

No more horses for New York's Central Park, teachers' concern in North Carolina, and marijuana now on sale in Colorado – US state blog round up for 28 December – 3 January 2014

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

Northeast

The *American Thinker* takes a close look at Massachusetts' healthcare program – the progenitor for the present Obamacare system. They [say](#) that the program (called 'Romneycare', after the former Governor Mitt Romney who introduced it), has led to the state's citizens experiencing the highest per capita health care costs in the country. On Sunday, *Crooks & Liars* [reports](#) that former Massachusetts Republican Senator, Scott Brown, has said that unemployment benefits should be phased out slowly, because people need 'welfare'.

The Lonely Conservative [reports](#) this week that gas drillers are giving up on New York, due to the state's moratorium on fracking. They write that even if the ban is lifted, drillers may still not be interested, because of the cost of regulatory compliance. Still in New York State, *Outside the Beltway* [says](#) that a federal court has upheld most of the provisions of the state's new gun control law, including a ban on assault weapons. This week also sees the inauguration of the recently elected mayor of New York City, Bill de Blasio. *The Feed* [says](#) that de Blasio will have to get a handle on the challenge of the conflicts of interest between unionized public workers and the consumers of the services they provide. Still on de Blasio, *American Thinker* [wants](#) to know what he has against horses given his announcement that he will put an end to the iconic horse and carriage rides in Central Park.



Numbered days? Credit: Victoria Pickering (Creative Commons BY NC ND)

Moving on to New Jersey, Governor Chris Christie has this week declined to defend two of the state's toughest gun laws at the state appeals court, [writes](#) *Crooks & Liars*. They wonder if the move is geared towards making the right wing of the Republican Party happy ahead of a potential 2016 Presidential bid for Christie.

In Vermont, *VT Digger* [criticises](#) the state government's poor management record in many public services, such as prisons, and the education system. As the state government moves to take charge of healthcare, they argue that it will need to do a great deal more to improve its operational skills.

South

In West Virginia, *Roll Call's At the Races* [reported](#) this week that former Maryland state Attorney Senator Alex Mooney has claimed that he is no carpetbagger. They say he will have to prove himself in a 'crowded' GOP

primary in May.

Meanwhile, *LeftinAlabama* has some [suggestions](#) for New Year's resolutions for the state's legislature, which has a Republican supermajority. These include Medicaid expansion, accountability in corporate welfare, and the legalization of medical marijuana.

In March, a special election will be held in Florida's 13th Congressional district following the death of Republican incumbent Bill Young last October. *Roll Call's Political Moneyline* [reports](#) this week that Congressional Republicans have already spent nearly \$40,000 in media against Alex Sink, a declared Democratic candidate in the election. Still in Florida, *SaintPetersBlog* looks at [ten weird things](#) that might happen in Florida in 2014 – including the state banning winter to promote its tourist industry.

In Texas, *Burnt Orange Report* [says](#) that a District Court Judge has granted two Texas colleges an injunction that will exempt them from the contraceptive coverage required under the Affordable Care Act. They say that the judge upheld the organisation's view that emergency contraception can cause abortions, something that goes against their religious beliefs. Still in Texas, *FreakOutNation* [says](#) that the recent deaths of three billionaire Republican donors could be a 'game-changer' for the state, as GOP organisations in Texas have relied on major contributions from them in the past. On Friday, *Bluedaze* [covered](#) a rural town hall meeting attended by 800 people who are concerned about earthquakes in North Texas, which may be being caused by fracking in the area. They report that they did not get answers from the Texas Railroad Commission, the state agency that regulates the oil and gas industry.

Over in North Carolina, the *Progressive Pulse* [writes](#) that a survey of teachers in the state has found that more than 96 percent believe the state's public education system is headed in the wrong direction. Their concerns include the removal of financial incentives for the pursuit of advanced degrees, tenure removal, and the state's voucher plan. In South Carolina, *FitsNews* [reports](#) on another data breach in the state – the S.C. Health Insurance Pool has lost its data to an unknown thief after a laptop was stolen from an employee's car. Still in South Carolina, *PoliticusUSA* [says](#) that the state will violate the constitution with its plans for mandatory prayers in schools.

Midwest

Wisconsin was the focus of a good deal of commentary this week. On Saturday, *Uppity Wisconsin* [criticises](#) Governor Scott Walker for releasing a press release that stated that between last October and November, unemployment had decreased in 19 counties across the state, when it had increased in the other 53. *Political Heat* [writes](#) that Milwaukee may yet surpass Chicago's murder rate, despite promises that a 2011 law allowing concealed carrying of guns would lead to less crime. Finally, *Outside the Beltway* [reports](#) that the state is now using cheese (well, cheese brine) to deal with winter snow and ice.

In Michigan, legislators have introduced two bills that would reform the state's asset forfeiture laws, [reports](#) *Hit & Run*. They say that the laws would require a criminal conviction before the police and prosecutors could take property, and would require agencies to compile detailed reports on their forfeiture activities.

On Sunday, *Caffeinated Politics* [looks](#) forward to a new law in Illinois, which begins on January 1st, and will impose heavy fines on those who litter cigarette butts. Meanwhile, *The Feed* looks at Chicago's [attempts](#) to tackle its pension crisis, saying that taxpayers may be faced with massive tax increases in order to fund the pensions of the public sector workers that protect them, such as the police.

SayanythingBlog [writes](#) on Thursday that North Dakota has seen the largest percentage of in-bound moves in the country, with over 77,000 interstate and cross-border household relocations in 2013. In South Dakota, *Madville Times* [writes](#) that the U.S. Salt corporation is expanding its operations into the state. What is surprising is that the expansion is taking place without any corporate welfare for the company from the state.

In Minnesota, *Look True North* [writes](#) that in 2013, the state's grassroots pro-gun campaigners were successful in preventing anti-gun laws from passing in the state. They say that recent hires by the anti-gun movement mean that the game will change in 2014.

West and Pacific

The Feed [reports](#) on a plan put forward by a California venture capitalist to split the state into six different states. They say, while they disagree with the proposed boundaries; creating six new states would help to solve a number of existing governance problems. Meanwhile, *Capitol Alert* [writes](#) that state demographers and the federal Census Bureau have finally agreed on California's population growth – there was previously a difference of 38.2 million to 38.3 million. Meanwhile, *Hit & Run* [writes](#) about the growing concern over police in Los Angeles who are demanding saliva samples from citizens at drink-driving checkpoints, for other purposes, such as checking for drug use.

In Hawaii, *Honolulu Civil Beat* [reviews](#) the state's Congressional delegation in 2013, saying that there were some big disappointments, such as Congress' failure to pass immigration reform or extend unemployment benefits. They write that in 2014, the Congressional delegation will continue to push for immigration reform and federal recognition for Native Hawaiians, similar to that already given to Alaska Natives and North American tribes.

January 1st was an important day in Colorado, seeing the first legal sales of marijuana for recreational use. *American Thinker* [writes](#) that while it may benefit the state in taxation, it may have unintended consequences out of state, as dealers travel to Colorado and then take the drug elsewhere. On Friday, *Crooks & Liars* [reports](#) that marijuana sales in Colorado have already hit \$1 million, while *Hit & Run* [writes](#) that the man who made the first legal purchase is putting his product away to donate to a museum.

In Wyoming, *WyoFile* [writes](#) that the working poor remain uninsured under Obamacare, as the state has not signed up for the Medicaid expansion that was part of the program, that would ensure that low-income adults would get care.

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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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