we are dying at the box office. We are not filling the seats," he said.

It was the strongest volley Schwarzenegger has yet fired in what has gradually become something of a civil war within his own party. Many in the GOP's conservative



base have grown increasingly agitated at his policies on everything from the environment to supporting a tax hike on businesses as a way to fund healthcare reform. Schwarzenegger seemed undaunted, however, at the prospect of further antagonizing his detractors, saying “the majority of Republicans prefer progress with messy compromise over defeat with pristine principles. Compromise is part of politics. And it is especially part of politics if you are the minority party.”

That did not sit well at all with some members of the GOP. Mike Spence, president of the California Republican Assembly, which represents conservatives, laid the party’s troubles at Schwarzenegger’s feet, accusing him of being a lackluster leader who won’t stand up to Democrats. “It’s classic Arnold, coming to a Republican Party convention to talk about non-Republican ideas,” Spence said. “If we’re dying, it’s because we’re relying on an actor to spread our message and he’s not spreading our message. He’s spreading a ‘post-partisan’ message that we surrender to Democrats in the Legislature.”

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But Schwarzenegger also reminded the audience of his own experiences trying to carry a strict conservative agenda, noting his disastrous “Year of Reform” special election of two years ago that voters handily rejected at the polls. In that regard, Schwarzenegger again referenced Ronald Reagan, saying “I am of the Reagan view that we should not go off the cliff with flags flying. I did that in 2005, trust me.” (SACRAMENTO BEE, LOS ANGELES TIMES, CAPITOL MORNING REPORT [SACRAMENTO]).

LINGLE WARNS PROTESTERS NOT TO IMPEDE SUPERFERRY:

HAWAII Gov. Linda Lingle (R) warned protesters they would be arrested and prosecuted if they break the law and disrupt the HAWAII Superferry during its expected return to Nawiliwili Harbor in two weeks. Federal, state and local authorities cleared the controversial Superferry to resume service on Sept. 26, although it will temporarily be limited to daylight service between O’ahu and Kaua’i. Lingle admitted that protesters caught authorities off guard last month with the intensity of their efforts to stop the Superferry from making its scheduled voyage, efforts that included taking to the water in various craft to block the ferry from entering Kahului Harbor. Lingle, state Attorney General Mark Bennett and Coast Guard Rear Adm. Sally Brice-O’Hara said state and federal authorities have set up a federal security zone around the Nawiliwili Harbor, promising that their response

would be much swifter and sweeping next time around. (HONOLULU ADVERTISER)

GOVERNORS IN BRIEF:

CONNECTICUT Gov. M. Jodi Rell (R) has ordered all Constitution State agencies to stop placing sensitive data on laptop computers, except in cases where a compelling need exists. Rell's order was in response to the recent theft of a tax department laptop containing the Social Security numbers of 106,000 taxpayers. The new policy also places limits on when data can be downloaded to any mobile computing device, including BlackBerries, CDs and floppy disks (HARTFORD COURANT). •

WASHINGTON Gov. Christine Gregoire (D) told the state's sex offender task force that Evergreen State authorities should obtain a DNA sample from every registered sex offender in the state. Gregoire additionally requested that all Level One offenders — those considered least likely to re-offend — be added to the state's sex offender Web site and that authorities consider increasing the number of offenders subject to electronic monitoring (SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER). • **FLORIDA** Gov. Charlie Crist (R) successfully lobbied the state Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to delay making a decision on whether to reclassify the manatee as "threatened" rather than "endangered." Crist cited the record 416 manatees that died in the Sunshine State's coastal waters last year, noting that state officials also cannot reliably say how many of the mammals actually still exist. The Commission did not say when it might make a final decision (ST. PETERSBURG TIMES). • **RHODE ISLAND** Gov. Don Carcieri (R) argued in a friend-of-the-court brief that the state Supreme Court should allow the state's first-ever same-sex divorce. In a brief regarding the case of two Providence women who married in **MASSACHUSETTS** but are now seeking a divorce, Carcieri argued that while the state "has a strong public policy opposing recognition of same-sex marriage, it also has an interest in allowing its citizens to extract themselves from those circumstances that the state has a strong public policy against" (PROVIDENCE JOURNAL).

