

State of the States: RI to protect abortion rights, Arkansas' new voter ID law, and Illinois' unpaid bills: 28 January – 3 February

 blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2017/02/07/state-of-the-states-ri-to-protect-abortion-rights-arkansas-new-voter-id-law-and-illinois-unpaid

2/7/2017

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

Northeast

On Wednesday, *Granite Grok* [writes](#) that state Democrats had previously said that business tax cuts in New Hampshire would “throw the budget off” by \$100 million and lead to a shortfall. It turns out that state business tax revenues are actually up by nearly \$133 million, despite the rate reductions.

Heading south, *Blue Mass Group* [reports](#) this week that the state’s legislature has overridden Governor Charlie Baker’s veto of \$18 million in pay rises for itself, as well as abolishing term limits for the state House Speaker.

Rhode Island’s *RI Future* [discusses](#) a new bill which has been introduced into the state legislature which would integrate *Roe v. Wade* into state law. This is being done as an insurance policy in case the Supreme Court is able to repeal the landmark ruling which gave women access to legal abortion services.

Over in Connecticut, *Wait What?* has the [news](#) that Governor Dannel Malloy has announced that his new budget proposal will move a large part (over \$400 million) of the state’s obligation to fund the teachers’ retirement system to local towns and taxpayers, and would also end the property tax credit which helps middle income families facing high tax burdens.

In New York this week, *State of Politics* [reports](#) that GOP County Executive, Rob Astorino has compared Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo’s agenda to “children’s candy” which includes plans for cheaper tuition and water infrastructure spending, arguing that it may “taste good”, but won’t be good for the state.

Save Jersey is very [surprised](#) at recent comments from likely Democratic gubernatorial candidate, Phil Murphy, that it was his intention to create an “Office of Immigrant Protection” which would provide services to residents facing detention and potential deportation. They say that the Office would use New Jersey’s tax dollars to defy the federal government’s constitutional prerogative to manage immigration.

South

On Monday, *Political Maryland* [wonders](#) if Governor Larry Hogan’s “slimmed-down budget” will implode, given President Trump’s desire to repeal the Affordable Care Act – which would leave an immediate \$1.26 billion hole in the balanced budget. Trump’s federal jobs freeze would also hurt the state which is home to many federal agencies.

In 2014 the now Congressman for Virginia’s 7th District, Dave Brat defeated the incumbent (and then House Majority Leader) Eric Cantor in a GOP primary after many had come to believe that Cantor had become arrogant and out of touch. *Blue Virginia* [reports](#) this week that Brat has recently complained that his constituents “are in my grill” about Obamacare and are constantly asking him for meetings – meetings which he seems to be evading.

As Alabama’s US Senator, Jeff Sessions is likely to be confirmed shortly as US Attorney General. When he does, it will be down to Governor Rob Bentley to appoint his replacement. *Yellowhammer* [looks](#) at who is being considered by Bentley for the post, including current Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange.

On Thursday, *Y'all Politics* has the [news](#) that the Mississippi State House has passed an internet sales tax, and had earmarked the revenue to fund road and bridge work.

Heading west, *Arkansas Times* [says](#) that a bill granting a tax exemption for military retirement pay has been "shoved through" the state Senate despite also including a \$6 million tax cut on soft-drink syrup and a tax hike on unemployment benefits and digital downloads. Staying in the Natural State, *Talk Business* [reports](#) that the state House has also approved a bill which would require voters to present photo ID when voting. A previous voter ID bill was struck down by the Arkansas Supreme Court in 2014; the same may well happen with the current bill if it becomes law.

Midwest

Indiana's *Indy Politics* this week [says](#) that the Deputy Mayor of Indianapolis, David Hampton, has apologized for racially offensive remarks made on Facebook concerning a group of African Americans who recently met with President Trump.

On Friday, Michigan's *Eclipta Blog* [writes](#) that a North Michigan Republican, Dan Adamini has called on Facebook for "another Kent state" – referring to the 1970 massacre of students by the Ohio National Guard – to quell a protest at UC Berkeley where Breitbart News editor Milo Yiannopoulos was scheduled to speak this week.

Capitol Fax has the [news](#) that the state of Illinois' unpaid bills are edging up towards \$15 billion, and that it will soon have to pay \$700 million in interest based on its current spending. The state has operated without a full budget for 18 months, with court orders, laws and spending agreements mandating that money is spent in certain key areas.

Heading north to Wisconsin, *The Political Environment* [says](#) that on GOP Governor Scott Walker's watch, the state's Lincoln Hills youth prison has become a humanitarian crisis with allegations of assaults and injuries and a recent suicide attempt.

In Minnesota this week, *Bluestem Prairie* [comments](#) that Republican state Representative, Jeff Backer, has accused Governor Mary Dayton of "grandstanding" over a state water quality law – when he himself has been grandstanding against another buffer bill, after previously having voted for it.

In the Mount Rushmore State, *Dakota Free Press* [says](#) that Republican state Senator, Jim Bolin wants to make it harder for voters to amend the state's Constitution, by requiring the measure to pass with 60 percent of votes rather than 50 percent plus one.

West and Pacific

On Monday, *Progressnow NM* [says](#) that the state's legislature has invited Mexican President, Enrique Peña Nieto to address the body, only a week after he cancelled a meeting with President Trump in retaliation for the president's plans to build a wall and impose new tariffs on its southern neighbor.

Heading up to Montana, *Northern Broadcasting System* [writes](#) that cuts to the state's education budget proposed by Democratic Governor, Steve Bullock, as well as a GOP appropriations subcommittee, has been thrown out by the state's Office of Public Instruction.

In Idaho this week, *Eye on Boise* [reports](#) that the state's ACLU is researching the impact of an immigration bill which would change the state's immigration enforcement practices. The proposed bill would mandate that local law enforcement research people's immigration background if they are arrested – no matter the charge.

On Wednesday, *Oregon Catalyst* [comments](#) that the state's legislature opened this week "awash" with taxpayer cash, and "riding a 35 year wave of double digit budget increases". They say that Governor Kate Brown has proposed a billion dollar in tax increases on top of the same amount in surplus tax revenues which is coming in.

Next year, residents of the Golden State go to the polls to elect a new Governor. *Fox & Hounds* [reckons](#) that the likely Democratic Candidate, Gavin Newsom, who is the current Mayor of San Francisco, should be hoping that the Mayor of San Diego, Kevin Faulconer runs as his GOP opponent. Why? He's the only Republican strong enough to make it through the primary instead of another Democrat who might be more of a challenge to Newsom.

Heading out to Hawaii, *Honolulu Civil Beat* [writes](#) this week that the price tag for a new jail in Oahu could run as high as \$673 million according to a team of consultants hired by the state's government.

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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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