

News From The States

EVENING WRAP

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By [Kate Queram](#)

Do you have questions about politics, elections, lawmakers, the mystery of why we continue to listen to the Supreme Court, and/or our collective ability to feel both outraged and apathetic? Send them over to askkate@statesnewsroom.com, and I may answer them in an upcoming newsletter!

Some days, it's easy to chuckle at the tenor of the news. Other days, it's hard to ignore the state of things; to write around the reality of hundreds of lawmakers spending all of their time pushing so *many dumb bills* at the expense of so many worthwhile causes. My political journalist mind understands this — Republicans will chip away at tiny parts of society until the whole thing is [one big elephant sculpture](#) — but my rational brain still, sometimes, cannot comprehend it.



The Big Takeaway

We may as well start with the most substantive bill of the bunch — a Virginia proposal that would require school boards to send annual safe storage reminders to parents who own guns. The proposal, approved Tuesday by the Senate, is one of [several measures](#) aimed at curbing gun violence, a renewed interest for Democrats after a 2023 shooting at an elementary school in Newport News, where a 6-year-old [shot his teacher](#) using a firearm from home, [per the](#)



*Abby Zwermer, the teacher in question.
(Photo by Nathaniel Cline/Virginia Mercury)*

As written, [the bill](#) would direct school boards to send emails and texts each year reminding parents of their “legal responsibility to safely store any firearm present in the household.” The notices would also detail the risks associated with improperly stored guns and data on firearm-related accidents, injuries and death among youth, along with safety tips and strategies. The messages must be sent within 30 days of the start of the school year, and would also be displayed in multiple languages on district websites, per the legislation.

“Unsecured firearms present a grave threat to both children and those around them,” said state Sen. Stella Pekarisky, a Fairfax Democrat and the bill’s lead sponsor. “This bill is not meant to restrict or prevent a family’s ability to defend themselves through lawful gun ownership. It simply empowers parents with the knowledge they need to safely secure firearms in the home and encourage safety conversations with their children.”

Opponents of the measure — mostly conservative groups, unsurprisingly — said it could besmirch the otherwise sterling reputation of firearm ownership, potentially scaring parents. Also, it’s so *long*. Like a *book*, almost. And no

pictures, either!

“With all this information, who’s going to read it?” asked Philip Van Cleave, president of the Virginia Citizens Defense League, a gun rights group. “If you make something too long, nobody’s going to read all that. It’s better to focus on just the key part about what the law is, maybe how to recognize if your child is having a crisis, but if you make it too long, nobody’s going to read it anyhow.”



“Also, not to be picky, but I saw the twist coming a mile away.”

(Photo by Александр Ткачук/Adobe Stock)

The legislation already cleared the House and is on track to reach Gov. Glenn Youngkin, a Republican who “will review any legislation that comes to his desk,” per a spokesman. Probably he’ll veto it, based on his general attitude toward gun control ([not a fan](#)) and his view of Virginia's existing firearm laws, which he described last month as “already among the toughest in the nation.”

And that concludes the substantive portion of today’s legislation roundup, which is just another way of saying that the rest of the news is from states controlled by Republicans. All are equally pointless, so I will go alphabetically, beginning with Indiana, where GOP senators on Tuesday approved a bill tightening political oversight of public colleges and universities in the name of “intellectual diversity,” [per the Indiana Capital Chronicle](#).

“The number of Hoosier students and parents who view higher education as

monolithic echo chambers [that] coddle students with minority, but scholarly, viewpoints or ostracize faculty ... or students with different viewpoints is significant,” state Sen. Spencer Deery said of [his bill](#). “Infringing on academic freedom is a red line we should not cross, but we don’t need to give up on these values to curb the excessive politicalization and viewpoint discrimination that threatens our state’s workforce goals.”

I’d unpack that for you, but I don’t know what any of it means. Workforce goals? “Minority, but scholarly, viewpoints?” Curbing excessive “politicalization” in higher education via legislation that ... politicizes higher education? It’s a bag of word salad, all slimy and mushed together. What I *can* tell you for sure is that most college kids in Indiana [believe](#) that conservative students are free to openly express their opinions at school, which should be enough to kill the bill. It’s not, of course. Because right-wing students and faculty members still *perceive* ostracization, and *perceptions* can only be *fixed* with *complicated legislation*, like *duh*.

“Even if some of it is perception, that still matters if it keeps a kid from enrolling in higher [education] or keeps their parents from encouraging them to do so,” Deery said. “Higher [education] should be for all Hoosiers.”



