

Christie's bridge troubles, unemployment benefits under threat, and has Obamacare hurt the U.S. more than Nazis, Soviets, and terrorists combined? – US state blog round up for 14 – 20 December

USApp Managing Editor, Chris Gilson, and Assistant Editor, Natalie Allen look at the week in U.S. state blogging. [Click here](#) for our weekly roundup of national blogs.

Northeast

Amongst rumors that Donald Trump is considering a run for New York Governor, *PoliticusUSA* investigates his chances, concluding that, while Trump has depicted himself as a “reluctant warrior riding a crest of public support,” he would suffer an embarrassing loss against incumbent Governor Cuomo. Because of this, we might see a repeat of the 2012 Presidential election, where Trump basks in the attention of a potential run, but ultimately does not enter the race.

Former Massachusetts Senator Scott Brown is moving to New Hampshire, leading to speculation that he plans to run for Senate in the Granite State. *Outside the Beltway* is not optimistic about his chances, [noting](#) the fact that no modern Senator has ever represented two states in his/her career and the significant differences between Massachusetts and New Hampshire Republicans create an uphill battle for Brown. Also in New Hampshire, *Granite Gronk* [looks at](#) a Facebook page to “Draft Andrew Hemmingway” to run for Governor of New Hampshire, which appeared after George Lambert dropped out of the race for health reasons. At the time of this writing, the page has 161 likes.

In Maine, *Agree to Disagree* [reports](#) that incumbent Paul LePage is leading the governor race in Northern Maine, despite the fact that their Congressman, Mike Michaud, is his primary challenger.

Saving New Jersey [profiles](#) Governor Chris Christie and looks at whether his “Jersey-tude” could have national appeal in a 2016 Presidential run, arguing that his often brutal honesty could be a double-edged sword. But this may be the least of Christie's problems in pursuing the White House. On Saturday, *PoliticusUSA* [covers the story](#) that Christie ordered the closing two lanes on the George Washington Bridge (connecting Fort Lee, New Jersey with New York), which caused three days of traffic backups, because the Democratic Mayor of Fort Lee, Mark Sokolich refused to back Christie in this year's gubernatorial race. The recent resignation of two high-ranking officials who were involved with the closure has put further pressure on Christie.

Still in New Jersey, *Crooks and Liars* [reports](#) that four former Governors oppose the controversial plan to build a natural gas pipeline through the state's Pinelands. The project is currently supported by Chris Christie's administration. *Blue Jersey* has an interesting [interview](#) with State Senate President Steve Sweeney, though he refuses to condemn the Pinelands pipeline.

South

In Texas, *PoliticusUSA* [examines](#) the four Republican candidates for lieutenant governor who each say they support the teaching of creationism in the state's public schools, and the constitutionality of their positions. *Outside the Beltway* [looks at](#) the first poll in the GOP primary for U.S. Senate, which has last minute entrant Congressman Steve Stockman losing to incumbent John Cornyn by 44 points. With the actual vote less than three months away, Stockman's chances do not look good, but his spokesman remains optimistic, calling the poll “bad news for liberal John Cornyn.” Also in Texas, *Burnt Orange Report* [writes](#) that Dallas has effectively banned almost all fracking within city limits in spite of intense lobbying from oil companies looking to increase drilling in

the area.

In North Carolina, *PoliticusUSA* [reports](#) that State Senator Bob Rucho recently tweeted that Obamacare has hurt the U.S. more than Nazis, Soviets, and terrorists combined. He later tweeted that “the PEN is mightier than the SWORD” in an attempt to clarify his meaning.

On Wednesday, *Outside the Beltway* [reports](#) that in Virginia’s Attorney General Race, State Senator, Republican Mark Obenshain, would concede to Democrat Mark Herring. This concession comes after weeks of speculation that Obenshain would challenge Herring’s very narrow (810 votes) lead in the state legislature.

Herring’s victory means that all the five statewide offices in Virginia (Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, and the two U.S. Senate seats) are in the hands of one party. Despite Democratic success in the state, *Blue Virginia* [says](#) that there is still a great deal of work to be done before the state can be said to be truly ‘blue’, especially given that Republicans control Virginia’s delegation to the House of Representatives and the House of Delegates.

Meanwhile in Georgia, Representative Jack Kingston has come under fire for saying that children on the federal lunch program should be made to sweep floors for their food, in order to learn that “there is no such thing as a free lunch”, [writes PoliticusUSA](#). Perhaps even less popular in Georgia than Kingston’s comments is the Affordable Care Act. *Georgia Tipsheet* [reports](#) on the results of a recent Healthcare Georgia Foundation poll in which 47 percent of respondents said they believe Obamacare will drive up their costs and 32 percent think the law will lessen the quality of their healthcare.

