

# SUMMARIES OF GOVERNORS' 2016 STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESSES

March 7, 2016

## Overview

As of March 7th, governors in 40 states have given a State of the State speech or address to the legislature, with three more still scheduled. Many governors once again began their speech by highlighting progress in their state, including strong job growth, lower unemployment rates, continued balanced budgets, higher rainy day fund levels, tax reductions, pension reforms, government restructuring, and record high investments in elementary and secondary education. However, a number of governors this year also discussed serious fiscal challenges facing their state, including revenue shortfalls brought on by the decline in oil and natural gas prices, and long-term structural imbalances.

Many of the themes in this year's speeches were similar to the last several years. Once again, governors prioritized elementary and secondary education and called for further investments in areas such as pre-K and full-day kindergarten. This year also saw a number of governors call for increased teacher pay, while others advocated for increased funds for charter schools, and some suggested changing the state's education funding formula. In the area of higher education, many governors called for tuition growth limits, increased degree attainment, additional scholarship funds, and efforts to help relieve student loan debt. Similar to last year, a number of speeches discussed the poor state of infrastructure including crumbling roads and deficient bridges and called for additional investments. Healthcare costs were a point of emphasis in many addresses, although they were not the primary focus in most speeches. Several governors called for some form of Medicaid expansion in their state, while others advocated for modernizing their Medicaid system. Finally, governors again stressed the need to create jobs, grow the economy, provide an opportunity for all to succeed, and

adjust to the changing world. Specific recommendations focused on items such as increased funding for workforce development and job training, research and development tax credits, reducing regulations, aid for small businesses, affordable housing, and property tax relief.

While many themes were similar to years past, other areas received additional emphasis this year, most notably the need to address drug abuse. Many governors discussed the opioid and heroin crisis in their state and proposed solutions such as increased access to treatment, additional law enforcement, changes in how drug charges are prosecuted, and limiting the availability of prescription opiates. Other areas specifically focused on in this year's addresses include juvenile justice reforms, increased funding and treatment options for people with mental illnesses and developmental disabilities, foster care reform, water management, and rural initiatives in areas such as job creation and the recruitment of teachers. Finally, as noted above, while most states continue to see revenue growth and budgetary improvements, some states this year are facing significant fiscal difficulties. Several governors proposed solutions such as spending cuts, tax increases, changes to tax credits, and using reserves due to declining revenue from oil, natural gas, and coal. Additionally, governors in states facing structural imbalances recommended actions focused on the drivers of long-term unfunded obligations, avoiding one-time fixes, prioritizing core services, and addressing both the spending and revenue side.

Below are state-by-state summaries of State of the State addresses with links to the speeches. Additionally, click [here](#) to access governors' proposed budgets for fiscal 2017.

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[Alabama's](#) governor discussed his new Great State 2019 Plan, in honor of the state's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2019. The governor notes that his strategic plan is aimed at fundamentally changing the state, opening doors of opportunity, clearing the path to prosperity, and working to solve decades old problems in the state. Specifically, it calls for investing more in education through higher quality pre-k and a scholarship program, additional workforce development opportunities, increasing the number of health professionals in rural areas, a long-term solution to the prison problem, and a broadband initiative.



[Alaska's](#) governor spoke about the challenging times the state is currently facing due to the decline in oil prices, and noted some accomplishments over the past year including Medicaid reform and expansion, a safe children's act, and changes in the department of corrections. The governor also described his New Sustainable Alaska Plan, which includes spending cuts and other cost-saving measures, the Permanent Fund Protection Act, which allocates half of the state's share of natural resource royalties toward dividends, and new revenue proposals, including the creation of a modest state income tax, an increase to alcohol and tobacco taxes, and changes to oil and gas tax credits.



[Arizona's](#) governor began by discussing progress the state has made over the past year including balancing the budget, lowering taxes, and job growth. The governor then discussed priorities for this year including further tax reductions, eliminating unnecessary regulations, taking steps to increase business innovation, improving the foster care system, initiatives to reduce drug abuse, and increasing education funding. The governor reiterated that he supports the education-related propositions on the ballot that would increase funding by \$3.5 billion.



Arkansas – No address in 2016.



[California's](#) governor focused on continued fiscal discipline in his speech, including paying for the commitments the state has already made, ways to not lock in future spending, and keeping the state prepared for an uncertain future. Regarding the budget, the governor said the state needs to continue to build up large reserves to deal with revenue volatility and any future recession, and should invest temporary surpluses in infrastructure or other one-time needs. The governor also discussed commitments the state must keep in areas such as health care, education, retirement liabilities, and water management.



