
State of the States for 16 February: The Illusion of GOP control in New Hampshire, Alabama’s risky tax incentives, and California’s single-payer long game

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

Northeast

In Vermont this week, *VT Digger* [reports](#) that the state Senate has passed a bill which would see the Green Mountain state’s minimum wage increase to \$15 an hour by 2024. The bill now heads to the state House, but has an uncertain future. Governor Phil Scott has indicated that he will veto the bill if it reaches his desk.

Granite Grok of New Hampshire this week [reckons](#) that there is only the “illusion” of Republican control of the state’s government following the state House’s passage of a paid family leave bill and a vote to ban “conversion therapy” for anyone less than 18 years of age.

Moving on to Massachusetts, *Blue Mass Group* [looks](#) at a new report which shows that the state lost more than 20 percent of its solar power jobs in 2017. They say that Governor Charlie Baker’s Department of Public Utilities has consistently sided with utilities to add fees to solar installations, and that this may have contributed to the decrease.

In New York this week, *State of Politics* [says](#) that the state’s top leaders are being lobbied by organizations which tackle substance abuse in the Empire State to use the money from a proposed tax on opioids to fund treatment.

Heading across the Hudson to New Jersey, *Observer* [examines](#) what they say is the “fraught” relationship between the state’s two top Democrats, Governor Phil Murphy and state Senate President, Steve Sweeney. The new Governor and Senate leader do not appear to be getting on, after Sweeney criticized Murphy’s proposal to circumvent GOP changes to the federal tax code.

PoliticsPA has the [news](#) that Keystone State Governor, Tom Wolf has given the thumbs down to Congressional maps submitted by state House and Senate Republicans, stating that the map would continue the GOP’s partisan advantage in the state.

South

On Wednesday *Blue Virginia* [comments](#) that state Republicans have nixed “64 good bills” that have been introduced by Assembly Democrats in the current session. With this in mind, they argue that the Assembly needs to be under Democratic control.

Heading south, *The Progressive Pulse* [examines](#) judicial redistricting in the Tar Heel State. They say that under two new maps proposed by state lawmakers, a number of existing judges will be “double-bunked”, forcing them to run against another incumbent in an election.

Better Georgia this week [writes](#) that Governor Nathan Deal is continuing to block the expansion of medical marijuana in the Peach State. In recent comments, Deal states that he would oppose in-state cultivation of marijuana, despite nearly 80 percent of Georgians supporting its use for this purpose.

This week saw the tragic shooting at a high school in Broward County, Florida, where 17 people were killed and 14 injured. *Florida Politics* [says](#) that in the wake of the shooting, the state Senate chose to focus on increasing funding for mental health and campus security, rather than gun control.

On Friday, *Yellowhammer* [argues](#) that as a tool to lure large businesses, tax incentives are “extremely risky” as the sole hope for economic development in Alabama. They write that such measures are actually a sign of weak state tax policy and can hurt small businesses who pay higher tax rates.

Arkansas' *Talk Business & Politics* [write](#) on Tuesday's three special state Senate votes, which saw two candidates advance to a Republican runoff vote in March and a GOP runoff winner advance to the general in May. In the final vote, a GOP runoff saw the winner for the seat decided, as there was no Democratic challenger in the special election.

Midwest

RightMI [wonders](#) what is going after Governor Rick Snyder launched two tax proposals which he touted as being environmental programs. The measures include an increase to the per ton landfill tipping tax and the introduction of an affordable assessment on public water utilities. They say that both measures will not raise enough revenue as is needed and will only expand the state's inept bureaucracy.

Heading on to Indiana, *Indy Politics* [writes](#) that the state is exploring launching a lawsuit against US opioid manufacturers in order to help drug users in the state.

Recent years have seen a number of budget woes for Illinois, with state politicians unable to agree on a budget between 2015 and 2017. *Capitol Fax* [reports](#) that ratings agency, Fitch, has warned that another budget stalemate – which looks to be building under Governor Bruce Rauner's latest proposal – might trigger a ratings downgrade to BBB-, which is teetering close to junk territory.

On Thursday, *Blogging Blue* [talks](#) on Governor Scott Walker's tax rebate, credit and a sales tax holiday after reports that Wisconsin is anticipating a \$385 million budget surplus by mid-2019. They argue that the proposals are "absurd" and look to be sweeteners in his reelection year.

This week it became increasingly apparent that US Congressman Kevin Cramer would be running this year for North Dakota's Senate seat. *Say Anything blog* [writes](#) that Cramer's move now leaves the state GOP's endorsement for the state's at large US House seat wide open, and they take a look at who some potential candidates might be.

Moving south, *Dakota Free Press* [says](#) that state Republicans have let South Dakota's "transgender war" drop after three bills aimed at restricting the rights of the transgendered died in committee this week.

West and Pacific

On Thursday, *Joe Monahan's New Mexico* [reports](#) that the state's "small ball" 2018 legislative session has crawled to a close, commenting that legislators arrived, acted, and left "checked out". The only major accomplishment for the 30-day session was apparently a new budget for the next fiscal year.

Blog for Arizona takes state Senator Sylvia Allen [to task](#), after she commented that voters were "immoral" for approving an increase of the state's minimum wage to \$12 an hour by 2020.

Desert Beacon [writes](#) this week that the race for US Senator Dean Heller's seat is getting interesting after splits emerged within the party between Heller's supporters and those of Danny Tarkanian, whose campaign has been accused of financial improprieties.

Oregon Catalyst meanwhile [argues](#) that state Senate Bill 1528 "flattens small business" through tax increases while distorting the tax code in big business' favor.

In the Golden State, *CalMatters* [comments](#) that supporters of single-payer healthcare in California are playing the long game. With no sign of such legislation moving ahead in the state Assembly, advocates have been trying to make it an important issue in this year's elections. Staying in California, *Flashreport* [wonders](#) if the state Senate is "rigging" a report in the current probe investigating allegations of harassment against Democratic Senator Tony Mendoza so that it can be "massaged" into backing whichever way the chair of the Rules Committee, state Senate Pro Tem Kevin de Leon "wants to go".

-
- Featured image "[Alabama dares](#)" by [Brent Moore](#) is licensed under [CC BY NC 2.0](#)

[Please read our comments policy before commenting.](#)

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.

Shortened URL for this post: <http://bit.ly/2EFCth6>