

## New York's Cuomo criticized for comments on conservatives, Herring flips on gay marriage in Virginia and North Dakota's oil boom – US state blog round up for 18 – 24 January

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

### Northeast

In New Jersey, Chris Christie officially began his second term as this week, but headlines continued to focus on 'Bridgegate' and things may still get worse for the embattled governor. *Crooks and Liars* [note](#) that Hoboken Mayor Dawn Zimmer's charges that Christie attempted to use Hurricane Sandy relief funds to blackmail her into supporting a real estate project are far worse than creating traffic on the George Washington and could come with serious legal repercussions. *Blue New Jersey* [puzzle over](#) the Christie team's decision to do damage control on this story by sending reporters positive tweets that Dawn Zimmer wrote about Chris Christie directly after Sandy.

*Daily Kos* [reports](#) that the New Jersey Senate and Assembly will merge their two investigative panels on the lane closures and will keep former assistant U.S. Attorney Reid Schar, who prosecuted former Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich, on as special counsel. *PoliticusUSA* [writes](#) that a recent Pew poll shows that 58 percent of those aware of Bridgegate believe that Christie is lying about his knowledge of the lane closures, and that twice as many people as last year now have an unfavorable opinion of the governor. On Thursday, *PolitickerNJ* reports that the U.S. Attorney's Office has [subpoenaed](#) members of Christie's re-election campaign, as well as the New Jersey State Republican Committee.

*My Left Nutmeg* [looks into](#) the Connecticut state surplus, explaining that the use of one-time revenues and borrowing has led to the current fiscal situation, which puts the state in the strange position of having a surplus and simultaneously three years of budget deficits. It criticizes Governor Dan Malloy for contemplating an election year tax cut with the state's shaky finances.

*The Lonely Conservative* [reports](#) that New York Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that the state will pay for universal pre-K, but New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio still plans to raise taxes on the wealthy, supposedly to ensure a steady stream of funding for the program and because he believes that is what voters want him to do. *Caffeinated Politics* [examine](#) de Blasio's efforts to remove the horse pulled carriages from New York City, challenging the rhetoric that the horses are "abused" and noting those who wish to end the carriage-horse business donated \$1.3 million to de Blasio's campaign. Meanwhile, *American Thinker* [compares](#) Governor Cuomo's recent comments that "extreme conservatives" have no place in his state to the persecution of the Jews in Nazi Germany. *NY State of Politics* [writes](#) that de Blasio has defended Cuomo's comments saying that he is 'absolutely right' that these views are not held by a majority of New Yorkers. Still in New York,



New York Governor Andrew Cuomo (Credit; Pat Arnow) Creative Commons BY SA

*Daily Kos* writes that city's [soup kitchens](#) have been hit hard since food stamp programs were curtailed in November last year.

In Maine, *Daily Kos* [reports](#) that the state legislature may soon have the votes to override Governor Paul LePage's veto of a Medicaid expansion that would insure between 70,000 and 100,000 people who are currently in the state's [Medicaid gap](#).

## South

In Virginia, *The Democratic Truth* [writes](#) that former governor of Virginia Bob McDonnell and his wife were indicted by the feds on 14 counts of fraud, conspiracy, and obstructing federal investigators. *Daily Kos* [details](#) the events leading up to the charges against the couple. The other big story out of Virginia this week is that the state's Attorney General, Mark Herring, has declared that he would no longer defend the state's ban on same-sex marriage. *Bearing Drift* [argues](#) that by deciding not to defend the law, Herring has violated his (recently sworn) oath of office to uphold the state's laws – meaning that some are now talking about impeaching him. *National Journal* [writes](#) that Herring's movement on gay marriage represents a broader political trend across the country, with a majority now supporting it.

Over state lines in West Virginia, *PoliticusUSA* [writes](#) that there are still concerns over water quality in one part of the state after 7,500 gallons of a toxic chemical leaked into the Elk River. They say that the spill is a good reason to oppose any further deregulation of the coal industry as Republicans have recently been trying to do. On Tuesday, *Crooks & Liars* [writes](#) that expansions to the Medicaid program have cut the number of uninsured West Virginians by a third, with many gaining health insurance for the first time.

Wendy Davis' campaign for the Texas governorship hit the commentary blogs again this week. *American Thinker* [writes](#) on Monday that she has not been entirely truthful about her life story to make her situation look more sympathetic. *PoliticusUSA* [says](#) that these sorts of personal attacks have 'exploded' after

Davis had announced that she had outraised her likely Republican opponent, Attorney General Greg Abbot, by nearly \$1 million. Still in Texas, *Burnt Orange Report* [looks](#) at a Texas Supreme Court decision last week that there was sufficient evidence for an alleged prostitute to lose parental rights to her daughter – this is despite there being no evidence that the mother had abused her child.