[Colorado's](#) governor highlighted improvements in the state over the past five years including stronger fiscal health, lower unemployment, and increasing economic performance. He also discussed various recent initiatives such as a statewide water plan, Colorado Blueprint 2.0 which helps regions identify and capitalize on their specific assets, programs to help rural Colorado, health care expansion, and efforts to close the education attainment gap. Additionally, the governor spoke about the need to find a way to invest more in infrastructure, extending the low-income housing tax credit program, updating marijuana regulations, increased bipartisanship, and reforming the state's tax expenditure limitation to strike a balance between stability and agility.



[Connecticut's](#) governor discussed how the economic reality has changed since the Great Recession and that the state must continue to address its structural imbalance including resetting expectations on what the state can afford, how it provides services, and how to save for priorities. The governor laid out five budget principles to help move the state forward: limit spending to available resources through changing its current services budget approach; the need to address the drivers of long-term unfunded obligations; prioritize funding for core services; holding state agencies accountable to the public and the legislature for their results; and improving the budget process. The governor also said he wants to work on fixing the transportation system, making criminal justice reforms, and continue to grow the economy.



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[Delaware's](#) governor talked about ways to build opportunities for sustained job creation in a changing economy. Specifically, he discussed ways to increase access to job training, make Delaware a more affordable and welcoming place to do business, sustain responsible state finances through reigning in health care costs, investing more in education by raising teacher salaries and expanding early-learning opportunities, implementing criminal justice reforms, and continuing expansion of substance abuse treatments. The governor also highlighted progress in the state over the past seven years including strong job growth, investing more in infrastructure, less crowded prisons, and higher graduation rates.



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[Florida's](#) governor began by discussing progress over the past five years including funding the critical needs waiting list, increased investments in education, and a new program for people who suffer from substance abuse and mental illness. The governor also highlighted the state's strong job growth. The governor wants to keep job growth strong by cutting taxes by \$1 billion partly as a result of strong revenue growth, and by creating a new \$250 million Florida Enterprise Fund, which would be a dedicated trust fund designed to diversify the state's economy and support small businesses.



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[Georgia's](#) governor said that over the past five years the state has increased the size of its rainy day fund, reduced the unemployment rate through cutting taxes and removing regulatory burdens, expanded educational opportunities and job training programs, and has prioritized criminal justice reform. The governor also focused on the work of the Education Reform Commission, and discussed their recent report and recommendations, some of which require statutory changes, while others can be done through the budgetary process. Finally, the governor highlighted several items in his budget proposal including pay raises for state employees and teachers, new transportation projects as a result of the infrastructure package approved last year, and the implications of rising health care costs.



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[Hawaii's](#) governor discussed the changing world and economy, and the need to do things the right way. The governor spoke about good governance requiring truthfulness, compassion, a focus on the children, and the need to create a legacy. In his speech he highlighted a number of items including the need to meet the state's pension and health benefit obligations, the state's tax modernization program, efforts to spend federal funds in a timely manner, increased aid for the homeless, expanding affordable housing, clean energy technology in the schools, and additional funding for innovation enterprises.





[Idaho's](#) governor said that his legislative agenda and budget recommendations prioritizes living within the state's means while making responsible, sustainable, and data-driven investments in education and job training. The governor noted that his budget calls for a 7.9 percent increase in public school funding, a 9.6 percent increase in funding for community colleges, and an 8.8 percent increase for four-year institutions. Regarding education and job training, the governor highlighted efforts to increase the number of citizens with a degree or professional certification, current reading initiatives, and the connectedness between K-12 and career development. Additionally, the governor discussed his recommendation for an alternative to Medicaid expansion, the need to ensure water sustainability, improving the public defense system, and increased funding to retain and reward state employees.



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[Illinois'](#) governor spoke about the need to improve the quality of life for all residents through more economic opportunity and increasing real incomes. The governor also discussed the need to stop job losses and increase job creation. He noted that in order to create a good environment to do business, the state must fix the workers compensation system, labor regulations, liability costs, and uncompetitive property taxes. The governor called for the implementation of recommendations from a report on streamlining and reducing costs to local governments, pension reform, not increasing taxes, reforms to union contracts, changes to IT spending, and criminal justice reform. Finally, the governor discussed long-term goals for education centering on eliminating wasteful bureaucracy, putting more money into the classrooms, and holding schools accountable for results.



