

NM NEWS & VIEWS FOR WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 11, 2010
THIS IS THE WORLD WE LIVE IN!

Offer Rejected to Move Mosque Away From Ground Zero to 'State Property':

The developers of the so-called Ground Zero mosque rejected New York Gov. David Paterson's offer to provide state property if the project is moved farther away from where the twin towers once stood.

In an effort to appease disputing parties, Paterson had said Tuesday that he would provide state help to the group sponsoring the Cordoba House if the developers opt to move it elsewhere.

"Frankly, if the sponsors were looking for property anywhere at a distance that would be such that it would accommodate a better feeling among the people who are frustrated, I would look into trying to provide them with the state property they would need," Paterson said.

While Paterson has "no objection" to the mosque being built a few blocks away from Ground Zero, he said he's "very sensitive to the desire of those who are adamant against it to see something else worked out."

But Paterson said Wednesday that the developers told his office they weren't interested in moving.

"I think they would like to stay where they are, and I certainly respect that and I certainly respect them," Paterson said. "Having said that, how much more foresighted would it have been if the imam who is the developer of the project had been willing to hear what we are actually talking about?"

The building of the \$100 million Islamic center and mosque has led to a firestorm of criticism over its proposed location – just a few blocks away from the site of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks by Islamic terrorists that left nearly 3,000 dead.

A handful of Republicans, like former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, Arizona Sen. John McCain and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, have blasted the project's location, while others, including New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, have forcefully defended it as a symbol of America's religious tolerance.

Religious leaders from various denominations also have supported the group's plans, arguing that critics' attacks amount to "religious bigotry."

"It's simply wrong for Newt Gingrich and Sarah Palin, public figures who frequently reference their Christian values, to malign all Muslims by comparing

this cultural center and mosque with a radical ideology that led to the horrific attacks of 9-11," said Sister Simone Campbell, executive director of NETWORK, a national lobbying group that advocates Catholic social justice. "We fail to honor those killed by terrorists when we betray the bedrock principle of religious freedom that has guided our democracy for centuries."

On Wednesday, the group leading the opposition against the mosque's planned location called the governor's "willingness to engage this issue" a "positive development."

"We're pleased that he realizes the sensitive nature of this issue," said Jay Sekulow, chief counsel for the American Center for Law and Justice, adding that he supports "having other land available to the mosque" but wouldn't want taxpayers to subsidize it.

The American Center for Law and Justice is fighting the New York City Landmarks Preservation Committee over the mosque plans -- the group filed suit against the committee after it declined to grant landmark status to the proposed site. The tower could span up to 15 stories and will house a mosque, a 500-seat auditorium and a pool.

The group also is calling on the State Department to back off plans to sponsor the imam of that controversial mosque on an upcoming trip to the Middle East.

The department confirmed Tuesday that the administration is sponsoring Feisal Abdul Rauf's trip to Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, which is described as part of a program to send Muslims abroad to educate other countries about the role of religion in the United States. Rauf made similar trips during the Bush administration. Rauf has become a controversial figure because of his refusal to acknowledge Hamas as a terrorist organization, which is how the U.S. government classifies the group.

The State Department, meanwhile, has defended Rauf and his planned visit to the Middle East.

"He is a distinguished Muslim cleric," said State Department Spokesman P.J. Crowley. "We do have a program whereby, through our Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau here at the State Department, we send people from Muslim communities here in this country around the world to help people overseas understand our society and the role of religion within our society."

Florida AG McCollum, Lawmakers Unveil Immigration Bill Modeled After Arizona's:

Florida's attorney general and a group of state lawmakers moved Wednesday to

push the Sunshine State into the forefront of the national illegal immigration debate with a bill modeled after Arizona's controversial law -- only, they claim, with a better shot of withstanding a court challenge.

State Attorney General Bill McCollum, following the lead of Virginia's top prosecutor, also issued an opinion saying state law enforcement already have the right to ask about immigration status in the course of their duties.

