

# Lawmakers to start session with full plate

## Politicians face decisions on budget, lottery

By MIKE SMITH  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

### INDIANAPOLIS

The fight over spending in the next state budget alone is likely to make the upcoming legislative session contentious, but Republican Gov. Mitch Daniels and the General Assembly have given them lots of other major issues to deal with.

Daniels has pushed aggressive agendas in his first two sessions and has a hefty one again this year, including proposals to phase in statewide full-day kinder-

A look at some top issues expected to be debated in the legislative session that begins Monday:

#### Two-year budget

Only thing lawmakers mandated to enact this year. Lawmakers projected to have about \$26 billion to spend, or about \$1.5 billion more than the current budget. Republican Gov. Mitch Daniels says he will insist the budget remain balanced.

#### Full-day kindergarten

Daniels wants to phase in optional full-day kindergarten over three years, starting with about 33,000 children eligible for

### A FEW TOP ISSUES

free and reduced-price lunches. Would cost about \$145 million in the next budget, growing to \$260 million a year by 2011-12. Concept has some bipartisan support.

#### Property taxes

Daniels and many lawmakers want to give local governments more taxing options to reduce reliance on property taxes.

#### Tollway bypass

Daniels wants authority to have a private company build and then operate a tollway around a large portion of Indian-

apolis connecting Interstate 69 northeast of the city with Interstate 70 to the southwest. Upfront payment from company would be used to help build the planned extension of I-69 through southern Indiana without making it a tollway. House Democrats plan hearings on the proposal in areas that would be affected by the bypass.

#### Gasoline taxes

House Democrats want to eliminate the gasoline sales tax. Republicans have frowned on the idea, saying it could cost \$300 million or more in annual state revenue.

hands of private companies.

The full plate that will greet lawmakers Monday could get more interesting with the return of a divided legislature.

Republicans still control the Senate, but Democrats regained the House and have a 51-49 advan-

age. Rep. Patrick Bauer of South Bend, a fiery veteran lawmaker who has sparred fiercely with Daniels and House Republicans the past two years, will again wield the gavel as speaker, as he did in 2003 and 2004.

The only thing lawmakers are required to do is enact a new, two-year budget. They will start in the black this time and tax revenues are expected to grow \$1.5 billion over the next two fiscal years, giving them about \$26 billion to work with.

Daniels wants them to hold spending increases to 4 percent each year, which is below projected revenue increases of 4.2 percent in the fiscal year that starts in July and 4.5 percent the next year. Daniels says he will insist that the budget remains balanced.

"If we are careful about lesser priorities, we can do not one but several new things to make Indiana

a better place," Daniels said.

Daniels' top priority is to begin phasing in statewide full-day kindergarten, starting with students from low-income families.

Many in both parties support the concept. But Senate Appropriations Chairman Robert Meeks, R-LaGrange, has said full-day kindergarten could force some school districts to increase property taxes to build extra classroom space and other necessities.

House Democrats also want to eliminate the gasoline sales tax, a proposal Republicans say could cost the state \$300 million or more in lost revenue.

Although in the minority now, House Republicans have pledged to pursue an extensive agenda. It includes proposals designed to improve the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, crack down on illegal immigration and provide more flexibility for schools.

## Weather hampers Plains

### Helicopters drop food for animals

By STEVEN K. PAULSON  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

### DENVER

National Guard helicopters dropped emergency food bundles and bales of hay for people and livestock trapped by snowdrifts as high as rooftops Tuesday after back-to-back blizzards paralyzed the Plains.

At least a dozen deaths were blamed on a weekend storm that knocked out electricity to tens of thousands of people in Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska and Oklahoma and left herds of cattle without food or water. The blizzard spread a blanket of snow on top of the icy layer left by a storm that hit just before Christmas.

Because of rising temperatures, many highways were clear, but many rural roads remained impassable, and National Guardsmen used Humvees and snowmobiles to reach people trapped in their homes and take them to shelters.

Colorado also launched a haylift in hopes of saving thousands of cattle immobilized by drifts as high as 10 feet. In 1997, a similar storm killed 30,000 cattle in the state.

Colorado and Kansas were trying to find enough helicopters capable of hauling hay bales weighing up to 1,300 pounds, said Don Ament, Colorado's agriculture director. Many helicopters in the state's National Guard fleet are in the Middle East.

"These cattle have already gone a number of days without food and water. They're just going to lay over dead if we don't do something soon," Ament said.

Two Huey and three Black Hawk helicopters dropped 400 bales of hay Tuesday to feed cattle in the hardest-hit areas, Colorado officials said.

National Guard helicopters in the state also dropped Meals Ready to Eat, or military rations, just outside people's houses so they could reach the bundles, Sgt. 1st Class Steve Segin said.

Ice in some areas was even more difficult to deal with than the snow, snapping trees and bringing down power lines. In Nebraska, big portable generators were set up to maintain water service and keep emergency shelters open.

