

Video showing problems is jarring

Gannett News Service

ALBANY — One constant when any Pataki administration officials testify at a hearing is they are resolutely upbeat, and say "under Gov. George Pataki's leadership" as often as possible.

That's why it was jarring this week that a video put together by the state Environmental Conservation Department detailing all kinds of problems with parks, campsites and other facilities the department runs. The video was shown to state Budget Division officials who are reviewing the department's capital-spending plans.

"Many of our areas are in need of repairs," the narrator said about campgrounds.

"Our stewardship of these facilities has been lacking," the narrator intoned at another point, talking about the department's nine environmental-education centers.

But then the lights came on, and Assistant Commissioner Susan Taluto said that, actually, most of the problems depicted in the video had been fixed. She said the overall condition of EnCon facilities was "good."

DEC spokeswoman Jennifer Post said the video was shown to highlight problems that have been fixed over the past few years.

On the mark

Utica pollster John Zogby may

ALBANY Notebook

have been wrong about the U.S. Senate race (he had it very tight, when Hillary Clinton ended up winning by 12 percentage points) but he was right on the money in this week's Canadian election.

He had Jean Chretien's Liberal Party getting 40 percent of the vote (actual 41) the Canadian Alliance 27 (actual 26) and the Progressive Conservatives 14 percent (actual 12).

An honored lobbyist

Blair Horner, the chief lobbyist for the New York Public Interest Research Group, is unlikely to win any popularity contests among legislators or other government officials at the Capitol. There's probably a connection between that fact and an honor he is due to receive next week.

Horner, who has been the chief lobbyist for the student-dominated good-government group here for 13 years, is to get a "Public Interest Citizen" award from NYPIRG in New York City. He's been with the group for a total of 25 years.

He was named as one of the

25 most influential New Yorkers in the last 25 years by Empire State Magazine and this year spearheaded first-in-the-nation legislation to require firesafe cigarettes and a bill to create a consumer profile of all New York physicians.

He's also known as one of the most outspoken and informed critics of what he sees as the closed system of governance here where most important decisions are made out of sight of the public.

Appointee criticized

While most of the dozens of state appointments approved by the Senate this week passed without controversy, the reappointment of an outspoken State University of New York trustee drew a complaint from the faculty union.

William Scheuerman, president of United University Professions, said he was disappointed that Gov. George Pataki and the state Senate reappointed Candace deRussy and Pamela Jacobs to the SUNY board.

Scheuerman singled out deRussy, saying in a written statement that she "did not demonstrate during her previous tenure any commitment whatsoever to adequately funding the university or to

respecting the rights of faculty."

Among other things, Scheuerman opposed a movement led by deRussy to impose general-education requirements across all SUNY campuses because he said it took away from the faculty's responsibility to determine curriculum.

Pataki and SUNY Chancellor Robert King, on the other hand, praised deRussy's leadership.



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