"This legislation will provide new enforcement tools for protecting our citizens and will help our state fight the ongoing problems created by illegal immigration," McCollum, a Republican, said in a written statement. "Florida will not be a sanctuary state for illegal aliens."

McCollum helped write the legislation, though Florida lawmakers will be responsible for pushing it in the legislature.

The move comes after a U.S. District Court judge blocked key provisions of Arizona's law. The battle between Arizona and the U.S. government, as well as civil rights groups, could make its way to the Supreme Court -- but while that fight plays out, several states are putting similar legislation on the table.

The Florida proposal would, like Arizona's, require law enforcement officers to check the residency status of anyone they suspect of being an illegal immigrant in the course of a "lawful stop."

It would require state businesses to use a national registry to ensure new employees are legal and would increase penalties for illegal immigrants who commit other crimes. The bill would also require non-citizen immigrants to carry immigration documentation or face a misdemeanor charge that could carry up to 20 days in jail.

Though McCollum's office said in a statement that the legislation was adjusted to "strengthen it" against a possible court challenge, the proposal would go beyond Arizona's by letting judges consider a defendant's illegal immigrant status during bond proceedings.

State Rep. William Snyder wrote the bill with McCollum.

The unveiling comes after Virginia State Attorney Ken Cuccinelli last week issued a ruling saying police can ask people about their immigration status during routine stops. The move prompted an objection from the American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia, which urged state police to ignore the opinion.

McCollum did something similar Wednesday, releasing an informal opinion to a

state lawmaker saying "it appears that state and local law enforcement have the authority to inquire into the immigration status" of anyone detained under state law providing the questioning doesn't "prolong" the detention.

As Cuccinelli said, McCollum clarified that under current law, officers are not required to ask about immigration status.

Democrats, Advocacy Groups Blast Cuts to Food Stamps to Fund \$26B Aid Bill:

Some Democrats are upset and advocacy groups are outraged over the raiding of the food-stamp cupboard to fund a state-aid bailout that some call a gift to teachers and government union workers.

House members convened Tuesday and passed the multibillion-dollar bailout bill for cash-strapped states that provides \$10 billion to school districts to rehire laid-off teachers or ensure that more teachers won't be let go before the new school year begins, keeping more than 160,000 teachers on the job, the Obama administration says.

But the bill also requires that \$12 billion be stripped from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly known as food stamps, to help fund the new bill, prompting some Democrats to cringe at the notion of cutting back on one necessity to pay for another. The federal assistance program currently helps 41 million Americans.

Arguably one of the most outspoken opponents on the Democratic side is Connecticut Rep. Rosa DeLauro, who has blasted the move as "a bitter pill to swallow" but still voted yes.

"I fought very hard for the food assistance money in the Recovery Act, and the fact is that participation in the food stamps program has jumped dramatically with the economic crisis, from 31.1 million persons to 38.2 million just in one year," DeLauro said in an e-mail sent to FoxNews.com. "But I know that states across the nation and my own state of Connecticut also desperately need these resources to save jobs and avoid Draconian cuts to essential services for low income families."

The Houston Chronicle reported Tuesday that several state advocacy groups, including the Texas Food Bank Network and the Houston Food Bank, rallied for House members to strike down the legislation, which passed 247-161 in the House. Three Democrats voted against the measure, while two Republicans voted in support of it.

Democratic rank and file members, including Sen. Majority Leader Harry Reid,

say the cuts won't take effect until 2014 and will merely return food stamp benefits to pre-stimulus levels.

The Food Research and Action Center said a family of four would see benefits drop about \$59 per month starting in 2014.

"While we support the education initiatives (in the bill), we adamantly oppose using food stamps to pay for them," said James Weill, president of the Food Research and Action Center. "The rain on food stamps to pay for other things absolutely has to stop and stop now."

According to U.S. Department of Agriculture figures, the number of people on the food stamp rolls has been growing to record levels for 18 straight months. Nearly \$5.5 billion in aid went out to beneficiaries in May alone. The number of May recipients marked a 19 percent increase from a year ago and the USDA projects that next year's enrollment will reach about 43.4 million.

