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REPUBLICAN GOVERNORS

PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

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Governor Nikki Haley named to Time's 100 most influential list ([TIME](#)) - For South Carolina, 2015 was one of the most challenging years on record. Whether dealing with the hate-filled shootings of the Charleston Nine at Mother Emanuel AME Church, the removal of the Confederate battle flag flying over statehouse grounds, the police shooting of Walter Scott or a 1,000-year flood, South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley led with determination, grace and compassion.

Energy and Environment

Governor Pete Ricketts Signs Bill Into Law To Protect Niobrara River ([KTC](#)) –On April 18th, Governor Pete Ricketts signed Legislative Bill (LB) 1038 into law furthering the process of protecting the flow of water in the Niobrara River. LB1038, introduced by District 43 Senator Al Davis, allows for the transfer of the water rights associated with the Nebraska Public Power District's (NPPD) Spencer Dam to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (Commission) and the Niobrara River Basin Alliance (NRBA). Under the legislation, the current hydropower use can be changed to an instream basin management use that will continue to protect flows for fish, wildlife, recreation and agriculture and will allow more flexibility in the implementation of integrated management plans. Such actions could include using excess stream flows for enhancing groundwater recharge, or retiming excess flow using storage to release water into the river during periods of high water demand. Once changed, the water rights will then be transferred to the Commission and the NRDs.

Transportation and Infrastructure

(Maine) New law aims to make roads safer for motorcyclists ([WGME](#)) - Governor Paul LePage has signed a new bill into law, to try and make roads safer for motorcycle riders. Last year, 32 motorcyclists were killed in crashes on Maine roads. This new law takes effect immediately. Before, Mainers had two ways they could get a motorcycle endorsement on their driver's license. Now, there's only one, and it will end up costing Mainers more money. At 32 deaths, 2015 was the deadliest year for motorcycle riders since 1991. Police say 27-year-old Christopher Moreno from Poland was killed when an alleged drunk driver failed to yield a right of way and hit Moreno's motorcycle head-on with his pickup truck. Moreno's sister, Christie Green, says her brother loved to ski, fix cars and ride his motorcycle. Under the new law, the Maine Motorcycle Safety Education Course will no longer be recognized by the BMV. That was an 8-hour classroom-only course that allowed riders to get a permit and later take a road test.

Governor Fallin signs insurance verification reform ([KTUL](#)) - House Bill 2473 has now been signed into law, keeping some motorists with insurance from receiving a fine when they fail to carry their insurance verification form. This now-law removes the penalty for failure to show proof of insurance during a traffic stop or any other time an officer needs to verify a person's insurance. This is because law enforcement currently have access to a person's insurance coverage when they look up the vehicle's tag or identification number. The legislation still allows a fine instances where law enforcement cannot verify insurance through a database.

New Apps Help Taxpayers Report Waste, Fraud and Abuse ([Pew Stateline](#)) – "Smartphones are becoming a ubiquitous tool, and I think we need to meet people where they are," said Dave Yost, the state auditor who in 2014 introduced a fraud app in Ohio. The cost of developing the apps varies. Ohio was able to develop its app in-house, while Richmond spent about \$10,000 for outside help. Pittsburgh's app was unveiled this month. It cost \$20,000 to develop and will cost \$3,000 for upkeep, but it also allows users to access a range of databases on city contracts and campaign contributions.

Public Safety

Oklahoma can consider PTSD in sentencing veterans under proposed law ([Reuters](#)) – An Oklahoma bill that allows judges to take into consideration a diagnosis of PTSD for veterans unanimously passed the state Senate on Tuesday, adding to a series of U.S. laws seeking to address mental illness among military veterans. Oklahoma House Bill 2595 allows

judges to take into account a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a mitigating factor when sentencing veterans who have been diagnosed with the illness. "This is neither a Democratic or Republican issue, but just something we should have for veterans," said state Representative Richard Morrisette, a sponsor of the legislation and a Democrat in the Republican-dominated Oklahoma legislature.

Economic Development

Texas Drawing Millions Moving from Other States ([The Texas Tribune](#)) – While state lawmakers and some presidential candidates have placed a spotlight on those coming to Texas from other countries, the Lone Star State has become the top destination for migrants of the domestic variety. In recent years, people moving to Texas from other states — rather than from other countries — have played a key role in the state's population growth, according to a new analysis by the Office of the State Demographer. From 2005 to 2013, an estimated 5.9 million people moved to Texas, and 4.8 million of those came from one of the other 49 states. Put another way: In that time period, Texas grew by an average of 345 people per day, accounting for people who moved here from other states and those who left Texas.

Education

(Alabama) Lawmakers approve teacher raise, largest education budget since recession ([AL.com](#)) – The Alabama Legislature today overwhelmingly passed the state's largest education budget and largest pay raise for school employees since the Great Recession. The budget calls for spending \$6.3 billion from the Education Trust Fund on K-12 schools, community colleges, four-year universities and other programs, 5.6 percent more than this year. Lawmakers voted to give teachers and most other education employees a 4 percent cost of living raise. Educators have had one cost of living raise since 2007, a 2 percent hike three years ago. The budget and pay raise bill were sent to Gov. Robert Bentley, who issued statements praising both.

Healthcare

Arkansas GOP Governor Uses Veto to Save Medicaid Program ([ABC News](#)) - Gov. Asa Hutchinson on Thursday effectively saved Arkansas' first-in-the-nation hybrid Medicaid expansion by voiding part of a budget bill that would have ended the subsidized insurance for more than 250,000 poor people. The Republican governor vetoed a provision in the Medicaid budget that ordered a Dec. 31 end to the program, which uses federal funds to purchase private insurance for the poor. "A lot of courage on all sides of this issue led to this result today," Hutchinson told reporters after issuing the veto. Arkansas was the first state to win approval for its hybrid Medicaid program, created three years ago as an alternative to expanding Medicaid under President Barack Obama's health care law.

(Iowa) New law may help some small town pharmacies stay open ([Radio Iowa](#)) - A new, digital option may help some small town pharmacies stay open in Iowa when a bill Governor Branstad signed into law today takes effect July 1. "It is important that we deliver health care in more modern ways and more local settings," Branstad says. The legislation expands a pilot project and will let so-called "tele-pharmacy" services go statewide in communities with more than 500 residents. "Many Iowa towns including Zearing, West Liberty, Brooklyn and State Center have already taken advantage of the pilot program, but we know many more would like to have a tele-pharmacy," Branstad says.