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Republican Governors Public Policy Committee
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Taxes and Budget

Property tax relief Ricketts' top priority ([The McCook Gazette](#)) - Property tax relief is Gov. Pete Ricketts' top priority this year, he told a National Ag Week gathering in McCook Monday. With only 19 session days left in the legislative session, it is important to get something accomplished in the way of property tax relief this year, he said. The governor's favored LB 958 and LB 959 are still in the Revenue and Education committees, in part, because they face a lot of opposition. "We cannot let the perfect become the enemy of the good. We have to get something done, even if it doesn't accomplish all of the goals we want. Anything that we get done this year will be progress and we can continue to work on this issue going forward as well," the governor told the assembly of farmers, business owners, and local government representatives. Property tax relief will be accomplished through cutting the growth of government, which Ricketts said has been done at the state level. "We cut the growth of state government from 6.5 percent growth in the last budget to 3.5 percent in this budget."

Compromise Tax Policy Bill Heads To Gov. Branstad ([IPR](#)) – A compromise tax policy bill passed the Iowa House and Senate Tuesday and will now go to Governor Branstad for his consideration. The bill matches up the Iowa tax code with federal law at a cost of nearly \$100 million to the state treasury. Backers say farmers and small businesses have enjoyed a tax break on major purchases in the past. The compromise bill also gives manufacturers a new \$22 million sales tax exemption which was less than Republicans wanted.

Transportation and Infrastructure

Voters approve \$2B Connect NC bond ([WNTEC](#)) – North Carolinians overwhelmingly voted to approve the Connect NC bond referendum. That means the state will take on \$2 billion of debt over the next 2 decades. About half of the bond will go toward construction projects at UNC system schools. For ECU, that means getting \$90 million to build a new life sciences and biotechnology building. The bond will also support thousands of jobs and trigger upgrades and renovations at community colleges, state parks, to water and sewer, and more. Governor Pat McCrory celebrated last night, after months of campaigning for the bond.

Governor Snyder OKs bill to enforce driving offenses in parking lots ([AP](#)) – Michigan law enforcement will have authority to enforce traffic laws on private property that is open to the general public when moving violations result in death or serious injuries. A law signed Tuesday by Gov. Rick Snyder is sponsored by Rep. Sam Singh of East Lansing. He proposed the measure after an incident at a Lansing-area Meijer parking lot in which a driver struck three people, severely injuring one. Singh says Meridian Township could not bring criminal charges against the driver for the moving violation because the incident occurred on private property.

Economic Development

Bill Blacklisting Companies That Boycott Israel On Arizona Governor's Desk ([The Phoenix News Times](#)) - A new bill landed on Arizona Governor Doug Ducey's desk that, if signed, will bar state and local governments from doing business with companies or groups boycotting Israel. House Bill 2617 is part of a national backlash against the "BDS movement" (BDS stands for boycott, divestment, and sanctions), which began in 2005 when "Palestinian civil society issued a call for a campaign of boycotts, divestment, and sanctions against Israel until it complies with international law and Palestinian rights." In the last decade, the BDS movement has gained traction across the world, but because of its controversial nature, has also inspired prominent pro-Israel groups to lead a counter movement. If Ducey signs this bill, Arizona will become one of a handful of states to enact anti-BDS legislation.

Florida led nation in job growth in January ([WINK](#)) – Florida leads the nation in job growth according to new federal jobless reports. Florida's unemployment rate dropped slightly to 5 percent in January according to state officials. That's

higher than the national jobless rate of 4.9 percent. But the state did add 32,200 jobs that month. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that this was the highest number of jobs added by any state in January. Texas was second with 31,400 jobs added. Gov. Rick Scott announced the new jobless numbers during a stop in Orlando at Orion Technologies. The governor also stopped by in Storm Smart in Fort Myers as part of his Million, Billion Jobs Victory Tour.

Gov. Walker highlights success of Tourism Industry ([The Wisconsin State Farmer](#)) - Governor Scott Walker spoke to around 900 tourism industry representatives this week in Baraboo about the state of tourism in Wisconsin and its impact on the economy at the Governor's Conference on Tourism. "Investing in our tourism industry is great for Wisconsin and for our taxpayers," Governor Walker said. "Last year, the advertising campaigns developed by Tourism reached hundreds of thousands of people and we saw more visitors to our state, which resulted in higher tax revenue. In 2015, for every dollar we spent on tourism advertising, \$8 came back to the state in the form of incremental tax revenues, which we use to invest in education, roads, job training, and other important needs to keep Wisconsin strong and moving forward."

Public Safety

Alabama governor Bentley calls troubled prison 'archaic' ([AP](#)) – Alabama faces more prison uprisings unless problems of overcrowding are addressed, Gov. Robert Bentley said Tuesday after he visited a maximum-security facility that has had two violent riots in the past several days. Bentley described the William C. Holman Correctional Facility as "archaic" and said the outdated buildings are dangerous for inmates and the people who guard them. "Part of the prison sentence is a punishment, we know that, but you've got to protect people," Bentley said. "Their lives have to be protected. It not only has to be safe for the inmates; it certainly has to be safe for the guards and the wardens." Last month, Bentley announced an initiative to build four new prisons — three for men and one for women — to reduce overcrowding and improve safety. The men's facilities would be designed to house at least 3,500 inmates. Most of the existing facilities would be closed.

