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Republican Governors Public Policy Committee
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Taxes and Budget

MD Senate Committee Approves Tax-Relief Plan ([WCBC](#)) – A Maryland Senate committee has approved a modest tax-relief plan. The plan approved Thursday reduces Maryland's top four tax-rate brackets over five years. That affects single tax filers who make more than \$100,000 and joint filers with income over \$150,000. Ryan Bishop, an analyst with the state's Department of Legislative Services, says that would cut taxes between 1 and 3 percent in those brackets. The plan also would expand the state's Earned Income Tax Credit, which is offered to low-income workers.

Energy and Environment

States again ask Supreme Court to stop EPA air pollution rule ([The Hill](#)) – A group of 20 states is trying once again to get the Supreme Court to put an end to a controversial air pollution rule that the court has already found to be unlawful. The states, led by Michigan, are asking the Supreme Court to take up the case against the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) mercury and air toxics standards, which have already caused numerous coal-fired power plants to shut down because they could not comply. The court said last year that the EPA did not properly account for the costs of the regulation before it decided to write it, but the justices let the rule stay in place while the administration figures out how to fix it.

Several US states consider laws to block local bag bans ([PRW](#)) - After years in which several states - most notably California - tried and failed to enact state-wide fees or outright bans on single-use plastic bags, some legislators have started a new trend, a ban on bans. Arizona kicked things off in April when governor Douglas Ducey signed into law a measure barring any municipality from regulating the sale or use of single-use plastic bags as well as foam containers, boxes, cans and bottles. This month, he signed it into law a second time.

Transportation and Infrastructure

Alabama House committee OKs six-cent gas tax increase ([The Montgomery Advertiser](#)) – An Alabama House committee Thursday approved a bill that would raise the state gas tax by about six cents a gallon, with the hopes of generating more money to fund road and bridge projects. The state's gas tax, a combination of three different levies and a pump inspection fee, stands at 18 cents a gallon. The bill will add another excise tax, based on an average of the existing state taxes in Florida, Georgia, Mississippi and Tennessee. McCutcheon said that would increase the tax six cents, to 24 cents. Diesel fuel taxes would go up about six cents. A companion bill, sponsored by Sen. Gerald Dial, R-Lineville, would create a Transportation Safety Fund that would direct money from the project to county infrastructure projects. The bill would ban the use of the money for personnel, equipment purchase or "construction of buildings not related the road and bridge construction." The committee approved Dial's bill.

Economic Development

Gov. Ducey OKs bill blocking businesses that boycott Israel ([AP](#)) – Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey has signed a measure that blocks state and local authorities from entering into contracts with businesses that boycott Israel. The proposal requires all companies that work with state and local governments to certify they are not boycotting Israel. It also requires the state treasurer and retirement systems to divest or withdraw all direct public holdings from restricted companies. Spokeswoman Annie Dockendorff said Ducey supports Israel as an important trade partner and ally. House Bill 2617 signed Thursday is one of several making their way through legislatures in at least six states. The proposal is in response to Palestinian human rights groups calling for boycotts until Israel complies with international law.

Millennials Fuel Apartment-Building Boom; Will It Last? ([Pew Stateline](#)) - Construction started on 386,000 new apartments last year, according to census data, the highest number since 1987. Apartments, defined as housing units in

buildings with five or more units, made up 35 percent of all home construction last year, the highest share since 1973. Forty-seven states saw construction shift from houses toward apartments, as measured by approval of permits, between 2005 and 2014, the most recent complete year of census data. The shift was especially dramatic in western states such as Colorado, where multifamily units made up 38 percent of new construction permits in 2014, up from just 10 percent in 2005. Other states where the share rose more than 25 percentage points were California, Oregon, Arizona, New Jersey, Washington, North Dakota and Nebraska. The only states to buck the trend were Wyoming and Rhode Island, where apartment-construction permits dropped by more than half since 2005.

