

## Delaware's 'Biden Dynasty', Florida's orange problem, and Washington moves to end death penalty: US state blog round up for 24– 30 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

New Hampshire's *Granite Grok* [writes](#) this week that the state is now looking at implementing anti-Obamacare style policies, after years of attempting to regulate health insurance in the state. They say as the 2015 legislative session begins, the push towards more open insurance markets continues in the form of a bill to authorize individuals and businesses to purchase health insurance from out of state companies.

Heading west to Vermont, this week saw Governor Peter Shumlin discuss his support for the legalization of marijuana in the state, though he also stated that he has no interest in smoking it himself, saying that he had "Been there, done that", [according](#) to *VTDigger*. They say that a recent report has shown that the state could raise up to \$75 million a year in tax revenue if the sale of the drug was legalized.

Last week saw the high profile arrest of the Speaker of the New York Assembly, Sheldon Silver. On Monday, *The Brennan Centre for Justice* [looks](#) at how Silver was able to get away with being paid large sums of outside income from his legal practice for doing little or no work, and argues that the system is rigged by the powerful to serve themselves. They say that reforms are needed including lower contribution limits, and an end to the unlawful personal use of campaign accounts by clearly specifying what is allowed. *State of Politics*, meanwhile, [writes](#) on the jockeying to replace Silver in New York State's Democratic conference. They say that the conference may prefer to appoint a permanent replacement rather than an interim one as that person would have an advantage once the effort to replace Silver is underway.

This week also saw a significant snowstorm hit the east coast. *National Journal* writes on how New Jersey Governor, Chris Christie, has '[learned to get tough](#)' on storms, after he was severely criticized for being in Florida when major storm hit New Jersey at the end 2010.

Moving down to the Keystone State, on Thursday, *PoliticsPA* [reports](#) that State Treasurer, Rob McCord has resigned, which may be related to a new investigation into alleged theft of campaign funds.

### South

On Friday, *Daily Kos* [looks](#) at whether or not the 'Biden dynasty' will continue in Delaware. They say that the state's former Attorney General, Beau Biden (son of Vice President Joe Biden) has been touted to run for the state's Governorship in 2016 when the current Governor, Jack Markell's term expires. They say that the younger Biden's health worries may keep him out of the race, and that a number of Democratic candidates may be able to take his place if he does not run.

Moving down to North Carolina, *The Progressive Pulse* this week [covers](#) the state legislature's 'adjournment' which allowed lawmakers to claim that it was not in session so that they could get cash from lobbyists, despite the body having met for the first session of the year two weeks ago.

*The Atlantic* paints a worrying picture this week of Florida without an orange industry. They [say](#) that a disease is devastating the Sunshine State's citrus industry and that it has led to a large drop in citrus related employment and income over the past decade.

In Alabama, *Yellowhammer* [reports](#) that the state's only openly gay legislator, Patricia Todd, has given a warning to her colleagues in the state house – if they make a point of discussing the importance of 'family values', then she may call them out if they have had affairs.

Heading west to the Lone Star State, *Burnt Orange Report* [says](#) that Texas' 'Muslim Capitol Day', organized by the state chapters of the Council on American-Islamic Relations was not a success, with protestors abusing Muslims who came to the capitol, and State Representative, Molly White stating on Facebook that she had instructed her staff to ask Muslim visitors to renounce Islamic terrorism and publically

pledge allegiance to America. Staying in Texas, *Crooks & Liars* [reports](#) that another Republican Representative in the state, Dan Flynn, has put forward a bill that allow teachers to use deadly force to protect themselves or other students.

## Midwest

*The Daily Signal* [writes](#) this week that Ohio's Obamacare expansion has far exceeded its past cost projections in its first year, costing taxpayers \$2.1 billion. Governor John Kasich's administration had predicted that 366,000 would enroll in the program by July 2015, but more than 471,000 Ohioans have been put on Medicaid since the rollout.

The Hoosier State was in the news this week, as Governor Mike Pence announced that his administration was setting up a state government news source. *Political Animal* [says](#) that while some have called the proposals a version of 'Pravda' for Indiana, it is not very different to the common practice of state agencies releasing press releases.

Residents of Chicago will soon go to the polls to vote on whether or not Mayor Rahm Emmanuel should have a second term. *Progress Illinois* [reports](#) on Wednesday that Emmanuel has pulled in nearly \$800,000 in campaign donations within a week.

Wisconsin's *Political Heat* is very [critical](#) of Republican Governor Scott Walker this week, over what they say are his 'inexcusable' attacks on the state's university system. They say that Walker plans on cutting 13 percent of the University of Wisconsin system's budget – \$300 million – over the next two years.

In Kansas, *Crooks & Liars* [writes](#) this week that Kansas Governor Sam Brownback's administration shared a working version of the state's budget with lobbyists three weeks before it was shared with legislators.

Heading up to North Dakota, *Say Anything Blog* [says](#) that the state's Democrats have introduced a bill banning discrimination against gay and transgender people, citing its benefits for the state's economic development; the state will be a more attractive employer compared to those without similar legislation.

## West and Pacific

On Wednesday, *Hit & Run* reports on a Colorado legislator who is seeking to end the state's practice of civil forfeiture, so that an owner must be convicted before their property is confiscated. They [say](#) that the measure from state Senator, Laura Woods would essentially end the practice which currently means that property can be removed even if it was only suspected to have been involved with a crime.

In Montana this week, *Cowgirl Blog* [highlights](#) new data that shows that the state is the worst in the country for



Beau Biden Credit: [Chris Coons](#) (Flickr, [CC-BY-NC-2.0](#))

employers offering health insurance. They say that this shows that extending health coverage to the working poor is an even greater imperative than in neighboring states.

On Monday, Nevada's *Desert Beacon* [says](#) that the state's legislature will soon be considering more pro-gun legislation, which is likely to include expanding concealed carry rights, and allowing guns on school campuses.

*Strange Bedfellows* [reports](#) this week that abolishing the death penalty has won support in the state's legislature. They say that one of the factors that spurred the legislation is the cost – three recent cases have cost more than \$15 million to prosecute.



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Recent weeks have seen controversy in the Golden State over many parents' decision not to vaccinate their children, which has subsequently led to outbreaks of measles. *Wonkblog* has an interesting [series of maps](#) showing the spread of anti-vaccination sentiment in California.

On Thursday, Hawaii's *Honolulu Civil Beat* grapples with the problem of the state's [shortage of doctors](#). They say that if the state were able to change urgent care and walk-in clinics into a type of basic care provider, then this might go some way towards helping the immediate problem.

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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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