

# State of the States for 2 February: The war on democracy in Virginia, Cuomo’s war chest, and Idaho’s ‘Kansas-style’ tax cut

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

## Northeast

In New Hampshire this week, *NH Labor News* [reports](#) that the state Senate has voted to kill a bill which would ban bump stocks in the state, similar to those used in last year’s mass shooting in Las Vegas.

Heading south, *RIPR* [says](#) that Rhode Island Governor has kept up her large financial advantage in the state’s gubernatorial contest, with over \$3.3 million on hand, compared to the \$240,000 raised by her closest competitor. Raimondo is also currently enjoying a 40 percent approval rating.

Continuing on to New York, *State of Politics* [writes](#) this week that Deputy State Senate Majority Leader, John DeFrancisco has stated that he will run for the GOP’s gubernatorial nomination to take on incumbent Democratic Governor, Andrew Cuomo this fall. The race won’t be easy – Cuomo reportedly has a \$30 million war chest and is relatively popular.

*Save Jersey* [comments](#) Monday that the announcement by GOP Congressmen, Rodney Frelinghuysen that he will not be seeking another term has already set off a frenzied behind the scenes contest for his replacement. The 11<sup>th</sup> Congressional district leans Republican, so a busy primary field is to be expected. Staying in the Garden State, *Observer* has the [news](#) that Governor Phil Murphy is beginning his term with a 35 percent approval rating, which is lower than that of his last two predecessors at the same point in their terms.

Down in Pennsylvania, *Raging Chicken Press* [says](#) that Rick Saccone – who is contesting the special election for the state’s 18<sup>th</sup> Congressional district – has done everything he can to suck up to Donald Trump and would be the state’s own version of the volatile president.

## South

*Blue Virginia* [writes](#) Friday that there seems to be a “war” on Democracy in the state’s General Assembly by Republicans, after the state House Finance Committee moved forward a bill which would reinstate the expired coal tax credit after voting down similar credits for solar power and electric vehicles. They comment that some of the Republican legislators involved have received tens of thousands of dollars from coal and coal related companies.

*NC Capitol Connection* [reports](#) this week that the state’s Supreme Court has thrown out a law which would create a bipartisan board over elections and ethics, citing that it is unconstitutional. The ruling will put power back in the Governor’s hands to determine the size and structure of state administrative bodies. Staying in North Carolina, *Wataugawatch* [says](#) that state Republicans currently have no announced candidates for 46 state House seats. State Democrats are doing a little better, only lacking 42.

Heading south to the Peach State, *GeorgiaPol* [has the news](#) that under Governor Nathan Deal, the African-American prison rate dropped by 30 percent.

On Monday, *Florida Politics* looks at [three scenarios](#) facing state Democrats in two upcoming special elections this year. They say that the most likely outcome is a win and a loss for the party.

*Yellowhammer* gives an [update](#) in what’s been going on in the state legislature. Bills making their way through the process include one which would authorize county commissioners to hold voter referendums to approve gas tax increases to fund road projects, a law to extend the state’s Stand Your Ground law to churches, and one which would criminalize voyeurism.

In Texas, *Juanita Jean* [lets us know](#) that despite his December guarantee that he would, Congressman Blake Farenthold has not yet repaid \$84,000 of taxpayer dollars he used to pay off a woman he sexually harassed.

## Midwest

On Thursday, Michigan’s *eclecta blog* [reports](#) that gubernatorial candidate, Abdul El-Sayed, has gone negative in his campaign, calling his rival and fellow Democrat, Gretchen Whitmer a “sub-standard candidate” and comparing her to Donald Trump-style Birthers.

Moving on to Illinois, *Capitol Fax* [rounds up](#) coverage of Governor Bruce Rauner’s State of the State including comments that he was vague in his proposals for achieving economic development in the state as well as in his plans to roll back income taxes.

*Right Wisconsin* [takes a look](#) at state conservatives’ spring legislative agenda; they argue that they should be looking at measures to reduce red tape in occupational licensing, ending the practice of civil asset forfeiture, and allowing terminal patients the ‘Right to Try’. Staying in the Badger State, *The Political Environment* [comments](#) that Governor Scott Walker has moved from “divide-and-conquer” to “unify-and-collect” tactics, after a number of big-dollar campaign contributions.

In North Dakota this week, *Say Anything blog* [writes](#) that state Democrats are continuing to struggle with candidate recruitment, with low attendance levels for conventions covering several legislative districts.

*Dakota Free Press* [talks poop](#) on Friday, or more precisely, Republican state legislators’ obsession with it, in the context of two new bathroom bills which have been floated. These measures would require warning labels on multi-person or unisex restrooms and for public school districts to have a policy regarding the use of bathrooms and locker rooms by the transgendered.

## West and Pacific

On Wednesday, *The Montana Post* [reckons](#) that Congressman Greg Gianforte is now trolling voters as he has been selected as a speaker at an upcoming communications workshop for the National Republican Congressional Committee, despite generally eschewing public town hall meetings.

Moving on to Idaho, *The Spokesman Review* [reports](#) that state House Democrats have decried a proposal to cut \$202 million in state taxes as “reckless”, and have argued that it could make the state more like Kansas, which saw its revenues shrink and major budget cuts made following similar tax decreases.

In the Golden State this week, *Fox & Hounds* [says](#) that despite what some in the media have been claiming, US Senator, Dianne Feinstein has no Democratic primary challenger. In fact, there is no primary at all. *CALMatters* talks the state’s gubernatorial election on Wednesday, [commenting](#) that in a recent candidates’ event, four Democrats who are running to replace Governor Jerry Brown struggled to disagree on anything much at all.

Over in Alaska, *The Mudflats* [says](#) that state Senator David Wilson from Wasilla has given an “epic non-apology” of a press conference following accusations of inappropriate conduct towards a high-level staffer.

Heading out to Hawaii, *Honolulu Civil Beat* [writes](#) that the state’s Attorney General, Doug Chin, will be stepping down to serve as Lieutenant Governor after the state’s Senate President and House Speaker both declined to take the position.

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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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