

## Tennessee bans UN election monitors, Brown trailing in New Hampshire, and Arizona's abortion fight – US state blog round up for 5 – 11 April

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

### Northeast

The 'Bridgewater' scandal that engulfed New Jersey Governor Christie earlier this year continued to develop this week, with David Wildstein, the former Port Authority official who helped to organize the closure of the George Washington Bridge last year, has started testifying to a Federal Grand Jury about the closure, [writes Crooks & Liars](#). Many are convinced that Christie was involved in the closure in at least some way, and that this may come out in Wildstein's testimony.

Moving to New York, on Monday, *Daily Kos* [looks](#) at state senator, Jeff Klein, who has been described by some as a 'douchebag Democrat'. They say that he has aligned with the state GOP in recent years, handing the Republicans control of the senate in exchange for perks and committee chairmanships. They write that New York City Councilman Oliver Koppell looks very keen to run against Klein over what he describes as his 'traitorous' behavior. Staying in the Empire State, *The Lonely Conservative* [writes](#) that another Democrat, Sean Eldridge, is trying to 'buy' a seat in the House of Representatives, describing him as a '27 year old carpetbagger', who is using money from his husband, Chris Hughes, one of Facebook's co-founders. Finally, on Friday, *Capitol Confidential* reports that New York Governor Andrew Cuomo has submitted 483 vetoes for the state's recently enacted budget.

Also in the news today for his use of veto is Maine Governor Paul LePage who gave a thumbs down to a bipartisan bill which would expand Medicaid in the state. *Crooks & Liars* [say](#) that he has 'blood on his hands' over this, as it will be denying needy people access to health care.

In Vermont this week, *VTDigger* [reports](#) that the state has spent more than \$250,000 on Taser settlements. They say that since 2004, the state has paid out in seven lawsuits that have alleged that police used the non-lethal weapons inappropriately. The news comes at the same time as a bill about police use of Tasers and training is being considered by the state's Senate.

Meanwhile in the Granite State of New Hampshire, *NH Journal* [says](#) that a new poll shows that recently declared Senate candidate, Scott Brown is trailing the incumbent Democrat Jeanne Shaheen by eight percentage points.

### South

*United Liberty* [looks](#) at the Senate race in Georgia, where they say that Democrat Michelle Nunn has had successes in fundraising and in recent polls in a usually red-leaning state, mostly because she rarely mentions that she is a Democrat and plays up stereotypically Republican themes in her campaign ads.

On Wednesday, *National Journal* [writes](#) that Tennessee's Republican controlled legislature has passed a bill banning United Nations monitors from overseeing state elections. This comes after civil rights groups voiced concerns to the UN in 2012 that state voter ID laws would lead to voter suppression.

Kentucky's *Blue in the Bluegrass* writes on Saturday about the state's legal hemp market. They [say](#) that now that the sale of hemp has been legalized by the state (where the plant largely grows as a weed), farmers will be likely to take up licenses to sell the product, as it can replace many petroleum based products.

In Florida this week, *FreakOutNation* writes on the supposed time travelling abilities of Florida Senate Majority Leader, Republican Lizbeth Benacquisto, who claimed to have been both campaigning in Florida's District 30, at the same time as voting on the floor of the state house. They [say](#) that fellow GOP state Senator, Kelli Stargel voted for Benacquisto, which would be in violation of legislative rules. Still in the Sunshine State, *Politicus USA* [writes](#) on Wednesday that former Governor (and current gubernatorial candidate), Charlie Crist now leads the incumbent Rick Scott by seven points. They put this down to Governor Scott's refusal to expand Medicaid and Crist's campaigning on the benefits of the federal government's Affordable Care Act.

Moving to the Magnolia State, *PoliticusUSA* [reports](#) that in Mississippi this week, Governor Phil Bryant signed into law a bill passed by the state's Republicans that would empower businesses to enforce biblical law and discriminate against same-sex couples. They say that the bill voids the 1<sup>st</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> amendments of the Constitution in the state which grant Americans equality under the law.

This week has not been a good one for Louisiana Congressman Vance McAllister, who was caught on tape kissing a married staffer. On Tuesday, *Louisiana Voice* [writes](#) that because the video was taken inside McAllister's office, it was 'obviously an inside job'.

In Texas this week, GOP gubernatorial candidate (and current Attorney General), Greg Abbott, is apparently hiding from the press once again, after being criticized for citing the work of a white nationalist as inspiration for his pre-K plan. *PoliticusUSA* [says](#) that he cancelled a press conference this week, so that he would not have to explain why he thinks that pre-K should be for a select few.

