

New York's campaign finance loophole, Florida U-turns on Medicaid while Montana accepts, and South Dakota's coming minimum wage fight: US state blog round up for 4 – 10 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

On Wednesday, Maine's *Pine Tree Politics* [comments](#) that revenue sharing scheme – which redistributes state revenues among cities and towns – has failed. They say that rather than falling as the scheme intended, municipal taxes' share of revenue has actually increased dramatically, and explain that revenue sharing also drives spending up, which in turn necessitates higher property taxes.

Heading south to the Green Mountain State, *VT Digger* [writes](#) this week on the Vermont Legislature's deliberations on consolidating schools and eliminating local school boards. They comment that the school issue splits Vermonters along a social divide that has existed since the state's founding between 'Uphillers', descendants of the farmers who settled hillside farms and 'Downhillers', who are descended from the professional classes who settled the state's valleys.

On Tuesday, New Hampshire's *Miscellany Blue* [introduces](#) us E. Davison Massey, a 72-year old retiree living in an affluent suburb of Chicago, who last year spent \$250,000 to elect liberty-leaning candidates to the state legislature. They put Massey's donation in the context of increasing spending from Republican Super Political Action Committees in states such as New Hampshire.

In Rhode Island this week, *RIFuture* [reports](#) that the state spent more than \$5.4 million on transport and textbooks for students who attend private and parochial schools. They say that there is now a debate in the state legislature over such subsidies on private school education, with many lawmakers believing them to be sacrosanct, while Governor Gina Raimondo wants to see them halved.

The Lonely Conservative [says](#) that New York Governor Andrew Cuomo's 'Start-Up NY' project, which aimed to create employment, has only produced 68 jobs, at a cost of \$28 million, something which they term is an 'epic fail'. Staying in the Empire State, the *Brennan Center for Justice* lobbies this week for the New York state legislature to close the 'LLC loophole' whereby Limited Liability Companies are able to give hundreds of thousands of dollars (often anonymously) in donations to candidates because they are classified by New York's Board of Elections as individuals. They [argue](#) that if the Board simply classifies these LLCs as corporations, then this will help to limit the influence of special interests and reduce corruption.

South

On Sunday, *Blue Virginia* [looks](#) at recent commentary that has suggested that the state's Democratic Governor, Terry McAuliffe, is 'being chummy' with GOP state legislators. They say that, because of his term limit, McAuliffe has a very different set of motivations compared to his fellow state Democrats, and that he is very likely to face a



Republican-dominated state legislature for the remainder of his term.

Heading south to the Sunshine State, *Wonkblog* says on Monday that Florida's GOP Governor, Rick Scott, has made a U-turn on supporting the expansion of Medicaid in the state. They [comment](#) that Scott's change of heart is not all that surprising, given the ongoing opposition to the expansion among many state legislators. Staying in Florida, *Saint Peters blog* [reports](#) this week that the state's war on marijuana cultivation was a success last year, with \$95 million worth of plants seized.

On Friday, *Something Like the Truth* [writes](#) that Louisiana Governor, Bobby Jindal, may be about to 'wreck' the state with a religious freedom bill, akin to those that have recently caused controversy in Indiana and Arkansas. They say that by backing such a bill, Jindal is undermining the state's economy, as such bills have been badly received by business leaders.

Moving west, the *Arkansas Times* reviews the 90th Arkansas legislature, [saying](#) that while the state's poor did not get a tax break from Governor Asa Hutchinson, the rich received a 33 percent reduction in the top rate of tax on capital gains.

On Wednesday, Texas' *Burnt Orange Report* [comments](#) that the state's Democrats must take the lead in cleaning up the GOP's scandals in the state. They say that Democrats must make a bigger issue of ethics reform in the state given the increasing concern over cronyism and corporate influence, such as the 21CT contract scandal that sparked the cancellation of a \$90 million contract extension.

Midwest

This week Ohio's *Plunderbund* [argues](#) that Governor John Kasich model for economic recovery is a poor one. They say that Kasich's pursuit of supply-side economics has meant that it still has yet to recover the total number of jobs lost to the 2007 recession.

The big news out of the Midwest this week was the victory of incumbent Chicago Mayor, Rahm Emanuel over his more liberal challenger, Jesus 'Chuy' Garcia. *National Journal* [writes](#) that Emanuel is at the forefront of American mayors who are redefining what progressive means by focusing on job creation via public-private partnerships and restructuring the city's school systems.

Moving west to Missouri, *Hit & Run* [reports](#) this week that municipal elections in Ferguson, Missouri, where black teenager Michael Brown was killed by a police officer last year, has seen a doubling of turnout, meaning that minorities will get better representation.

On Monday, *Freak Out Nation* [says](#) that Kansas' state senate is set to approve restrictions on welfare recipients which are among the most draconian in the country. They say that those on welfare will be unable to get more than \$25 a day, and would be prohibited from spending their benefits at liquor stores, pools and even cruise ships, under a law which has been sent to Governor Sam Brownback's desk.

Heading north to South Dakota, *The Democratic Truth* [writes](#) this week on the upcoming fight over the state's minimum wage. They say that voters approved an increase to \$8.50 last fall, but the state's Republicans have passed an exemption which sets a separate minimum for employees under 18 of \$7.50 an hour. State Democrats and unions are throwing their weight behind a campaign to repeal the exemption via another referendum which would go on the 2016 ballot.

In neighboring North Dakota this week, the state legislature is currently considering a new committee which would oversee suing the federal government over regulation, [reports](#) *Say Anything blog*. North Dakota businesses currently sue the government themselves to get regulations changed, but the new fund would help coordinate these efforts, and prevent single suits from small operators setting policy for entire industries.

West and Pacific

On Friday, *PoliticusUSA* [reports](#) that the Republican-controlled Montana House has voted to approve the expansion of Medicaid in the state, after the Democratic caucus joined with 13 defecting Republicans. They say

that the bill would expand coverage for up to 46,000 low income Montanans.

Colorado's *The Spot* [writes](#) this week that a committee in the state's Senate has killed a ban on gay conversion therapy for minors. They say that state Senate Democrats are dismayed over the move, and will introduce the bill again next year.

In New Mexico, *Progressnow NM* gives an [overview](#) of '5 unbelievable vetoes' made by Governor Susana Martinez during this year's legislative session. These include a veto on \$65,000 for science, technology, engineering and math programs administered by the state's agriculture department, one on a bill that would have allowed home deliveries of beer and wine, and which would have allowed hemp research in the state.

Tuesday sees *Outside the Beltway* [report](#) that long-serving Senator John McCain will be running for a 6th term as Senator for Arizona. They say that McCain has insisted he is up for the task, despite the fact that he may face a primary challenger from the right.

This week also saw negotiations in the Idaho State House and Senate over a transportation bill. *Eye on Boise* [says](#) that there has been agreement on lowering registration fees for some vehicles, but not on a gas tax.

Heading down to the Golden State, *Fox & Hounds* [writes](#)

Wednesday that the recent package of bills from California Democrats which aim to help and protect undocumented immigrants in the state will do little to help solve their poverty problems. They argue that California needs to do more to provide middle class jobs by cutting taxes and changing regulations on businesses, as well investing more to create more manufacturing jobs.

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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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