

# State of the States for 9 February: Vermont’s plan to buy Canadian drugs, South Carolina’s uncompetitive elections, and Oregon’s budget hoax

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

## Northeast

On Saturday, New Hampshire’s *Granite Grok* is unsurprised that the state’s Attorney General has determined that a ban on firearms on school property was unlawful. They [comment](#) that the state is a “Dillon’s Rule State”, meaning that municipal government – in this case, local school officials – only have authority when such power has been granted to them. In this case, that power appears to still rest with the state legislature.

Moving on to the Green Mountain State, *VT Digger* [reports](#) that state lawmakers have been moving forward with a plan to set up a state drug wholesaler which will import drugs from Canada in order to reduce prescription prices.

In the Empire State this week, *Capitol Confidential* [talks](#) on the ongoing federal corruption trial of a former aide to Governor Andrew Cuomo, Joe Percoco. They write that former Cuomo lobbyist Todd Howe has stated that Cuomo’s staff had often asked him to use his own private email to discuss state business. Staying in New York, *State of Politics* [looks](#) at another face-off between New York City Mayor, Bill de Blasio and Albany, after the Mayor headed to the state capital to testify to a joint Assembly-Senate budget committee on transit – specifically the NYC subway – spending in the state.

*Save Jersey* [writes](#) Tuesday on two proposals to raise state lawmakers’ and judges’ salaries, only weeks after a scandal over the ‘pension padding’ of elected officials.

In the Keystone State, *PoliticsPA* [has the news](#) that the US Supreme Court has denied an appeal from state Republicans to allow the current congressional map to be used in the fall elections. The state’s Supreme Court has ordered these maps redrawn after they were found to have been unconstitutionally gerrymandered by the GOP-dominated legislature.

## South

Tuesday sees *Blue Virginia* take an [in-depth look](#) at former state Governor, Terry McAuliffe’s ‘secret’ pipeline deals which gave an energy company release from any damage to Virginia’s forests and water from a proposed pipeline in exchange for payments in the tens of millions to state entities.

*The Progressive Pulse* of North Carolina [reports](#) that state House and Senate leadership have come up with a plan to ease the current class-size difficulties in the state. The new plan would allocate \$61 million in recurring funding for more teachers in the arts, music, and other subjects. Staying in the Tar Heel State, *WataugaWatch* [talks](#) on the US Supreme Court’s decision to block the use of two redrawn election districts for the state’s General Assembly while allowing the remaining ones to stand. They say that North Carolina voters are not likely to look favorably on the state Republicans who filed the motion.

Heading South, *SC Prog Blog* [reports](#) on a new study which has found that elections for the State House in South Carolina actually the least competitive in the entire country, with only six percent of races offering voters a viable choice of candidates.

*Florida Politics* has an [overview](#) of the fifth week of the Sunshine State’s 2018 legislative session including contentious bills such as the likely now-dead measure to outlaw sanctuary cities and bills to ban the breeding of Orcas and fracking in Florida.

Many commentators have been anticipating a Democratic wave in this year’s midterm Congressional elections. *Yellowhammer* [reckons](#) that that wave is unlikely to crash over Alabama given that a Democrat has not won a statewide race there since 2006, and the that the GOP control both the state House and Senate with overwhelming majorities.

Moving west to Arkansas, *Talk Politics* [says](#) that gubernatorial candidate, Jan Morgan, has accused the incumbent Governor, Asa Hutchinson of not being a “true Republican” and that she will make sure that Sharia law does not come to the state if she is elected.

*The Okie* [argues](#) this week that nothing should be off the table if people want to fix the state’s budget woes. This means that tax increases should be examined, as should “give aways” to Medicaid, the wind industry and public schools.

## Midwest

On Monday, Michigan’s *eclectablog* [says](#) that GOP Governor Rick Snyder’s “failure” as a leader continues into 2018 as he has now appointed a minister who opposes same-sex marriage and who had opposed an ordinance banning discrimination against lesbians and gays to the state’s civil rights commission.

In the Badger State this week, *The Political Environment* [reports](#) that the “desperate” Governor, Republican Scott Walker, has offered a subsidy deal to the paper maker Kimberley-Clark for it to avoid plant closures in order to “hang on to power” ahead of this year’s gubernatorial election. Staying in the state, *Right Wisconsin* [comments](#) that two independent charter schools are set to open in Madison for the next school year, which will bring school choice to the city, after they were approved by a new authority which authorizes charter schools in the state.

On Thursday, Illinois’ *Capitol Fax* [says](#) that as Governor Bruce Rauner prepares to unveil a new budget the state is already “awash...in red ink” according to the state’s Comptroller, with the state now facing more than \$13 billion in budget deficits.

Heading west, *Blog for Iowa* [checks out](#) this year’s legislative agenda in the Iowa Statehouse. Highlights include investigations into the state’s Medicaid privatization and restoring fiscal discipline.

In North Dakota this week, *Say Anything* has the [news](#) that state Democrats have announced a new initiated measure which would increase the current extraction tax rate from 5 to 6.5 percent. They say the measure does not take into account the large amount of money the state has received from the oil and gas industry since 2016 and that an increase might affect economic activity in the state.

## West and Pacific

On Tuesday, *Colorado Peak Politics* [wonders](#) why the state is subsidizing the sale of “six-figure” electric cars, like the Tesla, via a \$5,000 refundable tax credit.

*Blog for Arizona* this week [talks](#) on the “obscure agency” which has crushed solar power in the state. They write that a 5-man GOP board – the Arizona Corporation Commission – removed incentives for solar power while at the same time increasing incentives for “dirty-technology” electric companies.

*Oregon Catalyst* [says](#) that the \$300 million budget shortfall that state legislative leaders are warning of is actually a hoax. What has actually happened, they say, is that there will be a small drop in state tax collections which will be followed by a rise in net tax revenues in the coming years.

Heading out to the Golden State, *Fox & Hounds* [has the news](#) that a new poll has shown that while the 40-year old Proposition 13 (which covers property taxes) is unlikely to be changed in a potential ballot measure, while a narrow majority appears to support the repeal of a recently introduced gas tax. Remaining in California, *Calmatters* [talks](#) on Democratic Governor Jerry Brown’s new plan to introduce an online community college to reach more than 2.4 million Californians who lack a college degree.

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*Honolulu Civil Beat* [reports](#) on participation by state schools in the federal School Breakfast Program. It turns out that only 43 percent of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunches also take advantage of a subsidized breakfast.

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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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