

## Christie cleared for now, Georgia's 'guns everywhere' bill, and what is wrong with California's Democrats? US state blog round up for 22 – 28 March

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

Months after the 'Bridgegate' scandal broke in New Jersey, *Daily Kos* [reports](#) that an elite law firm's review of Governor Christie's office has not found any evidence that the embattled governor was involved in the lane closing on the George Washington Bridge. However, many are skeptical of the review, which was commissioned by Christie (though paid for with taxpayer money) and was unable to interview Bridget Anne Kelly, the governor's former deputy chief of staff, his former political chief Bill Stepien, or David Wildstein, the former Port Authority executive at the heart of the scandal. New Jersey state Senate Majority Leader, Loretta Weinberg is unsatisfied with the results of the report, [writes PolitickerNJ](#), saying that it raises more questions than it answers.

Staying in the Garden State, *PolitickerNJ* [looks at](#) State Senator Nicholas Scutari's new proposal to legalize and tax marijuana, calling for the drug to be treated like alcohol. It is unlikely that the measure will pass in the near future, given Chris Christie's unambiguous opposition to legalization.

In New York, *State of Politics* [examines](#) a new poll from Siena College that while voters overwhelmingly consider Andrew Cuomo to be an effective governor, they have seen very little improvement on key issues.

On Saturday, *FreakOutNation* [looks](#) at a Massachusetts Republican's proposed bill that would force divorcing women to gain the permission of the courts before they are able to have a dating or sexual relationship as long as they remain in the marital home.

*VTDigger* [writes](#) that Sue Minter, Deputy Secretary of the Vermont Agency of Transportation, testified before Congress on the economic consequences the Green Mountain State faces if Congress does not extend funding to the Highway Trust Fund, which is expected to be depleted by July.

In Rhode Island, *RINPR* [reports](#) that State Senator Josh Miller apologized for swearing at Dan Bidondi, who runs a website devoted to "[exposing the Illuminati, new world order, secret societies, false religions and proving biblical prophecy](#)," calling his actions a "very human and guttural reaction" after watching Bidondi antagonize an elderly veteran.



New Jersey Governor Chris Christie Credit: Gage Skidmore (Creative Commons BY SA)

## South

*Daily Kos* looks at Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe's proposal to the state legislature to expand Medicaid for just two years with the promise that the program can be ended if it hasn't helped the state in that time. In the same vein, *Blue Virginia* [explains](#) that the Democrats' only chance of successfully expanding Medicaid in the Old Dominion State is by winning seats in the General Assembly, even though the plan should draw bipartisan support, because many Republicans are afraid of losing their seats to primary challengers from the Tea Party.

On Thursday, *Roll Call* [previews](#) Washington DC's Mayoral Democratic Primary election next week, writing that an hour long debate between the four candidates this week saw accusations of corruption and lack of experience.

In South Carolina, *Daily Kos* [examines](#) a bill that would allow alcohol to be purchased on Election Day, writing that it is unlikely to pass since the measure would also prohibit alcohol sales on Christmas.

*Crooks and Liars* [reports](#) that the Georgia legislature just passed a bill that many are calling the "Guns Everywhere" law, which will allow people with a permit to carry loaded guns in most public areas, including bars and airports. Still in the Peach State, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) on Wednesday that the Governor is poised to sign a bill into law that would require drug tests for those receiving food stamps.

In Florida, *FreakOutNation* [writes](#) that Governor Rick Scott could be forced to pay \$82 million in fines for campaign finance violations after a complaint was filed that his reelection campaign

illegally transferred money from his electioneering communication organization to a political committee. Rick Scott received further bad news this week, as *Daily Kos* [reports](#) that billionaire Mike Fernandez resigned his position as Scott's finance co-chair after several campaign staffers put on over the top Mexican accents in front of Fernandez on the way to a Mexican restaurant. Meanwhile, *SaintPetersBlog* [explains](#) that Florida schools successfully closed the achievement gap between Hispanic students and white students through "an unshakable focus on high standards, school accountability, parental choice, and a commitment to rewarding effective teachers."

In Kentucky, *Blue in the Bluegrass* [studies](#) the federal minimum wage debate, writing that 500,000 Kentuckians would benefit directly from an increase in the minimum wage and most of these workers are not the teenagers depicted by Republicans, but workers supporting themselves, if not their families, on their wages.

*Crooks and Liars* [writes](#) that Tennessee has passed a new law that would allow the state to keep the details of executions secret, including what drugs were used in the process and where they came from. 11 death row inmates have already sued for this information to be made public.

