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Taxes and Budget

Branstad approves state budget ([The Forest City Summit](#)) – Gov. Terry Branstad said June 2 he thinks state lawmakers crafted a “difficult” but “responsible” \$7.35 billion state budget, to which the governor gave rare, full approval late the week of May 24. Branstad also said his budget vetoes from the previous year, which sparked strong backlash and a call for state lawmakers to override the governor, did not factor into his decision this year to make light use of his veto pen. In fact, Branstad suggested those 2015 vetoes made clear what kind of budget state legislators were to send him in 2016. “Maybe the message got across that we’re not going to accept one-time expenditures,” Branstad said Thursday at the Iowa Capitol. “And thank God we didn’t.” Branstad said if he had not vetoed the extra spending in 2015 — including \$56 million for public school infrastructure projects, \$6.3 million for the state’s three public universities and \$8 million to keep open two state mental health institutes — the budget crafted this year would have been even more difficult.

Energy and Environment

House unanimously passes pipeline safety bill ([The Hill](#)) – The House on Wednesday passed a bill to reauthorize the federal pipeline safety oversight board. Members attached their bill re-upping the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) to a Senate bill passed earlier this year doing the same thing. The measure now goes back to the Senate. The bill passed unanimously, and both the ranking Republican and Democrat on the House Energy and Commerce Committee praised it on Wednesday. “We promised action, and today, I am proud that we have a bipartisan agreement that will make a real difference,” said Chairman Fred Upton (R-Mich.). The legislation makes changes to PHMSA safety policies, including a push to add more transparency to the regulatory process. It also gives the Department of Transportation more power to issue emergency energy pipeline shutdown orders and requires a study of pipeline operators’ management plans.

House votes to delay ozone rule ([The Hill](#)) – The House on Wednesday passed legislation to block a major Obama administration rule on ozone pollution despite a veto threat from the White House. The bill, from Rep. Pete Olson (R-Texas) would delay the implementation of the ozone standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in October. It passed 234-177, with seven Democratic votes. It would also slow down the review schedule for EPA air pollutant rules and give regulators the chance to consider cost — not just public health impacts — when reviewing those rules. Republicans say the bill is necessary to prevent local governments from falling into “nonattainment,” a designation that they were unable to reduce ozone levels below those set by the EPA. Such a designation will endanger jobs, they say, as would the steps necessary for businesses to reduce their pollution fast enough to bring down ozone levels.

Transportation and Infrastructure

Gov. Nikki Haley signs roads bill into law ([WTFF](#)) – Gov. Nikki Haley signed the roads bill into law Wednesday. The S. 1258 bill replaces General Assembly selection of transportation commissioners with gubernatorial appointment. Haley said in a press release Wednesday, “The funding components in S.1258 demonstrate that the consistent and prioritized use of taxpayer dollars lead to significant investments in transportation. While this funding stream is not of the magnitude or sustainability to address the long-term needs of our highway system, it is true that we have taken a step forward. It is also true that we must find a permanent fix to funding our roads and bridges, the type of fix that does not exist in this legislation.”

Economic Development

Gov. Rick Scott heading for Louisiana to poach businesses ([The Tampa Bay Times](#)) - Hoping to capitalize on Louisiana’s budget woes, Florida Gov. Rick Scott is planning a trade mission to that state next week to try to convince businesses there to move to the Sunshine State. His visit comes after Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards, a Democrat, called the Republican-led Legislature back for a special session on Monday to reduce tax breaks and raise other revenues to plug a \$600 million budget shortfall. Already this year, Louisiana has raised its sales taxes and increased taxes on cigarettes and alcohol and reduced other tax exemptions for various businesses. “As Governor Edwards continues to rally behind tax increases and bad business policies, we stand ready to help Louisiana companies grow and create jobs in Florida,” Scott said.

in announcing his trade mission. "Florida has added over one million new jobs and our job growth rate is growing almost 60 percent faster than the national average. Many Louisianans already vacation in Florida, and they will save more of their money by moving their businesses to our state."

Gov. Scott announces new tech jobs in Jacksonville via randrr ([WTLV](#)) - Governor Rick Scott announced the creation of more than 200 new tech jobs in Jacksonville on Wednesday. Gov. Scott made the announcement at the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce. The positioning of the new jobs is the result of a \$9 million capital investment by the state. randrr, a digital platform that connects potential employees with employers, will house roughly 200 new workers, according to Gov. Scott. "We are excited to welcome randrr to Jacksonville and celebrate the company's creation of 200 new jobs," Governor Scott said. "randrr chose to establish its new offices in Florida over several other locations across the country, including Silicon Valley and New York, because of our talented workforce and focus on STEM education."

