

Voter ID challenged in North Carolina, Michigan's ugly House primary, and Oregon avoids Hobby Lobby ruling – US state blog round up for 5 – 11 July

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

Northeast

In Vermont this week, *VTDigger* [writes](#) that there are over 200 inmates in the state's prison system that could be released if they had a place to live. According to the Department of Corrections, more halfway houses are needed, and the problem is compounded by substance abuse and societal stigma that can make it hard for offenders' to make it on the outside.

Moving east to the Granite State, *Outside the Beltway* [writes](#) on Thursday that former Massachusetts Senator Scott Brown is not likely to be successful in his bid to gain New Hampshire's Senate seat, as the incumbent Democratic Senator, Jeanne Shaheen holds a 12-point lead over Brown.

WPRI has a chart on Tuesday that [shows](#) that 23 percent of the state's workers are now aged 55 or over. They say that the rise of 31,000 in this group is not enough to offset the decline in the 16 to 55 group.

This week *Daily Kos* [takes](#) New York City Mayor, Bill de Blasio to task. They say that the Democratic Mayor has endorsed the 'renegade' Independent Democratic Conference (IDC), who has given control of the Empire State's Senate to the Republicans. De Blasio has bought into the IDC's 'bogus non-promise' to return to the Democratic fold next year. Staying in New York State, on Thursday, *Capitol Confidential* [says](#) that Republican Rob Astorino has challenged incumbent Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo to a series of eight regional debates.



Bill de Blasio Credit: Kevin Case (Creative Commons BY)

Moving south to New Jersey, *Blue Jersey* [writes](#) on Monday that Governor Chris Christie's claims of a 'Jersey Comeback' last year have been proven wrong given Christie's Bridgegate allegations, and the revelations that funds to support the recovery from Hurricane Sandy were misused and mismanaged. Staying in the Garden State *PolitickerNJ* [writes](#) that Newark's recently elected Mayor, Ros Baraka has stated that he will negotiate with Governor Chris Christie to get additional state aid using a tactic from civil rights leader, Martin Luther King Jr – he will 'wear him down with love'. The comments come soon after Christie states that he would not make any commitment to providing monetary aid to help Newark's \$93 million budget deficit.

South

On Thursday, *Roll Call's At the Races* looks at Alex Mooney, who is in the race for an open House seat in West Virginia this fall. They [say](#) that Mooney, a Republican, is not from the state, and so is fighting against being labelled a 'carpetbagger' by Democrats. They say that Mooney's problem is that the outgoing member of Congress Rep. Shelley Moore Capito, is on a first name basis with many of her constituents, and many know little of Mooney.

Moving South to North Carolina, *Informed Comment* [writes](#) on Wednesday that voting rights activists have called for a halt to very restrictive voter suppression legislation. They are calling for a temporary stay on a new state bill which would mandate that voters show government issued identification, roll back early voting and eliminate same-day registration.

Mississippi stayed in the news this week with Chris McDaniel's announcement that he will file a formal challenge to last month's primary runoff election that he lost to incumbent GOP Senator, Thad Cochran, [writes](#) *Daily Kos*. McDaniel's Senate campaign claims that at least 6,700 voters were ineligible, and are calling for a new election.

In the Sunshine State of Florida this week, a state judge ruled that two of the state's House districts violate the state's constitution, [writes](#) *Roll Call's At the Races* on Thursday. They say that the judge ruled that the 5th and 10th districts, held by a Democrat and a Republican, respectively, are not compact and were drawn to favor the GOP. The key question now, is how much changes to the two districts will affect the other seats.

Heading west to Oklahoma, *Okie Funk* [writes](#) on Monday that the issue of earthquakes that are likely caused by the practice of hydraulic fracking in the state will need a broad grassroots movement in order to force the governor to take action. They say that groups in GOP stronghold areas are expressing anger about the issue, which until now, has been largely ignored by the Governor, Mary Fallin, and the state legislature which has given the gas and oil industry tax breaks for drilling in the state.

President Obama visited the Lone Star State of Texas this week, but GOP Governor Rick Perry declined his offer to meet in Austin for a photo-op, [writes](#) *The Lonely Conservative*. They say that Perry is more interested in a substantial meeting with the President to discuss the growing immigration crisis on the state's border with Texas. Staying in Texas, *Burnt Orange Report* [writes](#) on Tuesday that Governor Perry's refusal to expand Medicaid to over 1.2 million people in the state as part of Obamacare is costing the Texas economy more than \$10 billion over the next three years.

