

October 11, 2010

Dollar Domination



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The next issue of
Capitol Journal will be
available on October 18th.

Top Story

In just a few weeks voters in 36 states will determine the fate of 159 ballot measures. Unlike in past years, fiscal issues dominate the agenda.

SNCJ Spotlight

Social issues take back seat to fiscal ones on November ballots

Next month, voters in 36 states will decide the fate of 159 ballot measures, roughly the same number as in previous years. But unlike in elections past, it is fiscal issues rather than social ones that will dominate state ballots.

“The economy is trumping all else,” said Dan Smith, director of the Political Campaigning Program at the University of Florida. “We’re not seeing many social ‘wedge’ issues this year.”

This year's ballots won't be completely devoid of such issues, however. For instance, Colorado voters will weigh whether to define human life as beginning at conception (Amendment 62). Oklahoma voters will consider whether to make English the state's official language (Question 751). And, in what may be the most closely watched ballot contest in the nation, California voters will determine whether to permit the sale of marijuana for recreational use (Proposition 19).

Another measure that has gotten its share of play on the blogosphere is Oklahoma's Question 755, which would constitutionally bar state judges from using Islamic law, or Sharia, in court decisions.

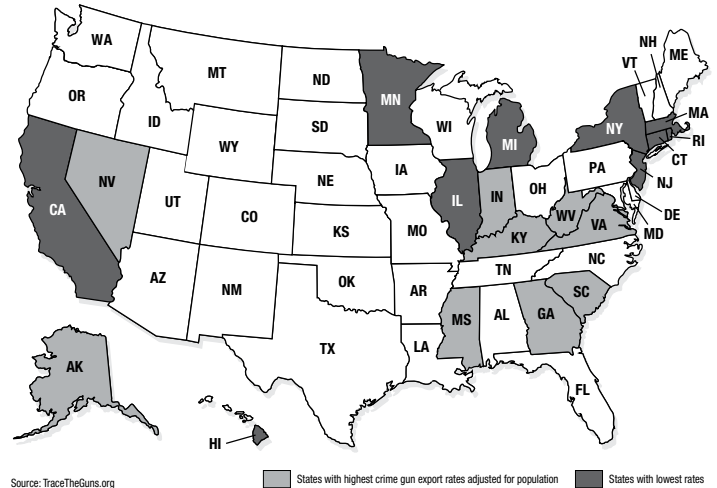
Muslim leaders say the state legislators behind the proposal are "riding a wave" of anti-Islamic sentiment across the country, citing the controversy over the Ground Zero mosque in New York city and the threatened Koran burning in Florida.

"Sharia law is not a threat to anyone, I don't care where you live," said Saad Mohammed of the Islamic Society of Greater Oklahoma City. "Bigotry and prejudice is driving this."

Oklahoma Rep. Rex Duncan (R), who chairs his chamber's judiciary panel and was the lead sponsor of the measure, said no judge has ever cited Sharia law in a ruling in Oklahoma, but a Family Court judge in New Jersey had cited a man's Islamic faith in refusing to grant a restraining order to a woman who claimed she had been raped by her husband. Question 755, Duncan said, is "a pre-emptive strike."

But despite the notable exceptions in Oklahoma and elsewhere, social issues don't figure as prominently on the ballots this year as they have in the past. For the first time in more than a decade, there is no gay marriage proposal on any statewide ballot. And the only abortion-related measure is Colorado's Amendment 62, much to

Bird's eye view



Ten states supply majority of guns used in out-of-state crimes

The states with the weakest gun control laws are the top sources of guns involved in crimes in other states, according to a report released last month by the bi-partisan coalition Mayors Against Illegal Guns. Trace the Guns: the Link Between Gun Laws and Interstate Gun Trafficking, which analyzed crime gun trace data from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, found that ten states accounted for nearly half of the guns recovered in crimes across state lines last year. Mississippi topped that list, with a crime gun export rate of 50.3 per 100,000 residents, nearly 23 times the rate of 50th-ranked Hawaii. The states with the highest rates had, on average, just one of 10 laws designed to deter illegal gun trafficking on their books, compared to eight in the states with the lowest rates.



the dismay of pro-choice advocates, who fully expected to be on the defensive this fall, with efforts to place anti-abortion measures on the ballot active in nearly a dozen states earlier this year.

