

Dead heat in Mississippi GOP Senate primary, Florida's 'Game of Thrones', and Seattle's \$15 minimum wage – US state blog round up for 31 May – 6 June

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

Northeast

On Sunday, Massachusetts' *Blue Mass Group* issues a warning to the people of New Hampshire: [Scott Brown is a joke](#). They say that Brown, who is now running for the Senate in New Hampshire, after having represented Massachusetts, is on the board of Global Digital Solutions, in exchange for \$1.3 million in stock, and that it is a great deal for him, as he does not have to do anything. Brown resigned his position on Wednesday in reaction to the increased scrutiny.

Moving on to the Ocean State, *Rhode Island Public Radio* [reports](#) that the state house has finally voted to ratify the 17th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which requires the direct election of Senators. The vote was largely ceremonial, as 3/4 of the states passed the Amendment in 1913.

On Monday, *VTDigger* [reports](#) that as part of this week's announcement of tougher emission standards for power plants, President Obama has pointed to Vermont as an example of how coal states can achieve greenhouse gas reductions. They say that not only does the Green Mountain State not generate electricity through coal, it also offers rebates and incentives for energy efficient appliances.

In New York this week, *State of Politics* [writes](#) that Governor Andrew Cuomo has reached a tentative agreement with the Working Families Party (WFP) that could give him their ballot line. They say that for the deal to be sealed, Cuomo will have to convince the WFP's state committee that he is behind liberal issues such as women's rights, decriminalizing marijuana and the funding of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity.

Moving to the Garden State, *Blue Jersey* [gives](#) a short primer on the state's budget, saying that some of the big issues currently facing New Jersey including state pension obligations, interest costs and over-estimates of revenue. They say that some of the solutions (currently opposed by Governor Chris Christie) include higher taxes for millionaires, a gas tax, and fewer tax subsidies for large companies.



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

South

On Monday, *The Daily Signal* [reports](#) that Maryland government officials have voted to spend more than \$43 million to transition the state's Obamacare exchange to new technology. This comes on top of the \$130 million already spent on building the now faulty website.

Eyes turned to Mississippi this week, with close Republican primary races for the House and Senate. On the eve of the primary, *Roll Call's At the Races* [looks](#) at former Democratic Representative, but now turned Republican

contender, Gene Taylor. They say that Taylor, who served 10 and a half terms as a Democrat, is now challenging the incumbent because southern Democrats have grown far less conservative in recent years. Staying in the Magnolia State, *Crooks & Liars* reports that the Republican Senate primary has resulted in a dead heat between Tea Party favorite Chris McDaniel and Thad Cochran, who have less than 1,000 votes between them. As neither reached the 50 percent threshold, a runoff is now likely.

Moving South to Arkansas, on Tuesday *Daily Kos* reports that the state's Democrats now have nearly enough signatures (72,000), to add a referendum on the minimum wage to the state's ballot in November. They say the measure would increase the minimum wage to \$8.50 an hour by 2017, which is 'puny' compared to Seattle's recent rise to \$15. The Federal minimum wage remains \$7.25 an hour.

On Saturday, *The Political Carnival* writes that the Texas Republican Party has announced that it is anti-gay, with a section of its party platform stating that "Homosexual behavior is contrary to the fundamental, unchanging truths that have been ordained by God, recognized by our country's founders, and shared by the majority of Texans." They say what should be even more surprising is the existence of the group, the 'Log Cabin Republicans', who are a GOP organization representing gay and lesbian conservatives, given that the GOP is actually legislating against them.

Roll Call's At the Races reports that in Florida this week, a congressional redistricting trial was due to conclude. The results of the trial could force a redrawing of district boundaries before November by the legislature, an issue known locally as Florida's 'Game of Thrones'.

Midwest

This week in the Buckeye State of Ohio, *Plunderbund* writes that developments in the Ohio Supreme Court in a case over a document request concerning threats against Republican Governor John Kasich show that the Governor is playing politics with public records. They say that claims from the Ohio Department of Public Safety that the records could not be released due to terrorism considerations are wrong since only the details of one specific threat were requested.

