

December 15, 2014

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The next issue of  
Capitol Journal will be  
available on December 22nd.

## Top Story

*New technologies from  
a variety of innovative  
industries and the same  
old partisan gridlock  
out of Washington D.C.  
will each drive state  
agendas in 2015.*

## SNCJ Spotlight

**Digital Revolution and federal inaction key drivers of  
statehouse activity in 2015**

Last week, we took a look at several of the issues we expect to see a lot of action in statehouses this year. Here are a few more, most of which are driven either by technological change or Washington gridlock.



By Korey Clark

## DIGITAL REVOLUTION/SHARING ECONOMY

— State and local officials across the country have been struggling to get a handle on the digital technology-driven businesses like Uber, Lyft, Airbnb and Bitcoin that are disrupting the industries in which they operate. Back in May, New Mexico's Public Regulation Commission ordered the ride-sharing service Lyft to stop operating in the state until regulators can determine whether the service is operating legally. In early June, Virginia's Department of Motor Vehicles issued a similar cease-and-desist order to both Lyft and competing service Uber, which it later lifted after the companies agreed to a set of terms, including running background checks on drivers. And last month a district court granted the Nevada Transportation Authority's request for an injunction against Uber for failing to comply with state laws governing the conveyance of passengers.

It's unclear whether the actions in New Mexico or Nevada will lead to legislative action in those states but other states have taken that step with regard to the digital economy. In June Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper (D) signed SB 125, officially authorizing and regulating ride-sharing services in that state. The same month, California Gov. Jerry Brown (D) signed AB 129, repealing a prohibition against the use of anything other than official U.S. currency for commerce and opening the way for digital currencies like bitcoins there. In August Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn (D), saying he didn't want to impose a "one size-fits-all approach" on an industry that should be regulated at the local level, vetoed legislation that would have established statewide regulations for ride-sharing services. And this month a bill that would impose new requirements on ride-sharing services was introduced in California (AB 24). Legislation regulating the home-rental service Airbnb could also be on the way in that state.

**FILM TAX CREDITS** — The power play by the production company behind the Netflix original series "House of Cards" to try to obtain millions of dollars in additional tax breaks from the state of Maryland and national and local news stories about the migration of film and TV production out of California to states like Georgia and Louisiana raised the profile of tax incentives for film and television production considerably this year. California responded by passing AB 1839, more than tripling the size of its film and TV tax credit program from \$100 million to \$330 million a year. Maryland, meanwhile, is considering doing away with its film and TV tax incentive

## The week in session

**States in Regular Session:** DC, MI, NJ, OH, US

**States in Informal Session:** MA

**States in Recess:** CA, IN, NY, ME

**States in Special Session:** PR "c"

**Special Sessions in Recess:** DE "c", VA "a"

**States currently prefilng for 2015**

**Session:** AR, AZ, CO, FL, GA, KS, KY, MO, MT, ND, NH, NV, OK, OR, SC, TN, TX, VA, WA, WY

**Adjourned Sessions:** AK, AL, AR, AR "a", AZ, AZ "a", CA, CA "a", CO, CT, DE, DE "b", DE "d", FL, FL "a", GA, HI, HI "c", IA, ID, IL, IL "a", IL "b", IN, KS, KY, LA, MD, ME, MN, MO, MS, MS "a", MS "b", MT, NC, NE, NH, NJ "a", NM, NV "a", OK, OR, PA, PR, PR "a", PR "b", RI, SC, SD, TN, UT, VT, WA, WA "a", WA "b", WA "c", WI, WI "c", WV, WV "a", WV "b", WY

Letters indicate special/extraordinary sessions

— Compiled By DENA BLODGETT  
(session information current as of 12/10/2014)  
Source: State Net database

program. Those actions are likely to encourage other states to take a closer look at their own programs.