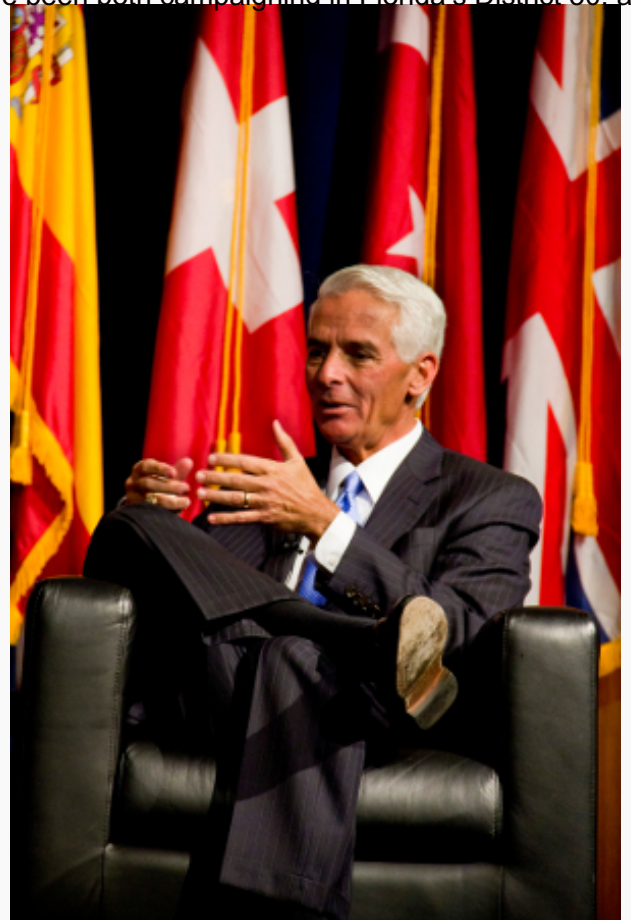
## Midwest

Wisconsin was again in the news this week for a number of reasons. First up is *FreakOutNation*, which [reported](#) on Saturday that one of the state GOP's regional caucuses had passed a resolution asserting the Badger State's right to secede from the U.S. Meanwhile, *The Prairie Badger* [reports](#) on one of Wisconsin's Senators, Ron Johnson, who has been implicated in the cover-up of an alleged sexual assault by State Assemblyman, Bill Kramer. They say that while Johnson is not under investigation, he still knew about Kramer assaulting one of his aides and did nothing for three years. Rounding up news from Wisconsin, *Uppity Wisconsin* [writes](#) on Thursday that Republicans continue to find new ways to turn campaign cash into 'dark money', and to intimidate voters through assembling databases of those who signed recall petitions against Governor Scott Walker.

Moving to Minnesota, *The Political Carnival* [reports](#) that Republican Aaron Miller is looking to replace Democratic Representative Tim Walz, because he does not want his daughter to have to learn evolution in school. Still in the North Star State, *MN Progressive Project* [reports](#) on Monday that Minnesota's legislative Democrats have struck a deal to raise the minimum wage to \$9.50.

Meanwhile in North Dakota, *SayAnythingBlog* [writes](#) that a recent poll has shown that North Dakotas have the most trust in their state than anywhere else in the U.S. They say that this is good news for the GOP, who control all statewide offices, and have a majority in the state legislature. Moving south to The Mount Rushmore State of South Dakota, the *Madville Times* bemoans the very low turnout at a municipal election in Madison. Only 6.5% of the population had turned out to vote with four hours of polling remaining.

In Iowa, *Bleeding Heartland* [writes](#) on Wednesday, that it is time to end the University of Iowa's 'VEISHEA' annual



Former Governor of Florida, Charlie Crist Credit: Neon Tpmmy (Creative Commons BY SA)

celebrations, which have once again degenerated into a riot, with one student being badly injured.

## West and Pacific

On Monday, Montana's *Cowgirl Blog* [looks](#) at a new analysis of likely voters in the state. They say that unmarried women, people of color and young people hold the key to electoral success this year – mostly because they are likely to stay home this year. They say as many as 80,000 ballots from Montana may not be cast this year, and that it is important to get these voters to the polls by talking about 'pocket book' issues of importance to them.

*Blog for Arizona* [writes](#) on the state's 'abortion wars' which are continuing in court. They say that a District Court judge has refused to continue an injunction which would block new state regulations that would restrict medication induced abortions after an appeal from Planned Parenthood of Arizona. Still in the Grand Canyon State, *Hit & Run* says that state legislators passed a bill this week that would allow for warrantless searches of abortion clinics. They [say](#) that the bill removes the need for the state's health department to obtain a warrant from a judge prior to surprise inspections.

Moving to the Golden State, on Monday, *California Progress* [writes](#) that officials in the state are becoming increasingly concerned over the secrecy of the oil and rail industry, as they will not share information about the contents of rail tanker cars that pass through towns. Meanwhile, *The Left Hook* discusses the increasingly common problem of wage theft in Silicon Valley, where businesses pay workers less than minimum wage, don't pay overtime, issue paychecks that bounce, and often do not pay workers at all. They [say](#) that even when the Labor Commission rules against businesses who act in this way, workers are often unable to collect what is owed to them. On Tuesday, *Fox & Hounds* writes that the California State Senate has deleted the online archives of the three Democratic State Senators who currently face criminal charges of weapons trafficking and public corruption. They [say](#) that the removal is a blow to journalists and members of the public who will no longer be able to investigate the past legislative activities of the lawmakers.

In Hawaii, *Honolulu Civil Beat* [writes](#) on Monday that a Republican member of the state's House of Representatives has requested that the Hawaii Department of Education prohibit teachers from using any materials from the Southern Poverty Law Center's Teaching Tolerance program in their classrooms. The program teaches children how to be inclusive and encourages celebrating diversity in the classroom. McDermott is concerned with what he sees as the program's 'political agenda'.

*Featured image: Scott Brown, Credit: WBUR (Creative Commons BY NC ND)*

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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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