

Earthquakes in Oklahoma continue, Illinois' Rauner vetoes labor bill, and Wyoming's energy economy woes: US state blog round up for 29 August – 4 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

This week in the Green Mountain State, *VTDigger* [argues](#) that the 'political revolution' of the state's Senator and presidential candidate, Bernie Sanders, needs to come home to the state. They write that the state can move forward to lead the country by increasing the minimum wage, implementing universal healthcare and by bringing in universal voter registration.

Heading down to New York state, *State of Politics* [writes](#) Wednesday that Governor Andrew Cuomo has stated he feels that it is a 'shame' that politics is being played with the Women's Equality Party, a party group that he formed last year of which is now subject to rule challenges for control of the party.

On Thursday this week *PolitickerNJ* has a [list of the 30 most influential women](#) in New Jersey politics – both elected and unelected. The list includes Lieutenant-Governor Kim Guadagno, and Loretta Weinberg, the state Senate's majority leader. Staying in the Garden State, *Save Jersey* [argues](#) this week that the 'Democracy Act' currently before Governor Chris Christie, which would expand early voting and introduce early voter registration, will actually do little to address depressed voter turnout in some areas given how gerrymandered some state legislative districts are.

PoliticsPA this week [reports](#) that following months of budget stalemate, Pennsylvania's Governor, Tom Wolf and the state Republican Party's leaders have met without their staffs in an attempt to thrash out a budget deal. They also have the [news](#) on Wednesday that the state's online voter registration system has worked without a hitch in the week since it launched, with nearly 5,000 Pennsylvania residents registering to vote in that time.

South

Virginia's *Bearing Drift* [writes](#) that the state's House of Delegates remained in recess this week, despite an earlier decision by the 4th US Circuit Court of Appeals that the legislature needed to make an effort to redraw the state's 3rd Congressional

District by September 1st. While the Governor had called a special session in response, the Virginia State Senate adjourned without debate.

The national spotlight was on the Bluegrass State this week with a country clerk refusing – and eventually being jailed as a result – to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples despite the Supreme Court's ruling earlier this year. *Blue in the Bluegrass* [reports](#) that Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear (who leaves office in December) has refused to call a special session of the assembly to address the issue.



Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf. Credit: Governor Tom Wolf (Flickr, CC-BY-2.0)

Heading down to Florida, *The Shark Tank* [says](#) that the Sunshine State's redistricting mess is continuing, with the state House and Senate refusing to agree to a new Congressional map, despite appeals for compromise from their leaders. They also have the news that Representative Corrine Brown (D) has sued to keep her district the same despite the requirement set by Florida's Supreme Court to redraw it.

Yellowhammer [reports](#) that Alabama's Governor, Rob Bentley, has announced that the state legislature will reconvene for another special session to address the General Fund budget on September 8th. They say that a budget that relied on cuts and reforms was previously vetoed by Bentley earlier this year, and that the state's constitution requires a balanced budget to be passed before the start of the new fiscal year on October 1st.

Moving west to The Natural State, *Arkansas Blog* [reports](#) that citizens' groups in the state have called on Governor Asa Hutchinson to reinstate health insurance coverage for the 50,000 people who have had it removed for failing to respond to a 10-day window that the state had provided for them to respond to a notice of income verification. Hutchinson has apparently accepted the federal government's demand that the state comply with the law by giving a 30-day window for people to respond to income eligibility checks, but the state has refused to restart the process.

Heading west to Oklahoma, *Okie Funk* [says](#) that earthquakes are continuing to rattle parts of the Sooner State, something that they say is the 'new normal' due to the fracking boom that the state is undergoing. They write that the state is on track to experience more than 800 earthquakes with a magnitude of more than 3.0 this year – the most in the contiguous US.

Midwest

Indiana's *Howey Politics* [argues](#) this week that the state needs to modernize its voting system by modernizing its election infrastructure and make voter ID available to those who can't currently afford it. Staying in the Hoosier State, *Indy Politics* [writes](#) on Tuesday that Governor Mike Pence has announced a new task force on Drug Enforcement, Treatment and Prevention after an apparent upswing in the number of deaths in the state due to drug overdoses.

Moving west to Illinois, *Progress Illinois* has the [news](#) this week that the state's Democrat-run House has failed to veto Governor Bryce Rauner's recent veto of a labor bill, which prevents a state worker strike or lockout by the administration if labor contract negotiations stall.

Meanwhile in the Badger State, *Uppity Wisconsin* [comments](#) that there is an impending crisis in the state's education program – a shortage of teachers which stems from declining education majors in university programs, and an exodus of new and experienced teachers from the state.



