

Same sex marriage rulings in Kentucky and Virginia, Cuomo vs. de Blasio over pre-k in New York, and Florida's Crist rejects Cuba embargo – US state blog round up for round up for 8 – 14 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

'Bridgagate' continued to be a thorn in New Jersey Governor Chris Christie's side this week. *PolitickerNJ* profiles the [eight Democrats](#) and [four Republicans](#) that were selected to serve on the state's joint investigatory committee of the lane closures on the George Washington Bridge. *Daily Kos* [reports](#) that Christie's helicopter records were being probed by the investigative committee to see if the governor had flown near or over the bridge and Fort Lee during the traffic jam, indicating that this could be the smoking gun former New Jersey Port Authority official David Wildstein referred to last month. However, their hopes were dashed the next day; *Blue Jersey* [writes](#) that Christie's helicopter was nowhere near the George Washington Bridge during the week in question. *PoliticusUSA* [looks at](#) the *New Jersey Star-Ledger's* strange apology for endorsing Christie for governor. While the paper says that they "blew this one," and they didn't know what his crew was capable of, they also said that he remains the best of a bad crop of candidates for the GOP presidential nomination.

In other New Jersey news, *Crooks and Liars* [reports](#) that the Newark Police Department is being placed under a Justice Department monitor after a federal review revealed evidence of systemic misconduct among its officers.

Moving to New Hampshire, *Roll Call* [examines](#) the swirling rumors that the Granite State's newest resident, former Massachusetts Senator Scott Brown, will run in the upcoming New Hampshire Senate race, noting that many state Republicans believe he is their best chance of capturing Democrat Jeanne Shaheen's seat. They acknowledge that we may not know what Brown plans to do for quite some time, as the New Hampshire filing period does not close until June.

In Maine, *Capitol Ticker* [writes](#) that Republican State Senator Thomas Saviello could face a primary challenge due to his support for Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act and refusal to stick to the party line on a number of other issues. They initially identified conservative columnist John Frary as his likely challenger, before Frary announced that he would not be running.

VTDigger [reports](#) that the Department of Vermont Health Access has asked *Newsweek* to correct numerous errors they found in a recent article about the troubled rollout of the state's healthcare exchange. *Newsweek* has stood by the story, but plans to fix at least



New York Mayor Bill de Blasio and New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo Credit: Jere Keys (Creative Commons BY)

some of the article's errors. *VTDigger* also [looks at](#) the state's pension problems, which have spread to the municipal level.

In New York, *Capitol Confidential* [writes](#) that Governor Andrew Cuomo has taken a new position in his ongoing battle with New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio over funding for the Mayor's universal pre-K program, which de Blasio wants to pay for by increasing taxes to the rich in the city, while Cuomo wants to use state funding. Cuomo is now advocating that universal pre-K be available to all of the children in the Empire State to ensure the program is paid for with state money. *NY State of Politics* [examines](#) the virulently negative reactions from a number of politicians on Bill de Blasio's plan to allow undocumented immigrants to carry city-issued identification cards. *The American Interest* [inspects](#) the budding battle between the liberal and moderate factions of the Democratic Party over Cuomo's plan to reduce corporate income taxes, supposedly to make the state more attractive to financial businesses. *The Lonely Conservative* [reports](#) that gun manufacturers have "outsmarted" new gun legislation banning assault weapons by modifying AR-15 rifles to have a fixed stock and no pistol grip so the gun no longer meets the definition of an assault weapon based on the law's definition. On Thursday, *PoliticusUSA* looks at Donald Trump's chances if he were to run against Governor Cuomo in New York. A new poll [suggests](#) that he is behind by 37 percentage points.

South

In Virginia, *Bearing Drift* looks at the likely effects that the Obamacare healthcare reform will have on employment in the state. They [say](#) that under the reform, as many as 62,500 workers in the state may opt for 'subsidized leisure', something they say means that the state's House of Delegates should hold off on endorsing this expansion of Medicaid. Meanwhile, *Blue Virginia* criticizes the state Senate for passing an omnibus 'ethics reform' bill for legislators which [they say](#) in fact does very little.