Midwest

This week saw the NBA superstar LeBron James return to the Cleveland Cavaliers after four years with the Miami Heat. On Friday, Ohio's *Third Base Politics* [writes](#) that LeBron is returning to a state where he will pay 10 percent less in taxes than in 2010 (and no estate taxes), since the state sent former Democratic Governor Ted Strickland packing.

Moving north to Michigan, *National Journal* [looks](#) at what they term the 'ugliest' House primary of the 2014 election cycle – the fight between the incumbent Tea Party backed Representative Justin Amash and the establishment backed Brian Ellis for the state's 3rd Congressional district. They say that with less than a month to the August 5th primary, Ellis' strategy of strong attacks does not seem to have worked, and may have even backfired as Amash remains popular while Ellis is disliked.

Heading south to Indiana, *Indy Politics* [writes](#) this week that though a federal judge has thrown out the state's ban on same-sex marriage, the administration of Republican Governor Mike Pence has announced that it will only recognize one such marriage in the state, since the judgment has been stayed. The marriage was recognized by the Court of Appeals as one of the partners was terminally ill.

In Illinois this week, *Hit & Run* reports that the Mayor of Chicago, Rahm Emanuel, and the city's Police Superintendent, Garry McCarthy, have called for stronger gun laws after 82 people were shot in the city over Independence Day weekend. They [say](#) that Chicago and Illinois already have strong restrictions on guns, but

when lawbreakers acquire black-market weapons, then these are moot.

Over in the Badger State, *Uppity Wisconsin* [writes](#) on Tuesday that nine states that raised their minimum wage earlier this year have enjoyed better job growth than Wisconsin, and that it is time for the state to do the same. They say that despite the evidence to the contrary, supporters of Republican Governor Scott Walker are holding firm to their 'increasingly unjustified' economic ideology.

Moving west to North Dakota, *SayAnythingBlog* [wonders](#) this week whether or not the state needs a full time legislature.

They say that the state is one of just four with a legislative branch that does not meet every year, rather they meet for only 80 days every two years. They say that with the state's oil boom, some lawmakers are concerned that they can't keep up with the state's growing needs.



Congressman Justin Amash of Michigan Credit: Gage Skidmore (Creative Commons BY SA)

West and Pacific

On Thursday this week, *Outside the Beltway* [reports](#) that a state judge has struck down Colorado's ban on same-sex marriage, though he immediately stayed his ruling. They say that it is worth noting that Judge C. Scott Crabtree who made the ruling was appointed in 2001 by a Republican Governor. Staying in the Centennial State, *ColoradoPols* [writes](#) on Friday that recent figures showing strong economic growth (the state is on track to add 68,000 new jobs this year), are good news for Democratic Governor John Hickenlooper ahead of November's gubernatorial election.

In Idaho, *Eye on Boise* [writes](#) on Friday that John Bujak's Libertarian bid for the state's governorship may be able to tip the race to Democratic challenger, A.J Balukoff over incumbent Republican Governor Butch Otter, if Bujak is able to run a strong campaign.

Heading west to Washington, *publicola* [writes](#) on Tuesday that marijuana can now be legally sold in the state, but at exorbitant prices. They say that the drug is being sold at a rate of \$20 per gram, roughly double the street price.

This week *Blue Oregon* is very [happy to report](#) that last week's Supreme Court ruling in the Hobby Lobby case that companies could avoid paying for contraception coverage under Obamacare because of their religious beliefs does not apply in Oregon. They say that Oregon is one of 19 states that did not pass the 1993's Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which the Hobby Lobby ruling pertained to. Insurance companies therefore have to comply with Obamacare's contraceptive mandate in the state.

California is currently experiencing a messy aftermath from June's primary for State Controller. The ballot has given the second place position by 481 votes to Betty Yee over fellow Democrat and State Assembly Speaker John Perez. Perez has called for a recount in 15 counties. *Fox & Hounds* [writes](#) that no matter what happens a Democrat will win the final race in November against Republican Ashley Swearengin, given that the GOP has won only one statewide race since 1994.

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