

Capitol Journal

News & Views from the 50 States

January 12, 2014



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The next issue of
Capitol Journal will be
available on January 19th.

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Top Story

California Gov. Jerry Brown started his historic fourth term with a call for the Golden State to strengthen its green agenda.

SNCJ Spotlight

CA Gov. Jerry Brown pushes Golden State to be even greener

Shortly after being sworn in for a historic fourth term last week, California Gov. Jerry Brown (D) hailed his state's efforts to combat global climate change, saying the Golden State has "the most far-reaching environmental laws of any state and the most integrated policy to deal with climate change of any political jurisdiction in the Western Hemisphere." California, he said, is also on track to reach all of its



By Rich Ehsen

lofty renewable energy goals, leading the nation “in energy efficiency, cleaner cars and energy storage.”

And now, he said, it needs to do more. Much, much more.

In his State of the State address last week, Brown proposed several ambitious new goals for the state to achieve by 2030, including cutting petroleum use in cars and trucks by up to 50 percent. Brown also called for increasing the state mandate for acquiring electricity from renewable sources, from the current standard of one third by 2020 to one half by 2023. He further proposed doubling the energy efficiency of existing buildings and making heating fuels cleaner.

He didn’t stop there, saying California must also reduce “the relentless release of methane, black carbon and other potent pollutants across industries” by better managing farmlands, forests and wetlands so they can absorb and store carbon instead of releasing it into the atmosphere and revamping electrical grids, transportation systems and communities across the state.

Achieving those goals, he told a packed Assembly chamber, will require a major effort across numerous government and private sector platforms.

“I envision a wide range of initiatives: more distributed power, expanded rooftop solar, micro-grids, an energy imbalance market, battery storage, the full integration of information technology and electrical distribution and millions of electric and low-carbon vehicles,” he said. “How we achieve these goals and at what pace will take great thought and imagination mixed with pragmatic caution. It will require enormous innovation, research and investment. And we will need active collaboration at every stage with our scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, businesses and officials at all levels.”

How achievable any of this is remains to be seen. California has already made great strides in cutting fuel usage, with some experts estimating overall fuel consumption will drop 20 percent by 2030 under current laws and regulations alone. Those include a 2012 federal rule requiring new cars to achieve 54 miles-per-gallon by 2025 and the state’s own low carbon fuel standard — a product of Executive Order S-1-01 issued by then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) in 2007 — that requires a minimum 10 percent reduction in the carbon intensity of fuels sold in California by 2020.

“My first thought when I hear the governor’s goal is how much of that 50 percent is already eat up by just these two things? I would like someone to answer that,” says Jon Costantino, a senior adviser in the Sacramento office of Manatt, Phelps and Phillips LLP and former official at the California Air Resources Board Office of Climate Change.

The week in session

States in Regular Session: CA, CO, CT, DC, IN, KY, MA, ME, MN, MO, MS, MT, ND, NE, NH, NY, OH, PA, RI, US, VT, WI

States in Recess: NJ, OK

Special Sessions in Recess: DE “c”, VA “a”

States currently prefilng for 2015: AR, AZ, FL, GA, IA, KS, MD, NM, NV, OR, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VA, WA, WY

Letters indicate special/extraordinary sessions

— Compiled By DENA BLODGETT
(session information current as of 1/7/2015)
Source: State Net database

