

# People & Politics

The Virginia House of Delegates unanimously elected G. Paul Nardo clerk in June, succeeding succeeding Bruce Jamerson, the 20-year veteran clerk who died on Easter. The chief justice of the Virginia Supreme Court administered the oath of office to Nardo, who became the chamber's 21st clerk, after he was escorted to the well of the House by a committee of delegates. Nardo has a long tenure in state government. He was chief of staff to Speaker William J. Howell for 11 years, was speech writer for former Governor George Allen, and was legislative director of former Representative Herbert Bateman.

New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez has appointed Jim Hall to replace Representative Jeannette Wallace, who died in April. Hall, 67, has served as a Los Alamos County councilor, school board member and county manager. He also has worked at the Los Alamos National Laboratory and was a consultant to the U.S. Department of Energy. He headed up the state Information Technology Management Office under Governor Gary Johnson. Wallace died in April at age 77. She served 20 years in the Legislature, and, according to her successor, "looked at the solutions people were proposing and saw the art of the possible. I'll do the same thing."

In August 2008, Utah became the first state to go to a four-day work week. That's about to end after Labor Day following a veto override of a bill requiring state agencies to move at least one office to the five-day work week. Initially, the four-day plan, ordered by then-Governor John Huntsman, was expected to save \$3 million a year in energy and other savings. But actual savings were around \$1 million. Governor Gary Herbert vetoed the bill, co-sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Scott Jenkins, in May, hoping to expand services online and by phone. Managers will be able to decide how many and which offices will be open five days a week, and how

many people are required to man them. "You want to make sure you're providing good customer service," said Human Resources Director Jeff Herring. "Based on the cost, availability and customer service, it really became the choice we had to make."

Illinois Representative Mark Beaubien, 68, died unexpectedly in June while at a Republican fundraiser. A graduate of Northwestern University Law School, Beaubien was first appointed to the House in 1996, and subsequently won six consecutive terms. He served as assistant Republican leader and was the GOP's chief budget negotiator in the House. Beaubien was respected on both sides of the aisle. "He was absolutely nonpartisan," said Representative Jack Franks, a Democratic colleague. Republican Leader Tom Cross said Beaubien was "loved around the Capitol for his brilliance, attention to detail and ability to work with all legislators on very important issues facing our state."

Kentucky Representative Dewayne Bunch has been moved to a rehabilitation center in Georgia after suffering a critical brain injury while trying to break up a fight between two students at the high school where he taught. Bunch's condition was "extremely critical" when he was transported to the hospital following the assault. He was the first teacher to respond to a fight in the cafeteria during breakfast between two boys, one 15, the other 16. The two students were charged with assault and sent to a juvenile facility. Bunch, a math and science teacher, returned from a tour in Iraq as a National Guardsman and ran for the House in 2010. "Dewayne is an outstanding legislator and is passionate about education," said House Republican Leader Jeff Hoover.

A 91-year-old New Hampshire freshman Representative resigned after statements he made regarding funding for the mentally ill provoked public outrage and pressure to quit.

Martin Harty said he doesn't support state funding for "the crazy people" who should be sent to "Siberia." Acknowledging his "big mouth caused this furor," he said he couldn't serve effectively with the "slightly unfavorable publicity" he provoked. Harty's comments were made to a program manager of an agency providing behavioral health and developmental services. House Speaker William O'Brien said Harty offered his resignation in person. "We both agreed that this is what is best for the House to move forward and focus on critical issues," O'Brien said.

Also in New Hampshire, former representative Jennifer Daler won an upset in a special election to replace Robert Mead who resigned to become chief of staff to House Speaker William O'Brien. Daler, a Democrat, served two years in the House, and won the seat in May in a district considered the 16th most Republican of all 103 New Hampshire House districts. Her 58-42 percent landslide victory was touted as a message of dissatisfaction with GOP leadership. Mead, 73, resigned one day after taking the oath of office for his third term, donating his \$100 a year legislative salary to charity and assuming his new \$80,000-plus annual salaried position with the speaker.

It allegedly came to fisticuffs on the floor of the Illinois House on the last day of the Legislature over a utility rate-hike bill. Representative Kyle McCarter, a Republican, says Democrat Representative Mike Jacobs hit him in the chest after a floor speech McCarter made stating the bill was swiftly passed out of the committee chaired by Jacobs, whose father is a utility lobbyist. McCarter alleges Jacobs came over, used profanity, pointed his finger and then punched the Republican in the chest. Jacobs denies there was a punch, calling it a "dust-up." McCarter filed a report with the Capitol police. They are investigating. Governor Pat Quinn says he will veto the bill.

# Giving Kids a Boost

The use of child safety seats has lowered infant deaths by 71 percent and toddler deaths by 54 percent from 1988 to 1994, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Still, car crashes are the leading cause of death among children.

All states and the District of Columbia require car seats. Each state, however, has different requirements. For the past decade, child safety seat requirements have been divided into three stages: infants using rear-facing seats, toddlers using forward-facing seats, and children using booster seats.

