



THE CORINTHIAN STYLE WYOMING CAPITOL was finished in 1890, the first year of Wyoming statehood. Its cost: \$136,275.12. Now it's on the National Register of Historic Places and needs some interior improvements. How costs go up. The state will spend about \$60 million to install a fire-suppression system and update the heating, wiring, plumbing and air conditioning in the 122-year-old building. Lawmakers are figuring out how to make the improvements and still work in the building. They are also considering a \$70 million appropriation to build a new state office building nearby.

WHEN THE NOVEMBER ELECTION PRODUCED A 20-20 TIE IN THE VIRGINIA SENATE, Republicans contended they were in control of the chamber by virtue of the tie-breaking vote of the GOP lieutenant governor. But Democrats said not so fast. They planned to file suit over the lieutenant governor's right to cast votes on chamber organization, the budget and judicial appointments, asserting they have the Virginia Constitution behind them. "Just two weeks ago, the citizens of Virginia elected 20 Democrats and 20 Republicans to the Senate," said Senator **Richard Saslaw**, the Democratic leader. "They have called for divided government, not one-party rule." But GOP Caucus Chair Senator **Ryan McDougle** disputed that, saying that the "lieutenant governor has the right to vote" under the existing structure. "I mean, it's just not an issue." Before the election, Democrats controlled the Senate 22-18.

TIM MASSANELLI WORKED FOR 19 SPEAKERS during his 36 years as parliamentarian for the **Arkansas** House. In November, he stepped down from his job because of poor health, but members of the House are hoping the 78-year-old will return when the fiscal session starts Feb. 13. He's been described as "brilliant," "a master politician," "irreplaceable." Former speaker **Shane Broadway** called him "invaluable, he's an institution." Former speaker **Bob Johnson** said, "Tim is very wise. ... He is always willing to give some solicited or unsolicited advice. You could take it or leave it. I chose to take it at almost about 100 percent. ... Tim Massanelli, I would say is irreplaceable." Massanelli had something to say about that when leading a group of freshmen around the Capitol and stopping before a black and white photograph of legislators from 1925. "They each served here. Everyone of them thought this place couldn't run without 'em. ... They're all dead. This place ain't missed a lick. It won't miss a lick when I'm gone, and it won't miss a lick when you're gone. That's the nature of the system."



A GROUP OF BIPARTISAN FLORIDA LAWMAKERS—three Democrats and two Republicans—have formed a new Everglades Caucus to press for restoration of the environmentally significant subtropical wetlands in the southern part of the state. "No one is happy with the pace at which the Everglades are being restored," said Representative **Steve Perman**. He and Senator Thad Altman are the founders of the caucus, which includes Senator **Maria Lorts Sachs**, and Representatives **Gayle Harrell** and **Lori Berman**. They expect more members to join. "The state of Florida has really come to the table in many ways, but our federal partners have fallen short," Altman said. The new caucus will meet at the start of the legislative session and will invite various environmental groups to press the state and federal government to continue restoration efforts, stymied by funding and legal challenges.

THE GREAT STATE OF ... CHICAGO? That's the idea behind a bill introduced by Representative **Bill Mitchell** who thinks that **Illinois** and Cook County should be divided into different states because of the "different and firmly seated views" Chicagoans hold compared with their more conservative neighbors in the rest of the state. Mitchell's concern centers on Chicago's higher tax rates and stricter gun laws. Chicago's "liberal policies are an insult to the traditional values" of the rest of the state, he said. "When I talk to constituents one of the biggest things I hear is 'Chicago should be its own state.' ... Downstate families are tired of Chicago dictating its views to the rest of us." Plus, there's precedent: Maine seceded from Massachusetts in 1819, Mitchell's bill states. If passed, it would go on the ballot, and if successful there, it would require approval by Congress and the president.

FORMER MASSACHUSETTS HOUSE SPEAKER SALVATORE DIMASI REPORTED TO FEDERAL PRISON in Kentucky to begin serving an eight-year sentence for his conviction on conspiracy, fraud and extortion charges. A federal jury in June found DiMasi guilty of steering two state contracts totaling \$17.5 million to a software company in exchange for \$65,000. Prosecutors claimed he also would have benefited from hundreds of thousands of dollars more the software company paid to others involved in the scheme. DiMasi was also ordered to forfeit \$65,000 and serve two years of supervised release following his sentence.

WHEN THE WASHINGTON LEGISLATURE WAS CALLED INTO SPECIAL SESSION in November to find \$2 billion in cuts to the \$8.7 billion discretionary budget, some 2,000 people descended on the Capitol to protest cuts and tax loopholes in an expansion of the Occupy Wall Street movement. Following a morning of music, speeches and "teach-ins," the crowd dispersed to march around the building in an effort to disrupt a legislative hearing while others went inside the Capitol in an attempt to occupy the rotunda. Protesters were expelled from the building after about two hours.