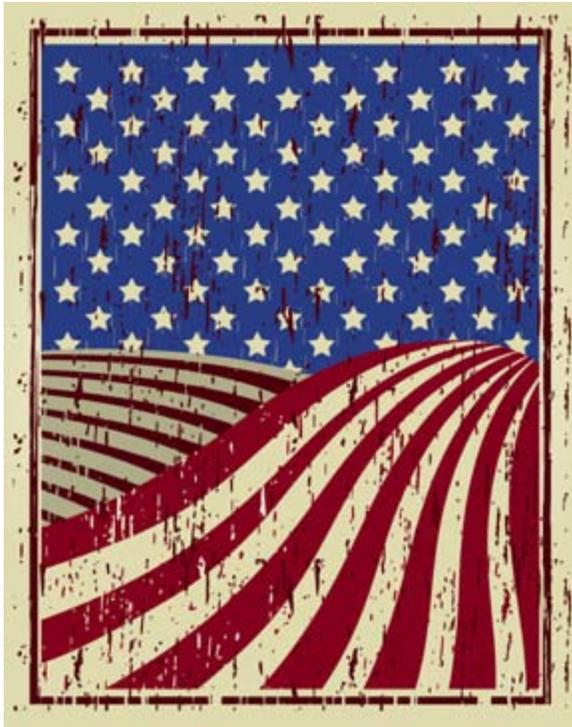




# Capitol Journal

News & Views from the 50 States

## Finally, a Farm Bill



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February 10, 2014

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● The next issue of  
 ● Capitol Journal will be  
 ● available on February 17th.

### Top Story

*Just when it looked as if no legislation of any consequence would ever make it through the partisan gridlock in Washington, Congress approved a five-year farm bill that will impact everything from farm subsidies to food stamps.*

## SNCJ Spotlight

### Congress passes food industry overhaul

Just when it looked as if no legislation of any consequence would ever make it through the partisan gridlock in Washington, the 113th Congress approved three significant, bipartisan measures in three months, the latest a five-year farm bill passed last week that will impact everything from farm subsidies to food stamps. In fact, after years of haggling, that \$956.4-billion package sailed through the



By Korey Clark



Republican-controlled U.S. House and Democrat-controlled U.S. Senate — on votes of 251 to 166 and 68 to 32, respectively — in the span of a week.

“Many people said this would never happen in this environment, but Congress has come together to pass a major bipartisan jobs bill,” said U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, (D-Michigan) chairwoman of her chamber’s agriculture committee and the bill’s author. “This effort proves that by working across party lines, we can save taxpayer money and create smart policies that lay the foundation for a stronger economy.”

Among the biggest changes mandated by the bill — HR 2642, which President Obama was expected to sign Feb. 7 — is the elimination of the controversial \$5

billion in direct federal subsidies paid to farmers each year whether they grow crops or not. The bill offsets the impact of that major cutback on farmers by expanding the federal crop insurance program by \$7 billion over the next decade.

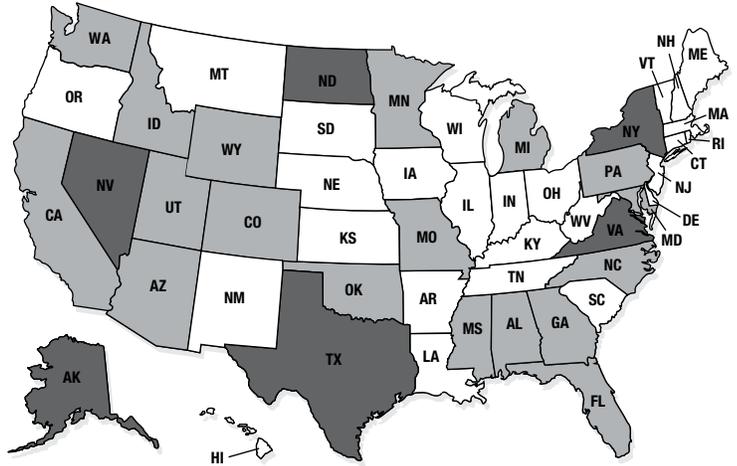
“Instead of getting a government check even in good times, farmers will pay an insurance bill every year and will only receive support from that insurance in years when they take a loss,” Stabenow said.