“It’s a little surprising that we didn’t see more,” said Elizabeth Nash, a public policy associate at the Guttmacher Institute. “I don’t have a good reason why.”

The recession is likely to have something to do with it. The vast majority of measures on the ballot pertain to fiscal matters.

Even California’s marijuana initiative has a major economic component. It would allow local governments to tax the newly legalized sales of the drug, generating an estimated \$1.4 billion in annual revenue.

Another prominent fiscal measure is WASHINGTON’s Initiative 1098, which would impose the state’s first income tax, exclusively on residents earning more than \$200,000 a year. The measure is backed by Microsoft founder Bill Gates and his father — and opposed by the current head of Microsoft, Steve Ballmer. And according to ballot expert Dan Smith, if it passes, it will show “there are pockets of the country where voters are not buying into the Tea Party sentiment that government is out of control.”

But Pete Sepp, executive vice president of the National Taxpayers Union, said “the trend seems to be more about limiting government than growing it.”

Curbing the growth of government is at the heart of three ballot measures in Arizona, Colorado and Oklahoma, (Proposition 106, Amendment 63 and Question 756, respectively) seeking to nullify President Obama’s signature health care reform law. The proposals, like a ballot measure approved by voters in Missouri this summer (Proposition C) and legislation passed in five other states, are largely symbolic, declaring that the federal government cannot force individuals or business to buy health insurance.

But other smaller-government measures have more teeth, including Massachusetts’ Question 3 and Washington’s Initiative 1107, which would roll back recent sales tax increases; California’s Proposition 26, making new fees and charges, rather than just taxes, subject to a two-thirds vote by the Legislature, instead of a simple majority; and a trio of anti-tax measures in Colorado (Proposition 101 and Amendments 60 and 61) — dubbed the “ugly three” by opponents, who include Republicans and Democrats alike — which could slash the state’s \$7 billion budget by more than a quarter and prohibit the state from taking on debt.

The week in session

States in Regular Session: DC, MI, NJ(Quorums), PA(Senate), PR

States in Recess: CA, NY, PA(House), US

Special Sessions in Recess: CT “a”, CT “b”, DE “b”, NY “w”, PA “a”

Upcoming Special Sessions:

MN “b” Regarding Flood Relief to convene 10/11/2010. VA “a” Regarding ABC Privatization: TBA - November.

States in Informal Session: MA

States in Skeleton Session: OH

In Pro Forma Session: US Senate

States in Veto Session: NH (10/13/2010)

States Currently Prefiling or Drafting for 2011: FL, KY, MT, ND, NH, NV, VA

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

State Special Sessions Adjourned in 2010: AZ “a”, AZ “b”, AZ “c”, AZ “d”, CA “e”, CA “f”, CA “h”, FL “a”, HI “d”, HI “e”, KY “a”, MN “a”, MO “a”, MS “a”, MS “b”, NH “a”, NJ “a”, NM “a”, NV “b”, NY “w”, OR “a”, TN “a”, WA “a”, WI “b”, WV “a”, WV “b”

Letters indicate special/extraordinary sessions

— Compiled By JAMES ROSS
(session information current as of 10/1/2010)
Source: State Net database



“I’ve never seen a fiscal impact comparable to what would happen if all three of these were to pass,” Jennie Drage Bowser of the National Conference of State Legislatures said of the Colorado proposals.

NCSL also reported that of the 150-plus measures on state ballots, only 42 are citizens’ initiatives, the lowest number in over two decades. Of those that did make it to the ballot, many have deep-pocketed sponsors.

