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Judge Jim Gray calls for Iraqi prison investigation

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Alicia Robinson

U.S. Senate candidate and Newport Beach resident Judge Jim Gray

weighed in Wednesday on recently discovered photos of American

soldiers abusing Iraqi prisoners, calling for an independent

investigation into allegations of torture of captive Iraqis by American forces.

"As a Vietnam-era veteran, I am sickened by photos purporting to show American soldiers engaging in obvious abuse of detainees," Gray said in a statement Wednesday.

Gray, a Libertarian, faces incumbent Democratic Sen. Barbara Boxer and Republican candidate Bill Jones in November.

Business bullish on

Gov. Schwarzenegger

The business community, at least in Newport Beach, is feeling positive about Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's recent actions to rescue the state's floundering economy.

Newport Beach Chamber of Commerce President Richard Luehrs came away optimistic from a lobbying trip to Sacramento last week. Luehrs visited with a host of legislators from both parties to discuss business issues such as the state's bankrupt unemployment insurance system and an impending increase in California's minimum wage, he said.

While business owners are still wondering how the new worker's compensation legislation will play out, Luehrs said they're comfortable with it and they trust Schwarzenegger to hammer out the details.

And right now in the capital, Luehrs said, it's all about

Schwarzenegger.

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"I've been going to Sacramento once or twice a year for the last 20 years, and I've never seen it as focused on one individual, specifically the governor," he said. "Both sides of the aisle are just in awe of his tenacity, his ability to draw people together and his focus on fixing the California economy."

Assemblyman Maddox makes most of his bills

The state Assembly's judiciary committee apparently liked three bills 68th District Assemblyman Ken Maddox wrote, because it passed them overwhelmingly, a statement from Maddox's office said Wednesday.

The three bills will allow collection agencies to fully recoup the cost of their services, prohibit cities and counties from using zoning to block religious institutions from their communities and amend the probate code to give a notice of proceedings to anyone with an interest in the related trust.

The bills, which go next to the full Assembly, are part of a slate of 15 pieces of legislation Maddox introduced for consideration in February. They may be among his last bills, as he is termed out of the Assembly at the end of the year and lost a primary bid for the 35th District Senate seat to 70th District Assemblyman John Campbell.

Plenty of suggestions

land with assemblymen

Campbell, Maddox and their fellow Republicans will have a number of ideas to consider following last Friday's Santa Ana stop of a GOP "suggestion box tour" in search of ways to cut government waste. At least 100 concerned residents showed up for the event, Campbell said. "Many of [the suggestions] we'd heard before," he said. "Some of them weren't actually on topic and they weren't money-saving, and there were some new ones we hadn't heard before, so I think it was worthwhile."

The regional meetings will wrap up this week, then the ideas will be compiled and submitted to the governor, Campbell said. He's hoping residents' suggestions will get more traction than some of the saving measures he has proposed.

After Schwarzenegger saved about \$100,000 and 58,000 pounds of paper by issuing the state budget on CD-ROM, Campbell tried to follow that lead by suggesting the 1,200 reports legislators get each year be delivered the same way. An apparently paper-loving Assembly committee voted the idea down, however.

"My guess is that some employee union decided that someone might lose their job if they didn't have to Xerox this stuff," Campbell said.



His bill that would have cut two of the 14 holidays state employees enjoy also crashed and burned in a committee last month.

A full crib and a full schedule for congressman

While it's likely he was exhausted from changing diapers, Rep. Dana Rohrabacher was back at work in Washington on Wednesday with a full schedule, said Rohrabacher spokesman Aaron Lewis. Rohrabacher became a father for the first, second and third times when his wife, Rhonda Carmony, gave birth to triplets -- two daughters and a son -- on April 27.

The representative has some work ahead as well. He's about to begin round of media appearances on CNN, MSNBC, Los Angeles radio station KFI-AM and the like to promote his controversial illegal immigrant reporting bill. It's the bill that reportedly earned Rohrabacher death threats in January after a New York radio station discussed the bill and gave out the phone number of the congressman's Huntington Beach office.

The bill would require hospitals that receive federal funding to ask patients if they are legal U.S. residents and report any who aren't in a federal database.

Lewis said the bill is expected to come up for a House vote in the next two weeks, but it's too early to project the outcome.

"We have no idea how the other members feel about it," Lewis said.

"Honestly, it could go either way."

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