Republicans, meanwhile, vocally opposed the state aid bill. Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wis., told Fox News it rewarded "irresponsible states" and their unions.

"It is basically taxpayers from fiscally (responsible) states bailing out fiscally irresponsible states. ... Medicaid funding, teacher funding, the more popular of the public unions, what this is, it's a bailout to prevent states from doing the necessary spending prioritization that they need do," he said.

The Obama administration pushed hard for the \$26 billion bill. The White House argued that it is essential to protecting 300,000 teachers and other nonfederal government workers from election-year layoffs and will not add to the national deficit.

"If we do nothing, these educators won't be returning to the classroom this fall, and that won't just deprive them of a paycheck, it will deprive the children and parents who are counting on them to provide a decent education," Obama said in the White House Rose Garden shortly before the bill passed on Tuesday.

"This proposal is fully paid for, in part by closing tax loopholes that encourage corporations that ships American jobs overseas. So it will not add to our deficit," he said. "And the money will only go toward saving the jobs of teachers and other essential professionals...I urge members of both parties to come together and get this done, so that I can sign this bill into law."

Gov. candidates discuss education reform:

The two candidates vying to be New Mexico's next governor have unveiled their

plans to reform education.

Both Democrat Diane Denish and Republican Susana Martinez agree education is a top priority and neither plan on raising taxes to pay for it even though funding has been cut.

Martinez says she plans to fund education by redirecting education dollars directly into the classroom in the form of first-rate teachers, textbooks and the latest technology. She also plans to expand kindergarten education and give parents the choice of what school they want their child to attend.

“My plan will identify the lowest performing students in each school and target the efforts to those kids so that all schools can make progress,” said Martinez at a press conference. “We will not promote students to other grades ... without the basic skills,” she added.

Lt. Governor Denish says it’s time to close state tax loopholes and use that money to pay for education. She says no one is satisfied with the status quo of education and she plans to change that.

“My plan— the New Mexico plan— is to make sure we have expanded early childhood education to give kids the start they need (and) we need to transform the high school experience so that they get real work experience,” said Denish. Under Denish, every school district would be audited annually to make sure money is being spent wisely.

Next Thursday, August 19th, Denish and Martinez will express their ideas on education in a debate moderated by APS Superintendent Winston Brooks at Eldorado High School in Albuquerque. The audience is by invitation only, open to teachers, students, and faculty.

If you have a question you would like asked, you can submit it on the APS website.

2 ABQ women busted at the border for drugs:

SANTA TERESA, NM - U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers working at the Santa Teresa port of entry seized a little over 500 pounds of marijuana.

The drugs were hidden in a vehicle that was occupied by two 18-year-old women from Albuquerque.

The seizure was made late Monday when a 1998 Ford Expedition entered the facility from Mexico. Customs officers at the primary inspection station selected

the vehicle for a secondary examination. Officers located false compartments in the floor of the vehicle as well as the fuel tank of the SUV.

Numerous marijuana filled bundles were removed from the floor of the vehicle as well as from welded metal boxes hidden in the fuel tank. The women face federal prosecution in relation to the failed smuggling attempt.

Boardley v. U.S. Department of the Interior resource page:

No more Mt. 'Hushmore': Free speech preserved at national parks

ADF attorneys secure victory for religious expression in iconic American parks, monuments

Friday, August 06, 2010

WASHINGTON — A federal appellate court ruling declared Friday that federal regulations requiring individuals and groups to have permits in order to exercise their First Amendment rights in “free speech areas” and public forums at national parks and monuments are unconstitutional. Alliance Defense Fund attorneys filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of the Interior on behalf of Michael Boardley after a ranger at Mount Rushmore National Memorial stopped him and others for passing out religious literature without a permit near the park’s visitor center.

“The First Amendment is the only permit a Christian or any American needs to engage in free speech on public property. The court was right to reach this conclusion,” said ADF Senior Counsel Nate Kellum. “Certainly, it made no sense to enforce unconstitutional regulations that deny free speech at the foot of Mount Rushmore--a place where four men who championed America’s freedoms are immortalized in stone.”