Washington’s Initiative 1100, seeking privatization of liquor sales, for example, is known as “the Costco initiative” because the multi-billion dollar warehouse club operator spent hundreds of thousands of dollars getting the measure on the ballot in the hope of selling liquor at its stores in the state.

And in California, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) has been blasting out-of-state oil companies for backing Proposition 23, a ballot measure seeking to undo the state’s landmark global warming law.

“Does anyone really believe that these companies, out of the goodness of their black oil hearts, are spending millions and millions of dollars to protect our jobs?” the governor has said.

NCSL’s Jennie Drage Bowser said that while the initiative process is often used by citizens to bypass state government when they’re frustrated by their elected representatives’ actions, the initiative process “is also increasingly used by industry to bypass state government in order to create policy that is more friendly to their goals and their bottom line.”

That appears to be particularly true this year. (NEW YORK TIMES, STATELINE.ORG, BALLOTPEDIA.ORG)

—By *KOREY CLARK*

Budget & taxes

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE PASSES BUDGET BILL: Last Thursday, CALIFORNIA’ Assembly passed the main bill in a package of legislation that could finally end the state’s record budget impasse. Ninety-nine days into the new fiscal year, the Assembly approved SB 870 by a vote of 54-1, just enough to reach the required two-thirds majority in the 80-member chamber. The Senate passed the bill early the next day.

The proposed budget package includes no new taxes or fees, and relies on spending cuts for only 40 percent of the \$19 billion needed to close the state’s gaping deficit. The rest comes from optimistic revenue assumptions, such as the receipt of \$5.3 billion from the federal government and the generation of \$1.4 billion from a

statewide economic recovery, prompting legislative analysts to warn that the state's budget problems are just going to be passed on to the next generation of leaders.

"This is a classic get-out-of-town budget," said Jean Ross, executive director of the liberal-leaning California Budget Project. "This isn't an agreement that brings the budget into balance in the short term; if anything it will make the problems worse in the long term."

Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg (D) acknowledged the budget would probably have to be revisited next year.

"We know we'll be back at it, but we also get a fresh start — a new legislative session and a new governor," he told reporters.

Assembly Speaker John Perez (D) took an equally pragmatic view.

"In the era of the Great Recession, there is no such thing as a perfect budget," he said. "This is a budget that reflects the compromises necessary to find a two-thirds majority."

The budget plan also reflects concessions made to ensure that Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) signs it. Lawmakers agreed to ask voters in 2012 to approve a larger rainy day fund — 10 percent of

General Fund revenue instead of the current 5 percent — to better prepare for future economic downturns. And legislative leaders and most of the state's public employee unions also agreed to pension reforms that include higher retirement ages for new employees and higher contribution rates for all workers.

Assembly Minority Leader Martin Garrick (R) seemed satisfied with the result.

The plan "doesn't hurt struggling taxpayers, out-of-work Californians and economic recovery, brings the state closer to living within its means and benefits the state this year and into the future," he said. (KCRA.COM, NEW YORK TIMES)

GUIDANCE FOR NEXT CROP OF LEGISLATORS: There is a great deal of unanimity in public opinion across regions of the country that differ quite a bit politically and demographically about how states should deal with the current fiscal crisis, according to a new report from the Public Policy Institute of California and the Pew Center on the States.

The report, which is based on public opinion polls conducted in June in Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois and New York, indicated, for example, that voters would rather endure further spending cuts than higher taxes.

It also revealed that while there is considerable support for maintaining funding for K-12 education and human services, there is little awareness that those two areas account for more than 40 percent of the budgets in all five states, and they will have

"In the era of the Great Recession, there is no such thing as a perfect budget. This is a budget that reflects the compromises necessary to find a two-thirds majority."



to be cut significantly to balance budgets unless taxes are raised.

If lawmakers must resort to taxes, the report said, voters would prefer that they be sin taxes or corporate taxes, although they bring in only a fraction of the revenue needed to run state government. And borrowing may not be the best alternative, with poll respondents in all five states frowning on that approach.