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: 65

Number of Intros last week: 312

Number of bills enacted/adopted last week: 147

Number of prefiles to date: 39,252

Number of Intros to date: 160,298

Number of enacted/adopted overall to date: 40,020

— Compiled By JAMES ROSS
(measures current as of 09/13/2007)
Source: State Net database

— Compiled by RICH EHISEN

Hot issues

B **BUSINESS:** The **CALIFORNIA** Assembly approves a final version of AB 779, legislation that prohibits Golden State businesses or public agencies that take credit or debit cards from storing, retaining, sending or failing to limit access to users' personal information. The measure also requires that consumers be notified if a security breach occurs. The measure moves to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) for review (SACRAMENTO BEE). • Still in **CALIFORNIA**, the Assembly endorses AB 70, which would require local governments to share the liability for damages caused by levee breaks when those governments allow development in floodplains. Under current law, the state is solely responsible for those damages. The measure moves to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) for review (STATE NET). • The **IOWA** Attorney General's office launches a program to connect homeowners facing foreclosure with a mediation service that will work with home loan companies and borrowers on restructuring mortgages to offer alternatives to losing their home. Officials say that the Hawkeye State has the fourth highest foreclosure rate in the nation (QUAD CITY TIMES).

CRIME & PUNISHMENT: The **CALIFORNIA** Assembly endorses a final version of AB 1471, which would require makers of new models of semiautomatic pistols to etch the gun make, model and serial number on each cartridge fired. The measure shoots off to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) for review (SACRAMENTO BEE). • **ILLINOIS** Gov. Rod Blagojevich (D) signs legislation that does away with the two-year statute of limitations for rape victims to file lawsuits against their attacker if the victim has been threatened, intimidated or manipulated by the perpetrator after the initial attack. It goes into effect Jan. 1 (CHICAGO TRIBUNE).

EDUCATION: A subcommittee of the **HAWAII** Board of Education approves a plan that would allow school administrators to search students' lockers — even using drug-sniffing dogs — “with or without cause.” The proposal must still be endorsed by the full Board (HONOLULU STAR BULLETIN). • The **CALIFORNIA** Senate gives final approval to SB 851, a measure that would bar students with a grade point average of 2.5 or less from working more than 20 hours per week; students with a GPA below 2.0 would not be allowed to work at all. It moves to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) for review (SACRAMENTO BEE).

ENVIRONMENT: The **CALIFORNIA** Assembly endorses AB 1109, which requires the Golden State to create a light bulb efficiency standard that would reduce the average energy consumption of indoor residential lighting by 50 percent and



of outdoor and commercial lighting by 25 percent. It moves to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) for review (SACRAMENTO BEE). • A federal judge in **VERMONT** rules that states have the right to establish their own auto emissions standards. The court determined that the Green Mountain State’s efforts to regulate greenhouse gas emissions do not conflict with the federal role in setting automotive fuel efficiency standards. The auto industry, which opposes state regulations, is expected to appeal the decision (RUTLAND HERALD).

Upcoming stories

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

- **Scrap metal**
- **Retail health clinics**
- **Family leave**

HEALTH & SCIENCE: The **CALIFORNIA** Legislature approves AB 8, which would require most employers to spend at least 7.5 percent of their payroll costs on healthcare or contribute to a state-operated fund. But the measure is already on a death watch as Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) has indicated he will veto it (SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE). • **ILLINOIS** Gov. Rod Blagojevich (D) signs SB 234, a measure that allows family members to have a mentally ill loved one involuntarily admitted for treatment if they fear that person may harm himself or others. It goes into effect on June 1, 2008 (STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER [SPRINGFIELD]). • **NEW JERSEY** Gov. Jon Corzine (D) signs a package of seven bills that address the Garden State’s highest-in-the-nation autism rate. The legislation includes the creation of a statewide registry for those diagnosed with autism; teacher training; an early intervention program in the state Department of Health; and a task force to examine the needs of adults living with autism (STAR-LEDGER [NEWARK]). • Back in **CALIFORNIA**, lawmakers reject AB 97, which would have barred restaurants from using trans fats in their kitchens. In contrast, lawmakers approve SB 120, legislation that would require restaurant chains to post calorie content on their menu boards and list fat, salt, carbohydrate and calorie content on printed menus. That measure is now served up to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) for review (LOS ANGELES TIMES).