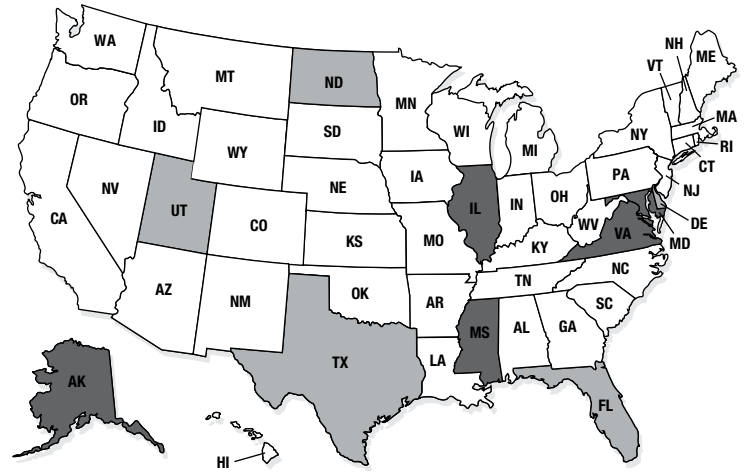
Whatever percentage, getting to 50 percent will not be easy. California is one of the preeminent car cultures in the world, with drivers logging over 300 billion miles a year. Many of those drivers don't have easy access to affordable, reliable and safe public transportation, one factor in Brown's determination to building the nation's first high-speed rail system, which broke ground this week. But funding for the \$68 billion project remains unclear at best, and a finished working "bullet train" is years away from reality even if the money were to magically appear somehow. (For more on this, see *Politics & leadership* in this issue)

Similar challenges confront Brown's other goals. Doubling the efficiency of existing buildings, for instance, is a particularly heavy lift when considering the fact the vast majority of buildings in California went up before any of the current efficiency standards were adopted. But the state has also made significant strides in many areas that could portend Brown's vision coming to reality. And Brown seemed anything but daunted by the work ahead to make that happen.

"Taking significant amounts of carbon out of our economy without harming its vibrancy is exactly the sort of challenge at which California excels," he said. "This is exciting, it is bold and it is absolutely necessary if we are to have any chance of stopping potentially catastrophic changes to our climate system."

— By RICH EHISEN

Bird's eye view



Source: Stateline.org

States with biggest increase in employment rate States with smallest increase/biggest decrease in employment rate

North Dakota created most jobs in 2014

Thanks to an oil and gas boom, North Dakota's job market grew more than any other state's last year, 4.8 percent, according to analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data by Stateline. Texas ranked second at 3.7 percent, followed by Utah at 3.4 percent. Every state actually added jobs between December 2013 and November 2014 but two, Alaska and Mississippi, which had employment declines of .41 percent and .08 percent, respectively.



Budget & taxes

MUNICIPALITIES CONTEND WITH TRAFFIC-CAMERA BACKLASH: Speed and red-light cameras have generated millions of dollars for municipalities across the country. But a backlash against

the cameras by motorists has led many of those municipalities and some states to abandon their use, leaving them with big budget holes.

The number of red-light camera programs nationwide has dropped by about 13 percent, to 469, since its high of 540 in 2012. And speed cameras have now been banned in at least a dozen states, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

The cameras have been touted as a way of making roads safer. And even Ohio state Sen. Bill Seitz (R), who introduced legislation signed by Gov. John Kasich (R) last month, effectively banning the cameras in his state by requiring a police officer to be posted by every one, doesn't dispute that claim.

"There's some evidence that perhaps they do promote safety," he said. But he added, "The costs outweigh the benefits, and the revenue-enhancement feature of this predominates over safety."

Seitz would likely get no argument on that point from residents of Nassau County, New York, where 56 cameras placed near schools led to the issuance of over 400,000 tickets in two months, causing a public outcry that forced county officials to do away with the cameras.

"The program angered residents to a point where it was outweighing the improved safety," said Cristina Brennan, a spokeswoman for Norma Gonsalves, presiding officer of the Nassau County Legislature.

Getting rid of the cameras doesn't come without a cost. Because of its decision, Nassau County is now facing a \$90 million budget gap over the next three years.

Still, it's unlikely traffic cameras will disappear completely any time soon.

"They're a political liability, but it's an easy way to raise revenue without raising taxes," said Howard Cure, head of municipal research at Evercore Wealth Management LLC, based in New York City. (BLOOMBERG)

TAX-CUT FEVER COOLING IN TX: Texas lawmakers are expected to have an extra \$9 billion to \$12 billion to spend this session. And with Republicans having expanded their majorities in both chambers of the Legislature in November, many had been predicting big tax cuts were on the way. But plunging oil prices at the end of last year have dampened those expectations somewhat.

