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REPUBLICAN GOVERNORS

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Taxes and Budget

Mississippi governor signs \$300 million bill ([WTVB](#)) – Gov. Phil Bryant has signed a bill authorizing Mississippi to issue \$250 million in bonds this year and another \$50 million in the future. Bryant signed House Bill 1729 on Tuesday, and it becomes law July 1. The projects must be approved by the three-member state Bond Commission before the state can issue bonds to take on long-term debt. The commissioners are the governor, the state treasurer and the attorney general. The bill includes \$69.2 million for construction projects at universities, \$25 million for community colleges and \$45 million for Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula. It also includes \$16.6 million to complete two history museums in Jackson that are scheduled to open for the state bicentennial in 2017.

Oklahoma governor signs online Internet tax proposal ([AP](#)) - Gov. Mary Fallin has signed legislation that supporters say will help the state collect more revenue from online purchases. Fallin signed legislation Tuesday that requires retailers to notify their Oklahoma customers they may owe taxes on their online purchases when filing state tax returns. The bill would also require retailers to provide Oklahomans with an annual report of how much they spent on online purchases. The Oklahoma Tax Commission says it doesn't expect the legislation to have an impact on next year's budget, but officials estimate the state loses \$150 million annually in unpaid sales and use taxes on mostly Internet purchases. Supporters say the law will help local retailers who struggle to compete with online competitors.

Energy and Environment

Governor Branstad Signs Blender Pump Legislation ([WNAX](#)) - Monday, Iowa Governor Terry Branstad signed into law the Renewable Fuels Infrastructure Funding legislation. The money goes toward ethanol and biodiesel blender pumps. Iowa Renewable Fuels Association Policy Director Grant Menke says this measure gives the state's consumers more fuel choices and benefits the economy, as well as the environment. He says the popularity of the program has been sparked by the USDA's Biofuels Infrastructure Partnership program. The Iowa Renewable Fuels Infrastructure program offers cost share grants to Iowa retailers wishing to upgrade fueling infrastructure to offer registered E15, E85 and biodiesel blends.

House, Senate leaders 'finalizing' chemical bill compromise ([The Hill](#)) – Leading lawmakers in the House and Senate said Tuesday evening they are in the final stages of hammering out a compromise bill to reform federal chemical safety standards. After months of negotiation, representatives of House Republicans, Senate Republicans and Senate Democrats said a final deal is near to reconcile the different measures the chambers passed last year to reform the nearly 40-year-old Toxic Substances Control Act. "House and Senate negotiators are finalizing a TSCA reform bill that represents an improvement over both the House and Senate bills in key respects," the lawmakers said in a joint statement. "Current federal law only provides very limited protection. We are hopeful that Congress will be taking action soon on reforming this important environmental law."

Transportation and Infrastructure

Gov. Kasich signs \$2.6 billion construction budget ([AP](#)) – Gov. John Kasich has signed a \$2.6 billion capital budget bill that includes funding for public works, community and school projects over the next two years. The Blade in Toledo reports the budget signed into law on Tuesday provides \$650 million for K-12 schools and \$500 million for public works projects. The state Department of Rehabilitation and Correction received \$150 million. Community projects received \$160 million. The budget provides money for improvements to higher education institutions, including the University of Toledo, Bowling Green State University and Kent State University.

Economic Development

Kentucky takes swing at red tape surrounding regulation of boxing, wrestling and mixed martial arts in state ([WDRB](#)) – Kentucky has delivered a knockout blow to the state agency regulating boxing, wrestling and mixed martial

arts (MMA). Governor Bevin abolished the Kentucky Boxing and Wrestling Authority in hopes of bringing larger events to the Commonwealth. In the home of Muhammad Ali, and the state that trained John Cena, the boxing and wrestling industries are strangled, some say, by state regulation. "One of the big issues and archaic rules Kentucky had was that all wrestling had to take place in the four squares of the ring," said Louisville Metro councilman David James. "Coming through the crowd would have gotten you a fine," James added. "It was a head-scratcher for me."

Public Safety

Gov. Baker, AG Healey Announce Campaign To Raise Awareness Of 911 Good Samaritan Law ([CBS Boston](#)) - Governor Charlie Baker and Attorney General Maura Healey announced a \$250,000 campaign to remind people of Massachusetts' Good Samaritan law that could save the lives of people suffering drug overdoses. "No one should die simply because a friend or a stranger is afraid to pick up the phone and call 911 for help," said Healey at a press conference at the State House Tuesday. The law, signed in 2012, protects someone from being prosecuted if they simply dial 911 when they witness someone suffering from an overdose. "The law provides protection to witnesses who seek medical assistance for someone—or themselves—who are experiencing a drug-related overdose," said Gov. Baker.

Elder Abuse Legislation Signed Into Law By Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam ([WDEF](#)) - Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam has signed legislation providing extra protections for Tennessee's vulnerable adult population. Crimes related to the abuse, neglect and exploitation of Tennessee's vulnerable adults continue to increase but are extremely under-reported because often these crimes are committed by loved ones or trusted caregivers. Bill HB1824/SB1848 requires background checks for individuals who work directly with seniors and adults with disabilities, including employees of home care organizations. Prior to passage of this bill, background check requirements among industries dealing with vulnerable adults was inconsistent. This legislation brings consistency and clarity to these requirements.

From inmate to minister: Seminary program aims to transform Texas prisoners from the inside out ([The Dallas Morning News](#)) - The inmates were the second graduating class from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice's seminary program. On a recent Monday afternoon, after four years of studies, the men received bachelor's degrees in biblical studies from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Now, they will be divided into teams and assigned to one of Texas' 109 prison units, where they will minister to other inmates. Their aim: to help those who will soon be released find reconciliation and rehabilitation through faith. Texas began its inmate seminary program more than five years ago. The plan sprouted in 2010 when then-Sen. Dan Patrick, a Republican from Houston and devout Christian, introduced longtime Democratic Sen. John Whitmire, chairman of the Senate Criminal Justice Committee, to a similar program at Louisiana's Angola prison. The seminary program there had helped reduce violence at one of the nation's most dangerous prisons.

Education

Gov. Bentley announces \$15 million for Pre-K grants ([WHNT](#)) – Governor Robert Bentley on Tuesday announced over 150 new grants that will provide more than 2,700 additional Alabama four-year-olds with access to high-quality, voluntary pre-kindergarten. "Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten is a proven program that prepares students for success," Governor Robert Bentley said. "Only 20 percent of Alabama's four-year-olds are currently enrolled in the First Class program. Along with the support of legislative funding, we will continue to expand access to this program until every Alabama parent who wants their child to attend has access. I appreciate the staff at the Department of Early Childhood Education for working hard to help organizations receive grants." The grants announced by Governor Bentley will expand Alabama's First Class voluntary pre-k program to more schools, faith-based preschools, child care centers, Head Start locations, and other new and expanding pre-k sites across the state.

Healthcare

Walgreens makes overdose remedy prescription-free in New Mexico ([Reuters](#)) - Walgreens Boots Alliance Inc. is making the opioid antidote naloxone available without a prescription in all its pharmacies in New Mexico, part of a plan to make the drug readily available in 35 states by the end of this year. Naloxone, administered by injection or nasal spray, can be used in the event of an overdose to reverse the effects of heroin and other opioid drugs. The Obama administration has been funding expanded distribution of naloxone amid a growing epidemic of addiction to opioid drugs in the United States. In March, New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez signed a bill into law that expands access to naloxone, allowing it to be available in more than 70 Walgreens pharmacies throughout the state. The law also protects those who administer naloxone from civil liability and criminal prosecution.