

# 1 OUT OF GAS

Odorless and colorless, carbon monoxide can seep into a home from malfunctioning gas stoves, furnaces, fireplaces and generators or when cars are left running in attached garages, catching residents unaware. Mild symptoms can feel like the flu—headache, fatigue, nausea and dizziness—but continued exposure to high levels can kill. Nearly 500 people die each year from the dangerous gas and 15,000 more are exposed to it, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Twenty-five states require carbon monoxide detectors in certain residential buildings. In addition, Virginia allows tenants to install carbon monoxide detectors in rental properties; Texas requires detectors in certain day-care centers, group day-care homes, and family homes; and Connecticut requires them in all schools.

# 3 A GOLDEN IDEA

The first 1,000 donors of \$100 or more to Share in the Care—the Colorado Capitol restoration campaign—received a handcrafted, limited-edition holiday ornament depicting the state’s beautiful, but damaged, Capitol dome built in 1901. It’s the first of four designed to mark the progress of the restoration. In 2010 the General Assembly appropriated \$4 million from the State Historical Fund for the project. Share in the Care hopes to raise another \$3 million. Beneath a thin layer of gold leaf, the dome’s exterior structure and detailed decoration are made of cast iron, which has been damaged by the common freeze-thaw cycle of Colorado’s sunny winters. The ornament was sponsored by BP America Inc.



# 5

## LIONS AND TIGERS AND BEARS ... OH MY

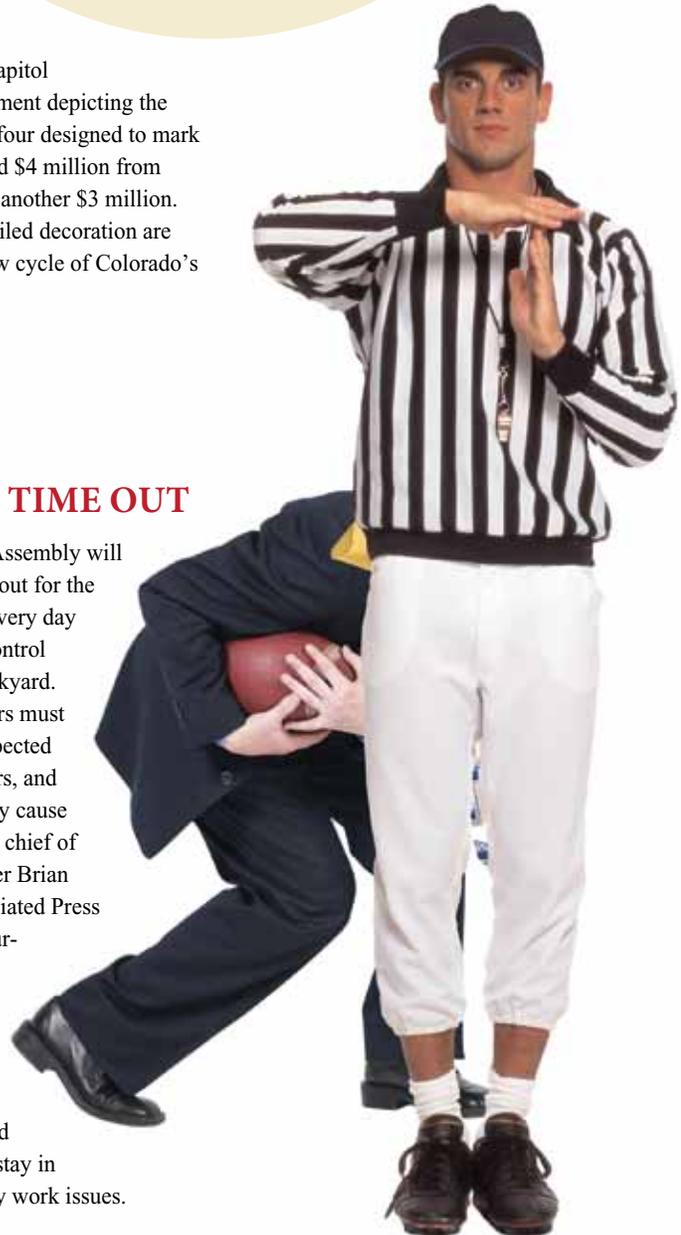
Debate will likely be fierce in Ohio as lawmakers consider whether to ban the ownership of exotic animals, and what to do with dangerous ones already in the state. The lack of any exotic animal regulations in Ohio concerned many after last fall’s tragic incident that resulted in the deaths of dozens of lions, bears and rare tigers freed by their suicidal owner. In response, Representative Debbie Phillips introduced a bill to prohibit the acquisition of dangerous exotic animals, including large cats, primates, constricting and venomous snakes, crocodiles and alligators. It also would require current owners to register their animals with the Division of Wildlife.