"The visions of having somewhere north of \$15 billion in money to do whatever, those sugar plum fairies have disappeared," said incoming Sen. Paul Bettencourt (R).

Political insiders say bold moves like repealing the business-franchise or "margins" tax, as Gov.-elect Greg Abbott had suggested, are now unlikely. But with the Legislature's more conservative tilt — eight of the state's nine new senators are staunch conservatives — a mix of smaller cuts is still a distinct possibility. (DALLAS MORNING NEWS)

"The visions of having somewhere north of \$15 billion in money to do whatever, those sugar plum fairies have disappeared."

OIL PRICE DROP EXPECTED TO DRAIN AK'S BUDGET RESERVE: The price of crude sank to \$46.83 per barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange this month, the lowest level in more than five years. With Alaska deriving about 90 percent of its budget from oil taxes and royalties, it may have to pull about \$3.5 billion from its cash reserve this fiscal year and \$3 billion next year to help balance its budget.

"We'll want to minimize as much as we can our draw on savings, while at the same time putting publicly acceptable solutions in place to address the structural gap," said Pat Pitney, director of the state's Office of Management and Budget.

But Pitney did see the positive in his state's situation.

"Because of the savings, we have the luxury of time to have a really very open public dialogue on what are the options to address the structural fiscal issue the state's facing," he said. (BLOOMBERG)

BATTLE BREWING IN CO OVER TABOR: Colorado taxpayers could receive \$200 million in tax refunds this year and \$187 million next, thanks to the state's constitutional cap on tax revenue growth, known as the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights, or TABOR. But those refunds would come even though state spending, particularly on education, continues to lag behind prerecession levels. That conundrum could lead to a showdown between Senate Republican leaders who want the refunds and House Democratic leaders who want to put that money to other use. And standing between them would be Gov. John Hickenlooper (D), who was pushed to the left the last two years by the state's Democrat-led General Assembly but who may return to his middle-of-the-road roots now that control of the Legislature is split. (DENVER POST)

BUDGETS IN BRIEF: Wind power companies have invested more than \$532 million in **MAINE** over the last eight years and are providing 1,560 jobs a year, mostly in construction, according to a report commissioned by wind-power advocacy group Wind For Maine. The report also said the fourteen major wind-power projects now operating or under construction in the state have a total generation capacity of 614 megawatts, enough to power more than 200,000 homes (PORTLAND PRESS HERALD). • **OREGON** businesses added more jobs in November than in any other month since 1990, according to a report from the University of Oregon (OREGONLIVE.COM). • A state-funded report released last month, concluding that a multibillion-dollar "carbon tax" on all fossil fuels used in **MASSACHUSETTS** would be an effective way to reduce the pollutants responsible for accelerating climate

Upcoming elections

(1/9/2014 - 1/30/2014)

01/13/2015

Texas Special Election
House District 13

Virginia Special Election
House District 74

01/27/2015

Florida Special Primary
House Districts 17 and 24
Senate District 6

change, is expected to bolster efforts by environmentalists to get a carbon tax passed by the Legislature this session (BOSTON GLOBE). • **DELAWARE** park officials are using crowdfunding to try to improve beach access to those with disabilities. So far they've raised \$3,175 of their \$30,000 goal (NEWS JOURNAL [WILMINGTON]). • **MARYLAND's** Board of Public Works has approved Gov. Martin O'Malley's (D) plan to balance the budget before Gov.-elect Larry Hogan (R) takes office this month. The plan calls for 2 percent across-the-board cuts over the next six months for many state agencies (BALTIMORE SUN). • **OHIO's** four casinos took in nearly \$71 million in December, nearly 12 percent more than the same month in 2013 (OHIO.COM). • **CONNECTICUT** Gov. Dannel Malloy (D) said last week he intends to make overhauling the state's aging transportation infrastructure over the next several decades a key focus of his second term (DAY [NEW LONDON]).