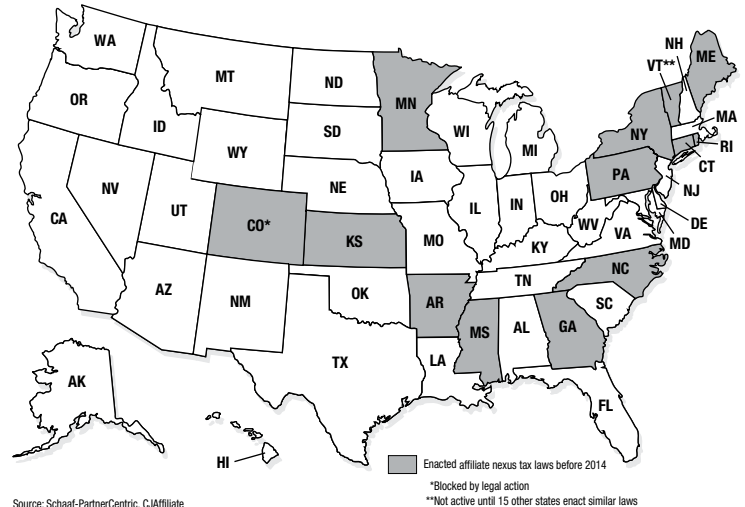
## TRANSPORTATION/ INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

— Before its summer recess Congress approved the transfer of just under \$11 billion mostly from the general fund to the federal Highway Trust Fund, which had been running on fumes. But that fix was temporary, extending funding only through May, so states are still in the position of having to come up with their own funding sources to meet their mounting infrastructure needs. Pennsylvania did that last year by enacting HB 1060, gradually increasing the state's gas taxes and motorist fees over five years to provide at least \$2.3 billion annually for

transportation projects. Missouri tried to do the same this year via a legislatively-referred ballot measure in August (Amendment 7) seeking voter approval for a .75 percent increase in the state's 4.225 percent sales tax. But the measure failed by a wide margin, 59 percent to 41 percent. A September report from The Pew Charitable Trusts, however, which found that the national transportation funding crisis wasn't solely the federal government's making — state transportation expenditures have actually dropped \$20 billion, or 20 percent, between 2002 and 2011 — could fuel other state transportation funding efforts next year.

**INTERNET SALES TAX** — Despite the U.S. Supreme Court's refusal last year to review a New York appeals court decision requiring online retailers like Amazon.com to collect sales taxes in states where they have affiliates that promote their products, there was no rush by the 38 states that didn't already have active "affiliate nexus tax," or "Amazon tax," laws to enact them, even though the National Conference of State Legislatures estimated states lose \$23 billion a year in uncollected taxes on online, phone and catalog purchases. Many of those states may have been waiting to see if the Republican-led U.S. House would pass the Marketplace Fairness Act, a bill that would allow each state to impose sales and use taxes on online retailers with at least

## Bird's eye view



### Only about a dozen states have active 'affiliate nexus' laws

Fourteen states have active "affiliate nexus," or so-called "Amazon tax" laws, requiring online merchants to collect sales tax on purchases made by residents of those states because the merchants or their affiliates have a substantial physical presence there. Most of the laws were established in 2013 or earlier. A law passed in Vermont in 2013 stipulates that it not become effective until 15 other states pass similar laws, while a law passed in Colorado in 2010 has been blocked by legal action.





trillions of dollars in unfunded pension liabilities, pension reform is likely to continue to be a hot issue in the states, regardless of the judicial actions in Illinois and Michigan.

**CYBERSECURITY** — As of the end of October, 21 states had introduced or considered data-breach legislation this year, nearly the same number as in 2013, 23, according to NCSL. Most of the measures focus mainly on requiring public notification of data breaches. But the fact that every state but three — Alabama, New Mexico and South Dakota — has now enacted at least one data-breach law suggests that the volume of such notification measures may soon begin to wane. There are other data-security issues, however, that have largely gone unaddressed. For instance, the United States is one of the few places in the world where credit-card fraud is still on the rise, due largely to the failure of American credit card issuers to embrace smart-chip technology, which is more secure than the far more prevalent magnetic-stripe cards, according to The Nilson Report, a credit card industry newsletter. Security experts say there are also weaknesses in the way credit and debit card payment information is transmitted from retailers to banks. Continued gridlock in Washington could spur states to become more proactive on the issue.

