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## REPUBLICAN GOVERNORS PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

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### Recommended Read

Kansas: An Unsung Hero For Economic Growth ([Forbes](#))- Now in the third year of his bold tax experiment, Kansas Governor Sam Brownback can see the ways in which reducing (and, in many cases, eliminating) the state income tax is yielding incremental, positive effects for Kansans. Significantly, every year since the tax cuts were implemented, Kansas has surpassed the state record for new business formations. When we consider that startups have decreased nationwide since the Great Recession of 2008, this achievement is particularly remarkable. What's more, the Kansas unemployment rate stands at 3.7% – the lowest the state has seen since 2001, and well below the national average of 5.5%.

### Economic Development

Governor Rauner Visits Small Businesses: Continues Push for Reforms ([WAND](#))- Small businesses across the state are urging lawmakers to listen to governor Bruce Rauner's plans for business reforms to improve the economic climate in the state. "In the last ten years Illinois has lost 500,000 to 800,000 people, so just even being able to attract good employment locally today has been more difficult than it was 10 years ago. I think it's going to be crucial for the future of Illinois that we do get the reforms and do the thing that's going to help local companies like GSI grow within Illinois," said Brian Atwood, director of North American operations for GSI. Rauner said he's hopeful that lawmakers will take action on his proposals when they return to the Capitol this fall.

Abbott: Investment in research will fuel an economic boost for Texas ([Houston Chronicle](#))- Innovation has no endpoint, but it always begins with an idea. And more of those brilliant ideas will be coming from the University of Houston with the first grants awarded through the new Governor's University Research Initiative. Texas A&M University, the University of Houston and the University of Texas at Austin have received the inaugural round of matching grants awarded by the Governor's University Research Initiative to help recruit even more Nobel Laureates and National Academy members to the state of Texas. Ten nationally recognized researchers were recruited from across the country and around the globe, and they will be among the leaders of a transformation in engineering and the sciences that will surpass the tech revolution of the last three decades.

(South Dakota) Bills now proposed for 'Spearfish Canyon State Park' ([KOTA](#))- Gov. Dennis Daugaard's plan to create a new state park at Spearfish Canyon is progressing thanks to South Dakota's Congressional Delegation. Sen. John Thune introduced federal legislation to authorize a land exchange between the federal government and the State of South Dakota. The bill is co-sponsored by Sen. Mike Rounds. Rep. Since the proposal was announced in January, the State of South Dakota has purchased 73 acres surrounding Spearfish Falls from the Barrick Gold Corporation. Another 34 acres in Spearfish Canyon has been gifted to the state from the Spearfish Canyon Foundation.

### Transportation

Md. governor announces plans to ease I-270 congestion ([WTOP](#))- On an average weekday, more than 250,000 cars travel along Interstate 270 near the Capital Beltway in Montgomery County, in an area considered to be the most congested corridor in Maryland. "This highway is simply not equipped to handle that kind of volume and any Marylander who has driven this route would quickly tell you that it's sometimes a traffic nightmare," said Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan. At a news conference Monday along the interstate in Potomac, the governor officially announced a plan to help ease congestion in the area. With more than \$560 million earmarked for highway improvements in Montgomery County, \$230 million is being set aside for projects aimed to improve traffic flow on the interstate.

### Public Safety

Deal To Discuss Criminal Justice Reform At GOP Convention ([NPR](#))- Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal is expected to take

the stage at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio Tuesday morning to talk about criminal justice reform. Deal will sit on a panel with Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin and Oklahoma Gov. Mary Fallin for a special issue briefing at the convention. Criminal justice reform is part of the 2016 GOP Platform. Adam Gelb, director of the Public Safety Performance Project at the nonpartisan Pew Charitable Trusts, said Georgia's reforms have been some of the most far-reaching in the nation. "It's a state where the culture is really changing," Gelb said, "and it's becoming less about what sounds good, and more about what actually works."

Gov. Bruce Rauner Signs Bill Banning Sale of 'Bath Salts' ([Chicago 5](#))- Gov. Bruce Rauner is signing legislation to ban the sale of synthetic drugs known as "bath salts" in Illinois. Most states have passed laws to ban the chemicals, which mimic the effects of powerful drugs like cocaine. The legislation Rauner says he will sign Monday at the courthouse in Taylorville would make selling bath salts a felony punishable with a fine of up to \$150,000.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott announces Police Protection Act ([Fox 7 Austin](#))- Governor Greg Abbott today announced an effort to strengthen penalties for crimes committed against law enforcement officers – the Police Protection Act. The proposal is punctuated by making it a hate crime for anyone to commit a crime against a law enforcement officer out of bias against the police. The Governor will request the Texas legislature to pass the Police Protection Act in the 2017 legislative session.

#### Veterans Initiatives

Governor Baker Signs Legislation Supporting Veterans' Benefits and Housing ([Real Estate Rama](#))- Governor Charlie Baker was joined by active duty service members and veterans of the United States Armed Services, Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders, Secretary of Veterans' Services Francisco Ureña and members of the legislature as he signed An Act relative to housing, operations, military service, and enrichment, (H. 4285) or "The HOME Act," into law. The omnibus legislation provides additional support for members of the Armed Services, veterans, gold star families, and the Commonwealth's two Soldiers' Homes.

#### Healthcare

Gov. Scott checks airports for signs about Zika ([Naples Daily News](#))- Gov. Rick Scott touched base Monday with smaller airports in the state, including Southwest International Airport in Fort Myers, to make sure they have signs up alerting travelers to the Zika virus that so far has been limited to travel-related cases. The Florida Department of Health began to install signs about a month ago at the state's major airports that inform travelers about the Zika virus. The agency is installing signs at smaller airports. Screening travelers as they arrive in Florida airports from Zika-prone locations was not a feasible way to combat the virus, Department of Health spokeswoman Mara Gambineri said.

LePage backs Aroostook County town's plan to drug test welfare recipients ([Portland Press Herald](#))- Gov. Paul LePage is getting behind an Aroostook County town's decision to consider new rules that would tie some welfare benefits to random drug testing. Officials in Madawaska are vetting rules that would apply to the state's General Assistance program, which provides money for things like food and housing. The rules, which would be the first of their kind in Maine, will come up at the town's Board of Selectmen meeting Tuesday. LePage, a Republican, has been a vocal supporter of welfare reform as governor, including advocating for drug-screening assessments for certain recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. He called Madawaska's proposal "fiscally responsible" and a chance to promote healthy living.

Mississippi telemental health among nation's 8 top programs ([WDAM](#))- Mississippi's supportive policy landscape for telemedicine, including services for residents coping with mental illness, has earned the state an overall "A" rating from the American Telemedicine Association in its 2016 state-by-state report card. Mississippi is among only eight states earning that highest score in the association's evaluation of performance in telemental and behavioral health. The Center for Telehealth at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in 2015 recorded 1,600 psychiatry patient encounters -- nearly double the 900 in 2014. The center fills gaps in mental health services in the state's rural corners by offering general and specialized psychiatric services delivered by an experienced team of psychiatrists, psychiatric nurse practitioners, psychologists, counselors and therapists. Patients ranging from children to the elderly are treated using a live audiovideo stream on a computer that connects them with specialists at UMMC. Visits are conducted discreetly in their local doctor's office, or locations including schools, hospitals or community mental health centers.