

State of the States: Gillibrand nixes White House plans in favour of Cuomo, staking out Rob Portman, and how blue is Oregon?: 18 – 24 February

 blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2017/03/02/state-of-the-states-gillibrand-nixes-white-house-plans-in-favour-of-cuomo-staking-out-rob-po

3/2/2017

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

Northeast

On Thursday, *NH Labor News* [writes](#) that State Senator, Kevin Avarad has submitted a new bill – written by out of state lobbyists – which would cut the number of people who were eligible for food stamps. The bill would up the amount of paperwork needed by applicants to file and would lower the income eligibility threshold, based on gross income.

Moving on to Vermont, *VT Digger* has the [news](#) that the state Senate has been discussing a bill which would require presidential candidates seeking the Vermont ballot to disclose their personal income tax returns for the past five years.

Heading down to the Empire State, *Capitol Confidential* [says](#) that US Representative, Paul Tonko spoke for more than two hours to constituents, who in contrast to recent Republican Town Halls was greeted Tonko with raucous cheering and support. Staying in New York, *State of Politics* [reports](#) that the state's US Senator, Kirsten Gillibrand has no plans to run for the White House in 2020, but has also “talked up” the potential candidacy of the state's Governor, Andrew Cuomo.

Turning to the Governor's race this year in neighbouring New Jersey *PolitickerNJ* [says](#) that both the Democrats and the Republican Party have “outsider” candidates who came from the inside. For the Democrats, it's Phil Murphy, former Goldman Sachs exec and Ambassador to Germany. For the GOP, Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno is an insider turned outsider, given that she has rarely been allowed to speak publically over the past seven years and often being Acting Governor while Governor Chris Christie was out of state.

This week, *PoliticsPA* [says](#) that ahead of state-level redistricting in 2021, the state's Democrats hold all the cards with a majority on the state Supreme Court which means that they have a tie-breaking vote on the panel which draws state House and Senate maps.

South

On Thursday, *Blue Virginia* [writes](#) that Congressman Dave Brat just “wrote the book” on how not to hold a Town Hall, after holding two Facebook forums with “watered down” questions, and then holding an actual public meeting in a small town miles away from the district's population centre, which only seats 150 people.

North Carolina's *The Progressive Pulse* has an [explainer](#) this week on how voting laws like North Carolina's 2013 bill which imposed strict voter ID requirements are discriminatory. It's down to the fact that such laws have more of a negative effect on the turnout of Hispanics, Blacks and mixed-race Americans, which will shift electoral outcomes to the right.

Heading south, *Better Georgia* [reports](#) that as state legislators consider a bill which would create drivers' licenses which specifically identify immigrants, protests occurred around the Peach State as part of “A Day Without

Immigrants” against President Trump’s recent immigration orders.

Moving on the Sunshine State, *Saint Peters blog* [talks](#) about what they say is Governor Rick Scott’s “revenge tour” against state House Republicans. The nine legislators are trying to get rid of Enterprise Florida and Visit Florida, and are annoyed at Scott for calling them out in their own districts – and for calling them “politicians”.

In Alabama this week, *Yellowhammer* [says](#) that the state’s Senate has approved a new bill which would prevent a judge from sentencing someone to death if a jury has recommended life in prison. Apparently Alabama justices have overridden jury decisions and sentenced someone to death 101 times.

Heading west, *Talk Politics* [reports](#) that the National Rifle Association (NRA) is now opposed to Arkansas’ bill which would allow faculty and older students to carry concealed firearms on state college campuses. Why the change of heart from the NRA? They’re unhappy with a new amendment requiring active shooter training and an expanded list of situations where colleges and universities can limit the possession of a firearm.

Midwest

Ohio’s *Plunderbund* [reports](#) Friday that a group of “concerned citizens” have been keen to get the state’s US Senator, Rob Portman, to agree to a Town Hall event. After staking out Portman at an event, they managed to get a 30-minute private meeting, but no commitment to even considering holding an even more public event.

This week, *Indy Politics* [says](#) that a national gun rights group is targeting a very pro-second amendment state lawmaker for not standing up for his own bill. They say that that the National Association for Gun rights is targeting State Representative Jim Lucas for failing to support amendments which would allow those had a restraining order against them to carry a gun without a permit.

Moving on to Illinois, *Capitol Fax* [wonders](#) if Governor Bruce Rauner’s goal to reduce the state’s prison population by 25 percent can be achieved. They say that by changing laws which send people to jail for vehicle theft and those which give enhanced penalties for drug offenses, they might be able to reduce the prison population.

Blog for Iowa [writes](#) Wednesday that the state’s election administrators are opposed to Secretary of State, Paul Pate’s voter ID bill. They say that voter fraud is very rare, with only 10 potentially being improper out of 1.6 million counted last November, and that voters are already identified – at registration.

Dakota Free Press [writes](#) Sunday that state legislators are resisting checks on their own power, in the replacement bill for IM22, an ethics law which was supported by a majority of voters in a recent ballot. The bill to replace the now-repealed IM22 would allow greater contributions to political campaigns and would allow direct donations from labor groups and corporations to politicians.

Heading north, *Say Anything blog* [argues](#) that state Democrats are “goldbricking” on the state’s gay rights debate, after their proposed bill to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity failed for the fourth time in a row.

West and Pacific

On Thursday, *ProgressnowNM* [writes](#) on why the state’s pregnant worker accommodations bill is important for New Mexico’s women. They say that the HB179 would expand protections for pregnant women in the workplace and require employers to provide reasonable accommodations including adjusted duties.

Heading on to Arizona, *Democratic Diva* [says](#) that the Grand Canyon State was in the news this week after the state Senate voted to give police the power to seize the assets of those who plan and participate in protests.

Meanwhile, *Colorado Peak Politics* [says](#) that while the state’s GOP Senator, Cory Gardner is travelling around the

state, Democrat Michael Bennet has been travelling in Cuba and Columbia.

Montana's *Reptile Dysfunction* [writes](#) that with last year's election now receding in people's memories, the "grim reality" of the state's fiscal situation is beginning to sink in. They comment that Governor Steve Bullock's previous assessments of the state's budget situation are nothing by "shameless political theatrics" at a time when state programs and departments are suffering through a lack of cash.

In Idaho this week, *Eye on Boise* has the [news](#) that the state's Senate has voted 34-1 to allow those under the age of 21 (and over 18) to run for the state's legislature.

Finally, on Thursday, *Oregon Catalyst* [looks](#) at just how blue the Beaver State really is, and argues that it's not really dominated by liberals – conservatives just have not found a way to win.

Featured image: Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand meets members of the 106th Rescue Wing, Westhampton Beach, NY. By Senior Airman Christopher Muncy [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

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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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