

## Shutdown begins to hurt, New Jersey election debates, and Yellen for the Fed – US blog round up for 5 – 11 October

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

### Government shutdown and the debt ceiling

Entering its second week, the government shutdown once again dominated commentary across the U.S. blogosphere, with the threat of reaching – and exceeding – the debt ceiling after the 17<sup>th</sup> of October increasingly becoming a concern as well. Over the weekend, *Wonkblog* argues that the shutdown is actually a [fight](#) between Republicans and the party's Tea Party faction, saying that while most Republicans didn't want a shutdown, the 52 members of the Republican conference who identify with the Tea Party are essentially holding the party to ransom. *Outside the Beltway* says that if we want to understand the motivations of the GOP's hardliners, then we should talk to their [constituents](#), who are encouraging their representatives to take a tough line on the government. Meanwhile, *The Atlantic* [argues](#) that Republicans are unsure of what they really want out of the current crisis. *Crooks & Liars* writes that the [shutdown has done the GOP no favors](#), with polls suggesting that 70 percent of Americans disapprove of the way they are handling the crisis.

The government has been accused of closing down venues that do not actually require federal funds as part of the shutdown. *American Thinker* says that the Democrats are closing these places as a [“way of making life difficult”](#). *United Liberty* [echoes](#) this, saying that the government did not need to erect ‘digital barricades’ around some of its websites, and that the real casualty of the shutdown is rationality. According to *Outside the Beltway*, this week the shutdown began to start hitting the private sector, as [defense contractors](#) were forced to furlough workers. *The Atlantic* also says that the shutdown is hurting everyone, but that this [does not really matter](#), given the



World War II Memorial during the Government Shutdown Credit: John Sonderman (Creative Commons BY NC)

Tea Party's lack of desire for a compromise on the budget. On Sunday, the *American Thinker* [reports](#) that the House has voted unanimously to approve retroactive pay for federal workers once the shutdown ends. *Crooks & Liars* takes a look at the Wall Street [stories](#) we might have missed as the shutdown overshadows the news cycle.

One suggested way that the shutdown might be ended would be for the Democrats to use a discharge petition to bring a Continuing Resolution for the budget to the floor of the House. *The Monkey Cage* looks at the [history of discharge petitions](#), saying that while they have historically not had a great deal of success, the direness of the current situation may mean that this time is different. *Crooks & Liars* [makes](#) the point that if the Democrats give in to the demands of the Republican party over the shutdown, then they will continue to demand greater and greater budget concessions and cuts.

As the week progressed, concern about the country's debt ceiling began to mount. The *National Journal* [says](#) that 40 percent of Americans think that reaching the debt ceiling would not cause many problems, but that they are likely to be very wrong in that belief. On Tuesday, *Wonkblog* [warned](#) that the Treasury bill market had spiked as bond investors began to worry about the debt ceiling. *Doug Ross* [ponders](#) whether or not President Obama would actually like the U.S. to default. *Red State* [argues](#) that the debt ceiling is the law of the land, and that the country will not default on its debt if no agreement is reached, as expenditure can be prioritised to cover bond interest first. *The Atlantic* takes a different line, saying that while the U.S. does need a debt ceiling, it should be in the form of a [debt-to-GDP ratio](#), not a dollar amount. *Outside the Beltway* reminds us that [negotiations](#) over the debt ceiling are not unprecedented, and that they did occur in the 1970s and 1980s.

On Tuesday, some light appears at the end of the tunnel, with President Obama stating that he would be open to a short term increase in the debt ceiling, leading *The White House Dossier* to argue that '[Obama just caved](#)'. Later in the week as Republicans and Democrats begin to discuss the possibility of a short term debt ceiling extension, the *National Journal* [says](#) that neither party '[blinked](#)'. A resolution was still not forthcoming by Thursday, however, as Obama [rejected](#) the Republicans' short term deal, according to *Crooks & Liars*, as the President would like the deal to include reopening the government.

## Government and the Beltway

In light of the government shutdown, and with public opinion of Congress at an all-time low, *Wonkblog* lists the thirteen reasons [why Washington is failing](#) including gerrymandering, polarized media, the Hastert Rule, the filibuster, Ted Cruz, and too much transparency. *The Monkey Cage* takes a close look at public opinion of the filibuster, arguing that it [depends on the person, and the party](#), that is doing the filibustering.

Next week, the Supreme Court is hearing a case on political donations, which could potentially massively increase the amount of money that could be given to candidates and parties. *The Hill's Congress blog* [says](#) that the Supreme Court needs to [stand firm](#) on donation limits to maintain equal opportunities in civic debate.

Last week President Obama gave an interview where he stated that he felt that owner of the Washington Redskins football team should think about changing the team's name as it might be offensive to Native Americans. *The White House Dossier* [argues](#) that the team's name is [none of the President's business](#), and that he is not the country's moral arbiter.



Janet Yellen, currently Vice Chair of the Federal Reserve System Credit: IMF (Creative Commons BY NC ND)

The *National Journal* is [pleased](#) that this week President Obama announced that Janet Yellen would succeed Ben Bernanke as Chairman of the US Federal Reserve Bank. They say that Yellen is likely to be tougher on Wall Street than her predecessors.

## Foreign policy

*The Monkey Cage* looks at [China's relative ascent at the United Nations](#) compared with the U.S.' decline, saying that as countries increase their trade with China, they tend to vote with the country in the General Assembly.

On Thursday, the Libyan Prime Minister Ali Zeidan was kidnapped by those who were against his aiding of the U.S. in helping to track down those involved with the attack on diplomats in Benghazi last year. In light of this, *Via Meadia* argues that we should admit that [intervening in Libya was a bad idea](#).

