

# State of the States for 5 January 2018: The challenge facing New Jersey's GOP, Virginia's "bonkers" election draw, and a Democratic feud in Illinois

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

## Northeast

On Tuesday, *VTDigger* writes that the 2018 legislative session in Vermont is [likely to be contentious](#). Why? It's largely down to memories of legislative skirmishes last year involving teachers' benefits as well as the relative sluggishness in state revenue growth.

Moving on to New York, *Capitol Confidential* [writes](#) that Governor Andrew Cuomo outlined an agenda for 2018 in his State of the State address this week which mixes the old and new. The new: plans to ban domestic abusers from having guns and ending cash bail for misdemeanor charges. The old: passing a constitutional amendment which would codify the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision into state law.

In the Garden State, *Observer* [reports](#) that the state legislature is to weigh major bills during its lame duck session this week, including boosting pensions for public officials and the creation of subsidies for nuclear power. Phil Murphy will take office as the 56<sup>th</sup> Governor of New Jersey on January 16<sup>th</sup>. *Blue Jersey* [recommends](#) that Murphy study the term of early 1990s state Governor, Jim Florio, commenting that "His tenure was rich in progressive legislation which remains relevant to today's concerns". Murphy was elected last November in a Democratic landslide. *Save Jersey* [writes](#) Wednesday that the state Republican Party's unspoken challenge now is in reaching voters who are unconcerned about issues such as high taxes because of their relative economic prosperity.

Pennsylvania will host a special election in March for the state's 18<sup>th</sup> congressional district. *PoliticsPA* [looks](#) at whether or not the GOP should be concerned despite the fact that it's a strongly Republican leaning district. It turns out that they should be.

## South

On Wednesday, *Delaware Liberal* [says](#) that the state's General Assembly should be able to finalize changes to the pretrial process which would end the "use of bail as an economic weapon against the poor" by switching to a risk-based model.

Much of the nation's attention fell on Virginia on Thursday, which saw the winner of a tied state House of Delegates election drawn by lots. *Blue Virginia* [comments](#) that those talking about how "bonkers" the state's random draw was have been focused on the wrong thing – how the election was decided – rather than on the reopening of a ballot box which gave the GOP candidate an extra vote, leading to the tie.

Setting up for [#HD94](#) drawing [pic.twitter.com/TugaoZb0b2](https://pic.twitter.com/TugaoZb0b2)

— James Alcorn (@jamesalcorn) [January 4, 2018](#)

Heading down to North Carolina, *the Progressive Pulse* [looks](#) at census data, which when cross referenced with information from the Environmental Protection Agency shows that many of the state's Black, Latino, American Indian and low income residents are more likely to experience health problems caused by pollution from nearby industry, dumps and power plants.

*Florida Politics* this week takes [a close look](#) at ten important questions facing the state's politics in 2018. They range from whether or not Governor Rick Scott will run for the state's US Senate seat to whether Congressman Jose Oliva can continue the Republican Party's winning streak in the state house.

*Yellowhammer* [writes](#) Wednesday that Alabama lawmakers are anticipating a low-key legislative session, given that it's an election year and most lawmakers will be focusing their attention on their fall campaigns.

Moving west to Mississippi, *Y'all Politics* [says](#) that 2018 will be very similar to 2017 for the state legislature, in that it will be considering infrastructure and school funding as well as the state's falling revenues.

In Arkansas, *Talk Politics* has the [news](#) that Jan Morgan, a pro-Trump Republican, has announced that she will be challenging the state's incumbent GOP Governor, Asa Hutchinson in the GOP primary in May. Morgan made a name for herself in 2014 when she declared her gun range a "Muslim Free Zone". Staying in the Natural State, the *Arkansas Times* [wonders](#) if it will join the "red state revolt" with a new estimate showing that many of its state legislative seats likely to flip to the Democrats this year.

In Texas this week, *Big Jolly Politics* [reminds us](#) that it's now primary season in Harris County. They preview the coming GOP primary for the county's Criminal Court which may see a long standing incumbent unseated by a relative newcomer.

## Midwest

Do you consider Ohio Governor, John Kasich to be a moderate? Well, you're wrong, according to *Plunderbund*, who give [twenty reasons](#) why they reckon he isn't one. These range from his support for a measure which would ban public hospitals from providing abortion care to supporting another which would eliminate Medicaid coverage of family planning services for those up to 200 percent of the federal poverty line.

Moving on to Indiana, *Indy Politics* [says](#) that state House Speaker, Brian Bosma released the state Republicans' legislative agenda this week. It covers attacking the opioid epidemic in the states, increasing funding for public schools and increasing government efficiency.

In Wisconsin this week, *The Political Environment* [comments](#) that on average, motorists in the Badger State pay \$673 per year in road-repair tax, and that the amount would have to markedly increase in order to fix the state's "dangerous bridges, unsafe water systems and other festering hazards in the public sector".

On Friday, *Capitol Fax* [reports](#) on the growing feud between Illinois Democratic gubernatorial candidate Chris Kennedy and Chicago Mayor, Rahm Emanuel (also a Democrat). Kennedy stated that Emanuel was making Chicago "whiter and wealthier"; in response, Emanuel has said that the statement was "hallucinatory", and that he was looking forward to solutions rather than insults.

*Show Me Progress* [looks at a new report](#) from the Missouri Ethics Commission which has shown that the initiative campaign to repeal the state's right to work law has had a union donation of \$750,000 – serious money.

*Dakota Free Press* also [talks](#) campaign finance, profiling state House and Senate bills, one of which would impose contribution limits on people, corporations, and labor unions, and another which changes how ballot initiative committees include groups which oppose the placement of questions on ballots.

## West and Pacific

Montana's *Combat!* wonders why the town of Missoula [is unable to keep a secret](#), after the city told its city councilors that it had corrected a \$3 million accounting error that it had not disclosed for six weeks. It turns out that the error had only been discovered one day before the 2017 mayoral election.

*Colorado Peak Politics* [reckons](#) that US Representative Jared Polis has swung back to being a Democrat – after courting Independents and Republicans – now that he is pushing for the gubernatorial nomination.

On Friday, *Eye on Boise* [writes](#) that Idaho state lawmakers are reconvening for the upcoming legislative session under the political spotlight that an election year brings. They will be considering issues such as the expansion of Medicaid in the state, tax cuts, and higher education reform.

Moving on to the Golden State, *Fox & Hounds* [talks](#) on what will be Jerry Brown's last budget as Governor – well actually his second 'last' budget, given that his 'first' last one was in 1982 during his earlier term. Staying in California, *Flashreport* says that now that marijuana has been legalized, there are some [tough questions](#) for the state's residents.

Finally, in the Aloha State this week, *Honolulu Civil Beat* says that economists have been cautioning state legislators about the state's housing shortage and the possibility of lower tax revenues.

- "[Welcome to New Jersey, nothing to report](#)" by [MPD01605](#) is licensed under [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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