HOMELAND SECURITY: **NEW YORK** Gov. Eliot Spitzer (D) signs the Freedom to Report Terrorism Act, legislation that shields people who in good faith report potential terrorist activities from civil and criminal liability. The measure does not protect malicious reports of suspicious behavior to law enforcement (ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT & CHRONICLE).

SOCIAL POLICY: The **NEW JERSEY** Supreme Court unanimously rules that Garden State doctors do not have a legal obligation to tell women considering an abortion that the procedure would result in “killing an existing human being.” The court said there is no scientific consensus on when life begins (NEW YORK TIMES). • The **CALIFORNIA** Senate approves AB 43, which would legalize

same-sex marriage in the Golden State. It marches down the aisle to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R), who has said he will veto it (SACRAMENTO BEE). • A **KENTUCKY** court rules that the youth and immaturity of a teen parent cannot alone be grounds for taking away parental rights. The ruling said that such termination should come only if teen parents show an inability to care for their children (LEXINGTON HERALD-LEADER).

POTPOURRI: The **CALIFORNIA** Assembly gives final approval to AB 881, which mandates that children riding in cars remain in booster seats until age 8, unless they are 4 feet 9 or taller. The measure rides off to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) for review (SACRAMENTO BEE). • Still in **CALIFORNIA**, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) vetoes legislation that would have allowed Golden State voters to weigh in on a non-binding ballot measure asking President Bush to immediately withdraw American forces from Iraq. The governor called the issue “divisive” (LOS ANGELES TIMES).

— Compiled by *RICH EHISEN*

Once around the statehouse lightly

S **LOGAN WARS:** WEST VIRIGINA Gov. Joe Manchin generally gets kudos for his work as the Mountain State’s top dog. But Manchin also irked some folks when he unilaterally changed the state slogan to “Open for Business” back in 2005. The gov, an accomplished businessman before getting into politics, wanted to emphasize the state’s economic development plans by encouraging travelers and residents alike to view the state as a good place to set up shop. But as the *Beckley Herald-Register* reports, folks have been lining up ever since to gripe about the new slogan and sing the praises of the old one — “Wild, Wonderful West Virginia.” The gov has put it up for a public vote, with more than 21,000 votes cast so far. No truth to the rumor that the top choice of voters was “Nothing Else Better To Do With Our Time.”

SHADES OF WATERGATE? Not really, say aides to former **MASSACHUSETTS** Gov. Mitt Romney after a recent break-in at the current presidential candidate’s Boston offices saw thieves make off with several laptops containing sensitive campaign information. Romney rep Eric Fehrstrom dismissed both the theft and the inevitable comparisons to the infamous Watergate scandal that brought down former President Richard Nixon, saying that because the info on the



computers is encrypted “there is no Woodward and Bernstein book at the end of this.” But as reported by the *Boston Herald*, one Democratic consultant wryly took note of at least one potentially significant loss for the man who would be president, saying “the Romney campaign is worried that the robbers stole his game plan for what he was going to flip-flop on next.”

NEVER THOUGHT WE’D SEE THE DAY, but consuming copious amounts of corn has become a no-no at the University of IOWA. As noted by the *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, the school recently called off a corn-in-the-cob eating competition that was to be a part of the school’s normal “Beat State Week” festivities that precede the annual football game against Iowa State. The reason, school officials say, is that the event would “encourage gluttony.” We hear that if this one works out, sloth, lust and avarice are the next targets.

MAKE LOVE, NOT WORK: So says the governor of Ulyanovsk, a central Russian province known primarily as the birthplace of Vladimir Lenin. According to The Associated Press, the Russian population has been declining by about 700,000 annually, prompting the Kremlin too launch a nationwide campaign to encourage couples to have more children. Ulyanovsk governor Sergei Morozov is so gung ho about the idea that he told employers in the region to get with the program by giving workers a day off last week so they could stay home and, err, do their duty. Women who actually give birth in exactly nine months — next June 12 — will qualify to win cool prizes such as a TV or a new refrigerator. Wow, and we thought we had all the good holidays.

— By *RICH EHISEN*

In case you missed it

Lawmakers consider thousands of bills every year, with only a relative few of those measures destined to become law. With all but a handful of statehouses done for the year, our August 6, 2007 issue took a look at how states handled some of the year’s hottest issues.

In case you missed it, the article can be found on our Web site at http://statenet.com/capitol_journal/08-06-2007/html.



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