

Pennsylvania's death penalty ban upheld, Virginia ends reciprocal concealed-carry, and a bleak outlook for South Dakota Democrats: US state blog round up for 19 – 25 December

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

Northeast

On Sunday, *GraniteGrok* [releases](#) its regular podcast on New Hampshire politics – *GrokTalk*. In this edition, they discuss whether or not the state is a political petri dish for the political class.

Moving on to Vermont, *VTDigger* this week [looks](#) at what they say is the state's 'shaky government'. They write that the state legislature's big challenge for next year will be to produce a budget for 2017 which is balanced, but also contains no new tax increases.

In the Empire State, *Times Union* has the [news](#) that Governor Andrew Cuomo has announced plans to issue conditional pardons for about 10,000 people convicted of non-violent crimes when they were minors. They say that the move comes at the same time as the New York State Legislature looks to pass a number of criminal justice reforms including raising the age of criminal responsibility from 16 to 18.

Over in the Garden State, *Save Jersey* [writes](#) on Monday that the New Jersey *Star-Ledger* has once again gone over the top in its 'crusade' to end gun ownership, with a recent editorial on the costs of gun violence. They comment that for the paper, "editorial balance [is] too heavy a cross to bear".

In the Keystone State this week, *PoliticsPA* [reports](#) that the Pennsylvania Supreme Court has upheld Governor Tom Wolf's moratorium on the use of the death penalty in the state, saying that the order did not violate his constitutional authority. Staying in Pennsylvania, *raging chicken press* [reports](#) on recent progress made towards an agreement on the state's budget. They say that the most recent attempt at a deal 'blew up' because of disagreements over pension reform and the feud between the State House and Senate.

South

On Wednesday, *Delaware Liberal* has a [to-do list](#) for the state's General Assembly in 2016. Items include passing a bill which creates a new higher tax bracket, putting a Senate bill to repeal the death penalty up for a vote, and passing same day voter registration and no excuse absentee voting bills.



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Moving on to the Old Dominion State, *Bearing Drift* has the [news](#) that Virginia's Attorney General, Mark Herring has ended the state's reciprocal concealed-carry agreements with 25 other states. Herring has been roundly criticized by state conservatives, who have accused him of applying state law through the lens of his own politics.

The Progressive Pulse of North Carolina [reviews](#) the top ten state budget missteps for 2015. These include tax cuts for wealthy and profitable corporations over reinvestment, the failure of state lawmakers to restore the Earned Income Tax Credit, and continued underinvestment in education.

Heading down to the Sunshine State, *Shark Tank* [says](#) that the 2016 Senate race to replace Marco Rubio (who will not be contesting his seat due to his presidential run) is heating up. Lieutenant Governor Carlos Lopez-Cantera has this week criticized US House Representative (and current GOP favorite) David Jolly for his joke that he has pressed Veterans issues to bolster Congress' ratings.

Heading out west to Texas, *Burnt Orange Report* [reports](#) that the state's Governor, Greg Abbott has pulled a grant for Planned Parenthood which has provided HIV testing and prevention services for 27 years. They say that move should clear up any doubt about Abbot's crusade against Planned Parenthood in Texas.

Midwest

Michigan's *eclecta blog* [writes](#) Tuesday that the state's Republicans want to make it harder for people to vote, and for people to be less informed when they do. They comment that a recently passed Senate Bill will ban using public dollars or resources to educate voters on ballot proposals in the 60 days leading up to an election, and eliminate a campaign finance reporting requirement meaning that independent expenditures will remain secret until after the election. Staying in Michigan, *RightMI* has the [news](#) that the state's Governor, Rick Snyder has wished all in the state a generic 'happy holidays', despite having signed a bill in 2013 which allows public institutions to permit holiday greetings such as 'Merry Christmas'.

Moving on to Wisconsin, *The Political Environment* [says](#) that the state's Governor, Scott Walker has blamed the state's relatively low ranking in job creation on the state's workers themselves.

Blog for Iowa [says](#) on Thursday that the recently agreed federal government spending bill as agreed by Congress has a huge benefit for the state's landowners who want to protect their land, in the form of improvements to the long-term Tax Benefits for Conservation Gifts which can go to the Sustainable Iowa Land Trust.

Democrats in South Dakota face a bleak outlook for 2016, [according](#) to South Dakota War College, which reports on

a recent article in the state's *Argus* newspaper. *Dakota Free Press* also [comments](#) on the *Argus* piece, and offers some constructive counterpoints such as the need to recruit more candidates for the legislature and to 'raise heck' on ballot measures.

West and Pacific

On Tuesday, *Intelligent Discontent* [argues](#) that one way to really hurt the state's economy is to not deal with the threat of global warming. They say that according to new research, failing to deal with global warming, may cost the state over a billion dollars and 36,000 jobs over the next 35 years. This week they also [write](#) that that businessman and philanthropist, Greg Gianforte has told Montana locals that he is exploring a run for the state's governorship, while also telling reporters in Washington DC that he is definitely running for the position.

Heading over to New Mexico, *Progressnow NM* [says](#) that the state's Governor, Susana Martinez, has become a 'punch line' for GOP leaders after a tape of her bullying a police officer after a complaint was made about her party's behavior at a hotel emerged.

In Washington State this week, *Strange Bedfellows* has the [news](#) that a County Superior Court Judge has dismissed a challenge by the National Rifle Association to Seattle's new gun-violence tax. The \$25 per gun tax on gun sales and a tax on ammunition will become law on January 1st.

Moving down to California, *The Left Hook* [argues](#) that reforms are needed to bankruptcy laws so that more Golden Staters can get out of debt.

Out in Hawaii, *Honolulu Civil Beat* [looks](#) at Governor David Ige's vision to make the state's government more effective and efficient by finding ways to collect money that the Aloha State is owed, but has not been paid.

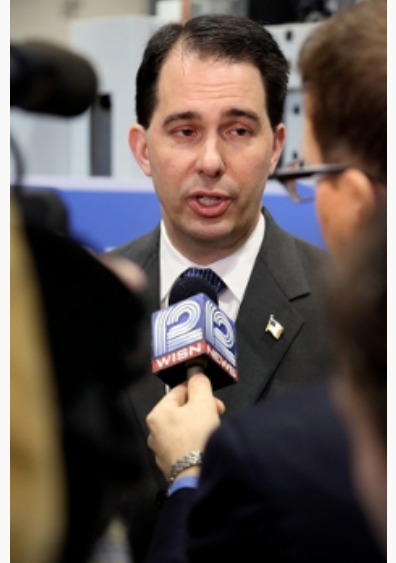
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