

Same-sex marriage in Texas, Michigan school funding and Utah votes for the firing squad: US state blog round up for 14 -20 February

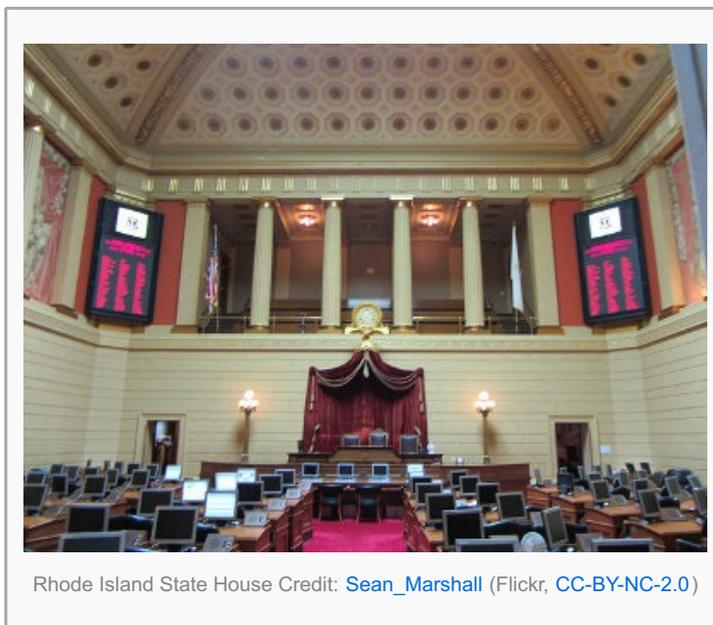
USApp Managing Editor, **Chris Gilson**, looks at the week in U.S. state blogging. [Click here](#) for our weekly roundup of national blogs.

Northeast

On Sunday, New Hampshire's *Granite Grok* reports that the state Senate has voted on a bill to allow the legal carrying of a handgun without a permit, referred to as 'Constitutional Carry'. They [say](#) that the state's Democrats who voted against the bill in committee stage must have a low opinion of their constituents given that they think that the bill will lead to more shootings.

RI Future [reports](#) this week that Rhode Island is now an ALEC-free zone. They say that at the end of 2014, Democratic Senator William Walaska's membership of the American Legislative Exchange Council expired, meaning that the State House will no longer influence lawmaking in Providence. For more on how ALEC influences state legislatures read our [article on the topic](#).

New York Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo has been under fire for delaying calling a date for the special election in the state's 11th Congressional district to replace Republican Representative Michael Grimm who recently resigned after being convicted for tax fraud. *Red State* [says](#) that a judge has threatened to set a date for the election if Cuomo does not.



Rhode Island State House Credit: [Sean Marshall](#) (Flickr, [CC-BY-NC-2.0](#))

Heading west, *PolitickerNJ* takes a close look at the [role of the Catholic Church](#) in New Jersey politics. They say that for the past three decades, Democrats and Republicans alike have been split by the demands of the church over issues such as same sex marriage and abortion. Staying in the state, on Friday, *Save Jersey* [says](#) that the political culture has moved in favor of the decriminalization of marijuana, and draws comparison with the over-criminalization of gun possession. They write that drugs kill more Americans than firearms on an annual basis, and that the state should reform its gun laws with as much zeal as it has for marijuana reform.

On Thursday, *The Lonely Conservative* [says](#) that some towns in New York State are keen to secede to Pennsylvania. The towns of New York's Southern Tier border Pennsylvania, which does not share New York's ban on fracking, and locals feel that exploiting natural gas would help to lift the towns' economies.

South

This week saw a state of emergency declared in West Virginia by Governor Earl Ray Tomblin after the derailment, explosion and fire of a train carrying crude oil from North Dakota. *PoliticusUSA* [comments](#) that the disaster comes just a year after a coal processing plant poisoned the drinking water supply of 300,000 West Virginians.

Moving south to the Sunshine State, *Saint Peters Blog* [says](#) that lobbying firms collected nearly \$30 million in legislative lobbying fees during the last quarter of 2014. The list of firms is led by four which collected more than \$1 million each.

Alabama's *Yellowhammer* profiles the [top 20 potential candidates](#) for the state's 2018 gubernatorial race. The list includes current state treasurer, Young Boozer, and Congressman Bradley Byrne.