In Illinois this week, *Daily Kos* reports on a new law that has been passed by the state legislature that bars employers from firing or discriminating against pregnant women. They say that individual states have been forced into passing such laws as Republicans in Congress have been continually blocking such legislation at the federal level. Staying in the Prairie state, *Progress Illinois* writes on Monday that six of the state's Congressmen have been given an 'F' score on immigration issues according to the 2014 National Immigration Score Card, based on their immigration related votes in Congress.

Moving to the Badger state, *Uppity Wisconsin* reports on Tuesday that that Wisconsin is among the dirtiest in the country in terms of CO2 emissions. They write that even after years of effort to clean up coal plant emissions, the state produces the 16th dirtiest emission levels, but that the new targets released this week by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are achievable if GOP Governor Scott Walker is willing to reverse course and promote renewable energy sources. On Friday, *The Prairie Badger* reports that Wisconsin's ban on same-sex marriages has been struck down by a Federal District Court judge.

This week, *SayAnythingBlog* writes that coal and oil development in North Dakota have shown little impact on air quality in the state,



Coal power plant in Northern Wisconsin Credit: Seth Tissue (Creative Commons BY SA)

after a report from the American Lung Association gave high top marks to the state for its air quality. They say that the new EPA regulations on emissions from power plants could hurt the state's economy and power grid in the years to come.

Moving South to the Mount Rushmore State, *National Journal* [writes](#) on Monday that Democrats have lost a chance to put South Dakota's Senate seat in play. They say that the splits between the progressive and centrist wings of the Democratic Party cost them an opportunity to be competitive in November, after one strong potential candidate passed on running due to potential challenge from the left of the party.

West and Pacific

In Arizona this week, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) about a failed GOP candidate who seemingly will do just about anything to win the Grand Canyon's state's heavily Hispanic 7th Congressional district, including pretending to be someone else. They say that Scott Fister has changed his name to 'Cesar Chavez', and is now running as a Democrat.

In May, Idaho's ban on same-sex marriages was struck down by a federal judge. This week, *Eye on Boise* writes that Republican Governor, Butch Otter, has asked the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals to send the case to a full panel of eleven judges. They [say](#) that while the move will not fast track the case, it Otter has maintained that the larger than normal panel would give the court's decision a greater perception of legitimacy.

Daily Kos [writes](#) on Tuesday that Seattle is now officially on its way to a \$15 minimum wage, after the city council unanimously voted to give local workers the rise in incremental stages topping out in 2021.

Moving south to the Beaver state, *BlueOregon* [ponders](#) whether or not Oregon should change how it conducts primary elections. They write that voters in the state face two ballot measures, one which would introduce open primaries, and the other 'unified' primaries, where people would be able to vote for as many candidates as they liked. Staying in Oregon, *Outside the Beltway* writes on Thursday that the Supreme Court has [denied](#) an effort by the National Organization for Marriage to block an earlier Federal District Court ruling that struck down the state's ban on same-sex marriage. They say that the decision was a 'no-brainer', after state officials decided not to pursue an appeal to the original ruling.

This week was a big one for California politics with primaries for many state offices and Congressional districts in the Golden state. On Wednesday the *National Journal* [describes](#) the victory of former U.S. Treasury Department official Neel Kashkari over far right state Assemblyman, Tim Donnelly in the GOP gubernatorial primary, as an opportunity for the party to 'rebrand'. They say that had he won, Donnelly might have been a drag on all of the GOP's candidates in California, and that Kashkari's win is a victory for those trying to expand the GOP beyond its 'hard-core' base. *Flashreport* [reflects](#) on one of the more surprising aspects of California's primaries this week – that over 280,000 voters cast ballots for Senator Leland Yee for Secretary of State, gaining him ten percent of the vote. Yee is currently under indictment by the FBI for arms trafficking and bribery, and actually withdrew from the race, though it was too late for his name to be removed from the ballot. Finally, *the Orange Juice Blog* [reports](#) on Friday that the city council of Los Angeles this week passed a resolution that came against the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal, currently under negotiation.

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