The change that has drawn the most attention, however, is the \$8 billion cut HR 2642 makes to the food stamp program — formally known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP — over the next decade. Proponents said that provision will close a loophole that allowed food-stamp recipients in 16 states to get more in benefits than they should have gotten. But anti-hunger advocates said the bill will cost about 1.7 million people in 15 states an average of \$90 per month in benefits.

“You are going to have to make a decision on what you are going to do, buy food or pay rent,” said Sheena Wright, president of the United Way in New York.

The 959-page bill also makes changes to the international food aid program, consolidates conservation programs and establishes a pilot program to encourage food-stamp recipients to purchase more fruits and vegetables.

## Bird’s eye view



Source: FAA.gov, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times  
 States with sites that applied to do FAA drone testing States with sites selected by FAA to do testing

### FAA chooses drone test states

Last month the Federal Aviation Administration selected sites in six states that will test various aspects of unmanned aircraft, or drones, to facilitate incorporation of the remotely piloted aircraft into U.S. airspace. Those states are Alaska, Nevada, New York, North Dakota, Texas and Virginia. Twenty-five applicants in 24 states submitted proposals to the FAA, but the agency said the six applicants it selected “achieve cross-country geographic and climatic diversity” and will help it meet its research needs.



“This is not your father’s farm bill,” said Stabenow.

But the bill has its share of critics, including those who say it contains dozens of provisions benefiting economic interests in various lawmakers’ home states. U.S. Sen. John McCain (R-Arizona) took particular exception to a provision shifting inspections of catfish from the Food and Drug Administration to a new \$20 million office at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which Southern lawmakers said was needed to ensure the proper inspection of imported catfish but McCain said was really aimed at limiting competition from Vietnam and other countries.

**“This is not your father’s farm bill.”**

“It seems that catfish is one bottom feeder with friends in high places,” McCain said.

Presumably, those more at the political poles than McCain also had much to dislike about the bill, given that the strategy of its backers was to ensure “a majority of the middle” would unite to pass it, according to U.S. House Agriculture Committee Chairman Frank D. Lucas (R-Oklahoma), who sponsored HR 2642 in his chamber.

“I’m quite certain that my very conservative friends and my very liberal friends won’t be happy with the final product,” he said in an interview. “Whether you want to define that as good legislating or a sign of the times, the folks with the hard perspective on both sides will not be pleased.”

**“It seems that catfish is one bottom feeder with friends in high places.”**

Stabenow, at least, was pleased enough about the potential cost savings from the bill over the next decade — \$16.6 billion, according to Congressional Budget Office estimates, and as much as \$23 billion, factoring in sequestration cuts to agriculture programs — to issue a challenge to her fellow members of Congress.

“We are the only part of the federal government to produce savings in our own areas of jurisdiction, and we eliminated about a hundred different programs or authorizations that...no longer made sense,” she said in a C-SPAN interview. “And so I would challenge my colleagues — if they did what we did, we’d have a balanced budget.”

With the current Congress having mustered enough bipartisan support to pass a budget in December and a \$1.1 trillion spending bill last month in addition to the farm bill, there may be more of a chance of that happening now than there’s been in quite some time. (WASHINGTON POST, NEW YORK TIMES, BLOOMBERG)

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

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# Budget & taxes

**C**A NEEDS BIGGER ENTERTAINMENT TAX CREDITS? Hollywood has long been the capital of the film industry. But California Assemblyman Raul Bocanegra (D) said the state needs to boost its film and TV tax incentives to keep productions from being lured away to other locations.

“For far too long, we thought the good weather and just being California was good enough, and it’s not,” he said.