(Kansas) Senate bill would help sell properties ([The Topeka Capital-Journal](#)) - Kansas legislators serving Topekans pointed Saturday to fresh evidence the administration of Gov. Sam Brownback may sell high-value real estate to help keep state government afloat and move closer to a philosophical goal of exiting the landlord business. A bill alive in a Senate budget committee would establish rules for hiring a private company to identify and market "surplus" government property, including state hospitals for the mentally ill and developmentally disabled, in deals that would have to be approved no later than Nov. 1 by the Kansas Department of Administration. Instead of following Kansas law sending a majority of the money from surplus property sales to the beleaguered state pension system, most receipts from these transactions would go to the severely depleted state treasury.

Gov. Matt Bevin says a workforce training initiative has expanded into northeastern Kentucky ([AP](#)) - Gov. Matt Bevin says a workforce training initiative has expanded into northeastern Kentucky. A statement from the governor's office says the Kentucky Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education is now available through Maysville Community and Technical College. After participants enroll in the program, they take classes two days each week and work at a sponsoring manufacturer three days a week. The five-semester program allows students to get an associate degree while also obtaining hands-on, paid experience. Officials say the program addresses a need for more skilled workers in advanced manufacturing. Programs are already in place in several areas of Kentucky. The statement says officials hope that it will eventually be available in all regions of the state.

Nevada's high-tech twist on adventure tourism ([The Reno Gazette-Journal](#)) - Major tourism destinations such as Las Vegas and Reno have their own tourism authorities. That leaves Travel Nevada to focus on the rest of the state, which is where adventure tourism comes in. Bethany Drysdale, director of public relations for the division, said the emphasis on blending adventure and social media has roots in the depths of the recession in 2011. That's when Gov. Brian Sandoval appointed Claudia Vecchio to lead the new Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs. After his budget eliminated the former Department of Cultural Affairs, Sandoval created the new department, putting the Commission on Tourism, Division of Museums and History, Nevada Arts Council and Nevada Indian Commission under one roof.

Public Safety

How High Point, N.C., Solved Its Domestic Violence Problem ([Governing](#)) – Like other progressive police departments, the High Point Police Department embraced many of these initiatives. In practice, though, its efforts and those of the broader criminal justice system were lackluster. Investigations were perfunctory. Faced with victims who were hard to find or who did not want to press charges, detectives gave up on investigations into "minor" incidents. Typically, there was no follow-up with victims. The police department didn't work with advocacy groups. Implementation, says High Point Police Chief Marty Sumner, "was poor." In 2011, the department decided to reinvigorate its approach. Through an array of positive incentives, community engagement and warnings of jail time, it sought to deter first-time abusers from assaulting their partners again and to dissuade chronic offenders from continuing or escalating their pattern of assaults.

Education

A New Roadmap to Better Teacher Evaluation and Support ([Governing](#)) – If you're planning a trip across town or across the country, these days the first step is to grab a smartphone to check Google Maps or Waze to get directions. But we're old enough to remember when every journey to a new place required unfolding an unwieldy paper map and then tracing out a course along tiny lines that may or may not represent the most efficient route. In some states, education policymakers are still using the equivalent of paper roadmaps. They create policies based on a two-dimensional view of the education landscape, without clear vision, broad-based input or effective follow-through. As a result, they -- along with the educators, parents and students they serve -- are taken on a tiresome trip that can leave everyone a little cranky.

Healthcare

Governor Pence to sign legislation to combat drug abuse in Indiana ([WNDU](#)) - Monday, Governor Mike Pence will sign into law a number of bills aimed at combating drug abuse in Indiana at a ceremony at the Hope Academy in Indianapolis, a tuition-free, public charter high school for students in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction. Three of these bills were included on the Governor's 2016 legislative agenda and were a product of the Governor's Task Force on Drug Enforcement Treatment and Prevention. Later in the day, Governor Pence will sign into law the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act, which creates a savings program for Hoosiers to better provide for their loved ones with special needs by allowing them to save money for disability-related costs without placing other benefits at risk.