The *Arkansas Times* is incredulous over state Senator Eddie Williams' proposal to reorganize the state's government into ten departments, one of which would be a Department of Homeland Security, akin to that of the federal government. They [say](#) that the fact that the U.S. government had such a difficult time defining what 'homeland security' meant, that this should have given the state's government pause.

On Thursday, *Daily Kos* [reports](#) that an Oklahoma state lawmaker, Representative Sally Kern wants to punish local and state employees who issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Last year a federal district judge ruled that the state's ban on same-sex marriage was unconstitutional. They say that Kern has introduced a bill that would subject to officials who issued marriage licenses to same-sex couples can be subject to removal from office.



Same-sex marriage was in the news in Texas as well this week. [According](#) to *The Atlantic*, this week a probate judge in Travis County, Texas, ruled that the state's ban on same-sex marriage was unconstitutional after a couple sued the county clerk and petitioned a state district judge in Austin for emergency license. The County judge's ruling was stayed by the state Supreme Court, after a request from the state's Attorney General, but not after the couple in question were married.

Midwest

This week in Michigan, *eclecta blog* [reports](#) that Republican Governor, Rick Snyder has unveiled what they say is a "fake increase" in per-pupil school funding. They write that in last week's state budget per-pupil funding was to be increased by \$75 per student, but that this would be offset by the elimination of reward funding for academic performance and a reduction in 'best practice' revenue by 60 percent. The net result is that the per-pupil increase will be a 'paltry' \$15.

Red State [says](#) that the Republican Governor of Illinois, Bruce Rauner is attempting to bring 'fiscal sanity' to the state by promising deep cuts of \$6.7 billion in his recent budget address on top of an executive order to block unions from getting fees from the paychecks of state employees who elect not to join a union.

On Sunday, *Uppity Wisconsin* [comments](#) that the budget of Governor Scott Walker, has given state workers the short shrift once again due to its suspension of merit raises and retention pay increases for state workers, and a 'miserly' one percent pay increase for each fiscal year. They say that this is occurring against a backdrop of tax cuts for the state's wealthy. Staying in Wisconsin, *Crooks & Liars* [says](#) that Governor Walker has been given a green light to attack unions by the legislature's fast-tracking of a so-called 'right to work' bill, which would eliminate the requirement for employees to pay union fees.

South Dakota's *Madville Times* [comments](#) on the recent testimony of a state Highway Patrol Major who has spoken against a Senate Bill which would allow certain legislators to carry weapons in the state Capitol. They say that there are concerns that the new bill does not contain funding for a training program for legislators, and that it would keep the identity of the armed legislators a secret.

Heading up to North Dakota, *Say Anything Blog* [reports](#) that a Muslim leader may have cancelled giving his invocation to the state's House after complaints from Republicans who preferred the opening to be done by a Christian.

West and Pacific

Hit & Run [reports](#) on two new lawsuits that aim to reverse the legalization of marijuana in Colorado. They say that the two new lawsuits are based on property and business owners who are worried that the proximity of marijuana cultivation to them will hurt them and their businesses.

This week, the GOP-dominated Utah House voted to bring back executions by firing squad, if the drug cocktail currently used was unavailable at the time of the scheduled execution, [writes](#) *PoliticoUSA*. Utah has not executed anyone by firing squad since 2010.

Moving down to Arizona, *National Journal* [looks](#) at the current uncertainty over what the state's Congressional districts will be in 2016, with electoral map currently before the Supreme Court. They say that the Court will soon hear arguments over the case between Arizona's redistricting commission and the Republican-led legislature, which has said that the commission was unconstitutional, and that it is their responsibility to redraw boundaries.

The Brennan Centre for Justice [comments](#) on what they say is California's recently reached milestone in reducing its prison population below the federally ordered population cap – something it achieved a year behind schedule. They say that for many years, the Golden State's prisons operated at far above capacity until ordered by the Supreme Court to reduce incarceration numbers to 137.5 percent of capacity in 2011.

On Wednesday, Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber resigned in the wake of a scandal involving his fiancée, Cylvia Hayes. *The Monkey Cage* [wonders](#) whether the former Secretary of State, Kate Brown, who succeeded Kitzhaber will be able to restore Oregonian's confidence in the governor's office.

Heading up to Washington, *Strange Bedfellows* [reports](#) that a judge has ruled that a florist in had violated the state's Consumer Protection Act when she refused to sell flowers to a customer preparing for his same-sex marriage.

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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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