

from our viewpoint...

She sticks to guns, proves system works

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius could have caved in and signed the conceal carry bill when it reached her desk, but she vetoed it as she had done before.

The Legislature had enough votes to override her veto and make conceal carry the law in our state. It goes into effect in July.

Some people think the governor was wrong, and she should have sidestepped her conviction to sign the bill. They think she was wrong not to sign it with the large majority of support it got in the Legislature.

It would have been the simple thing for the governor to do, but she has made it clear she did not believe the law was good for the state. Given her personal conviction, it would be a bigger slap to her supporters to bow to the pressure.

Sebelius was not the first governor to veto a conceal carry bill, but the other times the state Legislature did not have the horses to override and make it law.

The veto override proves the constitutional system works as designed by the founders over 200 years ago. The same two-thirds majority requirement found at the national level is in the Kansas constitution. The House voted 91-33 to override — seven more votes than the needed two-thirds. The Senate voted 30-10, three votes over the two-thirds.

In the House, 21 Democrats sided with Republicans to make concealed legal. In the Senate, six Democrats joined Republicans, who control the Legislature.

Sebelius is the first governor to have a veto overridden in 12 years. She vetoed a similar conceal carry bill in 2004, as did her predecessor, Republican Bill Graves, in 1997.

Kansas became the 39th state to approve a concealed weapons law, and Nebraska made it 40 in the last week.

There are arguments on both sides of the issue, but now it will be a Kansas law, and something more for people to deal with.

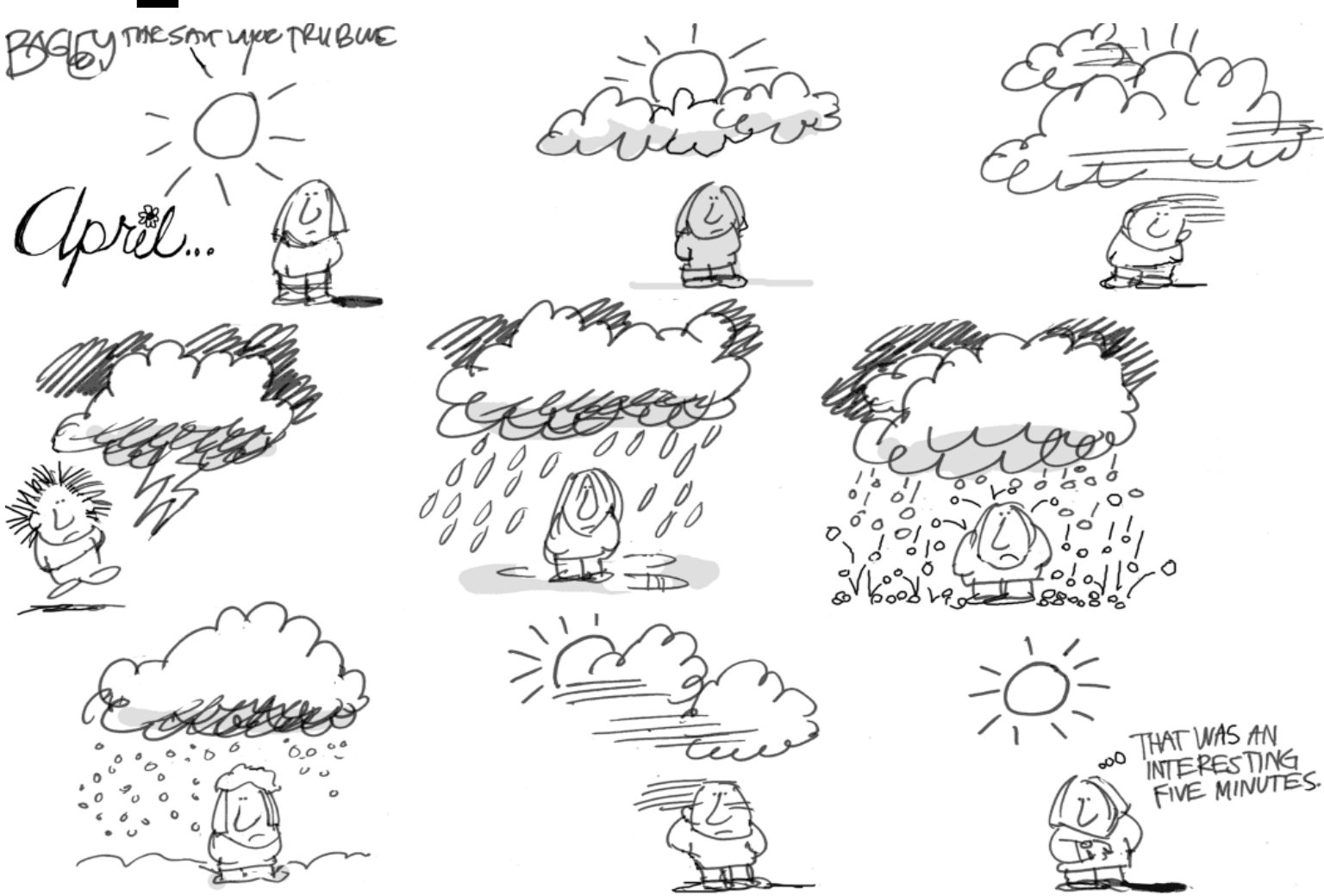
The new law has a list of exceptions, and any business owner or property owner can post a sign saying people are not to carry weapons while in the business or on the property.

