

What to expect from state legislatures in 2016, the politics of Kentucky's declining coal industry and a new healthcare proposal in Idaho: US state blog roundup for 2 – 8 January

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 Pine Tree State, *Dirigo Blue* [reports](#) that at a recent town hall meeting, the state's Republican Governor, Paul LePage went on a racist rant, commenting in thinly coded language that African Americans come to Maine to "impregnate...young white girl[s]", comments that are completely unsupported by any facts at all.

Heading down to New Hampshire, *NH Labor News* has the [news](#) that the state's House voted to pass a Senate bill which would call for a constitutional amendment to overturn the *Citizen's United* Supreme Court decision. Unfortunately, they say, the vote was reversed through an irregular process in a subsequent reconsideration vote.



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

Moving west to the Green Mountain State, *VTDigger* [says](#) that Vermont's lawmakers have given Governor Peter Shumlin's final State of the State address mixed reviews. Some were concerned that Shumlin made little mention of capping property taxes in the state, and others disagreed with proposals to fund college savings accounts for new-borns on cost grounds.

On Friday, *RI Future* looks at the [highs and lows](#) of the General Assembly's first week of 2016. Highs include the state Senate's passage of the Good Samaritan Act, and a big low was the Speaker of the House of Representatives ignoring protesters outside the chamber demanding drivers' licenses for undocumented workers.

New York's *State of Politics* [writes](#) that with US House Representative Steve Israel's announcement this week that he would not be seeking re-election this year, four (two Republican and two Democrat) New York House Members have now decided not to run again.

Over in New Jersey, *PolitickerNJ* [says](#) that politicians from the south of the state have been sorely disappointed at GOP Governor Chris Christie's statement of support this week for Senate President Democrat Steve Sweeney in his

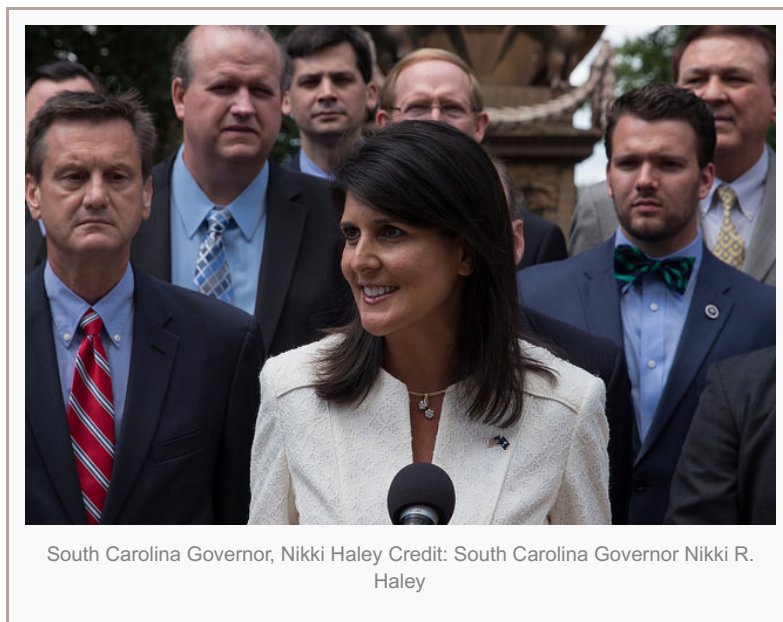
disagreement with Assembly Speaker (and also a Democrat) Vince Prieto over the funnelling of new casinos' revenues to Atlantic City.

South

On Monday, *Appalachian Voices* [writes](#) on the death of the coal industry in Kentucky and the political shakeup that this has created. They say that the realignment of the Bluegrass State towards the GOP is partly down to the coal industry's "war on coal" campaign aimed at hurting environmentally concerned Democrats. Staying in Kentucky, *Page One* [says](#) that the state's new Governor, Republican Matt Bevin, has appointed a few of his friends to "high-paid" positions such as Executive Directorships in his cabinet positions' offices.

