

Virginia says no to Medicaid expansion, Walker targets drug users in Wisconsin, and does Idaho have ‘Otter fatigue’? US state blog round up for 13 – 19 September

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

Northeast

This week, *Daily Kos* reports that Maine has bucked the national trend in that it has seen an increase in the number of people without health insurance, according to new census data. They [attribute](#) this to Governor Paul LePage, who has refused to expand Medicaid in the state, as well as seeing cuts to the program which has led to 30,000 people losing coverage.

The Empire State saw conflict in the Governor’s race this week, with Republican candidate, Rob Astorino hitting out at Andrew Cuomo’s campaign for photoshopping his son out of an attack ad that mocks Astorino’s support for the Miami Dolphins, [writes](#) *State of Politics*. Meanwhile, the Cuomo campaign has called on Astorino to produce his tax returns for the last five years, [writes](#) *Capitol Confidential*, saying that his reticence to do so may show that he has something to hide. Staying in New York, *National Journal* looks at how embattled GOP Congressman Michael Grimm may be able to pull off reelection in the upcoming midterms even in the face of charges of abuse and corruption. They [say](#) that his District, which includes Staten Island and some of Brooklyn, simply don’t care about the charges, with many feeling that ‘nobody is perfect’.



Heading to New Jersey, on Friday, *National Review’s*

The Campaign Spot [writes](#) that Governor Chris Christie has been the victim of a ‘reckless, partisan’ national media, in the wake of his exoneration by a federal investigation looking into evidence that he knew or directed the closure of lanes on the George Washington Bridge last year. Staying in the Garden State, *Blue Jersey* [writes](#) this week that it is troubling that reforms to introduce cameras for police cars and for police officers was only introduced after an Assemblyman was falsely accused by the police.

Moving to Pennsylvania, *PoliticsPA* [reports](#) on Monday that the state’s Auditor General is to investigate the appropriation of \$48 million by the administration of Governor Tom Corbett for the rollout of the HealthyPA plan, which gives those on low incomes the option of purchasing health insurance from private carriers rather than the state government. The appropriation comes at a time when the state faces a \$1.5 billion budget shortfall and a refusal from the Governor to expand Medicaid.

South

Recent months have seen intense debate in Virginia over the expansion of Medicaid in the state. *Decision Virginia* [reports](#) on Thursday that the state’s General Assembly has killed the Medicaid expansion for its 2014

session, after a compromise measure proposed by a Republican that would have allowed nearly 400,000 Virginians to purchase private health insurance using federal Medicaid funds failed to reach a floor vote.

Heading south, *The Progressive Pulse* [writes](#) this week that according to new Census data, the number of North Carolinians in poverty remains high at one in five (the 11th highest in the country), and that progress towards eliminating poverty is stuck, hampered by few jobs and a boom in low wage work. Across state lines in South Carolina, *FitsNews* [reports](#) that embattled Speaker of the House Bobby Harrell is being supported by the local Republican establishment, who have sent him campaign funds. Harrell was recently indicted for public corruption and then suspended from the state House.

Daily Kos [writes](#) on Monday this week that the GOP in Georgia is 'sweating' as Democrats hold the lead in the state's Senate and Governor races. They say that Democratic candidate leads the GOP nominee 46 to 43 percent for the state's open Senate seat, as Governor Nathan Deal trails Democrat Jason Carter 47 to 44 percent. They say that for both candidates, the path to victory lies with women, African-Americans and independent voters – if they energize these bases, then they should have no problem winning their races.

In the Sunshine State of Florida this week, *SaintPetersBlog* [writes](#) on Monday that the state's Republican Party is poised to seize a veto-proof majority of the state House according to recent polling. They say that the GOP only needs four more seats to take its current majority of 75 to 45 to one that could potentially check Democrat Charlie Crist if he is elected as Governor at the election in November.

Meanwhile, *Daily Kos* [takes](#) an in-depth look at the Louisiana legislature, writing that its politics are just as strange as the state is. They say that the state Senate and House are likely to remain in GOP hands due to redistricting, and also look at the regional divides between conservative seats and Democratic ones.

On Friday, *PoliticusUSA* [covers](#) the race between candidates for Governor, Democrat, Wendy Davis, and Republican Greg Abbott. They say that Abbott is being 'forced' to bus in supporters ahead of a debate to create the false impression of strength. They say that even though Abbott currently leads in the polls, the fact that he has to bring supporters in is a cause for concern for his campaign.

