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# REPUBLICAN GOVERNORS

## PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

Republican Governors Public Policy Committee  
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### Taxes and Budget

Hogan Calls For Relief From Mandated Spending ([WJZ](#))- Republican Gov. Larry Hogan on Tuesday urged Democrats who control the legislature to pass a measure to reign in state spending mandates, but Democrats said Maryland's governor already has strong budget powers to do that. Hogan, who campaigned on bringing greater fiscal accountability to state spending, noted that 83 percent of Maryland's budget is mandated. While the economy has improved, Hogan said the state is still vulnerable to serious financial problems in such unforeseen economic events as a federal government shutdown.

LePage pushes to eliminate estate tax ([The Ellsworth American](#))- Governor Paul LePage has renewed his effort to eliminate Maine's estate tax, a move he says would make the Pine Tree State a more appealing place to live, retire and run a business. Under the state's current tax code, Mainers who own more than \$5.45 million in taxable property are subject to the estate tax. When they die and their property is inherited by someone else, the state collects a tax on a portion of that property.

### Energy and Environment

Western governors eye endangered species changes ([The Hill](#))- A coalition of western state governors is considering formally backing legislation to shift power away from the federal government for endangered species protections. At a forum Wednesday in Denver led by Wyoming Gov. Matt Mead (R), said it'd be premature to say whether the Western Governors Association will ask for changes to the 1973 Endangered Species Act, according to the Denver Post. But the governors see the species law as ineffective, and want to see more species' protections handled like the sage grouse, which avoided formal protections last year in favor of state-led efforts. Federal officials have listed 2,309 species under the law, but only 33 have been removed. "That's a 1.4 percent success rate," Mead said. "We need, fundamentally, to do a better job of recovering species."

LePage opposes compromise to rapidly expand solar power ([Portland Press Herald](#))- But staffers at LePage's energy office who have participated in negotiations on the compromise have reached a different conclusion. They say the plan maintains subsidies for homeowners who install solar-electric panels on their rooftops at levels that hurt other ratepayers. "We're not opposed to solar," said Lisa Smith, a senior planner in the energy office. "But we're looking out for the cost to all ratepayers. We were in favor of a mechanism that went in a market-based direction, but this isn't it."

### Transportation and Infrastructure

Gov. Martinez signs Uber, Lyft bill ([Las Cruces Sun-News](#))- New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez arrived Wednesday in her first Uber ride and signed a bill allowing ride-booking companies Uber and Lyft to operate in the state. The Republican governor said the measure ends the confusion over whether the companies are welcome in New Mexico. "After one ride I can see why Uber is so amazing," Martinez said. "It makes the state accessible." Martinez said the companies will help reduce drunken driving in the state and allow tourists to roam.

### Economic Development

Texas snags top award for capital investment; SA recognized among metros ([San Antonio Business Journal](#))- Texas has been selected by Site Selection Magazine as the top performing state for capital investment and awarded the 2015 Governor's Cup. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott accepted the annual award, based on the number of new and expanded corporate facilities in the state. This is the fourth consecutive win for the Lone Star State and the seventh win for the state overall since 2004. Texas saw 702 high-capital investment projects completed in 2015, up from 689 projects that earned its first place finish the previous year.

Gov. Martinez signs \$158M public works package, but axes 150-plus projects ([Albuquerque Journal](#))- New Mexico's annual debate over capital outlay, or "pork," spending shows no signs of abating. Gov. Susana Martinez signed a trio of bills today that authorize funding for hundreds of bricks-and-mortar projects around the state. But the Republican governor also used her line-item veto authority to strike down more than 150 projects, and chastised lawmakers for having an "irresponsible" approach to infrastructure spending. "It is frustrating and disappointing to watch how the Legislature squanders critical infrastructure funding — choosing to spend money on local pork projects that often do not create jobs or develop the economy instead of pooling resources to make long-lasting, impactful improvements throughout the state," Martinez said in her executive message to House leaders.

Tenn. tourism campaign sees results ([WKRN](#))- The "Soundtrack of America, Made in Tennessee" brand campaign is bringing Tennessee 18 tax dollars for every \$1 spent on advertising, according to officials. Governor Bill Haslam and Commissioner Kevin Triplett of the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development announced the findings Wednesday morning. The campaign was launched 18 months ago. The study also revealed visitors spent an average of \$229 for every dollar invested in the campaign.

(Arkansas) 'Be Pro, Be Proud': Governor's latest movement to fill thousands of open jobs ([ABC 7](#))- Governor Asa Hutchinson, along with Walmart, the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce, Delta Regional Authority, and the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, announced a partnership with an initiative to fill the gap of thousands of jobs in Arkansas. There's a huge need in the state for jobs, like welding and commercial truck driving. The governor is hoping this initiative will not only create more interest in technical careers, but open doors to more training for those jobs. "I believe we've done our young people a disservice for the last two or three decades," Gov. Hutchinson said. There's about 5.6 million job openings in the U.S. today, with 60,000 of those in Arkansas. The majority are in high skilled technical career fields.

#### Public Safety

Governor Branstad signs 'historic' bill shielding juvenile court records from public view ([The Gazette](#))- The bill, approved 48-0 by the Senate and 96-1 by the House, makes all juvenile delinquency proceedings except those involving felony charges confidential unless a judge issues an order making them public. It was part of the criminal justice reforms Branstad recommended in his Condition of the State in January.

#### Education

(Maine) Legislature Approves Compromise Over Taxes, School Funding ([Maine Public Broadcasting](#))- Maine school districts facing significant budget cuts got some relief from Augusta today, where the Maine House and Senate gave final approval to a measure that provides an additional \$15 million dollars in state aid. The legislature also approved a tax conformity measure that was a key to winning the support of Governor Paul LePage. Gov. Paul LePage and the republicans in the legislature have made tax conformity their top priority so far this session. While it also is important for many Democrats, they were focused on a significant loss of school funding to many districts, due to declining enrollments, and changing property valuations. For weeks leaders have been meeting privately and with Governor to work out a compromise, and a framework emerged this week that would provide \$15 million in additional school funds. But some Democrats, including house majority leader Jeff McCabe, weren't satisfied.

#### Healthcare

Governor Pence announces new effort in combatting opioid abuse among veterans ([Fox59](#))- Governor Pence has announced a new initiative aimed at curbing opioid abuse by Hoosier veterans. Veterans treated at VA hospitals will now be enrolled in the Indiana State Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (INSPECT). This will allow doctors to view patients' controlled substance history and note red flags. This will begin with a pilot program at the Roudebush Veterans Affairs medical facility in Indianapolis.

Senate ends debate on opioid bill ([The Hill](#))- The legislation is expected to get a final vote as soon as Wednesday afternoon, though no vote is currently scheduled. If lawmakers run out of procedural clock it could be pushed to as late as Thursday afternoon. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) urged support for the legislation earlier Wednesday, saying it would mark a "big step" in combating a growing overdose epidemic. "The bill before us, with all of its important provisions, is the result of hard work and leadership from many colleagues on both sides of the aisle," he said, adding that the legislation underscores what the Senate can get done with bipartisanship.