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[Indiana's](#) governor discussed the strength of the state including new jobs, low unemployment, and added business investments. The governor also spoke about recent accomplishments such as maintaining strong reserves, passing a balanced budget, the state's AAA bond rating, increased investments in education, and the implementation of its healthcare alternative. The governor said that his focus is on continuing to strengthen the economy, supporting schools, improving roads, investing in infrastructure, keeping taxes low, and confronting drug abuse.



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[Iowa's](#) governor talked about the need to pass a responsible budget, and to set priorities that match those of residents across the state. The governor spoke of the need to increase funding for education infrastructure, improve water quality, better aligning career training for students and workers, craft a state energy plan, and to address criminal justice issues. In outlining his budget proposal, the governor noted that it is balanced and stable, fits within five-year budget projections, increases supplemental state aid to schools, fully funds property tax cuts, and takes the next steps in modernizing the state's Medicaid system.



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[Kansas'](#) governor spoke about improvements in the state over the past five years including more low-income residents paying zero income taxes, greater funding of the state's pension systems, increased K-12 spending, less people on welfare, modernization of the Medicaid system, as well as job growth and lower unemployment. The governor mentioned that education receives the largest amount of state funds, but that the education funding formula must be changed to put more money towards instruction. The governor also noted that one of the largest challenges the state faces is the future of its water.



[Kentucky's](#) governor spoke about the need to get Kentucky's financial house in order during his State of the Commonwealth Budget Address. To help strengthen the fiscal foundation, the governor called for 9 percent reductions for most state agencies during the next biennium, while exempting certain functions that are deemed critical such as K-12. The governor called for additional spending on items such as criminal justice, social workers, and infrastructure repairs. Regarding Medicaid, the governor said his administration will design a plan that will cover vulnerable citizens in a way that the state can afford and again called for shutting down the state's health insurance exchange. Finally, the governor called for significant additional funds to help address the state's unfunded pension liability, and called for additional pension reforms.



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[Louisiana's](#) governor, in a special address to the state, discussed the significant challenges the state is currently facing. The governor noted that the state is facing the largest budget deficit in its history caused by both revenues coming in below projections, partly due to the decline in the price of oil, and not having the funding available to fulfill prior commitments. In order to bring fiscal stability, the governor said the state must address both the spending and revenue side. If the problem is not addressed, the governor said that the health care system is on the verge of imploding, and universities may run out of money. To address the budget shortfall, the governor proposed significant spending cuts, a hiring freeze, using some of the rainy day fund and BP oil spill payments, reducing tax credits, suspending corporate tax deductions, raising the sales tax by one cent, and increasing alcohol and cigarette taxes. The governor is also scheduled to give a State of the State address on March 14.



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[Maine's](#) governor chose to forgo a live speech and instead submitted written remarks to the legislature. In his remarks, the governor criticized the legislature for its lack of action and recent impeachment proceedings. The governor highlighted several areas where he thinks more needs to be done including common-sense welfare reform, cutting the income tax over time, lowering electricity rates, reducing student debt, and fighting the current drug crisis.



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[Maryland's](#) governor discussed the progress the state has made over the past year regarding its fiscal health including revenue growth, a reduction in the structural deficit, and increasing the rainy day fund. He noted that last year's budget included tax cuts, and is asking for additional modest and reasonable tax relief again this year. The governor also talked about the need to institute the Manufacturing Jobs Initiative, which would help bring jobs to areas where unemployment is the highest, and the need to eliminate needless, burdensome regulations. Additionally, he spoke about the need to increase education funding while finding new solutions, protect the environment, make additional infrastructure investments, and address the heroin and opioid crisis.

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[Massachusetts'](#) governor outlined some of the steps the state has taken over the past year including closing a \$1 billion budget deficit without raising taxes, reducing spending, investments in school aid, higher education, and local aid, and funding for road and bridge projects. Moving forward, the governor wants to focus on energy, including increasing the supply of clean energy, fighting the opioid and heroin crisis, and education reform, including expanding the number of public charter schools. The governor also discussed his budget proposal for next year which will include increased local and education aid, more money to the stabilization fund, and no increase in taxes or fees.



[Michigan's](#) governor primarily focused on the water crisis in Flint and said the state will take actions such as distributing bottled water, water filters, and water testing kits, and that his budget will recommend keeping Flint on Detroit's water system through the end of the year, replacing water supply pipes, and fund specialized staff for follow-up care. The governor also discussed needing to fix the problems in government that led to the crisis. In addition to Flint, the governor talked about other issues the state is facing including needing to invest more in various types of infrastructure, and implementing reforms of Detroit's public schools.