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

Politics & leadership

HIGH-SPEED RAIL FINALLY GETS UNDER WAY IN CA: California's High-Speed Rail Authority officially began construction last week on the first stretch of the state's planned \$68-billion bullet train project. The groundbreaking at the future site of a station in downtown Fresno comes seven years after voters approved a \$9 billion bond measure for the project and two years after construction was scheduled to begin.

In that time, the project has overcome a series of court challenges, been granted an exemption from state environmental rules and garnered several legislative wins that have improved its prospects for future funding.

"They have overcome quite a lot," said Martin Wachs, a professor emeritus of urban planning at UCLA.

But Wachs added, "They certainly have enormous hurdles ahead of them."

For one thing, the state has only acquired about 100 of the over 500 parcels of private property needed for the project's first 29-mile segment between Fresno and Madera in the state's Central Valley. Construction industry experts also say the delayed start of the project means it will have to progress rapidly in order to comply with a federal funding requirement that \$4 billion in federal and state matching funds be spent by Oct. 1, 2017.

"It is a very ambitious construction schedule," said Wachs. "It could invite unwise spending."

On top of those challenges, if the project follows the usual pattern for major government projects, its cost is likely to far exceed the \$68-billion currently projected.

“Those projections are surrounded by uncertainty,” Wachs said. “The public should understand that the uncertainties are much greater than the certainties.”

U.S. House Republicans have vowed not to provide any more money for the project. And the GOP’s takeover of the U.S. Senate probably won’t help that cause.

“Now it is less likely they are going to get federal money,” said California Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R), the state’s House majority leader.

But Will Kempton, executive director of the trade group Transportation California, said the project “has two very positive things going for it.” One is a steady

“The public should understand that the uncertainties are much greater than the certainties.”

state revenue stream, thanks to the Legislature’s approval last year of a measure that will direct 25 percent of greenhouse gas, or cap-and-trade, fees to the project, potentially providing \$250 million to \$1 billion in funding each year. And the other, according to Kempton, is “the unwavering support” of Gov. Jerry Brown (D).

In a 10-minute speech at the groundbreaking ceremony Brown cited several key benefits of the project, such as the fact that by the time the high-speed trains are rolling, “there will be a big price on carbon [emissions],” which will be higher for

“We can afford it! In fact, we can not not afford it, as we look at building a future that really works.”

cars and planes than trains.

“That’s inevitable,” he said. “So there’s a real competitive advantage.”

Brown also mentioned a problem California has long been known for.

“There’s also a really big barrier that puts a limit on how many cars — that’s called congestion,”

he said. “You can only have so many lanes. You can’t keep paving over prime agricultural land. You can’t take property off the tax rolls any more than you have to.”

And responding to critics who say the price tag for the project is too high, the governor said: “It’s not that expensive! We can afford it! In fact, we can not not afford it, as we look at building a future that really works.” (LOS ANGELES TIMES, CITYLAB [WASHINGTON, DC])

FERGUSON SETS TONE FOR MO SESSION: Ceremonies last week in the Missouri Senate kicking off the 2015 session were disrupted by protestors in the upper gallery chanting “no justice, no peace” and “black lives matter,” rallying cries from the protests in Ferguson following the Aug. 9 police shooting of unarmed black teen Michael Brown. Cassidy Dansberry, one of the protestors at an earlier “die in” in the Capitol rotunda, said she came to let lawmakers know “this is not going to go away until change happens.”

In case you missed it

States have generally bounced back from the Great Recession, but slower growth and big time fiscal obligations have become the new normal.

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

http://www.statenet.com/capitol_journal/12-22-2014/html#sncj_spotlight

State lawmakers were already planning to consider changes, with bills in the works that would among other things require police officers to wear body-mounted video cameras and establish new rules for the use of deadly force by police officers. But most of the Ferguson-inspired bills have been filed by Democrats. And after last year's elections, Republicans now hold veto-proof majorities in both legislative chambers.

