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## REPUBLICAN GOVERNORS

### PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

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#### Energy and Environment

Senators push EPA to pay mine waste spill claims ([The Hill](#)) – Two western GOP senators on Wednesday introduced a bill to force the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to compensate local clean-up efforts following a mine waste spill last year. The legislation, from Sens. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Cory Gardner (R-Colo.) requires the EPA pay for claims related to the Gold King mine waste spill in Colorado last August. Hatch and Gardner introduced the bill as local governments continue to push the EPA for compensation following the spill, which sent 3 million gallons of mine waste into the Animas River. Colorado's La Plata County, for instance received a \$63,000 payment from the EPA this week, but a county commissioner told the Durango Herald officials don't expect to be reimbursed for nearly \$260,000 in personnel, travel and water monitoring expenses.

#### Economic Development

(Arkansas) Bill creates new path for workers' comp ([Arkansas Online](#)) – Gov. Asa Hutchinson wants lawmakers to make changes to the workers' compensation system, including ending the state's decades-old fund that relies on insurance premium taxes on businesses to pay for death and disability claims. Arkansas employers or their insurers currently pay roughly the first \$200,000 of a claim filed either by workers left disabled or by their surviving family members. Payment of the rest of that claim then falls to the state's Workers' Compensation Commission's Death and Permanent Total Disability fund. Arkansas is the last state in the union to maintain such a fund, according to the commission's CEO, Barbara Webb, who said other states have shifted the responsibility of funding such workers' claims onto businesses and their insurers.

New Tech jobs coming to Atlanta ([WSB Radio](#)) - Metro Atlanta's economy is getting a boost, as a California technology company has announced its bringing new jobs to Georgia Tech. Governor Nathan Deal says Keysight Technologies will create more than 200 software engineering jobs, representing an investment of almost \$14 million. Deal says, "Georgia's workforce is among the best in the country. Their talents and skills, paired with Georgia's existing technology infrastructure, offer valuable resources for innovative and growing high-tech companies." Keysight is a leading provider of electronic design and test software, equipment and services. The company will hire software engineers and managers in Atlanta.

Chobani invests \$100 million in Idaho ([KMVT](#)) - According to Chobani, their plant in Twin Falls is the largest in the world, and tomorrow they are opening their doors to the media to show off the plans for their big expansion. This addition is a 100 million dollar incremental investment for the company. Chobani expects it will create more jobs and be a catalyst for economic growth in the region. They will be using the added space to expand production of new and existing products. The chairman and CEO of Chobani says this expansion is a really proud moment for them, and the governor is happy as well. Otter said Chobani's success is setting a great example of regional collaboration between employers and community leaders throughout Idaho.

(South Carolina) Blackbaud adds 300 new jobs while expanding Berkeley County operations ([WCBD](#)) - A big milestone in Berkeley County, as Blackbaud announces they will build a brand new headquarters on Daniel Island, and hire 300 new employees. Governor Nikki Haley sent a recorded greeting to employees of Blackbaud as the company announced a \$154 million dollar investment in a new headquarters and hundreds of new jobs. "It's a great day in South Carolina. Congratulations." Mike Gianoni is Blackbaud's President and CEO. "This is a very big announcement for Blackbaud. We're sort of doubling down on our commitment here. We're growing very fast as a company. And this is a very very large announcement for us." About 1500 of Blackbaud's employees now work for Blackbaud in Charleston. They are looking for those 300 new jobs in many different positions. "It's not just engineering. A lot of times people think about software companies hiring and they think it's only engineers, but given this is corporate headquarters, it's pretty much every department."

#### Public Safety

Hogan plans to sign Noah's Law and police and criminal justice reform bills ([WaPo](#)) – In his final bill-signing ceremony of 2016, Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan (R) plans to sign measures that will change the way drunk drivers are punished and how police are disciplined, as well as another that makes a dramatic shift in how the criminal justice system deals with nonviolent drug offenders. The bills are among 143 pieces of legislation that Hogan will sign Thursday, leaving about 100 more measures still waiting on his action. Hogan has until the end of next week to decide whether to veto the remaining bills or to let them take effect without his signature. Thursday's ceremony is expected to draw dozens of police officers, many of whom pressed lawmakers to approve Noah's Law, a measure that will expand the use of interlock ignitions on drunk drivers. The bill was named for Noah Leotta, a Montgomery County police officer who was killed by a drunk driver while on DUI patrol.

Gov. Snyder signs bill to help protect pets from domestic abusers ([WPBN](#)) - Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder has signed a bill that helps victims of domestic violence and their pets. Gov. Snyder signed House Bill 4478, the PAWS Act, along with a package of three other bills aiming to protect domestic violence victims on May 3. The new law takes effect immediately. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) applauds Gov. Snyder for enacting the bill. The PAWS Act amends the Violence Against Women Act's interstate stalking provisions to make crossing state lines to injure pets a punishable offense. It also adds veterinary care to the list of restitution costs that can be recovered by victims, establishes a federal grant program designed to help domestic violence victims safely house their pets, and expresses a recommendation by Congress that states should include pets in protective orders.

#### Education

Ducey hails two bills for advancing free speech ([The Arizona Republic](#)) - Gov. Doug Ducey on Monday signed two bills that will broaden free-speech rights on college campuses as well as at political and government events. Rep. Anthony Kern's legislation effectively makes the entire campus of a community college or university a free-speech zone, rather than having such activities limited to prescribed areas. Kern, R-Glendale, introduced the legislation based on his experience years ago of seeing a student religious group relegated to a small corner of the Glendale Community College campus when it wanted to hand out literature. Ducey said House Bill 2615 will contribute to a college student's education.

What Happens When You Warn Students About Their Loan Debt? ([Pew Stateline](#)) – What if lowering student debt was as easy as sending students a letter? Indiana University officials say borrowing by undergraduates at the school has dropped 18 percent since 2012. That's when the university began sending students annual letters that estimate their total loan debt and future monthly payments, as part of a push to boost their financial literacy. Inspired by the results at IU, Indiana last year began requiring all colleges that accept state aid to send letters. Nebraska followed with a similar law this spring. Republican Rep. Casey Cox, the author of the Indiana legislation, says he gets phone calls from officials in other states interested in the idea. And U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly, an Indiana Democrat, has proposed requiring the federal Department of Education to keep a list of financial literacy best practices, perhaps including student loan letters.

#### Healthcare

House approves \$622M Zika funding bill ([The Hill](#)) - House Republicans on Wednesday overwhelmingly approved a \$622 million bill to combat the Zika virus, creating a pot of funds about one-third the size requested by the White House. All but four Republicans who cast votes were in favor of the bill, which funds federal research, prevention and treatment efforts for the next six months. The House's bill is about half of the Senate's funding package of \$1.1 billion, which is intended to last through September 2017. The Senate advanced that bill on Tuesday.