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REPUBLICAN GOVERNORS

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Recommended Reads

Texas Agrees on Changes to Voter ID Law ([Roll Call](#))- Texas voters will be able to cast ballots without a required photo identification if they sign an affidavit about why they couldn't get one, under an agreement reached between state officials and voter rights advocates. Lone Star State officials also agreed to spend \$2.5 million on voter education about the change to the 2011 voter photo ID law, once one of the country's strictest, per the agreement filed Wednesday. A federal judge must still approve the agreement. The changes to the law come after a federal appeals court ruled that the state's law has a discriminatory effect on minority voters and must be changed for the election in November. The state's early voting period begins Oct. 24.

High court blocks transgender student from using boys' bathroom ([The Hill](#))- The Supreme Court on Wednesday stopped a court order that would have allowed a transgender student in Virginia to use the boys' bathroom when he returns to school in the fall. The justices granted a request from the Gloucester County School Board to temporarily block the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit's ruling, which found that the student had been discriminated against and required the school to let him use the bathroom of his choice. The shorthanded court ruled 5-3 to temporarily stay the appellate court ruling. Democratic-appointed Justice Stephen Breyer sided with the court's four Republican appointees.

Zika Funding Gone by the End of September, HHS Says ([Roll Call](#))- The Obama administration on Wednesday pushed back against congressional criticism that available funding to combat the Zika virus is not being spent fast enough, claiming all the money on hand for domestic Zika efforts will be exhausted by the end of September. In a letter to senior health and foreign appropriators in both chambers, Sylvia Mathews Burwell, the secretary of Health and Human Services, provided further details of how the department is spending its share of the \$589 million that the administration reprogrammed in April to fight Zika. Roll Call has reported recently that much of that total has yet to be spent, according to information from the Office of Management and Budget. The \$374 million that went to HHS for domestic purposes was split among the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health and the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority. CDC received \$222 million, the bulk of the money, since the agency is "on the front lines of providing assistance to states, territories and localities to fight Zika," she said.

Economic Development

Governor Hutchinson Enters Public-Private Partnership On Tech Accelerators ([KUAR](#))- The state of Arkansas is investing \$1 million in discretionary funds over the next two years in a 50-50 partnership with the financial tech company FIS, to continue a program meant to bolster start-ups in the industry. Governor Asa Hutchinson said he'll also ask the legislature for \$2 million to expand the accelerator concept to industries beyond the financial sector. The Republican governor said the investment and use of state resources like the Arkansas Economic Development Commission is akin to other tech incubation projects he's pursued. Hutchinson has made access to computer coding courses a hallmark of his stump speeches and mentioned this initiative on Wednesday as well. He emphasized that early-phase tech development is a sector that Arkansas has a chance to compete in. The accelerator program, facilitated by the Venture Center, engages 10 tech start-up companies for 12 weeks and provides an initial \$50,000 investment. The state and FIS have committed to keep the program running through 2018.

Michigan, Ontario sign deal to spur auto industry growth ([Detroit Free Press](#))- Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder and Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne signed an agreement Wednesday aimed at helping both regions attract research and development of self-driving cars and spurring overall growth of the industry. Snyder said the agreement is a framework to guide discussions that could lead to specific ways for the two governments to work together. Wynne said the agreement commits both the Canadian province and the State of Michigan to working together even more to compete with other regions with a large automotive presence including the southeastern U.S. and Mexico. Michigan and Ontario must team up to compete against the rest of the world, said Wynne. "The memorandum of understanding we are signing today is an important step forward in creating that partnership," she said.

Job growth helps TN land State of the Year honors ([WBRC](#))- Tennessee received a large endorsement of support for its work in job growth and economics when Southern Business & Development magazine named the Volunteer State as "State of the Year" this week. However, some leaders said there is still much work to be done. After Governor Bill Haslam and Economic and Community Development Commissioner Randy Boyd announced 1,370 job commitments within four days, the state received the news it had been placed on the magazine's list...number one in fact...of top states for the year. "2015 was the best year in economic development in the state's history," Boyd said. "At 25,837 job commitments, Team Tennessee set an all-time job commitment record and we carried that momentum into 2016. We are honored to receive this distinction from Southern Business and Development and thank the magazine for recognizing our achievements throughout Tennessee."

Healthcare

Florida gov offers free Zika test kits for pregnant women ([Ocala Star Banner](#))- Florida Gov. Rick Scott ordered free Zika testing statewide Wednesday to help pregnant women determine whether they've been infected with the mosquito-borne virus, less than a week after health officials announced local transmissions of the virus in a Miami suburb. Scott directed state health officials to make the tests available at county health departments and also said the state would provide additional lab services to handle the expected increase to ensure test results are processed quickly. Wednesday's announcement comes as some doctors have complained they were being forced to ration test kits and turn away pregnant women who were requesting them.

