

News From The States

EVENING WRAP

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By [Kate Queram](#)

America is often unhinged. Some days, it's because the reality show cult [storms the U.S. Capitol](#). Other times, it's because a state legislature considers, on the same day, proposals to roll back child labor laws, regulate dog breeding, and authorize happy hours (hey, [it's 5 o'clock somewhere](#)). Say what you will about this country, but at least it's never boring.



The Big Takeaway

The aforementioned proposals are all real examples from Indiana, where House lawmakers spent Monday advancing a veritable buffet of legislation, [the Indiana Capital Chronicle reported](#). By which I mean: There's something for everyone! Do you wish lazy high-schoolers would pull up their bootstraps and get full-time jobs already? There's a [bill for that](#)! Do you worry about the lack of random inspections at dog breeding facilities? There's a [bill for that](#)! Do you long to drink cocktails at home, but not quite enough to *make* them at home? Yep — there's [a bill for that](#), too!



*Do you love ostentatious chandeliers? Indiana understands!
(Photo by Monroe Bush for the Indiana Capital Chronicle)*

But wait, there's more!

Interested in guns? We've got [a bill](#) to allow certain elected officials and staffers to carry guns in the statehouse. Deeply concerned about the future of lemonade stands? [No problem!](#) Dying to hunt bobcats? Indiana's [got you covered](#). Jonesing to make it harder for people to vote in a state where voter turnout is [already abysmal](#)? [House Bill 1264](#) is *here for you!*

That bill, advanced on a party-line vote over the objections of Democrats, would require first-time voters to provide proof of residency when registering in person, unless they can furnish an Indiana driver's license or social security number that matches an existing state record. Republicans [pitched the bill](#) as (what else) a security upgrade, which Democrats said was unnecessary in a state that already makes it a pain to vote, even [by mail](#).

"Why does this body continue to treat the right to vote as a suggestion and not a fundamental right we need to protect?" asked state Rep. Tonya Pfaff, a Terre Haute Democrat.



Not on state property!

(Photo by Barbara Hoberock/Oklahoma Voice)

The Ten Commandments are also not mere suggestions, at least not if you're Christian — or if you're at the Oklahoma State Capitol, which would be required to “prominently” display a replica of the commandments under [a bill](#) introduced this month. Once erected, the monument — “a symbol of its historic significance for Oklahoman and American history” — could only be removed with the governor's approval and a three-fourths vote of the legislature, [per the Oklahoma Voice](#).

The bill is only the latest chapter in Oklahoma's Ten Commandments saga, which began in 2015 when state officials removed an existing monument from the capitol grounds after the state Supreme Court ruled that its placement violated a constitutional prohibition on using state property to promote religion. The monument — a 6-foot-tall, 2,000-pound red granite behemoth — was relocated to private property just south of the capitol, but the state still owns it. And now that conditions (namely, [a 2018 law](#) permitting precisely this sort of display, along with the far-right majority [on the U.S. Supreme Court](#)) are more

favorable to religious causes, it's time for the commandments to come on home, according to state Sen. David Bullard, a Republican and the bill's author.

Most Oklahomans don't agree. A vast majority of voters rejected [a 2016 ballot measure](#) that would have returned the monument to the capitol, leaving the constitutional prohibition in place. And that language is unequivocal, according to Veronica Laizure, deputy director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations Oklahoma deputy director and board president for American Civil Liberties Union Oklahoma.

"It has been pretty well established that public grounds and public money should not be used for promotion of a single religious viewpoint," she said. "This is clearly doing that."



*Just gonna move these apart a little more, one sec
(Photo by Getty Images)*

Bullard had anticipated this sort of blowback. People who oppose the bill are just haters who "do not speak for the majority of Oklahomans who want to honor our Christian and constitutional heritage," he said. This isn't true, of course. A majority of Oklahomans have already made it clear that they'd prefer not to honor this particular heritage in this particular way, leaving Bullard in the awkward position of speaking — loudly — for the minority who disagree.

Lawmakers in Utah made better use of their time Monday, advancing a bill that would make it easier to terminate the parental rights a rapist has for a child conceived through sexual assault. [The proposal](#), approved unanimously by a House committee, would codify a judge's authority to sever, rather than just limit, parental rights, offering survivors a clear rebuke to a common manipulation tactic, [the Utah News Dispatch reported](#).

"Women have had situations where they've been raped, and repeatedly so, because someone wants to have control over them through control of the child," said Nicholeen Peck, president of the [Worldwide Organization for Women](#).

The bill would also amend state policies for sexual assault kits, extending the storage period to as long as 20 years and allowing survivors to petition authorities for longer retention. [A separate policy](#), also approved unanimously, would create best practices for sexual assault investigations in hopes of addressing the state's chronically low rates of prosecution in rape cases. Utah has a higher-than-average rate of sexual assault, but [less than 12%](#) of victims report the crime to law enforcement.

"The goal for us is to have more people to report, and feel like they're being believed," said House Minority Leader Angela Romero, a Democrat and the lead sponsor for both bills.



State of Our Democracy

U.S. Rep. Cori Bush (D-Mo.) said Tuesday she was "fully cooperating" with a Department of Justice investigation into allegations that her campaign misused federal funds to pay for security services, [our D.C. bureau reported](#).

"Since before I was sworn into office, I have endured relentless threats to my physical safety and life," Bush told reporters on the steps of the U.S. Capitol. "As a rank-and-file member of Congress, I am not entitled to personal protection by the House and instead have used campaign funds as permissible to retain security services."



*Let those who have not paid their spouses for security services cast the first stone.
(Photo by Drew Angerer/Getty Images)*

“I have not used any federal tax dollars for personal security services,” Bush added. “Any reporting that I have used federal funds for personal security is simply false.”

The DOJ declined to comment. The Federal Election Commission and the House Committee on Ethics are also reviewing the expenditures, according to Bush.

Rumors of the investigation began circulating Monday, when the U.S. House Clerk [announced](#) that the Sergeant at Arms had been served with a grand jury subpoena for documents. Bush said Tuesday the probe centered on her now-husband, who served as her security guard and continued to provide security services for the campaign [after they married](#). Conservative groups filed at least two complaints over the arrangement, which is [technically legal](#) as long as Bush’s husband (or any other family member) provided “bona fide services” at or below market rate.

Bush said she complied with that policy.

“In accordance with all applicable rules, I retained my husband as part of my security team to provide security services because he has had extensive

experience in this area, and is able to provide the necessary services at or below a fair market rate,” she said.

“I am under no illusion that these right-wing organizations will stop politicizing and pursuing efforts to attack me and the work that the people of St. Louis sent me to Congress to do: To lead boldly, to legislate change my constituents can feel, and to save lives,” she added.



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One Last Thing

The royals are [back at home](#) recuperating from their [various](#) medical [procedures](#), presumably while wearing tiaras and ermine robes. (Or not. I don't know what royals do. Making the forefathers proud!)

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