

Chris Christie demands an apology, Nebraska drops the death penalty, and Los Angeles raises minimum wage : US state blog round up for 16 – 22 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

This week, Maine's *Pine Tree Politics* [looks](#) at budget proposals from the state's Republicans, Democrats, and Governor. They say that the budget that does end up being passed will likely increase spending by as much as \$200 million, and that if the state government had exercised more fiscal discipline in years past, then the budget would not be the 'bloated mess' that it is today.

Moving down to New Hampshire, *Granite Grok* [reports](#) that Republican Yvonne Dean-Bailey became one of the youngest women ever elected to the State House. They say that Dean-Bailey, who is 19, won because of her belief in fiscal responsibility and lack of negative attacks against her opponent. Staying in the Granite State *Miscellany Blue* [says](#) that embattled GOP Congressman Frank Guinta, who recently acknowledged that he funded his 2010 campaign with an illegal \$355,000 loan from his parents, has apologized, but is also now insisting he did nothing wrong.

On Tuesday, *Blue Mass Group* [commends](#) the State Senate for adopting a budget amendment which will raise additional revenues in a progressive way, by repealing the formula which had previously caused the income tax rate to be automatically raised. In addition, the amendment will also allocate some of the new revenue to freezing the state's Earned Income Tax Credit program (benefiting those on low incomes), as well as increasing the personal income tax exemption.

This week *The Atlantic* [looks](#) at the massive public housing currently facing New York City. They say that this week, Mayor Bill de Blasio has unveiled a new plan for the city's housing authority, but that this plan does not include dismantling some of the city's 'ageing towers' in poor neighborhoods.

New Jersey Governor, Chris Christie, courted controversy this week by demanding an apology from the media over their coverage of the "Bridgewater" scandal over the past year and a half. *Save Jersey* [comments](#) that while Christie 'sort of' deserves an apology from the media, who rushed to judge the Governor over his alleged role in the closure of lanes on the George Washington Bridge in 2013, members of the public deserve an apology even more from the media for their biased coverage of politics in general.

South

This week saw the Republican Primary for the Kentucky governor's race, but as of Friday there was doubt over the winner, with Matt Bevin having only 83 more votes than James Comer, who has asked for a re-canvas. *Page One* has a [comprehensive](#) run down of the all the candidates, the results, and what is likely to happen next.

Heading down to Florida, *The Seminole Democrat* [says](#) that GOP Governor Rick Scott's plan to bridge the funding gap created by his administration's refusal to accept federal Medicaid funding by asking hospitals to save money has been rejected by some in his own party, who claim that he is trying to socialize the profits of hospitals. Staying in the Sunshine State, *The Shark Tank* [shows](#) that Democrats are also having issues with one of their own this week. They say that Representative Alan Grayson, who is considering running for the state's Senate seat in 2016 is not well liked by his own party – mostly because he has tried to press criminal charges against his estranged wife for using his credit card, and his propensity to be abusive towards Republicans.

On Friday, Left in Alabama [reports](#) that the state legislature, lacking a budget with only five days left in the session, has rushed to pass more ‘unconstitutional’ bills. They say that a state constitutional amendment, passed in 1984, requires the legislature to pass a budget first, but that has not stopped the body from passing laws which have taken it out of the marriage business, and several ant-abortion measures.

In Louisiana this week, Republican Governor Bobby Jindal issued an executive order which would allow businesses to discriminate against people based on their religious beliefs, [reports Louisiana Voice](#). The order comes after a similar bill failed to pass through the state House Civil Law Committee. They say that while Jindal often complains of government overreach on the national level, he seems to have no problems with putting in place measures which control millions of lives when it is politically expedient for him to do so.

Blue Daze of Texas [writes](#) this week that Republican Governor, Greg Abbott this week signed a bill into law which would force every state municipality to demonstrate that any limits places on oil and gas development were “commercially reasonable”. They say that the measure was written by the oil and gas industry, and that effectively overturns a ballot initiative in the town of Denton which banned fracking last November.

Midwest

Plunderbund of Ohio [writes](#) Tuesday that the state legislature has a plan to kick poor children off of their health insurance, via provisions in the state budget which would require those receiving Medicaid to pay a certain amount to maintain their health insurance coverage. They say that the measure may force poor families to choose between feeding their children and providing them with health insurance.

This week *Progress Illinois* [looks](#) at a new report which shows that union membership in the state has fallen by 97,000 over the past decade, with the unionization rate now standing at just over 15 percent. They further comment that GOP Governor Bruce Rauner is pushing for local communities to be able to enact their own ‘Right to work’ laws (which would eliminate the requirement that workers pay union dues whether or not they are in a job covered by a collective bargaining agreement), rather than for one to be brought in at the state level as has been the case elsewhere.