“It is unlawful to engage in expressive activities within any of this country’s 391 national parks unless a park official first issues a permit authorizing the activity. Michael Boardley argues this licensing scheme is overbroad and therefore unconstitutional on its face. We agree,” states the opinion from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. “Requiring individuals and small groups to obtain permits before engaging in expressive activities within designated ‘free speech areas’ (and other public forums within national parks) violates the First Amendment.... We have no choice but to hold the regulations unconstitutional in their entirety.”

“This important decision means that Mr. Boardley and all Americans who visit our beautiful national parks and monuments will be able to exercise their free speech and religious expression rights without further unconstitutional barriers,” said ADF Legal Counsel Heather Gebelin Hacker.

In August 2007, Boardley and a few others passed out gospel tracts near the front entrance of Mount Rushmore without incident or comment from park officials. The next day, a park ranger approached the small group and informed them that in order to distribute the tracts, they had to have a speech permit-- which would have taken two days to obtain. Boardley returned home to Minnesota and made multiple requests for a permit, but the document never arrived. The park service did not grant Boardley a permit until ADF attorneys filed the federal lawsuit *Boardley v. U.S. Department of the Interior* with the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia in November 2007.

In March 2009, the district court found that a portion of one of the regulations challenged in the lawsuit was unconstitutional. However, ADF attorneys filed an appeal with the D.C. Circuit in May 2009 contesting the continued requirement that individuals, not just groups, must obtain a permit in advance before engaging in free speech or distributing literature in designated areas of national parks across the country. Friday's decision in the lawsuit reversed the district court's ruling that upheld the problematic regulations.

ADF is a legal alliance of Christian attorneys and like-minded organizations defending the right of people to freely live out their faith. Launched in 1994, ADF employs a unique combination of strategy, training, funding, and litigation to protect and preserve religious liberty, the sanctity of life, marriage, and the family.

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ADF attorneys available to media after hearing over free speech censorship at national parks

Mt. Rushmore situation sparked lawsuit over requirement that individuals obtain permit to exercise First Amendment rights at national parks, monuments

Wednesday, May 12, 2010

WHO: ADF Senior Counsel Nate Kellum and ADF Litigation Staff Counsel Heather Gebelin Hacker

WHAT: Available for media interviews following hearing in *Boardley v. U.S. Department of the Interior*

WHEN: Thursday, May 13, immediately after hearing, which begins at 9:30 a.m. EDT

WHERE: U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, East Barrett Prettyman U.S. Courthouse, 333 Constitution Ave. N.W., Washington

WASHINGTON — Alliance Defense Fund Senior Counsel Nate Kellum and ADF

Litigation Staff Counsel Heather Gebelin Hacker will be available for media interviews Thursday following a hearing in a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of the Interior, brought by a Christian man kept from sharing his faith at Mt. Rushmore National Park in South Dakota.

ADF attorneys filed suit on behalf of Michael Boardley after a National Park Service ranger stopped him and others for passing out religious literature without a permit near the park's visitor center. In the appeal, ADF attorneys are asking the D.C. Circuit to review federal regulations requiring individual persons, not just groups, to apply for a permit before exercising their First Amendment rights in designated areas of national parks and monuments across the country.

"The First Amendment is the permit for a Christian or any American to engage in free speech on public property," said Kellum. "It's ironic that the National Park Service denied freedom of speech at the foot of Mt. Rushmore, where four men who represent America's freedoms are immortalized in stone."

In August 2007, Boardley and a few others passed out gospel tracts near the front entrance of Mt. Rushmore without incident or comment from park officials. The next day, a park ranger approached them and informed them that to distribute the tracts they had to have a speech permit, which would have taken two days to obtain. Boardley returned home to Minnesota and made multiple requests for a permit, but the permit never arrived. The park service did not grant Boardley a permit until ADF attorneys filed a federal lawsuit in November 2007.