Minnesota – March 9, 2016.



[Mississippi's](#) governor outlined his priorities for the 2016 session in his speech. The governor stated that he wants to reorganize the foster care system including splitting Family and Children's Services from the Department of Human Services. Regarding education, the governor said he wants to expand school choice and encourage innovation, as well as create an associate's degree program at four-year institutions. The governor also discussed that he wants to spend \$50 million from the Unemployment Trust Fund on workforce development, and hopes to provide an income tax credit to working families earning less than \$52,000. Finally, the governor discussed his budget proposal for fiscal 2017 which includes level-funding for most agencies, increased foster care spending, and a \$51 million deposit to the rainy day fund.



[Missouri's](#) governor outlined the progress the state has made in the areas of jobs, balancing the budget without raising taxes, making college better and more affordable, and providing better healthcare. He also discussed his vision for the path forward including growing the economy, improving schools, caring for those in need, and earning the trust of residents. Specifically, the governor noted that the state needs to maintain fiscal discipline through balancing the budget, paying its bills, protecting its AAA credit rating, finding a way to increase spending on roads and infrastructure without taking it from other priority areas, providing additional funding for K-12 including troubled schools, continuing to invest in performance funding for colleges and universities, and providing additional resources to people with mental illnesses and developmental disabilities.



Montana – No address in 2016.



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[Nebraska's](#) governor highlighted successes over the past year including reducing the growth in state spending, enacting the nurse practitioner bill, and increasing aid to dependent children. The governor said that his top priority moving forward is making structural changes to property taxes to provide property tax relief. Additionally, the governor spoke of the need to invest more in infrastructure and proposed a transportation infrastructure bank. Another area of focus for the upcoming year is continuing to reform the corrections system and investing in community corrections. Finally, the governor talked about his plans for dealing with a downward revision of the revenue forecast and managing the budget including controlling spending and re-appropriating some funds to the general fund.



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Nevada – No address in 2016.



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[New Hampshire's](#) governor focused on combatting substance abuse and continuing economic growth. The governor's proposals for addressing the heroin and opioid epidemic include additional support of local law enforcement, prevention efforts, improved provider training, a statewide drug court plan, and increasing access to treatment. The governor spoke of the need to build a strong workforce through education and discussed efforts to increase the number of residents with degrees, fully fund the adequacy formula, and strengthen early education. The governor also detailed new initiatives between businesses and community colleges, and to help people move from public assistance to high-quality jobs. Additionally, she discussed the need to strengthen the state's transportation infrastructure, and called for reauthorizing the bipartisan health care expansion plan.



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[New Jersey's](#) governor highlighted improvements in the state over the past six years including private sector job growth, balanced budgets with no new taxes, increased educational investments, and changes in the way drug charges are prosecuted. The governor listed three challenges that he wants to work with the legislature on including increased efforts to fight drug addictions through increased funding to care for mental health and substance use and other means, abolishing the estate tax, and regulatory relief for charter schools. In addition, the governor spoke out against a proposed constitutional amendment to guarantee pension payments over other types of state spending.



[New Mexico's](#) governor primarily focused on criminal justice reforms, education, and workforce development in her speech. The governor spoke of the need for tougher sentences for people convicted of violent crimes, child pornography, and DWI, while also calling for hiring more public safety workers. The governor discussed expanding early education, spending more on reading programs, raising teacher salaries, and offering additional scholarships. Regarding workforce development, the governor highlighted past successes in changing the regulatory environment and increases in research and development, and called for additional work to ensure students graduate on time with degrees and skills that employers need. Finally, she stated that the budget has been balanced without raising taxes, while at the same time increasing the size of the rainy day fund.



[New York's](#) governor focused on the theme of the state being “Built to Lead” due to its role throughout history, improvements over the past five years, and the capacity to address some of today’s most pressing challenges. The governor also outlined his budget proposal for fiscal 2017, which once again keeps state spending growth under two percent, as well as includes a small business tax cut. The governor discussed the need to encourage municipal consolidation, continue successful investments, provide Medicaid relief to local governments, invest more in infrastructure, and support schools and invest in education through such items as expanding pre-K and providing teachers with a credit for supplies. Other areas of focus included protecting the environment and encouraging clean energy, bolstering public safety, increasing housing aid, additional criminal justice reform, and embracing good government and transparency.



North Carolina – No address in 2016.



North Dakota – No address in 2016.



Ohio – April 6, 2016.