In the Badger State this week, *Blogging Blue* [looks](#) at the troubled Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), created by Governor Scott Walker. They report that the high ranking aides to Governor Walker pushed for a loan of \$500,000 to the WEDC in 2011, and that the loan is now being questioned by state auditors.

Nebraska made national news this week after its state legislature approved a measure which would abolish the death penalty. The Daily Signal [says](#) that many of the legislature’s Senators cites their own conservative principles as the reason for their opposition – the death penalty being in their view expensive and bureaucratic.

On Thursday, *Wonkblog* [covers](#) new measures recently put in place by the Kansas state legislature which punish those who are receiving benefits. From July 1st, beneficiaries will be unable to withdraw more that \$25 from ATM and prevent them redeeming benefits from places such as swimming pools, movie theatres and tattoo parlours. The ATM restriction is especially harsh as it is effectively an \$20 restriction, given that few ATMs carry \$5 notes.

As part of a continuing series, Minnesota’s *MN Progressive Project* [examines](#) how the state’s Republican Party is ‘screwing’ rural voters. This week, they say that it is tax cuts which they say will give away \$15 for every \$1 invested in the state’s school children.



Florida Governor Rick Scott Credit: [Gage Skidmore](#) (Flickr, [CC-BY-SA-2.0](#))

West and Pacific

In the Centennial State this week, *Colorado Peak Politics* [warns](#) that the fees for the state's Obamacare health insurance exchange, Connect for Health will more than double next year, as nearly \$200 million in federal subsidies will sunset. They also say that in the short time it has been in operation, the estimated annual cost of running Connect for Health have ballooned from \$26 million to \$54 million. Staying on the topic of healthcare in Colorado, *ColoradoPols* writes that the state's new Senator, Republican Cory Gardner, has made good on his 2014 Senate race promise to introduce legislation which encourage drug manufacturers to file an application with the Food and Drug Administration for their products to be sold over the counter. They [say](#) that the bill would actually end up making contraceptives more expensive and less available, as it would remove the requirement for insurance to cover birth control.

On Sunday, New Mexico's *Progress Now NM* [reports](#) that, in what they say was a rare bipartisan move, the State Senate approved the funding of budget commitments 'critical' to communities such as tribes, seniors and students. Unfortunately, they also write that the budget deal was scrapped by Republicans in the State House who altered the \$264 million capital outlay bill, funnelling funding away from schools and projects for senior citizens to roads.

Blog for Arizona [comments](#) this week on the state Governor, Doug Ducey's 'pattern of abuse of authority'. They say that Ducey is showing a clear pattern of asserting extra-constitutional authority and abuse of power, such as firing the head of the state's new Department of Child Safety without reason and his push to dissolve the Department of Weights and Measures.

This week saw the recently announced candidate for California's open Senate seat in 2016, Loretta Sanchez, in hot water over making a stereotypical Native American war cry when talking to an audience of Indian-American Democrats. *Calbuzz* [says](#) that many media outlets have been struggling to describe Sanchez's actions, but that the term 'ululation' has now entered California's political lexicon. Staying in the Sunshine State, *Fox & Hounds* [wonders](#) how businesses will react to the Los Angeles' City Council's recent vote to increase the minimum wage in the city to \$15 an hour by 2020. They say that the increased wage will be phased in, so its impact will not be immediately felt, but they should 'keep score' of the effects when they do hit, so officials can be aware of them.

Featured image: New Jersey Governor Chris Christie Credit: Gage Skidmore (CC-BY-SA-2.0)

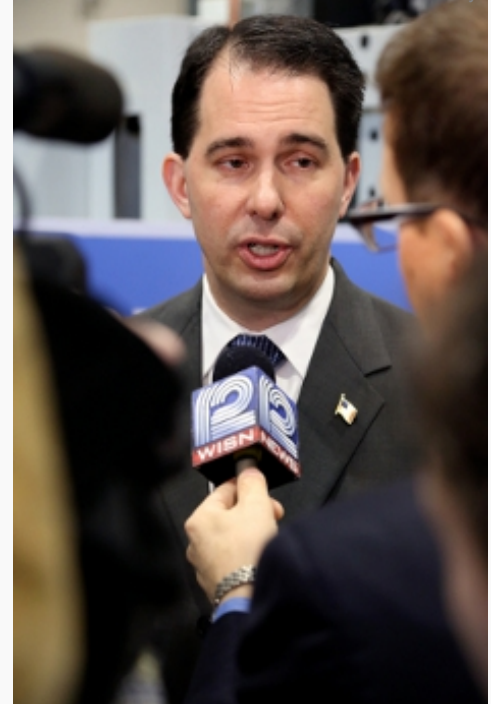
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