

# Congress considers Syria intervention, New York mayoral race gets gritty, and will Boehner retire after 2014? – US blog round up 31 August – 6 September.

Chris Gilson looks at the best in political blogging from the Beltway and across the States.

## Syria and foreign policy

The story this week is Syria, and the potential for US military intervention in the wake of the Syrian regime's alleged use of chemical weapons against civilians on August 21<sup>st</sup>. *Ezra Klein* asks, '[Could bombing Syria kill more civilians than it saves?](#)', to which he answers an emphatic 'yes', given that bombs inevitably cause harm, and that bombing may cause the Syrian government to kill even more people. On Saturday, President Obama announced that he would seek [Congressional approval](#) for a strike against Syria, surprising many commentators, including the Washington Post's *Wonkblog*, who calls it a 'bold and risky gambit'. The *White House Dossier* says that Obama's policy on Syria is [partially right](#), and praises his desire to intervene, and for consulting Congress, but is concerned at the relatively slow timetable for intervention.

On Wednesday the Senate Foreign Relations Committee drafted a [resolution](#) that would give the President limited authority to carry

Barack Obama meets with members of Congress to discuss Syria Credit: whitehouse.gov

out an attack within 60 days, writes the *Daily Kos*. *The Atlantic* points out that even if Congress does approve military action, it [will not set a precedent](#) that Presidents should always consult Congress over such interventions, and may even offer Obama and future Presidents opportunities to increase their power. *The Hill's Congress blog* says that the idea of a 'limited' intervention is an [illusion](#), as the US may find itself drawn back into the conflict. *Wonkblog* offers an in-depth analysis of how [missile strikes against Syria](#) might actually work. On Thursday, *Wonkblog* says that it looks like the House [will not approve](#) the resolution to launch strikes against Syria, especially since much of the American public opposes the strikes.

Looking at press and media coverage of the debate over intervening in Syria, *The Atlantic*, says that in general, American newspapers' coverage has been governed by [hawkish assumptions](#) that support military action. Meanwhile, *The Democratic Truth* reports that the FBI has [increased its surveillance](#) of Syrians living in the US ahead of potential strikes.

## Government and the Beltway

The summer recess is nearly over, and when Congress returns to Washington *The Hill's Congress blog* argues that [immigration reform](#) must be high on their agenda, especially given that there are now 11 million undocumented immigrants in the US. *The Political Carnival* reports that Florida's junior Senator, Marco Rubio was [booed](#) by Tea Party activists who are opposed to any amnesty for undocumented immigrants after he ducked the issue in a speech at the Tea Party's Defending the Dream forum.

The Chairman of the US Federal Reserve, Ben Bernanke, will resign in 2014, and his replacement looks increasingly likely to be former Treasury Secretary, Larry Summers. *Wonkblog* examines [what Summers might do as Chairman of the Fed](#), including looking beyond the unemployment rate as a measure of the health of the labor market, and do more to help lower and middle class Americans.

The junior Senator for Texas, Rafael 'Ted' Cruz, was born in Canada, but has dual US/Canadian citizenship. Amid speculation that he may run for

Speaker of the House John Boehner Credit: Gage Skidmore (Creative Commons BY SA)

President in 2016, *The Political Carnival* says that the fact that he [omitted his dual citizenship](#) on various Federal forms may mean a trip to prison, rather than to the White House. Meanwhile, *Wonkblog* looks at speculation over whether or not House Speaker John Boehner will [retire](#) after the 2014 election.

## The economy and society

Ahead of the Affordable Care Act (or 'Obamacare') coming into law on 1 January, 2014, the *Daily Kos* has a good [overview](#) and explainer of what it involves and how it will operate. Meanwhile, *Wonkblog* has two interesting [maps](#) showing uninsured levels across the country, broken down by income. The maps show the important role state policy will have on Obamacare, and why groups with the aim of enrolling people in the scheme are focusing on certain states and not others.

