

News From The States

EVENING WRAP

from States Newsroom

Thanks for being here and [supporting our work](#).



From Kate Queram

GOT QUESTIONS? ASK KATE

Politicians often do weird things, as I am sure you, a person in the world, are aware. Sometimes, they're suggesting you [inject bleach into your veins](#), or postulating that your body has ways of [“shutting down” a “legitimate rape.”](#) The next day, they're [spelling potato with an -e](#) or smirking about the definition [of the word “is.”](#)

Other times, they're sponsoring nonsensical bills. Practically, this should be irritating — it's often a waste of taxpayer money, and it forces other, more serious lawmakers to participate — but honestly, it's kind of a relief, at least from a newsletter perspective. I can't really do anything about “legitimate” rape, you know? But I *can* walk you through the legislative process, even when the legislation is odd. (It's a win, and I'm *taking it*.)



The Big Takeaway

Kansas Republicans on Wednesday donned their national security hats, approving a trio of bills designed to deter “countries of concern” by [mandating divestment](#) of state-managed investments, restricting [property ownership](#) and grounding imported drones used by government agencies,

[the Kansas Reflector reported.](#)

GOP lawmakers said the proposals were needed to combat threats from a half-dozen adversarial nations, including Iran, Russia, China and Hong Kong. But Democrats were skeptical, both of the alleged danger and the likelihood that the bills would mitigate it. Take the [drone proposal](#), which would bar government agencies, including law enforcement, from buying or operating drones with “critical components” manufactured in any of the highlighted countries. Any aircraft currently in use would be turned over to Wichita State University and Kansas State University-Salina, which would split a \$500,000 pot of state funding to determine whether the devices had been used for espionage. The drones could then be retrofitted with “nonthreatening” components and hypothetically put back into service.



“YOU CAN’T GROUND ME, YOU’RE NOT MY MOM” — a drone, probably (Photo by Kadmy/Adobe Stock)

But it’s not clear if any of this was necessary, according to state Rep. John Carmichael, a Wichita Democrat who said he was wary of creating a government-sanctioned drone buy-back program without first confirming that devices manufactured in foreign countries are actually infected with spyware or being used for nefarious purposes.

“Really? *Really?*” Carmichael said during House debate Tuesday. “There’s a reason that some people think people from Kansas are bumpkins. I think this is an example of it. Here’s the bad news, my friends. This has turned into Asian prejudice day in the Kansas Legislature, and it’s not a proud moment.”

Republicans did not take kindly to the outburst. Of *course* there’s a need for defensive maneuvers, said state Rep. Shawn Tarwater, a Republican from Stilwell. But he can’t tell you *more than that*, because the information is *classified*.

“The threat is real,” he said. “There are some people in this room who know exactly what will happen and how close we are to it happening, but they can’t speak to it because it’s top secret information.”

Beyond that, Carmichael’s tirade did not “deserve a response,” he added. “I’m trying not to make the press this year in negative ways, so I’ll pretend like I don’t know that man.”



It'd be harder to get up close and personal with — or film — police in Louisiana under a proposed bill that would make it a misdemeanor to come within 25 feet of an officer who is “engaged in law enforcement duties.” A similar proposal was [vetoed last year](#) by then-Gov. John Bel Edwards, a term-limited Democrat who was succeeded by Jeff Landry, a hard-line Republican who is likely to sign the bill if it clears the legislature a second time, [the Louisiana Illuminator reported](#).

Which it probably will. Lawmakers had anticipated this situation last year, when they [declined to pursue a veto override](#) specifically in hopes of resubmitting the bill to a more like-minded governor. [This year's version](#) is mostly a retread, minus a new provision requiring police to warn bystanders to stop approaching or retreat. Failing to do so, or failing to do so clearly, constitutes an acceptable defense for anyone charged with violating the policy. Punishment includes up to 60 days in jail and a fine of up to \$500. A House committee advanced the bill unanimously Tuesday, sending it back to the full chamber for a vote.