[Oklahoma's](#) governor began by discussing the economic challenges that the state currently faces due to the decline in oil and natural gas prices. The governor noted that the oil price collapse and structural problems have caused a nearly \$1 billion shortfall. To help address the shortfall, the governor has proposed several changes such as a measure that would automate the reconciliation of some agency non-revolving funds from one-time funds to general revenue, modernizing the state's sales tax code, and increasing cigarette taxes. The governor said that education remains her biggest priority and called for increasing teacher pay, as well as reforms to some school districts. Additionally, the governor outlined plans to lower mandatory drug possession sentences, provide more money for state prisons, and called for finishing renovations of the state capitol.



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Oregon – No address in 2016.



[Pennsylvania's](#) governor called on the legislature to finish passing a previously agreed upon budget for fiscal 2016. The governor noted that the state faces significant structural budget challenges which have impacted its credit rating and a current budget deficit of \$2 billion. He further said that if the deficit isn't addressed, and the state continues to rely on one-time fixes and budget gimmicks, residents will face billions of dollars in property tax hikes, as well as cuts to schools and critical services for women, children, and seniors. Specifically, the governor said that teachers may be laid off, children could lose access to early education, seniors would lose some prescription drug assistance and community based services, and assistance for people with mental illnesses and intellectual disabilities would be reduced. In addition to calling on the legislature to pass a budget for fiscal 2016, the governor released a budget proposal for fiscal 2017. The budget strives to put the state on more solid fiscal footing, and makes targeted investments in education, job creation, and programs to combat addiction and reform the criminal justice system.



[Rhode Island's](#) governor highlighted improvements over the past year including a significant drop in the unemployment rate and strong job growth. She then discussed her jobs plan to help build on the progress. The jobs plan includes record resources to support students and teachers, freezing college tuition, expanding research and development tax credits, down payment assistance and student loan repayments for recent graduates, cuts in the unemployment insurance tax, and increasing the earned income tax credit. In addition, the governor's budget proposal closes an estimated \$49.5 million shortfall, includes no broad-based tax increase, focuses on growing advanced industries, provides regulatory improvements to make it easier to do business, and reforms state pensions and the Medicaid program.



[South Carolina's](#) governor began her speech by discussing several of the tragedies the state has faced over the past year including shootings and flooding, and that the state has endured. She then discussed several of her proposals for the upcoming year including hiring additional prosecutors to deal with domestic violence cases, recruiting teachers to rural school districts, dedicating a portion of the state's bond capacity to K-12 facilities, and ethics reform. The governor also reiterated her position on transportation funding and stated that she will not sign any transportation bill that raise taxes, and wants to see reforms to the state department of transportation. Finally, the governor highlighted successes in the state including reducing the unemployment rate, decreasing unemployment taxes, cutting the state's debt service, increasing reserves, and moving people from welfare-to-work.



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[South Dakota's](#) governor discussed the findings of his Blue Ribbon Task Force on Teachers and Students including that the state spends less per student than surrounding states and that South Dakota is last in teacher salaries. To help address the issue, the governor proposed a one half cent increase in the sales tax to go towards increased teacher pay, a revised school funding formula, and a more efficient education system. Other areas the governor discussed included a new retirement design for new public employees, reasons why the state should expand Medicaid, successes in criminal justice reform, a continued tuition freeze for higher education, efforts to increase employment, and the progress of his better government initiative.



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[Tennessee's](#) governor highlighted improvements in both the state's economy and fiscal health, and said that the state should not waste its unique opportunity to invest in its priorities. The governor noted that a collaborative effort has allowed Tennessee to grow its economy, reduce ongoing costs, provide high quality service, and maintain fiscal discipline. In his address, the governor outlined his budget proposal which includes the state's largest investment in K-12, with much of the additional funding going towards teacher salaries. Regarding higher education, the budget continues the effort to increase the number of residents with a postsecondary credential and invests over \$580 million in infrastructure improvements. Other priority areas include using funds from the general fund to repay the highway fund, additional funds for serving more people with developmental disabilities, an increase in the number of drug recovery courts, investments in a rural development initiative, and growing the state's reserve fund.



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Texas – No address in 2016.



[Utah's](#) governor highlighted economic improvements in the state over the past six years including strong job growth and a reduction in the unemployment rate. The governor said that while the state of the state is strong, the state can do even better. The governor called for increased investments in rural areas, a continued emphasis on education following record funding levels last year, a goal of increasing the graduation rate to 90 percent over the next four years, finding long-term solutions to water supply issues, and reaching an agreement with the legislature to increase healthcare coverage. In addition, to preserve the state's fiscal stability, the governor called for maintaining strong reserve levels, no new debt or tax increases, and paying down existing debt.



