



## People & Politics



Representative **Thom Tillis** took the speaker's podium in **North Carolina** with a gavel made from 300-year-old wood, as the statehouse moved under Republican control for the first time in 140 years. Tillis thanked his predecessor, Democratic Speaker **Joe Hackney**, and his staff for making the transition smooth. The gavel was made recently by volunteers using the wood from a colonial-era tree that was later used to build a home visited by General Sherman's Union soldiers on the last day of the Civil War. Tillis named the gavel "Ray" in honor of his father.

Winter has had a harsh grip on the Northeast, and that's just fine with at least one **Connecticut** lawmaker. Senator **Beth Bye** found the conditions perfect for cross-country skiing to the legislative office building in Hartford recently. She was scheduled to meet with a constituent, who cancelled because of the weather. The 3.5 mile trip took an hour and 15 minutes. After doing some work, she got a ride home.

**Hawaii** Speaker **Calvin Say**, the longest serving speaker since Hawaii statehood, won re-election to his leadership post, warding off a two-month challenge that divided the Democratic caucus and prompted U.S. Senator Daniel Inouye to skip the traditional House opening ceremony. Democratic dissidents reached a compromise later in the day with Say that gives them increased leadership posts and committee chairmanships. Representative **Sylvia Luke**, a Say opponent, characterized the compromise as "a big step forward" that "bridges both sides together."

Democrats hold a 43-8 majority in the House. Say quoted President Lincoln's second inaugural address in an effort to heal wounds and move beyond the leadership fight.

**Illinois** House Assistant Majority Leader **Edward Acevedo** was walking on a Chicago street one night in January when a van pulled up and someone inside pointed a gun at him. After Acevedo, a lawmaker since 1997 and a Chicago police officer since 1995, identified himself, the gunman sped off without firing. No arrests have been made.

**Illinois** Senator **Lou Viverito's** 16-year tenure in the Senate ended in January when he retired to concentrate on his job as a township supervisor. A onetime barbershop owner and assistant majority leader under former Senate President Emil Jones—who fired him for voting against a proposed gross receipts tax—the 78-year-old Viverito shared office space and the occasional game of golf with Barack Obama. When Viverito was appointed to the Senate in 1995, the Legislature and governor's office were controlled by Republicans; he leaves the Democrats in control of all three. "I've had quite a career. It's been a good run. But it's time to go," he said.

