

# Inside

2/24/07

## ■ Bureau of Laffs



**T**he federal government is always the butt of jokes; now comedian Naomi Johnson wants to find some bureaucrats who can tell one.

Inspired by the smart, deadpan humor that she encountered in the land of steel desks, the former employee of the Health and Human Services and State departments has launched the “Funniest Fed” contest.

Auditions will soon be under way to discover the funniest administrators for a laugh-off at the Arlington, Va., Cinema 'N' Drafthouse this spring. Johnson even went through the humorless task of clearing the contest and its \$250 grand prize with the Office of Government Ethics. “What I want is smart, funny people who also happen to be civil servants,” Johnson said.

Johnson has taken time off from government work to try the professional comedy circuit herself. “I went to have my first mammogram the other day,” she said. “I’m there, I’m all ready to get it done, and the woman says, ‘I’m really sorry, but I’m going to have to see some photo ID.’ I’m like, they’re not going to be on there! I think this identity theft thing has gone way too far.” —**Brian Friel**

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**Set to Stun** Drop that laser gun! Buck Rogers would be sorely vexed by new FAA rules that forbid “explosives, firearms, knives, or other weapons” on future commercial spacecraft. Jeeze. What’s space exploration without a few messy shootouts with giant green alien protozoa? Earth-based gun advocates slammed the agency for arguing



that the right of the people to bear arms guaranteed by the Second Amendment is a “collective” right, not an individual one, and therefore doesn’t apply to astronauts. In a rewrite, the agency dropped the assertion but said that guns in space are still a dumb idea. “We feel this is a reasonable restriction,” said FAA spokeswoman Diane Spitaliere. —**Randy Barrett**



## Murmurs

Pss! Government types aren’t generally known for being folksy, but farmers appear to have a friend in **Mark Keenum**. The new Agriculture Department undersecretary has surprised several crowds recently by launching into speeches saying he has “the toughest job in the world” and often gets called in the middle of the night to “clean up a mess.” It’s not the office demanding his attention—it’s Keenum’s 2-year-old triplets, **Kathryn, Everett, and Mary Phillips**, and 9-month-old baby, **Victoria**. His wife, **Rhonda Newman Keenum**, was an assistant secretary of Commerce when the triplets were born and is now the director of the White House Office of Public Liaison. She’s expected to depart soon for a job in the PR sector ... Bipartisanship seems to be thriving these days, at least on K Street, judging by a March 5 fundraiser for the re-election campaign of Mississippi Gov. **Haley Barbour**—a former Republican National Committee chairman, to boot—at the home of heavy-hitting Democratic lobbyist **Tony Podesta**. Not surprisingly, the money-bash invite names a few hotshot GOP lobbyists as hosts, one of whom quipped that Podesta is “closer to Haley than I am” ...

## Vital Statistics

■ **670,000**

Licensed hair-care professionals in the United States qualified to shave Britney Spears’s head

—U.S. Labor Department

■ **94.3**

Percentage increase from 2003 to 2006 in the average length of delays in late JetBlue departures

—U.S. Transportation Department

■ **30**

Maximum number of years in prison that Lewis Libby faces, if convicted on all counts

—U.S. Office of the Special Counsel