**MINIMUM WAGE** — Voters in five states approved, by margins of as much as 38 percent, ballot measures aimed at increasing the minimum wage. The measures even passed in four states — Alaska, Arkansas, Nebraska, and South Dakota — where voters elected Republicans to the U.S. Senate and in Illinois, where voters chose Bruce Rauner, a Republican businessman with a track record of opposing minimum wage increases, to be their governor over incumbent Democrat Pat Quinn, who strongly supported the increase. That Election Day performance, which also brought the unbroken string of successful recent minimum wage ballot measures to 15, clearly affirmed the public's support for minimum wage increases, virtually ensuring more will be on the way next year and beyond.

— *By KOREY CLARK*

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## Budget & taxes

**INVENTORY TAX COSTING LA MILLIONS:** Every year Louisiana businesses pay hundreds of millions of dollars in inventory taxes to parish governments. The state then issues them a full refund.

The state's inventory tax refund program, approved by the Legislature more than two decades ago, created a \$427 million hole in the budget last year. And that hole has been growing fast recently, with the cost of the program having shot up by 120

percent over the last several years, raising suspicions that businesses might be gaming the system.

Robert Travis Scott, president of the nonpartisan Public Affairs Research Council, said the problem is “huge and it’s getting huger.”

“And that really is the problem. Where’s the lid on this thing?”

Scott expects the cost of the program to swell to \$600 million in the next couple of years.

The state can’t simply do away with the inventory tax, however, because local governments depend on the money. Industry-heavy St. James Parish, for example, derives nearly half of its property tax revenues and about 17 percent of its total tax collections from the inventory tax.

“These revenues are vital to operating a parish from the police jury down to the sheriff down to the libraries,” said James Laurent Jr., assessor for Pointe Coupee Parish. (ADVOCATE [BATON ROUGE])

**TX GOV-ELECT TAKING ON ROAD FUNDING SHORTFALL:** Incoming Texas Gov. Greg Abbott (R) has set an ambitious goal for his first year in office: nearly eliminating his state Department Of Transportation’s \$5 billion annual budget deficit.

“I’ve outlined a detailed plan that will ensure that we add \$4 billion more per year for building roads in this state without raising taxes, fees or tolls,” he said at a press conference last week.

The state’s voters have already given the governor a big hand in helping him reach his goal, approving Proposition 1, which will allow the state to divert some oil and gas production revenues to the highway fund. Abbott also wants to direct two-thirds of the sales taxes collected on vehicle sales into that road fund. (TEXAS TRIBUNE [AUSTIN])

**SC NEEDS BILLIONS FOR TRANSPORTATION:** South Carolina’s Transportation Commission gave final approval this month to a plan projecting the state will have to spend another \$70 billion on transportation — about \$60 billion of it on roads — over the next 25 years. The problem with the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan is that the state is only expected to have \$28 billion available to spend on transportation over that period, meaning it will be about \$1.5 billion short of meeting its transportation needs every year. Gov. Nikki Haley (R) intends to release her plan for funding transportation next month, but her office has said it won’t include any tax increases (STATE [COLUMBIA], STATE NET).

**BUDGETS IN BRIEF: KANSAS’** three state-owned casinos contributed \$673 million to the state’s economy and provided about 4,000 jobs in 2013, according to a study commissioned by the American Gaming Association (WICHITA EAGLE).

• **UTAH** Gov. Gary Herbert (R) has released budget projections showing the state has a \$638 million surplus, due mostly to increased income tax collections (SALT LAKE TRIBUNE, STATE NET). • Also in **UTAH**, legislators are considering major increases in fuel taxes, sales taxes and vehicle registration fees to cover an estimated \$11 billion shortfall in the state’s unified transportation plan through 2040 (SALT LAKE TRIBUNE).

