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Energy and Environment

(Alabama) Governor announces \$2 million for flood victims ([The Enterprise Ledger](#)) – Floods raged across the state of Alabama during Christmas with one of the worst cases being located in Coffee County. Roughly 20 homes were completely destroyed during the flooding, and an additional 107 homes received major damage. As the road to recovery continues, Governor Robert Bentley shared news that will potentially benefit those who lost everything. Bentley traveled to Elba on Tuesday and announced a total of \$2 million will be allocated to the City of Elba to help with the recovery of people's homes through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. FEMA awarded the state \$4.7 million to be used across Alabama in all regions affected by the flood. Elba received the \$2 million portion due to the severity of the flooding, according to Bentley.

Governor Mead hails fracking decision ([KGWN](#)) - Governor Matt Mead is pleased with U.S. District Court Judge Scott Skavdahl's decision in favor of Wyoming over the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) hydraulic fracturing rule. Wyoming's challenge to this rule was joined by North Dakota, Utah and Colorado. The BLM rule is outside the scope of BLM's jurisdiction. The Court ruling immediately sets aside the fracking rule. "Wyoming continues to be a leader in energy development and environmental stewardship," said Governor Mead. "We were the first state to regulate fracking. The BLM rule overreaches its authority and creates confusion. I am pleased with the Court's decision and thank the Wyoming Attorney General for his work." In the decision the court said that, "BLM has attempted an end-run around" the limitations Congress placed on the federal regulation of fracking in the 2005 Energy Policy Act. The Court explained that "regulation of an activity must be by Congressional authority, not administrative fiat."

Obama signs chemical safety overhaul into law ([The Hill](#)) - The bill has been decades in the making and the result of years of intense on-and-off legislative negotiations. Obama noted that reforming the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976 (TSCA) was a significant point of discussion when he was a senator on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee 10 years ago. It reforms the TSCA, which numerous stakeholders had regarded for years as toothless. The TSCA prevented the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from regulating even the most harmful chemicals, such as carcinogenic asbestos. Under the new law, however, the EPA now has wide-ranging authority to order testing of and regulate the thousands of chemicals that are in use, as well as the hundreds of new substances that come on the market each year. Crucially, the EPA no longer has to prove that regulating a chemical is cost-effective and only has to show that it is harmful to public health or the environment.

Transportation and Infrastructure

Obama signs pipeline safety bill ([The Hill](#)) – President Obama signed a bill Wednesday to renew the federal government's pipeline safety program, giving regulators new emergency authorities. The Protecting our Infrastructure of Pipelines and Enhancing Safety Act of 2016, or PIPES Act, reauthorizes the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration's (PHMSA) oil and gas pipeline programs through 2019, with a few new mandates for the agency. Obama's signature follows unanimous passage in both the House and the Senate. "We came together, Republicans and Democrats, to improve pipeline safety, and we got the job done with this important law," a bipartisan group of House lawmakers, led by the top members of the Transportation and Energy and Commerce committees, said in a Wednesday statement following Obama's signature.

Public Safety

Arizona revising its stance on rape kits ([AP](#)) – Law enforcement agencies across Arizona are sifting through evidence lockers looking for every last untested sexual assault kit under new efforts driven largely by Gov. Doug Ducey. It's part of a push across the country to cut the backlog of untested DNA evidence in sexual assault cases. The samples went untested for a variety of reasons, such as cases where the parties involved agreed that sexual contact occurred but disagreed about whether it was consensual. But the kits are now considered a valuable tool in identifying serial offenders. Test results can be entered into a database that can lead officials to discover whether an assailant is a repeat offender. The latest count of untested kits

reveals Maricopa County alone has at least 4,000. The governor was outraged to hear about the untested kits, his spokesman Daniel Scarpinato said.

Parole, prison reform discussed at Ark. Capitol ([THV 11](#)) - Prison overcrowding, correction department spending, mental health and poverty. Those issues, among several others, were addressed on Wednesday by a Legislative Task Force investigating problems with the state's criminal justice system. The long and short of it: Arkansans are spending a lot of money to put people behind bars that would be just as successful on the outside. More of those low-level prisoners should instead be on probation. In order for that to happen, the state would have to invest in more probations. The Council of State Governments Justice Center, or JC, is researching the prison and probation systems in Arkansas. They give the state advice on how to cut spending in corrections and find ways to keep people from ending up behind bars.