The state list of exceptions covers most public places: any police, sheriff or highway patrol station; detention facility, prison or jail; courthouse; courtroom, (except that a judge can carry a concealed weapon); polling place; meetings of the governing body of a county, city or other political subdivision of the state, or any committee or subcommittee; on the state fairgrounds; state office buildings; athletic events sponsored by a private or public elementary or high school or any private or public college; professional athletic events; any part of a bar or lounge (except this doesn't apply to a restaurant); elementary or high school buildings; community college, college or university facilities; any place where firearms are prohibited by federal or state law; child exchange and visitation centers; community mental health centers and psychiatric hospitals; any city hall; any public library; any day care or group day care home; and any church or temple.

Now that you have committed to memory the list of where not to carry that concealed weapon, you are ready to apply for the four-year permit at a cost of \$150. You do need to complete a safety training course at your cost.

This is something the legislators can go home and tell their supporters they got passed, and they will probably get a slap on the back and a "good for you."

The real problems facing the state have to wait, but the Legislature is going to have to face the voters if they fail to find a workable school funding solution. — *Tom Betz*



Reporter confined for protecting sources

Jim Taricani should be the poster boy for a federal shield law to protect reporters from malicious judges and overeager prosecutors.

A reporter for WJAR-TV in Providence, R.I., Taricani is one of three news people to face jail time in the last couple of years for defying court orders to reveal their sources. Though he did as much, or more, time as anyone, he got less attention, probably because his story was local.

The others, Judy Miller of *The New York Times* and Matthew Cooper of *Newsweek*, fell victim to a special prosecutor out after Scooter Libby, the vice president's former chief of staff. The Washington case got national attention while Taricani was sweating out a six-month term for criminal contempt.

It could happen to anyone, he says, though many, perhaps most, reporters from smaller organizations faced with the same situation would just cave in and give the prosecutor what he wants.

Most people couldn't afford to fight the federal judiciary, and nobody really wants to go to jail.

Taricani stuck by his guns. Three times he refused the prosecutor's demands that he reveal who gave him a tape of a city official taking a \$1,000 bribe in corruption-ridden Providence.

The tape came out of an FBI sting operation using a crooked contractor with contacts high at City Hall. It's the stuff movies are made of, he said, and in fact, there is a movie coming out about the mayor and his cronies.

Taricani said he got the tape from one of the lawyers in the case, promising he wouldn't tell anyone where it came from. If he hadn't made that promise, he notes, he wouldn't have gotten the tape. And the tape, he thought, was important.

The mayor's assistant and the contractor, talking like movie mobsters, joked about the bribe for a city contract. Until it aired, he said, it was easy for people in Providence to live in denial about their government.

He took the tape to his bosses at the station. They called in the lawyers, and eventually, top brass at NBC News in New York. He's thankful that he worked for a network-owned station, Taricani says, because the company never wavered in its support.

Eventually, he said, NBC spent \$765,000 on legal fees. When the judge started fining him \$1,000 a day, the station boosted his pay so he could pay the eventual \$83,000 bill. Later, the network paid the extra taxes on that, too.