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

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## Politics & leadership

**C**ONGRESS BLOCKS POT LEGALIZATION IN DC: A “rider” included in the 1,600 page bill that top U.S. Senate Democrats and U.S. House Republicans agreed upon last week to fund the federal government through next September will block the District of Columbia from carrying out legalization of the recreational use of marijuana in accordance with Initiative 71, which D.C. voters approved by a 2 to 1 margin last month.

“I can’t believe they did this,” said D.C. Council Chairman Phil Mendelson. “We don’t need to be locking these people up.”

Adam Eidinger, who led the effort to put the measure before D.C. voters, likewise, said, “It’s totally disturbing; it’s entirely undemocratic.”

Much to Mendelson’s dismay, in addition to blocking Initiative 71, the rider

**“It’s totally disturbing; it’s entirely undemocratic.”**

could also reverse a law passed in the spring by the D.C. council allowing the District to join 18 states that have done away with criminal penalties for marijuana possession.

“It’s bad enough that they were setting their sights on legalization, but for them to go further and undo decriminalization — it’s irrational when over a third of states have done so,” he said.

The rider’s language mirrored that of an amendment introduced during the summer by U.S. Rep. Andy Harris (R), the most outspoken critic of D.C. legalization in Congress. After a speech at the conservative Heritage Foundation, Harris said he didn’t have a problem with defying Initiative 71 because it was subject to congressional approval.

“The fact is the Constitution gives Congress the ultimate oversight about what happens in the federal district,” he said. (WASHINGTON POST)

**ACLU CHARGES CHARTERS RESEGREGATING DE SCHOOLS:** The ACLU of Delaware and Community Legal Aid Society have filed a complaint with

the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights contending that Delaware's charter school system is resegregating the state's public schools. The groups say over 75 percent of the charter schools statewide have mostly white or mostly minority student bodies, with the schools serving the former vastly outperforming those serving the latter. The groups also say that in addition to taking away higher income white students from traditional schools, charters have enrollment requirements, including entrance exams and fees, that block low income families.

"The power of choice should be with the student and the family, not with the charter school," said ACLU Executive Director Kathleen MacRae. "We can no longer allow the competition for a desk in a high-performing charter school to come between neighbors and friends or exclude students of color and students with special needs altogether."

The groups want a moratorium on new charter schools until a desegregation plan is put into place. They also want charter school admissions to be determined by lottery, class sizes at traditional schools to be no larger than those at charter schools, charter schools to be completely free, and additional funding to go to schools serving low-income, minority and special needs students.

Delaware's Department of Education issued a statement indicating that officials there were reviewing the complaint but also calling attention to the state's efforts to get more low-income children into quality preschools and on track to go to college.

"We are committed to providing access to great educational opportunities for every Delaware student, from birth through higher education, and we are proud of the academic progress our low-income students and children of color have made in recent years, including by closing the gap between minority and nonminority students," the statement said. (NEWS JOURNAL [WILMINGTON])

**POLITICS IN BRIEF:** Backers of OREGON's Measure 92, requiring the labeling of genetically altered foods, filed a lawsuit last week claiming the state's failure to count about 4,600 ballots disenfranchised voters. A recount showed the measure passing by roughly 800 votes out of more than 1.5 million cast (OREGONLIVE.COM). • KENTUCKY Senate Republican leaders named Sen. Chris McDaniel (R) to head the chamber's powerful budget committee. McDaniel will be the running mate of gubernatorial candidate James Comer next year (LEXINGTON HERALD-LEADER).

— Compiled by KOREY CLARK

## In case you missed it

With Washington mired in perpetual partisan gridlock, the real policy action in recent years has shifted to the states. The coming year will be no different.

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

[http://www.statenet.com/capitol\\_journal/12-08-2014/html#snclj\\_spotlight](http://www.statenet.com/capitol_journal/12-08-2014/html#snclj_spotlight)



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# Governors

## HERBERT LAYS OUT UT MEDICAID EXPANSION PLAN:

**H**Surrounded by a phalanx of community, business, health and faith leaders, Utah Gov. Gary Herbert (R) unveiled his long-awaited Medicaid expansion alternative plan last week, setting up a struggle with lawmakers concerned the proposal will be too costly.

