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REPUBLICAN GOVERNORS

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Republican Governors Public Policy Committee
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Taxes and Budget

New Jersey Supreme Court to hear arguments in pension case ([AP](#)) – New Jersey's Supreme Court will hear arguments over whether the state's public pensioners have a contractual right to cost of living increases. The court is set to listen to arguments on Monday, the latest in a long-running fight between the Christie administration and public sector unions over retirement benefits. Gov. Chris Christie and the Democrat-led Legislature agreed to end the pay increases as part of a 2011 deal in which the Republican governor agreed to make payments into the debt-laden pension in return for the cuts. When state revenues fell below expectations, Christie contributed less to the pension than the law required, angering Democrats and unions. But the cost of living adjustment cuts were not restored.

Energy and Environment

(Iowa) Study Shows Governor Water Funding Economically Good ([WHO](#)) – The SAVE for the Future Proposal championed by Governor Branstad announced an economic study that paints the boost to water quality funding in a favorable light. The Iowa State University sponsored study conducted by Dr. Dermot Hayes, Dr. Cathy Kling, and Dr. John Lawrence says the projected spending would be near par to the economic activity generated. The initiative would make \$690 million, 1,150 full-time employment positions, and 2,800 total positions. The study stays conservative with factored in costs by the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy, but adds there could be more economic downstream benefits. Iowa's goal is reducing non-point source nitrogen by 41 percent and phosphorus by 29 percent, which means less nutrients in other states rivers or the Gulf of Mexico. Total benefits could be break even according to the report.

(Maryland) Bill preserves open space funds ([The Daily News](#)) – The original intent of Program Open Space was to allow the state and its local governments to purchase lands for public access and recreation. Funded through a one half of one percent (0.05 percent) fee on real estate transactions, the program pays for preservation so that those who live here have access to open space. Since the program's inception in 1969, the transfer tax has generated millions of dollars annually that has supported many of this state's greatest land acquisitions, public parks and playgrounds, and farmland conservation. It is so popular that a 2016 poll revealed that 87 percent of the citizens of Maryland support Program Open Space, and 73 percent want the funds to be used only for its intent. HB 1464 creates a "lock box" for the Program Open Space Trust Fund where all revenue from the transfer tax would be deposited. As of July 2017, if a governor needs to borrow from the fund during lean times, the money would be repaid from general funds in one-third increments over the next three years. And before the borrowing begins, the governor must present a plan for repayment.

Transportation and Infrastructure

(Arizona) House votes to ban speed cameras on state highways ([The Arizona Capital Times](#)) – The days for photo radar on state roads may be numbered. With little discussion, the state House voted 32-26 on March 10 to make it illegal for the state or local communities to erect speed cameras on any state highway. That covers any road maintained by the state, usually identified by having a route number. SB1241 also would ban cameras to catch those who run red lights. The legislation already has been approved by the Senate. But it needs one more roll-call vote there because the House made a minor change in wording. And if Sen. Debbie Lesko, R-Peoria, can keep supporters of the law on board, the measure will then go to Gov. Doug Ducey.

NJ Transit Labor Standoff Came Down to Retiree Pay ([WSJ](#)) - In the end, the tense negotiations between NJ Transit and its workers came down to a final sticking point: whether wage increases should be retroactive for recent retirees. The unions representing more than 4,200 of the commuter railroad's employees had threatened to shut down the heavily used link to New York City if their demands weren't met. They have worked without a new contract or wage increases for about five years. The standoff pitted them against a Republican governor known for butting heads with labor leaders, one who casts

himself as protector of taxpayers. Friday evening, with a little more than 24 hours before trains would have ground to a halt, NJ Transit's lead negotiator made a final concession, agreeing to the retroactive pay.

Economic Development

Georgia businesses recognized for entering new international markets ([Valdosta Today](#)) – At the annual Go Global Reception, Governor and First Lady Nathan Deal and the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) presented 26 companies with a GLOBE (Georgia Launching Opportunities By Exporting) Award. This state-led awards program highlights companies that entered into a new international market in the previous year. "The ability to remain competitive both domestically and internationally is vital in our ever-changing economy," said GDEcD Commissioner Chris Carr. "In just under a year, 26 companies expanded into 102 international markets – this makes it clear that Georgia is an ideal place for business growth. We congratulate the GLOBE Award winners, value our partnership with them and look forward to continuing our support in their future progress." These companies contributed to the state's continued export successes. In 2015 Georgia exports topped \$38.5 billion and reached 217 countries and territories.