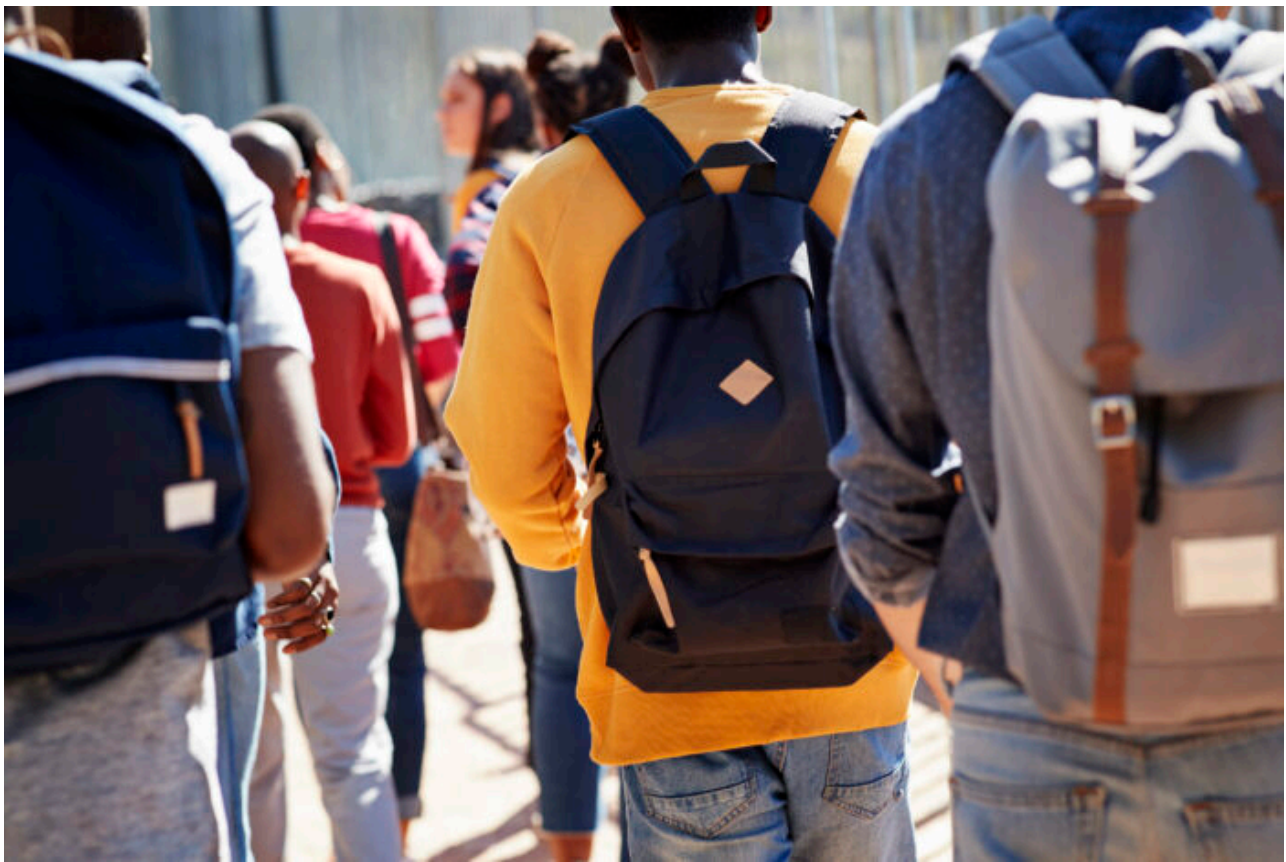
Oranges should be for everyone. Too bad I perceive these as apples!

The bill proposes a host of changes to accomplish ... whatever the goal is here. It would give state Republican leaders, rather than alumni councils, the power to appoint members of boards of trustees ([“with advice”](#) from Democratic minority leaders). It would empower those boards to reject tenure if they *perceive* that a faculty member is unlikely to “foster a culture of free inquiry, free expression and intellectual diversity” or expose students to a range of “political or ideological frameworks.” And it would require trustees to review tenured professors every five years, with punishments — demotions, terminations, salary cuts, whatever the board decides — for anyone deemed not up to “free speech” snuff.

And it aims a scud missile at diversity initiatives — and the notion of diversity itself — by requiring committees to promote the recruitment and retention of “underrepresented” (read: conservative) students rather than the “minority” (read: non-white) students required under current state law. That provision, by far the most egregious in the bill, drew harsh rebuke from Senate Minority Leader Greg Taylor, an Indianapolis Democrat who lambasted the measure as an “offensive” attempt to cater to snowflakey conservatives by minimizing [chronic racial disparities](#) in higher education.

“The amount of minorities, Black students, going to universities has never been so low,” he said. “These students still struggle to have the same rights on campus as your conservative students do — and it’s not because of their political views or their ideologies. It’s simply because of an inalienable trait that they had nothing to do with.”

Republicans in Wisconsin took that concept one step further, proposing to do away with campus diversity, equity and inclusion efforts altogether. [The resulting bill](#) would bar University of Wisconsin institutions from requesting students and faculty to pledge “allegiance to,” support, or oppose “any political ideology or movement,” including statements “regarding diversity, equity and inclusion,” [the Wisconsin Examiner reported](#).



Who knows how many of these students were coerced into pledging allegiance to Antifa as a condition of enrollment?