Herbert's plan would apply to the almost 100,000 currently uninsured Utahans who fall into the so-called coverage gap, predominantly the working poor who fail to qualify for either Medicaid or federal health insurance subsidies. It has several facets, including

**“These are our neighbors, our friends and our family members. Turning a blind eye and doing nothing is really not the Utah way.”**

helping low-wage workers pay for employer-offered health insurance — including co-pays and premiums — they otherwise could not afford. The unemployed or those otherwise without work-based insurance plans would be aided in obtaining coverage through the state health benefits exchange. All people applying

for the plan would automatically be enrolled in a state “work effort” program to help them get jobs or to obtain training for higher paying employment.

Any Medicaid alternative plan needs the approval of federal health officials. Although Utah has not received an official waiver, Herbert says his proposal has been endorsed in writing as a three-year pilot program by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, with the state holding the option to end it after that if it so chooses. But Herbert still faces a major hurdle in convincing lawmakers the plan will pencil out financially for the state.

That objective took a blow last week when lawmakers learned that the plan's proposed cost is much higher than originally thought. Originally expected to cut the state's Medicaid bill, it is now actually estimated to run about \$4.6 million for half of 2016 and as much as \$90 million annually by 2020. Even so, Herbert says the state has a moral obligation to do something to help its working poor.

“These are our neighbors, our friends and our family members,” he told reporters. “Turning a blind eye and doing nothing is really not the Utah way.” (DESERET NEWS [SALT LAKE CITY], SALT LAKE TRIBUNE, UTAH PUBLIC RADIO)

## CUOMO MULLS LETTING AG INVESTIGATE POLICE KILLINGS:

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo (D) is mulling a request by Attorney General Eric Schneiderman (D) to allow his office to investigate and possibly prosecute incidents of police killings of unarmed civilians in the Empire State. Schneiderman made his request last week in the wake of a grand jury decision to not indict a New York City police officer in the death of Eric Garner, an unarmed man the officer had placed in

an illegal choke hold. That decision led to sometimes violent protest against police in New York and other cities around the nation. Schneiderman called on lawmakers to adopt new measures to restore the public's faith in police, but said it was important for his office to be granted more power in the event that another such incident occurs before lawmakers have the time to act.

"The horrible events surrounding the death of Eric Garner have revealed a deep crisis of confidence in some of the fundamental elements of our criminal justice system," Schneiderman said in a statement. "Nothing could be more critical for both the public and the police officers who work tirelessly to keep our communities safe than acting immediately to restore trust."

"When the trust between the police and the communities they serve and protect breaks down, everyone is at risk," he added.

Gov. Cuomo did not immediately indicate if he would grant Schneiderman that authority, saying through a spokesperson only that he is considering the request. (NEW YORK TIMES, WASHINGTON POST)

## **HOGAN TO DECLARE HEROIN**

**EMERGENCY IN MD:** Maryland Gov.-elect Larry Hogan (R) said one of his first acts as governor will be to declare a state of emergency regarding the Old Line State's ongoing rise in heroin addiction. He will also create a task force to determine causes behind the increase and ways to combat it.

"Every state on the East Coast has declared a state of emergency except Maryland — and Maryland has the worst problem," Hogan told reporters last week at the state's fall GOP convention. He did not say how his proposed task force would work with a similar council outgoing Gov. Martin O'Malley (D) formed via an executive order in July. (CAPITAL GAZETTE [ANNAPOLIS])

## **BRYANT CREATES MS HUMAN TRAFFICKING TASK FORCE:**

Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant (R) issued an executive order last week (EO 1349) to create a task force designed to combat human trafficking in the Magnolia State. In a statement, Bryant said the task force will include representatives from law enforcement, the judicial system, social services, education and community leaders and be tasked with examining existing research on human trafficking as well as

## **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:** 104

**Number of 2015 Prefiles last week:** 1,936

**Number of Intros last week:** 397

**Number of Enacted/Adopted last week:** 215

**Number of 2014 Prefiles to date:** 22,702

**Number of 2015 Prefiles to date:** 8,570

**Number of 2014 Intros to date:** 86,155

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

**Number of 2014 Session Enacted/Adopted overall to date:** 28,400

**Number of bills currently in State Net Database:** 175,459

— Compiled By DENA BLODGETT  
(measures current as of 12/10/2014)  
Source: State Net database

conducting its own. That will include reviewing the state's trafficking laws to determine what is and is not working and submitting a report and recommendations to Bryant by July 1, 2015.

