

Alabama's \$137,000 missing Tasers, Indiana's income problem, and New Mexico rolls back civil forfeiture: US state blog round up for 11 – 17 April

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

Northeast

In the Granite State this week, *NH Labor News* [writes](#) that Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) has introduced the Women on the Twenty Act, which would direct the Secretary of the Treasury to convene a citizen panel which would recommend a woman to feature on the twenty dollar bill.

On Thursday, Vermont's *VTDigger* [reports](#) that the state House has given initial approval to a Senate bill which would prohibit certain criminals and those with severe mental illnesses from possessing guns. They say that Vermont is the only state in the U.S. which lacks a law like this, according to its advocates.

Turning to the Empire State, *The American Interest* [says](#) this week that New York City is 'strangling' itself with expensive transit projects such as \$10 billion on a new Port Authority Bus Terminal. Staying in New York, *State of Politics* has the [news](#) that Democratic Governor, Andrew Cuomo earned \$376,000 from his book, "*All Things Possible*"; which was released last year, according to recently released tax returns. Cuomo's book sold just over 3,000 copies, meaning that each has earned him nearly \$188 (if the \$188,000 advance is included).



Heading over to neighboring New Jersey, *Blue Jersey* [decries](#) the recent state budget's focus on tax cuts for businesses, which will cause the state to lose \$660 billion in revenues, which they say could be put to good use to increase economic opportunities and provide economic security for those in the state who need it the most. Staying in the Garden State, *PolitickerNJ* [says](#) that GOP Governor, Chris Christie has defended his economic policies after the state's credit rating was again downgraded by Moody's Investor Service from A1 to A2.

South

On Monday, North Carolina's *The Progressive Pulse* [reports](#) that the state now has the record for the longest unfulfilled federal judicial vacancy. They say that a seat on the U.S. District Court for North Carolina's Eastern District has been empty for almost 3,400 days, or more than nine years.

Heading south to the Sunshine State, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) Thursday that Republican Governor, Rick Scott, has threatened to sue the Obama administration in order to get funding for hospitals that treat uninsured patients, which the federal government is planning to withhold after Scott u-turned on his previous decision to expand Medicaid in the state.

Alabama's *Yellowhammer* has the [news](#) this week that the state's Auditor, Jim Ziegler has issued a report which

shows that the state is missing \$211,000 worth of property, including 179 Tasers bought in 2006, which are worth \$137,000, but were damaged in shipping, with nothing having been done about them since.

Meanwhile in the Natural State, *The Arkansas Times* [comments](#) that none of the new-anti-choice laws passed by the state's General Assembly in the past year, including restrictions on drugs and the use of telemedicine, benefit women's health, and that several might endanger it. They say that as bad as these laws are, they are political gold in the eyes of the anti-choice legislators who now dominate lawmaking in Arkansas.

Moving down to Louisiana, *Something Like the Truth* [writes](#) on Monday that GOP Governor Bobby Jindal is claiming credit for an economic miracle that is actually a 'mirage'. While Jindal spoke of leaving the state's economy better off than how he found it in his annual 'State of the State' address, Louisiana's projected \$1.6 billion budget shortfall, and higher unemployment rate than a decade ago, show that the state's 'supercharged' business climate has not led to economic vitality.



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

There has been much controversy over state religious freedom (or RFRA) laws in recent weeks. *FreakOutNation* has the [story](#) this week of a Texas woman who when issued with a citation by police for feeding the homeless, told them that they were infringing on her religious liberty, which should be protected as per the state's RFRA law.

Midwest

In the Great Lakes State this week, *eclecta blog* [reports](#) that the Michigan Progressive Women's Legislative caucus has introduced wage discrimination bills, a package which they say will offer solutions to closing the state's wage gap, by empowering workers to negotiate for equal pay, and create strong incentives for employers to follow the law.

Heading south, *PoliticusUSA* [says](#) that the popularity of Indiana's Republican Governor, Mike Pence, has taken a big hit from 62 to 43 percent after the controversy over the state's religious freedom law. While Governor Pence was forced to backtrack in the face of opposition to the bill, Indiana voters have not forgotten his initial support for the bill. Staying in the Hoosier State, *The Federalist* [reckons](#) that since the state's RFRA law was 'fixed', it is now the most hostile state towards religious freedom as it only grants protections to those who are representatives of a religious institution or church. On Friday, *Indy Politics* takes a look at the state's 'income' problem. They [write](#) that while there has been a great deal of talk on stagnant wages in the state, more need to take advantage of the educational and free training opportunities that are provided.

On Monday, North Dakota's *Say Anything blog* [reports](#) on how a coffee shop in the state's ban on lawmakers who voted no to a recent anti-discrimination bill has backfired on them. They say that the only state legislator who has noticed the ban is Representative Josh Boschee who is the first openly gay member of the Legislature, and that he does not like the ban.

West and Pacific

On Wednesday *The Daily Signal* [says](#) that the New Mexico has unanimously passed a bipartisan bill which would essentially abolish the practice of civil forfeiture in the state. They say that the bill will prevent authorities from seizing property permanently from people if they believe to be allegedly related to a crime. The new law would require a conviction before property was forfeited, and would require additional transparency to allow better oversight of the process.

Moving up to Oregon, *Hit & Run* [writes](#) this week that birth control pills could soon be available without a doctor's

prescription in the state, if the state legislature approves a recent GOP proposal. The new law would allow oral contraception to be dispensed by pharmacists, as is already the case in California. Staying in the Beaver State, *BlueOregon* [says](#) that it is time to raise the state's minimum wage, but raise the question of how high. Oregon already has the second-highest statewide minimum wage at \$9.25 an hour, and there are legislative proposals that would increase it to as high as \$15 by 2018.



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California is currently in the midst of a major drought, with Governor Jerry Brown instituting water restrictions for the first time last week. *Townhall* [writes](#) this week that the state's government has made the drought worse through policies which prevented the construction of new reservoirs and other water infrastructure due to environmental concerns. On Friday, *Outside the Beltway* [reports](#) that a bill which would toughen the state's vaccine mandate by removing the personal belief exemption has stalled in the face of opposition from the state Senate's Education Committee. Staying in the Golden State, *Fox & Hounds* [says](#) that despite the positive message delivered by Los Angeles Mayor, Eric Garcetti in this week's State of the City speech, the city is still facing an \$700 million cumulative deficit over the next four years and more than \$25 billion in unfunded pensions.

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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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