

**From:** The Council of State Governments <data@csg.org>  
**To:** Kester, Tonykester@aging.sc.gov  
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**Subject:** The Current State: Measles and Vaccines; An Inmate's Right to a Beard; Balancing the Recovery

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**Issue: 4**

**February 16, 2015**

#### **Measles Outbreak Prompts State Debate on Vaccine Exemptions**

What started as a trip to Disneyland created a nationwide debate about vaccinations against measles and other preventable diseases. Less than half the states have a 95 percent vaccination rate for measles--the level at which "herd immunity" offers protection for most people. Seven states have vaccination rates below 90 percent.

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#### **More than Manners: Civility is Essential for Better Government**

Our institutions of deliberative democracy are not functioning optimally. Much of what's broken can be traced to a rise in partisan tribalism and an associated decline in civility in the public square. Improving civility in government is to the optimist a daunting task, to the pessimist a fool's errand.

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#### **To Shave or Not to Shave ... An Inmate's Rights**

Inmate Gregory Holt wanted to grow a half-inch beard in accordance with his Muslim religious beliefs. The Arkansas Department of Corrections said no. Turns out, Holt had the right to do so under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Rights Act, according to the U.S. Supreme Court.

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#### **Credit Due: Increasing Veterans' Postsecondary Degree Attainment**

Veterans are enrolling in postsecondary education institutions in large numbers, most of them with extensive occupational experience. Many colleges use Prior Learning Assessments to award academic credit for the knowledge and skills an individual has gained outside the classroom. Tune in to this eCademy webcast at **2 p.m. EST Feb. 24** to learn how states can help in this effort to grant credits to veterans for prior learning through state policies and programs.

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#### **Balancing the Recovery**

States have emerged from the Great Recession, but with the recovery comes new questions about fiscal direction: Should we shore up our savings or restore spending? State leaders in 2015 will be struggling with how to restore funding in critical areas cut during the downturn while making sure they have the resources to weather the next storm.

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#### **Energy & Environment Highlights in the President's Budget**

President Obama's 2016 fiscal year budget highlights many of his initiatives in the energy and environment arena. Obama reiterated his support for the Climate Action Plan he released in 2013 in the \$4 trillion spending plan. The budget calls for an increase in funding to support the plan.

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### **E-Cigarettes: Regulation and Taxation**

Some people trying to give up smoking have turned to e-cigarettes. E-cigarettes are widely believed to be less toxic than combustible tobacco cigarettes. Some believe that smokers can switch to e-cigarettes as a means to stop or reduce smoking, while some health advocates fear that e-cigarettes may create new smokers. No comprehensive published research or evidence exists to back up either belief, however. Now, some states are considering how to regulate e-cigarettes.

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### **Kalisa Participates in Discussion on Military Voting**

Kamanzi Graham Kalisa, director of CSG's Overseas Voting Initiative, participated in a panel discussion on military voting at the **Overseas Vote Foundation Summit 2015** in Washington, D.C. CSG's Overseas Voting Initiative, funded by the U.S. Department of Defense Federal Voting Assistance Program, aims to assist states in improving the return rate of overseas absentee ballots from military service members and U.S. citizens abroad.

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**CSG Midwest: Midwestern Legislative Conference (MLC) 70th Annual Meeting**  
July 12-15, 2015: Bismarck, N.D.

**CSG South: Southern Legislative Conference (SLC) 69th Annual Meeting**  
July 18-22, 2015: Savannah, Ga

**CSG West 68th Annual Meeting**  
July 28-31, 2015: Vail, Colo.

**CSG East: Eastern Regional Conference (ERC) 55th Annual Meeting and Regional Policy Forum**  
Aug. 16-19, 2015: Wilmington, Del.

**See Full Calendar**

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Founded in 1933, The Council of State Governments is our nation's only organization serving all three branches of state government. CSG is a region-based forum that fosters the exchange of insights and ideas to help state officials shape public policy. This offers unparalleled regional, national and international opportunities to network, develop leaders, collaborate and create problem-solving partnerships.



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