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## REPUBLICAN GOVERNORS

### PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

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#### Taxes and Budget

Christie: Surplus allows N.J. to lower unemployment tax on businesses ([NorthJersey.com](http://NorthJersey.com)) – New Jersey businesses will see their taxes drop by about \$48 per employee this summer. Governor Christie announced Tuesday that after running a deficit for several years, the account that pays unemployment claims is now well into the black. Christie said the roughly \$1 billion balance in the fund will trigger about \$200 million in cuts to the state unemployment insurance tax on businesses. That means the average business, which has paid about \$700 a year per employee into the fund, will pay about \$652 a year for each worker, the administration said — the first such tax cut since 1998. “Our job is to make it easier and more affordable to live and to work here, not more expensive and burdensome,” Christie said at a news conference at the Jersey City corporate office of J.P. Morgan Chase & Co., the banking giant awarded \$412 million in tax credits by the state to move here from New York City. Christie added that the business tax reduction “allows the folks on both sides – the employer and the employee – to keep more of their money.”

#### Transportation and Infrastructure

Idaho driving test now covers bikes, pedestrians ([AP](http://AP)) – Getting a driver's license in Idaho now requires a little knowledge of those who are also on the road. Since January, everyone taking the driver's license test has had to answer two questions about bicycle and pedestrian safety, according to the Idaho Statesman. The 40-question test is drawn from 88 possible questions on all topics and is randomly generated on Division of Motor Vehicle computers. There are 11 possible bicycle and pedestrian questions and two are guaranteed to be on the test. Information in the driver's manual has not changed. The new questions are a victory for advocates for bicycle and pedestrian safety as they remind motorists that other people use the road as well.

(Nebraska) Highway funding bill moves forward ([KMTV](http://KMTV)) - The state of Nebraska is on the verge of creating a new funding source for highway projects. State Lawmakers voted 48-0 Tuesday to pass a bill creating what's called an infrastructure bank to finance the projects. It would draw \$50 million from the state's cash reserve and use additional money generated from a gas tax increase approved last year. Papillion Senator Jim Smith's bill would support efforts to finish Nebraska's expressway system and repair county bridges. The fund would expire in 2033. Governor Pete Ricketts has identified the bill as one of his top priorities this session.

Energy tax breaks dropped from FAA bill ([The Hill](http://The Hill)) - The Senate is dropping plans to include energy tax breaks in legislation reauthorizing the Federal Aviation Administration after lawmakers were unable to reach a final deal. Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.), chairman of the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, told reporters on Tuesday that the FAA measure will now only contain standard revenue provisions. Democrats had been pressing leadership to attach renewable energy tax breaks they claim were unintentionally left out of a tax extenders package Congress passed in December. They said last week they had a general agreement to add the energy tax breaks to the FAA bill, but had yet to unveil final details. “It just got too complicated and it was taking too long,” Thune said. “A decision was made to go with a clean finance title, the way we've always handled FAA reauthorizations in the past.”

#### Energy and Environment

Plan to Improve Iowa Water Quality Moves to Senate ([WHO TV](http://WHO TV)) – A move to improve Iowa's water quality is now in the hands of state senators. On Monday, the House approved a \$477 million plan to pull money from the state infrastructure fund and taxes on water bills over the next 13 years. However, opponents say that's not nearly enough. Originally, Governor Branstad wanted to divert money from education and spend it on water quality projects. Lawmakers must act quickly as the session is set to adjourn next Tuesday.

#### Public Safety

(Kansas) State leaders call attention to child abuse prevention ([The Hays Post](http://The Hays Post)) – Governor Sam Brownback and

Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt recently spoke to students, parents and staff at Christ the King school, Topeka, about issues of child abuse in the state. "Children are precious, and it's up to all of us to make sure they are safe, happy and protected," said Governor Brownback. "Child abuse is preventable, and there is no excuse that justifies turning away from the problem." In Kansas, DCF received 65,631 reports of child abuse and/or neglect in FY 2015, an increase of about 480 over the previous fiscal year. The agency encourages Kansans to be alert for signs of child abuse and to call the Kansas Protection Report Center (1-800-922-5330) if they believe abuse is occurring. "No child should have to live in fear," DCF Secretary Phyllis Gilmore said. "Each of us has the responsibility of reporting suspected abuse or neglect."

