

Pennsylvania's debt downgrade, child poverty in North Carolina, and Rand Paul underwhelms in California: US state blog round up for 20 – 26 September

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 New Hampshire this week, *miscellany: blue* [writes](#) that the founder of the Free State Project there has stated that the Granite State could pose a 'serious secessionist challenge' to the U.S. government in 30 to 60 years.

Heading west to the Green Mountain State, *VTDigger* reports that an advocate for healthcare, Trinkia Kerr, told state lawmakers this week that people with chronic health conditions are finding it hard to make copayments for their care. They [say](#) that while people with conditions such as heart disease and diabetes were formerly eligible for state subsidies, under the state's new health insurance exchange system, copayments are not waived.

Moving to the Empire State, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) on Wednesday that voters are becoming increasingly discontented with Democratic Governor, Andrew Cuomo. They say that recent polls showing him with 54 percent are the lowest that he has seen in a traditional poll, and that this is happening against the backdrop of Cuomo potentially alienating voters by going back on his word to help Democrats retake the state Senate. Staying in New York, *Capitol Confidential* [writes](#) that Cuomo's Democratic camp is continuing to call for his rival in the gubernatorial race, Rob Astorino, to produce five more years of tax returns after he opened up last year's returns for review. Astorino has recently stated that the calls are 'hypocritical', after Cuomo did not release his tax returns in the 2010 election until he had won his general election.

Save Jersey writes this week on Republican Governor, Chris Christie's 'Bridgagate' scandal. They [say](#) that as some media outlets say that Christie may soon take back the mantle of GOP frontrunner for the 2016 presidential election, the scandal has made him even stronger, because he 'soldiered on' despite attacks from the media, thus proving his strong leadership abilities.

On Tuesday, *PoliticsPA* [reports](#) that Pennsylvania's debt rating has been downgraded for the fourth time in two years. They say that citing recurring budget deficits and growing pension costs, ratings agency Fitch has dropped the state's rating to –AA, putting it in the bottom five of the 42 states it evaluates.



New Jersey Governor Chris Christie Credit: Gage Skidmore (CC-BY-SA-2.0)

South

In the Old Dominion State this week, *Bearing Drift* writes that taxes are set to increase on Virginians. They write that some the state's General Assembly has passed a measure that would raise the state's gas tax if Congress fails to sign off new taxes on Internet transactions. They [say](#) that both tax increases are regressive, and the Internet sales tax would be an accounting nightmare for employers.

Heading South to North Carolina, *the progressive pulse* [writes](#) on Tuesday that one in four of the state's children lived in poverty in 2013, a rate that was unchanged from the previous year. They say that the numbers are not declining is troubling given the country is in recovery, and the rate is higher than the national average.

Charlie Crist is trying for the Florida Governorship once again – this time as a Democrat. *The Shark Tank* [writes](#) this week on Crist's 'circle of distrust'. They say that he has surrounded himself with people with 'colorful' backgrounds in recent years, including people who plead guilty of money laundering, arrested for writing worthless checks, and plead guilty to fraud and conspiracy to commit money laundering charges.

On Sunday, the *Arkansas Times* [writes](#) that the state's legislature is moving towards dominating the government through the GOP's placement of constitutional amendments on the November ballot. They say that these include having the legislature approve all executive agency rule changes, and increasing lawmakers' term limits to 14 years.

This week, *Okie Funk* [looks](#) at a new report that shows that Oklahoma's nursing homes are ranked among the worst in the country. They say that this problem dates back more than thirty years, with a major problem being the lack of professional staffing.

National Journal [gives](#) the startling statistic this week that ten U.S. counties account for more than a quarter of all the executions carried out in the U.S. since 1976. They day that Harris County in Texas, which includes Houston has carried out 122 – more than any state besides the Lone Star. They say that Dallas County comes in second with 53.

Midwest

On Monday this week, Michigan's *eclecta blog* [writes](#) that the state led the country in job losses this August, and is now ranked 5th in the country in its unemployment numbers. They say that this position has not changed in the four years that Republican Rick Snyder has been Governor of the state. Staying in the Great Lakes State, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) on Tuesday that GOP Senate candidate, Terri Lynn Land has pledged to work towards the repeal of Obamacare if she is elected – a move that if successful, would take health insurance away from 630,000 Michiganders.

