



**MARYLAND** — Montgomery and Prince George's counties agreed in August to contribute more funding to the Washington Metro Purple Line, a proposed 16-mile light rail line extending from Bethesda to New Carrollton. Gov. Larry Hogan had demanded more county money as a condition for the project to proceed. The state has committed \$168 million, compared with \$347 million from the two counties. More federal and private funding is necessary to fully finance the project, estimated at \$2.45 billion. If private money comes through and Congress approves federal funding later this year, construction may begin as early as May 2016.



**NORTH CAROLINA** — Blue Cross and Blue Shield, North Carolina's largest health insurer, announced in August that it wanted a premium hike of 34.6 percent for customers under 65 who buy individual plans under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The company said the reason was that older and sicker customers continue to outnumber the healthy ones and use more expensive health care services than anticipated. The proposed rate increase, effective Jan. 1, would apply only to individual plans under the ACA, not employer plans, and for most customers, much of the cost would be covered by ACA subsidies. The North Carolina Department of Insurance reviewed the request and announced its approval on Nov. 1.



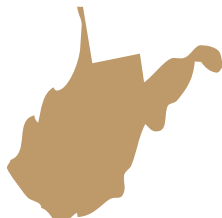
**SOUTH CAROLINA** — Project leaders in South Carolina and Georgia agreed in August to start seeking permits so the Army Corps of Engineers can begin surveying the land on which the Jasper Ocean Terminal, a 1,500-acre facility that will be located on the South Carolina side of the Savannah River, will be built. The \$4.5 billion project, which is expected to be completed in 2029, will be the largest single-site container terminal upon completion, easing volume off neighboring ports in Charleston and Savannah. By 2040, it has the potential to support more than 1 million jobs in both states, according to a 2010 study by the University of Georgia and the consulting firm Wilbur Smith & Associates.



**VIRGINIA** — According to the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles, registered in-state ride-sharing drivers for companies like Uber and Lyft are close to 19,000 as of Aug. 3. Last February, Gov. Terry McAuliffe signed a bill legalizing ride-sharing services provided they abide by state regulations, and since then they have expanded throughout the state. Meanwhile, Uber has cut prices in Richmond and is looking at ways to price its services with more flexibility in different parts of Virginia.



**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — City officials approved in July a proposal to place a minimum-wage hike on the ballot in November 2016. If the measure is adopted, D.C.'s minimum wage — which currently stands at \$10.50 per hour — would rise to \$15 per hour by 2020, making it one of the highest minimum wages in the country. The minimum wage would also be annually indexed to inflation. The next step for supporters is to gather the 23,200 signatures needed to ensure the proposal is placed in front of voters.



**WEST VIRGINIA** — Declining coal production and lower natural gas prices have caused West Virginia's tax receipts to fall, according to the state's Department of Revenue. In July, the first month of the 2016 fiscal year, receipts totaled \$251.78 million, an 8.2 percent drop over the previous July. The state attributed this to a shortfall in severance tax collection, which has fallen by almost half, year-on-year, due to lower gas and coal prices and declining coal production.