

SACRAMENTO SPECTATOR

Although this is written before the governor has finished signing and vetoing legislation, the clear consensus at the stylish *soirees* and *salons* frequented by your *Spectator* is that the governor and the Republicans ended the legislative session holding all the trump cards.

The Donkey Party was able to advance virtually no significant portion of its agenda, and found itself playing defense much of the time. Yes, this is how it is supposed to work with a Republican governor, but the fact that it indeed turned out this way has pachyderms smiling all around your heat-wilted capital.

Governor Schwarzenegger was aided mightily in this regard by the skill of the GOP leader in the assembly, Kevin McCarthy, and in the state senate, Dick Ackerman. They kept their troops in line when it really mattered. That they could do so, and that the Democrats knew it, immensely strengthened the governor's negotiating hand.

Gil Cedillo's driver licenses for illegals bill was the 800-pound gorilla of the signing/vetoing period. The governor stood his ground, insisting that any such licenses be obviously different

to the casual observer. When the Democrats refused to agree, he supplied his promised veto. This issue is such a loser that Democrat refusal to give it up could, by itself, cost them a couple of legislative seats this November. It also demonstrates their slavish devotion to extreme ideology, even to the point of risking electoral backlash.

The governor's willingness to broaden the list of incumbent Democrats he will campaign



against (Nicole Para is the latest addition) has also lifted GOP spirits. Lobbyists and other political "innies" who have seen recent private polls tell me not only that the governor's approval numbers continue to be at least thrice those of the Legislature, but also that the question: "Who would you be more likely to believe on a given political issue?" drops the Legislature's percentages into the high teens.

This explains much of the GOP's legislative success toward the end of the recently

concluded session. It also explains the fear and loathing infecting Democrat caucuses in both houses. The Democrats have no effective answer or counter-weapon to Governor Schwarzenegger. If he is used effectively by individual GOP campaigns, the election day impact could be enormous.

These dynamics will also come into play with what is already looming as next year's big fight: enactment of the recommendations of the California Performance Review. As long as the current Schwarzenegger/lawmaker popularity ratio holds up, the governor will enjoy enormous leverage — and he'll need it — to overcome what is sure to be fierce, hysterical union opposition to most of the plan.

The Governor's ultimate trump card is the threat to take the entire package — as one initiative — to the voters. The Democrats must avoid that at all costs, at least as long as the polls remain lopsidedly against them.

So ... as exciting as this year has been (and could continue to be on election night in November), the new year promises no shortage of fascinating objects for in-depth *spectating*. As long as the toney taverns and posh porticoes around town continue to provide vital information, I promise unrelenting devotion to ferreting out the truth to pass along to you, faithful readers.

— A. P. C.

An oppressive solution to a nonexistent problem

Medical professionals targetted by immigration/multilingual proponents.

M . D A V I D S T I R L I N G

FEW ISSUES evoke such passionate debate as illegal immigration. The issue is especially contentious in the Golden State, and understandably so: the Immigration and Naturalization Service declares California home to 32 percent of the nation's illegal immigrant population, with their numbers continuing to climb (INS reports California's growing illegal immigrant population increased by 73,200 people on average each year between 1990 and 2000).

Elected officials and organizations demanding that legal residents' rights and privileges be extended to persons in the country illegally are increasingly active. For instance, Democrat members of the Legislature's Hispanic Caucus have staged an unrelenting six-year drive for legislation to grant California drivers licenses to the states' estimated 2.5 million illegal aliens. Even Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's expressed willingness to sign legislation granting "specially-marked" driver licenses to this group — a controversial proposal in itself — does not satisfy these legislators. The measure's leading proponent, Senator Gil Cedillo (D-L.A.), is so adamantly devoted to unmarked drivers licenses for this group that he publicly urged Lt. Governor Cruz Bustamante to sign the measure into law while the governor attended the Republican National Convention in New York City.

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors has placed a measure on the November 2 ballot that would allow non-citizens to vote in school board elections.

M. David Stirling is vice president of the public interest legal organization, Pacific Legal Foundation. PLF's recently filed a lawsuit on behalf of several medical professionals challenges the legality of the government edict described in this article. For more information on the suit, go to www.pacificlegal.org.

Now these controversies over licenses and voting for illegal immigrants will continue to be debated hotly in public, and will remain subject to democratic political processes by which voters will — directly and indirectly — influence their outcome. The same, however, cannot be said of a federal "immigrant rights" edict quietly issued during the Clinton Administration's waning months that makes the federal government a far more intrusive force with respect to our individual and economic freedoms.

In August 2000, the nation's physicians, clinics, hospitals, and other medical care providers who receive medicare and medicaid reimbursement for treating patients with limited English proficiency (LEP) were ordered to provide to those patients full interpreter and translator services in their own languages. To help put this in perspective, consider that the United States Commission on Civil Rights reports that U.S. residents speak as many as 500 different languages and dialects.

IN ADDITION, these medical care professionals must insure the competency of the medical translation and interpreter services they provide. And even though federal medicare and medicaid reimbursements rarely cover the actual costs of the medical services rendered, the federal government contributes nothing to pay for these mandated language assistance services. Medical care providers are required to bear the *full* financial burden. Under this edict, an LEP person's complaint to federal authorities that the medical professional failed to provide competent language services in his native tongue can trigger a federal investigation, which can lead to loss of federal reimbursement, or worse, a charge of inten-