Public Safety

Nebraska pushes to allow ex-drug felons to get food stamps ([AP](#)) – Nebraska is inching closer to allowing people with felony drug convictions to receive food stamps. Lawmakers advanced a measure 31-5 Wednesday to opt out of a federal law making these individuals the only group ineligible for food stamps. Supporters say the ban creates a barrier to rehabilitation and hurts children and family members dependent on offenders who have completed their sentences. Sen. Adam Morfeld of Lincoln, who sponsored the effort, said food stamps provide a stable and independent source of food access, which directly contributes to felons' ability to get back on their feet.

Education

What's Next for SD Teachers' Pay ([Public News Service](#)) – Now that Gov. Dennis Daugaard has approved a package of laws to raise South Dakota's lowest-in-the-nation teacher pay, educators say they're starting work on rolling out the changes. The new laws include a half-cent sales tax increase that will go toward raising teacher salaries to more than \$48,000 a year. Mary McCorkle, president of the South Dakota Education Association, said teachers and the state will be working in the coming weeks to figure out exactly how the money will be divided among schools. The new sales-tax collection will start in June. Other parts of the governor's education overhaul package include incentives for school districts to share resources. The laws also will boost access to e-learning services and create a teacher-mentoring program. McCorkle said all of these changes will help South Dakota's education system attract and retain more teachers.

Healthcare

Indiana lawmakers OK bill to protect Healthy Indiana Plan ([The Indy Star](#)) - State lawmakers approved Thursday a bill preventing Indiana's alternative Medicaid program from being changed without the legislature's approval. The bill also says the state's share of the costs must be restricted, a provision the bill's author said could potentially limit enrollment, which is in direct opposition to federal Medicaid eligibility rules. Supporters say the bill, which Gov. Mike Pence is expected to sign into law, will strengthen Indiana's hand in negotiating with the federal government once the state's temporary permission for the Healthy Indiana Plan (HIP 2.0) expires in 2018. Negotiations start next year, after studies have been completed on how well its unique features are working.

Georgia legislature debates 'Firefighter Cancer' bill ([CBS 46](#)) - A bill is making its way through the state senate that would provide workers compensation benefits to firefighters in Georgia who are battling job-related cancer. Without the bill, supporters say firefighters battling those cancers would lose their jobs and insurance coverage. Frank Martinez is one of those men. He has fought several fires in his 15 years on the job. He and his colleagues are often exposed to toxins that leave them coughing and their voices raspy. "There's been many times when we've looked around and said to each other, "Ah, we just got cancer," said Martinez. "Of course, it was a joke back then." Jim Daws with the Professional Firefighters of Georgia says that lawmakers are beginning to understand the importance of the bill. "All we're asking for is the legislature to recognize that if you're going to send someone in to do a job with a foreseeable consequence as cancer, then you should stand behind them when something like that happens," says Daws.

New restrictions on prescription drugs set to hit Boston area ([WJAR](#)) - Gov. Charlie Baker plans to set new restrictions on painkiller prescriptions and other policies aimed at increasing addiction awareness in the medical community. SouthCoast Today reports the governor has expressed the need for a bill addressing drug addiction. And after more than a month of negotiation, a bill was sent to the governor on Thursday. Included on the bill are limitations on initial opioid prescriptions, and guidelines will allow individuals to receive a lesser amount of painkillers than the amount listed on a prescription. The new legislation will also require medical professionals to undergo training in substance abuse. Gov. Baker now plans to sign the new restrictions into law on Monday, and to put them into effect immediately.

Senate turns to mental health bill ([The Hill](#)) - After the near-unanimous passage of last week's drug abuse bill, the Senate Health Committee is now beginning work on a mental health bill that it also hopes will pass this year. The committee will hold its markup on Wednesday, just a week after introducing the bipartisan measure. The bill diverges sharply from a

years-old House mental health reform bill from Rep. Tim Murphy (R-Pa.), raising questions about how lawmakers will bridge the divide. The Senate's bill is far narrower, though leaders have said it is intended as just a starting point. Provisions from other committees -- such as criminal justice reforms -- are expected to be added down the road. More details on the path forward could come at the markup. Three bills to address the opioid epidemic will also be considered as part of the larger effort.