

State of the States for 23 March: Maryland raises taxes to stabilize Obamacare, Rauner squeaks to victory in Michigan, and Brown's premature victory lap in California

USAPP Managing Editor, [Chris Gilson](#), looks at the week in US state blogging.

Northeast

On Tuesday, Maine's *Pollways* [wonders](#) if a blue wave is headed towards the state's 2nd Congressional District, following Conor Lamb's recent victory in Pennsylvania in a very red district. They say that Donald Trump won the Pine Tree State's 2nd District by less than 20 points, meaning that incumbent Representative Bruce Poliquin may be vulnerable in a national wave election.

Granite Grok [says](#) that the New Hampshire state House will soon vote on a bill which would establish a "mini-me Obamacare mandate" to replace the federal mandate recently repealed by Congress. They comment that the bill will scare off employers and increase costs for businesses in the state.

VTDigger [comments](#) this week that with the appointment of Cindy Hyde-Smith as Mississippi Senator, Vermont is the only state in the country that has never been represented by a women in Congress.

Moving on to Massachusetts, *Blue Mass Group* [writes](#) that the state's Republican Governor, Charlie Baker is a "failed leader", who has proven he lacks the leadership to make positive change in the Bay State. They cite more delays and scandals within the Massachusetts Bay Transportation authority as evidence of Baker's failings.

This week saw former *Sex and the City* star Cynthia Nixon declare her candidacy for the Democrats' gubernatorial nomination in New York, pitting her against incumbent Governor Andrew Cuomo. *State of Politics* [says](#) that after only one day she has managed to raise more in small dollar donations than Cuomo did in seven years.

In the Garden State this week, *Observer* [comments](#) that state Assembly minority leader, Jon Brammick is one to watch after he kicked off a "Rally the Reasonable" state-wide tour aimed at distancing himself from the far-right and Trump wings of the Republican Party.

South

On Saturday, *Seventh State* has the [news](#) that Maryland Governor, Larry Hogan has worked with the state's General Assembly to increase taxes by \$380 million in order to protect the state's Obamacare health insurance market by stabilizing premiums for individuals.

Moving on to North Carolina, *The Progressive Pulse* [details](#) a "must-read" public policy report about school segregation in the Tar Heel State which makes a "damning" assessment of recent policies in this area as well making practical recommendations.

ScotBlog this week [argues](#) that it shouldn't be a crime to make fun of a state representative. They write that in Tennessee, it is, and may be about to be even more harshly punished after a state House Representative put forward a plan to increase sentences for those who insult or misrepresent state politicians.

On Wednesday, *Better Georgia* [says](#) that state Republicans are continuing to chip away at voting rights, with the latest measure being one that would cut voting in Atlanta at 7pm, despite the fact that polls there usually close at 8pm. Staying in the Peach State, *GeorgiaPol* [reports](#) that state lawmakers are poised to declare that pornography is a "public health crisis" there.

In the Sunshine State, *Florida Politics* [has the news](#) that Governor Rick Scott has signed a bill aimed at preventing opioid addiction by putting limits on doctors' prescriptions for painkillers.

Yellowhammer [argues](#) Thursday that it's time to change the state's law on prison funding after one Sheriff legally bought a beach house with \$740,000 in funds which were earmarked to feed prison inmates.

Midwest

Writing from the Buckeye State, *Plunderbund* [reports](#) that an Ohio State Representative, Niraj Antani, suggested this week that kids who are 18 and older should be allowed to take guns to school for their own protection. The comments were too far even for his Republican colleagues, some of whom stated in response that it was a "terrible idea".

Heading north, *eclecta blog* [says](#) that Republican gubernatorial candidate, Bill Scheutte has proposed introducing "dedicated reading centres" to solve the state's literacy crisis. Apparently Schuette has never heard of a library, they comment.

On Thursday, *Indy Politics blog* [talks](#) on the state legislature's planned mid-May special session, arguing that the "outbursts and outrage" over the session are laughable, but do prove that the state doesn't spend enough on civics education: the three day session will only cost taxpayers an extra \$57,000 in a state with a balanced budget.

This week saw primaries in Illinois – *Capitol Fax* [has the news](#) that the state's incumbent GOP Governor, Bruce Rauner squeaked to victory over his challenger, Kay Ives by only 2.8 percent, the weakest primary victory by a Republican governor since 1928.

The Political Environment this week [writes](#) on how Wisconsin's Republican Party is changing the rules to suit themselves after State Senate Majority Leader, Scott Fitzgerald, suggested a bill which would block a legal order by a judge appointed by Governor Scott Walker to schedule special elections routinely.

On Tuesday, *Bluestem Prairie* [comments](#) that support for guns is so deeply ingrained in Minnesota, the National Rifle Association doesn't need a full time lobbyist at the capitol, though it does help to throw lavish parties for state legislators.

West and Pacific

Earlier this month, President Trump announced new tariffs which may end up hurting American manufacturing. *The Montana Post* [says](#) that the state's US Senator, Steve Daines who announced a new \$200 million beef export deal with China will have to address Trump's tariffs which may not be good for these sort of deals.

Eye on Boise this week [reports](#) that Idaho Governor, Butch Otter has signed into a law which reforms the state's civil asset forfeiture regime, despite giving it his thumbs down last year. The measure will stop police from seizing money or property by virtue of them being near to an illegal substance.

On Wednesday, *Blog for Arizona* [says](#) that the state's US Representative, Martha McSally, has gone "full racist demagogue" after suggesting that a wall might need to be built between Arizona and California, in response to the latter's status as a sanctuary state.

Speaking of California, *Fox & Hounds* [argues](#) that Democratic Governor Jerry Brown's "victory lap" is premature given that he still has more than nine months of his term remaining and still faces housing and pension crises in the Golden State.

Heading out to Hawaii, *Honolulu Civil Beat* [reports](#) that a medical aid in dying bill has been fast tracked through the state Senate after passing through the state House. The measure would legalize physician assisted death for adults with fewer than six months to live.

- Featured [image](#), Bruce Rauner, Governor of Illinois: by [Illinois Public Radio](#) is licensed under [CC BY NC 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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