(Maryland) Clinical-Stage Vaccine Company to Expand, Add 850 New Local Jobs ([The Rockville Patch](#)) - Novavax, a clinical-stage vaccine company that designs products to prevent a broad range of infectious diseases, announced plans this week to expand its presence in Montgomery County, including adding as many as 800 new jobs. "This expansion, along with the addition of 850 new jobs, is a win for hardworking Marylanders and our state as a whole," Gov. Hogan said. "Innovative companies like Novavax — that choose to grow their business right here in Maryland — underscore our administration's commitment to strengthening our economy."

Utah has best state economy with high marks for investment in workforce, infrastructure, report says ([The Deseret News](#)) — Utah has the best state economy in the U.S., according to a report published Monday by WalletHub, a national financial research and consulting organization. But when it comes to performance and overall economic health, Utah outranks most other states in metrics such as GDP growth, the percentage of fastest-growing firms, business startup activity and jobs in high-tech industries, the report states. It's good news, but it comes as little surprise to many Utahns seeing the benefits of investments that were made more than a decade ago, as well as current policies that make for a business-friendly economy. "It's in our DNA as a people — we're a very entrepreneurial state," said Natalie Gochmour, associate dean of the David Eccles School of Business and director of the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute at the University of Utah.

Education

(Michigan) Senate approves \$617 million plan for DPS bailout ([WLNS](#)) - Both the house and the senate approved the \$617 million plan to bail out the failing Detroit school system. It's now heading to Governor Snyder for his signature. The house gave its approval around 11:30 p.m. while the senate voted on it after midnight. The bailout narrowly passed in both cases. The plan will split the Detroit School District in two. The old district would retain the hundreds of millions in debt while the new district would handle education. DPS has been under state management for the past seven years and the bailout would return control to a locally elected school board.

Gov. Bill Haslam signs transformative college overhaul ([WBIR](#)) - Gov. Bill Haslam signed his plan to overhaul college governance Wednesday, laying the groundwork for a summer that promises to transform the landscape of public higher education in Tennessee. "This is a historic day," Haslam told a friendly audience in the university's nursing building. "We're here today to launch this movement to let great universities like Tennessee Tech have their own leadership and initiative focused on achieving the full potential of that university." Under the FOCUS plan, the six universities in the Board of Regents system, including Tennessee Tech, Tennessee State and Middle Tennessee State universities, will get their own boards that will oversee tuition, hiring and firing of presidents and other issues. The Board of Regents will continue to oversee the state's network of 13 community colleges and 27 technical colleges.

States Race to Protect Student Data ([Pew Stateline](#)) — What if a child's performance in a fifth-grade gym class could be used to set the rate for a life insurance policy when they're 50? What if a computer program advertised interactive tutoring when your child struggled with long division? Privacy advocates worry these scenarios could become reality as schools increasingly rely on outside companies to collect, manage and analyze the massive amount of data gleaned from standardized tests, transcripts, individual education programs and even cafeteria purchases. With few protections on the privacy of student data beyond a decades-old federal law, states have been scrambling to regulate how student data is collected and stored. More recently they've begun governing how third-party companies can use student information. In 2014, 21 states passed 26 student data laws mostly targeted at states and school districts. Many echoed a 2013 Oklahoma law that requires state approval to release student data and mandates that only aggregated data — no data tied to individual students — can be released.

Healthcare

New Mexico Department of Health Announces Decrease in Drug Overdose Deaths in 2015 ([KRWG](#)) - Today, the New Mexico Department of Health announced that drug overdose deaths in the state decreased by 9 percent last year. Preliminary mortality data from 2015 shows that the number of drug overdose deaths among New Mexicans dropped from 540 in 2014 to 492 in 2015. New Mexico has been recognized as a leader in innovative policies addressing prescription drug overdose by being one of two states that has implemented 10 out of 10 promising strategies according to the Trust for America's Health. Since taking office, Governor Susana Martinez has implemented a comprehensive approach to fighting drug abuse in New Mexico, particularly regarding prescription drug abuse and fatalities. The Governor signed legislation this

spring that requires opioid prescribers to check New Mexico's Prescription Monitoring Program the first time they prescribe these drugs to an individual, and to check the system every three months for repeat prescriptions in order to reduce drug seeking.

Congress heading toward Zika conference ([The Hill](#)) - Lawmakers are heading toward a battle over how much money to spend fighting the Zika virus. The Senate agreed by a voice vote Wednesday evening to go a joint House-Senate conference committee on a wide-ranging appropriations bill that includes \$1.1 billion in unpaid-for funding to combat the Zika virus. "We all agree that the Zika virus is real threat and needs to be addressed," Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (Ky.) said Wednesday. "We're now ready to go to conference and complete a final bill." Lawmakers will need to find a way to reconcile the Senate bill with the \$622 million in funding passed by the House, where Republicans have balked at supporting the larger amount. The House version also uses funding originally meant to combat the Ebola virus to pay for the Zika virus efforts.