"We've got to stop it," Bryant also told reporters. "These children, no matter where they come from, no matter how they got here, should not be sexually abused. [They] should not be put through the human trafficking corridor that passes through the state of Mississippi." (WJTV.COM [JACKSON]), MISSISSIPPI GOVERNOR'S OFFICE, CLARION-LEDGER [JACKSON])

**GOVERNORS IN BRIEF:** The office of **OKLAHOMA** Gov. MARY Fallin (R) agreed to pay a former employee \$125,000 to settle a wrongful termination suit. Wendy Gregory, the head of Fallin's Tulsa office, was fired in 2012 after the IRS moved to garnish her wages in a child support dispute involving her husband and a former wife. In settling Gregory also agreed to drop an open records lawsuit she had previously lodged against the governor (TULSA WORLD). • The **UTAH** Air Quality Board voted last Wednesday to endorse Gov. Gary Herbert's (R) proposed wood-burning ban in the Beehive State's air pollution-heavy Wasatch Valley between November and March. The proposal will now go through a public commentary period, beginning on Jan. 1 (SALT LAKE TRIBUNE). • **MASSACHUSETTS** Gov. Deval Patrick (D) has proposed new regulations on ridesharing services like Uber and Lyft that would require the companies to, among several things, obtain "certificates to operate" and conduct background checks on their drivers. Patrick is hoping to put the rules in place before leaving office in January, but lawmakers would ultimately have to approve the implementation of those regulations next session (BOSTON GLOBE).

— Compiled by RICH EHISEN

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## Hot issues

**B** **USINESS:** The **MICHIGAN** House approves HB 5958, which would allow Wolverine State businesses to refuse service to gay, lesbian, transgender or bisexual people based on holding "a sincerely held religious belief." The measure is now in the Senate (DETROIT FREE PRESS).

**CRIME & PUNISHMENT:** The **MICHIGAN** House approves a package of bills (HB 5228 through HB 5931) that would set up a commission to review the state's sentencing guidelines and parole and probation processes. It is in the Senate (DETROIT FREE PRESS). • The Obama administration issues guidelines that ban federal law enforcement from profiling suspects on the basis of religion, national

origin and other characteristics. The guidelines also apply to local law enforcement agencies when they are working jointly with federal authorities (CHICAGO SUN-TIMES). • Both houses of the **ILLINOIS** Legislature endorse SB 1342, which among several things makes it legal for citizens to record police activities and conversations while the officers are on duty but also allows police vastly greater authority to eavesdrop on citizen conversations as well. It goes to Gov. Pat Quinn (D), who has not indicated if he will sign it (STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER [SPRINGFIELD]). • The **OHIO** House approves SB 342, which would prohibit Buckeye State cities from issuing citations related to photos taken by a traffic camera unless a police officer is present to witness the red-light or speeding violations. The bill moves to Gov. John Kasich (R) for review (TOLEDO BLADE).

## Upcoming stories

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

- **A Cannon Perspective**
- **State worker exodus**
- **Legalizing pot**

**EDUCATION:** The **MICHIGAN** House approves HB 6074, which would exclude student athletes from being identified as public employees for the purpose of forming a union. It moves to the Senate (DETROIT FREE PRESS, STATE NET). • The U.S. Department of Education again grants **LOUISIANA** a waiver from some tenets of the 2001 No Child Left Behind law. The Pelican State first received a waiver in 2012 (TIMES-PICAYUNE [NEW ORLEANS]).

