



BOOKWORMS LIVE!

Seattle is the most literate city, according to Central Connecticut State University, based on newspaper circulation, number of bookstores, library resources, periodical publishing resources, educational attainment and Internet resources. Cities that followed, in order, are: Washington, D.C.; Minneapolis; Pittsburgh; Atlanta; Portland, Ore.; St. Paul; Boston; Cincinnati; and Denver.

FIGHTING CRIME

The Justice Department recently ordered prosecutors in 33 states to intensify their efforts to fight violent crime on Indian reservations, particularly offenses against women and children. The U.S. attorney general said that 35 new assistant attorneys general and 12 other specialists from the Federal Bureau of Investigation will be assigned to handle such crimes. Statistics show that American Indians are the victims of violent crime at more than twice the national rate.

POSITIVE PERCEPTION

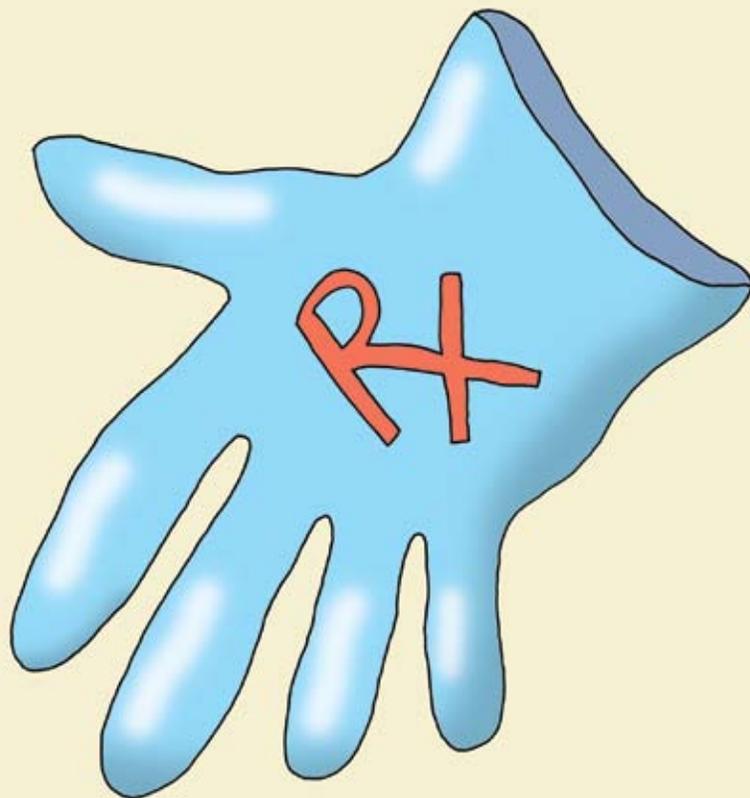
Washington Senator Rosa Franklin wants to change the terms “disadvantaged” and “at risk” to “at hope” in at least 54 places in state law because she believes negative labels are hurting kids’ chances for success. “We need to come up with positive terms,” she says. Supporters agree and say that labels can work like self-fulfilling prophecies. Others argue that the potential cost of the bill could be better spent. “What helps [more] is a smart, well-structured program that has funding and credibility,” says Representative Glenn Anderson, in the Canadian Press

PASS THE PEPPER

First it was trans fats, now it’s salt. New York City is looking at reducing the amount of salt in packaged and restaurant food by 25 percent over the next five years. Health experts say that would reduce high blood pressure, strokes and heart attacks. The plan is voluntary and does not require legislation. It allows companies to cut salt gradually to meet the targets, which range from 10 percent to 40 percent for 61 classes of packaged foods and 25 classes of restaurant foods.

SAFETY BEHIND BARS

Twelve percent of incarcerated juveniles in state-operated and large locally or privately operated juvenile facilities have been raped or sexually abused in the past year by fellow inmates or prison staff, according to a new report by the U.S. Justice Department. The National Survey of Youth in Custody was conducted in 195 juvenile confinement facilities between June 2008 and April 2009, with a sample of more than 9,000 young offenders. Researchers identified 13 facilities as having an especially “high rate.”