On Tuesday, *Blue in the Bluegrass* [looks](#) at a new survey that shows that a majority of Kentucky residents support the legalization of marijuana for medicinal purposes. Meanwhile, still in Kentucky, *Page One* [writes](#) in favor of the state abolishing the death penalty. On Wednesday, *Daily Kos* [reports](#) that a Federal judge has overturned the state's ban on recognizing marriages performed in other states.

Moving south, *wataugawatch* says on Friday that a Federal judge has struck down Virginia's constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. They [wonder](#) if North Carolina will be next given that a similar amendment passed in the state in 2012.

Tennessee Watchdog [writes](#) on Tuesday that one county in the state – Hawkins County – owes the IRS over \$166,000, due to the fact that a local school's finance director failed to notify them about deposits to a payroll account.

On Wednesday, *Daily Kos* takes a look at Georgia's political future. They say that changing demographics may [turn the state purple](#) before long.

Left in Alabama [profiles](#) a 'stupid' law passed by the state's Senate this week, which would protect hunters from drones launched by animal rights activists.



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On Saturday, *Y'all Politics* [reports](#) that Mississippi will be gaining \$5.6 million in federal money to help poor performing schools in the state.

This week saw the conviction of former New Orleans mayor, Ray Nagin on corruption charges. *The American Prospect* [writes](#) on Friday that the city deserved a better class of scandal than the 'dullard' Nagin was able to provide.

On Saturday, Florida's *StPetersBlog* [reports](#) that likely Democratic candidate for the state's governorship, Charlie Crist, has come out in favor of lifting the U.S embargo against Cuba. On Monday, *The Shark Tank* [criticizes](#) Crist for 'flip-flopping', as in 2010 (whilst a Republican) he supported the embargo. Still in Florida, *Seminole Democrats* [looks](#) at a Hispanic politician in the state who has changed from the GOP to the Democratic Party. Former state representative and Republican activist, Ana Rivas Logan, has switched her party allegiance in reaction to the GOP's anti-immigrant stance. The good news for Democrats in Florida continued this week, with *PoliticusUSA* [reporting](#) on Friday that the Democratic candidate, Alex Sink, now has a 7 point lead in the special election, scheduled for March 11th, for the state's 13th Congressional District.

Midwest

On Sunday, *The Foundry* [looks](#) at high unemployment rates in some parts of Michigan. They say that while Western Michigan is prospering due to a manufacturing and technology boom, unemployment still remains high in Detroit in the east of the state. Still in the Great Lakes State, *eclectablog* [criticizes](#) the state's Republican Party for one of their candidate's comments that gay people should be 'purged' from the party.

North Dakota's *Say Anything Blog* [writes](#) this week that the state's Democratic Party is struggling to recruit candidates. They say that as of yet the state's at-large Republican Congressman Kevin Cramer lacks a Democratic challenger for the fall mid-term election.

In Illinois, the Republican candidate for Governor, Bill Brady, apologized this week for suggesting that unemployed people did not want jobs because they enjoyed collecting unemployment benefits, [reports](#) *FreakOutNation*.

Moving south to Missouri, *PoliticMO* [reports](#) that the State's House Speaker has urged Republicans to tread carefully in their desire to impeach Democratic Governor Jay Nixon. Nixon is facing potential impeachment over delayed calls for special elections and for his executive order allowing same-sex couples married in other states to file joint tax returns.

On Tuesday *Daily Kos* [reports](#) that Kansas' Republican Senator, Pat Roberts, has been fielding media questions as to how much time he has spent in the state that he represents in recent years. They say that his office is refusing to give an answer, which is compounding the problem.

West and Pacific

On Sunday *FreakOutNation* [reports](#) that a Sheriff in a Nevada county has begun charging prisoners for their food and medical care. They say that the move will make the burden for the families of prisoners even more financially devastating, while Sheriff Jim Pitts argues that the move will save county taxpayers millions of dollars every year.