The latest installment of “The Hunger Games” trilogy, for instance, was shot in Georgia, which offers \$200 million a year in entertainment tax credits, twice what California offers. And the “Breaking Bad” TV series moved from California to New Mexico, which offers television shows and films a 30-percent tax credit, compared to California’s rate of 20-25 percent. And there are more than 30 other states vying for such projects with incentives of their own.

“California is now just trying to recover the loss that was created by this tax war,” said Paul Audley, president of Film LA, an organization that helps studios secure location permits. “California is really just trying to restore its signature industry against an onslaught of free money from other states.”

Bocanegra, who plans to introduce legislation to increase the state’s entertainment tax incentives this month, said the amount of the increase isn’t likely to bring it on par with the \$420 million in tax breaks offered by New York.

“Do I think we need to compete dollar-for-dollar, California against New York? No. But we certainly need to be in the game, and right now, we’re not in the game,” he said. “We became complacent...over time, while our program became outdated.”

Critics of the tax credits, like Joseph Henchman at the conservative-leaning Tax Foundation, said they don’t generate real economic growth on a national level because the production locations keep shifting around the country. And even for individual states, he said, the competition to offer the best deal means their average return is a net loss.

“They lose between 70 [cents] and 90 cents for every dollar they spend on credits,” he said.

But Lee Thomas, director of Georgia’s Film, Music and Digital Entertainment Division, said studies that indicate the long-term economic returns from entertainment tax credits may not justify their cost don’t hold true in states that develop an entertainment community alongside their credit programs.

“It’s market by market. There are certain places that came out with really high tax credit programs, and they didn’t have the infrastructure to support a film production center,” she said. “Because we have a robust crew and infrastructure here, it’s good for the producers and good for the state. We’re seeing people put down roots.”



A government study in Louisiana revealed that its incentive program injected \$1 billion into the economy and generated 14,000 jobs in 2012, while costing it only \$236 million. Chris Stelly, executive director of the state’s entertainment bureau, says the state has managed to build a community that is a real alternative to California rather than just another temporary shooting location.

“I wouldn’t say that we’re trying to become the Hollywood of the South...we really want to be doing this on our own so we can diversify our economy,” he said.

Research suggests the unfavorable studies about entertainment tax incentives don’t apply to California either. A UCLA study found that the state’s current program generated \$1.04 in economic return for every dollar spent. A separate study by the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corp. placed that figure even higher, at \$1.13.

And California has a distinct advantage over many of the other states currently providing such incentives, according to Film LA’s Audley.

“All of these companies want to work where they live so people aren’t leaving their families behind and sleeping in strange beds,” he said. “They live here, and they want to work here.”

With Bocanegra’s forthcoming measure already having earned the backing of local unions and broad bipartisan support, Hollywood may continue to be the primary location for that work. (POLITICO)

**IA COULD OUTSHINE FL IN SOLAR POWER:** Iowa could generate 7 million gigawatt hours of solar photovoltaic energy, an amount that far exceeds the 57,000 gigawatt hours generated in the state by coal, gas, wind and nuclear energy combined in 2010, according to a report released last month.

“The potential for solar in Iowa is quite significant,” said Nathaniel Baer, energy program director for the Des Moines-based Iowa Environmental Council, which released the report.

The report said the amount of energy the state could realistically produce would actually place it 16th in the nation, ahead of Florida and Georgia, “even though as much or possibly more sun reaches those states.”

Baer said it was difficult to determine exactly where the state currently ranks in solar power generation.

## 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 2014 Prefiles last week:** 346

**Number of 2015 Prefiles last week:** 0

**Number of Intros last week:** 6,571

**Number of Enacted/Adopted last week:** 394

**Number of 2014 Prefiles to date:** 15,659

**Number of 2015 Prefiles to date:** 54

**Number of 2014 Intros to date:** 35,395

**Number of 2013 Session Enacted/Adopted overall to date:** 40,747

**Number of 2014 Session Enacted/Adopted overall to date:** 1530

**Number of bills currently in State Net Database:** 133,157

— Compiled By FELICIA CARILLO  
(measures current as of 2/5/2014)  
Source: State Net database



“We’re kind of lumped in with a third of states that lag from behind,” he said.

