

California's drought turns critical, mass transit moves in Indiana and will Oklahoma ban marriage? – US state blog round up for 1 – 7 February

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

'Bridgegate' is still dominating headlines in New Jersey after the *New York Times* reported that David Wildstein, the former Port Authority official at the heart of this scandal, has evidence linking Governor Chris Christie and the lane closures on the George Washington. Reporting on Christie's first interview since these new allegations, *Daily Kos* [writes that](#) Christie opted to use "plausibly incompetent buffoon defense," by reiterating that he did not know what his staff was doing. *Save New Jersey* [criticizes](#) the characterization of David Wildstein as a Christie ally or insider, citing his time as the anonymous editor of *PolitickerNJ*, a blog that was frequently critical of Christie during his first campaign, as evidence to the contrary. *American Thinker* [brushes off](#) the entire scandal as a media frenzy driven by liberals trying to destroy Christie before the 2016 election after the *New York Times* printed a correction on their story that Wildstein could link Christie directly to Bridgegate.

Staying in New Jersey, but moving to other topics, *Save Jersey* [reports](#) that the New Jersey's economy remains one of the largest in the world, with only 27 countries in the world boasting a bigger economy than the Garden State. *Blue Jersey* [compares](#) New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and New Jersey Governor Chris Christie's choice of venues to watch the Super Bowl. De Blasio watched the game from home with his family, while Christie took over the state of New Jersey's luxury box in MetLife Stadium when he found out he would not have use of the governor's box during the game.

In New York, *American Interest* [looks at](#) Bill de Blasio's recent action to cut funding to charter schools, citing it as evidence that charter schools, which have been supported by President Obama, are one of the biggest divisions in the Democratic Party. Meanwhile, *The Lonely Conservative* [reports](#) on the sad story of a man who paid all but \$936 of the nearly \$11,000 he owed in back taxes on his property in Syracuse, only to have the Democrat-run city seize his house anyway.

And in Maine, *Capitol Ticker* [writes](#) that recent accusations from both sides over the budget writing process would be easy to see through if the budget

negotiations were truly held in open meetings. While technically all of these meetings are supposed to be open to the public, caucus meetings have been used to move these discussions behind closed doors.



New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio speaking to City Year. Photo Credit: City Year (Creative Commons: BY-NC-ND 2.0)

South

In Delaware, Congressman John Carney announced that he will be holding a tele-town hall to hear what his constituents think Congress should focus on in 2014. *Delaware Liberal* perhaps captures the nation's feelings towards Congress, saying of the event that [“it looks like another one of these stupid things is happening.”](#)

PoliticusUSA [reports](#) that Washington D.C. has taken a small step towards marijuana decriminalization, saying that the “watered down” effort—which would make possession of the drug a civil offense—is better than no step at all, but doesn't go far enough.

In North Carolina, *Scrutiny Hooligans* [decries](#) the state's plans for new tax cuts, saying that the bottom 80 percent of citizens will pay more, with 66 percent of the cuts would go to the wealthiest 1 percent if the proposal goes through.

Bearing Drift [reports](#) that in Virginia, an application for a convention states—a method for the states to propose amendments to the Constitution, which has not happened since the nation was founded—passed the House of Delegates Committee on Rules. While a convention is technically possible under Article V of the Constitution, two-thirds of the states would need to submit a similar application for it to actually convene.

In Georgia, *News Desk* [writes](#) that the snowstorm that paralyzed Atlanta may have also halted Mayor Kasim Reed's rising political star, explaining that it does not matter that blame does not lie solely with Reed because he was not able to adeptly handle the ensuing fall out.

SaintPetersBlog [looks at](#) the Florida governor's race, arguing that while it may be tempting to reduce the election to a competition between Charlie Crist's likability vs. Rick Scott's money, there are a number of other factors to consider, and the election will likely be a referendum on Rick Scott's performance.

In Tennessee, *FreakOutNation* [praises](#) Governor Bill Haslam for his proposal to make at least two years of community college free for any high school graduate in the state.

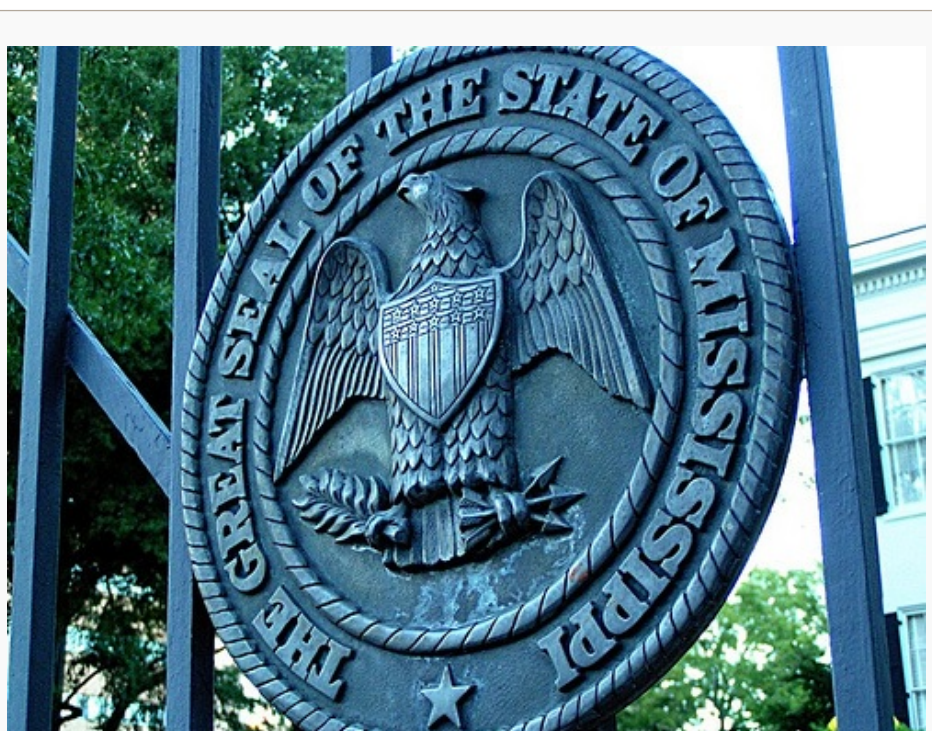
Left in Alabama [reports](#) that despite worries that the Alabama Democrats would not have any candidates in the upcoming gubernatorial election, it now appears that they may have three candidates in the primary.

