

# Legislative Solutions

★ Report from the Capitols ★



**C**ALIFORNIA'S RECALL DOMINATES ELECTION COVERAGE - California's vote to recall Gov. Gray Davis (D) is overshadowing regularly scheduled fall elections in Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey and Virginia.

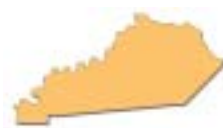
Gov. Davis is only the second governor to face a recall vote in U.S. history. North Dakota Gov. Lynn Frazier (R) was the first in 1921 when voters recalled him amid charges that he and officials in a state agency called the Industrial League abused their power and misused state funds. Gov. Evan Mecham (R-AZ) would have faced a recall election in 1988, but the state legislature stepped in to impeach him of obstruction of justice before the vote was held. Eighteen states have a recall mechanism as part of state law: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, North Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington, and Wisconsin.



Gov. Davis

Kentucky, Louisiana and Mississippi are holding gubernatorial elections this year which are drawing much less national attention but could change the partisan balance of the Governors' mansions. Currently the Republicans have a slight advantage - controlling the executive branch of government in 26 states while the Democrats hold sway in 24 state capitals. Kentucky's Gov. Paul Patton (D) and Louisiana's Gov. Mike Foster (R) are both lame ducks and cannot run for re-election.

The race in Kentucky was set on May 20th when voters chose U.S. Rep. Ernie Fletcher (R) and state Attorney General Ben Chandler (D) to represent their parties in November. Some feel that Chandler has been hurt through his association with scandal-plagued Gov. Patton (D), but he has been gaining ground by questioning Fletcher's voting record in Washington D.C. However, if campaign



## CHANGE IN QUARTERLY TAX REVENUE ADJUSTED FOR LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

Q2 2002 vs. Q2 2003<sup>i</sup>



- ♦ Recent modest state tax revenue growth is largely the result of enacted tax increases.
- ♦ States enacted net tax increases for the sixth quarter in a row. This quarter's net increases added an estimated \$3.5 billion to state tax revenue.

coffers are an accurate prediction of the winner, Fletcher appears to be the frontrunner - he has reported a war chest of \$2.4 million while Chandler has only \$1.2 million to keep his campaign on track<sup>ii</sup>.

The race to replace Gov. Foster (R) in Louisiana is wide open until the October 4th primary. Under Louisiana's interesting open primary, 18 gubernatorial candidates are vying for voters' support. If anyone wins more than 50 percent of the vote - an unlikely occurrence - he or she will be crowned the state's next governor. If not, the top two finishers, regardless of party, will compete in a runoff November 15th. Republicans are working hard to make sure that one of their candidates makes it to the November election. It is conceivable that two Democrats could face each

→ (Cont.)

<sup>i</sup> "State Revenue Report", Fiscal Studies Program, *The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government*, 9/2003.

<sup>ii</sup> As reported to the Kentucky Registry of Election Finance on 9/12/03.

**Election Coverage (Cont.)** - other in the November election if a Republican candidate does not emerge from the pack. Of the 18 candidates, only 8 are serious contenders - 5 Democrats and 3 Republicans. Two of the Democratic candidates currently hold statewide office: Lt. Governor Kathleen Blanco (D) and State Attorney General Richard Ieyoub (D), while the remainder have past elected experience: former Senate President Randy Ewing (D), former U.S. Congressman Claude "Buddy" Leach (D), and J.E. Jumonville Jr. (D), former state senator from Ventress, LA. The Republicans are represented by: Jay Blossman (R), chairman of the Public Service Commission, state Representative Hunt Downer (R), and Bobby Jindal (R), the former head of the state health and hospital system<sup>iii</sup>. Recent polls show that Lt. Governor Kathleen Blanco's name recognition is paying off, having been dubbed the frontrunner for the upcoming election. However, Republican Bobby Jindal, who has been the leading GOP candidate in recent polls, is nipping at her heels.



In addition to the race for the Governor's mansion in Baton Rouge, the entire House and Senate face re-election. However, this contest is not expected to produce a power shift. Democrats outnumber Republicans by significant numbers in the state, and the make up of both chambers is no different. Most observers expect the Democrats to maintain their comfortable margins of control in the House (68-36-1 Ind.) and the Senate (23-15 with 1 vacancy).

Mississippi is holding an election for all significant statewide offices and the entire legislature in 2003. The Governor's race is particularly interesting since it pits the only incumbent governor facing re-election this year against a Washington power broker. Gov. Ronnie Musgrove (D) is fighting for a second term against Haley Barbour (R), the former Republican National Chairman. Barbour has been running an aggressive campaign for some time now to re-introduce himself to Mississippi voters, and recently capitalized on a visit from his friend President Bush to promote his Washington D.C. connections<sup>iv</sup>. In the meantime, Gov. Musgrove has been conserving his re-election war chest, but is beginning to get his message out to the faithful. Since he won the office



by less than 9,000 votes in 1999 and Mississippi is currently weathering a painful economic recession, it is expected to be a tough battle.

As in Louisiana, the Mississippi legislature is not expected to make much news in this election. With the Democrats controlling the House (81-38-3 Ind.) and the Senate (29-23) by comfortable margins, pollsters predict the Republicans will continue in the minority.

New Jersey and Virginia are garnering the least attention this year by electing only their legislatures, since their governors were both elected just two years ago. New Jersey will likely hold the most drama since the chambers are so evenly split. The Senate is jointly controlled with 20 Democrats and 20 Republicans trying to win control of the chamber. Meanwhile in the New Jersey Assembly, Republicans are trying to regain control of the chamber they lost in the 2001 elections after 10 years in the majority. Races will be hotly contested, and will be portrayed as a referendum on Gov. James McGreevey's (D) leadership. Republicans blame McGreevey for mishandling the economy, while Democrats point the finger at former Gov. Christine Todd Whitman (R) and a decade of Republican control in Trenton.



Virginia does not face the same drama as New Jersey this year; in fact 60 of the 100 House seats and 17 of the 40 Senate districts are uncontested. In addition, Republicans controlled the redistricting process and many new districts are expected to improve the Republicans' chances. The major issue awaiting the new legislature in January is the Governor's proposal for tax reform in the commonwealth. In order to reduce critics' ammunition during the campaign though, Gov. Mark Warner (D) will defer the debate by not releasing his proposal until after the election. ■



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<sup>iii</sup> "And they're off", by Robert Travis Scott, Times-Picayune, 8/24/03.

<sup>iv</sup> "Musgrove launches aggressive campaign for re-election", by Patrice Sawyer, Clarion-Ledger, 9/8/03.