Moving west to the Badger State, *Blogging Blue* [writes](#) that Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker has appointed his brother's lawyer, Vince Biskupic to a seat on a County Court in the state. They say that as a County prosecutor, Biskupic has an interesting record of raising money from people in uncharged deals.

This week, *The Iowa Republican* [writes](#) that Democratic candidate for Governor, Jack Hatch 'floundered' in the second gubernatorial debate with five-term incumbent, Terry Branstad. They say that Hatch repeatedly attacked Branstad, but these bounced off like 'a tennis ball thrown at a brick wall'.

In South Dakota this week, *Madville Times* [writes](#) that in the state's Senate Race, Republican, Mike Rounds' campaign has criticized his Democratic rival, Rick Weiland, for being a 'far left liberal'. They say that this is hypocritical when Rounds has touted how he has helped to make the state's roads great by using federal stimulus dollars.

Heading north, *Say Anything Blog* [reports](#) that North Dakota's incarceration rate increased by 175 percent between 1994 and 2012, while crime only decreased by 18 percent in the same period. They say that there is little rhyme or reason to these figures, given that other states such as New York saw their incarceration rates fall as well as their crime rates. They say that the statistics may be an indication that the state's past 'get tough' approach to crime has reached the point of diminishing returns. Staying in North Dakota, *Daily Kos* looks at a new

poll that says that the GOP might be in danger of losing their only House seat in the state. They [say](#) that the poll, which shows Democrat George Sinner leading incumbent Representative Kevin Cramer 40 to 38 percent, may lead to an upsurge in outside groups investing 'real money', as Republicans and Democrats may realize that Cramer is in danger.

In the Sunflower state this week, *PoliticusUSA* [writes](#) that the Republican Governor of Kansas, Sam Brownback, is treating voters

like they are 'gullible and stupid', after he boasted on his website about economic achievements that seem to have little evidence to support them. They say that even Republican voters cannot deny that squandering a budget surplus on tax cuts for the rich, as well as budget cuts have put the state on the 'fast track to bankruptcy'.

West and Pacific

On Monday, *New Mexico Politics with Joe Monahan* [writes](#) that a state Supreme Court decision paves the way for voters in two counties to be asked their opinion about the decriminalization of small amounts of marijuana. They say that the fact that the poll is non-binding, and does not concern legalization, mean that is unlikely that there will be an upsurge in turnout.

Moving north to Colorado, *The Spot* [writes](#) that a new poll of likely voters in the Centennial State's Senate race has found Republican Cory Gardner and Democrat Mark Udall are statistically tied.

In the Grand Canyon state, *Blog for Arizona* [writes](#) on what they say is a 'manufactured scandal' over an attack which targets Republican Martha McSally (running for the state's 2nd Congressional District) from a the Political Action Committee of former Arizona Congresswoman Gabby Giffords. They say that the ad, which attacked McSally's opposition to closing loopholes in federal gun laws was said to be taking advantage of Giffords' tragic shooting in 2011.

On Monday, Montana's *Cowgirl Blog* [gives](#) some dos and don'ts for Montana Republicans, who are currently training their members on understanding social media. They advise the Montana GOP to not "tell us 60 times a day how much you love fossil fuels and oil drillers", and to "be a real person", and "add value".

This week, *Calbuzz* [reports](#) on Senator Rand Paul's (R-KY) visit to California's GOP convention, where they say that he 'served thin gruel' to the attendees with 'recycled shots at President Obama and Hillary Clinton, while largely avoiding anything of substance'. Staying in the Golden State, *calitics* [wonders](#) if Tim Draper's now defunct [plan to split the state six ways](#) was a Trojan Horse, given that the initiative included an amendment to the state's Constitution which would enhance and empower regional and local government.



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Rand Paul at CPAC Credit: Gage Skidmore (CC-BY-SA-2.0)

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