



# People & Politics



The “Green Zone,” a film about the U.S.- Iraq war released in March, stars Matt Damon, Greg Kinnear, Amy Ryan and ... Texas Representative **Allen Vaught**. Actually, Vaught, an Iraq War veteran and vice chair of the House Defense and Veterans Affairs Committee, has a small part in the film, which incorporates many Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. A captain in the U.S. Army Reserve, Vaught was the de facto mayor of Fallujah during the early part of Operation Iraqi Freedom and was injured in a roadside bomb. He received the Purple Heart among other commendations, and was contacted by the author of the book on which the film is based about some technical aspects of the war. Vaught plays a staff officer during a scene, and says it was “a great honor to have a small part in the ‘Green Zone.’ I have not seen the entire film, but I expect it will be a great tribute to the veterans of the Iraq War.” The director, Paul Greengrass, whose other films include the “Bourne Ultimatum,” allowed Vaught to name his character after his son, Jonathan Vaught.

**Fiona Ma** became California’s first Asian American to be named speaker pro tem of the Assembly. Ma was appointed to the post by Assembly Speaker **John A. Perez**. Ma, a former member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, was first elected to the Assembly in 2006. She served as majority whip before assuming her new leadership position.

Georgia Senator **David Adelman** resigned his seat in March to become the U.S. ambassador to Singapore. The 45-year-old lawmaker was elected to the Georgia Senate in 2002. His departure leaves the minority caucus with a membership of 19 out of 56 seats. Adelman, who was attorney general and taught political science at the University of Georgia, is studying Mandarin and hopes to strengthen ties between the island off the southern tip of the Maylay peninsula. “Singapore is a country that punches above its weight,” Adelman says. “It’s a relatively small country, but it has a powerful economy.”



*Matt Damon in a scene from the film “Green Zone.”*

**Don Balfour**, Georgia senator and president of NCSL, has withdrawn from the congressional race to replace retiring Congressman John Linder.

**Juanita W. Goggins**, civil rights trailblazer and the first African American woman elected to the South Carolina legislature, froze to death alone in her home at age 75 in March. Just a year ago a stretch of Highway 5 was renamed in honor of the woman who led a life of exemplary public service. She was a school teacher, founder of a tutoring company and the first black woman delegate from South Carolina to the Democratic National Convention. She defeated a white male incumbent in 1974 and headed off to the State House. “I am going to Columbia to be a legislator, not just a black spot in the House chambers,” she said at the time. She worked to reduce the student-teacher ratio, expand kindergarten and improve public health. “She was truly a mover and a shaker, so well-liked and so well-loved by so many,” said Representative **John King**, who represents the seat Goggins once held.

Louisiana House Speaker **Jim Tucker** has reshuffled committee appointments following a close-vote challenge to his choice for speaker pro-tem. In a 53-48 vote, Repre-

sentative **Joel Robideaux** was elected to the chamber’s second leadership post. Robideaux was challenged by Representative **Noble Ellington**. After the vote, Tucker reassigned Ellington to the Insurance Committee, considered a far less influential spot than his place on the House and Government Affairs Committee. Tucker also told Ellington that his apartment in the Pentagon Barracks across the street from the Capitol would be let to him on a month-to-month basis. Two other Republicans who supported Ellington—Representatives **John LaBruzzo** and **John Schroder**—lost their membership on the Appropriations Committee. Tucker appointed Representatives **Rosalind Jones** and **James Armes III**, both of whom had supported Robideaux, in their place. “In this process you only have your word, and there are a couple of folks who broke their word,” Tucker said.

Former Tennessee House Democratic Leader **Kim McMillan** stepped out of the race for governor, deciding instead to run for mayor of Clarksville. A month before, Senate Democratic Leader **Jim Kyle** dropped out of the race. Mike McWherter, a businessman and son of former Governor Ned McWherter, is the only Democrat left in the race. Three Republicans will face off in the August primary.

## Internet Imposters

Maryland Delegate Chris Shank has two Facebook pages—his own and another one that a fan set up. Since he has no control over that one, it caused him some concern. “There’s some inherent risk, but we’ll see how it goes,” Shank says. At least it was a supporter who set up the second page.

On the other hand, the Connecticut Republican Party set up Web pages for every member of the House Democratic caucus, all with similar Web addresses using the Democrats’ real names. The pages have prominent headlines like “Raising Your Taxes,” but there is a notice at the bottom of the page saying they are paid for and authorized by the Connecticut Republican Party. The GOP also set up parody Twitter accounts in the Democrats’ names, but they were shut down for violating the company’s terms of service agreement.

Another kind of Internet impersonator pretends to be a Facebook friend who asks for money after claiming to have lost cash, credit

cards or a passport while traveling. Or there is the Wisconsin man who posed as a woman on Facebook to get high school boys to send him nude photos that he later used for blackmail.

Three states have passed laws specifically targeting Internet or online impersonation. In Hawaii, anyone who uses personal information to pose electronically as someone else without their permission is guilty of a misdemeanor.

In New York, impersonating someone is also a misdemeanor, if done to benefit from the site or to injure or defraud another. It’s also against the law to pretend to be a public servant.

In Texas, it’s a third-degree felony to create a website on a social networking site using the name or persona of another with the intent to harm, defraud, intimidate or threaten. Texas also prohibits sending an e-mail, instant message or text claiming to be another person, without his or her permission, if the intent is to harm or defraud. The Texas law, in particular, has raised First Amendment concerns. Opponents claim the word “harm” could be interpreted too broadly. Some legal experts also claim the law defines social networking



sites so broadly that it is difficult to distinguish them from other kinds of websites.

Other states have similar criminal impersonation laws, although they don’t specifically refer to online impersonation. Individuals also could be sued for exploiting someone else’s name or likeness without permission under state “misappropriation of likeness” or “right to publicity” laws.

As online crimes increase, state lawmakers are likely to consider adding provisions to address the problem. Internet impersonation bills have been introduced this year in California, New York, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

## Ready, Set, Action



In the last decade, tax incentives for film and entertainment productions have spread across the country. State officials have used the programs to lure filmmakers to their states for many reasons, including job creation and tourism promotion. Currently, 45 states and Puerto Rico offer motion picture incentives. These incentives include tax credits, rebates and exemptions.

Critics and advocates, however, disagree on their effectiveness on stimulating the economy, creating jobs and luring tourists.

Tax credits in Michigan seem to have spurred business in that state, hard hit by layoffs and plant closings. In 2007, before Michigan offered a tax credit for production costs, two films were made there. In 2008, after enacting the credit, 35 producers chose to film in Michigan, and by mid-2009, 85 movies already were made or had applied to within the state. In 2007, movie makers spent \$2 million in Michigan; in 2008, that number was up to \$125 million, according to USA Today.

Other states are touting the impact of the

film industry on their economies as well. In Louisiana, lawmakers in 2009 increased the 25 percent film tax credit to 30 percent and eliminated the phase-down of the credit. California, long known for its film industry, enacted its first film incentive program in early 2009.

Other states have taken a critical view of these tax expenditures in light of the current fiscal situation. With huge budget deficits and waning revenues, some lawmakers are taking a closer look at tax credits for filmmakers. Last year, Kansas suspended its film production income tax credit for two years, Connecticut reformed its film tax credit, and Wisconsin scaled its back. In Iowa, amid scandal on the misuse of funds, the state partially suspended its program.

The debate on the economic impact of film industry incentives is sure to continue, especially as the fiscal pressure on the states is prolonged. Given the varied experiences of states with these programs, however, legislators will continue to wrestle with whether to call “action” or “cut” in their state.

