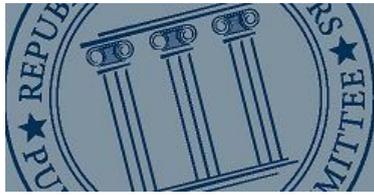


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REPUBLICAN GOVERNORS

PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

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Taxes and Budget

Arkansas legislature advances spending bills ([The Times Record](#)) – The Arkansas House and Senate approved legislation Wednesday setting out a \$5.3 billion state budget for the next fiscal year. Also, legislators advanced measures to limit the use of welfare benefits and create a new way to appeal decisions of the Capitol Zoning District Commission in Little Rock; gave final passage to a bill to fund a new online filing system for campaign finance reports; and re-elected the Senate leader. The Revenue Stabilization Act, which sets spending priorities and prohibits the state from spending more than it takes in, cleared the Joint Budget Committee on Wednesday morning. The legislation proposes a \$5.3 billion budget that is closely aligned with the budget Gov. Asa Hutchinson proposed in March. It calls for a \$142.7 million increase in spending compared to the current fiscal year, which ends June 30.

Energy and Environment

May Proclaimed As Renewable Fuels Month In Nebraska ([KTIC](#)) – Ethanol and soy biodiesel have become major markets for Nebraska corn and soybeans—and are providing significant economic, environmental and consumer benefits. In recognition of the importance of renewable biofuels to the state, Governor Pete Ricketts has proclaimed May as Renewable Fuels Month in Nebraska. Nebraska is the nation's second largest ethanol producer, home to 25 ethanol plants with the capacity of more than two billion gallons of production. These plants, which employ more than 1,300 people, process more than 700 million bushels of corn a year into clean-burning ethanol as well as distillers grains, a high protein feed ingredient for livestock. Some Nebraska ethanol plants also produce carbon dioxide for bottling and food processing as well as corn oil for human food consumption.

Veteran Initiatives

Gov. Herbert signs three bills related to military personnel ([Fox 13](#)) – May is National Military Appreciation Month, and in honor of that Governor Gary Herbert signed three bills relating to the military Wednesday. One of the bills, H. B. 98, provides death benefits for the families of Utah National Guard members who die in the line of duty. Another bill, H.B. 135, grants free admission to state parks for disabled veterans, and the third, S.B. 35, creates a special license plate indicating where the veteran who owns the plate served.

Economic Development

Governor Abbott Announces New SATA Group Project ([RGV](#)) – Governor Greg Abbott today announced that SATA Group, a high-tech components manufacturer, will be constructing a new machine plant in Brownsville, Texas. This project is expected to create 300 jobs and generate \$114 million in capital investment in the Texas economy. A Texas Enterprise Fund (TEF) offer of \$1.8 million has been extended to SATA Group. "Texas continues to be an economic powerhouse thanks to an environment and government that encourages business growth by limiting taxes, regulations and bureaucracy," said Governor Abbott. "I am proud that SATA Group has chosen to expand in the Rio Grande Valley, bringing high-quality jobs to a region that is vital to the growth of our state. The best thing a government can do to create jobs and prosperity is get out of the way of employers, and as Governor, I will continue to pursue policies that do just that."

Gov. Scott Walker approves rule requiring drug testing for unemployment insurance ([WTMJ](#)) - Governor Scott Walker recently approved an emergency rule submitted by the Department of Workforce Development which requires some receiving unemployment benefits to submit to drug tests. "This new rule brings us one step closer to moving Wisconsinites from government dependence to true independence," Governor Walker said. "We frequently hear from employers that they have good paying jobs, but they need their workers to be drug-free. This rule is a common-sense reform which strengthens our workforce by helping people find and keep a family supporting job." Under the new rule, if someone is on unemployment insurance and fails a drug test, or refuses to take one from an employer who's offering it as part of an offer of employment, he or she can now be denied benefits.