Supporters of the bill described it as an additional safety buffer for law enforcement officers when their attention is focused elsewhere, like during an arrest or an altercation. But critics said it seemed more like a safeguard against citizens capturing police misconduct on video, particularly since existing law already forbids interfering with police activity.

“We’re creating a problem where one does not exist,” said Terry Landry Jr., policy director for the Southern Poverty Law Center Action Fund. “I think that if someone is trying to ensure that justice is being carried out, we should be encouraging that – not trying to dissuade people from doing that.”

Not so, according to state Rep. Bryan Fontenot, the Republican who sponsored the bill. Of course, some police “need to be checked” by citizen watchdogs. But that can still happen at a distance of 25 feet, which also gives officers adequate room to respond with lethal force if someone approaches them with a knife, he said.

Don’t take his word for it, he added. The proof comes from “testing at police

academies.”



ADULTS ONLY. (Photo by Skylar Laird/SC Daily Gazette)

I don't think the police academies have tested pinball machines, but it's still illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to play them in South Carolina. Kids in the Palmetto State have been forbidden to flick the devil's bumpers since at least 1940, when pinball debuted as a game of chance that typically included prizes, which was enough for regulators to classify it as a form of gambling. Most states had similar laws on the books back then, but they've since been overturned — all except South Carolina's, [per the South Carolina Daily Gazette](#).

Minors found in violation of the pinball prohibition can be charged with a misdemeanor, which could theoretically land them in a juvenile detention facility. (Similar offenses include “playing or loitering in a billiard room” and “gaining admission to a theater by false identification.”) To be clear, they probably *won't*; it's not clear when — or even if — the law was last enforced. But the possibility still weighs heavy on young pinball wizards as

well as the businesses that host them.

“I don’t like breaking the law,” said Frederick Richardson, owner of Bang Back Pinball Lounge in Columbia’s Five Points district, where dozens of scofflaw youngsters line up each weekend to get their (currently illegal) fix (not narcing just saying). “I don’t want anything to do with that.”

Soon, he may not have to. A House committee on Tuesday gave unanimous approval to [a bill](#) overturning the law, sending the measure back to the chamber for a vote. A similar bill cleared the House in 2022 but did not receive a vote in the Senate, but this year’s version seems to have more momentum, along with the official endorsement of the state Sheriffs’ Association.

“All of us are singing ‘[Pinball Wizard](#)’ in our minds,” Chester County Sheriff Max Dorsey, the organization’s chaplain, told lawmakers.

TILT

- [Alabama Senate bill would punish companies that voluntarily recognize unions](#)
 - [Committee rejects ‘red flag’ law to curb gun violence in Louisiana](#)
 - [Bill stopping Missouri from seizing benefits owed to foster kids advances in Senate](#)
 - [Tennessee lawmakers change Super Bowl public records bill, could still keep documents closed for years](#)
-



BREAKING: The Francis Scott Key Bridge did not collapse because of a [collision with a container ship](#), but because of diversity, equity and inclusion programs, according to Phil Lyman, a Utah gubernatorial candidate with no apparent expertise in structural engineering, container ship piloting, or diversity, equity and/or inclusion, [the Utah News Dispatch reported](#).

“This is what happens when you have Governors who prioritize diversity over the wellbeing and security of citizens,” reads [a tweet](#) from Lyman’s account, posted Tuesday above headshots of Maryland Port Commissioners

Karenthia Barber and Sandy Roberts. Both are Black.



He said what he said! (Photo by Spenser Heaps/for the Utah News Dispatch)

Asked about the post, Lyman (a diehard MAGA devotee, because obviously) all but shrugged. His staff wrote that one, he said. He hadn't actually seen it ahead of time.

"There's some things I see, there's some things I don't see," he said Tuesday. "This one this morning, yeah, it took me a little bit by surprise."