Susan K. Urahn, managing director of the Pew Center on the States, said that with deficits projected for this year and next, elected officials are just going to have to be frank with the public.

“Folks are willing to do their part in terms of dealing with those fiscal crises,” she says. “There’s an opportunity to really crystallize the public debate to make it clear to the public that there are a lot of choices to be made. Ultimately, leaders are simply going to have to lead.” (STATELINE.ORG)

BUDGETS IN BRIEF: A report expected to be released this week by New York University School of Law’s Brennan Center for Justice found that 13 of the 15 states with the largest prison populations impose some fee for access to public counsel (USA TODAY). • **WASHINGTON** Gov. Christine Gregoire’s (D) budget office said last week that state agencies plan to cut 725 more jobs to answer her call for a 6.3 percent across-the-board spending reduction. Gregoire ordered the cuts last month (OREGONIAN [PORTLAND]). • University of **OREGON** President Richard Lariviere asked state lawmakers for \$800 million in bonds to create a more predictable, stable source of funding for the university to keep middle class students from being squeezed out by costs. The controversial funding plan, which Lariviere said has never been tried anywhere in the country, will be introduced as a bill in the 2011 Legislature (OREGONIAN [PORTLAND]). • **IOWA** ended last fiscal year with a \$755 million budget surplus, the state’s second highest in the past decade (DES MOINES REGISTER).

– *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

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!

Politics & leadership

BINGO PROBE SNARES FOUR AL SENATORS: Two years ago Alabama Gov. Bob Riley (R) began raiding the state’s electronic bingo parlors, maintaining that the bingo machines weren’t just a high tech version of bingo, as the operators of about 30 casinos around the state contended, but illegal slot machines. The casino owners responded by sending lobbyists to Montgomery



to convince lawmakers to legalize their operations. Those efforts have not been entirely successful — nor, evidently, legal.

Last week, federal agents arrested the owners of two of the state’s largest electronic bingo casinos, along with several lobbyists and four state senators — eleven individuals in all — on charges of conspiracy, bribery and honest services fraud.

Lanny Breuer, head of the Justice Department’s criminal division, called the scheme “astonishing in scope...a full-scale campaign to bribe legislators and others.”

A 12th individual — an employee of one of the indicted lobbyists — reportedly accepted a plea deal last month after admitting to offering a senator \$2 million to vote for legislation to keep the bingo machines operating.

That lawmaker was Sen. Jim Preuitt (R), who was arrested along with Sens. Harri Anne Smith (I), Larry Means (D) and Quinton Ross Jr. (D). All four voted in March in favor of the pro-bingo measure SB 380, which ultimately failed in the House.

Sen. Smith called the indictments “a nakedly political move, coordinated by prosecutors in cahoots with the governor’s office” to influence next month’s elections.

One of the biggest issues in the state’s gubernatorial race is Democratic nominee Ron Sparks’ plan to legalize and tax electronic bingo. Bill Stewart, the retired head of the political science department at the University of Alabama, said in light of the scandal, undecided voters may associate gambling with corruption and lean toward the Republican candidate.

Backers of SB 380 also accused Riley of playing politics last spring, when he announced the federal investigation into allegations of vote buying shortly before the final votes on the bill.

