

## Minimum wage rises in Vermont and New Hampshire, Brewer may end Arizona's run of female Governors, and why is Ohio important? US state blog round up for round up for 8 – 14 March

USApp Assistant Editor, **Natalie Allen**, and Managing Editor, **Chris Gilson** look at the week in U.S. state blogging. [Click here](#) for our weekly roundup of national blogs.

### Northeast

Starting in Vermont, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) that the Green Mountain state is set to raise the state minimum wage from \$8.73 to \$10.10 an hour, which would give more than 16,000 workers a raise. However, it does not look like a proposal mandating paid sick leave for state workers will pass as many businesses are opposed to the measure.

New Hampshire is also on its way to a minimum wage increase, as *Blue Hampshire* [reports](#) that the House of Representatives passed a bill that would raise the state minimum wage to \$9.00 over two years and set it to increase automatically with inflation after 2017, which analysis from the Economic Policy Institute says would increase the wages of 76,000 residents. *Granite Grok* [decries](#) the raise, saying that it will price mom and pop shops out of the market and that state controlled wages create government dependency.

*American Interest* [looks at](#) New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio's ongoing battle against charter schools; he is currently being sued by a group of parents of a charter school for reneging on a promise made by former mayor Michael Bloomberg and by a group of charter school opponents who want to force all charter schools to pay rent. Under de Blasio's current plan, charter schools will pay rent on a sliding scale that accounts for their financial abilities. In New York's North Country, *The Lonely Conservative* [writes](#) that the Democratic candidate for New York's 21<sup>st</sup> Congressional District, Aaron Woolf, is off to a very bad start after he revealed he has never been to the biggest city in the district and refused to answer questions about Fort Drum and upcoming military cuts.

In New Jersey, *Daily Kos* [looks at](#) a new poll that shows Governor Chris Christie's approval rating has fallen to a net negative for the first time since he took office, 44 percent of New Jersey adults now say they disapprove of the governor's job performance compared to 41 percent who still approve. *FreakOutNation* [reports](#) that Christie allegedly gave away pieces of metal salvaged from the remains of the Twin Towers as gifts to mayors that endorsed him for his re-election bid in 2013. Finally, *Blue Jersey* [examines](#) an Asbury Park Press review that shows the governor's friends earned millions through state contracts, legal and lobbying fees during Christie's time in office.



New Jersey Governor Chris Christie Credit: Gage Skidmore (Creative Commons BY SA)

On Thursday, *Daily Kos* reports on a Maine Republican who has recently said those in the state who are now unable to get Medicaid (as the state's GOP leadership refused to accept its expansion under Obamacare), should simply 'work more'.

On Monday, [according](#) to *RI Future*, the Governor of Rhode Island, Lincoln Chafee, stopped cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food stamp program in the state. They say that the state will now have an extra \$69 million in SNAP funds.

In Massachusetts, the *Blue Mass Group* [look](#) at what the matter with the state is – they say that the state's Congressional delegation is committed to a just economy, including higher minimum wages, but state legislators seem more interested in not annoying the business lobby.

## South

In Washington D.C., *Roll Call* [writes](#) that businessman Jeffrey E. Thomson was charged with two felony counts of conspiracy, partly from his role in the 2010 campaign that elected Mayor Vincent Gray. The charges could not come at a worse time for Gray, who will be competing in the District's Democratic primary on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

In nearby Maryland, *The Political Carnival* [wonders](#) whether or not a pro-marijuana, pro-women's rights, lesbian and progressive, Heather Mizeur, will win the state's Governorship this fall. They say that even if she isn't successful, she is a 'refreshing' candidate.

*Daily Kos* [looks at](#) recent comments from North Carolina's Republican candidates for U.S. Senate about the possibility of states banning birth control. Three candidates, Ted Alexander, Greg Bannon, and Heather Grant, think states should be able to ban contraceptives, but do not think North Carolina should do so, while the likely frontrunner and current North Carolina House Speaker, Thom Tillis, thinks states should have the right to ban birth control, but won't say whether he thinks the Tar Heel State should pursue this. *BlueNC* [calls for](#) state Representative Tim Moffit's resignation after allegations surfaced that he asked his Democratic challenger Brian Turner to drop out of the race, implying that he would give him another state job in return. *WataugaWatch* [disparages](#) Congressman Robert Pittinger, who is calling President Obama "Enemy Number One" in the face of a Tea Party challenger in his upcoming primary.

Moving to Kentucky, on Thursday, *Bluegrass Bulletin* [reports](#) that a medical marijuana bill has passed in the state's Senate.

In Mississippi, *Y'all Politics* [looks](#) at a recent state house bill – the Religious Freedom Restoration Act – writing that the state's Democrats have taken the Southern Baptists to task for their support for the measure.

In Florida, *The Shark Tank* [writes](#) that former governor and current candidate Charlie Crist has consistently show himself to be an inconsistent (albeit likable) politician and questions whether Crist would have become a Democrat if he had managed to beat Marco Rubio in the 2010 Senate race. *SaintPetersBlog* [analyzes](#) the major takeaways from the special election in Congressional District 13, namely that Jeb Bush is still a crucial figure in Florida politics, among others. Given that the election was unexpectedly (at least for the Democrats) won by GOP candidate, David Jolly, *SemDem* has some [advice](#) for state and national Democrats for future elections – do not run from Obamacare.

In Texas, *Daily Kos* [criticizes](#) Representative Ralph Hall who joked that he would go work at Walmart if he loses his runoff election, since the 90 year old would draw a pension of more than \$80,000 a year for his time in the House.

