

DOJ to investigate Baltimore police, marijuana in Texas, and John McCain's bumpy ride to reelection: US state blog round up for 2 – 8 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

On Sunday this week, New Hampshire's *Miscellany Blue* [reports](#) that a new survey in the state has shown overwhelming support for keeping the current license requirement for carrying a concealed gun in public. Thus comes after Governor Maggie Hassan announced last week that she would veto a bill passed by the Senate which would remove the current licensing requirement.



Governor of New York State, Andrew Cuomo Credit: Diana Robinson (Flickr, CC-BY-2.0)

Heading down to the Empire State, *Capitol Confidential* [writes](#) Tuesday that state Senate Majority Leader, Dean Skelos has been charged, along with his son, in a corruption case, and that he will remain the chamber's top official for the time being. Staying in New York, *Roll Call* [says](#) that Staten Island District Attorney won the special election for the state's 11th Congressional District on Tuesday to replace former Representative Michael C. Grimm who resigned after pleading guilty to tax evasion. The district remains the only one in New York to be represented by a Republican. *Wonkblog* meanwhile has the [story](#) that Democratic Governor, Andrew Cuomo, want to raise wages for fast food workers in the state. New York is one of the few states where the Governor is able to raise wages on their own.

Moving on to the Garden State, *Blue Jersey* [comments](#) on Governor Chris Christie's pension battle with the state's public sector unions. They say that Christie has slashed funding to the pension service in order to give away millions in corporate tax breaks, despite previously signing the payments into law.

PoliticsPA [asks](#) this week whether or not the Keystone State is still a swing state. They say that it's voted for the Democratic candidate in six straight contests. They argue that while Democrats have only a relatively small advantage in the state, it is very difficult for Republicans to surmount it given the relatively small number of independent voters.

South

On Thursday, *FiveThirtyEight* [explores](#) the toxic legacy of lead paint in Baltimore, something which affected the life of Freddie Gray, whose death in police custody in April sparked unrest and rioting in the city. They say that state tests found that more than 65,000 children have dangerously high blood lead levels between 1993 and 2013. This week also saw the opening of a Department of Justice investigation into police practices in Baltimore, [reports](#) *The Atlantic*. The investigation will look at whether the city's police force had a 'pattern or practice' of violations of constitutional or federal law, and is the strongest federal response to Freddie Gray's death.

Heading down to South Carolina, *FitsNews* [says](#) that comedian and satirical news presenter, Stephen Colbert, has teamed up with an education nonprofit and a local technology firm to give \$800,000 to fund requests from teachers from government run schools.

In the Sunshine State this week, Republican Governor, Rick Scott, this week sent a letter to hospitals advising them to start working with a new state hospital commission to prepare ways that the industry can share profits to make up for Florida's impending loss of federal Low Income Pool (LIP) funding, [writes](#) *Saint Peters blog*. The funding will now end after Scott's negotiations with the Department of Health and Human Services aimed at keeping it were fruitless. The Obama administration is facing out LIP funding in favor of the expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, which Florida has refused.

Left in Alabama [looks](#) at a new poll set to make its way through the state house which they say would encourage science teachers with 'idiosyncratic opinions' to teach whatever they liked, with educational authorities unable to intervene. They worry that this will allow creationism to be discussed alongside evolution in schools.

Moving west to the Lone Star State, *Burnt Orange Report* [comments](#) on the state of the marijuana debate in Texas. They say that state House committees have recently passed measures to reduce possession penalties and to legalize it, and that 49 percent of Texans believe it should be legal in small amounts for any purpose.

Midwest

The Daily Signal [writes](#) on Saturday that the Ohio aims to set a 'national race' for transparency, with the state's Treasurer launching a website, [OhioCheckbook.com](#) which shows taxpayers where their money is going. They comment that it took more than a year to get the transparency bill that led to the website through the state House, and another year to get it set up.

In Michigan this week, *Eclipta blog* [reports](#) that the city of Detroit's Schools Emergency Manager has announced that eight schools would be restructured, forcing teachers to reapply for their jobs. The timing is unfortunate, given that it is Teacher Appreciation Week.

Moving over to Illinois, *Hit & Run* has the [news](#) that the state government's pension reforms have been struck down by the state's Supreme Court, something they say will make the pension crisis worse. The reforms would have tried to rein in the pension funds' \$100 billion debt and unfunded liabilities by putting a cap on how much of an employee's salary could be used to calculate pension payments.

On Wednesday, Wisconsin's *Political Environment* [says](#) that the Badger state is heading towards a 'Kansas-style self-inflicted wound territory' after GOP Governor Scott Walker gave people a weekly tax cut of just under \$3 per year, which now means that the state budget has a surprise shortfall.

PoliticMO [writes](#) Tuesday that the state House and Senate have overridden Governor Jay Nixon's veto of legislation that would reform the state's welfare system. The measure will reduce the lifetime cap on how long people can receive benefits from the state's temporary assistance program for needy families, and would strengthen the requirement that welfare recipients should be working or in training.

In the Mount Rushmore State, *Dakota Free Press* [makes for the case](#) for the expansion of Medicaid. They argue that it would create more jobs (30,000) in South Dakota than the controversial Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines.

West and Pacific

On Tuesday, *ColoradoPols* [looks](#) at conservative arguments against legislation that would have provided funds for a program that has reduced teen pregnancy rates by 40 percent and teen abortions by 35 percent. They say that the legislation was not passed because of Republican arguments that birth control was the same as abortion and that it would also lead to promiscuity and ‘bad sex’.

Long-serving Arizona Senator John McCain is up for reelection in 2016, but [according](#) to *Daily Kos*, he may face a bumpy road. They say that he currently has a 41 – 50 approval rating with Republican primary voters and there are a couple of potential primary challengers for the incumbent Senator.

Heading west to the Golden State, *Fox & Hounds* wonders if the city of Los Angeles can continue to afford its high priced and inefficient workforce. They [say](#) that city workers earn 40 to 100 percent more than their private sector counterparts, and are entitled to hefty benefits. They argue that the ‘cash strapped’ city can no longer support these high compensation packages and the current inefficient operations. *Daily Kos*, meanwhile, [reports](#) that the California State Senate has taken a bold stance on investigations into deaths by police by prohibiting Grand Juries from investigating them.



John and Cindy McCain Credit: Gage Skidmore (Flickr, CC-BY-SA-2.0)

Honolulu Civil Beat [writes](#) Thursday that state lawmakers have ‘quietly’ distributed millions of dollars’ worth of grants in a process that has largely shut out the public and many nonprofit organizations who are asking for money.

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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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