No state currently requires children over age 1 to ride in a rear-facing seat, but state regulations may soon be changing. A new guideline by the American Academy of Pediatrics advises parents to keep children in rear-facing seats until age 2, or until they reach the maximum height and weight for their seat. Rear-facing seats best protect the head, neck and torso in a front-on crash.

The academy also advises using booster seats until children are 4 feet 9 inches tall and between 8 and 12 years old. Booster seats adjust the car's seat belt to best fit a child's size—across the upper thighs, shoulder and chest rather than the stomach, neck or face.

After children have graduated from booster seats to seat belts, they should remain in the back seat through age 12, according to the CDC.

Forty-seven states and Washington, D.C., require children to be secured in a booster seat until they reach a certain age. Arizona, Florida, South Dakota and Puerto Rico do not have a specific booster seat law. Legislation died at the close of this year's session in the Florida House Transportation and Highway Safety Subcommittee that would have required booster seats for children 4 to 7 years old who are shorter than 4 feet 9 inches.

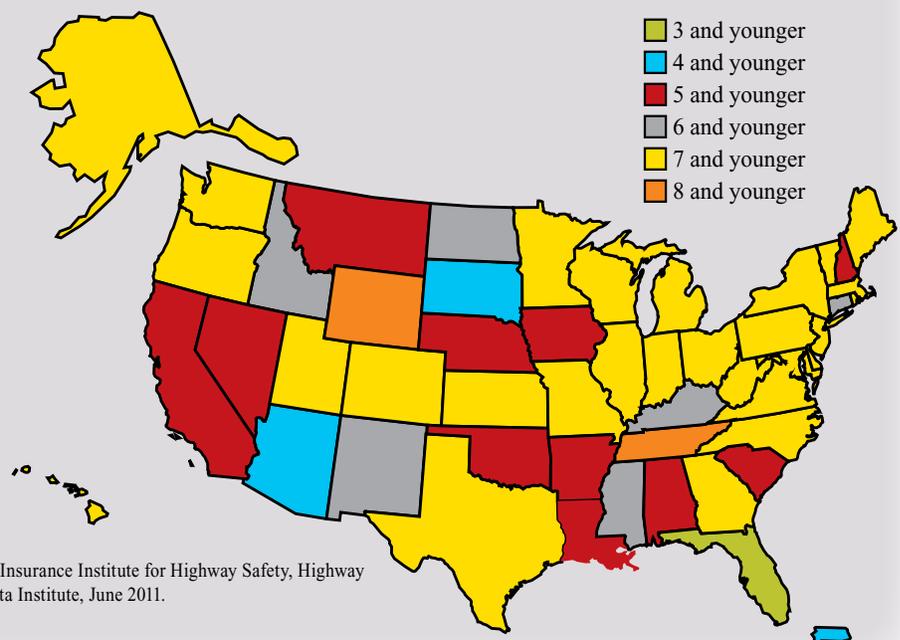
## SL ONLINE

For more details on state laws, go to [www.ncsl.org/magazine](http://www.ncsl.org/magazine).



## THE INS AND OUTS OF SAFETY SEATS

The age at which children are required to be in child restraint or booster seats, although there are state exceptions and variations based on weight, height and seat placement in the vehicle.



Source: Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Highway Loss Data Institute, June 2011.



## School Shots

As parents prepare their kids for a new school year, they have yet another thing to remember: Be sure their shots are up-to-date. To protect them from a variety of diseases and to protect the community from an outbreak of disease, all states require children to receive certain vaccinations before starting school. These requirements catch the children who did not receive immunizations as infants.

States set school immunization requirements, usually based on recommendations by the national Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, a group of 15 health experts appointed by the secretary of Health and Human Services.

Vaccines are one of the 10 greatest public health achievements of the 20th century, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. They are credited with saving millions of lives and preventing hundreds of millions of cases of disease. In addition, for every \$1 spent on immunizations, \$16 is saved in health care costs, according to the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials.

The vaccine against meningococcal disease is one of the newest requirements for students. Currently, 37 states and the District of Columbia require college students to receive either information on meningococcal disease or the vaccine. An advisory committee report in 2000 identified college freshmen living in dorms at a high risk of getting the disease, and in 2005 also recommended that young adolescents and students entering high school also receive the vaccine. Twenty states now include this younger group in their requirements. So far this year, eight states have bills pending to establish or modify laws on meningitis.

Vaccine requirements, however, are not without controversy. Some people oppose mandatory vaccinations, believing, among other things, that the risk of an adverse reaction is greater than the risk of contracting an infectious disease. Some opponents also contend vaccine requirements infringe on individual rights.

In response to these concerns, 20 states grant philosophical or personal belief exemptions from immunization requirements. Every state grants exemptions for medical reasons, and all, except Mississippi and West Virginia, grant religious exemptions.

In an effort to tighten exemptions, Washington state lawmakers in May passed a bill requiring parents claiming a personal belief exemption to show proof they have consulted a medical professional before their children are allowed to opt out of required immunizations.

