

## Baltimore's shocking inequality, air pollution in New Mexico, and the most popular politician in America: US state blog round up for 25 April – 1 May

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

### Northeast

*Townhall* [writes](#) on Tuesday in praise of Maine Governor, Paul LePage, who they say is a 'conservative kicking butt'. Their praise for LePage stems from his reforms to welfare (which Democrats have been forced to support) and education in Maine, as well as his steadfast rejection of Obamacare.

Vermont's *VTDigger* [reports](#) this week that Governor Peter Shumlin has interrupted the state legislature's budget proves at the '11<sup>th</sup> hour' to call for the state Senate's Appropriations Committee to find \$10 – \$15 million in more spending reductions, in order to help address an \$113 million gap in spending. They say that Shumlin's intervention has perplexed insiders as he has had four months to influence the budget and tax bills, but has not done so until now.

Any guesses as to the most popular politician in America? *National Journal* [says](#) that it is in fact Massachusetts' Republican Governor Charlie Baker who, according to recent polls, has the support of 70 percent of voters. They comment that one of the secrets to his popularity, (especially as a Republican in a Democratic-leaning state), is that he keeps his head down and runs the state.

Heading over to the Empire State, *Capitol Confidential* [writes](#) on Wednesday that despite rumors to the contrary, New York's Democratic Governor, Andrew Cuomo, has no plans to leave office, and will be running for reelection in 2018. They say that Cuomo is well-liked by a majority of New Yorkers, and has nearly \$9 million in his 2018 campaign account.

One of New Jersey Governor, Chris Christie's longtime political allies, state Senator Joe Kyryllos recently switched his allegiance from Christie's growing presidential bid to that of former Florida Governor, Jeb Bush. *PolitickerNJ* [reports](#) that when asked, Christie shrugged off the defection, stating that "This is politics. And people make political decisions based on politics", and that he was not holding a grudge. Later, they [look](#) at the big news this week out of New Jersey – the admission of former Port Authority of New York and New Jersey executive, David Wildstein that he was guilty on conspiracy charges relating to the closure of four lanes of the George Washington Bridge in September 2013. They say that Wildstein also made allegations against Bill Baroni (also of the Port Authority) and Bridget Kelly (Christie's former Deputy Chief of Staff).



### South

Riots and unrest in Baltimore Maryland following the death of Freddie Gray in police custody in April made headlines nationally and internationally this week. On Tuesday, *Wonkblog* [presents](#) two maps which show the 'shocking' level of inequality in Baltimore, with an endemic level of empty buildings in black neighborhoods. On Friday, *National Journal* [reports](#) that Baltimore State Attorney has announced that the six police officers involved with Freddie Gray's death would be charged with murder. They comment that getting convictions is likely to be difficult given that only one in eight cases of police mistreatment leads to one. Maryland's *Seventh State* [comments](#) this week that the Baltimore community desperately needs to hear more about models for better policing, and how they can be implemented, and that more needs to be done to provide opportunities for those in poverty.



Sign in Baltimore. Credit: [Talk Radio News Service](#) (Flickr, [CC-BY-NC-SA-2.0](#))

Heading south to the Sunshine state, *Saint Peters Blog* [bemoans](#) the lack of 'top-tier' GOP candidates to run for Marco Rubio's (who is running for president) Senate seat in 2016. They say that the explanations that some have given – that the Republicans can't win in Florida in a presidential year, and that no-one thinks that they can beat the likely Democratic candidate, two-term Congressman Patrick Murphy – are plain wrong.

Alabama's *Yellowhammer* [writes](#) on Friday that the state's budget crisis should not be solved with tax hikes or gambling revenues (as has been proposed). They say that instead, conservative principles are needed that would lead to more efficient and effective government.

On Thursday, *Letter from Texas* [reports](#) on citizen concern over calls from Governor Greg Abbot for the Texas Guard to 'keep an eye on' U.S. Army movements in part of the state as part of a military exercise. Tongue firmly in cheek, they suggest that Oklahoma's governor may have called up that state's Guardsmen to watch over Texas troops, as they watch the federal soldiers.

## Midwest

On Monday, *Daily Kos* has the [news](#) that the city of Chicago has paid more than \$521 million since 2004 to settle lawsuits related to police misconduct, according to a new study. They say that the city could have built five state of the art schools for the same amount. Staying in Chicago, *Progress Illinois* [reports](#) Thursday that the city is likely to be the home of the Obama presidential library, likely in one of the city's parks.

Heading north to the Badger State, *Crooks & Liars* [says](#) that the prosecutors in the 'John Doe' corruption case against Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker have challenged him to release all the currently sealed documents in the case, documents which have the potential to harm his presidential bid.

Minnesota's *Bluestem Prairie* [writes](#) that the state's House of Representatives has this week passed an omnibus bill which would repeal transgender-inclusive policies in Minneapolis and St. Paul school districts, and would also prevent future school districts from implementing their own.

Moving south to Missouri, *Townhall* [criticises](#) Governor Jay Nixon for his veto this week of legislation which have reformed the state's failing welfare program. They say that the vetoed Strengthening Missouri Families Act would have implemented work requirements, sanctions for non-compliance, and other programs which would help those in poverty stay off welfare rolls.

*Crooks & Liars* [takes](#) Kansas Governor, Sam Brownback, to task for signing a bill again and again this week. They say that Brownback has travelled to four different cities to re-enact the signing of a bill which outlaws a second-trimester abortion procedure, dilation and evacuation, in ceremonies which teenagers could attend.

## West and Pacific

Colorado is looking at creating a presidential primary for the 2016 cycle, in addition to its existing caucus process. *The Spot* [reports](#) that a new legislative analysis has estimate that creating such a primary would cost \$1.7 million, which would have to be raised by increasing filing fees for businesses and charities.

Moving south to New Mexico, *Progress Now MN* [looks](#) at a report from the American Lung Association which states that ¼ New Mexicans are at risk for air pollution related illnesses. They write that environmental advocates have read the report as a call for action to address pollution which has been linked with recent oil and gas developments.

Idaho's *Eye on Boise* writes this week on the state's 'secretive' selection process for federal judges that has meant that it is the only state in the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit that has never had a woman district judge. The [comments](#) come as Idaho's Senators moves to find a replacement for U.S. District Judge, Edward Lodge, appear to be ignoring female candidates.



Refinery in New Mexico Credit: [Jonathan Boeke](#) (Flickr, [BY-NC-SA-2.0](#))

In the Grand Canyon State, *Blog for Arizona* [warns](#) us not to rush to sing the praises of Governor Doug Ducey after he ordered the state's Department of Child Safety to reverse a policy that blocked legally married same-sex couples from jointly adopting or being foster parents. They say that simply 'doing the right thing', as in this case, should not merit praise.

This week *The Atlantic* writes on the ongoing severe drought which California is currently experiencing. They [say](#) that Governor Jerry Brown is using the drought as an opportunity to push his agenda to fight climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Remaining in the Golden State, *Fox & Hounds* comments that SB 1253, which was an attempt to reform the initiative process, has been a failure as the recent 'Sodomite Suppression Act' initiative has shown. They [say](#) that true initiative reform should not allow initiatives to so blatantly violate the constitution and should insure that they reach the ballot based on the merit of their ideas, not the money that is behind them.

*Featured image:* Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker. Credit: [Charlie Baker](#) (Flickr, [CC-BY-NC-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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