

# News From The States

# EVENING WRAP

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By [Kate Queram](#)

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The theme of today's newsletter was obvious to me from the moment I opened my laptop this morning and laid eyes on the headlines.

"I'm sorry, they're doing *what?*" I said.

No one answered me, because I work from home and my pets can't talk. But that's OK. Once you read it, you'll understand.



## The Big Takeaway

Lawmakers in South Carolina this month requested a list of alternate names for the state-run [Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum](#), reigniting hope among officials who have warned [for years](#) that the facility's fundraising efforts were hamstrung by its weird name, [the South Carolina Daily Gazette reported](#).

It's not a guarantee, said Allen Roberson, the museum's director. But it's a start.

"I feel more optimistic than I ever have before," he said.



*Free suggestion: South Carolina's Totally Normal Military History Museum.  
(Photo by Skylar Laird/South Carolina Daily Gazette)*

**Corporate donors have long balked at bankrolling the Confederate Relic Room**, which contains artifacts from the Civil War and a number of other conflicts, from the Revolutionary War to the war in Afghanistan. Officials from Michelin, Sonoco, Budweiser and Boeing all refused to give money based solely on the facility's name, even as they complimented its collection. The moniker has also jeopardized the museum's accreditation status and deterred visitors, including a woman who waited outside rather than accompany her husband on a tour of the "racist" collection, Roberson said.

"The reference to the Confederacy is a lightning rod," museum commissioner R. Voight Shealy said during a recent meeting. "We all know it."

**But they can't change it without the approval of lawmakers**, who are required [under state law](#) to sign off on name changes for buildings or monuments that commemorate wars. For now, that prospect is mostly hypothetical. There's no proposed legislation, and the list of alternate names requested by lawmakers must first make it past the museum's commissioners, some of whom have been hesitant to approve a change without concrete proof that doing so would improve fundraising.



*Tennessee State Rep. Justin Pearson, a Memphis Democrat, looks on as the facade of legitimate governance crumbles around him.  
(Photo by John Partipilo/Tennessee Lookout)*

**Hesitance was not an issue Monday in Tennessee**, where House Republicans approved a measure that would bar local governments from reinstating lawmakers who are expelled for “disorderly behavior” despite [warnings](#) from legislative attorneys that the proposal likely violates the state constitution, [the Tennessee Lookout reported](#).

[The bill](#), approved 69-22 on [a party-line vote](#), was a clear swipe at two House Democrats who were [ousted last year](#) after staging a protest on the House floor to demand action on gun violence. State Reps. Justin J. Pearson (Memphis) and Justin Jones (Nashville) were both reinstated by local boards [within a week](#) and clinched their seats permanently in special elections [last summer](#). That process is dictated by the Tennessee Constitution and also in state law, which both authorize municipal government bodies to fill legislative vacancies with any “successor” who is qualified to hold state office.

**But that’s not what it’s *supposed to say***, according to state Rep. Johnny Garrett, a Republican who apparently owns a time machine or a special phone that rings in the past, where the state’s forefathers are just sitting around brushing their wigs and waiting to give their takes on various government questions from the 21st century. And guys, they’re *not psyched* about this one.

“Our framers did not intend that someone expelled from this House would be considered [to replace] themselves,” said Garrett, who sponsored the bill (because of course he did). “At no place in the state constitution does it say anything about succeeding yourself by appointment.”



*“HELLO, YE OLDE TENNESSEEANS? I HAVE JOHNNY GARRETT FOR YOU ... YES, AGAIN.”  
(Photo by stokkete/Adobe Stock)*

Republicans rejected a handful of amendments from Democrats ahead of the vote, including several from Pearson, who described the bill as a constitutional overreach that diminished the ability of local governments to select their own representatives.

“Truthfully, I am so tired of the retaliatory, racist reaction of bills targeting Rep. Jones and myself,” said Pearson. Both men are Black.

Pearson was reprimanded for the remark. Jones, who had sparred with Republicans Monday over several unrelated proposals, was not permitted to speak at all. As to the constitutionality of the whole thing, well. Who can say, really?

“There’s always people who question the constitutionality of stuff,” said House Speaker Cameron Sexton, who abstained from the vote. “We’ll see.”