On Tuesday, *FreakOutNation* reports on [comments](#) on Twitter from a Republican candidate for the Florida State House that regarding President Obama, "'I'm past impeachment. It's time to arrest and hang him high'". *StPetersBlog* [writes](#) on a recent survey of Florida voters, finding that the electorate is at best lukewarm on its Senators, that they oppose Obamacare, but support raising the minimum wage.



Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring Credit: Edward Kimmel (Creative Commons BY SA)

In Mississippi, *Cottonmouth* [says](#) that recent ‘bragging’ by Governor Phil Bryant (he is happy that the unemployment rate is slightly lower than that of neighbor Tennessee), should be put into perspective, given that the also neighboring states of Alabama and Louisiana have lower rates still.

## Midwest

On Monday, *Daily Kos* [says](#) that Republicans in Indiana are pushing for one of the most restrictive amendments on civil unions and marriage into the state constitution. On the same topic, *Indy Politics* [writes](#) that some are calling for a referendum on the measure, and so then questions why there are not similar calls on decisions on other measures, such as school vouchers and the minimum wage.

*The Foundry* has a [glowing report](#) on North Dakota’s economic growth surge since 2006 on Sunday. They say that it is down to the state’s oil reserves, and also that state regulation on oil exploitation is relatively minimal, compared to other states and the country as a whole. This is echoed by *SayAnythingBlog* who [report](#) that a recent poll in the state has found that at least 80 percent of North Dakotans are in favor of continued oil and gas exploitation. Economic prosperity is definitely the focus of South Dakota’s *Madville Times* who [report](#) that the state saw a 68 percent increase in homeless students between 2009/2010 and 2011/2012.



Oil extraction in North Dakota Credit: porchlife (Creative Commons BY NC SA)

*PoliticMO* [previews](#) Missouri Governor Jay Nixon’s ‘State of the State’ address, writing that ahead of the address he was still not budging on a disagreement with the state legislature over revenue projections.

In Wisconsin, *Uppity Wisconsin* [says](#) that the state’s Governor, Scott Walker, is increasingly to the right of other state governors, as illustrated by his refusal to expand Medicaid and mandating ultrasound examinations for women who are seeking abortions.

## West and Pacific

On Monday, *American Thinker* [reports](#) on plans currently being made by state legislators in Washington towards a defined-benefit pension plan for public workers. They say that while the measure is likely to fail, as the state government is mostly run by Democrats, who oppose it, it may be a good idea for other cities and states that have run into pension troubles. Still in Washington, *SeattleMet* [reports](#) that Democratic legislators have moved through committee, their bill that mandates that health insurance companies that cover maternity care should also cover abortions.

In Arizona, state Republicans have [proposed](#) a bill that would allow them to break any law, writes *PoliticUSA*. The bill would allow discrimination against gays for any reason if it is founded on religious belief.

On Tuesday, *The Foundry* [writes](#) on a new law in Utah that has been passed by the state legislature that makes it easier for law enforcement to seize the property of innocent people, and gives them less recourse to get it back. Still in Utah, *Daily Kos* [reports](#) that four couples of the 1,300 people who were married in Utah before the Supreme Government put a stay on another Federal District Court judgment that the state’s gay marriage ban be



overturned, are suing the state to force it to recognize their marriages.

In Colorado, *FreakOutNation* [reports](#) that despite protests in the state since the passage of stricter gun laws in 2012, background checks and gun sales rose significantly in 2013, showing that the laws are working.

Moving to California politics, *American Thinker* [comments](#) on Wednesday on the recent criticism of Latina actress Maria Conchita Alonso, who they say was forced to resign her part in the play, *The Vagina Monologues*, because of her support for Republican Tim Donnelly for Governor, and her negative views on illegal immigration. Meanwhile, *Capitol Alert* [reports](#) that California Assemblywoman, Toni Atkins, is poised to become the leader of the Assembly Democrats. If she becomes speaker, she would be the first openly gay woman to do so. Still in California, and ahead of Governor Jerry Brown's 'State of the State' address for 2014, *Fox & Hounds* looks at the state's 'real trouble[s]', [arguing](#) that Brown needs to move to address the growing issue of prison overcrowding, the state's high rate of high-school drop outs, crumbling highways, and the water crisis. After Brown's speech (his 11<sup>th</sup> 'State of the State' address as California Governor) on Wednesday, *Capitol Alert* [writes](#) that his speech urged the state Legislature to restrain spending despite having a budget surplus.

In Hawaii *Honolulu Civil Beat* [fact checks](#) Governor Neil Abercrombie's 2014 'State of the State' speech on Wednesday, writing that he can hardly take credit for the state's \$844 million surplus, when state legislators have cut more than that from his budget requests since he took office. They also write that the unemployment rate of 4.4 percent quoted by the Governor gives a misleadingly positive view of employment in Hawaii, as many workers hold multiple jobs and part-time jobs.

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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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