Washington State has moved to take a softer line of prisoners, writes *Daily Kos*. They [say](#) that the Governor, Jay Inslee has this week suspended executions in the state, arguing that he does not believe the death penalty means that equal justice is being served.

Meanwhile in Wyoming, *The Drake's Take* [argues](#) that as state legislators work to craft the state's 2015-2016 budget they should take advantage of surpluses and invest in infrastructure, welfare and health projects.

On Tuesday, *Crooks & Liars* [reports](#) on a proposed bill before the Arizona state House that would jail undocumented immigrants if they use public restrooms, schools or roads. Civil liberties groups have stated that such a bill, which would require people who use public resources to prove that they were in the U.S. legally, would be unconstitutional. Still in the Grand Canyon State, *Blog for Arizona* [says](#) that more than 140,000 citizens have signed petitions to call for a state referendum on the GOP's Voter Suppression Act. The state's Tea Party is trying

to move to prevent the referendum as well.

Idaho's *Eye on Boise* [reports](#) that the state's Obamacare exchange, YourHealthIdaho.org, is the second most successful in the country, having enrolled nearly 33,000 Idahoans. The *Sutherland Daily* is not so positive about Medicaid expansion in Utah, however. They [say](#) that the state should opt out as it will create a two-tiered system if care where able bodied adults are prioritized over the truly needs such as the elderly, disabled and poor children.

Moving on to California, *Capital & Main* writes on Monday that the state is in urgent need of high speed rail, a project that has languished with little sign of progress in recent months. They [write](#) that the state cannot afford not to build a high speed rail link, as it is the only viable way that will ensure the state's infrastructure will meet the demand of its projected 50 million in population by 2050. Parts of California have also been suffering from the effects of a major drought in recent months. *Capitol Alert* [reports](#) on Friday that President Obama would be visiting the state, and would be bringing over \$150 million in drought aid with him.

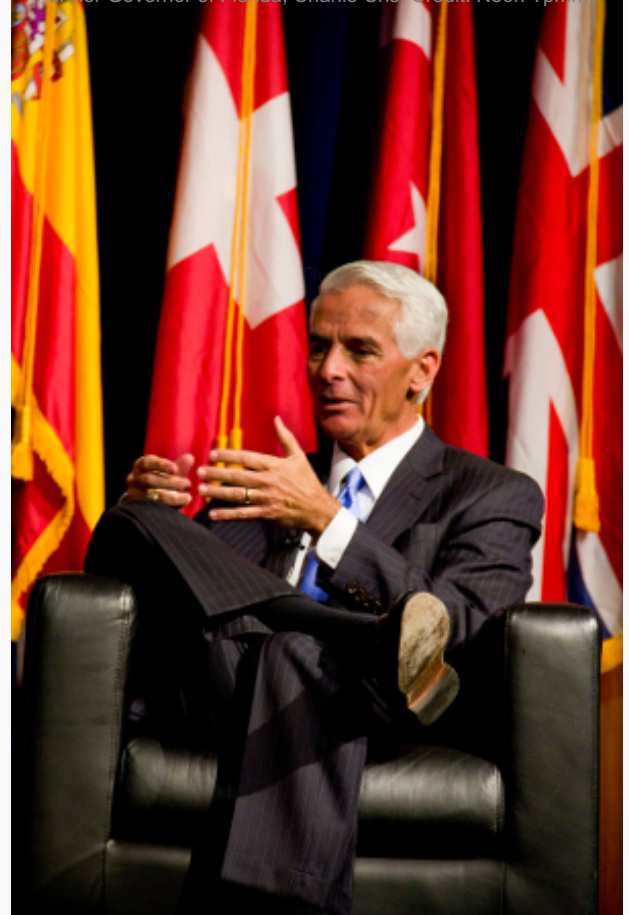
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Former Governor of Florida, Charlie Crist Credit: Neon Tommy



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