## The economy, society, and rollout of Affordable Care

This week saw continuing questions over the number of people who had actually registered with Obamacare. *American Thinker* [says](#) that the number is tiny, while *Daily Kos* [writes](#) that the program's success in Kentucky, where tens of thousands have signed up, makes a mockery of the Republicans' opposition. *Wonkblog* points out that measuring Obamacare enrolment is rather [tricky](#), given different states are using different tracking metrics. *Via Meadia* says that [technical and data glitches](#) have held up registration and that if they continue, then they may well contribute to a negative first impression of Obamacare. Meanwhile, *Hit & Run* wonders whether or not the government is being [misleading](#) on Obamacare's IT failures, or if they are simply incompetent.

The *New Yorker* looks at the [effects of Obamacare on small businesses](#), saying that despite the Republican case that it will be an enormous cost, the program will actually be of great benefit, and may allow 1.5million people to become self-employed. *Via Meadia* looks at those who currently have health plans that do not meet the requirements of the Affordable Care Act, saying that they may have to purchase a comparable plan at the new exchanges at a [much higher cost](#). *The American Prospect* [looks](#) at the reasons the Affordable Care Act is unpopular in the public's mind, arguing that it is a complicated bill that faces extensive and well organized opposition.

*Informed Comment* argues that the Keystone XL pipeline, the extension of which would massively increase the imports of Canadian tar sands oil, must be opposed as '[Alberta's tar sands produce the dirtiest oil on the planet](#)'.

## Across the States

### Northeast

New Jersey faces two elections in the near future; a Senate Vacancy election on October 16<sup>th</sup>, and a gubernatorial election on November 5<sup>th</sup>. On Tuesday night, the two candidates for the state's Senate seat, Cory Booker (D), and Steve Lonegan (R), had their final debate. *Save Jersey* [criticizes](#) Booker's insistence during the debate that Republicans like Lonegan are the problem in Washington, saying that he is a man of substance, rather than 'an empty suit' like Booker. On Wednesday night, the two candidates for the governorship, the incumbent Chris Christie (R), and Barbara Buono (D) went head-to-head in their debate. *Blue Jersey* [says](#) that Buono spent much of the debate calling for Christie to account for the gap between what he promised voters in 2009, and what he's delivered. Meanwhile, the *National Journal* looks at Chris Christie's recent [friendliness](#) with New Jersey Democrats – likely due to the fact that he is expected to win the election by a landslide.



Governor of New Jersey Chris Christie Credit: New Jersey National Guard (Creative Commons BY SA)

*The Lonely Conservative* [looks](#) at The Mayor of Washington DC, Vincent Gray's attack on fellow Democrat, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid over the government's shutdown, which is holding up funds for the city.

In New Hampshire, *Granite Grok* [says](#) that the state's Democrats have a love/hate relationship with the Republican's state budget – after their criticisms, the budget is now in surplus by \$76million.

Maine's *Agree to Disagree* [looks](#) at whether or not it was 'civil' for the state's government to declare a civil emergency in response to the government shutdown.

## South

*Hit & Run* writes that, interestingly for a 'red' state, there may be considerable support for the [legalization of marijuana](#) – higher levels of support than in Massachusetts. In Florida, *SaintPetersBlog* looks at the state's new 'Timely Justice Act', which, while being aimed at speeding up executions, may end up having the [opposite effect](#).

*Brains and Eggs* says that Texas has the [worst conservatives in the country](#), given their support for Tea Party members like Ted Cruz over the government shutdown. On similar lines, *Delaware Liberal* looks at the '[shameful silence](#)' of that state's 'sane' Republicans who have not come out against the tactics of their wider party during the shutdown.

## Midwest

While the federal government has ordered state parks that receive federal funding to be shut down, this will not be happening in Wisconsin, [according](#) to *The Lonely Conservative*, as the state's Governor, Scott Walker has said that the parks will stay open. Meanwhile, *Smart Politics* wonders if Wisconsin will elect a [female Governor in 2014](#), as state Commerce Secretary, Mary Burke, announced this week that she would be contesting the post for the Democratic Party.

With four of Illinois' last seven governors being sent to jail and now the state's lottery commissioner, Mike Jones, facing investigation for allegedly corrupt contracts, *Red State* asks, "[are Illinois politicians beyond redemption?](#)".

*Sayanythingblog* says that the North Dakota state Legislature needs to address the [tax status of married gay couples](#). While gay marriage is legal in some states, this is not the case in North Dakota. This means that gay couples cannot file state level taxes as married couples, as they can do in other states.

## West and Pacific

This week, the progressive Democratic Governor of California, Jerry Brown signed into law a measure that would give illegal immigrants the right to hold drivers' licenses in the state. The *American Thinker* is [stunned](#) by the decision, arguing that it makes no sense for someone who is in the country illegally to have a legal document. This week, Brown also signed a bill that expanded California access to abortion for California women, making it one of the country's most liberal states for abortion, [according](#) to *Daily Kos*. Still in California, *Calitics* remembers the lead up to the 2003 [recall election](#) of former Governor, Gray Davis – an election that led to the election of Arnold Schwarzenegger as Governor.

Ahead of Seattle's mayoral election on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, *Strange Bedfellows* [says](#) that despite certain polls showing challenger Ed Murray having a strong lead, the incumbent, Michael McGinn may still be able to win.

*Daily Kos* [reports](#) that Colorado Republicans are pushing ahead with their third attempt (after two successes), to recall a Democrat, this time State Senator Evie Hudak.

## And finally...

*The Atlantic* says that America's new \$100 bill is [awesome](#).

The *New Yorker* wonders why more Americans don't win the [Nobel Prize](#).

*Outside the Beltway* reports that you can now [drunk dial](#) a random member of Congress to protest directly at the government's shutdown.

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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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