

# You say you thought they *read* the bills?

## Legislative Democrats' End-of-Session Meltdown

by Steve Baldwin

CALIFORNIA DESERVES better. It was the final night of the Legislature's 1999-2000 session and Democrats were frantic. More than 300 bills were on the file but, according to the Constitution, all must be dealt with by midnight. Past Speakers remedied this by pulling the wall clock's plug at midnight. But this time, foul-mouthed maverick Assemblyman Dick Floyd had sought and received a Legislative Counsel legal opinion stating any bill passed after midnight will not be valid. The clock trick was out.

The final night was bereft of proper debate and deliberation. Dozens of bad bills flew by with little consideration. After news cameras left at 7 p.m., Democrats literally jumped with joy as bills passed to harass small business, penalize property owners, and otherwise made life difficult for taxpayers. Speaker Pro Tem Fred Keeley used every possible trick to suppress debate; an exhausted Legislature went along.

Around 10 p.m. a slew of bills arrived from the Senate without Democrat analysis. In other

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words, Democrat Assemblymembers had no idea what they were voting for. Nonetheless, they blindly voted every bill out, apparently feeling any bill passed by the Democrat Senate must be OK.



One Democrat, to his credit — George Nakano — turned his voting key off in protest. Many Republicans simply voted no on every bill.

As 11 p.m. approached, Democrat joy began turning into fear, bitterness, and finally panic. Basic procedures were just ignored. Democrats so love government that a growing fear was clear to see in their eyes as midnight approached — a beautiful sight to behold! By 11:30, we knew many

bills would not make it. Because the 50 or so bills left were all big government measures, members of the GOP's conservative Liberty Caucus started asking bill sponsors questions about their bills, slowing down the process. Assemblyman Howard Kaloogian questioned several tax bills. I blasted a measure creating a new multi-million dollar "mental health" program for schools that would essentially declare many children "mentally ill" if they were spanked at home or some other absurd thing. This bill failed by a few votes, but was placed on call, meaning it could get another change on another roll call vote later in the session.

Midnight hit. Democrats were seething with anger at members who had the audacity actually to try to find out what a bill was about. Speaker Pro Tem Keeley kept bringing up bills for a vote, claiming his watch said only 11:55 while the Assembly wall clock said midnight. Assemblyman Tom McClintock repeatedly objected, declaring that all bills voted on beyond midnight would be unconstitutional. (About five bills passed after the midnight deadline could be challenged in court.)

FINALLY, ABRUPTLY, the charade ended. More than 50 bills, including measures placed on call, died a quick death. Ultra liberal legislators Pat Wiggins and Darrel Steinberg actually cried. SB 1326 died, a bill to require discussions of the homosexual political agenda in our schools. It was on "re-consideration," but floor jockey

Dion Aroner ran out of time. The mental health bill also died, saving our children from invasive anti-family surveys and tests. So, things

could have been worse. At least conservatives stopped a few of the 1,000-plus idiotic bills introduced this session.

## Presidential pollsters

Can we believe *anyone's* numbers?

by Leon McKinney

Last spring, my mother-in-law, who lives in the Midwest electoral bellwether state of Illinois, was called by a political poll taker. My in-laws are a lifetime union family whom, I suspect, have voted Democrat since 1950 or so, but they're really nice people in spite of that. The pollster, after verifying my mother-in-law was indeed a registered Democrat, began asking questions about Al Gore versus George W. Bush. My mother-in-law, bless her heart, replied that she was disgusted by Clinton's lies and crimes, in particular *l'affaire* Lewinsky and his selling us out to the Communist Chinese in exchange for Chi-Com funny money delivered by various Asian bagmen (I must claim some credit for educating my in-laws about Clinton), and then she said she wondered just what sort of man Al Gore was, standing by Clinton for eight long years. Suddenly, the pollster discovered he'd already gathered all the polling data needed from my in-laws' town — he was very sorry to have bothered her. A voice in my head says he didn't want to record an-

other Democrat vote for Bush.

Are some of the major polls biased? A lot of conservatives think they are, and, it turns out, so does Purdue University Professor Gerald S. Wasserman who says his analysis of 1996 presidential polling shows it was "a collective failure," not just tending to be wrong, but consistently wrong *in Bill Clinton's favor*. Wasserman calculated that the chance of such a mass failure occurring among honest pollsters is once in 4,900 elections (*i.e.*, once between now and the year 21600). "To continue to use current polling technology without calling for a change," Wasserman said, "would be like having a gambler play after the roulette wheel comes up red 12 times in a row. In both cases, it might just be chance, but any sensible person would stop and check the apparatus before going on."

Unfortunately, sensible people appear to be a nearly silent minority among the media establishment's liberal poo-bahs. When a mid-September *Newsweek* poll gave Al Gore a 14-point lead, William Saletan of Slate.com said, "Bush is toast." Eric Alterman of

MSNBC.com said, "Barring extraterrestrial intervention, the election's over and Gore won it." Neither Saletan nor Alterman said anything about a late October, 1996, *Newsweek* poll that showed Bill Clinton leading Bob Dole by 23 points — a 15-point blooper revealed on election night when Mr. Dole lost by only eight. No, instead of cautioning Americans against trusting too heavily a poll with a proven 15-point margin of error, much less noting that several debates and more than six weeks of campaigning remained before the election, Saletan and Alterman canonized *Newsweek's* poll, using it as an excuse to close the books on the election. Bear this in mind the next time you are tempted to listen seriously to such gentlemen as Saletan and Alterman.

Or the *New York Times*. The *Times's* post-Lazio/Clinton Senate race debate poll showed Clinton had "surged" to a nine-point lead among "likely voters." But about the same time, the nonpartisan Marist Institute's poll, which has a good track record, showed a 44-44 Lazio/Clinton dead heat, again among "likely voters." It then came out that the *Times* poll assumed 87 percent of the registered voters it surveyed were "likely voters." Marist's poll, in contrast, accounted for political reality, taking into consideration the 45 percent turnout of registered voters in the last presidential election year.

Well, can we believe anyone's poll numbers? And if so, whose? Last March, the Washington, DC-based *Progressive Review* named Rasmussen Research (<http://www.portraitofamerica.com>) first in accuracy followed by Gallup

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