

## 1

**WHEN HOUSING HURTS**

Nearly a quarter of all working households spend more than half their income on housing. That rate increased significantly between 2008 and 2010, according to the Center for Housing Policy, which looked at census data. Despite falling home prices and values, incomes declined even more. Renters fared even worse, with higher rents and lower incomes. The five states in 2010 with the largest share of working households carrying a “severe housing cost burden” (monthly housing costs exceeding 50 percent of income) were: California (34 percent), Florida (33 percent), New Jersey (32 percent), Hawaii (30 percent) and Nevada (29 percent). Maine was the only state that experienced a decrease in this rate during the same time frame.



## 2

**FANTASY KICKS OFF**

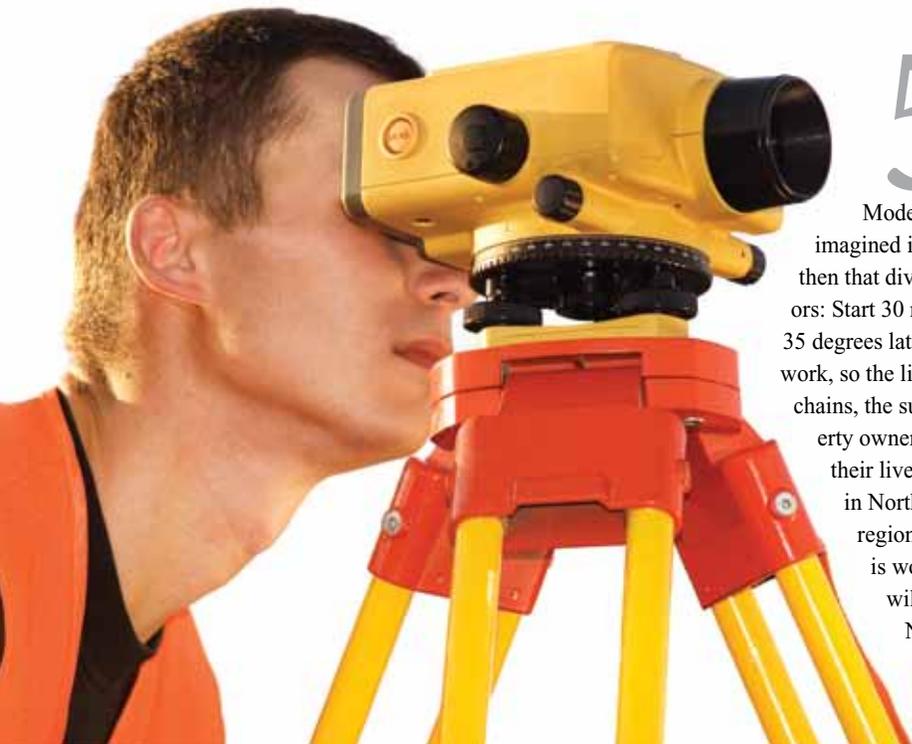
Just think, football season is right around the corner, and that includes the much-loved fantasy football contests. But fans beware! In some states, these competitions are a crime, although that may be changing. Currently, Arizona, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Montana and Vermont outlaw fantasy competitions. Lawmakers in Maryland and Louisiana, however, have considered bills that would exempt fantasy competitions from certain gambling crimes and criminal punishment. Maryland’s bill is still working its way through the legislative process. Louisiana’s bill never made it out of the House of Representatives in 2010. According to Fantasy Sports Business.com and U.S. News & World Report, more than 27 million Americans play fantasy sports, making it a \$1 billion a year business.



## 5

**MAINTAIN YOUR BOUNDARIES**

Modern surveyors, using equipment George II of England could not have imagined in 1735, have discovered errors in the boundary line drawn back then that divided Carolina in two. The king had specific orders for the surveyors: Start 30 miles south of the mouth of the Cape Fear River, move northwest to 35 degrees latitude, then head west until they hit the Pacific. ...Well, that didn’t work, so the line over the years twisted and turned a bit as surveyors used stakes, chains, the sun and the stars. It all seems rather amusing, except to the 93 property owners who could lose their South Carolina identity—and maybe even their livelihoods. Gas prices are 30 cents higher and fireworks are illegal in North Carolina, driving business south to stores in the “questionable” region. The states set up a Joint Boundary Commission years ago, which is working to address the property owners’ concerns. When finished, it will submit a new state line to the South Carolina Legislature and the North Carolina Council of State for their approval, according to the Associated Press.

