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To: RGPPCRGPPC@rgppc.org
Date: 7/28/2016 9:04:25 AM
Subject: RGPPC Policy & Press



REPUBLICAN GOVERNORS

PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

Policy & Press | July 28, 2016

Economic Development

(Florida) Amazon confirms new facility, hiring 1,500 in Jacksonville ([FCN](#))- Jacksonville will be home to Amazon's newest distribution center, the company confirmed Wednesday. The company will build a large facility on the city's Northside, hiring more than 1,500 people full-time. It will be built at International Airport Boulevard and Pecan Park Road. The property was recently sold for \$15 million. Governor Rick Scott said in a statement, "It is great news that Amazon continues to invest in Florida and create new jobs for our families. I look forward to their continued success in Jacksonville and across our state."

Governor McCrory signs Farm Act of 2016 ([Mountain Xpress](#))- Governor Pat McCrory was joined by Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler, state legislators and agriculture leaders from throughout North Carolina today as he signed the Farm Act of 2016. "This is a great day for agriculture and our entire economy," said Governor McCrory. "This Farm Act will support North Carolina agriculture and farmers in our state and build on our accomplishments to make the industry even larger." Among the many provisions, the Farm Act of 2016 will help the state respond to agricultural emergencies. The bill also gives North Carolina school districts the ability to prioritize purchasing food grown and raised in North Carolina. In addition, regulations are streamlined for construction, installation, repair, replacement or alteration of farm structures.

Gov. Haley: Daimler expansion a 'huge thing for SC' ([WACH](#))- The ceremony for the Daimler groundbreaking in North Charleston was packed wall-to-wall Wednesday. There was also big news on production and jobs. The \$500 million plant will build Mercedes-Benz and Freightliner vans. It will also bring 1,300 jobs. But the good news doesn't stop with the plant. The Daimler North Charleston facility is expected to also create a need for more than 400 jobs with suppliers. "It's a huge thing for South Carolina to be chosen as the only North American site for a new facility," Governor Nikki Haley said at the ceremony Wednesday. Haley was one of many state level and local leaders in attendance at the event. She thanked current workers for Daimler who made the expansion a possibility, and she said it's South Carolina's job to "wrap our arms around this company and not let go."

Budget & Tax

Governor Bentley announces special session to discuss lottery ([WAAY](#))- Governor Robert Bentley announced a special session Wednesday morning via video. In the video announcement, Bentley says he plans to travel the state to discuss his plans of bringing a lottery to Alabama. Bentley projects bringing the lottery to Alabama will bring in \$225 million a year. "I will present to the legislator simple, clean and transparent legislation that creates a lottery with no other gambling included," he says. He is also asking for a statewide lottery commission to hold the lottery accountable once it's up and running completely. He adds the sole purpose of a lottery is to solve the state's financial crisis. "It is time to stop supporting other states budgets and keep our money at home to solve our own problems," says Governor Bentley.

Fallin considers special session to talk pay raises for teachers ([Fox 23](#))- Governor Mary Fallin said she is considering a special session to address pay raises for public school teachers. Fallin said \$140.8 million initially cut from agency allocations midyear can now be allocated. "I've begun discussions with legislative leaders to consider calling lawmakers to return in special session to address the issue of teacher pay raises. I continue to support a pay raise for teachers, having called on lawmakers at the beginning of this year's session to approve a teacher pay raise. Lawmakers considered it, but this was an extremely difficult budget year and a funding agreement couldn't be reached. With this available money, I am again asking lawmakers to act on this important issue of providing a raise for every teacher in this state." Fallin said the money is available because General Revenue Fund allocation reductions of a recent revenue failure were deeper than necessary. Without a special session, the \$140.8 million would be distributed equally among all agencies receiving general revenue allocations.

Good Government

Ideas roll in for Bevin's red tape initiative ([Courier-Journal](#))- Since Gov. Matt Bevin launched his Red Tape Reduction Initiative three weeks ago, people have submitted around 385 suggestions on regulations that could be revised or repealed. Public engagement is key for this long-term endeavor, said Jessica Ditto, Bevin's communications director. About half of the recommendations the administration has received so far came from businesses while the rest came from residents and state employees. Ditto said the Bevin administration wants to eliminate bureaucratic rules that burden businesses but is committed to ensuring the state doesn't drop requirements that protect the health and safety of Kentuckians. State cabinets already are analyzing many of the rules that fall under their jurisdiction. "Our cabinets are very motivated to deal with these outdated regulations," she said. The Governor's Office is reviewing submissions from the public as they roll in and sending them to the appropriate cabinet for analysis, said Nate Haney, deputy secretary of Bevin's executive cabinet.