(Photo by Klaus Vedfelt/Getty Images)

“Mandatory diversity statements and other academic loyalty oaths violate academic freedom and undermine open inquiry on campus,” said state Rep. Clint Moses, a Republican and the bill’s lead sponsor. “Ideological conformity sabotages the purpose of higher education.”

The legislation is similar to the proposal in Indiana (and also [one in Ohio](#)), if slightly more stupid. It’s not necessary, for starters — the University of Wisconsin system already [agreed to eliminate](#) DEI statements for students and employees, largely to appease these same GOP lawmakers. (Much appreciated, Moses said. But *just in case*, the bill will “take care of it once and for all.”) It could also impinge Republican priorities, like staffing the [Wisconsin Institute for Citizenship and Civil Dialogue](#), a whole entire department created specifically to enhance programming and research on free speech and “viewpoint diversity.” The language may also impede efforts to comply with a deal requiring the university to prioritize hiring conservative faculty members, said Deej Lundgren, the UW’s associate vice president for government relations.

“We have concerns that under this bill we wouldn’t be able to ask the

appropriate questions to find out whether or not they fit that bill, and whether or not we can hold up our end of the bargain on hiring those faculty members,” Lundgren said.

Republicans did not immediately propose changes to the bill. As of Wednesday afternoon, the Assembly Colleges and Universities committee had yet to advance the legislation.

It's a school night

- [Michigan State University tenured faculty expected to receive union recognition](#)
- [Missouri lawmakers want to raise teacher pay but anticipate Senate resistance](#)
- [Could Utah microschoools be allowed next to a liquor store?](#)
- [Multiple Oklahoma bills seek to bring free menstrual products to schools](#)
- [Plaintiffs ask court to find Montana 'community choice school' act unenforceable, request summary judgment](#)



State of Our Democracy

Nikki Haley came in second to the ghost of Donald Trump in Nevada's presidential primary Tuesday, garnering 30.5% of the vote to finish more than 30 points behind the only other real choice: “None of these candidates,” [per the Nevada Current](#).



*Second to no one.
(Photo by Scott Olson/Getty Images)*

The embarrassing finish was all but inevitable in Nevada, where Republicans refused to cancel its caucus to comply with a new law mandating a state-run primary. Instead, the state GOP crafted new rules for its own nominating process, barring super PAC employees from the proceedings and restricting delegates only to candidates who participate exclusively in the caucus. Both policies [heavily favor Trump](#); they also rendered the primary essentially meaningless. Accordingly, Trump opted out. Haley stayed in.

But she still didn't win. Nearly 42,000 voters backed “no one,” roughly twice as many as supported Haley. Her campaign seemed to anticipate the drubbing this week, reminding reporters that it had spent little time or money trying to win the state. Still, she lost every county. Technically, the defeat came at the hands of “no one,” but really, Haley [lost to Trump](#), badly, in a contest he couldn't even be bothered to attend.

It's a blow to Haley's ego and to her campaign, but she vowed to press on anyway, dismissing the proceedings as “rigged” and “a scam” in a Wednesday interview on Fox Business.

“They wanted us to pay \$55,000 to just participate in their caucus, so we didn't spend a day or a dollar there,” she said. “We weren't even worried about it.”

I mean maybe you should have been

- [Can you vote for any candidate in California's primary election? Here are the rules](#)
- [Campaign finance reports show Ohio U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown far out-raising Republican candidates](#)
- [Judge finds parts of bill adding new hurdles for Montana ballot initiatives unconstitutional](#)
- [ID time is coming soon for early voters in Nebraska](#)



From The Newsrooms

Healthcare

- [Florida Supreme Court justices skeptical about arguments for rejecting abortion amendment](#)
- [Medicaid expansion continues to be tied to disability waitlist in Missouri legislative debate](#)
- [Children's medical confidentiality would be eliminated under Arizona GOP proposal](#)
- [Oregon lawmakers take first deep plunge into proposals to address the drug crisis](#)

Gov & Politics

- [Seven lawmakers to watch in the 2024 Oregon legislative session](#)
- [Arizona Republicans, Gov. Katie Hobbs on a collision course over how to fix election recount law](#)
- [South Dakota Senate to take up pre-election regulation of 'deepfake' misinformation](#)
- [Here are the key issues facing Supreme Court in Trump 14th Amendment case out of Colorado](#)

Criminal Justice

- [Washington Senate passes bill to](#)
- [Montana man charged by feds for](#)

[ban hog-tying by police after death of Manuel Ellis](#)

- [Female workers sue Virginia prison agency, claiming body searches discriminate against women](#)

[illegally breeding, trafficking hybrid Asian sheep](#)

- [Kansas House bill requires issuance of ID, records to state prison inmates at release](#)



One Last Thing

Miley Cyrus [was just joking](#) about not wearing underwear to the Grammys, for anyone who was concerned about the state of Miley Cyrus' underwear.

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