But, he asks, how many news organizations could afford to spend \$850,000 to defend a reporter's rights?

"The lawyers' opinion," he said with a hint of



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a smile, "was if it happened again, the tape showed up on the doorstep in a brown paper bag."

In the end, it made no difference. Six months after the tape aired, after everyone involved in the case had either been convicted or pleaded guilty, the judge had Taricani hauled into his court on criminal contempt charges. A special prosecutor shook down everyone from the U.S. attorney's office to the FBI, but focused on an agent who'd known the reporter for more than 20 years — and the defense lawyer.

In the end, the FBI agent led him into making some admissions, he said, and the prosecutor leaned hard on him. The "mobbed-up" lawyer, facing drug and morals charges involving a 15-year-old girl, turned on him, not only admitting he supplied the tape but claiming that he never demanded anonymity.

Taricani was left to face an angry federal judge who gave him six months in jail. Because doctors said the heart-transplant patient might not survive in prison, he wound up with a stiff home confinement.

He had to disconnect his Internet access, he said, couldn't leave the house at all and couldn't work. He read more than 30 books, and his wife, he said, got used to having a clean house. After four months with no violations, the judge set him free.

All to defend a source who had dropped a dime on him.

Would he do it again?

"Sure," Taricani says. "The story was that important."

Taxpayers will pay any earthquake bill

When the big one finally hits us in California, it won't be the insurance companies that will pick up the multi-billion-dollar cost to rebuild out homes and cities — it will be you, the American taxpayer.

This is a lesson we're learning from New Orleans, where the mayor has assured displaced residents of areas of the city deemed vulnerable to another hurricane that he will not stand in their way should they choose to rebuild their demolished houses, even though they would most likely be destroyed when another Katrina comes along.

Now that's bad enough, but the generous Mayor Nagin did not stop there. He urged those residents to take advantage of a buyout program that would pay them up to \$150,000 for their property. Need I tell you who's going to foot that bill?

It won't be insurance companies — most of the residents in the affected area didn't have flood insurance. Do you need to be told that it's you, the taxpayer, who'll shell out that \$150,000 or so per house?

Here in California, we don't worry about hurricanes, broken levees or blizzards. We worry about earthquakes. Every once in a while, the earth shivers and shakes, and buildings and bridges and highways come crashing down. The last big one was 12 years ago, in 1994. We can protect ourselves from having to pay the ruinous cost of rebuilding our homes after a massive quake by buying earthquake insurance, just as the people of New Orleans could have protected themselves from Katrina by buying flood and windstorm insurance.

The problem with earthquake insurance is the cost — which is huge. Because it is so expensive, fully 86 percent of Californians cross their fingers, hope that they'll be spared from a quake and, as a result, don't buy insurance.

Does that make them worry that they might be destroyed financially and left homeless in the event of an earthquake against which they were not insured? As the folks in New Orleans are learning, there's no need to worry. Who needs insurance when the government is willing to pay the cost of their failure to buy insurance?

In 1996, the number of folks in California not insured against quakes was 65 percent. Now, as memories of the last earthquake fade, that figure has jumped to 86 percent, which means only 14 percent of us in the most earthquake-prone state in the Union are insured against another quake — a quake that's sure to come.

That 86 percent, however, are not shooting craps, hoping the inevitable quake won't occur. They rest easy in the knowledge that you, the taxpayer, will step in and make them whole.

In New Orleans, they had good reason for putting their faith in the government. They understand that the politicians lust after the vote of African Americans, and since the majority of the population in New Orleans is black — or "chocolate" as their idiot mayor calls them, they know that Uncle Sam will be there, with



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his checkbook handy, to try to buy their votes with taxpayer money.

Here in California, we are fully aware of our enormous political clout. We know how much the politicians of both parties yearn to win our votes, which go a long way towards electing a president. We send more members of Congress to Washington than any other state.

And we know that in order to stay in our good graces, the polls will take the rubber band off the federal bankroll and pick up the cost of any earthquake or other natural disaster, giving us low-cost loans and other goodies. So why spend all that money for earthquake insurance?

After all, we're in good hands with Uncle Sam.

Mike Reagan, the eldest son of the late President Ronald Reagan, is heard on more radio stations nationally than any other commentator. E-mail comments to mereagan@hotmail.com.

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