

Budget woes in Massachusetts and Kansas, Texas overturns school pastry ban, and ethics in Wyoming's legislature: US state blog round up for 10 – 16 January

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 Wednesday, *Granite Grok* [wonders](#) if transparency is on the way out in the New Hampshire state House. They say that average voters are not at all informed about the work of the legislature, and that all votes should be recorded so that the people's representatives can be held to account.

This week in Vermont, *The Daily Signal* reports that a Republican state Representative, Mary Morrissey, has been removed from the state House's Committee on Health Care. They [say](#) that her removal may be in response to her tough questions about whether or not the state could afford to run a single payer health care system.

Heading south to Massachusetts, *Blue Mass Group* writes on Friday that the state's new Republican Governor, Charlie Baker is facing a massive deficit, something that they [say](#) is not down to the state having a spending problem, but to massive tax cuts that have caused \$51 billion in lost revenue over the past 17 years.

Talking Points Memo [writes](#) this week that New York City has turned its back on its own police force. They say that a new poll has shown that 69 percent of voters in the city disapprove of police officers turning their backs on Democratic Mayor, Bill de Blasio, at the recent funerals of two slain police officers, and that 52 percent believe that police discipline has broken down. Many in the New York Police Department have accused Mayor de Blasio of not supporting them enough after Eric Garner died after being put into a chokehold by a police officer in July last year. Staying in the Empire State, *Capitol Confidential* reports that



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eight women's equality bills have passed in the state Senate, including bills on equal pay, workplace sexual harassment and domestic violence protections. They [say](#) that some Senate Democrats have called the legislative maneuvering to bring up the bills a political ploy by Republicans, given that the legislation has been 'hanging around' for many years.

In New Jersey this week, Republican Governor Chris Christie gave his annual (and final) 'State of the State' address. *PolitickerNJ* [writes](#) that the state legislature's Democratic leadership have critiqued Christie's points on the state's fiscal and economic health. They say that Christie's opponents have accused him of using the speech

as a platform to assert himself head of a potential 2016 presidential run.

South

This week in the Old Dominion State, *Outside the Beltway* [reports](#) that Joseph Morrissey, a Democrat in the Virginia House of Delegates has won an election for the seat that he was forced to resign last year after being convicted of contributing to the delinquency of a minor. Morrissey is also in the middle of serving a six month jail sentence – but that is unlikely to stop him from serving in the House, as he is on a work-release program that allows him to be off site during work hours.

On Thursday, Georgia's *Peach Pundit* [looks](#) at a new report from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy that shows that the state's richest 1 percent contribute only 5 percent of their income in state and local taxes, while the bottom 80 percent contribute nearly double that amount. They write that much of this inequality stems from state sales tax, with the bottom 20 percent of Georgians paying over 8 times more of their income than the top 1 percent in sales tax.

Daily Kos [writes](#) that African American families in Florida are outraged after it came to light that police are using mugshots of their relatives for gun target practice.

Yellowhammer [says](#) that an Alabama state representative has claimed this week that illegal immigration could cost the state a Congressional seat. They say that the state's slow population growth may mean one fewer seat, as other states (such as Texas and Arizona) grow at a faster rate because of illegal immigration.



Governor Bobby Jindal of Louisiana credit: Gage Skidmore (CC-BY-SA-2.0)

On Wednesday, *Louisiana Voice* [reports](#) that the state's Secretary of State has announced this week that his agency will implement a furlough in order to make \$3.8 million in budget cuts which have been ordered by Republican Governor, Bobby Jindal. They say that all Secretary of State employees will be required to take off one day every two weeks without pay for the rest of the fiscal year.

Heading west to Texas, *National Journal* [writes](#) that the state's newly elected agriculture commissioner, Sid Miller has announced that there is an amnesty on cupcakes, pies, cookies and brownies in the Lone Star State's schools. The amnesty overturns a previous ban by the Texas Agriculture Department on parents handing out fatty and sugary foods at school birthday parties.

Midwest

On Thursday, *No More Mister Nice Blog* [reports](#) that Michigan's GOP Governor, Rick Snyder has vetoed a bill which would allow some of those with restraining orders issued against them for domestic violence to carry a concealed pistol. They say that Snyder 'did the right thing' in vetoing the bill, but has probably also ended his political career, as it is unlikely that he will ever win another Republican primary.

Heading west to Wisconsin, *The Political Environment* [covers](#) a speech given this week by the state's Governor, Scott Walker. They say his speech was 'cheesy and boring', in its focus on the reorganization of state government agencies, something that they say has little fiscal or policy value to everyday citizens.

SayAnythingblog [writes](#) on the role of oil in North Dakota's economy. They say that activities that support oil and gas extraction in the state (mostly exploration) are actually responsible for a bigger share of the increase in the state's economic activity since 2005 rather than the extraction itself.

Moving south, the *Madville Times* [reports](#) that South Dakota received nearly 41 percent of its general fund revenues from the federal government in 2012, the 4th highest in the country.

On Monday, *Hit & Run* [says](#) that the Missouri state government has announced plans to help finance a new stadium for the St Louis Rams with \$500 million public funding in the form of bonds or tax credits. They write that countless studies have shown that such taxpayer funded projects have zero economic impact, other than benefiting the billionaire team owners.

PoliticusUSA [writes](#) on Sunday that the Republican Tea Party's experiment in Kansas has failed, with Governor Sam Brownback call for 'revenue enhancements' to close the state's growing deficit. Brownback has implemented massive tax cuts in recent years that have starved the state of revenue, despite their intention of driving economic growth.

West and Pacific

On Thursday, *Colorado Peak Politics* [responds](#) to Governor John Hickenlooper's State of the State address. They criticize Hickenlooper for celebrating the state's record on tech startups, given the relative dearth of venture capital, and his embracing of collaboration now that the GOP has control of the State Senate once again.

This week, Wyoming's *WyoFile* [looks](#) at whether the state's legislature has a casual attitude towards ethics. They look at the case of a Representative who has not moved to resign despite the accusation that he sought special treatment to reduce drunk driving charges against his son, and cases of conflicts of interest for Senators on committees.

On Monday, Idaho's *Eye on Boise* [reports](#) on Republican Governor, Butch Otter's State of the State address, where they say he called for boosts to school funding and tax cuts for businesses and high earners. The state's Senate is unlikely to pass the proposed tax cuts given their similarity to proposals last year which also never even saw a hearing.

FreakOutNation [says](#) that Washington's State Senate has banned the open carrying of firearms in its chamber's public viewing area. The ban comes after gun advocates displayed handguns and assault weapons in the chamber as part of a protest against the passage of legislation that would mandate background checks by licensed gun dealers with all sales and transfers, including at gun shows.

Moving south to the Golden State, *Fox & Hounds* looks at what they say are 'head scratchers' in the state's political scene. They [say](#) that a request by State Senators to the Attorney General, Kamala Harris, that gas prices are not increased under recent cap and trade legislation undermines the law, and that the city of Los Angeles has ordered a study on the effects of minimum wages from a firm that did a similar study for the mayor on his plan to increase minimum wages. They say that it is unlikely that the firm will come to different conclusions this time. Staying in California, *National Journal* [writes](#) that the only way that the Democrats could lose the seat being



Colorado Governor, John Hickenlooper Credit: [Hans Watson](#) (Flickr, [CC-BY-NC-SA-2.0](#))

vacated by Senator Barbara Boxer in 2016 would be if a number of strong candidates split the vote in the 'jungle primary', leaving the two Republicans alone for the final vote.

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