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State of the States 2019: Getting America Connected.

The nation's governors are laying out policy priorities for the coming year — some for the first time. Many are focused on technology-driven economic and workforce development as paths to prosperity.

The influx of new governors across the country cast a slightly different tone in this year's State of the State addresses. Typically the most notable policy speech given by each state's top elected official, veteran governors often make the address equal parts retrospective and prospective, pointing to their successes during their terms thus far, while hinting at their plans to take on issues that continue to need attention. But new governors don't have a record to point to just yet, so their speeches tend to be more forward-looking. Government Technology editorial staff reviewed each speech and rated it from 1 to 5 based on the strength of its technology initiatives.

Based on early speeches, common themes predominate, with most governors laying out plans to strengthen state education systems with a parallel focus on job creation. Technology factors heavily into both. Many speeches refer to specific programs aimed at injecting more resources into things like coding and other science, technology, engineering and math (STEM)-related curriculum. Likewise, luring and growing tech-related industry to their states is high on the list of many leaders who are eager to rattle off the names of new investments from familiar tech giants with footprints throughout the country.

In easily the most often discussed tech-related priority, about half of governors got specific about the importance of continuing to work on extending the benefits of high-speed Internet to every corner of their state. Incoming Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam said it was the top issue identified by his constituents, while many others included specific budget requests for broadband in their speeches. Colorado Gov. Jared Polis offered a familiar sentiment on connectivity: "In the 21st-century economy, broadband is critical infrastructure that everyone must have access to," he said, asking the Legislature to join him in delivering for Coloradans.

Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont lamented the state's budget shortfall, and pointed to some specific ways technology could help address it. Advocating for a one-stop-shop-style experience for citizens interacting with government, he called on policymakers to support the creation of "the first all-digital government" in Connecticut, with an emphasis on shared services and tech-powered efficiencies throughout the enterprise. North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum again delivered a tech-heavy speech, asking lawmakers to support nearly $200 million in IT infrastructure improvements to strengthen cybersecurity and modernize key programs with updated tools. Burgum was also one of a few state leaders to specifically talk about the potential of emerging technologies, asking for an additional $30 million for infrastructure to support the development of the drone industry in North Dakota.

See our analysis of how the rest of the nation's governors fared below. Evaluations will be added as additional speeches are delivered.

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BY NEWS STAFF / JANUARY 31, 2019

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