Texas on alert for local Zika, urges precautions ([KCEN](#))- Zika cases have been detected in Florida and increased travel to Brazil for the Summer Olympics, Texas is on high alert for local Zika transmission by mosquito bites and is urging everyone to strictly follow precautions. The Texas response plan is in effect. Texas has reported 93 cases of Zika virus disease – all related to travel abroad to areas with active Zika transmission. No local transmission through mosquito bite has been detected yet in Texas. State efforts have been underway since January to delay and minimize the impact of Zika on Texas. Last week, state health officials briefed Gov. Greg Abbott on the state's response and preparations. Next week the Governor's Task Force on Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response will meet again in Austin to discuss Zika and other issues.

Budget & Tax

Deal's budgeting is a lesson for local officials ([Newnan Times-Herald](#))- August is a key month for taxpayers because it's when the state government starts its budgeting process and when local governments wind up theirs. The heads of state agencies are facing a directive from Gov. Nathan Deal to draft their spending plans without increases. That's despite the fact that state revenues have steadily risen since the last budgeting period. Much of the extra money is to go into the state's reserves to augment the cushion for the next recession, whenever that may come. Without a healthy reserve fund, governments are faced with the prospect of raising taxes in the middle of a recession to cover expenses that can't be cut, like social services to the expanding pool of laid-off workers and those with diminished incomes. Deal is to be commended for holding the reins on state government. He has often said that the job of overseeing the budget doesn't get easier when the economy improves. Instead, the challenge merely shifts from making cuts in lean times to preventing explosive growth in flush times because every agency has a wish list.

Public Safety

South Dakota expands the war against meth ([KELO](#))- The State of South Dakota is doubling down on the meth epidemic. Just days after State Attorney General Marty Jackley announced the 'No Meth Ever' campaign, Governor Dennis Daugaard on Wednesday announced the 'Meth Changes Everything' campaign. "The campaign that we're undertaking will help people to be educated about it and target young people and prevent them from even trying meth," says Governor Daugaard. The campaign is geared at educating high school students and communities across the state about the dangers of meth. South Dakotans are encouraged to take the pledge to stand against meth use by visiting the website [methchangeseverything.com](#). The website provides information about meth use, resources for individuals seeking help and candid stories from recovering meth addicts.

Education

(Florida) State resumes borrowing for education projects ([Tampa Bay Business Journal](#))- Reversing a five-year trend, Gov. Rick Scott and the Florida Cabinet on Tuesday unanimously agreed to borrow \$285 million over the next few years to build and maintain facilities for state universities, colleges and public schools. Following a period of fiscal austerity when Scott vigorously opposed most state borrowing, Tuesday's decision marked the first time since the 2010-11 budget year that the state has approved Public Education Capital Outlay, or PECO, bonds to pay for the construction and maintenance of educational buildings. The funding, which lawmakers included in the 2016-17 budget, will go toward major university projects including \$20 million for the University of Central Florida's downtown Orlando campus, \$13.8 million for a nuclear science building at the University of Florida and \$22.5 million for the University of South Florida's Morsani College of Medicine in Tampa.

Governor Christie Announces Improved Statewide PARCC Results in Year Two ([Cape May County Herald](#))- Governor Chris Christie announced positive gains in the preliminary statewide Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for

College and Careers (PARCC) assessment results in mathematics and English language arts for the 2015-16 school year. Overall, a higher percentage of students met or exceeded expectations – indicating they are on pace to be college and career ready – in nearly all subjects and grade levels. These scores also represent an emerging trend across all socioeconomic groups of a shrinking percentage of students failing to meet expectations or partially meeting expectations. “We are encouraged by the positive gains made by our students on the PARCC assessment,” said Governor Christie. “New Jersey’s educational system is one of the best in the nation, and we are committed to keep pushing for improvements that will continue student success. We pursued the higher-quality assessment because we knew our students were well-positioned to meet the challenge, and these results further validate that approach.”

(New Mexico) Governor announces new school supplies initiative ([KRQE News 13](#))- School-supply drives are being held around the state to make sure kids are all set to kick off the school year. Governor Susana Martinez made the announcement Wednesday afternoon that the state is working with local businesses, non-profits and other groups to collect basic supplies like backpacks and notebooks. Its aim is to help families struggling to afford the costs that come with school starting. The governor urges anyone interested in donating to drop off supplies at one of the participating businesses.

Transportation

(Georgia) Port partnership expands to new industries ([WFXL](#))- A new Cordele Inland Port partnership was announced on Wednesday by Governor Nathan Deal along with other major stakeholders. The Inland Port, which began about three years ago, used to move agricultural products to the Savannah port for export. It has now expanded with the new partnership with Kia Motors. Governor Deal said the new contracts with Kia and other companies, will allow for a two way street of bringing parts and supplies for the automotive industry back from the Savannah port. “Products that are being shipped in by boat will be transported by rail to here in Cordele and from there be distributed to their destinations which of course is Kia and Hyundai which is in Alabama, said Governor Nathan Deal of Georgia. “So the net total of it is, that it’s about 530,000 miles I believe every month of truck traffic that will be eliminated by putting those containers on the railways and bringing them here to Cordele,” he added.