In March 2009, the district court found that one of the regulations challenged in the lawsuit was unconstitutional. However, ADF attorneys filed an appeal with the D.C. Circuit in May 2009 over the continued requirement that individuals, not just groups, must obtain a permit in advance before they may engage in speech or distribute literature in designated areas of national parks.

"The government cannot require small groups and individuals to obtain a permit before exercising their constitutional rights," said Hacker. "We hope this appeal will restore free speech and religious freedom not just for Mr. Boardley, but for others visiting national parks and monuments as well."

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ADF attorneys ask for free speech to be restored at U.S. national parks

ADF attorneys ask court to review regulations used to silence Christian at Mt. Rushmore

Monday, May 11, 2009

WASHINGTON — Attorneys with the Alliance Defense Fund filed a notice of appeal Monday with the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia in *Boardley v. U.S. Department of the Interior*, asking the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit to review federal regulations that require even individuals to apply for a permit before exercising their First Amendment rights in designated areas of national parks across the country. ADF filed the lawsuit on behalf of a Minnesota man prohibited from passing out religious literature near the visitor's center at Mt. Rushmore National Park.

"The First Amendment is our permit to engage in free speech on public property," said ADF Litigation Staff Counsel Heather Gebelin Hacker. "It's unbelievable that the National Park Service would deny freedom of speech at our national parks, especially at the foot of Mt. Rushmore, where four men who represent America's freedoms are immortalized."

On Aug. 9, 2007, Michael Boardley and a few other individuals passed out gospel tracts near the front entrance of Mt. Rushmore without incident or comment from park officials. The next day, a park ranger approached them and informed them that they had to have a speech permit. Without the permit, they could not distribute the tracts, but it would take two days to obtain one. After Boardley returned home, he made multiple requests for a permit, but the permit never arrived. The Park Service did not grant Mr. Boardley a permit until after ADF attorneys filed the lawsuit on Nov. 2, 2007.

On March 17, 2009, the district court found that one of the regulations challenged in the lawsuit facially violated the First and Fifth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution. The focus of the appeal is the regulations' requirement that even individuals must obtain a permit in advance before they may engage in speech in designated areas of national parks.

"The government cannot require small groups and individuals to obtain a permit before exercising their constitutional rights," said Hacker. "It is our hope that this appeal will restore free speech and religious freedom not just for Mr. Boardley, but for others visiting national parks and monuments as well."

ADF is a legal alliance of Christian attorneys and like-minded organizations defending the right of people to freely live out their faith. Launched in 1994,

ADF employs a unique combination of strategy, training, funding, and litigation to protect and preserve religious liberty, the sanctity of life, marriage, and the family.

www.telladf.org

Q2 GDP Growth Could Be Revised To Just 1% After Trade Data:

June's trade deficit swelled 18.8% to \$49.9 billion, the highest since October 2008. That was much worse than Wall Street predicted — or what the Commerce Department estimated in the recent Q2 GDP report. The new report, along with recent inventory data, suggest Commerce will revise down Q2 economic growth from the already-sluggish 2.4% annual rate to about 1%, according to Action Economics. Action Economics is looking for stronger retail inventory figures later this week that would imply a 1.4% GDP pace.

Those downward revisions may bolster Q3 figures. Weaker inventory growth in Q2 suggests there will be less of a drop-off in Q3. Q2's fat trade gap may mean the same.

But there's no denying that the recovery is losing steam just as head winds hit. The inventory restocking cycle, which had fueled growth in recent quarters, clearly is ending.

Federal stimulus is waning, with big potential tax hikes looming at year-end if Congress doesn't act. Meanwhile, state and local governments, though about to get another \$26 billion from Uncle Sam for Medicaid and public employees, will be cutting spending and likely raising taxes over the next several quarters. They cut 48,000 jobs in July alone.

Housing activity will be a big negative in Q3 after being a huge positive in Q2. Both reflect the April 30 deadline for the homebuyer tax credit.