# 2 NOT FOR SALE

Human trafficking is a lucrative and fast-growing criminal enterprise worldwide, according to the United Nation’s Office on Drugs and Crime. It is defined by the office as “an act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring or receiving a person through a use of force, coercion or other means, for the purpose of exploiting them.” Sexual exploitation is its most common form (79 percent), followed by forced labor (18 percent). And states are not doing enough to protect the many children who get traded for sex and domestic work, according to a new study by the advocacy group Shared Hope International. Former U.S. Representative Linda Smith of Washington founded the nonprofit “to help women and children enslaved in the sex trade” through education, public awareness and working with local organizations, according to the group’s website. It looked at each state’s laws to protect children and punish the abusers and graded states based on their findings. No state received an A and more than half received Ds or Fs. Texas scored the highest, followed by Missouri, Illinois and Washington—the only states to receive Bs.

# 4 TIME OUT

The Indiana General Assembly will be taking a short time out for the Super Bowl. It’s not every day you have the out-of-control event in your own backyard. Out-of-town lawmakers must make room for the expected rush of 100,000 visitors, and parking and traffic may cause gridlock. Julie Halbig, chief of staff for House Speaker Brian Bosma, told the Associated Press that lawmakers met during several Fridays in January to avoid any delay of game for a mid-March sine die. State employees who work at the Capitol and nearby buildings will stay in formation, fielding any work issues.



# 6 PARENT POWER

Idaho teachers are working under several new rules passed by lawmakers last year, one being a new merit system to reward teachers that go above and beyond. The new law required districts to come up with a system to rate teachers, using a variety of criteria, from student test scores to student graduation and attendance rates. At least 29 school districts, according to the Associated Press, have included involvement with parents as one criterion. For example, the Challis district set a goal that every teacher contact their students' parents at least twice every three months. In Gooding, 25 percent of teachers' bonuses will be based on whether they can get their students' parents to at least three conferences during the school year. Critics question some of the changes. "Idaho teachers know that parents are very, very important in the education of their child," said Penni Cyr, president of the Idaho Education Association. "But there also factors that are outside of a teacher's control. So is it reasonable for holding teachers responsible for getting parents to a conference or to withhold pay because parents can't attend conferences for whatever reason?"



## ROBO REVOLT

Attorneys general in at least 48 states are opposing a bill in Congress to allow automated "robocalls" to cell phones. They argue the calls are intrusive and reach too far into private lives. The Mobile Informational Call Act of 2011 would amend the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, which bars businesses from sending robocalls and text messages to cell phones, as do many state laws. The bill would preempt state laws and could override do not call state lists that block charities and other phone solicitors.

# 7

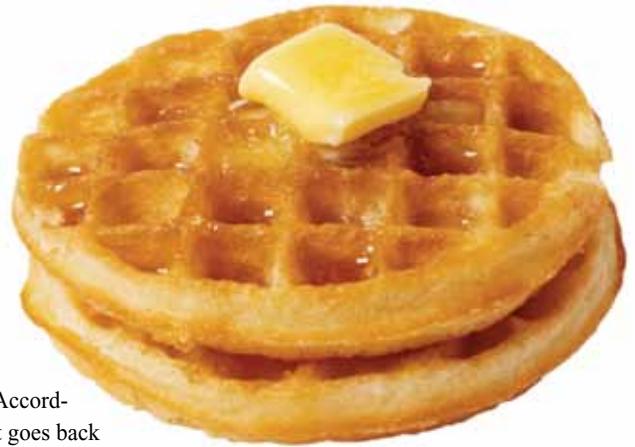
## NOT QUITE A QUARTER

After last fall's elections in Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey and Virginia, female lawmakers—now at 1,740—make up 23.6 percent of all state legislators. That's down 68 seats from the peak year of 2010. The states with the highest percentage of female lawmakers are: Colorado (41 percent), Vermont (38.3 percent), Arizona (34.4 percent), Hawaii (34.2 percent) and Washington (32 percent). Of all the women serving in legislatures, 60 percent are Democrats, 39 percent are Republicans and 1 percent are third party members or nonpartisan lawmakers from Nebraska.

# 8

## IS BUTTER BETTER?

In Wisconsin, serving colored oleo or margarine in place of butter at a restaurant, school or even in a prison, is prohibited by law, unless it is at the request of the customer (or student or prisoner). It carries a fine and jail time. According to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, it goes back to 1895, when the Dairy State—currently the No. 2 producer of butter—banned butter-colored margarine altogether. That prohibition sent Wisconsin "housewives packing boxes of colored margarine into car trunks, often at liquor stores that were part of the oleo black market." That law was repealed in 1967, but the substituting one slipped through and stayed on the books, although it has never been enforced. Calling the restriction "silly, antiquated and anti-free market," Representative Dale Kooyenga is co-sponsoring a bill to repeal it. The cow lobby is herding. Butter prices have gone up in the last few years, even though consumption, currently at five pounds per capita, is a far cry from the 18 pounds consumed by every American in 1910. And the average weight back then was what?



# 9

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## LEGAL AND LEGIT

Colorado became the first state, in late October, to issue business licenses to medical marijuana dispensaries. Advocates say the state's regulations for the new businesses are very comprehensive, and will protect owners from federal raids, since federal law does not recognize any legal use of the plant. Patients pay \$35 to get on the medical-marijuana registry. The next hurdle? Dispensary owners are looking for banks that will accept their money. Fearing federal charges of money laundering and drug trafficking, banks are hesitant to open accounts for this new industry. There are currently 16 states that allow some form of legalized medical marijuana.

# 10