But Iowans are already beginning to embrace solar power. The state’s \$1.5 million solar tax credit program, established to spur investment in the construction of solar arrays, was maxed out last year, and the state carried over \$471,000 in tax credit requests into this year.

Baer said if the state added 300 megawatts of solar energy annually over the next five years it could create an average of 2,500 jobs each year and generate enough energy to power 39,000 homes for a year. (DES MOINES REGISTER)

**BUDGETS IN BRIEF: OHIO** Gov. John Kasich (R) has threatened to veto any fracking-tax bill that fails to pass “the smell test in terms of what I think is fair.” The state’s GOP-controlled Legislature introduced a fracking-tax measure in December (HB 375) that was shaped by the oil and gas industry (COLUMBUS DISPATCH, STATE NET). • In his State of the State address last week, **MAINE** Gov. Paul LePage (R) called for a statewide referendum on whether the state should lower taxes by at least \$100 million and reduce spending by another \$100 million. With Democrats in control of both chambers of the state’s Legislature, a citizen-initiated measure would likely be the only way such a proposal would go before voters (BANGOR DAILY NEWS, STATE NET). • **PENNSYLVANIA** Gov. Tom Corbett (R) proposed a new \$240 million grant program for K-12 education and reduced pension contributions in the \$29.4 billion spending plan he unveiled last week (PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE, STATE NET).

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

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# Politics & leadership

**INFIGHTING CONTINUES AT PORT AUTHORITY:** Last week the Port Authority’s top New York executive Pat Foye, an appointee of Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo, sent a letter to executives at Delta, American, United and JetBlue airlines urging them to implement a wage hike for workers at New York airports, a request that many considered a nod to the governor’s Democratic base ahead of his re-election bid this year. The letter was also sent to the media, which prompted a rather cool response from the Port Authority’s top New Jersey executive, Deb Gramiccioni, an appointee of Republican Gov. Chris Christie.

“We are absolutely in favor of reasonable wage adjustments negotiated through the collective bargaining process,” she said in a statement. “But this directive raises complex labor, business and legal issues that our airlines, their business partners,



and employees are facing, and we need to consider the significant financial and operations impacts at our airports.”

The fact that Foye gave Gramiccioni no advance notice about the letter and only requested raises for New York airport employees even though the Port Authority also operates Newark’s Liberty International Airport may have had something to do with her reaction. But the incident was also a reversal of events preceding and following the George Washington Bridge lane closures last year that led to the “Bridgegate” scandal. New Jersey officials had ordered those closures without notifying Foye, who put an end to them once he found out about them four days later. And Gramiccioni was actually appointed by Christie to replace former Port Authority Deputy Executive Director Bill Baroni, who resigned over the lane closure scandal. (NORTHJERSEY.COM)

**Upcoming elections**  
(2/7/2014 - 2/28/2014)

02/25/2014  
**Connecticut Special Election**  
Senate District 10

**Rhode Island Special Election**  
House District 49

**Virginia Special Election**  
House District 100

**HEALTH EXCHANGE GLITCHES GIVE GOP ELECTION ISSUE:**

The federal health insurance exchange is running more smoothly than ever. But technological problems continue to plague exchanges in states like Maryland, Minnesota and Oregon. And Republicans who oppose the Affordable Care Act intend to use that fact to their advantage in the contests for governor and state legislative office this year.

“People see incompetence when they look at this,” said Michael Short, a spokesman for the Republican National Committee. “Everyone that’s associated with it is going to have to deal with the consequences of this terrible law, including the state legislators who created these exchanges and the governors in charge of running them.”