On Thursday, *The Foundry* [covers](#) a Kansas Supreme Court Decision on how much money schools in the state should receive; teachers' unions has sued the state for providing funding levels that they claimed violated the state constitution which says that school funding should be 'adequate'. The decision rejects the lawsuit, arguing that spending is not necessarily the best measure of educational equity.

## Midwest

*Informed Comment* [reports](#) that Illinois is leading America's green revolution with 91 communities, made up of more than 1.7 million individuals, now running on 100% renewable energy. On Monday, *Capitol Fax* [looks](#) at Governor Pat Quinn's 'totally messed up program'. They say that, despite Quinn's claims to the contrary, he spent millions on anti-violence grants before the 2010 election to boost his chances of winning.

*Crooks & Liars* [covers](#) racist comments in a tweet about the NBA from a Minnesota State Legislator, Pat Garofalo. They say that despite Garofalo's backtracking from his comments, they should be seen in the context of modern racism in the South, and his record of trying to cut funding for school desegregation.

In Missouri, a recent *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* article looks at research showing that Missouri is the 8<sup>th</sup> most miserable state in the nation, *Occasional Planet* [responds](#) to the article's optimism that the state legislature will fix things, writing that the Republican majority is likely to make life worse for average Missourians by increasing access to guns and perpetuating an unfair tax program among other things. *Daily Kos* [condemns](#) state legislator David Sater's recent comments defending his bill that would require a 72 hour waiting period before an abortion even in the case of rape. Sater says that by not seeking emergency contraception after being raped, a woman is making the decision to keep the baby if she gets pregnant, although he sponsored a bill in 2010 that would limit access such medicines.

Moving to Wisconsin, on Friday, the *Brennan Centre for Social Justice* [says](#) that early voting is under attack in the state, as state and federal courts are deliberating the outcome of the state's strict voter ID law. The bill would eliminate early voting on weekends and other limitations on the timing of votes. *Blogging Blue* [critiques](#) Governor Scott Walker's priorities. They say that his statement that he will call a special legislative session if the courts do not uphold the voter ID law comes at the same time as another company has announced it is moving (along with its jobs) out of the Badger State.



Credit: Eric Richardson (Creative Commons BY NC SA)

Also under fire for its priorities is the Ohio state house, at least from *Ohio Daily*, who [say](#) that the body has spent more time on figuring out more places to allow guns and interfering with women's reproductive choices than working on important issues like job creation and education. Still in the Buckeye State, *Plunderbund* talks about why we should care what is going on in Ohio. They [write](#) that its status as a political laboratory, swing state, and a producer of Presidents and Cabinet members show that its politics are important.

Since 2009, Detroit's schools have been controlled by an Emergency Manager. On Tuesday, *Eclectablog* [says](#) that emergency management is not working for the city's public schools, with their achievement figures falling behind the state average over the last five years. They say that 'management gimmickry' will not solve the problems faced by public schools as long as core issues of poverty and crime remain unaddressed.

## West and Pacific

On Monday, *Outside the Beltway*, [reports](#) that in the first month of its legalization, Colorado businesses have sold \$14 million worth of marijuana. Netted out over a whole year, this may mean more than \$42 million in tax gains for the state. With marijuana now legal in the state, a Colorado appeals court ruled on Thursday that citizens can

challenge previous convictions for minor cannabis offenses, [reports Hit & Run](#).

Marijuana reform is also on the minds of California Democrats, who had their annual convention this weekend, [according to Capitol Alert](#). They have adopted a platform calling for marijuana's legalization, and a moratorium on fracking in the state. They say that both positions are at odds with the views of the Governor, Jerry Brown. Meanwhile, *Fox & Hounds* bemoans the weak response of California State President Pro Tem, Darrell Steinberg, to a scandal that may see two Democratic state senators face jail. They [say](#) the proposal to ban legislators from accepting free tickets to ball games and theme parks and cut their annual gift limits will do little to prevent legislators from taking bribes. On Friday, *Hit & Run* [says](#) that recent evidence that shows that the state only made a superficial effort to recover more than \$500 million that it improperly paid in unemployment benefits between 2011 and 2013 show why the state 'screwed', in light of its large debts.



Governor Jan Brewer speaking at the Arizona Chamber of Commerce & Industry's 2014 Legislative Forecast Luncheon. Credit: Gage Skidmore (Creative Commons BY SA)

This week Arizona Governor, Jan Brewer, announced that she would not be running for re-election, [reports Outside the Beltway](#). *National Journal* [says](#) that Brewer's retirement will bring to an end of a 17-year stretch of female governors for Arizona, as the state is very likely to elect a male governor this year.

Moving to Idaho, *Eye on Boise* [writes](#) on Tuesday that a bill to increase some state speed limits narrowly passed in the state house this week, and will now go to Governor Butch Otter for signing.

*The Political Carnival* covers [moves](#) by the Utah House to hold the state's presidential primary a week before any other, via a totally online system. They say that in making this move, Utah risks having the number of delegates it sends to the national convention reduced from the current 40, to just 9.

On Thursday, Wyoming's *Preserve the Beartooth* [profiles](#) the town of Pavillion in the state, which sits at the centre of a fracking controversy; they are unable to get water from wells due to the contamination of local aquifers due to oil and gas drilling.

In Alaska, *The Mudflats* [says](#) that the recent 'disastrous' negotiations over the lease and remodeling of the Anchorage legislative office shows that members of the state's legislature are not acting in the best interests of the state. They [encourage](#) other Alaskans to run as Democrats to replace those in Juneau with 'honest, intelligent, Alaskans'. On Friday, *The Atlantic* wonders if [plans](#) to build the 'Pebble Mine' in Alaska's Bristol Bay to tap significant mineral deposits will become the next Keystone XL, referring to the clash between those keen on its economic effects and those concerned about environmental the potential effects.

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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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