#### Economic Development

Gov. Herbert Signs Bills that Cut State Regulations ([KUER](#)) – Governor Gary Herbert signed more than a dozen bills Tuesday aimed at removing red tape in state government. At a ceremonial signing, Gov. Herbert said this year he challenged the legislature to find ways to streamline the state code. "They responded," he says. "We have 14 bills here today that eliminate 272 lines of code. Some that are just redundant, unnecessary; some maybe even counterproductive." One bill allows dairies to sell both pasteurized and raw milk in their stores. Another bill takes away the requirement that airports be licensed by the state. Several other bills changed requirements for certain agencies to report to legislative committees. Some legislators deemed those reports duplicative and unnecessary. Gov. Herbert says removing red tape in state government can improve efficiency—but it has another benefit too.

#### Education

Governor Bentley Creates Alabama Children's Cabinet ([WTVY](#)) – Governor Robert Bentley on Tuesday announced a statewide effort to streamline services to Alabama's more than 1 million children. The Alabama Children's Cabinet, created by Executive Order 17, will serve as an advisory body in formulating policies, encouraging innovation, and discussing issues critical to the needs of Alabama's children. The Cabinet will align systems of children's programs and services, creating a unified and cohesive delivery of services through a comprehensive approach. "Alabama's children are our future, and we must ensure that their needs are being met just as we do with adults," Governor Robert Bentley said. "Whether it is education, health care, nutrition programs, or other needs, children need someone to advocate for what is best for them. We have put together a great group of individuals, already working hard on children's issues, that has the knowledge and experience necessary to improve the lives of the children of Alabama. The Children's Cabinet will be an important group dedicated to Alabama's children"

(Alabama) Senate committee OKs teacher pay raise, education budget ([The Montgomery Advertiser](#)) - The Senate Finance and Taxation Education committee Tuesday approved a \$6.327 billion Education Trust Fund budget, the largest since 2008, which funds pay raises for teachers and provides additional money to hire new educators and fund transportation. The House unanimously approved the budget last month. The budget provides a four percent raise for teachers making \$75,000 or less; the current state salary schedule tops out at \$63,000, though some districts supplement teachers' pay. Teachers making more than \$75,000 would get a two percent raise. Senate Finance and Taxation Education chairman Arthur Orr, R-Decatur, offered a substitute that included principals and assistant principals in the pay raise. Orr said the raise would allow school systems to do a better job retaining administrative talent.

Pence signs scholarship bill into law ([KPC News](#)) - Gov. Mike Pence last week joined Speaker of the House Brian Bosma, R-Indianapolis, to ceremonially sign House Enrolled Act (HEA) 1002, which establishes the Next Generation Hoosier Educators Scholarship fund. In the fall of 2017, top-performing students who commit to teaching in Indiana for at least five years, could receive up to \$7,500 per year to cover college tuition as they pursue their degree. The Governor signed HEA 1002, which goes into effect July 1, into law on March 22. "This bipartisan initiative encourages our best and brightest students to consider teaching in Indiana classrooms as a lifelong career," said Pence. "I appreciate the efforts of Speaker Bosma and the Indiana General Assembly in moving this measure as we look to attract top-performing students to the teaching profession in Indiana."

#### Healthcare

Florida hospitals made to show prices under new law ([WWSB](#)) - Go into any store to make a purchase, and you'll likely find a price tag. But you may be hard pressed to find information on what hospitals charge, because hospitals don't post their prices. That's about to change. Florida Governor Rick Scott signed a bill into law that addresses hospital transparency. HB 1175, the Transparency in Health Care Bill will be in effect July 1st of 2016. Hospitals and insurers will be required to make available information which can be used by consumers to make health care decisions based on cost and quality.

Kentucky Governor Bevin Signs Bill Ensuring Patient Access to Interchangeable Biologic Medicines ([Business Wire](#)) - The Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO) and Kentucky Life Science Council (KLSC) commend Governor Matt Bevin for signing critical legislation to create a pathway for the substitution of interchangeable biologic medicines. Governor Bevin signed Senate Bill 134 this week, following passage in both the Kentucky Senate and House earlier this month. The policies outlined in the bill align with BIO's principles on biologic substitution, therefore BIO and KLSC support this important legislation and are grateful to Governor Bevin for his leadership on this issue.