**ENVIRONMENT:** The **MICHIGAN** House approves HB 5205, which would expand the definition of allowable materials to burn in a waste-to-energy plant to include solid waste such as scrap tires, non-recyclable plastics and railroad ties. It is now in the Senate (DETROIT FREE PRESS).

**SOCIAL POLICY:** The **MICHIGAN** House and Senate each approve a two-bill package (HB 4118 and SB 275) which together would require applicants for social welfare programs to be screened for illegal drugs. The measures now head to Gov. Rick Snyder (R) for review (DETROIT FREE PRESS). • Also in **MICHIGAN**, the Senate approves a two-bill package (SBs 1156 and 1157) that would make it a misdemeanor crime to stalk, assault or threaten retaliatory actions against a woman in an attempt to coerce her to have an abortion. It is now in the House (MLIVE.COM). • The **OHIO** House rejects HB 248, a measure that would have barred women from obtaining an abortion as soon as a fetal heartbeat can be detected, as early as six weeks into pregnancy (COLUMBUS DISPATCH).

**POTPOURRI:** The **OHIO** Senate approves HB 234, which would reduce the number of training hours needed to obtain a concealed carry weapons permit from 12 to eight and scrap a rule that required holders to be Buckeye State residents. The

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— *Compiled by RICH EHISEN*

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**O H NOW HE'S DONE IT:** New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie may or may not make a run at the White House in 2016 (hint: he will) but if he does, he won't have Cher on his side. As NJ.com reports, the music diva is more than a bit hacked off that Christie — who likes to battle Democrats over alleged legislative pork — vetoed a bill that would have barred pig farmers from keeping pregnant sows locked up in gestation crates so small the animals can't turn around or lie down. Using the megaphone that is Twitter, the chanteuse called Christie a “despicable bully” and told him to “4get POTUS.” Cher also took a jab at Iowa's pig industry, which processes about 20 million porkers a year, asking “why must u torture preg pigs?” Meanwhile Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad, lauded Christie, calling the veto “a good decision.” Ironically, the Iowa Caucuses are only two years away. Sigh.

**FASHION SENSELESS:** If you plan on being around the Montana Legislature next session you had best check your wardrobe first. As the *Helena Independent Record* reports, there's a new wardrobe sheriff in town and his name is House Speaker Austin Knudsen. Knudsen released a memo last week detailing what lawmakers, staff and even reporters may or may not wear when doing the people's business. In the world according to Austin, men need to wear shirts and ties, and you can all just forget casual Fridays. Or casual Saturdays for that matter as jeans are banned at all times. The Fashion Czar didn't forget the ladies, though. The fairer sex is not allowed to wear leggings, open-toed sandals or tennis shoes and...wait for it..."Women should be sensitive to skirt lengths and necklines." In other words, no cleavage or leg. No word, however, if the men can offer up some décolletage.

**TWO BIRDS, ONE STONE:** California Gov. Jerry Brown is nothing if not thrifty. That apparently applies to the spending of his time as well. According to a release from the gov's press folks, this year Brown is combining his swearing-in to a new four-year term with his annual State of the State speech. For the uninitiated, Brown's SOS addresses are can't miss political theater, often filled with vague

academic references or, in one notable case, an ode to the children's book *The Little Engine That Could*. Stay tuned.

**A DOG'S LIFE:** Speaking of Brown, his incorrigible Welsh Pembroke Corgi is back in the news. According to the news and pop culture web site BuzzFeed, California's First Dog, Sutter, is among "The 40 Most Important Corgis of 2014." We didn't realize this is a thing, but apparently BuzzFeed has compiled similar lists since 2012. This year marks a return for Sutter, who was shockingly left off in 2013. Even so, he came in at only No. 20 on the list, sandwiched between a Corgi puppy that had turned itself green playing in some grass and another wearing part of a watermelon on its head.

— By *RICH EHISEN*

**Editor:** Rich Ehisen — [capj@statenet.com](mailto:capj@statenet.com)

**Associate Editor:** Korey Clark — [capj@statenet.com](mailto: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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