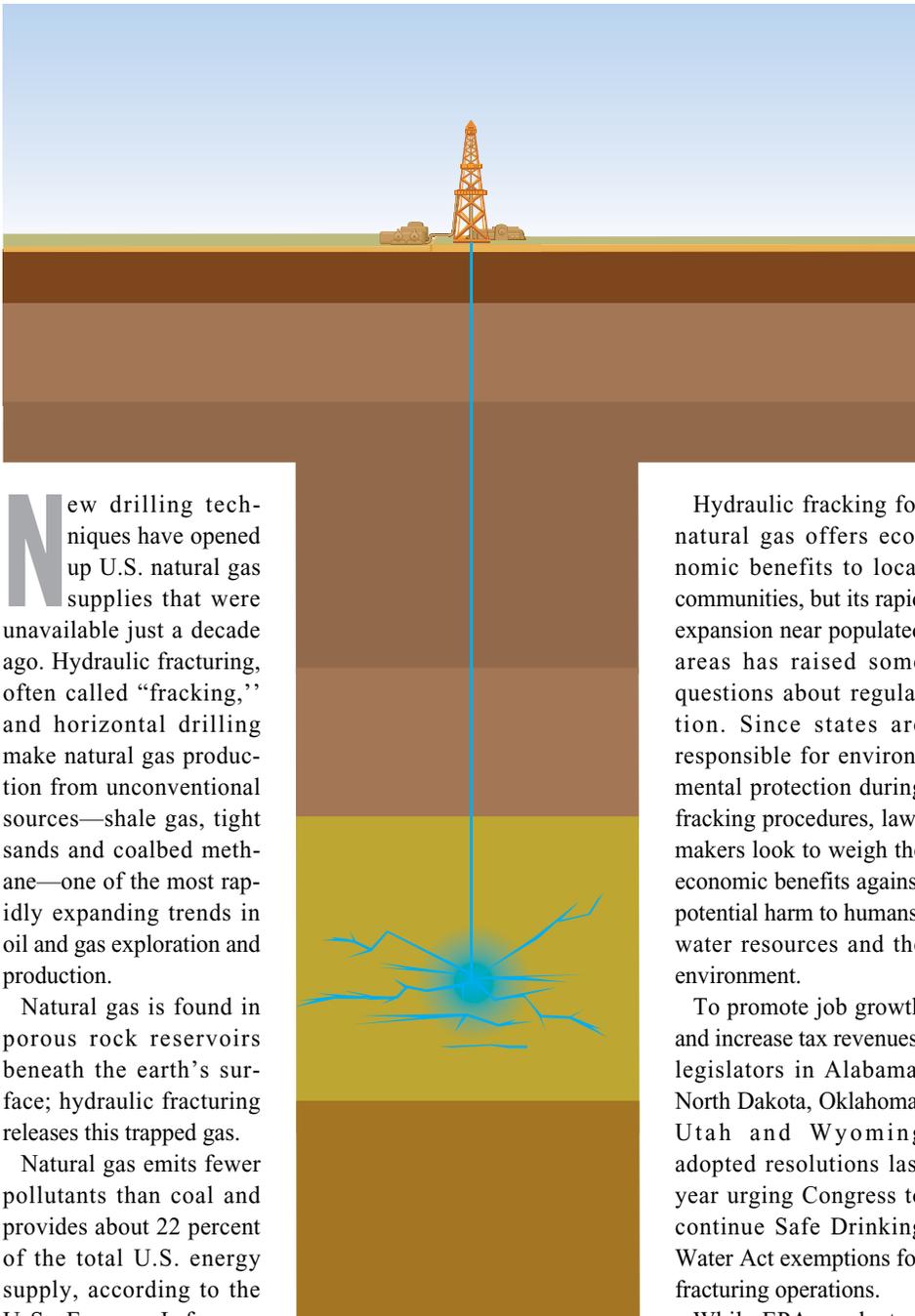
When Senator **Ross Romero** was elected minority leader of the **Utah** Senate late last year, he made history. The 40-year-old is the first Latino to hold a leadership position in the Utah Legislature. A Democrat in an overwhelmingly Republican chamber (22-7), Romero began his legislative career in the Utah House in 2004. His rise in the Senate

leadership ranks has been swift. Elected to the Senate in 2006, he became minority whip two years later, and took the top spot this session. Romero, who is a lawyer and banker, says he votes with Republicans on the majority of bills and is a bridge to the ethnic community.

**Arizona** Senate President **Russell Pearce** doesn't believe lawmakers need to lose their Second Amendment rights just because they serve in the Legislature. He sent a memo to his colleagues in January saying that although state law prohibits guns in the Capitol, that doesn't extend to the Senate building, where he has constitutional authority to set the rules.

The gold on the **Colorado** Capitol dome shines bright against the Rocky Mountain sky. But underneath, it's rusting badly. It came to public attention when a 10-pound hunk of rusted cast iron fell off in 2007. The state has turned to one of its enduring statesmen to head the campaign to raise some \$8 million of the \$12 million needed to fix the dome. **Hank Brown** served under the dome in the state Senate from 1972 to 1976, went to Congress in 1981 and moved to the U.S. Senate from 1991 to 1997. He took the helm of the University of Colorado as president during a troubled period and steered the school back to its former status. "Ultimately if we don't act, the structure may collapse, impaling the governor and the legislature, so it's with mixed feelings ..." Brown said to laughter. The legislature developed a plan to get \$4 million from the State Historical Fund and the rest through private donations.

# Fracturing for Natural Gas



New drilling techniques have opened up U.S. natural gas supplies that were unavailable just a decade ago. Hydraulic fracturing, often called “fracking,” and horizontal drilling make natural gas production from unconventional sources—shale gas, tight sands and coalbed methane—one of the most rapidly expanding trends in oil and gas exploration and production.