Consumer spending — 70% of overall economic activity — grew at a sluggish 1.6% pace in Q2. But even that may be overstanding. Spending picked up through Q1. All consumers had to do was coast in the spring and Q2's average spending would outpace Q1's average. That's basically what happened. Actual nominal spending in June, the end of Q2, actually was slightly below March's pace. (Inflation-adjusted spending was slightly higher).

Nonresidential fixed investment surged at a 17% annual rate in Q2, thanks to a

21.9% gain in equipment and software. That accounted for 1.5 percentage points of GDP growth. After revisions, business spending seems likely to account for all of last quarter's growth and more.

With consumers likely to stay cautious and other temporary boosts turning into negatives, the U.S. may rely even more heavily on capital spending going forward.

Not surprisingly, the Federal Reserve and private economists have been busy cutting their forecasts for the rest of year.

Q2's likely revisions will only add to the public's negative perceptions about the U.S. economy and the trillion-dollar stimulus heading into the midterm elections.

Blagojevich jury deadlocked on some counts:

-- A federal jury weighing the fate of former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich in his corruption trial telegraphed Wednesday it may be deadlocked on some counts of the indictment.

"In a situation where all the jurors cannot agree on all counts what should the next step be? We must now ask for guidance?" the jury asked U.S. District Judge James Zagel.

The judge responded, "It is permissible for a jury to return a verdict on some counts and not all counts" and told it to continue deliberations.

Blagojevich faces 24 counts, including racketeering, wire fraud, attempted extortion and bribery. The two-term Democrat was removed from office in January 2009 amid accusations that he attempted to sell the U.S. Senate seat that had been occupied by Barack Obama before he became president.

In one conversation recorded by federal agents, he told an aide, "I've got this thing, and it's [expletive] golden. I'm just not giving it up for [expletive] nothing."

Conviction on the count of conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud would carry a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison, while a conviction on the count of solicitation of bribery would carry a maximum sentence of 10 years.

The former governor's brother, Robert Blagojevich, testified last week that the governor was "trying to politically work something to his benefit" in handling the appointment but was thinking in terms of political horse-trading, not corruption.

"It didn't seem out of the ordinary, because Obama was taking a lot of people from Illinois with him to D.C.," said Robert Blagojevich, who raised money for his brother. He said the governor "was interested in the idea of being the head of Health and Human Services."

Robert Blagojevich is charged with wire fraud, extortion conspiracy, attempted extortion and bribery conspiracy and is on trial with his brother.

While awaiting trial, the ousted governor asserted his innocence in interviews and on Twitter, as well as during his appearances on the "Celebrity Apprentice" reality show.

Hill titan Dan Rostenkowski dead at 82:

-- Former Illinois congressman Dan Rostenkowski, who rose through the ranks of Chicago's rough-and-tumble political scene to become one of the most powerful men on Capitol Hill, has died, according to the office of Chicago Alderman Richard Mell.

He was 82. He died in Wisconsin after an extended illness, Mell's office said.

Rostenkowski first entered Congress in 1959, during the second half of the Eisenhower administration. Known for his booming voice and reputation as a power broker, he became chairman of the tax-writing Ways and Means Committee in 1981.

During his tenure as chairman, the powerful Democrat played a key role in passing major reforms of both Social Security and the tax code, among other things.

In 1988, Rostenkowski helped pass a controversial expansion of Medicare designed to protect seniors against catastrophic medical expenses. Senior citizens became livid over the higher monthly premiums and surtax tied to the bill. The measure was repealed a year later.

Rostenkowski was defeated in the Republican landslide of 1994, however, after becoming mired in scandal. Among other things, prosecutors alleged he used public funds for personal matters and to pay employees who did little actual work.

Rostenkowski pleaded guilty to corruption charges in April 1996, and ultimately served over a year in federal prison. He was pardoned by President Bill Clinton in 2000.

"Dan Rostenkowski devoted his life to his community, Chicago and the state," Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan said Wednesday.

"His efforts on behalf of the regular people who needed a friend to wade through the tangle of government are unparalleled."