The RNC has already filed public-records requests in five states — Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota and Oregon — seeking information about pay and vacation time for the directors of their exchanges. All five of the states have Democratic governors whose terms are up this year.

Many analysts believe the issues with the exchanges aren’t enough to produce GOP upsets in the fall. But if they persist they could cause problems for the Democrats. Lawrence Jacobs, a professor of political science at the University of Minnesota, said it was “quite possible,” for instance, that Republicans could regain control of his state’s House if the glitches with the state’s exchange aren’t resolved by the fall.

“If we’re still talking about MNsure in October,” he said, “that’s bad news for Democrats.” (NEW YORK TIMES)

**POLITICS IN BRIEF:** Carlos Lopez-Cantera was sworn in as lieutenant

governor of **FLORIDA** last week. He is the first Hispanic and Cuban-American in the



state's history to hold that office (MIAMI HERALD). • The MONTANA Republican Party has been running Internet ads urging Gov. Steve Bullock (D) not to make any “backroom deals” on the selection of an appointee to serve out the remainder of the term of U.S. Sen. Max Baucus, (D-Montana), who was confirmed as the next U.S. ambassador to China last week. Bullock has steadfastly declined to say who he is considering for the post, but all eyes are on Lt. Gov. John Walsh (D), who has been the front-runner for the appointment ever since the White House said last year it was planning to send Baucus to China (MISSOULIAN, WASHINGTON POST).

– Compiled by KOREY CLARK

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# Governors

**H**OUSE PASSES CA WATER BILL OVER BROWN'S OBJECTIONS:  
The ongoing drought in California has sparked yet another new skirmish in the longstanding war between the Golden State's pro-environmental forces and its pro-business agricultural interests. Last Wednesday, the Republican-controlled U.S. House of Representatives approved HR 3964, a bill that would, among several things, roll back state environmental protections and halt ongoing river restorations in order to send more water from Northern California to parched Central Valley farms. The measure passed predominantly along party lines, with Democrats almost universally opposed.

It moves to the Senate, where its chances are highly suspect. The White House has also indicated it would likely veto the bill if it makes it to the president's desk.

Although the bill is likely to go nowhere in the Senate, it still drew an angry reaction from California Gov. Jerry Brown (D), who prior to the vote sent the House Natural Resources Committee's ranking members a testy letter calling the measure “an unwelcome and divisive intrusion” into the state's efforts to manage what he called “the worst water crisis in our modern history.” He said the measure would actually do nothing to ease the state's water situation, noting his administration and lawmakers are already working on a multi-pronged water management plan that includes greater emphasis on storage, conservation and recycling.

“[The House bill] would override state laws and protections, and mandate that certain water interests come out ahead of others,” Brown wrote. “It falsely suggests the promise of water relief when that is simply not possible given the scarcity of water supplies.”

Barbara O'Connor, director of the Institute for the Study of Politics and Media at California State University, Sacramento, noted the unusually firm nature of Brown's stance.





amendment needs to pass two separately-elected legislatures before it can be voted on by the public during a referendum. Lawmakers passed a same-sex marriage ban in 2011, but that measure also banned civil unions. Should lawmakers ultimately leave the current resolution intact, it would have to pass again in 2016 before it could go before voters that fall. The resolution is now in the Senate. (COURIER-JOURNAL [LOUISVILLE], FORT WAYNE JOURNAL GAZETTE)

## In case you missed it

The use of electronic cigarettes has exploded. But with safety questions still pending and federal oversight on hold, states are taking their own actions.