Natural gas is found in porous rock reservoirs beneath the earth’s surface; hydraulic fracturing releases this trapped gas.

Natural gas emits fewer pollutants than coal and provides about 22 percent of the total U.S. energy supply, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. In the past, fluctuations in natural gas prices and consistently higher prices than coal have limited the nation’s reliance on it. Dependence on natural gas, however, is expected to increase as advances in natural gas drilling technology boost domestic supplies, holding prices down.

Hydraulic fracturing for natural gas offers economic benefits to local communities, but its rapid expansion near populated areas has raised some questions about regulation. Since states are responsible for environmental protection during fracking procedures, lawmakers look to weigh the economic benefits against potential harm to humans, water resources and the environment.

To promote job growth and increase tax revenues, legislators in Alabama, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Utah and Wyoming adopted resolutions last year urging Congress to continue Safe Drinking Water Act exemptions for fracturing operations.

While EPA conducts a nationwide study to assess the environmental and public health effects of hydraulic fracturing, state agencies continue to regulate, permit and enforce activities related to natural gas development. Legislatures continue to consider bills that promote, regulate, monitor or tax this growing industry.

## Saving Tax Refunds

**Form 8888** Allocation of Refund (Including Savings Bond Purchases)OMB No. 1545-0047  
 Department of the Treasury Internal Revenue Service Attach to Form 1040, Form 1040-EZ, Form 1042EZ, Form 1040NR, Form 1040NR-EZ, Form 1042-SR, or Form 1042-PR. See instructions. **10** Allocation Sequence No. 56  
 Your social security number

**Part I Direct Deposit**  
 Complete this part if you want us to directly deposit a portion of your refund to one or more accounts.

**1a** Amount to be deposited in first account **1a**

**b** Routing number   c  Checking  Savings

**d** Account number

**2a** Amount to be deposited in second account **2a**

**b** Routing number   c  Checking  Savings

**d** Account number

**3a** Amount to be deposited in third account **3a**

**b** Routing number   c  Checking  Savings

**d** Account number

**Part II U.S. Series I Savings Bond Purchases**  
 Complete this part if you want to buy paper bonds with a portion of your refund.  
 If a name is entered on line 5c or 6c below, co-ownership will be assumed unless the beneficiary box is checked.  
 See instructions for more details.

**4** Amount to be used for bond purchases for yourself (and your spouse, if filing jointly) **4**

**5a** Amount to be used to buy bonds for yourself, your spouse, or someone else **5a**

**b** Enter the owner's name (First Last) for the bond registration

**c** If you would like to add a co-owner or beneficiary, enter the name here (First Last). If beneficiary, also check here

**6a** Amount to be used to buy bonds for yourself, your spouse, or someone else **6a**

Tax time is right around the corner, and this year, struggling families have a new way to save some money for their kids’ futures: purchasing U.S. Series I Savings Bonds with their tax refunds.

Since 2007, taxpayers have been able to use Form 8888 to deposit their federal refund directly into three different accounts, including checking, savings and retirement accounts. (California and Maryland have similar state laws.) Now, federal taxpayers also can use the 8888 form to buy the bonds.

Savings bonds can be purchased for as little as \$50 up to \$5,000, and the buyer is not required to hold a bank account. Bonds are protected against inflation and pay interest for 30 years, but are redeemable after one year. When cashed in, they can be used for anything, including college tuition or a home mortgage. Starting this year, bonds can be purchased as a gift for others, including children or grandchildren.

The Doorways 2 Dreams Fund worked with the U.S. Treasury, the IRS and the Bureau of Public Debt to develop the savings bond option. The organization works to improve low-income families’ use and understanding of financial services. The nonprofit conducted pilot projects between 2007 and 2010 and discovered that 52 percent of those who purchased bonds had no savings at all, and 41 percent had never before saved their refunds.