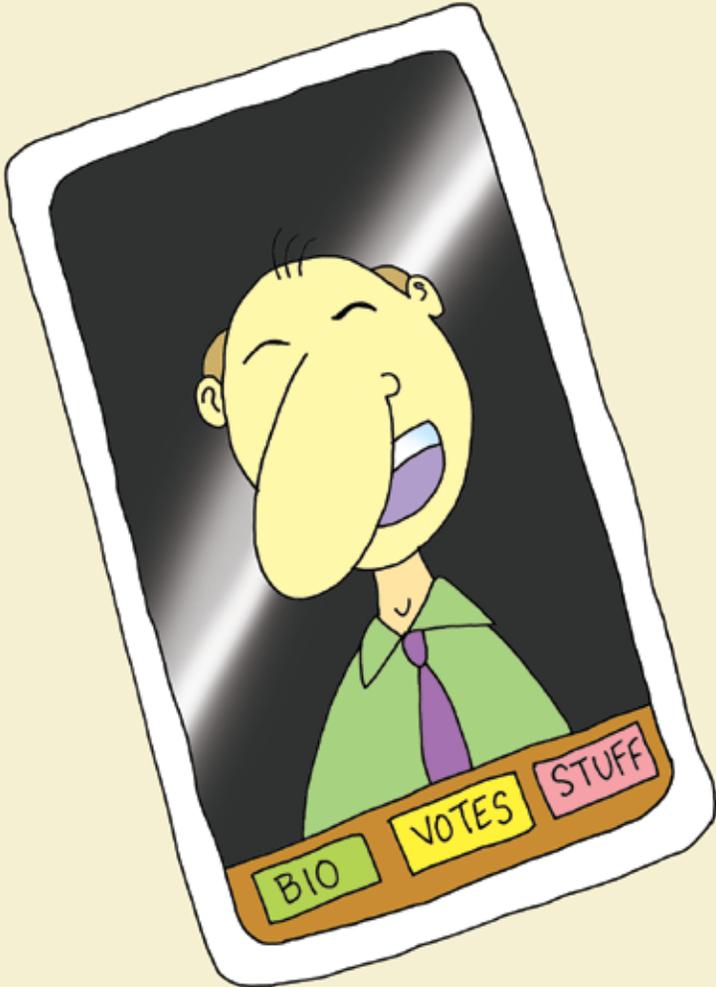


FLU DEFENSE

First things first. Indiana lawmakers started their session on the defense—against the H1N1 virus, that is. With plenty of vaccine available and concern that the virus might make a comeback, legislators and staff were offered shots or nasal spray at a clinic in the statehouse in early January. “All those hand shakings—it just made sense,” said Representative Tom Saunders.

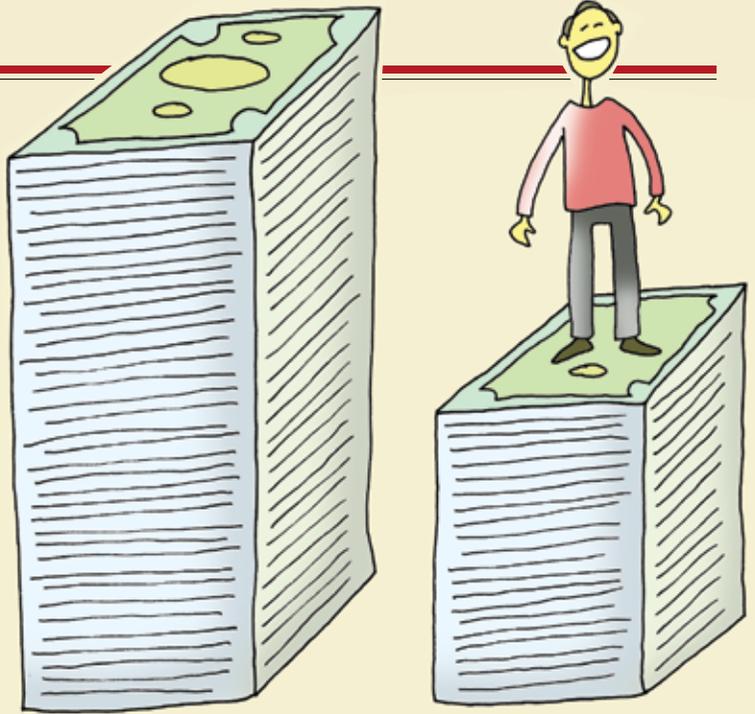
NEW WAYS TO DRIVE DISTRACTED

Safety advocates are worried about new, irresistible technology soon going into the dashboard of cars. “Infotainment systems” include 10-inch screens above gearshifts that show high-definition videos, 3-D maps and Web pages. “This is irresponsible at best and pernicious at worst,” Nicholas A. Ashford, a technology policy professor at MIT, told *The New York Times*, citing research showing the risks of distracted driving. Technology and car companies say that safety remains a priority for them. For example, a warning pops up when a system in an Audi is turned on that says: “Please only use the online services when traffic conditions allow you to do so safely.”



iKENTUCKY

The Kentucky Legislative Research Commission has a new iPhone-friendly way for people to get information about lawmakers, legislation moving through the legislature and other legislative news. With one touch on their home screen, iPhone users can pull up key features of the General Assembly’s home page, such as bill summaries and status and how each lawmaker voted. “We’re always looking for ways to keep people connected,” said LRC Director Robert Sherman. “The better connected people are to the State Capitol, the more likely they are to provide the informed feedback that lawmakers depend on to serve our state.”



DOUBLE DIPPING

The rules in several states are meant to curb the practice by some government employees of collecting a pension and a paycheck at the same time. Arkansas, Florida, New Mexico, South Dakota and Utah have passed, or at least considered, new rules. The laws make public employees wait a certain time (four to six months) before returning to jobs, or prevent them from returning at all. “They don’t even empty out their desks,” Arkansas Representative Allen Kerr told *USA Today*.

DESIGN FOR ALL

Louisiana now requires that 2 percent of a state building’s construction budget be used on universal design principles. Advocates of this kind of design hope to bring to the attention of architects and builders the benefits of using designs in new construction and in renovation projects that can be used by virtually everyone, regardless of their level of ability or disability. Representative Scott M. Simon, key sponsor of the bill, was critically injured in an industrial accident, leaving him paralyzed from the waist down. He went on to receive his master’s in architecture and has worked to remove barriers and apply a more inclusive design concept in his work.

ONE BAR

The debate over a uniform bar exam and scoring system that would be accepted by other states is growing. *USA Today* reports that Missouri will offer the first national exam sometime this year. Bar associations in Arizona, Colorado, Minnesota, New Hampshire, North Dakota and Washington, D.C., also are considering the idea. Proponents claim a single exam would decrease consumer expenses in multistate litigation and allow greater job mobility for law school graduates. Also, some believe a national test could lead to a more diverse bar by phasing out potentially biased tests. One concern of a single test is that new lawyers will be ignorant of the many differences in state law.