On Thursday fast food workers went on [strike](#) in sixty cities, according to *The Hill's Congress blog*. They are striking for unions and higher wages; 70 per cent of the workforce is paid between \$7.26 and \$10.09 per hour. *Wonkblog* has [five reasons to be worried about the economy](#). In short: fallout from Syria, the coming fiscal standoff, the Fed's ending of quantitative easing, what Larry Summers (see above) is likely to do if and when he becomes the Fed Chair, and the delayed effects of higher interest rates.

Colorado and Washington recently introduced regulations to legalize and tax the sale of recreational marijuana. *The Atlantic* interviews Senator Patrick Leahy, Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee about the Federal government's [response](#), who says "[to] waste time on marijuana in states where it is legal makes absolutely no sense".

## Across the States

### Northeast

New Yorkers go to the polls to elect a new Mayor in November. *Caffeinated Politics* says that ahead of next week's Primaries, the race is getting [gritty](#). The city of Syracuse, New York State, also has an election coming up. *New York State of Politics* writes that the State's Governor, Andrew Cuomo, has [refused to endorse](#) any Democratic candidate ahead of the primary next week.

*Blue Jersey* is very [surprised](#) that Chris Christie (the Governor of New Jersey) and Rand Paul (the junior Senator for Kentucky) are completely neck-and-neck in a recent New Jersey poll of who would make a better President (especially given Christie's 'homefield' advantage).

### South

The *Daily Kos* covers a Georgia Insurance Health Commissioner who states that they will do everything in their power to be [obstructionist](#) towards Obamacare when it is introduced.

*SaintPetersBlog* says that Republican Representative, Steve Southerland, has voiced his [support for immigration reform](#), going against many of his fellow Tea Party members.

*Under the Dome* [says](#) that a new national survey says that only 30 per cent of Americans view North Carolina favorably and 23 per cent unfavorably. This slipping in the state's image may be due to the state's turn to the right. *The Progressive Pulse* says that one in six families in the state [struggled with hunger](#) over the last year. Meanwhile, *Fitsnews* says that a new survey shows that South Carolina is the [least corrupt](#) state in America, in terms of convictions per 100,000.

In Texas, *Big Jolly Politics* says that a local newspaper in Houston is aggressively [attacking](#) the Democratic mayoral candidate, Ben Hall.

### Midwest

Previewing the 2014 Wisconsin gubernatorial race, *The Prairie Badger* looks at potential Democratic primary [fight](#) between State Senator Kathleen Vinehout and Madison School Board member, Mary Burke (who has been essentially chosen by the State's Democratic establishment to run against Governor Scott Walker).

The *Daily Kos* warns that Kansas may be [removing](#) the eligibility of 20,000 people from food stamp aid, as the State forces people to work or participate in job training for at least 20 hours a week regardless of whether or not work or training is available.

*Eclectablog* writes that Michigan's Republicans [passed](#) over 90 per cent of new laws this year to take immediate effect, but this did not include an expansion of Medicaid.

### **West and Pacific**

*Blue Oregon* ponders whether or not the State's Republicans have found a candidate to [challenge](#) the State's junior Senator, Democrat Jeff Merkley. This potential challenger comes in the form of Jason Conger, who has a 'compelling' life story that may appeal to voters. *New Mexico Politics* [looks](#) at the positioning of Congressional candidates ahead of the 2014 elections.

Hawaii's *Civil Beat* says that the State's lawmakers should not rush to give further [tax breaks to industries](#) while ignoring the overall economic climate, which suffers from a continuing tax burden and regulations.

California's *Calitics* reports that Governor Brown's administration is looking to [move up to 10,000 prisoners](#) to out of State prisons, with or without the agreement of the state Legislature. Calbuzz examines the enormous [challenges](#) facing the state's Republican party, including rising votes for Independents, and greater support for Democrats among Latino and Asian voters.

### **And finally...**

*Wonkblog* wishes everyone a [happy Labor Day, in eight charts](#), which show how being a worker has changed over the decades.

*The Atlantic* looks at the eleven times Congress has previously [declared war](#) in US history.

*The Political Carnival* claims that thousands of bridges across the country are dangerously close to [collapsing](#), due to a lack of funding for infrastructure.

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*Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of USApp– American Politics and Policy, nor of the London School of Economics.*

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