



1

SICK AND HIRED

In what was called both a “real win-win” and a “bad precedent,” Connecticut became the first state to mandate paid sick leave. The new law requires service businesses with at least 50 employees to provide at least one hour of paid sick leave for each 40 hours worked. The controversial measure—a scaled down version of earlier proposals—applies only to service workers, and exempts manufacturing firms and some nonprofits. San Francisco, Seattle and the District of Columbia have similar requirements.



4

QUIET TRAFFIC

Virginia lawmakers have OK'd a pilot program to test “quiet-pavement” technology. Five areas around the state will see if a new kind of asphalt called “porous friction course” can really soften traffic noise and survive Virginia weather. Producers say it reduces sounds from tires, lessening the need to build sound walls, decreases spray kick-up from rainstorms and costs less. Delegate Joe May promoted the pilot after talking with the developers during the NCSL Legislative Summit a couple of years ago. “Instead of creating the noise when tires pass over the road, it simply minimizes it,” May told the Leesburg Today. “The theory is if you don’t generate the sound in the first place, you don’t have to mitigate it. And it is laughably inexpensive in comparison to the sound walls.”



BIPARTISAN PRACTICAL JOKE

Who said lawmakers from both parties don’t know how to have fun together? Oregon representatives pulled off a political prank during a special session last year like no other. Representative Jefferson Smith got all his colleagues, except one, to say part of the lyrics to the ’80s song “Never Gonna Give You Up” concealed in regular floor speech, without tipping off the clerk or others. Since floor speech is always videotaped, recordings of lawmakers’ saying the lyrics one word or phrase at a time were then pieced together to make the entire song. Posted on YouTube, the two-minute video went viral. The production ends with this disclaimer: “No bills were harmed in the making of this video. No public dollars were spent.”

3

THE UN-STATE?

Give an 82-year-old former teacher and history buff time on his hands, and what does he discover? North Dakota isn’t really a state. Well, kind of. But don’t panic, voters have the opportunity to correct the error next year. Back in 1995, John Rolcsynski was eating dinner while reading the state constitution when he noticed the writers in 1889 forgot to include the word “executive” to the list of those who must take an oath of office, putting it at odds with Article VI of the U.S. Constitution. No one really was interested in his concerns until Senator Tim Mathern came along. “I really didn’t believe that this was an issue that was going to place our status as a state or our decisions in jeopardy,” he told the Grand Forks Herald. “But John is passionate, John is convinced that this is a fatal flaw, and I think sometimes as legislators it behooves us to give people a vehicle to express their citizenship.”

5

TERMED TROUBLE

Term limits in California have failed to lower the number of “professional legislators” and bring in more “citizen legislators,” according to a new study by the Center for Governmental Studies. Although termed out of the Legislature, most lawmakers stay in government jobs, often running for other elected offices, just as they did before term limits were enacted. “The bulk of the evidence suggests repealing term limits altogether would improve the effectiveness of the Legislature,” the study says. The public’s strong support for term limits, however, makes this unlikely. So the authors of the study recommend the total number of years a member can serve be reduced from 14 years to 12, but that members be allowed to serve that entire 12 years in either chamber. “This revision would allow members to acquire more policy expertise and increase the institutional memory of the Legislature, but it would continue the goal of term limits by maintaining a limit on legislative tenure.”

6

FOUR ODD OUT

Why are Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey and Virginia the only states to hold legislative elections in odd-numbered years? According to NCSL's blog, *The Thicket*, it mostly reflects when their new constitutions were adopted and, consequently, when they held their first elections. For Virginia that was 1851, for Louisiana it was 1879. New Jersey's case is a little different. While it did adopt a new constitution in 1947, the governor also expressed a desire that state elections not be overshadowed by the national contest for president. The origins of Mississippi's odd-year elections are unclear, since its constitution was passed in 1890. Elections in Kentucky took place in odd-numbered years until 1984, when the state moved the legislative elections to even-numbered years but kept the governor and other statewide elections in odd years. Kentucky is the only state that separates the election of the governor from that of the Legislature.