Florida’s *StPeter’sBlog* [looks](#) at what the recently agreed Federal budget means for the state, saying that the higher airline fees will hurt the state’s tourism industry, cuts cost-of-living increases for the military, and has not extended long-term unemployment benefits to more than 260,000 Floridians.

The *Arkansas Times* [reports](#) on a decision this week by a state Judge, who has refused to dismiss a lawsuit that challenges the state’s ban on same-sex marriage

Midwest

Discussing the city of Detroit’s recent declaration of bankruptcy, *The Feed* [says](#) that such a move is ironically a rather expensive one, given that it has committed \$28 million in fees to lawyers and consultants who will help with the process. They say that many of the city’s residents are justifiably angry, especially those that will not get their promised pensions as the city pays expensive consultants.

According to *Roll Call* Republicans are [looking](#) for a ‘straight flush’ in North Dakota, as the party already controls every state and Federal elected position (except for one Democratic Senator). Despite GOP advantages, state Democrats are looking ahead to possible opportunities and weaknesses in 2014 and 2016. Staying in North Dakota, *Say Anything* [reports](#) that Marcel Sim, the former police chief of Lincoln (located just outside of Bismark), who was accused child abuse earlier this year, has been cleared of any wrongdoing. Unfortunately, the Lincoln City Council fired Sim on October 28th, which may leave them vulnerable to a wrongful termination lawsuit.

Wisconsin’s *Political Heat* [says](#) that Governor Scott Walker’s plan to eliminate income taxes in favor of increased sales taxes would hurt the state’s poor families and help the rich. *Blue Cheddar* [looks at](#) Governor Walker’s



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proposal to allow Wisconsin's uninsured to purchase coverage directly from providers rather than in the online exchange, theorizing that this proposal is either a PR stunt or evidence that the Obama administration is ready to "wheel and deal to get this Obamacare program going." Meanwhile, *Look True North* [decries](#) recent comparisons between the vigorous economic recovery in Minnesota and the rather sluggish one in Wisconsin, arguing that much of the difference is due to conditions in the industries specific to each state rather than the divergent economic policies. Whatever the reason, it is clear that Wisconsin is still struggling; following the release of a U.S Department of Labor report, *Blogging Blue* [writes](#) that Wisconsin is first in the nation in new unemployment claims.



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And in Iowa, *National Journal* [examines](#) a seemingly local scandal that may create problems for Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. Former Iowa state senator Kent Sorenson resigned from office in October after it was revealed that he may have accepted payment to work on Michele Bachmann's presidential campaign, a violation of the state Senate's ethics rules. Sorenson is also suspected of accepting money to defect to Ron Paul's campaign. Paul's deputy campaign manager, who has previously done contract work for McConnell, sent Sorenson a check for \$25,000 and Paul's former campaign chairman, who is now running McConnell's campaign, may have known about the agreement.

West and Pacific

This week is a big one for marriage equality, as *Outside the Beltway* [reports](#) that the New Mexico Supreme Court has issued a ruling that legalizes same-sex marriage. The state is the 17th to legalize such partnerships.

Speaking of marriage, *Outside the Beltway* also [explains](#) the recent district court ruling that struck down part of a Utah law against polygamy. While the bigamy statute was upheld, the section of the law prohibiting cohabitation with someone while married to another was declared unconstitutional. However, this provision was unique to Utah and the ruling has essentially brought the bigamy law in line with those in other states.

This week's budget agreement included no provision for an extension for those on emergency unemployment benefits. *SeattlePI* writes that, as a result of this, 25,000 people in the state will [lose their benefits](#) as of December 28th.

On Wednesday, *Blog for Arizona* [reports](#) on protests at Wal-Mart and McDonald's in Tucson over low wage conditions. They say that these protests come at a time when income disparities in America are at an all-time high.

In California, *Capital & Main* says that it is 'unfathomable' why the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges is now trying to close the state's largest public college, the City College of San Francisco. Still in the Golden State, *Capital Alert* [says](#) that more than 50,000 Californians enrolled in the state's health insurance exchange in the three days leading up to Thursday. Finally, this week there was much speculation that current California Governor, Jerry Brown, might be considering another presidential bid for 2016. *Fox & Hounds* [says](#) that

it is an old story, with speculation having occurred in the aftermath of the 2012 election.

And finally in Hawaii, *Honolulu Civil Beat* [reports](#) on Honolulu's recent audit of the public relations and community involvement contracts for the city's rail project. Although the report found that most of the work being done by the Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation met federal requirements, it expresses concern about its reliance on outside consultants for the project.

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Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of USApp– American Politics and Policy, nor of the London School of Economics.

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