

Pennsylvania also has a lead crisis, South Dakota's 'bigoted' legislature, and do Alaskans secretly love socialism?: US state blog roundup for 30 January – 5 February

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

Northeast

This week in the Green Mountain state, *VTDigger* has [ten steps](#) to fix the state's troubled budget. They comment that Vermont's politicians are continually spending their way into a shortfall, and that instead they should adopt measures such as setting limits on the growth of state spending and ending the practices of tapping reserves.

Heading south, *Blue Mass Group* [argues](#) Tuesday that Governor Charlie Baker's budget for 2017 continues the state's race to the bottom in care for the developmentally disabled. They say that privatizing care of human services such as disability care reduces choices as it often causes state-run facilities to close.

Capitol Confidential [reports](#) that the New York State Assembly has marked Groundhog Day by passing paid family leave legislation for the fifth time. Governor Andrew Cuomo also has his own legislative plan for paid family leave; the Assembly's differs in that it would be part funded through an expansion of the state's temporary disability fund.



Credit: Tracey O (Creative Commons BY SA)

Moving on the Garden State, *Save Jersey* [says](#) that New Jersey Assembly lawmakers have introduced a bill which would raise the state's minimum wage to \$15 an hour, up from the current level of \$8.38. Democratic lawmakers have stated that the increase is needed because New Jersey businesses aren't paying their workers enough.

Lead contamination in Flint, Michigan has been in the news a great deal of late – *raging chicken press* says that Pennsylvania is experiencing its own lead crisis. They [write](#) that a new study has shown that 18 cities in Pennsylvania have lead levels higher than those recorded in Flint.

South

Delaware Liberal [writes](#) Tuesday that we may have witnessed the de facto repeal of the death penalty in the state. They say that the state's Supreme Court has placed a hold on all death penalty cases in Delaware in response to the US Supreme Court's recent ruling that a Florida statute which granted judges the exclusive right to determine death sentences was unconstitutional. Delaware has exactly the same law, and it's something that only the state's General Assembly can change.



Terry McAuliffe By Miller Center [CC-BY-2.0
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Moving on to the Old Dominion State, *Decision Virginia* [says](#) that the state's Governor, Terry McAuliffe has defended his gun compromise which expands concealed carry permit rights in exchange for two new gun control measures. The deal means that those responsible for domestic violence will have to surrender their firearms within 24 hours.

Kentucky's *Blue in the Bluegrass* [says](#) that the state's Senate has passed legislation intended to cut the flow of non-Medicaid state money to Planned Parenthood clinics in the state. They argue that the move will make poor women even poorer by hurting their access to abortions.

Heading down to Alabama, *Yellowhammer* [introduces](#) us to the state legislature's most liberal lawmakers – one of whom is a Republican.

Florida's *Shark Tank* [reports](#) on Wednesday that an anti-sanctuary city bill was set to pass in the state House. The bill would make it illegal for a local government in the Sunshine State to employ a policy which would stop or impede police from cooperating with federal immigration agencies.

Heading west, *Arkansas Times* [comments](#) that state and national politics are preventing prison reform, with 'get tough on crime passions' swelling at least once a decade. They write that in 2015 Arkansas spent \$418 million on corrections, and that some past sponsors of the state's harsh 'three-strikes' law are now regretting their past support for the measure.

Midwest

On Wednesday, *eclecta blog* [says](#) that Michigan's Republicans are 'freaking out' over the aforementioned Flint water crisis, and that we can tell that this is the case because they are trying to argue that the federal government has done little to address the crisis, while they – and the state's Governor, Rick Snyder – have done a great deal.

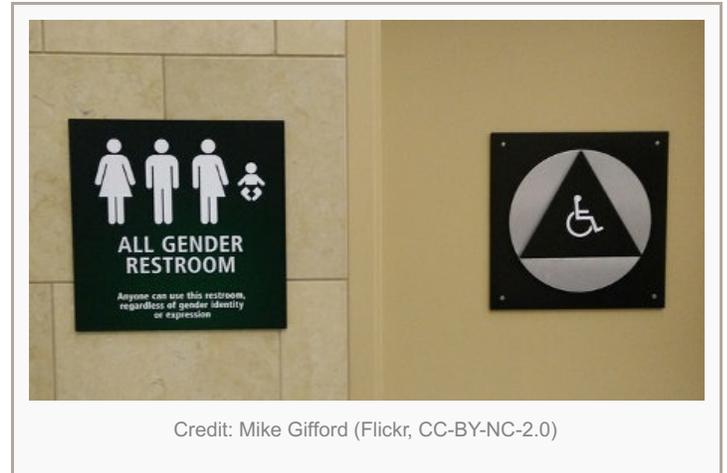
Heading down to Indiana, *Indy Politics* [reports](#) this week that a bill which would have added sexual orientation to the state's civil rights code has died in the state's Senate.

In Illinois, *Capitol Fax* [says](#) that some of Governor Bruce Rauner's reforms made to address the failed policies of past Governor Rod Blagojevich's 'reign of error', such as new rules around construction tendering, will actually make even more of a mess.

Moving on to Minnesota, *MN Progressive Project* [writes](#) Wednesday that the state's Republicans are ignoring the plight of out-of-work miners in the state by their lack of willingness to meet in a special session to extend \$29 million in unemployment benefits to miners.

Dakota Free Press [argues](#) that the South Dakota legislature is 'bursting with bigotry', in response to three bills before the State house which discriminate against the transgendered, including one which would assign school bathroom and locker rooms on the basis of biological sex at birth, and not by gender.

Heading north, *Say Anything blog* has the [news](#) that North Dakota is facing a budget shortfall of over \$1 billion. The budget gap mostly comes from large reductions in sales and corporate income tax revenues.



West and Pacific

In the Centennial State this week, *Colorado Peak Politics*, [says](#) that the mainstream media hasn't given the state GOP's \$15 million road funding proposals a 'fair shake'. They write that the media have stated that the Republican plan threatens mass transit in Colorado, despite the fact that mass transit vehicles depend on roads as well.

Moving south, *Progressnow NM* [says](#) that the New Mexico Republican Party's new jobs plan is a case of 'I get a pay raise, you get a pay cut'. Profiling the plan, they write that it would repeal existing wage laws, lower the state's minimum wage, and would give state legislators a raise.

Heading west to the Golden state, *Fox & Hounds* [wonders](#) if California legislators will have to wear patches on their clothes showing their largest donors. If the *California is Not for Sale* ballot initiative gets enough support, then they will. Staying in California, *Flashreport* has the [news](#) that the state's pension contribution shortfall is now at least \$15 billion per year.

Alaska has a dirty little secret, [according](#) to *The Mudflats*. What is it? People there actually love socialism, as evidenced by the number of Alaskans who benefit from government programs.

With the cost of living on the up, can teachers afford to live in Hawaii? *Honolulu Civil Beat* [investigates](#).

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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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