

A bad year for Massachusetts Democrats, Illinois warned of credit downgrade, and votes for felons in Kentucky – for now: US state blog round up for 21 – 27 November

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

Northeast

In New Hampshire this week, *Granite Grok* [writes](#) that the state's US Senator, Kelly Ayotte will be on the hook if her backing of moderate leadership in the state helps it to expand Medicaid there – she has previously been on the record as opposing Obamacare.

Heading west to the Green Mountain State, *VTDigger* [reports](#) that the state's Governor, Peter Shumlin has reiterated his public support for welcoming Syrian refugees into the US. Shumlin also stated that Vermont is a good place for refugees to begin new lives as it has one of the lowest unemployment rates.

On Friday, *Blue Mass Group* [comments](#) that the state's Democratic leadership has had a bad year, despite a recent statement from the state House Speaker that their work "has been good". They say that 2015 has been marked by a faltering public transport system, a failed Olympics proposal, and the legislature's sitting on important bills.

Heading down to New York, *State of Politics* [says](#) that the feud between the state's Governor, Andrew Cuomo and New York City Mayor, Bill de Blasio escalated this week, as the governor criticised de Blasio for appearing alongside Cuomo's 2014 GOP opponent, Rob Astorino, because of the latter's stances on abortion, same-sex marriage and Syrian refugees.

Over in the Garden State, *Save Jersey* [writes](#) on how to save the state in four steps, including ending the practice of salary 'double dipping' for retired public employees, removing school taxes from the property tax bill, and eliminating the state's prevailing wage law.

On Wednesday in the Keystone State, *PoliticsPA* [wonders](#) if the state's ongoing budget negotiations are a 'mission impossible'. The state's budget framework was agreed two weeks ago and included a \$350 million education investment which appears to be unfunded. This comes after Governor Tom Wolf vetoed a 4 month \$11 billion short term spending plan, and a failed veto override by the state Senate's GOP.

South

On Saturday, Virginia's *Bearing Drift* [comments](#) on the abuse of leaders at an Islamic center in Spotsylvania County during a community meeting concerning the center's proposed expansion. They say that the 'reprehensible display of bigotry' shows a disregard for the core Republican values of property rights and religious liberty.



New York Mayor Bill de Blasio and New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo Credit: Jere Keys (Creative Commons BY)

This week saw the outgoing governor of Kentucky, Steve Beshear sign an Executive Order restoring the right to vote for many prisoners. *Blue in the Bluegrass* [calls](#) the move a ‘cruel joke’ given that Beshear’s successor, Matt Bevin will likely reverse the order as soon as he is sworn in on December 8th.



Florida Governor Rick Scott Credit: Gage Skidmore (Flickr, CC-BY-SA-2.0)

Florida Governor, Rick Scott recently rolled out his proposed budget for 2016-17. *Shark Tank* has a [roundup](#) of reaction to the budget – many expect a fight between Scott and the state’s legislature over proposals to penalize hospitals that overcharge their patients as well as bringing in more competition to the healthcare industry.

Saturday saw US Senator David Vitter lose the Louisiana gubernatorial race to Democrat, John Bel Edwards. *Something Like the Truth* [says](#) that Vitter lost the election because he underestimated and misunderstood his opponent, and fought with once-successful, but not outdated strategies from previous campaigns.

On Monday, *Arkansas blog* has the [news](#) that a Chinese company has proposed building a \$1.36 billion mill in the Natural State, to be completed by 2018. They wonder if the state will be providing low-cost loans or even direct grants to support the new venture.

In the Lone Star State this week, *Burnt Orange Report* [writes](#) that Texas Governor, Greg Abbott is exploiting the Syrian refugee crisis to raise campaign funds. Abbott, they say, has asked supporters to donate to his campaign to help support his fight against President Obama who is attacking him for ‘protecting’ the US from potentially dangerous refugees.

Midwest

Ohio has a new motto – “find it here”. *Plunderbund* [looks](#) at a few things that tourists might find in the Buckeye State, including a ‘mediaeval rural oriented’ legislature and 27,000 bridges in a state of disrepair.

Heading up to Michigan, *Eclecta blog* [writes](#) that it is time for a ‘People’s Budget’ that ensures that the wealthiest Michiganders and corporations pay their fair share, and to reverse recent cuts such as \$3 million to the state’s Department of Health and Human Services in the GOP’s 2016 state budget.

On Tuesday, *Indy Democrat blog* [says](#) that it already has not been a great week for Governor Mike Pence, who is being sued in federal court by the ACLU for attempting to block Syrian refugees at the state’s border. They also report that Exodus International has plans to continue to settle refugees in Indiana – including those from Syria.



Illinois State Capitol Credit: Patrick Gensel (Flickr, CC-BY-NC-SA-2.0)

Capitol Fax has the [news](#) this week that the credit rating agency Moody's has warned Illinois that it could downgrade the state's credit rating even closer to junk if its already large pension liability and budget deficit grows. Last month Moody's downgraded the state's credit rating to three steps above junk. Illinois is still caught in a budget-impasse that has lasted since July 1st.

On Friday, *The Political Environment* [says](#) that Republican policymakers in Wisconsin now wish to 'tinker with and shortcut' formulas and policies in order to minimize or end environmental protections and wage guarantees which are currently required in large federally-funded road projects. They comment that the attempted changes to road building and financing rules are another example of the GOP administration's ideological-driven preference for 'quick and dirty' over common resource protections.

Dakota Free Press [looks](#) at the type of socialism espoused by Vermont Senator, and Democratic presidential candidate, Bernie Sanders, and that which exists in South Dakota. They write that socialism as practiced in the Mount Rushmore State is more a type of corporate welfare compared to Sanders' Rooseveltian style of socialism.

West and Pacific

On Thursday, *MT Cowgirl* of Montana [warns](#) that Senator Fred Thomas – who they say ruined the state's cheap power – along with 55 more GOP legislators has signed a letter to the state's governor, Steve Bullock, demanding that he stops Syrian refugees from settling in the state.

Heading south to the Centennial State, *Colorado Peak Politics* [says](#) that when Democratic presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton, made a public appearance in Colorado this week, the state's US Senator, Michael Bennet, was not with her. They say that Bennet may have skipped the event because of the backlash he previously experienced in attempting to close down the school in 2006.

In the Grand Canyon State, *Blog for Arizona* [says](#) that the Morrison Institute at Arizona State University has issued a study of independent voters in the state. They write that the study also shows that the 'Top Two' primary would be supported by a majority of voters in the state.

Over in the Golden State this week, *Fox & Hounds* [comments](#) that the race to succeed California Senator Barbara Boxer could well produce the upset of 2016. While the favorite currently appears to be Kamala Harris – the state's Attorney General – US House Representative, Loretta Sanchez does have a serious chance of beating Harris because of the state's 'Top Two' primary system.

Moving northeast to Idaho, *Eye on Boise* has the [news](#) Wednesday that the town of Wilder has elected its first all-Latino city council. The town's population is 75 percent Latino, a community which has historically experienced a lack of representation.

Blue Oregon [wonders](#) this week if the Beaver State will be able to fix its broken tax system which sees underfunded schools and social services which means the state often struggles to recruit big employers.

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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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California Attorney General Kamala Harris
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