Healthcare

Gov. Bevin appealing court order dismissing Planned Parenthood lawsuit ([WHAS](#))- Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin is appealing a court order dismissing its lawsuit against Planned Parenthood. That lawsuit kept the clinic from providing abortions. The state claims those abortions were being done illegally without a license. Planned Parenthood said it was told by members of the previous administration it had to perform the procedures to get a license.

Gov. Martinez, Walgreens team up to combat prescription drug abuse ([KRQE News 13](#))- Governor Susana Martinez is teaming up with Walgreens Thursday in an effort to stop prescription pill abuse. The drug company will unveil a new "safe medication disposal kiosk" at its location on Menaul and Eubank. Anyone will be able to drop off their unused prescriptions there at no cost all year long. The company says it will open four more here in New Mexico.

Gov. Abbott receives briefing from DSHS Commissioner Hellerstedt on Texas' Zika preparedness and response plan ([State of Reform](#))- Governor Greg Abbott today met with Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Commissioner John Hellerstedt to receive an update on Texas' Zika Preparedness and Response Plan and discuss the next steps in combatting the virus. During the meeting, Governor Abbott was briefed on the Response Plan, DSHS' coordination with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Texas Task Force on Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response's involvement in the State's efforts. "The State of Texas is continuing to work with both local and federal partners to implement our Zika Response Plan," said Governor Abbott. "I would like to thank Commissioner Hellerstedt for coordinating this joint effort to ensure that Texas is prepared for any and all cases of local transmission. Texas remains at the forefront in the nationwide effort to combat the Zika virus."

Education

Snyder order creates literacy commission ([Michigan Radio](#))- A state panel will be named soon to look into improving Michigan's dismal literacy rate. Governor Rick Snyder signed an executive order Wednesday creating the new PreK-12 Literacy Commission. Michigan has one of the nation's worst literacy rates. It's ranked 40th when it comes to student literacy in the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Anna Heaton is the governor's press secretary. She says trend is moving in the wrong. "We're not getting better," she says. "We're actually falling further behind, so we need to improve our reading literacy rate so we can be more competitive for jobs in the future."

(North Carolina) Charter school companies to take over low-performing schools ([The News & Observer](#))- The governor's office on Tuesday announced a number of recent bill signings by Gov. Pat McCrory, including a statewide district for five low-performing schools that is meant to improve student proficiency. House Bill 1080 establishes the new district for schools that will be turned over to charter school management companies and overseen by a superintendent chosen by the state Board of Education. The five schools will be selected from a pool of struggling schools. The law requires that charter operators who want to work in the district must show they know what they're doing and that they have a plan for "dramatically improving student achievement." Legislators who supported the plan said North Carolina's program would have more safeguards than neighboring Tennessee, where a similar district has not improved student performance after three years.

Veteran Initiatives

Massachusetts Governor Signs Act Granting Paid Leave to Veterans Participating in Veterans Day Activities and Adds "Veteran Status" As a Protected Class ([Lexology](#))- On July 14, 2016, Governor Baker signed into law An Act Relative to Housing, Operations, Military Service, and Enrichment, known as "The HOME Act." Among other things, the HOME Act requires employers to provide paid leave to qualified veterans on Veterans Day under certain conditions. The HOME Act also adds "veteran status" as a protected class under the Massachusetts Fair Employment Practices Act. Paid Leave for Participation in Veterans Day Activities. Before the enactment of the HOME Act, Massachusetts law required employers to grant a paid or unpaid leave of absence to qualifying veterans who wished to participate in a Veterans Day or Memorial Day exercise, parade, or service. M.G.L. 149 § 52A 1/2. The HOME Act amends the law to require employers with 50 or more employees to grant said leave of absence on Veterans Day with pay, provided that the employee provides "reasonable notice" for such leave. As written, the HOME Act does not require employers to grant paid leave on Memorial Day.