

Vitter losing steam in Louisiana, Democrats struggling in the Dakotas, and will Vermont legalize marijuana in 2016?: US state blog round up for 19 – 25 September

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

Northeast

In the Granite State this week, *NH Labor News* [looks](#) at a new report from the state's ACLU which has found that the state is violating its own constitution by imprisoning those who are unable to pay their fines. They that not only are debtors' prison practices illegal – they make no financial sense, with the government spending more to jail defendants than they would recover in fines. Later, in the week, they also [discuss](#) new data from the US Census Bureau that shows that New Hampshire's rate of child poverty is still stubbornly high at 13 percent – up from 10.2 percent in 2013. They say that Congressional budget cuts to programs such as housing vouchers, Head Start early education, and other poverty reduction measures will do nothing to help the state's children.

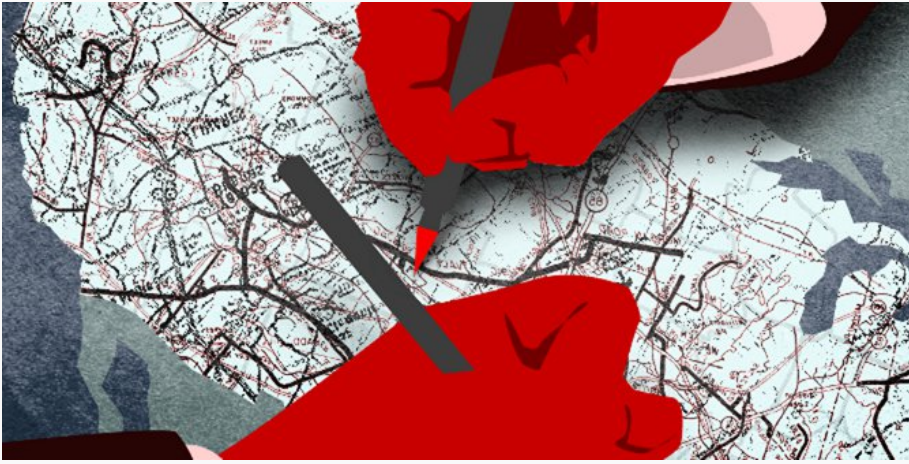
On Tuesday, *VTDigger* [reports](#) that Vermont's Attorney General, Bill Sorrell, has told his staff that the state's assembly is likely to legalize marijuana next year. They say that Sorrell stated that the move is now more likely since state House Speaker, Shap Smith, has now said that he favors legalization, and would therefore allow legislation to reach the House floor.

Heading down to the Garden State, *PolitickerNJ* [says](#) Governor Chris Christie is 'unfit to lead'. They say that under Chris Christie's watch, the state's National Guard has become increasingly dysfunctional, with top-down leadership severely lacking.

Moving on to Pennsylvania, *Keystone Politics* [says](#) that this week state Republicans passed a stop-gap budget that the state's Governor, Tom Wolf, will be sure to veto. They write that the budget fails to deliver on any of Wolf's three priorities – education funding, local property tax relief, and a shale severance tax. Staying in the Keystone State, *PoliticsPA* [reports](#) that state Attorney General, Kathleen Kane, has indicated this week that she may not run for re-election. Kane's law license is due to be suspended from October 21st, over perjury and abuse of office charges filed against her in August.

South

This week, North Carolina's *Progressive Pulse* has the [news](#) that the state's Senate has given tentative approval to a bill which would restrict food aid for childless adults who are poor, and live where there are few jobs. They say that the Senate bill would permanently ban the state from waiving work-related time limits on federal food-aid for areas with high unemployment, leaving up to 105,000 people without access to such aid.



Credit: Truthout.org (Flickr, CC-BY-NC-SA-2.0)

Heading down to the Sunshine State, *The Shark Tank* [reports](#) on comments from state Representative Janet Atkins to a gathering of GOP activists that the key to defeating Corrine Brown (a black Democrat) would be to boost the number of black prisoners in her district. Staying in Florida, *Saint Peters Blog* has the [news](#) that the state House and Senate have agreed on redistricting procedures for drawing a new state Senate map, ahead of October's special session to redraw Senate districts. The procedure will involve drawing multiple 'base maps' and responds to a three year old lawsuit which claimed that the Senate district boundaries were gerrymandered.