## Digital Democracy



Young people live in a digital world. They text, tweet and friend with ease. And, it turns out, this may be good for government. The online world can lead to real-world engagement. According to new research, students who use the Internet often are more likely to be civically involved.

Being part of online communities, political or not, exposes young people to diverse viewpoints and issues and “is related to higher levels of civic engagement,” says Joe Kahne, an education professor at Mills College and author of the study. This, he says, is good for democracy.

Researchers surveyed more than 2,500 young people and followed more than 400 of them from high schools across California for three-and-a-half years. They examined whether the participants used blogs or social networking sites to discuss issues, the Internet to get information about political or social issues, or e-mail to talk about these issues.

The study debunked some commonly held beliefs about teenagers and the digital world. Although many believe kids who spend a lot of time online become socially isolated, the opposite appears to be true. Young people involved in online communities were more likely to volunteer in their communities and participate in charitable work.

High schoolers involved online were either exposed to different viewpoints (57 percent) or none at all (34 percent), but few (5 percent) indicated they were exposed to only like-minded opinions—the so-called “echo chamber.”

The study also looked at young people’s ability to learn how to discern, interpret and apply information from the Web. Students who took some training in class on how to navigate, evaluate and participate in this online world increased their understanding of diverse perspectives and improved their likelihood of getting involved with civic and political issues online.

The results of the study—funded by the MacArthur Foundation and the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Education—were released by a new research network of scholars called Youth and Participatory Politics. The group will continue to investigate how digital media affect the political and civic engagement of young people. Stay connected.

# Funeral Protests: Offensive but Protected

The Supreme Court ruled in March that the Westboro Baptist Church's protest at a military funeral in Maryland, while offensive to most, was protected under the First Amendment. The protestors alerted local authorities beforehand, complied with police guidance, stayed 1,000 feet from the ceremony and, according to the high court, did not interfere with the funeral itself.

The court did not rule on the validity of Maryland's new law that restricts funeral protests, since lawmakers passed it after the protest in question.

Currently, 45 states have laws prohibiting funeral protests. California, Florida, Idaho, Louisiana, Maine, Rhode Island and Virginia ban funeral protests without specific time-and-place restrictions. The remaining 38 states restrict when—from one hour before the service to two hours after—and where—from 100 feet to 1,500 feet—funeral protests may occur.

Lawmakers in 13 of these states are currently considering increasing the distance or lengthening the time allowed for demonstrations. Legislators in California and Florida may add time-and-place restrictions to their current laws.

The five states without prohibitions—Alaska, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon and West Virginia—currently have proposed legislation addressing the issue and creating time-and-place restrictions on demonstrations.

Federal legislation has also been introduced to extend the picketing ban to five hours before and after a military funeral.



This year was the deadliest tornado season since 1936, and now we're in hurricane season, which officially began June 1 and lasts through Nov. 30.

## 36.8 million

The number of people most threatened by Atlantic hurricanes—the 12 percent of Americans who live near the coast in the states stretching from North Carolina to Texas.

## 163%

Growth rate in this coastal population between 1960 and 2010.

## 12

The number of hurricanes last year.

## 5

The number of major hurricanes—Category 3 or higher—last year.

## 0

The number that made landfall in the United States last year.

## 1950

The year the Weather Bureau began naming hurricanes. Names rotate in a six-year cycle.

## 2005

Busiest hurricane season on record, forcing use of the Greek alphabet for naming purposes for the first time—28 named storms, 15 hurricanes, four reached Category 5 status.

## 5

The number of names the World Meteorological Organization has retired after they caused extensive damage: Dennis, Katrina, Rita, Stan and Wilma.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Hurricane Center, Atlantic Oceanography and Meteorological Laboratory.

## Union Membership, Just the Facts

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has a plethora of information on union membership. Here are a few findings, based on data from 2010:

- ◆ 11.9 percent of U.S. workers were union members, down from 12.3 percent in 2009.
- ◆ 12.6 percent of men and 11.1 percent of women were members.
- ◆ 36.2 percent of public sector workers and 6.9 percent of private sector workers were members.
- ◆ Government employees (783,000) comprised about half of the 1.6 million workers who were covered by a union contract but were not members of a union.
- ◆ Members of unions earned, on average, \$917 a week.
- ◆ Those who were not represented by unions earned \$717 a week.
- ◆ Eight states had membership rates below 5 percent: North Carolina (3.2 percent), Arkansas and Georgia (4 percent each), Louisiana (4.3 percent), Mississippi (4.5 percent), South Carolina and Virginia (4.6 percent each) and Tennessee (4.7 percent).
- ◆ Six states had rates greater than 17 percent: New York (24.2 percent), Alaska (22.9 percent), Hawaii (21.8 percent), Washington (19.4 percent), California (17.5 percent) and New Jersey (17.1 percent).
- ◆ About half the 14.7 million union members lived in six states: California, New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Ohio and New Jersey.

SL ONLINE

For more information about union membership, go to [www.ncsl.org/magazine](http://www.ncsl.org/magazine).