JIM SCARANTINO'S NEW MEXICO WATCHDOG <http://newmexico.watchdog.org> :

More Than \$1 Billion Unspent in Capital Outlay Funding

The Legislative Finance Committee has found that nearly a third of the capital outlay funding approved since 2005, more than \$1 billion, remains unspent. Eighty percent of the funding approved in 2008 is unspent. More than \$700 million of the unspent capital funds were approved at least four years ago.

The LFC released these findings in its August newsletter. "Slightly more than half of the outstanding capital outlay is for 284 projects funded at \$1 million or more," the LFC reported. The committee's staff testified at a hearing in July that 60 percent of those projects are on schedule and another 30 percent are active. However, 30 projects are idle.

Capital outlay is funded through voter-approved general obligation bonds, paid off with property taxes; severance tax bonds, backed with tax revenue from oil and mining activity; and non-recurring general fund revenue. Early projections, according to the LFC, indicate the state will have no non-recurring money available for capital outlay this year. Severance tax bonding capacity is expected to be \$200 million.

Earlier this year, the Legislature passed SB 182 to reallocate \$130 million in unspent capital outlay funds from about 1,500 projects to help cover the state's budget shortfall. The discovery of \$1 billion in unspent capital outlay funds comes shortly after news reported here that Governor Bill Richardson's estimates for 2010 revenue were short \$32.5 million, and short another \$159.3 million for 2011. A portion of the unspent capital outlay funds identified by the LFC, particularly those for idle projects, may become a target of legislators working yet again to plug holes in the state's battered finances.

Harry Reid: "I don't know how anyone of Hispanic heritage could be a Republican."

While campaigning in Nevada Tuesday, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid told an audience of mostly Hispanic voters: "I don't know how anyone of Hispanic heritage could be a Republican, okay. Do I need to say more?" Watch the video here:

Reid's racially-charged comments come as the Nevada Democrat is trying to boost Hispanic turnout in his bid for reelection this November. Polls show, however, that Reid's positions on immigration are very unpopular with Nevada voters in general. Reid supports the Obama administration's lawsuit against Arizona over its immigration law, but 63 percent of Nevada voters oppose the lawsuit, according to a Rasmussen poll.

Reid voted against a measure to complete a 700-mile fence along the Mexican border in May, but 68 percent of voters nationally support building a border fence, according to Rasmussen.

The Real Clear Politics average of polls shows Reid leading Republican Sharron Angle by 2 percentage points. The Angle campaign has not yet officially responded to Reid's remark, but an Angle staffer wrote on Twitter that Reid made an "idiotic" statement.

A statement from Sharron Angle's deputy campaign manager Jordan Gehrke:

"Reid has said he'll do more if re-elected--apparently that means more insensitive racial comments, more gaffes, more lame attempts to distract from what he has done to destroy the Nevada economy. With that said, I suppose Nevadans should just be glad he didn't say anything racist about Hispanic people's skin tone or 'dialect' this time."

The last line is a reference to Reid's comment that Barack Obama does not have a "negro dialect." Reid apologized to Obama when his remark was published in a book in January of this year.

Karl reminds us that Harry Reid voted for a "poison pill" amendment that killed that the 2007 immigration bill:

Hispanic voters — and everyone else — ought to note that Harry Reid was a key vote in killing "comprehensive immigration reform" in 2007. So the answer to Reid's question is "yes" — he does need to say a bit more, if only to explain why he put the interest of Big Labor ahead of "comprehensive immigration reform."

Update (8:49 a.m.): A number of readers note that Reid's son, Rory Reid, is trailing Republican Brian Sandoval, who happens to be Hispanic, badly in the Nevada governor's race.

Marco Rubio, a Republican Senate candidate in Florida and the son of Cuban exiles, tells Fox News that Reid's comments are "outrageous."

Many Blessings,

Rev. Mark F. Tross

Rio Rancho North Foursquare/Gladstone Church/Ekklesia Outreach

<http://ekkleisiaoutreach.com>

<http://powersforgood.weebly.com>

<http://www.whatissimplechurch.com>

<http://simplechurchfellowship.weebly.com>