This week saw the announcement that South Carolina's Governor, Nikki Haley would give the Republican Party's response to President Obama's State of the Union next week. *FITS News* [says](#) that the announcement has generated a great deal of commentary about her poor job performance leading the Old North State. They point readers to stories concerning a 2012 ethics investigation into Haley and her lack of desire to veto big government spending measures.

Heading down to Florida, *Saint Peters Blog* has [five "bold" predictions](#) for the coming political year in the Sunshine State. These include that at least one of the state's seven elected statewide officials will not be in office by year's end, and that the state's Legislature will actually end the 2016 session on time and with a list of noteworthy accomplishments.



In the lead up to President Obama's announcement this week of new executive actions on gun control, Alabama's *Yellowhammer* [reports](#) that the state may consider passing a "guns everywhere" law as Georgia has done. Such a law would effectively eliminate gun free zones, allowing licensed firearms owners to carry their guns in churches, schools, bars and some government buildings.

Mississippi's *Cottonmouth* continues its [series](#) on what to expect from the state's legislature in 2016, writing on Wednesday that we should look forward to the state's bridges and roads deteriorating further given the lack of political will for any increase in the state's gas tax.

Midwest

On Thursday, *Eclecta blog* [reports](#) that Governor Rick Snyder signed state Senate Bill 571 into law this week, a bill which was introduced as a campaign finance reform bill, but at the last minute was changed into one which would make it harder for people to get information about ballot proposals and increase the amount that PACs are able to donate to candidates.

Indy Politics [writes](#) this week that state Senate Republicans have introduced a new civil rights bill which would "balance religious liberty and civil rights protections" by adding sexual orientation and military status as protected classes in the state's civil rights laws for employment, housing, and public accommodation.

Continuing on to Illinois, *Capitol Fax* has the [news](#) that the administration of the state's Governor, Bruce Rauner, plan to borrow nearly half a billion dollars this month to pay for construction projects, despite the fact that the state government has not had a complete budget since last July. Staying in the Prairie State, *Progress Illinois* [says](#) that the

Chicago Teachers Union has called on both Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the Cook County State's Attorney to resign, accusing them of impeding the criminal justice system in their handling of the shooting death by police of Laquan McDonald in November 2014.

On Friday, *South Dakota War College* predicts some of the [bills](#) that will go through the state's legislature this year. These include anti-LGBT legislation such as measures which would make school bathrooms and locker rooms gender specific based on biology.

Heading up to North Dakota, *Say Anything* [comments](#) that the state's Democrats are touting non-existent candidates in their messages to supporters.

West and Pacific

In the Centennial State this week, *Colorado Peak Politics* [says](#) that the state's Governor is looking for additional revenues while not addressing the fact that the state actually has a spending problem; budget expenditures went up by \$1.8 billion between 2013 and 2014.

Moving down to New Mexico, *Progressnow NM* [comments](#) that Republicans are bringing their anti-worker "trump card" into the state's next legislative session, after Governor Susana Martinez stated that she would allow right to work bills to be heard in the legislature this year.

Blog for Arizona also [looks ahead](#) to that state's upcoming legislative session, writing that the more things change the more they stay the same – predicting more legislative attacks on immigrants, education, women, the environment, and the state's judiciary.

In Idaho this week, *Eye on Boise* [reports](#) on comments from the state's Governor, Butch Otter on his proposals for a new \$30 million program to provide basic preventative health care to the nearly 80,000 state residents who make too little to qualify for health insurance through Obamacare, and too much to qualify for Medicaid. Of the program, Otter has stated, that "it's Idahoans taking care of Idahoans".

The Beaver State this week saw a standoff between a small militia group and the federal government after the group occupied a national wildlife refuge. *Oregon Catalyst* [says](#) that a new survey shows that only 7 percent of Oregonians want the federal government to control natural resource land, and that nearly 75 percent would rather see it controlled by state or local authorities.

California's *Flash Report* [praises](#) Democratic Governor Jerry Brown's budget – announced this week – as "cautious", but reminds the state's lawmakers that they should focus on raising the quality of life in the state without raising taxes.

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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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