[Vermont's](#) governor outlined his agenda for the year focusing on helping to grow the economy and create jobs, ensuring that everyone has access to an education that can help them succeed, combating climate change, expanding treatment for opiate addiction and working to prevent addiction in the first place, and criminal justice and drug policy reform. Specifically, the governor called for expanding the Vermont Enterprise Fund, creating a college saving account for every child born in Vermont, expanding a program that gives a free semester of school to low-income residents, adding staff to deal with opiate addiction caseloads, limiting the availability of prescription opiates, and expanding treatment options. The governor also praised improvements in the state over the past years and said he is optimistic about Vermont's future.



[Virginia's](#) governor began by talking about improvements in the state over the past year including closing a \$2.4 billion deficit, protecting schools from cuts, strong job growth, lower unemployment, a record investment in capital projects, and growing state revenues. Moving forward, the governor said the state needs to maintain its balanced budget while making strategic investments, and should consider proposals that will grow the economy, expand opportunity, make government work better, and take better care of taxpayer dollars. Specifically, the governor called for a record investment in public education, expanding nutrition programs for students, increased financial aid for higher education, incentives for degree completion for colleges and universities, an agreeable solution to bring about Medicaid expansion, continued investments in infrastructure, and fully funding pension contribution rates.



[Washington's](#) governor spoke about some of the bipartisan accomplishments over the past year including a \$16 billion transportation package, \$15 billion for light rail expansion, an additional \$2.3 billion to education, expanded early-learning and all-day kindergarten, pay raises for teachers and state employees, a tuition cut at colleges and universities, and restored parks funding. The governor also highlighted successes under his Results Washington initiative regarding performance management strategies. The governor stated that there are four main things he wants to accomplish in this year's legislative session: increasing the number of teachers through higher pay and other incentives; using reserve funds to pay for recent wildfire damage; increased investments in the state's mental health system; and a framework for future K-12 investments.



[West Virginia's](#) governor outlined his top priorities, focusing on the areas of economic development, workforce development, strengthening southern West Virginia, energy, tackling substance abuse, juvenile justice, education, and fiscal responsibility. The governor proposed several initiatives regarding development including allowing entrepreneurs to continue to receive unemployment benefits while they establish their new business, the expansion of a pilot program designed to help people receiving TANF benefits to enroll in college courses, and the development of a former large industrial site. Regarding substance abuse, the governor announced new licensing requirements for suboxone and methadone clinics, and hopes to expand an act making opioid antagonists available without prescription. In the area of education, the governor announced the creation of the Innovation in Education Grant Program, which is designed to reward innovation and creativity in the classroom. Finally, to help ensure fiscal stability, the governor called for raising the state's cigarette tax, eliminating a sales tax exemption regarding telecommunications, and not using any money from the rainy day fund in the fiscal 2017 budget.



[Wisconsin's](#) governor said that the state of the state is strong and that more people are working than nearly any other point in the state's history. The governor noted that state finances are stable, schools are doing well overall, college tuition is frozen, and property and income taxes are down from 2010. The governor stated that the rainy day fund is the largest in the state's history, the pension system is fully funded, and the state's per capita debt is among the lowest in the nation. Additionally, the state has made progress is helping everyone that wants a job to find a job, and has transferred over 8,000 people from government dependence to independence. The governor highlighted several initiatives related to education including an Academic and Career Plans pilot program to help children with career planning beginning in the sixth grade, investing money from state reforms into public education, increased funding for dual enrollment programs, the exploration of three-year college degrees, and a package of ideas to help offset the price of college and reduce the cost of student loan debt. Finally, the governor discussed his 2020 Vision Project, in which he will conduct listening sessions across the state to help plan the state's future for the next two decades.



[Wyoming's](#) governor said the state remains strong and has taken proactive efforts to streamline government, keep the standard budget flat, develop water and energy strategies, work on wildlife and other natural resource issues, and provide economic catalysts. The governor acknowledged that it is a time of constrained revenue due to declining oil, gas, and coal prices and said spending must be prioritized. To help lessen painful budget cuts, the governor has proposed borrowing from the state's sizeable rainy day fund and then repaying it with a portion of severance tax revenue. The governor has also called for the expansion of Medicaid, stating that it would help balance the budget, keep federal tax dollars in the state, and would benefit hospitals and health-care providers.