Midwest

This week Michigan's *eclectablog* [ponders](#) why the national Republican Party is giving Governor Rick Snyder's 'hilariously awful' reelection campaign a pass. They write that Snyder's original plan to run on the state as being the 'Comeback Kid' is a dubious one for someone who is the Governor of a state with the country's 3rd worst unemployment rate. He now runs on the (they feel) equally bad slogan: "Michigan's Road to Recovery".

Heading west, Wisconsin was in the news this week. On Friday, *The Brennan Centre for Justice* [looks](#) at how last week, the 7th Court of Appeals decided that the state had to abide by a 2011 voter ID law, that had been blocked since it was signed into law. They say that the appeals panel seems to have ignored the fact that the state has already received nearly 12,000 absentee ballot requests under the prior rules, and that the state board of elections will not have the time or resources to mount an advertising campaign to inform voters of the new ID requirements. Staying in the Badger State, *Red State* looks at the recent accusations of plagiarism against the Democratic candidate for Governor, Mary Burke. They [say](#) that Burke seems to have taken her jobs plan from three prior Democratic gubernatorial candidates, and that it matters because she has used her jobs plan as proof that she is smarter and more qualified to help Wisconsin's economy grow than her opponent, incumbent Governor, Scott Walker. *The Daily Signal*, meanwhile, [writes](#) that Walker has proposed drug testing for those filing for unemployment benefits and food stamps. They say that Walker's bottom line is that taxpayers should not have to pay public assistance for those who cannot pass a drug test.

The state of Iowa is now taking a more progressive attitude towards certain drugs, reports *Bleeding Heartland* this week; they [write](#) that a committee in the state's legislature has voted to recommend that the state reschedule marijuana from a Schedule I drug to a Schedule II drug, meaning that it could be used for medical purposes.

Kansas stayed in the news this week, with *Roll Call's At the Races* [reporting](#) that in the state's Senate race, Democrat Chad Taylor will not appear on the ballot this November after a judge ruled that he could be removed.

Taylor's removal from the ballot had been contested by Kansas' GOP Secretary of State, Kris Kobach. The ruling now means that the independent candidate will have a good chance of beating the incumbent Republican Senator, Pat Roberts.

The western region of North Dakota is booming, as oil exploitation continues to expand. But how much extra state spending is needed in the area? *SayAnythingBlog* writes this week that while population and commerce are exploding, the state can only spend so much given the constraints of labor and the weather. They say that the way that these communities are using the tax dollars they are already getting needs to be looked at closely before more is allocated.

West and Pacific

This week *WyoFile* writes that the opponents of the death penalty are making gains in Wyoming. They say that this week state legislators debated a bill to end capital punishment (as well as one to introduce firing squads), and though the state House and Senate's Judiciary Committee did not sponsor the bill, it still gained some Republican votes.

Heading west to Idaho, *Eye on Boise* writes on Monday that the state may be experiencing 'Otter fatigue' as the GOP Governor, Butch Otter seeks a third term. They write that while polls still show Otter with a large lead against his Democratic challenger, A.J. Balukoff, many reject Otter's education reforms, and if they turn against the Governor, his opponent could still win.

On Sunday, *Blog for Arizona* writes that whoever succeeds the current Republican Governor of the state, Jan Brewer, must repair its reputation, and avoid the future embarrassments that may damage its potential for economic growth. They take a look at the current field of gubernatorial candidates, and find that while Republican Doug Ducey, is likely to defend the state's same sex marriage ban, while Democrat Fred DuVal, is supportive of marriage equality.

This summer saw an initiative from billionaire Tim Draper to divide California into six new states. *Outside the Beltway* reports that Draper's \$5.2 million ballot initiative has been unsuccessful, after election officials determined that he had not provided enough valid voter signatures to qualify. Staying in the Golden State, *Hit & Run* writes that vaccination rates in affluent Los Angeles schools are akin to those in South Sudan, after many parents have decided not to vaccinate their children. They say that this low vaccination rate is leading to rates of whooping cough and measles among children not seen for decades. Finally, *National Review's The Agenda* writes that while many cities have fought against new ride-sharing companies such as Uber and Lyft, Los Angeles is moving to deregulate its taxi market.

Featured image: Idaho Governor Butch Otter Credit: [Jake Putnam](#) (Flickr, [CC-BY-NC-SA-2.0](#))

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