

Gail Collins: New governors — Kasich, Walker, etc. — making news

By Gail Collins

6:04 PM Monday, April 25, 2011

Right now, you're probably asking yourself: How are all the angry new governors doing?

Great! Fear and loathing may abound, but it's business-friendly fear and loathing. In Ohio and Wisconsin, angry new governors John Kasich and Scott Walker are taking economic development out of the hands of state bureaucrats and giving the job to new quasi-private entities that will be much more effective and efficient.

In Florida, where the Legislature did all that in the 1990s, the angry new governor Rick Scott has a bold plan to improve economic development by creating a state Department of Commerce that will be much more effective and efficient.

Really, just so there's change and it doesn't sound socialistic. "We don't want to leave any money on the table," said Kasich, who is planning to sell five prisons, the lottery and maybe do something with the turnpike. I'm from Ohio, and while I never did like the turnpike, I've always been a fan of history. I wonder if I could get a good deal on the Warren Harding homestead.

In Maine, Gov. Paul LePage has won his fight to remove a huge Department of Labor mural that LePage regarded as too pro-labor. Now his administration is marching ahead with its effort to rename the building's conference rooms. Among the names targeted for elimination are Frances Perkins, FDR's secretary of labor, and William Looney, a 19th-century Republican who sponsored legislation to limit the number of hours women and children could work in factories.

The department has asked its employees to come up with new names that, according to its memo, "should not reflect a bias toward either business or workers." Definitely do not want to give the impression that government is on the side of the workers. Perhaps attending meetings in the William Looney room made employers worry that the LePage administration leaned too far to the left when it came to child labor laws.

Gov. Butch Otter of Idaho is so on the side of private enterprise ranchers that he just signed a law naming the gray wolf a "disaster emergency." I would love to go into this, but he's actually not new in office. I just brought it up because I like being able to say "Butch Otter."

Meanwhile, in news from South Carolina, Gov. Nikki Haley, a Tea Party favorite, tossed out Darla Moore, a longtime member of the University of South Carolina board of trustees. Moore had given money to one of the Democratic candidates for governor, saying she wanted "a fresh set of eyes." This would not be all that big a deal except that Moore is the biggest donor in the university's history. She has given at least \$70 million to the school, which would seem to be worth one heck of a lot of sets of eyes.

Moore is being replaced by Thomas “Tommy” Cofield, a lawyer and Haley supporter who formerly served as a judge on the Fee Dispute Resolution Board. According to his biography, he is also active in community and civic affairs.

In Wisconsin, Walker is moving people around like crazy. He tapped Brian Deschane, a director at the Department of Regulation and Licensing, to oversee regulatory and environmental issues when the Commerce Department turns into the new public-private thingie.

This was a meteoric rise for Deschane, a 27-year-old college dropout who had been at his job for only a couple of months. The promotion carried a 26 percent raise in salary to \$81,500 a year, along with the opportunity to manage dozens of other state employees. It offered an exciting change of pace for the Wisconsin wunderkind, whose previous experience had mainly involved short-term political campaign jobs and working for the Wisconsin Builders Association, where his father, Jerry, is a lobbyist and executive vice president. Did we mention that the WBA and its members gave Walker \$121,652 in campaign contributions?

“He got the position himself,” the elder Deschane assured The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. “I didn’t get it for him.” He did acknowledge that he might have mentioned to Walker’s campaign manager that the kid was “out there and available.”

People, does this sound like good planning to you? If you were governor and one of your top priorities was getting jobs taken out from under civil service protection, wouldn’t you put up a Post-it reminding yourself not to put the unqualified offspring of major campaign contributors in important positions?

After the story broke, the governor was deeply embarrassed, and Deschane — did we mention he had two DWI convictions? — was demoted back to his original job, which he then quit. He is history, although Stephen Fitzgerald, the father of the speaker of the Assembly and also the father of the speaker’s brother, the Senate majority leader, still has his new job as head of the Wisconsin State Patrol.

There is, you know, a reason we created civil service in the first place.

Gail Collins writes for The New York Times.

Find this article at:

<http://www.daytondailynews.com/opinion/columnists/gail-collins-new-governors-kasich-walker-etc-making-news-1144960.html>

 [Print this page](#)  [Close](#)