But it seemed to be more of a good surprise (like, say, a party, or a drawer full of cheese) than a bad one (such as drowning in the abyss of self-loathing over your own offensive and distasteful post). I mean, he wasn't going to *apologize* for it. It wasn't even totally out of left field, because Barber once worked as a DEI auditor! Smoke, fire, hello!

"I'm not posting [Barber] because she's a Black woman, I'm posting her because she's an auditor of DEI," he said. "Correlation is not causation. I don't think that I was saying DEI caused this bridge collapse. I'm saying you've got this DEI initiative that's going in these places and then you clearly have human failures that create a disaster like this."

Lyman's colleagues attempted to defend him, sort of, by saying he's totally different in person than he is online, which might have carried more weight if he hadn't defended the post in an actual offline interview. State House Minority Leader Angela Romero, a Salt Lake City Democrat, said the post was the inevitable conclusion of the GOP backlash against DEI, which this year included [a bill](#) restricting similar initiatives at Utah universities and public institutions.

"It's very concerning to me the road we're heading down, not only as a state, but as a country," she said. "I think as elected officials, we need to start calling out some of this rhetoric."



From The Newsrooms

GOV & POLITICS

- [States rush to combat AI threat to elections](#)
- [RFK Jr.'s VP selection triggers campaign to get on the ballot in Florida](#)
- [Open seats, primary challenges mean Missouri Senate will see most turnover in two decades](#)
- [Newark mayor, allies failed to report more than \\$700K in donations and spending, New Jersey watchdog says](#)

ENVIRONMENT

- [Arizona Republicans could ask voters to enshrine the right to a gas stove in the constitution](#)
- [Bird flu threat looms for Iowa cattle](#)
- [\(North Carolina\) Proposed permit allows Lear Corp. to discharge high levels of PFAS into NE Cape Fear](#)
- [Potato processor, Oregon regulators reach settlement over wastewater violations](#)

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

- [Marilyn Lands, Democrat who ran on reproductive rights, flips Alabama House seat](#)
 - [Idaho lawmakers clash on lack of reproductive rights legislation as session nears end](#)
 - [Florida Supreme Court's ruling on abortion-rights referendum imminent, but late argument arises](#)
 - [Prescription-free contraceptives still months away from New Jersey pharmacies](#)
-



One Last Thing

For the low, low price of \$60, you, too, can own a [“God Bless the USA Bible,”](#) a Donald Trump-endorsed edition of the holy gospel that includes the King James Version translation, along with the “founding father documents,” such as the U.S. Constitution and the pledge of allegiance; and the “handwritten” chorus of Lee Greenwood’s “God Bless the USA.” (Handwritten by whom? No one knows, but if it’s [in Sharpie](#), well, you’ll know.)

Trump’s presidential campaign will receive no proceeds from the venture, according to the website, but a Trump-related LLC will, so it’ll probably (definitely) help bankroll his legal expenses. The rollout was timed to coincide with Easter, though shoppers won’t receive their Bibles for at least four to six weeks due to “high order volume.” (Also, the sticky pages are normal. [Here’s a video about that](#), if you have some spare time and absolutely no standards for online content.)

News From The States

A PROJECT OF STATES NEWSROOM

Did someone forward you this newsletter?



©News From The States, all rights reserved.

www.newsfromthestates.com | info@newsfromthestates.com

Manage your donation and subscription preferences [here](#).

Add **info@newsfromthestates.com** to your address book to ensure delivery.

Did someone forward you this newsletter? [Click here](#) to get it delivered to your inbox.

News From The States is a part of [States Newsroom](#), the nation's largest nonprofit news organization dedicated to state coverage, with reporting from every state capital.

States Newsroom – News From The States

1414 Raleigh Rd #127

Chapel Hill, NC 27517

United States

You are receiving this email because you opted in via our website or States Newsroom. If you believe you received this message in error or wish to change your subscription, please
(Unsubscribing is not supported in previews).