Since the savings bond option costs states nothing, but can help people build their personal financial assets, state lawmakers may want to promote it to their constituents through their newsletters and websites.

**SL ONLINE**

Check out more resources, including outreach materials, at [www.ncsl.org/magazine](http://www.ncsl.org/magazine).

## What Do You Make?

**\$37,530**

State Legislator

**\$167,280**

Chief Executives

**\$67,430**

Accountants and Auditors

**\$69,240**

Budget Analysts

**\$96,320**

Economists

**\$64,680**

Urban and Regional Planners

**\$50,470**

Social Workers

**\$129,020**

Lawyers

**\$103,990**

Judges

**\$76,990**

Political Science Professors

**\$55,150**

High School Teachers

**\$80,950**

Athletes

**\$47,270**

Fire Fighters

Note: These estimates are from data collected from employers in all industries and from rural areas and cities in every state.

Source: "May 2009 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates United States," Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Jan. 2011.

### SL ONLINE

Check out more salary information at [www.ncsl.org/magazine](http://www.ncsl.org/magazine).

## Recreating State Government

A new crop of governors and legislators are confronting an old problem: dire state finances as the recession, officially ended in June 2009, drags on into a new fiscal year in the states. Federal stimulus funds are drying up. There will be \$37.9 billion less in federal stimulus money next fiscal year than in FY 2011, and after that it will be gone. Congress has signaled it is closing the federal pocketbook to states. And the looming budget gap starting in July is pegged at some \$82.1 billion, according to NCSL.

True, tax receipts are on the upswing in some states, albeit slowly, but historically, states struggle to regain economic stability long after a recession ends, and collections are still about 12 percent below where they were before the recession began. After addressing budget gaps of some \$89 billion last year and \$174.1 billion the year before, there is little cushion left. As legislatures convened from Albany to Sacramento, state jobs, pensions, education, prisons and more were on the chopping block.

Here are some of the ideas being talked about in states as of late January:

◆ In New York, Governor Cuomo recommended \$8.9 billion in spending cuts, including \$1.5 billion to K-12 education and \$982 million to Medicaid. He is demanding concessions from state employee unions and predicting 9,800 layoffs without them. He is also proposing a 20 percent reduction in the number of state agencies, commissions and authorities, improved tax collections, and an enhanced lottery as ways to plug the state's \$10 billion deficit.

◆ California Governor Jerry Brown wants to cut \$1.4 billion from the state's university system, \$1.7 billion from the state's health sys-

tem and \$1.5 billion from the welfare-to-work program. State employee pay cuts of 8 percent to 10 percent would save \$7 billion.

◆ Illinois lawmakers in a lame duck session temporarily increased the individual income tax rate 66 percent, from 3 percent to 5 percent, to help plug the state's \$13 billion deficit. Coupled with a hike in corporate taxes, these changes will generate about \$6.8 billion a year for the state, which also is holding spending growth to 2 percent.

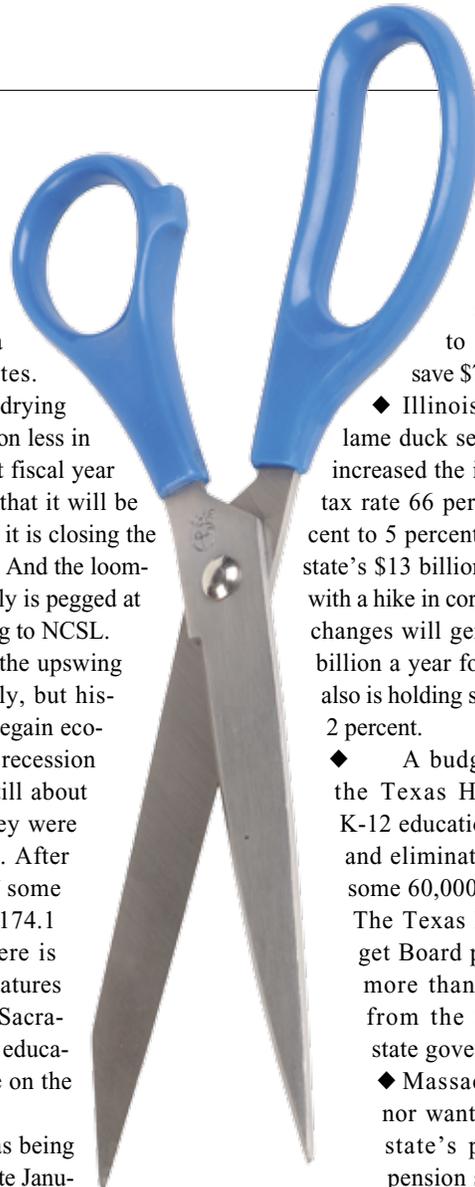
◆ A budget developed by the Texas House would cut K-12 education by \$9.8 billion and eliminate financial aid to some 60,000 college students. The Texas Legislative Budget Board proposed cutting more than 9,600 positions from the 241,000 jobs in state government.