Sen. Tom Dempsey (R), who is expected to serve for a second term as Senate President pro Tem, however, indicated that while Ferguson wouldn't dominate the session it would receive attention.

"We won't have a Ferguson agenda, but we will have legislation that gets to some of the societal and governmental problems in Ferguson and a number of North County communities," he said. (ST LOUIS POST-DISPATCH)

MN LAWMAKERS CONSIDERING SKIPPING 2016 SESSION: Minnesota lawmakers may opt to complete all the work planned for the 2015-16 legislative session this year and take next year off, when renovations will shut down much of the Capitol.

Senate Minority Leader David Hann (R) said the Legislature used to routinely meet only once every two years, when the Legislature alternated between short bonding sessions and long budget sessions.

"I think what's happened in the last several years is those distinctions have blurred quite a lot. We seem to be ending up doing bonding bills on budget years and tend to do more than just bonding on the non-budget years," he said. "I think it's possible to get done the things we need to get done without having a second year, and under the circumstances with the renovation, it might make sense to do that." (STAR TRIBUNE [MINNEAPOLIS])

POLITICS IN BRIEF: Clear leaders emerged in **TEXAS'** three special legislative elections last Tuesday, but none of the candidates appeared to have received the 50-percent voter support needed to win outright. So all three of the races — in House District 17, House District 123, and Senate District 26 — will likely go to runoffs (SAN MARCOS MERCURY)

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

Governors

'FALLEN' MCDONNELL SENTENCED TO TWO YEARS IN JAIL: A federal judge sentenced former Virginia Gov. Robert McDonnell (R) to two years in prison for his conviction on a long list of corruption charges last fall. The sentence handed down by U.S. District Judge James R. Spencer was significantly

less severe than the 10 to 12 years originally sought by prosecutors or the six to eight years Spencer had indicated he would likely consider. But it was also harsher than the 6,000 hours of community service McDonnell's defense team had requested.

The sentence came after a four-hour parade of character witnesses testified on his behalf, including former Virginia Gov. Douglas Wilder (D). McDonnell also spoke, asking again for a chance to serve his sentence via community service. He pleaded with Spencer to show mercy on his wife, Maureen McDonnell, who was also convicted of multiple counts of corruption and faces significant jail time as well.

"Judge Spencer, I stand before you as a heartbroken and humbled man," he said. "I'm now 60 years old. All of the additional days that the Lord allows me...I dedicate them to the service of others."

But Spencer, while noting he had "great sympathy" for McDonnell and his family, said he had "a duty and a responsibility" to mete out a firmer punishment than that. He ordered McDonnell to report to begin serving his sentence on Feb. 9.

McDonnell was both chastened and defiant when speaking to reporters afterward, calling himself "a fallen human being" and conceding he had "made mistakes" in his life. But he also denied having broken his oath of office and vowed to appeal his conviction.

A jury unanimously found McDonnell and his wife Maureen guilty last September on numerous counts of accepting \$177,000 in gifts, loans and other items from a Virginia business owner Jonnie Williams in exchange for using the governor's office to help promote his dietary supplement business. Ms. McDonnell is scheduled to be sentenced on Feb. 20. Williams was granted federal immunity in exchange for testifying against the McDonnells. (WASHINGTON POST, RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH, WALL STREET JOURNAL)

BILL WOULD LET PENCE SEEK IN GOV'S OFFICE, WHITE HOUSE
IN 2016: With buzz building that Indiana Gov. Mike Pence (R) is considering a run at the 2016 GOP presidential nomination, a new bill was submitted in the Hoosier State last week that would let him simultaneously seek both the presidency and re-election as governor. The proposal, authored by state Sen. Mike Delph (R), would expand state law to allow a sitting governor or state lawmaker to seek both re-election and election to any federal office at the same time.

