

# State of the States for 20 October: New Jersey’s vulnerable voting machines, Nelson woos Puerto Ricans in Florida, and Friess doesn’t understand Wyoming

USAPP Managing Editor, **Chris Gilson**, looks at the week in US state blogging.

## Northeast

On Wednesday, *Pine Tree Politics* [reflects](#) on the decision of Maine’s US Senator, Susan Collins to remain in the Senate – rather than to run for Governor – commenting that the state’s ‘Game of Thrones’ has now started. They say that the race to replace incumbent Governor, Paul LePage can now begin, and that both the GOP and Democratic fields are relatively crowded.

Heading south, *VTDigger* [argues](#) that the positive economic impacts of increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour have been overstated. With the Green Mountain due to increase it to that level by 2021, evidence from Seattle and elsewhere shows that it may lead to fewer hours and jobs for workers.

In Massachusetts this week, *Blue Mass Group* [observes](#) that the state legislature is taking up criminal justice reform, with work ongoing on issues such as repealing mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses and curbing the use of solitary confinement.

Moving on to New York, *State of Politics* [writes](#) that Governor Andrew Cuomo has used Vice President Mike Pence’s visit to the Empire State as an opportunity to criticize the Trump administration’s plans for tax reform. Cuomo said that the plans would cut taxes elsewhere but use New York as a “piggy bank”.

*Save Jersey* [says](#) on Sunday that the Garden State continues to use voting machines which are easily hacked; one of the main problems is that the machines lack an independently verifiable paper trail. Staying in New Jersey, *Observer* [reports](#) this week that the state’s largest teachers’ union has spent \$4 million to unseat state Senate President – and Democrat – Steve Sweeney, making his race likely to be the most expensive for a legislative seat in state history. This week also saw the second debate between gubernatorial hopefuls, Phil Murphy and the current Lieutenant-Governor, Kim Guadagno. *Blue Jersey* [gives their takeaways](#) from the debate, commenting that it did little to change the race, given that Guadagno must content with the baggage that comes with being a part of the deeply unpopular administration of current Governor, Chris Christie.

## South

This week has seen a battery of polls in the Virginia Governor’s race; most put Democrat Ralph Northam ahead of Republican Ed Gillespie, but at least one has had the latter up by 1 point. On Wednesday, *Blue Virginia* [says](#) that a new Quinnipiac poll which has Northam up by 6 points differs greatly from some of the others out this week.

North Carolina’s *The Progressive Pulse* has the [news](#) this week that Governor Roy Cooper has signed an executive order which would prohibit discrimination in his government on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. The order is a solution for those in the state unable to use public restrooms that match their identity under House Bill 142, which replaced the earlier House Bill 2. Staying in the Tar Heel State, *wataugawatch* [writes](#) Wednesday that state Representative Bill Rabon has filed a constitutional amendment which would force all the state’s judge’s to run for reelection every two years. They say that the amendment is a GOP attack on judges who have found Republican-made laws to be unconstitutional.

Heading south, *Florida Politics* [reports](#) that the state's Democrats will put forward two bills in the 2018 legislative session which will strike the birthdays of the Confederates Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis from the list of the Sunshine State's holidays, and which would remove Confederate monuments from public lands by 2020. Staying in Florida, *The Shark Tank* [says](#) that the state's Democratic Senator, Bill Nelson, along with other state Democrats, are encouraging those who have left, or are planning to leave, Puerto Rico for Florida to register to vote.

On December 12<sup>th</sup>, voters will go to the polls in Alabama to pick now US Attorney General, Jeff Sessions' replacement. *Yellowhammer* [writes](#) that Fox News has released a new poll which indicates that the Republican candidate, Roy Moore is as good as tied with his Democratic opponent, Doug Jones.

On Thursday, *Arkansas Blog* has the [news](#) that the state's Supreme Court has ordered that same-sex couples must be treated the same as opposite sex couples in how birth certificates are issued in that they will be presumed to be the child's parents.

## Midwest

On Tuesday, *Plunderbund* [reports](#) that about 112 Ohio municipalities have rebelled with a lawsuit against a law signed by Governor John Kasich which changes the way that local business taxes are collected.

On Thursday, *eclectablog* [says](#) that Michigan Congressman, Tim Walberg, told constituents at a town hall meeting, to "Get a life" after they expressed their anger with him, the GOP, and Donald Trump.

In Indiana, *Howey Politics* [warns](#) of a "wolf in sheep's clothing", in the form of a legislative study committee on redistricting, an initiative that they claim is a Democratic bid to regain power in the state. Staying in the Hoosier state, *Indy Politics* has the [news](#) that Greg Pence, brother of Vice President Mike Pence, is running for Congress in the state's 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District.

Speaking of people who are running, *Blogging Blue* [confirms](#) that yes; Scott Walker is officially running for a third term as Wisconsin's Governor.

Moving on to the Mount Rushmore State, *Dakota Free Press* [says](#) that one reason why there are few women who run for and stay in office might be the gross misogyny that is present in the state Capitol.

## West and Pacific

On Thursday, *The Montana Post* [comments](#) that President Trump and Breitbart News Executive, Steve Bannon have inspired "cynical" candidates for the state's Senate race like James and Sarah Dean, a husband and wife who are running in the Republican and Democratic primaries, respectively.

Talking of Senate races, *WyoFile* [talks](#) on the recent rumors that investor and philanthropist, Foster Friess might run for the US Senate in Wyoming. They say that many locally are wondering if Friess has a firm grasp on the state's politics and that he does not look to be running because something in the state needs to be addressed.

On Wednesday, *Colorado peak Politics* [reports](#) on a new study that has found that the gun control legislation enacted in 2013 in the state may not have been effective.

Moving on to the Golden State, *Fox & Hounds* [writes](#) that the state's Republican Party has not done very well in California's 'jungle primaries', that see the top two candidates in a multi-party primary advance to the general election. *Calbuzz* meanwhile [says](#) that the leader of the State Senate, Democrat Kevin de Leon faces a big challenge if he wants to beat incumbent US Senator next year. First, he must persuade voters to get rid of her.

Want to be less prejudiced? Then move to the Aloha State! *Honolulu Civil Beat* [talks](#) on a new study which has found that after nine months of living on Oahu, students' views on race became less prejudiced.

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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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