

California's budget windfall, Minnesota expands voting rights as Ohio ponders a poll tax: US state blog round up for 9 – 15 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

In the Green Mountain State this week, *VTDigger* [comments](#) on the game of 'chicken' unfolding this week between Governor Peter Shumlin and the state Legislature's Democrats over the state budget and new taxes. The legislature has agreed to a budget which has \$3 million or new revenue, and a similar amount less in budget cuts compared to what Governor Shumlin has been pushing for. They say that by passing the altered budget, the state legislature is risking a veto by Shumlin.



Governor Peter Shumlin of Vermont, Credit: Community College of Vermont (Flickr, CC-BY-2.0)

Connecticut's *My Left Nutmeg* [covers](#) a dispute between State Representative Cecilia Buck-Taylor who they say used a Facebook post to 'misrepresent and spread fear' about an initiative from Governor Dannel Malloy which would eliminate drug-free zones in urban communities.

Moving on to the Empire State, *The American Interest* [writes](#) this week that New York City Mayor, Bill de Blasio has unveiled a new plan to solve a continuing fight over pension payout to firefighters, police and corrections officers and sanitation workers. They say that the unions are not pleased with de Blasio's plans, which does not bode well for an agreement given that de Blasio is already considered to be very liberal, and is unlikely to offer any further concessions. Staying in New York, *Daily Kos* [reports](#) that following a recent *New York Times* investigation into labor law violations and poor working conditions for those who work in the city's nail salons, Governor Andrew Cuomo has announced that nail salons who do not comply with orders to pay workers' back wages, or are unlicensed, will be shut down. Last week saw New York State Senate Majority Leader, Dan Skelos, resign after being indicted on federal corruption charges. On Thursday, *State of Politics* [writes](#) that according to state Senator, John DeFrancisco, Governor Cuomo 'definitely' influenced the leadership battle which saw Skelos replaced with Senator John Flanagan, though the Governor has refuted having any involvement.

In New Jersey, *PolitickerNJ* [looks](#) at the winners and losers from the state's recent elections in West New York, North Bergen and other municipal seats.

South

North Carolina's *Civitas Review* [reports](#) with some relief that Volvo has chosen neighboring South Carolina as the location for its new plant. Why are they happy that the Old North State has missed out? South Carolina's government has offered Volvo \$200 million in 'crony incentives' to bring the company there.

Heading south to the Sunshine State, *Saint Peters Blog* [says](#) this week that Florida Governor, Rick Scott has been on a campaign of letter writing to the federal government. One of his missives has been to Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Burwell about Florida getting federal money to cover those who do not have government or private health insurance, as well as a proposal for healthcare coverage initiatives which would protect poor Floridians from losing their coverage through future reforms.

Yellowhammer this week has a solution which may help to solve Alabama's budget crisis this week. They [argue](#) that if the state amends the way it budgets (with one entire budget of \$6 billion earmarked for education), then it could nearly balance its budget without any need for new taxes.

In October, Louisiana voters will go to the polls to elect a new Governor. *Something Like the Truth* [argues](#) Friday that U.S. Senator, Republican David Vitter, is currently polling at 38 percent and is essentially unbeatable.

Americablog [reports](#) on a bill recently passed by the Texas House of Representatives which would label the health insurance cards of those whose plans are subsidized via the Affordable Care Act with an 'S', for 'subsidy'. They say that critics of the bill are concerned that the new cards might lead to doctors rejecting patients who have subsidized insurance. Staying in the Lone State, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) Friday that the clock has run out on another bill which would have prevented state and local officials from issuing same-sex marriage licenses, even if the Supreme Court strikes down such marriage bans across the country.

Midwest

On Friday, *PoliticusUSA* [covers](#) the story that Ohio Republicans have proposed instituting a poll tax for the 2016 election. While instituting a simple voting fee is unconstitutional, they say that the legislation currently moving through the Ohio legislature would require voters to pay a fee to obtain a valid ID card in order to be able to vote.

Heading up to Michigan, *Eclecta blog* [writes](#) this week that its state Republicans have introduced a state House bill which would prohibit a local government body from adopting or enforcing an ordinance or policy which would regulate the relationship between an employer, its employees and those which would require an employer to pay a wage higher than the state or federal minimum. One of the main concerns about the bill from progressives, is that it would mean there are no longer any local measures which would give the LGBTQ communities civil rights that they do not have under existing state law.

Moving west across Lake Michigan to Wisconsin, *National Journal* [reports](#) this week that the ongoing investigation into Governor Scott Walker's fundraising for his 2011 and 2012 recall elections could end up in the Supreme Court. The Wisconsin Club for Growth, a close Walker ally, is pursuing a lawsuit which alleges that prosecutors unfairly targeted the group, accusing it of coordinating too closely with the Walker campaign. Staying in the Badger State, *Roll Call's At the Races* [says](#) that former Senator Ross Feingold has announced that he would be running for his old Wisconsin seat in the 2016 election, against, the Republican who ousted him in 2010, Ron Johnson. Johnson is one of the most vulnerable incumbent Senators in the 2016 cycle.

PoliticMO [says](#) that in Missouri this week, the state House Speaker, Republican John Diehl, has been forced to resign after revelations of a 'sexting' relationship with a Capitol intern.

In Minnesota this week, the Democratic led state Senate has approved a new voting bill which extends early voting to 15 days before an election and permits convicted felons to vote immediately after being released from prison, [reports PoliticusUSA](#). Minnesota had the highest voter turnout in the U.S. in the 2012 and 2008 elections, at over 76 percent.

West and Pacific

Montana's *Cowgirl Blog* gives the '[hypocrites of the week award](#)' to the Montana State Fund. Why? The State Fund has released TV advertisements which assert that the fund is supportive of the state's firefighters, while over the years it has lobbied repeatedly against Montana firefighters getting the care that they need when they are injured on the job.

Meanwhile in the Beaver State, *Blue Oregon* [reports](#) that recall challenge may be brewing for state Senator Floyd

Prozanski who was the chief sponsor of a new gun safety bill that was recently passed in the state.

Heading south to California, *Flashreport* [writes](#) on Tuesday that a bill which repeals the religious exemption of the state's requirement that parents ensure their children are vaccinated if they are to attend school is being fast-tracked by Democrats. They say that the bill is 'creepy' as it interferes with children's right to free education and to religious freedom. Staying in the Golden State, *Fox & Hounds* [writes](#) this week that recent revisions show new revenues of \$6.7 billion in California's General Fund. These will be channeled towards

education, the state's 'rainy day reserve', and will also be used to pay down existing debt. This week also saw Representative Loretta Sanchez announce that she will be running for the state's open Senate seat in 2016. *Calbuzz* [says](#) that if elected, Sanchez would be the first ever Latina in the U.S. Senate, and the first Latino from California.

Honolulu Civil Beat [reports](#) on Sunday that the Hawaii legislature has passed a bill which sets a goal of 100 percent renewable energy in the state by 2045, with a requirement that it reaches the 1/3rd mark by 2020.

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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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