

# News From The States

# EVENING WRAP

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By [Kate Queram](#)

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***Do you have questions about politics, elections, elderly men in positions of power, the current whereabouts of Ron DeSantis, and/or the upper limits of daily caffeine intake? Send them over to [askkate@statesnewsroom.com](mailto:askkate@statesnewsroom.com), and I may answer them in an upcoming newsletter!***

It's been a week, y'all. Let's shut it down.



## The Big Takeaway

**Former Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan on Friday launched a last-minute bid for the United States Senate, an unexpected about-face that follows years of denying any interest in serving in the United States Senate, [Maryland Matters reported](#). In [a video](#) posted online hours before the filing deadline, Hogan seemed more resigned than enthusiastic about the prospect, casting himself as part of “the exhausted majority of Marylanders” fed up with “the toxic politics that divide our nation.”**



*Fine, OK, he'll do it, geez.*  
(Photo by Danielle E. Gaines/Maryland Matters)

“I am running for the United States Senate — not to serve one party — but to stand up to both parties, fight for Maryland, and fix our nation’s broken politics,” he said. “It’s what I did as Maryland’s governor, and it’s exactly how I’ll serve Maryland in the Senate. Let’s get back to work.”

Hogan, a centrist Republican, served as governor for two terms in deep-blue Maryland, leaving office with a gobsmacking [77% approval rating](#). National Republicans noted that popularity when they approached him about a potential Senate run in 2022, but Hogan declined, saying he lacked “a burning desire” to tackle the job.

He’d have won, though. He was sure of that.

“Just because you can win a race, doesn’t mean that’s the job you should do if your heart’s not in it,” he said [at the time](#). “And I just didn’t see myself being a U.S. senator.”



*Stylized line person shrugging its shoulders indicating lack of knowledge, and care.  
(Illustration by Getty images)*

**It's possible that Hogan had a sincere change of heart about the joys of Congress, but I doubt it.** (There is no joy in Congress. Congress is where joy goes to die a slow, miserable, filibustered death.) Realistically, the shift has more to do with the state of things over at No Labels, the group trying to cobble together a nonpartisan “unity” ticket for the presidential election in [a misguided effort](#) to save democracy that will probably just send Donald Trump back to the White House. Hogan, avowed [never-Trumper](#), left the group's leadership [last month](#), sparking rumors that he'd been selected to carry the GOP flag onto that ticket. Even if his heart isn't in it, a run for Senate is clearly the better choice.

Hogan's entrance adds a fair amount of drama to the race to replace the [retiring](#) Sen. Ben Cardin, a Democrat. He is the only high-profile Republican in the field of primary candidates, led by Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks and U.S. Rep. David Trone, both Democrats.

Both released statements Friday that sought to paint Hogan as a Trump crony who would “suppress votes across the country,” “give massive tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans” (Trone) and restrict “our fundamental freedoms over our bodies” (Alsobrooks). It's unclear how those attacks will land with Maryland

voters, who liked Hogan enough to elect him governor (twice) but may not trust him to side with Senate Democrats on key measures, particularly the [politically thorny issue of abortion](#).



(Photo by Justin Sullivan/Getty Images)

**Republicans in Arizona do not trust voters to ... well, decide things with their votes**, at least not in local bond elections with less than 60% turnout, [the Arizona Mirror reported](#). Because, you see, those elections raise taxes, allowing school districts or municipalities to take on additional debt to fund [development projects](#). But participation usually lags, and it's just plain *wrong* to make people pay higher taxes simply because they can't be bothered to show up to vote against paying higher taxes, according to state Rep. Michael Carbone.

His solution: [House Bill 2719](#), which would toss the result of a local bond election if less than 60% of registered voters cast ballots (even if it passes). The measure, approved Wednesday by a House oversight committee, would also restrict bond elections to November in even-numbered years as well as increase the number of voter signatures needed to place a bond question on the ballot.

The goal is not to invalidate the people who *do* show up to vote, Carbone said. It's to *encourage* them to vote, a very simple idea that could be accomplished if

only local governments would do a better job of *promoting* the elections. You need a snappy slogan! You gotta *sell it!*

“Taxpayers will invest their hard-earned dollars when you ask them right,” he said.