But Riley’s spokesman, Jeff Emerson, who said at the time that the governor had called SB 380 “the most corrupt piece of legislation ever considered by the Senate,” stated last week: “Today’s action by the Justice Department shows he was, sadly, right.” (ASSOCIATED PRESS, YAHOO NEWS, WBRC [], MONTGOMERY ADVERTISER)

POLITICS IN BRIEF: DELAWARE Republican Senate candidate Christine O’Donnell’s campaign released a new ad last week assuring the state’s voters that she is “not a witch.” The unorthodox move was intended to counter some of the

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: 137

Number of Intros last week: 311

Number of Enacted/Adopted last week: 179

Number of 2010 Session Prefiles to date: 22,050

Number of 2010 Intros to date: 91,170

Number of 2010 Session Enacted/Adopted overall to date: 29,736

Number of 2009-10 bills currently in State Net Database: 190,524

— Compiled By JAMES ROSS
(measures current as of 10/7/2010)
Source: State Net database



off-message issues that have arisen in connection with O'Donnell's campaign and to overcome the substantial gap that exists between her and Democrat Chris Coons in the polls (CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR). • The retention battle over three IOWA Supreme Court justices is a tossup, according to a new Iowa Poll, which shows that 40 percent of Iowans who plan to cast a ballot in the retention election intend to vote to keep all three justices, 40 percent will vote to remove all three, and 16 percent will retain some of them. The poll comes over a year after a unanimous IOWA Supreme Court decision allowing same-sex couples to wed in the state, which prompted Bob Vander Plaats, a former Republican candidate for governor, to launch a campaign to unseat the three justices (DES MOINES REGISTER).

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*



Governors

VIRGINIA LIQUOR PRIVATIZATION PLAN MOVES AHEAD:
Virginia Gov. Robert McDonnell's (R) hand-picked Government Reform and Restructuring Commission last week overwhelmingly endorsed his proposal to privatize the Old Dominion's retail liquor operations.

Under McDonnell's plan, the Old Dominion would auction off 1,000 liquor licenses — triple the current number of state-run liquor outlets — with 600 going to major retailers, 250 to smaller, family-run stores and 150 for small-scale sales in pharmacies. The state would also sell an unlimited number of wholesale licenses.

According to administration estimates, revenue and proceeds generated from the sale of the state's central warehouse and state-run stores could reach at least \$458 million, with the money going into a new "transportation infrastructure bank" to help finance road and transit improvements.

Only three of the Commission's 25 members voted against the proposal, which must now gain lawmakers' approval to go into effect. McDonnell did not say when he would make a formal pitch to the General Assembly but noted

he would not call lawmakers into special session to address the proposal unless he was sure he had the votes to pass the measure.

But lawmakers in both parties expressed serious reservations over the long-term impact of the plan, noting that annual tax revenue produced under the new system would fall \$47 million short of the roughly \$260 million in taxes and profits currently generated each year by the state-run system. That revenue goes to the state's general fund.

“A basic precept of this whole endeavor was that the general fund would not be affected. Now that's not happening.”



Schwarzenegger vetoes AB 2666, which would have required the state to disclose which companies receive corporate tax breaks and the amount of those credits (SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE).

- Also in **CALIFORNIA**, Schwarzenegger signs SB 657, a measure that requires major retailers and manufacturers to show the steps they take to ensure their product supply chains are free of slave labor and human trafficking (SACRAMENTO BEE).
- The **WYOMING** Joint Agriculture Committee agrees to sponsor legislation that would allow Equality State residents to purchase raw milk through so-called “herd share” agreements, where consumers purchase a share of a cow or goat, paying a rancher for a portion of its care in exchange for milk produced by the animal. The committee rejected a proposal to allow the retail sale of raw milk (BILLINGS GAZETTE).

<p style="text-align: center;">Upcoming elections 10/7/2010 - 10/28/2010</p> <p>10/12/2010 Arkansas Special Election House District 21</p>

CRIME & PUNISHMENT: CALIFORNIA Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) signs SB 1449, which reduces possession of up to an ounce of marijuana from a misdemeanor to an infraction, equivalent to a parking ticket (SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE).

- Also in **CALIFORNIA**, Schwarzenegger signs SB 677, which allows courts to seize property used in the commission of human trafficking, and to impose civil penalties of up to \$25,000 for such activity (SACRAMENTO BEE).
- **IDAHO** Gov. Butch Otter (R) says he will sign off on new rules proposed by state pharmacy officials that would bar the sale of seven chemicals used to make synthetic marijuana. The ban would last until the beginning of the next Gem State legislative session, when lawmakers can decide whether to make the ban permanent (IDAHO STATESMAN [BOISE]).