*In Alabama, this is a photo of children  
(Photo by Antonio Marquez Ianza/Getty Images)*

**Things are equally normal over in Congress**, where Senate Democrats announced Tuesday they would attempt to pass [a bill](#) protecting access to in vitro fertilization in response to an [Alabama Supreme Court ruling](#) that defined fertilized eggs — even those outside the womb — as “children” under state law, [our D.C. bureau reported](#).

The effort was helmed by U.S. Sen. Tammy Duckworth, an Illinois Democrat who conceived both of her daughters via IVF. Every family should be able to pursue that path if they need or want to, she said.

“After a decade of struggling with infertility post my service in Iraq, I was only able to get pregnant through IVF,” said Duckworth, a military veteran. “IVF is the reason that I’ve gotten to experience the chaos and beauty, the stress and the joy that is motherhood. IVF is the reason that my husband and I aren’t just Tammy and Bryan, we are mom and dad.”

**Duckworth said she would fast-track the bill Wednesday** by asking for unanimous consent on the Senate floor, a process that would skip the traditional roll call vote but would also allow a single senator to block the legislation. (She also tried this [in December](#). It failed.) As of Tuesday, the bill had 15 co-sponsors. All were Democrats. From Republicans, “it’s been crickets,” Duckworth said.

Duckworth also rejected calls to court the pro-life lobby by amending the bill to require that all fertilized embryos (everywhere. All of them!) be implanted. Not all embryos are viable, she said. (Also, regulating the uterus is ... kind of a Republican thing.)

“You’re going to force a woman to go through a miscarriage by implanting non-viable embryos. That’s what you want to do?” she said. “You’re going to punish women further — women who are struggling, who scrape together everything they’ve had in order to go through these procedures?”

### **They’d like to, yes**

- [\(Michigan\) O’Rourke clarifies position: Push Biden, but support him](#)
- [Republicans rebuke Oklahoma senator’s anti-LGBTQ+ ‘filth’ comments](#)
- [Utah may pay to remove its elected officials’ personal information from the internet](#)
- [West Virginia Senate’s ‘Anti-Woke Act’ would ban higher education’s DEI offices, initiatives](#)



### **Caught Our Eye**

Louisiana lawmakers dialed back the madness a teeny tiny bit Monday, removing from a capital punishment bill a provision that would have authorized criminal charges for anyone who publicized execution records — even journalists, and even if they obtain the information legally. Under the original bill, violators could be punished with up to two years in prison and a fine of up to \$50,000. [As approved](#), they can still be sued, but will not face criminal charges, [the Louisiana Illuminator reported](#).

But it might still be unconstitutional, according to First Amendment experts, who said civil penalties may run afoul of press freedom if applied to the news media.

The Senate Judiciary Committee advanced the amended proposal on a 5-1 party-line vote. The policy heads next to the full Senate.



### **From The Newsrooms**

## **Gov & Politics**

- [Trial starts in Kansas suit alleging at-large Dodge City elections unconstitutionally dilute Latino vote](#)
- [How much will Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry's criminal justice changes cost? State officials can't say.](#)
- [Four things to watch in Michigan's presidential primary](#)
- ['Dark cloud': Ethics investigation of Dean Plocher continues to hang over Missouri House](#)

## Environment

- [Alaska's mariculture industry expands, with big production increases in recent years, report says](#)
- [Federal government allocates \\$38 million to parts of Oregon for wildfire funding](#)
- [Conservation group warns of effects of wake boats on Wisconsin lakes](#)
- [Bill to limit local restrictions on solar projects in Virginia paused for more study](#)

## Criminal Justice

- [Chicago is the latest city rethinking disputed technology that listens for gunshots](#)
- [Report on possible changes in Maryland's judicial selection process pushed back to 2025 session](#)
- [Nevada advocates, lawmakers laud progress on implementation of prison reforms](#)
- [New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy wants to double funding for program pairing cops with mental health workers](#)



## One Last Thing

An “immersive” Willy Wonka event was canceled in Scotland after the reality of the scene — an empty warehouse with some candy decorations — [failed to live up](#) to the AI-generated advertisements. There were no chocolate fountains. There were no golden tickets. There were only a few plastic candy canes and a bunch of out-of-work actors pretending to be Oompa Loompas. (Veruca Salt [would never.](#))

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