**FRACKING FACTS**

## 3

FracFocus, a website on the chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing (fracking), recently celebrated its first birthday. Hydraulic fracturing is a process of injecting water, sand and chemicals into the cracks in rocks to release the natural gas and oil. The chemicals used in the procedure have been the focus of growing concern among the public and environmentalists. After one year, 150 participating companies have provided information on 13,000 wells in 20 states. The website depends on companies voluntarily following the disclosure guidelines for each state in which they operate. Colorado, Louisiana, Montana, North Dakota, Pennsylvania and Texas, according to Politico, require companies to provide information to the website. Arkansas and Wyoming don’t name the website in regulations, but many companies fulfill those states’ reporting requirements by providing information to the site. The registry is a joint project of the Ground Water Protection Council and the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission.

## 4

**STATE EXAMPLE**

The Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation found only a modest increase in costs for the state’s taxpayers since the legislature passed the health care reform law in 2006. The study, according to the Associated Press, reported direct state spending attributable to the law grew from a little more than \$1 billion in FY 2006 to more than \$1.9 billion in FY 2011. Federal reimbursements brought the state spending down to about 1.4 percent of the total state budget in FY 2011. The foundation found the law has been funded largely by shifting money away from the state’s old free care pool and other supplemental payments and into traditional health insurance for the uninsured.

# 6

## UNDUE BURDEN UNDOES LAW

A federal court has thrown out Colorado's law, passed in 2010, encouraging online out-of-state retailers to collect sales taxes from Colorado customers. Failing to do so would have resulted in a heap of paperwork requirements, including keeping account of the amounts purchased by each customer in the state and notifying them of what they owe. U.S. District Judge Robert Blackburn found the law and its rules "impose an undue burden on interstate commerce," making them unconstitutional.



# 8

## COUNTY-BY-COUNTY

The University of Wisconsin, along with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, has released the third annual County Health Rankings. The study assessed a county's health based on four factors—health behavior, clinical care, social and economic conditions, and physical environment. The report lists statistics for every county in the country on such things as death rates, education levels, air pollution rates, income levels, availability of healthy foods, etc. The rankings included several new measures this year, such as how many fast food restaurants are in the county and the level of physical inactivity among residents. Researchers hope local officials will use the findings to target efforts at improving specific problems prevalent in their communities. The report can be found at [www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org).

# 10

## NO LONGER NO. 2

A new report by The Tax Foundation ranks the 34 developed countries in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development based on their corporate tax rates. According to the research organization, the United States became No. 1 on April 1, with the highest combined federal-state corporate tax rate—39.2 percent—in the developed world. That's because Japan's once-higher rate recently dipped to 38.01 percent. The organization's researchers say that, even after accounting for tax deductions (loopholes), the "U.S. effective tax rate still remains one of the highest among industrialized nations." The United States and Japan were followed by France (34.4 percent); Belgium (34 percent); Germany (30.2 percent); and Mexico, Spain and Australia (all at 30 percent).

# 7

## A LIFETIME AHEAD

Certain juvenile sex offenders in Ohio (eight, in fact) no longer face a lifetime requirement to register with law enforcement agencies, have their photos, addresses and criminal histories distributed to neighbors and schools, and be listed in a searchable state database of sex offenders. The Ohio Supreme Court ruled in early April that the requirement was disproportionate to the crime and thus amounted to cruel and unusual punishment. The court cited a growing national consensus against imposing lifetime registration mandates on juveniles. This requirement was part of Ohio's law passed to comply with the Adam Walsh Act, a federal law to standardize sex offender registries around the nation. It was the first state, according to the Cleveland Plain Dealer, to do so.

## EVOLVING RULES

# 9



Tennessee lawmakers have passed controversial legislation to encourage classroom discussions on "scientific subjects, including, but not limited to, biological evolution, the chemical origins of life, global warming and human cloning." The law aims "to create an environment within public elementary and secondary schools that encourages students to explore scientific questions, learn about scientific evidence, develop critical thinking skills, and respond appropriately and respectfully to differences of opinion about controversial issues." The governor allowed the bill to become law without his signature.