◆ Massachusetts' governor wants to overhaul the state's public employee pension system to save \$5

billion over the next 30 years.

◆ Florida's deficit could reach \$4 billion, according to some observers. The Legislature wants to balance the budget through cuts at the same time the new governor is pressing for corporate tax cuts and a 19 percent reduction in property taxes. Florida does not have an income tax.

◆ Nevada is facing the largest budget deficit in the nation—54 percent of the general fund. The governor wants to borrow against insurance premium taxes to raise \$190 million and make significant cuts to K-12 and higher education. State employee salaries will drop 4.6 percent because of mandated furlough days.



# Apology Anthology

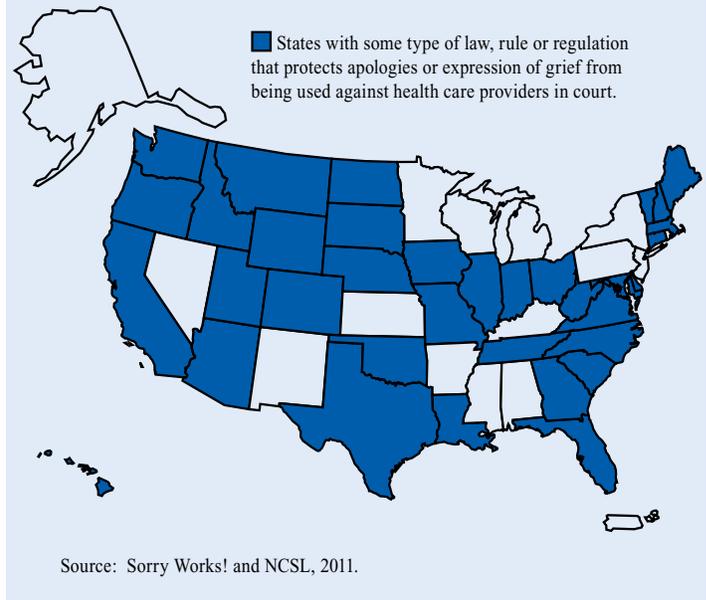
After something goes wrong with a patient, medical professionals may wish to express their apologies or condolences to patients and their families. Nearly six in 10 doctors say they have done so, disclosing to patients that a serious error has occurred, according to a 2006 survey.

Many doctors are advised, if not ordered, however, to refrain from making such statements to patients and families, in case the matter ends up in court. Such expressions may be used against them in medical malpractice cases as evidence of wrongdoing or guilt.

Some studies, including one at the University of Michigan Health System, have shown that allowing medical professionals to express their sympathy and apologies actually reduces malpractice lawsuits. An organization called Sorry Works! was created in February 2005 to advocate for full disclosure by physicians, hospitals and insurers when medical errors occur in the belief that doing so is an effective way to reduce malpractice lawsuits, liability costs and even medical errors.

Thirty-five states, the District of Columbia and Guam have some

## I'M SORRY STATES



type of “I’m sorry” law or regulation, according to Sorry Works! They vary in what they protect, but generally cover medical professionals’ apologies or sympathetic gestures from being used in court.