

From: RGPPC <[RGPPC@rgppc.org](mailto:RGPPC@rgppc.org)>  
To: [RGPPCRGPPC@rgppc.org](mailto:RGPPCRGPPC@rgppc.org)  
Date: 6/16/2016 8:43:21 AM  
Subject: RGPPC Policy & Press

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## REPUBLICAN GOVERNORS

### PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

Policy & Press | June 16, 2016

#### Taxes and Budget

NC Senate considers 5.5 percent income tax limit in constitution ([The News & Observer](#)) – Voters would decide whether to add a 5.5 percent cap on income tax rates to the state constitution under a bill approved Tuesday in a N.C. Senate committee. The constitutional amendment wouldn't affect the current rate – which will drop from 5.75 percent to 5.499 percent next year – but would effectively prevent the legislature from raising income taxes. The constitution now includes a maximum rate of 10 percent. The proposal has similarities to a proposed Taxpayers' Bill of Rights, or TABOR, that passed the Senate last year but didn't get a vote in the House. That bill would have gone further, capping the income tax at 5 percent and tying annual state spending increases to the rate of population growth and inflation.

#### Energy and Environment

Gov. Hogan's office provides \$23 million to fight runoff pollution ([Fox 5](#)) - Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan's administration will award more than \$23 million to the state Department of Natural Resources to reduce runoff pollution in the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic coast, the Governor's Office announced on Wednesday. The grant funding will go to the Chesapeake and Atlantic Bays Trust Fund, which directs funding to the "most cost-effective and efficient projects" in Maryland, said a statement from the Governor's Office. "The Chesapeake Bay is our greatest and most important natural asset, and a national treasure that needs our continued attention and focus," said Gov. Hogan in the statement. "Trust Fund projects enhance our local streams and rivers, and bring us a step closer to a healthier and more productive Chesapeake Bay, for this and future generations." Hogan also said in the statement that the grant would be the first in Maryland history to provide full funding for the trust fund.

Spending bill blocking EPA regulations heads to the House floor ([The Hill](#)) – The House Appropriations Committee on Wednesday advanced a \$32.1 billion spending bill for the Interior Department and environment programs, sending a bill laden with policy riders to the House floor. The bill cuts \$64 million from current sending levels and would block a handful of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rules. It would cut the EPA's budget by \$164 million, which is a smaller cut than Republicans have pursued in the past

#### Transportation and Infrastructure

Gov. Hogan announces \$115 million local construction project ([The Bay Net](#)) – Governor Larry Hogan today announced work is underway on the \$115.4 million project to build a new interchange to replace the current signalized intersection along MD 210 (Indian Head Highway) at Kerby Hill and Livingston roads. Work includes constructing an overpass to carry Kerby Hill Road and Livingston Road traffic over MD 210 to improve traffic flow along this busy corridor in Prince George's County. This investment will improve safety and reduce traffic congestion for thousands of drivers along this corridor. "Everyone in the state relies on Maryland's roads, and our administration remains committed to the future improvement of Maryland transportation," said Governor Hogan. "Our investment in a number of critical projects all across Prince George's County, including \$115 million for MD 210, will help citizens across our state go about their daily lives in a faster, more efficient, and safer manner."

#### Economic Development

South Dakota now has top debt rating from all 3 agencies ([AP](#)) – South Dakota has the highest credit rating possible from all three major bond rating agencies after Fitch Ratings upgraded the state's rating Wednesday. Fitch cited the state's "consistently conservative fiscal operations" in upgrading South Dakota's issuer default rating to "AAA" and state-linked debt to "AA+." Collecting top ratings has been a priority for Republican Gov. Dennis Daugaard, and Fitch's move comes after similar upgrades from Moody's and Standard and Poor's since May 2015. "These types of upgrades demonstrate our state's exceptional credit worthiness to financial markets," Daugaard said in a statement. "We've worked hard to place our state on a firm financial footing, and that stewardship is paying dividends." Fitch also attributed the upgrade to South Dakota's tax structure, since revenues have exhibited less sensitivity to national economic cycles than other states. The agency credited the

state's healthy pension system and low debt.

#### Public Safety

Governor Otter signs "Idaho Elder Abuse Awareness Day" proclamation ([KIVI](#)) – Governor Otter signed a proclamation declaring today June 15, 2016 "Idaho Elder Abuse Awareness Day". The governor said, "People in every community should be aware of the signs of elder abuse. They need to intervene when abuse is suspected, report it and help educate others on the signs of elder abuse." The FACES Victim Advocacy Center is one place Idahoans can turn for protection and support should abuse be suspected. "As our population ages, reports of elder abuse are steadily rising," said Jean Fisher, FACES COO and Deputy Prosecutor for Ada County. "Our most common form is financial exploitation, but right behind that is physical abuse and neglect," Fisher said. FACES says seniors often do not report crimes against them because those crimes are committed by their adult children, upon whom seniors depend for support.

#### Education

Governor announces new STEM initiative for Arkansas schools ([The Times Record](#)) – Gov. Asa Hutchinson on Wednesday announced a statewide initiative aimed at increasing middle-school students' awareness of and interest in computer science and the fields of science, technology, engineering and math, or STEM. Hutchinson said the initiative will make a new online education program called Learning Blade available to middle-school students across the state, including students who attend traditional public schools, charter schools and private schools as well as home-schooled students. The program is not a course but a game-based learning tool that will allow students "to explore fun ways of testing out their interest in engineering, testing out their interest in computer coding, to see if that's something that works for them, appeals to them," Hutchinson said.

#### Healthcare

Texas Governor Invites CDC To Review Zika Response Plan, Asks For Money To Fund It ([The Patch](#)) - With summer upon us, the threat of mosquitoes carrying the Zika virus is heightened in light of cases being reported across the globe -- including 40 in Texas so far. Given that worry, Gov. Greg Abbott on Wednesday invited Centers for Disease Control officials to come to Texas to the state prepare for the potential threat. The governor is asking the CDC to review the state's Zika Virus Preparedness and Response Plan. Last week, the governor participated in a conference call by the White House to talk about strategies to address the threat and explore the best ways to combat the virus. "Like the CDC, the State of Texas, along with our local partners, is taking steps to prevent and prepare for local transmission of the Zika virus," Abbott wrote in his letter to the CDC. "With the benefit of the CDC assets on the ground in Texas working with DSHS and our Task Force on Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response, we can ensure that we are developing and implementing the strongest possible Zika virus response."

House panel advances long-delayed mental health bill ([The Hill](#)) - "Today, this Committee takes a monumental step by advancing a bill that makes real reforms and offers evidence-based treatment for families in mental health crisis," Murphy said. "Today we are taking a stand. We affirm that mental illness is not a crime. Mental illness is not a moral defect, it is not a choice, and it is not a joke. Mental illness is just that: an illness." The bill still faces a long path to becoming law, but both parties agree there needs to be action on mental health. Murphy said he spoke to Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.), who has pointed to the bill as the party's response to gun violence, about it on Tuesday. Murphy is hoping to get a vote in the full House before the August recess, though Upton said at the markup that the bill is likely to reach the floor in the fall.