Illinois Governor, Bruce Rauner Credit: [Steven Vance](#) (Flickr, [CC-BY-2.0](#))

Blog for Iowa [writes](#) Tuesday on the need to expand the Democratic electorate in the state so that the state can remain a purple one and elect a progressive at the national level in 2016.

Dakota Free Press has the interesting statistic that the ratio of registered Republicans to Democrats in the Mount Rushmore State is about 7 to 5 – and yet the same ratio in the state legislature is 21 to 5. They [say](#) that this disparity is very likely to be the result of gerrymandering, and that the power to draw legislative districts should be

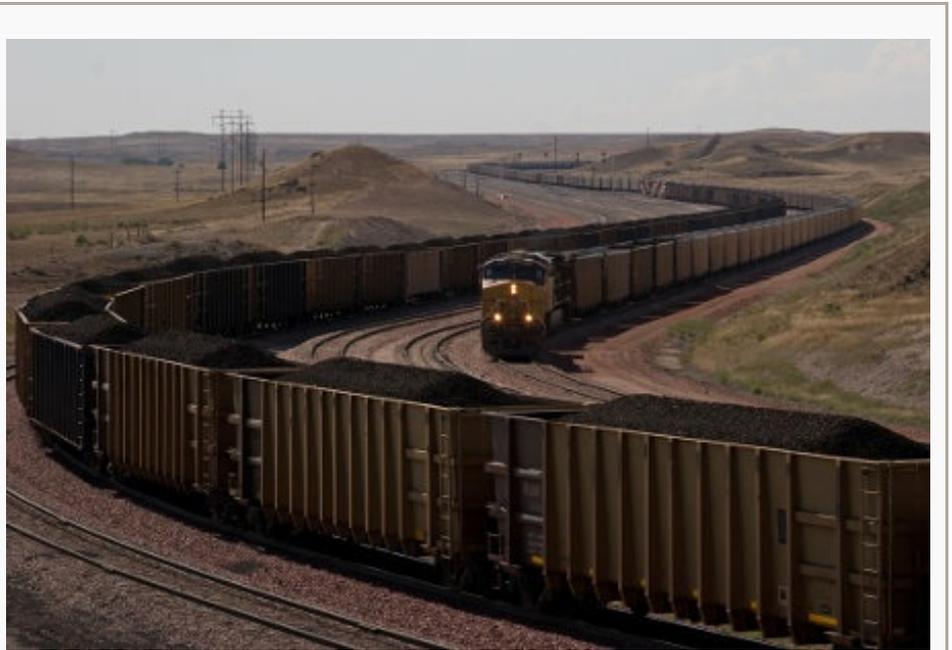
in the hands of an independent commission, not a self-interested legislature.

West and Pacific

On Tuesday, *WyoFile* [writes](#) that the downturn in the Equality State's energy economy could hurt its revenues by as much as \$832 million in 2017-18 if prices do not begin to rise again, and that this is causing concern among state officials. They say that Wyoming's economy is inordinately reliant on mineral extraction industries, meaning that when prices fluctuate, so does the state's revenues.

Heading down to Colorado, *Peak Politics* [reports](#) on a recent state gambling counseling program – a program that they say has not actually helped a single person according to a new audit.

Idaho's *Eye on Boise* [says](#) this week that a new ballot 2016 initiative would raise cigarette taxes by \$1.50 and then use the money gained to lower tuition at the state's public colleges and universities. The initiative needs more than 47,000 signatures to get on the ballot and 6 percent of voters in each of the state's 18 legislative districts. No initiative has actually qualified for the ballot since the district requirement was introduced in 2013.



Coal trains in Wyoming, Credit: [Kimon Berlin](#) (Flickr, [CC-BY-SA-2.0](#))

Heading over to California, *Fox & Hounds* has the [news](#) that Governor Jerry Brown has signed a new bill which would mean that citizens who wish to submit a ballot initiative or referendum must pay \$2,000, rather than the current fee of \$200. They argue that the measure will limit access to direct democracy and reserve getting ideas on the ballot to the state's elite political class. Staying in the Golden State, *Flashreport* [writes](#) that a State Senator has authored a bill which would change the age at which a young person is considered a juvenile if they've committed a serious crime to 23. They argue that the bill is the latest attempt in the state to decriminalize heinous criminals.

Honolulu Civil Beat [writes](#) on Tuesday this week that the Hawaii state auditor's office has heavily criticized Hawaii Health Connector's management, calling its procurement processes, 'hasty and inept', after it found that the organization wasted more than \$11 million in awarding an IT contract based on personal recommendations rather than by price.

Featured [image](#) of Oklahoma oil field – Credit: [Kool Cats Photography](#) (Flickr, [CC-BY-2.0](#))

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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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