

# State of the States for 23 February: Pennsylvania’s special election debate, South Carolina’s “parody marriage” bill, and California’s “bell ringer” candidate

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

## Northeast

On Wednesday, *NH Labor News* [wonders](#) if the New Hampshire state House is still “our” House of Representatives after 170 House members pledged to uphold the policies of Americans for Prosperity – a conservative lobby group – even if those positions apparently are not on line with the wishes of those they represent.

Heading west to Vermont, *VTDigger* [looks at arguments](#) that state Democrats will have a hard time finding one of their number to challenge GOP Governor, Phil Scott this coming November. They say that for all the talk of Scott’s dominance in the current legislative session, he has not actually achieved a great deal.

This week *RIFuture.org* [comments](#) on allegations of sexual misconduct with a minor that have been levelled against state Senator Nick Kettle. They argue that his past transgressions – including mocking the homeless and creating a fake Facebook page to hurt a state Democrats – both mean that he should resign whether he is guilty or innocent.

Moving on to the Garden State, Thursday sees the [second part](#) of *Blue Jersey’s* series on why healthcare in the state is heading towards a “zombie apocalypse”. They say that although health insurance premiums in New Jersey are on the rise and the US Congress has done away with Obamacare’s individual mandate, newly minted Democratic governor, Phil Murphy and the state legislature are fighting back with executive orders and legislation to stabilize and reduce premiums.

Next month sees Republican Rick Saccone and Democrat Conor Lamb face off in an election for Pennsylvania’s 18<sup>th</sup> Congressional district. *PoliticsPA* [reports](#) on the candidates’ first debate, commenting that while both suggested that mental health was the main issue relating to the recent school shooting in Parkland, Florida, they differed on the legalization of medical marijuana. Staying in the Keystone State, *Raging Chicken Press* [has the news](#) that US Senator Pat Toomey has stated in a press conference that the state Supreme Court’s recent ruling that the state’s Congressional map had been gerrymandered by Republicans was a “partisan...unconstitutional power grab”.

## South

On Friday, Virginia’s *Bearing Drift* [reckons](#) that in the Old Dominion State, “it’s 2004 all over again”. They’re referencing the budget stalemate from that year that the state GOP looks to be on the road to recreating 14 years later after they proposed a Medicaid expansion in the state budget that the state Senate is unlikely to agree to. Staying in Virginia, *Blue Virginia* [says](#) that when it comes to guns, the state GOP is even more extreme than President Trump after they killed bills which would ban bump stocks, institute universal background checks, and require minors to obtain parental permissions to keep firearms in their homes.

*FITSNews* this week [says](#) that the South Carolina government has come up with more “definitional nonsense” with a proposal to refine the institution of marriage and define any marriage which did not involve a man and a woman as a “parody marriage”.

*Florida Politics* [writes](#) that in the aftermath of the Parkland school shooting last week, the state’s Republican governor, Rick Scott is facing a “reckoning” on guns with other state lawmakers as he focuses on keeping guns out of the hands of those with mental illnesses rather than limiting their ownership, a stance which puts him in line with that of the National Rifle Association.

Continuing on to Louisiana, *Something Like the Truth* [argues](#) that the state’s near-constant fiscal woes are distracting its citizens from the state’s real problems.

On Wednesday, *Yellowhammer* [reports](#) that the state’s Senate has passed a \$2 billion state budget that gives more money to state law enforcement, mental health services and to its prison system, but has no new taxes.

## Midwest

On Monday, *Capitol Fax* writes that Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner, has been [slammed](#) by those on his right in the GOP over his recent comments over the *Janus vs. AFSCME* Supreme Court case on workers’ rights. Rauner stated that he is involved with the case (which involves an Illinois worker) and has predicted that it will be successful, comments which have drawn the ire of the Liberty Justice Centre which are linked to the campaign of Jeanne Ives who is running against Rauner in the GOP gubernatorial primary.

In Indiana this week, *Ogden on Politics* [says](#) that state Democrats “appear certain” to pick up several of the state’s legislative seats in this year’s mid-term elections. At the moment the GOP have 70 of 100 seats in the state House and 40 of 50 in the state Senate; a twenty point swing would mean a 60/40 split in the state House.

*Right Wisconsin* [writes](#) Thursday that despite Democrats’ claims that Republican Governor Scott Walker has been “leaving women behind”, the state’s women actually “win with Walker” via tax cuts and School Choice policies.

*The Unablogger* [weighs in on](#) the indictment of Missouri’s Republican Governor Eric Greitens on a charge of invasion of privacy, commenting that it is a case of a “politically ambitious prosecutor from one party seeks to take down the state’s governor from the other party”, against the wishes of the alleged victim.

*Say Anything blog* [reviews](#) the state of North Dakota’s federal races after a few days of announcements and other maneuvering: Congressman Kevin Cramer is running for US Senate, the NDGOP Chairman, Kelly Armstrong and State Senator Tom Campbell are running for the US House, as is “mystery candidate” Tiffany Abentroth.

Moving south, *South Dakota War College* [reports](#) that the state’s US Representative, Kristi Noem, who is also running for Governor, has stated that the National Rifle Association would be welcome to have their convention in the state, following a request from the Mayor of Dallas for the group to relocate their annual gathering.

## West and Pacific

On Wednesday, *The Montana Post* [wonders](#) how the state’s budget got to its current dire point – they blame nearly three years of Republican pressure to cut taxes despite balanced budget proposals from Governor Steve Bullock.

Heading south, *Colorado Peak Politics* [writes](#) that the Democratic Governors Association has plans to spend at least \$20 million to win the state’s gubernatorial race this year so that it can favor Democrats when the state is redistricted in 2021. They argue that in 2011, state Democrats – not Republicans – gerrymandered the state’s House and Senate seats.

On Thursday, *Eye on Boise* [reports](#) that a bill which would allow out-of-state insurance providers to sell their insurance in Idaho will move to the state’s Senate. While the bill may result in lower premiums, insurance companies have been reticent to provide such plans in other states which have enacted similar laws.

*Blog for Arizona* this week [comments](#) that Republican Governor Doug Ducey’s bid for re-election is in trouble, after new polls show that his support stands at 40 percent against a generic Democrat, with nearly 28 percent of voters as yet undecided.

California’s election season is beginning to pick up with various potential candidates jockeying for position ahead of the state’s primaries in June. *Fox & Hounds* [wonders](#) if Amanda Renteria is a “bell ringer” in the Democratic gubernatorial primary – potentially not a real contender, but putting herself forward on the ballot in order to reduce a few points of the real contender.

In January, many residents of the Aloha State were alarmed by a false alert about a North Korean missile attack from the state’s Emergency Warning Agency. *Honolulu Civil Beat* [says](#) that a new report has shown that Hawaii needs to spend millions of dollars to be able to effectively warn the public about looming disasters.

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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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