On Thursday, Alabama's *Yellowhammer* has [three themes](#) that they say we should understand about the state's recent Special Session. These include the state's two-sided budget system, a fixation with federal matching dollars, and the domination of important state-wide debates by a few voices.

The state of Louisiana goes to the polls in less than a month's time. *Something Like the Truth* [comments](#) that GOP Senator, David Vitter, who is running for Governor, has seen a large decline in popularity over the last year, with only 34 percent of voters rating him favorably.

Moving on to the Lone Star State, *Juanita Jean's* [says](#) that George P. Bush, Jeb Bush's son, has turned the Texas General Land office (of which he is Commissioner) into a 'political payoff machine', hiring friends, family, and campaign aides.

Midwest

On Monday, *eclecta blog* [writes](#) that Michigan's state legislature has taken up bills which attack women's health. They say that two bills which seek to criminalize coercive abortions are redundant and unnecessary given that the state already has an abortion consent law.

This week *Capitol Fax* of Illinois has the [news](#) that the state's non-partisan Independent Maps coalition is more than halfway to its goal of collecting 600,000 signatures calling for a state constitutional amendment to create a non-partisan commission to draw state legislative districts. They comment that this plan could hurt the state's Democratic Party, because it would protect the geographic integrity of local governments, which would disadvantage Chicago. *Progress Illinois* also [discusses](#) Chicago this week, reporting that Mayor Rahm Emanuel has called for a tax hike of nearly \$600 million in his \$7.8 billion budget proposal, in order to cover police and fire pension costs, as well as to finance school construction.

Moving west to the Hawkeye State, *Blog for Iowa* [writes](#) this week that Governor Terry Branstad is laying the groundwork towards eroding public school funding in the state by pledging to boost funding next year for a tax credit which would support scholarships for low income students attending private schools.

On Sunday, *South Dakota War College* [writes](#) that there are no candidates on the horizon for the state's Democratic Party, and that their focus on winning ballot measures is doing nothing to help them win back power in the Mount Rushmore State.

Heading north, [according](#) to *Say Anything blog*, North Dakota's Democratic Party is in a similar position to its southern counterpart. They say that while the state's GOP have six potential gubernatorial candidates, the Democrats are looking for even one.

West and Pacific

On Monday, *Colorado Peak Politics* [reports](#) that only 35 percent of the donations raised by US Senator, Michael Bennet since January have actually come from residents of Colorado. They say that judging by his airplane and hotel bills, Bennet has been travelling to California and New York a great deal to 'pick up checks'.

Heading north, *Montana Cowgirl Blog* [says](#) that the state 'dodge a bullet' when moderate Republicans joined with Democrats to pass a compromise bill which provides a market alternative to Medicaid expansion in the Treasure State. However, in the wake of the bill's passage, state Tea Partiers are now attacking the moderate Republicans who supported the bill.



Idaho Governor Butch Otter Credit: Jake Putnam (Flickr, CC-BY-NC-SA-2.0)

On Friday, *Eye on Boise* has the [news](#) that that Idaho's Governor, Butch Otter, along with the state Legislature has filed a lawsuit over the Obama Administration's sage grouse ruling, citing the imposition of unprecedented and unnecessary restrictions on Idaho farmers and ranchers as part of the amendments to federal land-use plans aimed at protecting the birds.

Moving over to the Grand Canyon State, *Blog for Arizona* [writes](#) that public education is under assault in the state with Governor Doug Ducey's budget plans allocating more per-pupil to charter schools, potentially at the expense of public schools.

In the Golden State this week, *Fox & Hounds* [writes](#) that the State Treasurer, John Chiang has managed to save the state \$270 million, without budget cuts or raising taxes, by refinancing \$1.54 billion of existing state debt.

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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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