

COGEL NEWS

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Recent News

- *Freedom of Information*

UNITED STATES—The *Washington Post* reports that seven federal agencies have implemented a “release to one, release to all” policy as part of the Obama administration’s Open Government initiative.

CALIFORNIA—An *LA Times* article reports that the state Senate and the Fair Political Practices Commission are differing on whether the public should be able to see changes in the Conflict of Interest Code for employees of the Legislature.

FLORIDA—The *Tampa Bay Times* reports that Florida’s taxpayers will be footing the bill after Governor Rick Scott settles a lawsuit accusing him of skirting state public records laws by using private email accounts to conduct public business.

MASSACHUSETTS—The *Boston Globe* reports that, according to its review of state practices and reports from public records advocates, Massachusetts may have the weakest public records laws in the country

WISCONSIN—*Wisconsin Public Radio* covers a plan to remove, from a court access website, records for people 25 or younger who have been charged with some nonviolent felonies if the charges are dismissed before the case goes to trial. The plan has been praised by advocates for changing the state’s juvenile justice system.

- *Lobbying*

OHIO—A report in *Public Integrity* asserts that political profiteers are pushing a move to amend Ohio’s constitution to legalize medical and recreational marijuana. As drafted, the constitutional amendment would put the future marijuana market in the hands of only ten growers.

WASHINGTON, D.C.—*Public Integrity* also reports on the efforts of industry lobbyists to stop a 2.3 percent excise tax on medical device manufacturers.

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, this year in Boston from December 6 through 9. 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.

- *Elections*

CANADA—The *National Post* reports that the Canadian government is arguing that the use of voter information cards as valid ID at the polls could lead to election fraud.

UNITED STATES—The *Wall Street Journal* reports on a new Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll, which finds that Americans express more alarm about the influence of money on elections than about any of the five other issues tested.

UNITED STATES—The *New York Times* reports on a *Nielsen report* concluding that television reaches 87 percent of Americans 18 and older, and the concurrent impact of television on elections.

UNITED STATES—In an opinion column in the *Dallas News*, Carl P. Leubsdorf assesses Hillary Clinton's call for an automatic national voter registration system.

ARIZONA—The *Arizona Star* reported on the Supreme Court's decision, in late June, that upheld the state's congressional lines, concluding that voters have the constitutional right to take drawing them away from the elected Legislature.

FLORIDA—The *Tampa Bay Times* reports that Florida's Supreme Court has ordered the state to draw a new redistricting map. The Court ruled that the current map is the product of unconstitutional political gerrymandering and it signaled deep distrust of lawmakers, providing detail instructions on how to repair the flawed map before the 2016 election.

ILLINOIS—*Politico* reports that redistricting litigation continues in Florida, North Carolina, and Virginia despite the Supreme Court's ruling on the best-known challenge to existing districts.

NEW JERSEY—An article on *NJ.com* reports that a sweeping reform to New Jersey's election laws has passed the state Senate and will go on to Governor.

TEXAS—According to the *Texas Tribune*, the voting rights bill introduced in Congress last month would subject Texas elections to new levels of federal scrutiny, but it would not invalidate the state's 2011 voter photo ID law.

- *Ethics*

CHINA—*The Diplomat* reports on China's anti-corruption campaign, which has entered a new phase.

CANADA—In the *National Post*, Kady O'Malley describes the Ottawa Citizen's own analysis of the most recent expenditure reports filed by the members of the House of Commons.



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.

- *Ethics (Continued)*

CANADA—In a commentary in the *National Post*, Stephen Maher examines the recent conviction of Dean Del Mastro, former Conservative MP, on elections violations, to determine what the conviction reveals about Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

UNITED STATES—The *Washington Post* reports on a confidential ethics report revealing that the state-owned oil company of Azerbaijan secretly funded an all-expenses-paid trip to a 2013 conference in Baku, on the Caspian Sea, for ten members of Congress and thirty-two staff members. According to the report, lawmakers and staff received, in addition to travel and hotel expenses, silk scarves, crystal tea sets, and Azerbaijani rugs.

NEW YORK—*Bloomberg News* reports that former New York politicians Sheldon Silver and Dean Skelos, who are facing political corruption charges in Manhattan federal court, may be watching the Brooklyn trial of John Sampson, former Democratic leader of the state Senate.

ONTARIO—The *National Post* reports that the Ontario Integrity Commissioner has concluded that Ontario New Democrat Jagmeet Singh's staff has mistakenly used constituency office resources to promote a rally with federal party leader Thomas Mulcair.

- *Campaign Finance*

UNITED STATES—According to *The Hill*, Congressional Democrats are calling on President Obama to finalize an executive order that would require federal contractors to disclose their political spending. And a related *Washington Post* article reports that a provision in a financial services funding bill recently approved by the House Appropriations Committee will impede executive branch efforts to make these disclosures mandatory.

UNITED STATES—*USA Today* reports on two members of the Federal Election Commission who are filing a formal petition with the FEC asking it to write rules to clamp down on political spending and unmask anonymous money flooding US elections.

UNITED STATES—A *New York Times* article reports that corporations are opening up about political spending.

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