In Arkansas, *The Arkansas Project* [scrutinizes](#) the state's sales tax burden, which is 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in the nation, writing that the state is moving in the wrong direction, as last year it only had the 6<sup>th</sup> highest sales tax.

In Texas, *Roll Call* [looks at](#) the potential for Democrats to field a competitive Senate candidate as early as 2018 as demographic shifts continue to change the face of Texas politics. *Brains and Eggs* [explores](#) the possibility that Texas could be the first state to successfully install a bullet train system as California's plan stutters and a private company's plan for a train between Houston and Dallas gains momentum. Meanwhile, *FreakOutNation* [examines](#)



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the impact of a recent oil spill in Texas City on the coastal economy, which has already taken its toll on the fishing industry and its auxiliary businesses. *Burnt Orange Report* [writes](#) that a new study shows that Texas has four out of the top ten most economically segregated large metro areas in the country, with San Antonio-New Braunfels coming in as the most segregated in the nation.

## Midwest

This week Michigan issued its first gay marriage license, [reports](#) *Caffeinated Politics*, after the state's ban was struck down on Friday. *Daily Kos* [writes](#) on Monday, however, that the state will not recognize the marriages that have taken place while it appeals the ruling. Still in the Great Lakes State, and moving to Detroit, *The Feed* [writes](#) that the city is looking to sell its sewer system in order to clear its bankruptcy debts; residents owe more than \$100 million in unpaid water bills.

Wisconsin's *The Prairie Badger* [writes](#) this week on local elections, praising the chairwoman of a county Democratic Party for her recent comments on their importance. Meanwhile, *Crooks & Liars* [writes](#) critically on the state's corporation tax rates which are effectively negative in some cases – giving a refund to companies on zero taxes owed. On Thursday, *Uppity Wisconsin* [says](#) that Governor Scott Walker has 'screwed over' the state's military veterans this week by signing a bill that would limit asbestos liability; the majority of plaintiffs in asbestos suits have served in the military.

In Iowa this week, Democratic Congressman (and Senate candidate) Bruce Braley got into trouble when he was caught on tape saying that he would be a better representative than a farmer from Iowa who has never practiced law, [reports](#) *Red State*. They say that the whole point of democracy is that the 'common man' gets a say, not just the experts.

Moving south to Missouri, *PoliticMO* [writes](#) on Wednesday that Democratic Governor Jay Nixon is unfazed by state Senate Republicans' threat that Medicaid expansion is 'dead' in the upper chamber this year.

On Tuesday, *Say Anything Blog* [writes](#) that in North Dakota, personal incomes have nearly doubled in the past decade, putting the state at third in the country in terms of per capita income.

## West and Pacific

In the Centennial State, *ColoradoPols* [reports](#) that recently nominated Colorado GOP state House candidate Nathaniel Marshall has dropped out the race, after it came to light that he had ties to white supremacists and an arrest record.



California State Senator Leland Yee Credit: Steve Rhodes (Creative Commons BY NC ND)

In California this week, *Daily Kos* [reports](#) that the state will send voter registration cards to everyone who has signed up for Obamacare. They say that this means that many residents can complete or update their registration in time for the primary election on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. On Wednesday, *Calbuzz* [reports](#) on a recent poll which finds that

Californians approve of the job that Democratic Governor Jerry Brown is doing, are favorable towards a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants, and are generally positive towards other Democratic policies. What will make for happy reading for the state's Republicans is Thursday's news that state Senator Leland Yee was arrested this week for corruption charges. In light of this arrest, and charges faced by state Senator Ron Calderon, *Crooks & Liars* [wonders](#) what is wrong with California's Democrats. In light of the indictment of Yee, and other recent ethical failings in the Senate, *Fox & Hounds* [writes](#) on Friday that State Senate President Darrell Steinberg has fallen short in his leadership by not dealing strongly when things went wrong.

This week marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska. On Monday, *Crooks & Liars* [looks](#) back at the disaster, and its effects on the state and local communities. On Wednesday, *FreakOutNation* [reports](#) on an Alaskan state Senator's comments that the state providing free birth control was 'out of the question', because it is used by 'people who don't ... act responsibly'. Still in Alaska, *The Mudflats* [calls out](#) GOP Senate candidate Dan Sullivan, who has used a stock photo from New Zealand on his website.

On Wednesday, *Outside the Beltway* [reports](#) that legislators in Hawaii have agreed to change a law to remove an exemption that allows police officers to have sex with prostitutes. Still in the Aloha State, *Honolulu Civil Beat* [writes](#) that despite Senators cutting millions from the state budget, financial projections still show that Hawaii will begin deficit spending by 2017.

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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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