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

[http://www.statenet.com/capitol\\_journal/02-03-2014/html#sncj\\_spotlight](http://www.statenet.com/capitol_journal/02-03-2014/html#sncj_spotlight)

**GOVERNORS ON BRIEF:** Seven governors — **MINNESOTA** Gov. Mark Dayton, **IOWA** Gov. Terry Branstad, **INDIANA** Gov. Mike Pence, **KANSAS** Gov. Sam Brownback, **MICHIGAN** Gov. Rick Snyder, **OHIO** Gov. John Kasich and **WISCONSIN** Gov. Scott Walker — lobbied President Obama last week to help ease a multi-state propane shortage brought on by historically bad weather. All but Dayton are Republicans. The governors sent the president a letter urging him to consider regulatory waivers aimed at increasing propane supplies and to explore actions to improve supply stability in future years (MINNESOTA PUBLIC RADIO). • **MICHIGAN** Gov. Rick Snyder (R) officially kicked off his re-election campaign last week. He made the announcement at an event in Detroit (DETROIT FREE PRESS). • **RHODE ISLAND** Gov. Lincoln Chaffee (I) introduced legislation last week that would allow undocumented immigrants to obtain an Ocean State driver’s license. The bill, SB 2241, was introduced in the Senate by Sen. Frank Ciccone (D) and in the House by Rep. Anastasia Williams (D), who authored similar legislation last year (PROVIDENCE JOURNAL). • **PENNSYLVANIA** Gov. Tom Corbett (R) said he would sign newly-passed legislation (SB 57) that would allow Keystone State police to wear small helmet- and lapel-mounted video cameras. Under the law, police would not be permitted to record in homes and would have to notify whomever they record as soon as reasonably practical (PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE).

— *Compiled by RICH EHISEN*

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# Hot issues

**B** **USINESS:** The **TENNESSEE** Senate approves SB 837, which would allow voters in 49 Volunteer State counties decide whether to allow grocery stores and other retail outlets to sell wine. The bill is now in the House (NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN). • The **UNITED STATES** Senate approves legislation that would delay by four years the implementation of a 2012 federal law that requires homeowners living in designated flood planes to pay a greater portion of the cost of insuring their homes against a flood event (See “Congress struggles to find balance in flood insurance reform” in the Nov. 18, 2013 *SNCJ* <http://bit.ly/1bqEkDV>). The measure moves to the House of Representatives (TAMPA BAY TIMES). • **DELAWARE** Gov. Jack Markell (D) signs SB 6, legislation that raises the First State minimum wage to \$7.75 per hour on June 1 this year and to \$8.25 per hour on June 1, 2015 (DELAWARE GOVERNOR’S OFFICE). • The **NEW HAMPSHIRE** Senate kills SB 217, so-called right-to-work legislation that would have kept unions from being able to force nonunion employees to pay to cover some of the costs of collective bargaining (NASHUA TELEGRAPH). • The **WEST VIRGINIA** House approves HB 4284, a measure that would require Mountain State employers to make reasonable accommodations to allow pregnant employees to continue to work. It is now in the Senate (CHARLESTON GAZETTE). • The **INDIANA** House approves HB 1205, which would cap at 38 percent the rate of return for companies that provide cash advances to people awaiting payoffs in personal injury lawsuits. It is now in the Senate (STATE NET, NORTHWEST INDIANA TIMES [MUNSTER]).

**CRIME & PUNISHMENT:** The **INDIANA** House approves HB 1009, legislation that requires police to obtain a warrant before using unmanned drone aircraft in a criminal investigation. It moves to the Senate (FORT WAYNE JOURNAL-GAZETTE). • The **PENNSYLVANIA** House unanimously approves HB 1951, which would prohibit Megan’s law offenders who were not performing the required quarterly check-ins with law enforcement from receiving welfare. It is now in the Senate (PATRIOT-NEWS [HARRISBURG]).

**EDUCATION:** The **INDIANA** Senate unanimously approves SB 326, a bill that would allow Hoosier State schools to decorate with Nativity scenes or menorahs if paired with another religious or secular symbol and permit lessons on the history of winter holidays and traditional holiday greetings, such as “Merry Christmas” and “Happy Hanukkah.” It is now in the House (NORTHWEST INDIANA TIMES [MUNSTER]). • The **WASHINGTON** Senate approves SB 5318, which would extend in-state tuition to military veterans who have not lived long enough in the



state to qualify. It moves to the House (TACOMA NEWS TRIBUNE). • The **VIRGINIA** Senate approves SB 155, a bill that would require Old Dominion schools to provide students in grades six through 12 with at least 150 minutes of physical activity each week. It is now in the House (FREE LANCE-STAR [FREDRICKSBURG]).