Gov. Deal Speaks About the Importance of Educating Prison Inmates Before Release ([NBC 41](#)) - The Georgia Department of Corrections held their 2016 Academic Education Summer Conference Wednesday afternoon at the Macon Marriott City Center. Governor Nathan Deal, (R) Georgia, was on hand to speak to a crowd of educators, who teach various marketable skills to inmates within the state's prison system. "If somebody has an education and they can read when they couldn't read before," said the Governor. "When they have a skill that is marketable in the general community that they didn't have before, it's just common sense the likelihood that they're coming back is significantly reduced and that's good news for all of us." Over 8,000 inmates are educated as part of programs every year, and can earn their high school diplomas, GED's, or even learn a trade such as welding.

Education

Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam Announces National Guard Youth Challenge Program ([Clarksville Online](#)) - Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam today announced with Major General Max Haston of the Department of Military and Department of Children's Services (DCS) Commissioner Bonnie Hommrich that Tennessee has been approved by the U.S. Department of Defense for a National Guard Youth ChalleNGe program. The National Guard Youth ChalleNGe is an alternative residential program that offers youth between ages 16-18 who have dropped out of school and have no criminal record the opportunity to learn self-discipline, leadership and responsibility while working to obtain a high school equivalency diploma outside of a traditional school setting. Its implementation is one of the steps in the governor's Public Safety Action Plan.

Government officials join the 2016 Scholastic Summer Reading Challenge ([WDAM](#)) – Government officials across America are making a commitment to getting kids reading this summer. 39 Governors' Spouses representing the U.S. and U.S. territories, along with 3 Governors and 1 Lieutenant Governor have signed on as "Reading Ambassadors" for the 2016 Scholastic Summer Reading Challenge to help support literacy in their states and encourage children and families to read throughout the summer months. To show their commitment, many Reading Ambassadors will discuss the importance of summer reading through reading events held at local schools and each Ambassador will deliver 500 new books donated by Scholastic on their behalf to schools in need.

Healthcare

Task force aims for new stance on health coverage in Georgia ([Business in Savannah](#)) - A Georgia health care task force is putting the final touches on widely anticipated recommendations for the state to increase access to medical services for the uninsured. Those options will be "markedly different" from conventional Medicaid expansion as enacted by numerous states under the Affordable Care Act, said Brian Robinson, a former aide to Gov. Nathan Deal who's working on the project. Most of those states have implemented expansion simply by making more low-income people eligible for their Medicaid programs. Robinson said the task force, created by the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, is developing "one of the most conservative plans in the country." It will contain "market-based reforms" and "personal responsibility" for people who gain coverage, he said. That could mean charging premiums and co-pays for the adults gaining coverage.

(Indiana) Governor's Task Force on Drug Enforcement, Treatment, and Prevention endorses prescribing guidelines for acute pain ([The Tribune Star](#)) - On Tuesday, the Governor's Task Force on Drug Enforcement, Treatment, and Prevention endorsed a set of opioid and controlled substance prescribing guidelines for emergency departments as part of a larger strategy to combat prescription drug abuse in Indiana. This endorsement is a result of a prior recommendation of the Task Force and action taken by Governor Mike Pence, who directed the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) to work with stakeholders to create guidelines for acute pain prescribing. "Our Task Force on Drug Enforcement, Treatment, and Prevention today takes yet another meaningful stride forward in Indiana's fight against prescription drug abuse as we roll out new guidelines aimed at curbing overprescribed addictive opioids," said Governor Pence on Tuesday. "While communities across the Hoosier state and the nation work to address a prescription opioid and heroin epidemic, my administration remains vigilant in addressing the scourge of drug abuse that has brought heartbreak for far too many Hoosier families."

Gov. Matt Bevin announces Medicaid overhaul proposal ([WKYT](#)) - Gov. Matt Bevin held a news conference Wednesday morning to announce his plan to replace Kentucky's expanded Medicaid program. Bevin would like to launch a program called "Helping to Engage and Achieve Long Term Health" (HEALTH). It would be a waiver application process for people wanting Medicaid coverage. "This proposal is modeled after the very same health plan offered to Kentucky state

employees including incentives to promote healthy lifestyles. This plan offers common sense strategies to help our citizens gain employment or prepare for employment through community engagement, including volunteer activities and job training programs,” said Gov. Bevin.

House GOP pushes \$1.1 billion Zika bill through ([The Hill](#)) - House Republicans on Thursday approved a spending bill that includes a controversial \$1.1 billion plan for the Zika virus in a late-night vote over Democrat protests. House Appropriations Committee Chairman Hal Rogers (R-Ky.) announced the long-awaited deal late Wednesday evening, describing it as a “responsible compromise that can and should be signed into law.” Lawmakers also approved \$82.5 billion in funding to train and maintain U.S. military forces, to fund veterans programs and to offer housing and services to military families. Those funding levels are \$2.6 billion more than last year’s totals and \$372 million less than President Obama’s request.