*Give them a calculator and a little house! They'll love it!*  
(Photo by Getty Images)

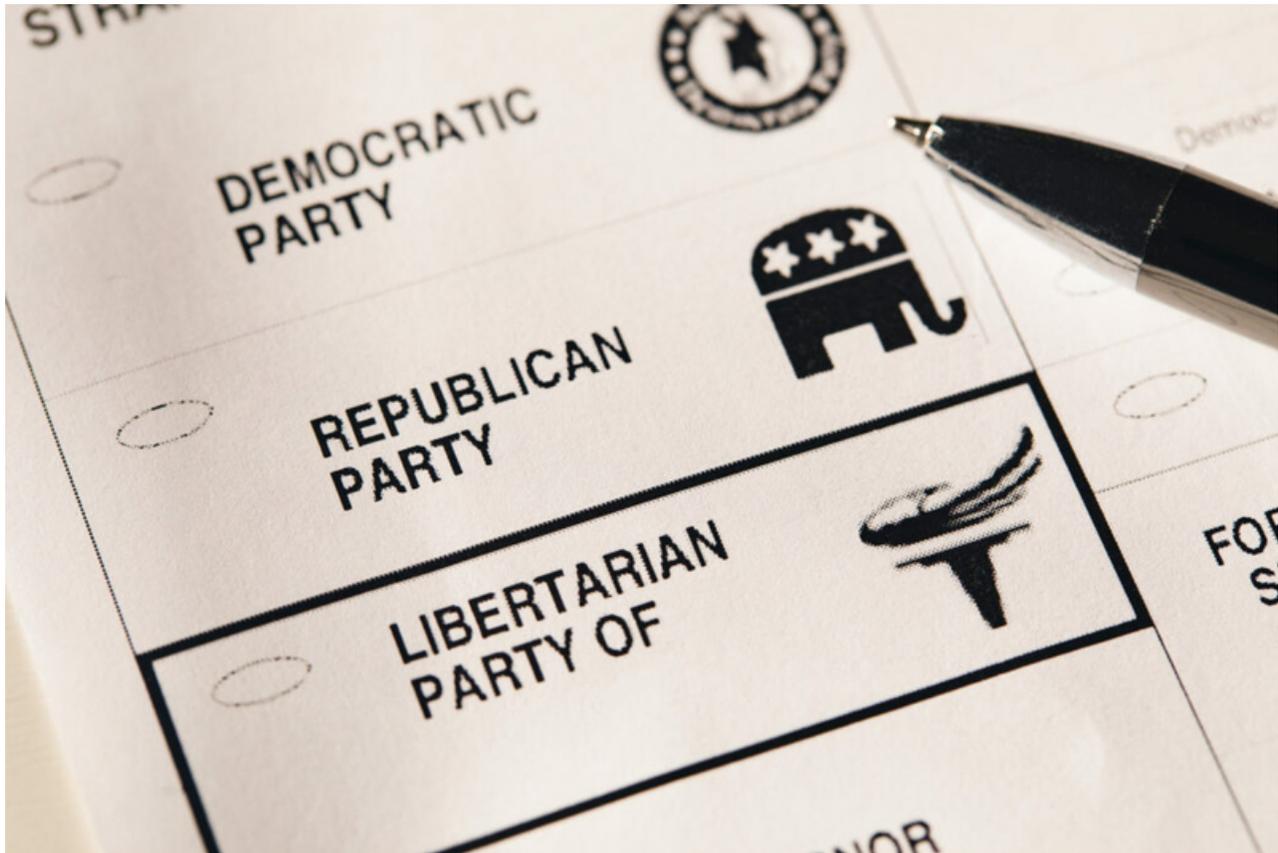
**Carbone would know.** In 2018, he [successfully lobbied voters](#) to approve a \$20 million bond to fund construction and maintenance projects for a school district in Gila Bend, roughly 90 minutes from Phoenix. But he could have tried harder — only [55% of voters](#) showed up to weigh in on the proposal.

Democrats acknowledged the concern over low turnout in off-year elections, but suggested that maybe — *just maybe* — threatening voters is not the best way to get them to vote, particularly in areas where turnout *never* clears 60%.

