

COGEL NEWS

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Recent News

• *General*

UNITED STATES— *Blueprints for Democracy: Actionable Reforms to Solve our Governing Crisis*, a report and accompanying website (at blueprintsfordemocracy.org) was recently jointly released by two authorities on campaign finance reform, **Issue One** and the **Campaign Legal Center**. *Blueprints for Democracy* is like a Zagat guide that details a suite of specific solutions to reduce the power of money in politics and restore faith in public institutions.

The report provides a comprehensive overview of the most promising state and municipal models for reform that have been implemented across the country, alongside best practices for legislators and advocates enacting change in their local communities. Coming on the heels of recent ballot initiative victories in Seattle and Maine, *'Blueprints'* is a timely breakdown of both the support for and feasibility of true money-in-politics reform.

From Connecticut's clean elections program to California's disclosure regime to South Carolina's lobbying rules, *Blueprints* highlights solutions including:

- small-donor empowerment so everyone can participate in our elections;
- disclosure and transparency so everyone knows who tries to influence their vote;
- lobbying and ethics reform so everyone plays by the same common-sense rules; and
- stronger enforcement so everyone is held accountable for abiding by the law.

Authored by Lawrence Noble, former general counsel to the Federal Election Commission and current general counsel at the **Campaign Legal Center**, the report also includes rigorous legal and historical analysis, the latest public opinion polling, case studies, insights from issue experts and infographics.

Most importantly, the solutions offered in *Blueprints for Democracy* have undergone strict legal review to ensure their constitutional viability and could pass muster with the current Supreme Court. It is the best available resource for legislators, journalists and all advocates who believe their government—from the local level all the way to Washington—should represent everyone. It is the first step in a larger strategy to overcome entrenched cynicism and assist lawmakers as they push for change.

As former U.S. Senators Alan Simpson and Bill Bradley say in the foreword, "The time is now. Join us in this most American fight to ensure our government 'of, by and for the people' does not perish on our watch."

If your agency, law firm, or organization is not a COGEL member, please consider joining. COGEL membership gives you immediate access to your professional counterparts throughout the U.S. and Canada, including an amazing annual conference. Get more information [here](#)

If there's action in your jurisdiction, and you want your COGEL colleagues to know about it, please send a link to [John Schaaf](#) or [Jennifer Hardin](#), who compile the COGEL News.

- *Ethics*

ALBERTA—The *Global News* reports that the Alberta government is launching an external review of the 2013 conflict of interest investigation of former Alberta Premier Alison Redford.

KENTUCKY— From the *Wall Street Journal*, an account of Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara's trip to Kentucky where he addressed Kentucky state legislators, at their annual ethics training, about protecting the institution against corruption.

NEW YORK—From the *New York Observer*: Former New York State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver was found guilty on all counts in the corruption case against him.

NEW YORK—The *New York Times* reports that former New York State Senate Leader Dean Skelos and his son were convicted on corruption charges.

NEW YORK—There are a series of articles on responses to the convictions of Sheldon Silver and Dean Skelos. From the *New York Times* and *Newsday*, articles that discuss Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara's comments following the convictions. Also from the *New York Times*, results of a poll concluding that New Yorkers want new ethics laws to clean up Albany.

OKLAHOMA—*NewsOK* reports that former Oklahoma Secretary of State Dianna Duran was sentenced last month following her conviction of embezzling from her campaign fund.

ONTARIO—An article in the *National Post* describes Canadian Senator Mike Duffy's testimony in his ongoing corruption trial.

ONTARIO—The *National Post* reports that two former aides to former Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty face criminal charges for their alleged role in the deletion of emails and documents related to the cancellation of two gas plants.

PENNSYLVANIA—A *Philly.com* article says that the Pennsylvania Senate has voted unanimously to begin the process that could remove Attorney General Kathleen Kane from office.

- *Lobbying*

UNITED STATES—*The Hill* describes the top lobbying victories for 2015.

UNITED STATES—From *The Guardian*, American Electric Power is leaving the American Legislative Exchange Council, ALEC, as AEP helps states move to clean power.

CALIFORNIA—From *Governing*, a California Assemblyman will resign from office to become a lobbyist.



COGEL offers its thanks, on behalf of the membership, to *State and Federal Communications* for the many services it provides to COGEL. Included among those is “*News You Can Use*,” a valuable compilation of ethics and campaign finance news, which is made available to all COGEL members on the COGEL Web site.

- *Elections*

ALABAMA—From the *Associated Press*, the NAACP is suing Alabama over its voter identification law.

CANADA—The *National Post* reports that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau denies that he'll change the electoral system to favor the Liberal party.

GEORGIA—An article in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* says that two Georgia women have filed a class action lawsuit alleging a massive data breach by Secretary of State Brian Kemp's office involving the private data of more than six million voters in the state.

UNITED STATES—An article on the *NCSL Blog* discusses the organization's Elections 2020 Project, funded by the *Democracy Fund*, which is studying the challenges facing the states as they replace their aging voting equipment. Also from the NCSL—

- An [elections technology toolkit](#), which is a compilation of “tech notes” describing the technology in use at each step of the election process; and
- A [legislative brief on automatic voter registration](#).

NORTH CAROLINA—The *News Observer* reports that North Carolina groups are accusing the state of violating its “Motor Voter Law.”

MICHIGAN—The *Detroit Free Press* reports that the Michigan legislature has voted to end straight ticket voting.

UNITED STATES—This *New York Times* article discusses a national effort, *Generation Citizen*, to lower the voting age to sixteen.

UNITED STATES—Two articles, from *USA Today* and the *Brennan Center for Justice*, describe the Supreme Court's deliberation on redistricting, and the impact of one possible outcome, in *Evenwel v. Abbott*.

- *Freedom of Information*

UNITED STATES—*Governing* reports that some governments are making public records more transparent by posting them online. In a related report, *Governing* also reports that São Paulo, Brazil, is embarking on an ambitious education effort to retrain its 150,000 public servants about open government, which may be a model for governments in the US.

UNITED STATES—The *Federation of American Scientists* discusses a new report from JASON, an independent scientific advisory group that provides consulting services to the U.S. government on matters of defense science and technology, that describes proposals to prevent fraud in the upcoming 2020 Census.

UNITED STATES—A *New York Times* article discusses a recent ruling by the Government Accountability Office that the Environmental Protection Agency engaged in covert propaganda and violated federal law in its use of social media to urge the public to back a rule intended to protect streams and surface waters.

BRITISH COLUMBIA—A *Globe and Mail* article states that BC Premier Christy Clark says she will prohibit the triple deleting of e-mail records. In a related article, the *Globe and Mail* reports that the Executive Director of the Liberal Party has resigned because she was criminally charged with destruction of government records while she was working in the office of the Ontario premier.

- *Freedom of Information (Continued)*

KANSAS—The *Wichita Eagle* reports that the City of Wichita has denied a request for the body camera video from a police shooting in early December.

- *Campaign Finance*

CANADA—The *National Post* reports that former MP Dean Del Mastro will spend one month in prison after being convicted of a violation of Canada's election law.

UNITED STATES—According to this *Rollcall* article, lawmakers are busy raising campaign cash while they're in Washington debating an omnibus spending bill. A related [post on NCSL's Blog](#) discusses the intertwined jobs of legislating and fundraising.

UNITED STATES—*Governing* reports on the waning power and influence of state political parties.

UNITED STATES—This *Governing* article states that gray areas in campaign spending laws are getting politicians in trouble across the country.

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