EDUCATION: CALIFORNIA Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) signs SB 1381, which raises the minimum age for Golden State children to begin kindergarten. Under the measure, children entering school in 2012 must turn 5 by Nov. 1st. The cutoff moves to September 1st in 2014 (LOS ANGELES TIMES). Still in **CALIFORNIA**, Schwarzenegger vetoes SB 330, which would have required auxiliary organizations of a Golden State university or community college to comply with the state’s Public Records Act (SACRAMENTO BEE).

ENVIRONMENT: A federal judge rules that bald eagles in **ARIZONA** can be removed from protection under the federal Endangered Species Act. The judge said the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had determined that the state’s eagle population is not biologically distinct enough to warrant continued protection. Opponents of the ruling said they will appeal the decision (ARIZONA REPUBLIC [PHOENIX]).

- **CALIFORNIA** Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) signs AB 2503, which will allow

oil companies to leave decommissioned oil rigs in place as reefs for aquatic habitat (SACRAMENTO BEE).

HEALTH & SCIENCE: CALIFORNIA Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) vetoes SB 1029, which would have allowed pharmacists to sell up to 30 hypodermic needles and syringes to adults without a prescription (SACRAMENTO BEE). • Still in **CALIFORNIA**, Schwarzenegger signs two bills — SB 900 and AB 1602 — that together make the Golden State the first in the nation to establish its own health care exchange in keeping with the federal health care reform law (SACRAMENTO BEE). • Schwarzenegger also signs **CALIFORNIA** AB 2244 to bar insurers selling individual market policies from refusing to sell or renew coverage to children with pre-existing conditions (LOS ANGELES TIMES). • Also in **CALIFORNIA**, the governor signs AB 2470, which bars health insurers from canceling insurance once a policy is issued unless there is fraud or intentional misrepresentation of facts, and SB 1088, which requires health insurers to cover dependents to age 26. He vetoes a third bill, AB 1825, which would have required health insurance policies to cover maternity care (SACRAMENTO BEE).

SOCIAL POLICY: Social services officials in **CALIFORNIA** order the vendor that administers the state’s welfare debit card program to block use of the cards at casinos nationwide and on cruise ships. The order came after the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the debit cards had been used to access \$69 million in welfare funds at casinos outside of the Golden State since 2007 (LOS ANGELES TIMES). • **CALIFORNIA** Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) signs Assembly Bill 12, which will extend transitional foster care benefits to young adults between ages 18 and 21. Benefits traditionally end when a foster child reaches 18 (SACRAMENTO BEE). • The U.S. Supreme Court refuses to hear a challenge to a **NEW JERSEY** school district policy that bars the performance of religious songs, including Christmas music. The court did not issue a reason for the rejection (STAR-LEDGER [NEWARK]). • The **PENNSYLVANIA** House endorses HB 40, which would allow residents to defend themselves with deadly force without fear of prosecution or civil liability if attacked in their home or car. It is now in the Senate, which is expected to consider the measure this week (STATE NET).

POTPOURRI: CALIFORNIA Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) vetoes AB 827, which would have prohibited city councils, county supervisors and school boards from awarding “evergreen” employment contracts to managers that increase salaries above the cost-of-living increase without a performance evaluation that is made public (LOS ANGELES TIMES). • Still in **CALIFORNIA**, Schwarzenegger also vetoes SB 1425, which would have barred the practice of “pension spiking” by public employees, or using various methods to pad a worker’s last few years



of employment in order to artificially increase that person's pension. He also vetoes AB 1987, which would have imposed the same restrictions on city and county employees (SACRAMENTO BEE). • Also in **CALIFORNIA**, Schwarzenegger signs AB 1952, which requires drivers ages 15 to 21 complete a safety program and pass a written exam before obtaining an instruction permit to operate a motorcycle (SACRAMENTO BEE). • Schwarzenegger also signs **CALIFORNIA** AB 2487, which will require trial judges to disqualify themselves from any case in which they have received at least \$1,500 in campaign contributions from either side (SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE).

