

**From:** The Council of State Governments <data@csg.org>  
**To:** Kester, Tonykester@aging.sc.gov  
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**Subject:** Introducing The Current State, CSG's new weekly enewsletter

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**Issue: 1**

**January 26, 2015**

### **Another Cliffhanger for Transportation Funding?**

A new year, same old problems for state transportation directors. The federal Highway Trust Fund is expected to run out of money May 31 and the extension of MAP-21, the funding mechanism for transportation, will expire. That's a bad time for state transportation departments—highway construction season starts right about then.

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### **How the President's Initiatives will Impact States**

President Obama laid out an ambitious plan focused on "middle-class economics" in his State of the Union address last week. Many of his plans to boost income and mobility for middle-class Americans—including tax reform and workforce development initiatives—will directly impact state governments. Obama also focused on other issues, like infrastructure and trade.

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### **Top 5 Issues**

As legislators kick off the new year, they'll be facing issues in every policy area that could have long-ranging consequences. CSG senior fellows Katherine Barrett and Richard Greene share their **Top 5 issues** facing state policymakers, while CSG policy experts have looked at what is happening in the states to compile Top 5 lists in **fiscal and economic development, education, workforce development, transportation, rural, energy and environment, international, health and federalism** issues.

### **States Take Global Approach to Higher Education**

States know increased international exposure can contribute to economic growth and increased trade and foreign investment. Several states are formalizing their approach to attracting foreign students and encouraging foreign exchange in strategic economic and workforce development plans. This eCademy session at **2 p.m. Jan. 27** will identify trends in state government activity supporting internationalization and discuss why this offers an opportunity for states.

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### **State of the States: What's on Governors' Minds?**

As governors across the country prepare to give their state of the state addresses, look back over the past three years to see the big issues they discussed in previous addresses. Education has topped the discussion by governors during that time, followed by economic development.

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### **Same-Sex Marriage Bans**

The U.S. Supreme Court has said "we will" to considering the constitutionality of state same-sex marriage bans. The court will decide whether states can prohibit same-sex marriage and refuse to recognize same-sex marriages lawfully performed out of state.

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## Minimum Wage Watch 2015

While Congress continues to debate raising the federal minimum wage, states aren't sitting still on the issue. In fact, minimum wage workers in 20 states got a raise Jan. 1 because of new laws or changes brought by state wages being linked to the consumer price index.

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Founded in 1933, The Council of State Governments is our nation's only organization serving all three branches of state government. CSG is a region-based forum that fosters the exchange of insights and ideas to help state officials shape public policy. This offers unparalleled regional, national and international opportunities to network, develop leaders, collaborate and create problem-solving partnerships.

**National Association of State Technology Directors (NASTD) Southern Region Seminar**  
March 9-12, Savannah Marriott Riverfront, Savannah, Ga.

**National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) 2015 Mid-Year Forum**  
March 13-17, Hilton Alexandria Mark Center, Alexandria, Va.

## CSG welcomes our new national officers and committee chairs!

**Gov. Brian Sandoval**, Nevada, 2015 CSG National President

**Sen. Carl Marcellino**, New York, 2015 CSG National Chair

**Sen. Beau McCoy**, Nebraska, 2015 CSG National Chair-elect

**Sen. Kelvin Atkinson**, Nevada, 2015 CSG National Vice Chair

**Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin**, West Virginia, 2015 CSG National Immediate Past President

**Sen. Mark Norris**, Tennessee, 2015 CSG National Immediate Past Chair

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**House Speaker David Ralston**, 2015 CSG South Chair

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