**ENERGY:** The **VERMONT** House approves HB 702, legislation that would require utility companies to take up to 15 percent of homeowners’ own net-metered electricity — power generated from solar or other generating systems — through 2016, when federal renewable energy tax credits expire. That is a more than fourfold increase from the current 4 percent standard. It is now in the Senate (STATE NET, BURLINGTON FREE PRESS).

**ENVIRONMENT:** The U.S. House of Representatives approves HR 3964, a bill that would require **CALIFORNIA** water managers to greatly reduce water allocated for environmental purposes while simultaneously ratcheting up the amount given to the agricultural industry. The measure moves to the Senate, where it is expected to meet stiff resistance. President Barack Obama has vowed to veto the bill if it were to reach his desk (BLOOMBERG BUSINESSWEEK).

**HEALTH & SCIENCE:** The **MAINE** Senate approves HB 870, a bill that would license mid-level dental professionals to perform routine oral health procedures. The bill faces additional votes in both the Senate and House to gain final approval (STATE NET, BANGOR DAILY NEWS). • **MARYLAND** Gov. Martin O’Malley (D) signs legislation that will allow Old Line State residents who attempted to use the state health benefits exchange website to purchase health coverage but were unable to enroll because of technical problems to obtain temporary coverage in the Maryland Health Insurance Plan (MHIP). The administration expects around 1,400 people to take advantage of the law (MARYLAND GOVERNOR’S OFFICE).

**IMMIGRATION:** The **WASHINGTON** House approves SB 6523, which would allow unauthorized immigrant students who have graduated from Evergreen State high schools to pay in-state tuition when attending an in-state college. It moves to the House (TACOMA NEWS TRIBUNE).

## The week in session

**States in Regular Session:** AK, AL, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DC, DE, GA, HI, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, MA, MD, ME, MI, MO, MS, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, PR, RI, SC, SD, TN, US, UT, VA, VT, WA, WV, WY

**States in Recess:** WI

**States in Special Session:** WI “c”

**States currently prefilng for 2014 Session:** FL

**States currently prefilng for 2015 Session:** MT

**States adjourned in 2014:** DE “b”, WI “b”

Letters indicate special/extraordinary sessions

— Compiled By FELICA CARILLO  
(session information current as of 2/5/2014)  
Source: State Net database



**SOCIAL POLICY:** The U.S. 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals stays its ruling upholding a **CALIFORNIA** law that bars mental health professionals from using so-called gay conversion therapy on minors. The court upheld the law last month, but said it would stay the ruling for 90 days pending an appeal by opponents to the U.S. Supreme Court (LOS ANGELES TIMES). • The **VIRGINIA** House approves HB 706, a bill that would let any member of the General Assembly defend an Old Dominion law in federal court if the state attorney general refuses. The measure, which is intended to counter Attorney General Mark R. Herring’s (D) decision not to defend the state’s same-sex marriage ban in federal suits seeking to overturn it, moves to the Senate (RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH). • The **NEW YORK** Senate approves SB 966, a bill that would bar people on welfare and other public help programs from using their “electronic benefits transfer” cards at ATMs in liquor stores, casinos and strip clubs, and limit people from using cash obtained through public assistance to buy alcohol, cigarettes and lottery tickets. It is now in the Assembly (SYRACUSE POST-STANDARD, STATE NET). • The **KENTUCKY** Senate approves SB 8, a bill that would require doctors offering abortion services to first conduct an ultrasound and simultaneously describe what is seen to the patient or face fines up to \$100,000 for a first offense and up to \$250,000 for subsequent offenses. It moves to the House (LEXINGTON COURIER-JOURNAL). • The **WASHINGTON** House approves HB 2148, legislation that would require health insurers whose plans cover maternity care to also offer abortion services. It moves to the Senate (STATE NET, SWATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER).