"I think it's good for the state of Indiana to have a sitting governor in the national conversation and because of that I think it's in our interest to make the obstacles and roadblocks for Pence as minimal as possible," Delph told the *Indianapolis Star*.

Spence has not said definitely if he will seek the White House in 2016, nor did he offer support for Delph's measure. A gubernatorial spokesperson said only that Spence would consider the measure if it ultimately gets to his desk. (INDIANAPOLIS STAR, USA TODAY)

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GOVERNORS IN BRIEF: Less than an hour after being sworn in, **ARIZONA** Gov. Doug Ducey (R) issued Executive Order 1 2015, which bars all state agencies from issuing new regulations on businesses without approval from his office. The order also requires those agencies to review all existing regulations and report back to Ducey's office by Sept. 1 (STATE NET). • **IDAHO** Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter (R) petitioned the US. Supreme Court to hear an appeal of a 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling legalizing same-sex marriage in the Gem State. Otter said the High Court needed to determine once and for all whether states have the right to establish their own policies regarding same-sex unions (REUTERS). • **MISSOURI** Gov. Jay Nixon (D) said he opposes a proposal from state Rep. Brandon Ellington (D) to repeal the grand jury system in the Show Me State Constitution. The proposal is just one of many pieces of legislation introduced in the wake of the shooting death by police of unarmed black teenager Michael Brown last August, an event that sparked weeks of civil unrest and violence. A grand jury later chose to not indict the officer involved (ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH). • **ILLINOIS** Gov. Pat Quinn (D) issued Executive Order IL I 2015, which requires the state Office of New Americans to appoint a liaison in each Prairie State agency to assist immigrants in verifying their residency. The order is designed to help immigrants who would benefit from President Obama's recent executive action to halt deportations of millions of immigrants not currently authorized to be in the United States (STATE NET).

— Compiled by *RICH EHISEN*

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 2015 Prefiles last week: 1,178

Number of Intros last week: 284

Number of Enacted/Adopted last week: 85

Number of 2015 Prefiles to date: 13,138

Number of 2015 Enacted/Adopted overall to date: 85

Number of bills currently in State Net Database: 22,364

— Compiled By DENA BLODGETT
(measures current as of 1/6/2015)
Source: State Net database

Hot issues

BUSINESS: A federal court rules that a **CALIFORNIA** law banning the force-feeding of ducks and geese in order to artificially enlarge their livers, or the sale of products made from that process, is unconstitutional. Force-feeding the fowl is a key part of making foie gras, a delicacy made of duck or goose liver. U.S. District Judge Stephen V. Wilson said the law violated federal interstate commerce laws regulating poultry products (LOS ANGELES TIMES).

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CRIME: The **PENNSYLVANIA** Department of Corrections announces it will no longer place inmates with serious mental illnesses in solitary confinement. Those prisoners will now be placed in special treatment units instead. The agreement settles a lawsuit brought against the agency by advocates for the mentally ill (WASHINGTON POST).

EDUCATION: The University of **VIRGINIA** imposes several new rules on fraternities and sororities, including a ban on kegs of beer and pre-mixed alcohol drinks at all social functions. Other mandates include a requirement that at least three members of the organization remain “sober and lucid” throughout the event, that at least one of them possesses a key for every room in the fraternity house and that any event with more nonmembers than members have a security officer monitoring all entrance and exits. The new rules are a condition for the university to lift a ban on social activities for all UVA fraternities and sororities. The Greek organizations have until Jan. 16 to accept the rules. University leaders imposed the ban following a story in *Rolling Stone* magazine detailing an alleged gang rape at a UVA fraternity. The magazine later retracted and apologized for that story, citing discrepancies in the alleged victims’ story (ABCNBEWS.COM).

HEALTH AND SCIENCE: **KENTUCKY** Gov. Steve Beshear (D) announces the state will furnish three urban Bluegrass State hospitals with a total of 2,000 naloxone kits to send home with heroin overdose patients. Naloxone, which has proven to be very effective in stopping and reversing the effects of a heroin overdose, is not covered by Medicaid or most private insurers (HERALD-LEADER [LEXINGTON]).