Public Safety

Martinez touts new initiative for parents, kids ([The Taos News](#)) - Parenting is hard, says New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez. And in an effort to make it easier, she and the secretary of the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department, Taos native Monique Jacobson, have launched the statewide "Pull Together" campaign. The goal is to assist parents and the community to locate resources and services — starting with a new website — [pulltogether.org](#). The website launched Monday (May 2). Martinez and Jacobson were at Taos High School Tuesday (May 3) for an event to tout the \$2.7 million campaign. The effort seeks to not only assist parents, but inspire them, along with families, teachers, young people and community members. "Make New Mexico the best place to be a kid" is the tagline of the campaign.

States Push Tougher Standards for Juvenile Public Defenders ([Pew Stateline](#)) – The process for certifying and training lawyers who work with juveniles in Massachusetts is one of the most strenuous in the country. The state is also unusual in that it requires lawyers to get experience in adult criminal court before they are permitted to work with kids. Since 2011, private attorneys must get at least a year of criminal defense practice and undergo eight hours of training before they can be appointed to represent juveniles. For public defenders to be hired as CPCS staff, the requirement is three years. The state is not just trying to move away from the reputation of juvenile courts as a training ground, but to make juvenile law a specialty, said Joshua Dohan, director of CPCS' Youth Advocacy Division.

Education

(Michigan) House narrowly approves controversial DPS package ([The Detroit Free Press](#)) - After more than 15 hours in session and intense back-room negotiations, the House of Representatives narrowly approved a Republican sponsored package of bills that is intended to fix the financial crisis facing the Detroit Public Schools. Republicans said the bills will provide the district with the tools to improve education in the city. The House package splits the district in two – one to pay off the debt and the other district to take over the day-to-day operations of the district – and provides \$500 million to the district to help pay off the DPS operating deficit, which has been estimated at \$515 million. It also provides a \$33 million loan to help with the transition to a new district. Gov. Rick Snyder proposed \$200 million for those transition costs and the Senate and a coalition of district stakeholders concurred in that amount. The \$500 million would come from annual tobacco settlement revenues that come into the state.

Nebraska Turns To College Assessment Exams To Measure High School Academics ([NET](#)) – That change movement to require the ACT began after problems surfaced with the state's original assessment exam: NeSa. Parts of the exam, given online, have been plagued by problems for years. They include outages during exams and the loss of students' scores. According to the Nebraska Department of Education or NDE, last January, over 5,000 students across 143 school districts lost access to testing tools. "Obviously, it gave us a reason to pause a little bit and have a conversation about what the future might be," said Matt Blomstedt, the state's education commissioner. Blomstedt and several members of the state board of education have been advocating and ultimately "shopping" around for a comparable exam to replace NeSa for high school juniors. That helped prompt the ACT pilot study, and so far, he's been pleased with the results. Blomstedt said juniors tend to take a college readiness exam more serious.

Healthcare

Gov. Bentley passes Leni's Law ([WHNT](#)) - On Wednesday, Governor Robert Bentley signed Leni's Law, which decriminalizes non-high inducing marijuana oil for people coping with debilitating seizures. The House and Senate overwhelmingly passed HB61 last week. "As a physician, I believe it is extremely important to give patients with a chronic or debilitating disease the option to consider every possible option for treatment, Governor Robert Bentley said.

Governor Fallin signs autism coverage bill ([AP](#)) - Oklahoma Gov. Mary Fallin has signed seven pieces of legislation into law, including a bill that requires health insurers to cover the treatment of children with autism. The autism bill signed Wednesday requires coverage for the screening, diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorder in children younger than 9. Under the measure, the children would have access to applied behavior analysis for up to 25 hours a week with a limit of \$25,000 a year.

SD State Agencies Develop Zika Protective Measures ([KDLT](#)) - At the direction of Gov. Dennis Daugaard, two state agencies are working together to protect against the potential threat of the Zika Virus. "The newest mosquito-borne threat has not been detected in South Dakota. However, Zika mosquito vectors have been identified in neighboring states to our south and east," said Gov. Daugaard. "The departments of Health and Environment and Natural Resources are taking steps now to help prevent the spread of this virus in our state." Because tires and other water-containing refuse are prime breeding grounds for mosquitoes, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is in the process of arranging waste tire collection events at regional landfills in the southeast part of the state.