In case you missed it

Fueled by anti-tax fervor, angry voters have taken a "throw-the-bums-out" approach to this fall's elections. But in many cities, they are not waiting for Election Day.

In case you missed it, the article can be found on our Web site at

http://www.statenet.com/capitol_journal/10-04-2010/html

— Compiled by RICH EHISEN

Once around the statehouse lightly

G OING, GOING, GONE: With his final term nearing an end, New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson is already thinking about his next professional gig. Whatever that may be, it likely won't come with a mansion to live in, so he and wife Barbara are downsizing a bit. To wit, the Richardsons recently held an estate sale to get rid of some of their collected detritus. As the *Santa Fe New Mexican* reports, items included the usual yard sale staples: clothes, slightly worn furniture and other assorted brick-a-brack, with prices ranging from \$1 all the way to \$3,000. Curious shoppers found their share of unique items, including a plethora of antiques, western-themed art and sculpture and even a large turkey that Richardson reportedly shot and had stuffed a while back. Alas, the bird was for show only and not for sale. The gov's people say proceeds will go to programs to combat violence against women.

CHIEF OF THORNS: Richardson isn't the only termed-out gov looking for work these days. Outgoing Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell is also scanning the job scene, and, as *Bloomberg News* reports, reportedly has his eyes set on the White House. Unlike many former gov's, however, he doesn't want to be president, only to replace Rahm Emanuel as President Obama's chief of staff. But as Rendell himself notes, his blunt demeanor and sometimes prickly relationship with Obama makes that a longshot. "If I were president, I am not sure that I would offer Ed Rendell the job of chief of staff," he said. "I tell the truth and I like to mix it up. And that is not the



Obama administration’s modus operandi, to say the least.” Yes, that probably takes him out of the running. If not, referring to himself in the third-person probably will.

A LITTLE VETO HUMOR: A recent marathon bill signing session clearly did not rob California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of his sense of humor. As the *Sacramento Bee* reports, “the Governator” took time to poke a bit of fun at lawmakers along the way. One particular shout out went to Democrat Tommy Ammiano, who famously earned the gov’s wrath last year after shouting “You lie!” at Schwarzenegger during a public appearance. The gov later vetoed one of Ammiano’s bills, including with it an acrostic message that began with “F” and ended with “you.” Undeterred, Ammiano pushed basically the same bill through this year’s Legislature. This time the gov signed it, albeit with another, more family friendly acrostic note: “You Are Welcome.”

UNCLE TOM’S...KITCHEN: Books that change the course of a nation are pretty rare. So, you probably can’t blame Montgomery County, Maryland officials for shelling out \$1 million in 2006 to buy an old farmhouse with a log cabin jutting from one side that they believed was the former home of Josiah Henson, the model for the title character in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s 1852 novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, which historians credit with sowing the seeds of the Civil War. Since then, state officials have dropped another \$1 million into preparing it to be turned into a museum. But, as the *Washington Post* reports, there is a small problem: Henson never lived in the house. The log cabin alleged to be his home was actually the main home’s kitchen. State officials who approved the money, including former Gov. Robert Ehrlich, who is looking to reclaim his old job, have declined to comment.

— By RICH EHISEN

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Editor: Rich Ehsen — capj@statenet.com
Associate Editor: Korey Clark — capj@statenet.com
Contributing Editors: Virginia Nelson, Art Zimmerman
Editorial Advisor: Lou Cannon
Correspondents: Richard Cox (CA), Steve Karas (CA),
Bruce McKeeman (CA), James Ross (CA), Linda Mendenhall (IL),
Lauren Davis (MA) and Ben Livingood (PA)
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