Carbone was unmoved. Local governments just need to try harder and believe in themselves, and all of their bond dreams will come true.

“It’s a lot of work and it’s hard,” he said. “But if we do it the right way, it will pass.”

**Wisconsin Republicans had the opposite concern Thursday**, proclaiming a system that discounts a majority of votes as “such a bad idea” and “so against what we stand for in our democracy.” Of course, they were talking about ranked-choice voting, which allows voters to list multiple candidates in order of preference instead of supporting only one. Majority votes are not discarded — and democracy is not diminished — in the process, but whatever. Republicans still want to amend the state constitution to ban it, [the Wisconsin Examiner reported](#).



*Choose wisely.  
(Photo by Getty Images)*

The proposed resolution is the Republican response to a bipartisan measure that would switch Wisconsin’s congressional elections to [a final-five runoff system](#), where the top five candidates from a nonpartisan primary advance to the general election to be ranked by voters. The candidate with the fewest first-choice votes is eliminated; those votes are then redistributed to whoever the voters ranked second. The process repeats until someone tops 50%.

Critics of ranked-choice voting say it’s confusing for voters (how, I don’t know) and takes too long to tabulate, but those problems don’t really apply to the final-five system. But there are still *votes being discarded*, which is *wrong*, even if

those votes are going to people who wouldn't win *anyway*, according to state Sen. Duey Stroebel.

“One of the biggest issues associated with this voting method is ballot exhaustion, which occurs when voters do not rank every candidate on the ballot. If the candidates who these voters did rank are eliminated through the initial rounds of tabulation, then their ballots are effectively excluded from the final vote total,” said Stroebel, a Republican who co-sponsored the proposed amendment. “As a consequence, a candidate can be elected without being the choice of the majority in the final round of tabulation.”



*One sticker per round! (I'm kidding. But I wish I weren't.)  
(Photo by Montinique Monroe/Getty Images)*

**I mean, sure, if a voter opts not to participate** in the ranking portion of the ranked voting system, they'll miss out on additional voting rounds. But that would be, in itself, a choice. And all of that is beside the point, according to Democrats, who were confused to find themselves in a committee hearing for an all-out ban on a system that hasn't even been debated in the legislature.

“This seems highly unusual, to have a constitutional amendment aimed at ending debate for good on a bill that I don't even think has gotten a committee vote. Why?” asked state Sen. Mark Spreitzer, a Beloit Democrat. “Obviously there's a

bill out there to do ranked-choice voting, final-five primary. Kill that bill in committee, kill it in caucus, kill it on the floor. But why jump to a constitutional amendment to say we can't even have that discussion?"

Just, you know, *democracy*, and stuff, Stroebel replied.

"It's just a bad idea that leads to bad and unexpected results," he said.

### **The will of the people or whatever**

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- [Early voting starts Monday in South Carolina GOP's Haley vs Trump contest](#)



### **Caught Our Eye**



*You are just the tiniest little snail, aren't you? Yes you are!*

The Kings River pyrg — a teeny tiny itty bitty [springsnail](#) — could get federal protection under the Endangered Species Act, [the Nevada Current reported](#). The snail, roughly the size of the tip of a ballpoint pen, lives only in 13 shallow, isolated springs in a 14-mile stretch of land in northern Nevada. They are tiny but mighty, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

“Springsnails are just millimeters in length,” the agency notes [on its website](#). “Yet they play an important role in their habitat as primary consumers, eating algae and maintaining water quality.”

Threats to the species include lithium mining, livestock grazing, development and drought, [among other things](#). Federal officials will examine those hazards for the next year to determine whether the snail should be listed as a threatened or endangered species, the agency said.



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### One Last Thing

Usher [said Thursday](#) he would be “a fool” not to play “Yeah!” during the halftime show at the Super Bowl, in part because the game is in Las Vegas, home to both Lil’ Jon and Ludacris, who collaborated on the song. AGREED.

This is probably my last post about Usher, the Super Bowl, and “Yeah!”, unless he plays it or does not play it and includes Lil Jon and Ludacris or does not include Lil Jon and Ludacris. Thank you for continuing to subscribe anyway.

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