**POTPOURRI:** The **SOUTH DAKOTA** Senate approves SB 75, a bill that would bar local governments from banning specific dog breeds. It is now in the House (RAPID CITY JOURNAL, STATE NET). • The **UTAH** House approves HB 57, which would allow animal shelters to use gas to euthanize animals only if other means would be unsafe to personnel or cause “unacceptable levels of stress” to the animal. The bill, which would also bar shelters from euthanizing more than one animal at a time in a carbon-monoxide chamber unless each animal has a specific compartment, moves to the Senate (SALT LAKE TRIBUNE).

— *Compiled by RICH EHISEN*

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# Once around the statehouse lightly

**SOME REAL SLICK THIEVERY:** If you're locking up the restaurant at night, make sure you drop the money and the used kitchen grease into the safe before you go. Yes, we said the used kitchen grease. As the *Sacramento Bee* reports, the increased use of old kitchen grease to make biodiesel fuels has made stealing the rendered animal fat big business. A full truck of the gobby goo can fetch almost a grand in cash, which is clearly enough incentive for bad guys to give it a go. With thefts on the rise, California Assemblyman Chris Holden has introduced a bill that would up the penalties for stealing said grease and require renderers to keep better records of what they produce. It's a lousy job, but someone's gotta do it.

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN LOW:** There is nothing more assured in life than sports fans going overboard in support of their teams when one makes it into a championship game. And nothing in that regard tops the Super Bowl, which last week featured the Seattle Seahawks and the Denver Broncos. This year's institutional madness came courtesy of Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper and the Washington Senate. First, as the *Denver Post* reports, Hickenlooper issued a proclamation temporarily renaming 53 of the state's tallest mountains after the Broncos' players. The tallest, Mt. Elwell, he redubbed as Mt. Peyton Manning after the team's quarterback. Not to be outdone, the Washington Senate followed suit by renaming the majestic Mount Rainier "Mount Seattle Seahawks." Thankfully, the players put all the silliness to rest on Sunday as the Seahawks handily thumped Manning and the Broncos 43-8. All the temporary names expired last Monday.

**AND NOW HE'S BEATING UP KIDS:** New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie has had a truly awful last few weeks. Accusations of political thuggery have almost leveled him and his administration, putting the normally uber confident Christie back on his heels. As *NorthJersey.com* reports, he even got booed at a Super Bowl "handoff" party at which he appeared with New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer (her state hosts the big game next year). But while Christie may be down, he ain't out by a long shot. As the *Newark Star-Ledger* reports, the gov's competitive juices – and his sense of humor – were on display last week when, while touring a new Boys & Girls Club in Newark, he challenged a 13-year-old boy to some ping pong. A spirited game ensued, including a moment in which, after a missed shot, Christie told the youngster, "There could be ramifications for this." Thankfully, Christie won.



**HE SAID HE'D BE BACK:** Life has not exactly been a bowl of cherries for former California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger since leaving office in 2010. His marriage has fallen apart, his return to acting isn't setting the world on fire and, most recently, rumors of his death swirled across social media. Not to worry: the Governor is still alive and kicking. Or, as the 115 million people who tuned into the Super Bowl saw, he is alive and playing ping pong — a.k.a. “tiny tennis” — in one of the big game's more memorable commercials. Wearing a wig and tennis outfit that made him resemble an older, more muscular version of Bjorn Borg, Schwarzenegger bid his “regular guy” opponent to do some push ups before they played, then dubbed him his “little princess,” sorta like the infamous “girly man” put down he used on political opponents. So are we the only ones now dying to see a Schwarzenegger-Christie ping pong battle royal?

— *By RICH EHISEN*



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