7

HOW MANY WHAT?

Missouri transportation officials have developed an app that estimates a person's blood alcohol concentration. They hope to focus attention on the importance of designating drivers who won't be drinking. Download "Show Me My Buzz" and by putting in how many drinks you've had, how long you've been drinking, your weight and your sex, it will estimate your BAC. A double tap gives you the local cab company's phone number. And it's free. Question: Do you really think, if you've been drinking, you can trust your answers?

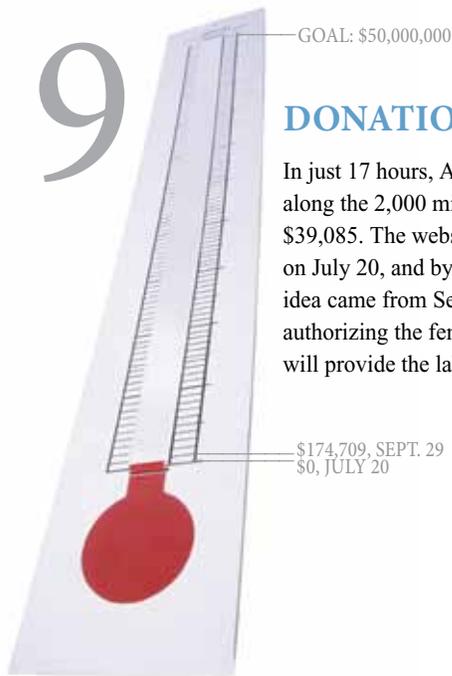
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THE PRICE OF NICE

Here's something for unemployed people to ponder. A new study found that "agreeable" workers earn a lot less than "disagreeable" ones, and that men who were described as "highly agreeable" after interviewing for jobs were less likely to be hired. The researchers, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, looked at data on 10,000 workers with a wide range of jobs, salaries and ages over a 20-year span. Other research, however, shows rudeness by employees is bad for business.

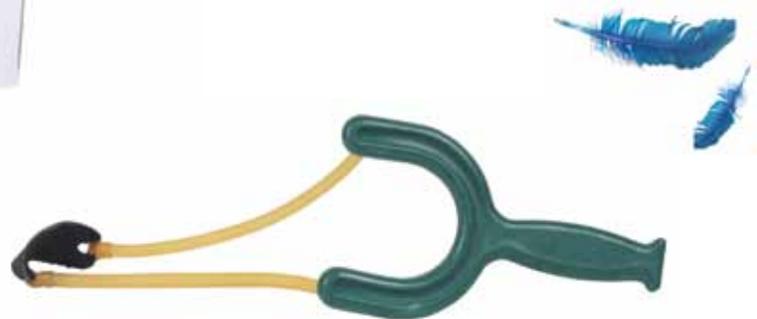
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DONATIONS TO DIG

In just 17 hours, Arizona's fund-raising website to build a fence along the 2,000 mile long U.S.-Mexico border had collected \$39,085. The website, www.buildtheborderfence.com, launched on July 20, and by Sept. 29, donations had hit \$174,709. The idea came from Senator Steven Smith. He also sponsored the bill authorizing the fence. His goal is to raise \$50 million. Inmates will provide the labor to build the fence.

10



ALL A-TWITTER OVER TWEETING

A state judge in August issued an injunction blocking a Missouri law from taking effect that would have barred teachers from using social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to communicate with their students. The judge said the law "would have a chilling effect on speech." Lawmakers passed the law as part of a larger package of legislation to protect children from sexual abuse in schools. Teacher unions challenged the prohibition, arguing that social networking is used widely and effectively among educators. Lawmakers responded in September by passing a bill that repeals the social media ban but requires local school districts to revise their policies to "prevent improper communications between staff members and students."