— Compiled by *RICH EHISEN*

Once around the statehouse lightly

H **THE WHO SHALL NOT BE NAMED:** It’s normal for pols to dislike dealing with the media, but most accept it as part of the job and just try to be professional about it. And then there is Frederick County, Maryland Council member Kirby Delauter. As the *Frederick News-Post* reports, Delauter got his rage on last week over his being mentioned in a story in their paper. Seemingly clueless about how this whole reporter-public official thing works, Delauter threatened reporter Bethany Rogers with legal action if she ever mentioned his name again in

print. The result was about what anyone with even a basic understanding of the U.S. Constitution would expect: the *News-Post* refused to back down, issuing an editorial that used his name no fewer than 26 times, including three in the headline. Social media also picked up on the story, making him one of the most mocked people in America for the week that was. Alas, public shaming worked — a few days later Delauter issued a formal apology. Reflecting on emailing while angry, he noted: “I thought I had long ago learned the lesson of waiting 24 hours before I hit the send key, but apparently I didn’t learn that lesson as well as I should have.” You think?

Upcoming stories

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

- **Common Core**
- **State worker exodus**
- **Legalizing pot**

HE WHO SHALL NOT BE MOCKED: New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie makes no bones about his love for two things: Bruce Springsteen and the Dallas Cowboys. While the former has given Christie the cold shoulder, he and Cowboys’ owner Jerry Jones are having a full-on bromance. This was evident during the recent Cowboys playoff game against the Detroit Lions, where TV cameras caught the two men hugging it out in Jones’ private box after the ‘Boys scored the winning touchdown. That sparked a furious reaction on Facebook from fans who question how such a diehard Jersey guy like Christie can root for Dallas rather than the hometown Giants or Jets. But as *Politico* reports, that drew a similarly edgy response from Todd Christie, the gov’s brother. He went off on his bro’s critics, telling them to “get a life.” He also took umbrage to those who mocked his older brother’s ample weight, saying “every calorically challenged FB person who posts about the Gov’s weight — forget the magic mirror and look at yourself.” So there!

HE WHO WOULD GO FORTH AND MOCK ANYWAY: None of which apparently bothers Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, who took a poke at Christie via Twitter by posting a picture of a Green Bay Packers fan wearing a “cheesehead” — an orange thing shaped like a triangular wedge of cheddar — emblazoned with the word “owner” along with a caption noting this was “the type of owner” he would be looking to hug after the Pack and Cowboys met in the next round of the NFL playoffs. Touche!

HE WHO SHOULD BE RELENTLESSLY MOCKED: Former major league pitcher Curt Schilling was never shy about running a fastball in high and tight, nor has he ever been hesitant to run his yap until people practically cover their ears and beg for mercy. His latest round of self-serving bloviation came last week when he went on a Boston radio show and claimed MLB Hall of Fame voters are failing to induct him into those hallowed halls because of his strong Republican beliefs. Moreover, he said, new HOF inductee John Smoltz was selected because he is a

Democrat. That would of course be totally wrong...if only it were true. Presuming a HOF voter would even care about a player's politics, Smoltz is also a Republican. Schilling later claimed he was only kidding, though a quick listen to the audio would seem to counter that. Whatever. He may or may not ever make it into the HOF, but we're pretty sure that based on how his video game company took Rhode Island to the cleaners for tens of millions of their tax dollars, folks in the Ocean State would vote him into the Public Fleecers Hall of Fame. I mean, if there was one.

— BY RICH EHISEN

Editor: Rich Ehsen — capj@statenet.com

Associate Editor: Korey Clark — capj@statenet.com

Contributing Editors: Mary Peck

Editorial Advisor: Lou Cannon

Correspondents: Richard Cox (CA), Steve Karas (CA), James Ross (CA), Lauren Davis (MA), Ben Livingood (PA), Cathy Santsche (CA) and Felicia Carrillo (CA)

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