Y'all Politics [writes](#) that the Mississippi Senate has passed a bill to add the words “In God We Trust” to the state seal, which currently says “The Great Seal of the State of Mississippi” on it.

In Oklahoma, *The Political Carnival* [reports](#) that lawmakers in the Sooner State are considering banning all marriage in an attempt to prevent the legalization of same-sex marriage without violating the equal protection clause of the 14th amendment.

Burnt Orange Report [challenges](#) the widely touted “miracle economy” in Texas, citing a new report that 49.8 percent of Texas households lack the savings to

pay for three months of basic expenses, and that nearly a third of middle class households are considered



Credit: Christopher Meredith (Creative Commons: BY 2.0)

financially insecure.

Midwest

IndyPolitics [writes](#) that the Indiana Senate passed a bill that would establish and expand mass transit in Indianapolis. The effort would allow voters to hold a referendum to increase the local option income tax to fund the initiative, but must be approved by the House before it can be put into action.

In Missouri, *Occasional Planet* [looks at](#) the recent execution of Herbert Smulls, a black man convicted by an all-white jury, who was executed before the Supreme Court had ruled on his final stay request in violation for the sixth amendment. Apparently this was not an isolated incident, Smulls' lawyers reported that this was the third straight execution carried out before courts had issued final rulings on pending appeals.

Bleeding Heartland examines a new report that shows that Iowa (among other states) fails to “[incorporate enough long-term fiscal planning in the budget process](#),” explaining that this is not the first time that alarms have been raised about the Hawkeye State's long-term budget.

In Wisconsin, *blue cheddar* [reports](#) on what they see as three positive Wisconsin news stories: the recently filed ACLU lawsuit for same-sex marriage in the Badger State, a judge ordering Governor Scott Walker's Department of Justice to justify the costs of prosecuting nearly 400 cases of “illegal singing” stemming from arrests made at the 2013 Solidarity Sing Along, and an investigation into possible illegal coordination between Scott Walker's campaign committee and special interest groups. *Caffeinated Politics* puts a face to the fight for same-sex marriage in Wisconsin, [recounting](#) the personal hardships that arise when a couple is denied the rights that come with marriage.

Eclectablog [calls](#) for every Michigan voter to repeat the mantra “Michigan is 49th in projected job growth and has the 4th highest unemployment rate in the country” for the duration of Rick Snyder's reelection campaign.

West and Pacific

Colorado Peak Politics [examines](#) the recent Republican resurgence in the Centennial State, attributing much of it to Obama's falling approval ratings and predicting big wins for the GOP in Colorado in 2014.

In Utah, *Daily Kos* [criticizes](#) new arguments that it is in the state's interest to ban same-sex marriage because states with genderless marriage have lower birth-rates, pointing out that correlation does not equal causation and there are a number of other explanations for this association.

Blog for Arizona [denounces](#) the notion that the media must present two sides of an argument for the sake of fairness, arguing that sometimes there are not two legitimate sides to an issue, citing a recent Op-Ed in the *Arizona Republic* on the supposed persecution of Christians in the state as an example.

In California, *American Thinker* [reports](#) that the drought has caused the state to take extreme preservation measures as 17 cities and towns will run out of water in less than 100 days, including areas with some of the world's most productive farm land, which could affect food prices. *FlashReport* [calls on](#) California's Congress to pass a bill that would stop flushing fresh water out to sea in an attempt to save the endangered Delta smelt during the drought.

In Washington, *Wonkblog* [looks at](#) the Evergreen State's healthcare exchange, which is one of the best in the nation. Since the exchange started, 33.1 percent of eligible citizens have signed up for coverage and much of its success is credited to the state's management of the roll out.

PoliticusUSA [writes](#) that despite the solidly Republican results in Alaska's recent elections, incumbent Democratic Senator Mark Begich leads all potential Republican opponents—including Sarah Palin—in a recent poll, dampening GOP hopes to pick up his Senate seat in the midterms.

Honolulu Civil Beat [examines](#) the possible reasons that Hawaii Governor Neil Abercrombie has waited two months to sign new rules to curb the state's greenhouse gas emissions; while the governor's office claims that

Abercrombie is simply taking the time to “address complex regulatory issues,” many worry it is actually the result of pressure from companies opposed to the new regulations.

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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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The endangered Delta Smelt. Photo Credit: US Fish and Wildlife Service Pacific Southwest Region (Creative Commons: BY 2.0)