

Chris Christie's no good week, Mississippi's high vaccination rate, and a 'performance art' budget in Wisconsin: US state blog round up for 31 January – 6 February

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

Northeast

This week in the Green Mountain State, *VT Digger* [reports](#) that Governor Peter Shumlin has proposed a 0.7 percent payroll tax to fund Medicaid in Vermont. They say that the tax, which would raise \$90 million, would be the first of its kind if it passes through the state legislature.

Heading south to Massachusetts, *Blue Mass Group* [writes](#) on Wednesday that the state's government has imposed billions of dollars' worth of taxes on business and residents, without debate or discussion. They say that the 'tax' is in the form of lost wages and business that stems from the shutdown of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) for several days due to snow, because the state government is unable to put MBTA on a reliable and sustainable footing.

On Friday, Rhode Island's *RIPR On Politics* has [18 things](#) that they think we should know about the state's politics and media. These include that state Democrats have rallied around increasing the minimum wage to \$10.10, and that Governor Gina Raimondo is continuing to put her stamp on state government.

State of Politics [looks](#) at a disagreement between the Mayor of New York City, Bill de Blasio, and New York State Governor, Andrew Cuomo. They say that Cuomo has 'shrugged off' a call from de Blasio for the state's minimum wage to be increased earlier than was initially planned, commenting that it is an issue for the state legislature, not the Mayor.

Heading over to the Garden State, *Blue Jersey* [comments](#) on Governor Chris Christie's recent trip to the UK. They say that it was a 'no good, very bad trip', given the controversial statement that he gave about vaccines whilst in London. Christie's troubles continued this week – *Daily Kos* [reports](#) that he is now the target of a new criminal investigation over allegations that he and his staff broke the law when the quashed grand jury indictments against his supporters.

South

North Carolina's *The Progressive Pulse* [looks](#) at the good, the bad, and the ugly of this week's State of the State speech from Governor Pat McCrory. They say that while McCrory was likeable and sincere, he 'barely tiptoed' around the important issue of Medicaid expansion in the state.

Tennessee saw a routine prayer to open the state's Senate transform into a rant about tyranny this week, reports *FreakOutNation*. They [say](#) that a pastor of the American Bible Protestant Church was invited to speak by a Republican Senator, and launched into a tirade about federal government overreach.



Continuing south to Florida, *The Seminole Democrat* [says](#) that ‘everyone’ is piling on to Governor Rick Scott over his ousting of Gerald Bailey, the head of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, after Bailey refused to get involved in Scott’s re-election campaign last year.

Ten Miles Square brings good news from Mississippi this week – apparently the state tops the nation with its rate of vaccination among kindergarteners – 99.7 percent. They [say](#) that the state has been able to achieve such high immunization rates because being a poor, rural state, it has been historically more prone to disease outbreaks, and thus the state government has had years of public health efforts to combat the spread of these diseases.

Something Like the Truth [says](#) that Louisiana is now facing a ‘devastating’ \$1.6 billion budgetary shortfall in the coming fiscal year, and that the state needs more revenue, despite the view of anti-tax conservatives, such as Governor Bobby Jindal, that tax cuts are vital for growth.

Okie Funk [wonders](#) this week whether or not the state may also end up facing a similar budget shortfall, with the announcement of layoffs by companies related to the oil extraction business. The dramatic fall in oil prices and corresponding fall in production has led to falling revenues in the state.

Midwest

This week Ohio’s *Plunderbund* [reports](#) that Republican Governor John Kasich, has proposed the two biggest budgets in the state’s history, with the budgets of over \$68 billion far outstripping his Democratic predecessor’s. They remind us that Kasich heavily criticized former Governor Ted Strickland in 2010 for his budgets, calling him a ‘tax and spend’ liberal.

Last March, over 300 same-sex marriages were performed in Michigan on one day after the state’s ban on same-sex marriage ban was ruled unconstitutional by a federal judge, before it was stayed because of an appeal.

Eclectablog [commends](#) Governor Rick Snyder for his announcement this week that his administration will not appeal a decision by a

U.S. District Judge that compels the state to recognize the marriages, but criticizes him for allowing the appeal against the original same-sex ban decision to continue.

Potential presidential candidate for the Republican Party, Wisconsin Governor, Scott Walker, was in the news this week for his state’s budget. *Daily Kos* [says](#) that the budget is ‘a work of intentionally incompetent performance art’ given that it is likely to trigger public sector layoffs and devastate higher education.

Heading south to Missouri, on Monday, *PoliticMO* [covers](#) the state legislature’s review of bills that aim to change the government’s ethics laws. The Republican measure would prevent lawmakers from returning as a lobbyist for one year.

South Dakota’s *Madville Times* [looks](#) at inequality in the state – they say that the state’s 1 percent have taken more than half of new income, post-recession. South Dakota’s teacher’s 22 percent less than the average salary of the 99 percent.

In neighboring North Dakota this week, *Say Anything blog* [calls out](#) the state’s Democrats for their hypocrisy over wanting to give the state’s renters property tax relief. They say that renters do not directly pay property tax, but that landlords pass on the cost of tax to their tenants. They draw a parallel with corporates who pass their tax burden on to customers through higher prices – a group which Democrats do not wish to see tax relief given to.



Ohio Governor John Kasich – Photo Credit: Governor Beshear (Creative Commons: BY-NC-ND 2.0)

West and Pacific

Daily Kos [reports](#) this week that Colorado's policy of providing free contraception to low income women since 2009 has led to the state's teen birth rate falling by 40 percent, with an accompanying drop in the teen abortion rate by 35 percent.

This week saw Wyoming's state legislature consider the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), [writes WyoFile](#). They say that the bill would provide a loophole for Wyoming's public accommodation law, which requires equal access to public businesses and agencies without regards to race, religion, sex or nationality. RFRA would allow businesses to deny people service on the basis of one of these factors.

Blog for Arizona is [critical](#) of that state's legislature, which they say faces another lawsuit for its failure to fund education. They say that the new suit centers on the state not adjusting the 'base level' of education funding in accordance with inflation.

Oregon Governor, John Kitzhaber was in the news this week over revelations that he may have allowed his fiancée, Cylvia Hayes to use her position for private gain and professional advancement. *Wonkblog* [has the details](#).

Heading south to the Golden State, *Capital & Main* begins a [series on inequality](#) in California. *Fox & Hounds*, meanwhile [looks](#) at the upcoming 2016 open Senate seat in California, which will be contested under the new 'top-two' open primary rules.

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

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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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