At least 6,300 homes and businesses in western Kansas were without power, along with an estimated 15,000 in Nebraska and more than 6,000 in Colorado and Oklahoma. Some utility officials warned it could take weeks to restore electricity.

### DEATH OF SADDAM

# Iraqi government to investigate execution



An Iraqi cries on the grave of the country's former dictator Saddam Hussein in Ouja, Iraq, on Tuesday. The Iraqi government has ordered an investigation in the execution of the former dictator after a video was released showing Saddam was taunted before his hanging.

## Conduct during Saddam hanging, leak of video questioned

By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

### BAGHDAD, Iraq

Iraq's prime minister ordered an investigation Tuesday into Saddam Hussein's execution to try to uncover who taunted the former dictator in the final minutes of his life, and who leaked inflammatory footage taken by camera phone of the hanging.

The unofficial video, on which at least one person is heard shouting "To hell!" at the deposed president and Saddam is heard exchanging insults with his executioners, dealt a blow to Iraq's efforts to prove it was a neutral enforcer of the law. Instead, the emotional, politicized spectacle raised tensions between the Shiite majority and Sunni Arabs who ran the country until their benefactor, Saddam, was ousted in the U.S.-led invasion of 2003.

A prosecutor who saw the hanging said some of the taunting came from guards outside the execution chamber, not the masked ones who put the noose around Saddam's neck.

The Iraqi government did not say what, if any, punishment would await anyone uncovered in its probe of guards and 14 selected witnesses who attended the execution at a Baghdad prison before dawn Saturday. Some were high-ranking officials or people affiliated with radical

Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, a political ally of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, who had wanted to speed up the timing of the execution after an appeals court upheld the death sentence.

The grainy video appeared on the Internet late Saturday. Al-Jazeera television also showed the footage at that time, saying it was exclusive.

The footage contained audio of people taunting Saddam with chants of "Muqtada," a reference to al-Sadr. Also on the video, Saddam accuses his tormentors of being unmanly in scenes that stop just short of pandemonium.

The video was inflammatory not only because the chanting was clearly audible but also for showing the ghastly spectacle of Saddam plummeting through the gallows trapdoor and dangling in death, his vacant eyes open and his snapped neck almost at a right angle to the line of his shoulders.

In contrast, the official video showed masked executioners placing a heavy noose around Saddam's neck, without a soundtrack. Another official video shows Saddam wrapped in a burial shroud after his death, though his head and neck are exposed as proof of his identity.

Munqith al-Faroon, an Iraqi prosecutor who helped convict and sentence Saddam to death for the killings of 148 people in the town of Dujail in 1982, said he was a

witness to the hanging. He said two top officials had their mobile phones with them, even though the government-approved witnesses had been searched before boarding U.S. helicopter that carried them from the Green Zone to the site of the execution, their cell phones placed in a box for safekeeping.

Al-Faroon did not name the officials who had their phones and said he did not know whether the Iraqi government had approved the mobile phone video.

"It might be for money. Maybe he decided from the start to film it and to sell it to the satellite TV channels," al-Faroon said in an interview with TV2, a Danish television network. "I do not think that an investigation is necessary if they only filmed it for money. The execution was not a secret. The filming was not against the law."

Still, the prime minister ordered the formation of an investigative committee in the Interior Ministry to identify who chanted slogans inside the execution chamber and who filmed the execution and sent it to the media, said Sami al-Askari, a political adviser to the Iraqi leader.

It was unclear how many guards attended the execution. On the official video, seven people were on the gallows platform with Saddam. They included five guards in masks, a man without a mask whose face was blurred over, and a photographer.

## Same-sex marriage ban allowed to proceed

### Massachusetts could vote on proposal in '08

By STEVE LEBLANC  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

### BOSTON

In a suspense-filled final day of the legislative session, Massachusetts lawmakers kept alive a proposed constitutional amendment Tuesday that would put a stop to gay marriage in the only state that allows same-sex couples to wed.

The vote came after weeks of mounting legal and political pressure on legislators from both sides in the debate.

With a combination of parliamentary maneuvering, flip-flopping and brinkmanship, lawmakers gave the first round of approval necessary for the amendment to appear on the ballot in 2008.

The measure still needs the endorsement of the next legislative session.

If the amendment makes it onto the ballot and residents approve it, it will leave Massachusetts' 8,000 existing gay marriages intact but ban any new ones.

"This is democracy in action. It's not a vengeance campaign. It's not a hate campaign. It's just an opportunity for the people to vote," said Kris Mineau of the Massachusetts Family Institute, a conservative group that opposes gay marriage.

In November, seven states approved gay-marriage bans, joining 20 that had done so in previous elections.

Other states are moving in the opposite direction: New Jersey's gay couples gained new rights last week when the state legalized same-sex civil unions there. Vermont and Connecticut also allow civil unions.



Gay marriage activists protest outside the Statehouse in Boston on Tuesday. Massachusetts lawmakers voted Tuesday to allow a proposed constitutional amendment to move forward that, if passed, would ban it.

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