Ga. Criminal Justice Bill Allows Food Stamps For Drug Felons ([WABE](#)) - A Georgia House committee Monday approved a bill that would implement the next steps of criminal justice reform in the state. Gov. Nathan Deal has pushed for major changes to the state's prison system in the last several years, focusing on getting low-level offenders out of prison. A large part of the latest proposal focuses on helping offenders successfully stay out of prison and re-enter society. The wide-ranging bill, SB 367, includes measures to help people get driver's licenses and to expand ban-the-box initiatives for people to be able to obtain a job. It also includes proposed changes to school discipline procedures that advocates say funnel students into the juvenile justice system.

Idaho rape kit bill headed to Gov. Otter's desk ([AP](#)) - Legislation that would create a statewide system of collecting and tracking rape kits in Idaho is headed to the governor's desk after receiving unanimous support in the state Legislature. The proposal easily cleared the Senate on Tuesday, which means it just now needs Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter's signature to become law. The bill would ensure medical clinics will use rape kits to collect forensic evidence after a suspected sexual assault. The bill also ensures that clinics will send that evidence for DNA testing unless the victim requests otherwise.

Governor Nikki Haley Signs Bill Creating Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committees ([WJBF](#)) - Tuesday, Governor Nikki Haley signed into law H.4666, a bill that establishes a Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee in each of the state's 16 Solicitor Circuits. Legislation formalizing a fatality review process for domestic violence was recommendation 19 of the Governor's Domestic Violence Task Force's report from August 2015. South Carolina was just one of nine states that did not have a domestic fatality review team. Under the new law, Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committees will identify and review deaths linked to domestic violence and make recommendations to the State Domestic Violence Advisory, which was created by the 2015 Domestic Violence Reform Bill. Committees will be made up of local domestic violence advocates, law enforcement professionals, medical professionals, and others with expertise in investigating domestic violence cases.

Education

Md. Senate advances bill to encourage private school scholarships ([WaPo](#)) – A controversial proposal to give state tax credits to companies that make donations for private school scholarships is gaining momentum in Maryland, drawing support from top Democratic leaders to the consternation of the state teachers' union. One bill that would create an education tax credit received preliminary approval in the state Senate on Tuesday. A slightly different version of the measure is expected to advance in a House committee, possibly before the end of the week. Under the bill, the state Department of Commerce would receive donations from companies that would be placed into a fund. The businesses would get a tax credit of 70 percent of the donation. The money in the fund would be used to provide scholarships to students who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals. At least 5 percent of the student population would have to be disadvantaged in order for a schools to be eligible.

Abbott wants access to Internet for Texas students ([The Cleburne Times-Review](#)) - As technology changes over the years, many school districts must find ways to catch up with the times. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott announced Thursday that he wants all of the state's 5.2 million students to have access to broadband Internet by 2018. "Learning is no longer limited by bricks and mortar — it is expanded exponentially by bytes and bandwidth," Abbott said. "Expanding technology in our classrooms will allow the state of Texas to meet future workforce needs, help teachers build a pipeline of qualified graduates and support our students in their efforts to learn without limits. Every single child deserves access to quality education, and with the expanded use of technology in the classroom, that opportunity will be available to all Texas students."

Healthcare

Bill inspired by Jimmy Carter's cancer treatment passes in Georgia ([The Atlanta Journal Constitution](#)) - More cancer patients in Georgia would be able to receive the same treatment that former President Jimmy Carter says eliminated signs of his disease under a bill given final passage Monday by the state Senate. House Bill 965 — dubbed the Honorable Jimmy Carter Cancer Treatment Access Act — now goes to Gov. Nathan Deal for his signature to become law. The bill aims to prevent insurance companies from limiting coverage of drugs for Stage 4 cancer patients. Its sponsor, state Rep. Mike Cheokas, R-Americus, counts Carter as a constituent and has said the former president's cancer battle inspired him to try to help others get access to the same drugs that helped Carter.

Governor Snyder signs bill to lower prescription costs ([WLNS](#)) - Governor Snyder has signed new legislation that is expected to make prescription drugs more affordable. "Everyone should have access to high quality, affordable healthcare," Snyder said. "By lowering the costs of prescription drugs we can help provide Michiganders with the opportunity to better manage long-term health conditions." The bill which was sponsored by State Senator Margaret O'Brien will also help reduce prescription drug waste by requiring a prorated daily cost-sharing rate from insurers for patients who do not need a 30-day supply.

Building a Ground Army to Fight Heroin Deaths ([Pew Stateline](#)) - A crowd quickly gathers here on one of West Baltimore's many drug-infested street corners. But it isn't heroin they're seeking. It's a heroin antidote known as naloxone, or Narcan. Two city health department workers are holding up slim salmon-colored boxes and explaining that the medication inside can be used to stop someone from dying of a heroin overdose. Most onlookers nod solemnly in recognition. They've heard about the drug. They want to know more. Nationwide, more than 150,000 people received naloxone kits from community outreach programs like Baltimore's between 1996 and 2014, and more than 26,000 overdoses were reversed using those kits, according to a recent survey funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

CDC urges doctors to curtail opioid use ([The Hill](#)) - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Tuesday released new guidelines for prescribing opioids, a long-awaited step aimed at curbing the nation's drug abuse epidemic. The CDC guidelines caution doctors against prescribing opioids to relieve chronic, long-term pain. For the "vast majority" of patients, CDC Director Tom Frieden said, the risks of prescribing such drugs "will outweigh the benefits. More than 40 Americans die each day from prescription opioid overdoses. We must act now," Frieden said. "Overprescribing opioids — largely for chronic pain — is a key driver of America's drug-overdose epidemic." The action from the CDC comes after years of study within the organization, and in the middle of a presidential race where opioid abuse has become a major issue.