

## Obama's 'Reverse Reagan' problem, Sebelius resigns, and do members of Congress deserve higher pay? – US national blog round up for 5 – 11 April

*USApp Managing Editor, Chris Gilson, looks at the best in political blogging from the Beltway. Our round-up of state blogs will follow on Saturday afternoon.*

### The Democratic Party, the GOP and elections

On Saturday, *The Lonely Conservative* [writes](#) that the bid by Comcast, a cable provider, to buy Time Warner Cable is likely to go through, given that they say the company has 'bought off' the Democratic Party through lobbying activities in the last year or so. If successful, Comcast will become the largest cable provider in the U.S.

On Sunday, *The Atlantic* [writes](#) on President Obama's 'reverse Reagan' problem and the Affordable Care Act. While President Reagan was able to remain personally popular even though voters disliked his policies, Obama is unpopular even as his signature Obamacare policy has become more and more liked. This week also saw a great deal of crossed swords between Republicans and Democrats over equal pay, as the Senate considered the Paycheck Fairness Act. Meanwhile, the *White House Dossier* [accuses](#) the Obama White House of only paying women 88 percent of what they pay men, and also plays down gender pay inequality in general. On Monday, as Obama joins former Presidents to commemorate Lyndon Johnson's passage of the Civil Rights Act 50 years ago, the *National Journal* looks at one piece of advice that is often given to Obama's aides about how he deals with Congress – [why can't Obama be more like LBJ?](#)

With the 2014 midterm elections in mind, *The Atlantic* [ponders](#) whether or not the Democrats will be able to 'engineer' their way to electoral victory by using new campaigning tools and modelling.

Looking ahead to the 2016 presidential election, *PoliticusUSA* [says](#) that the sexist reactions from a picture tweeted by likely candidate and former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, of her with two members of the Russian band Pussy Riot, are a preview of how some commentators might act towards her if she does run for the presidency. Meanwhile, *Outside the Beltway* [writes](#) on Monday that every other Democrat who is interested in running for the presidency in 2016 is 'frozen' in place, waiting to see what Clinton does, which could have great ramifications for campaigning and fundraising next year, if she decides not to run.

On Tuesday, *Roll Call's Heard on the Hill* [reports](#) that web entrepreneur, Mike Mann, is developing a new 'Better Government Party', aimed at upending the current dominance of the two-party system. *National Journal* [writes](#) on Thursday that while ten men running for Governor across various blue and swing states have picked women as their running mates, this is more likely to help them get elected, than them setting the stage for a female successor.

This week saw continued speculation that Jeb Bush, brother of George W., might be interested in running for the GOP nomination for the presidency in 2016. On Monday, *Politicus USA* [writes](#) that Bush may be 2016's 'obligatory sane Republican', especially given his moderate statements on illegal immigration this week. *Hit & Run* [disagrees](#), saying that while Bush makes sense on the illegal immigration issue (he stated that it could be considered to be an 'act of love'), the fact that his father and brother have both been president, should rule him out. Finally, *FiveThirtyEight* [writes](#) on Thursday that while there is still no front runner for 2016, Bush should be considered to be a good, not terrible, candidate. *PoliticusUSA* also [reports](#) this week that another likely GOP contender for the nomination in 2016, Wisconsin Governor, Scott Walker, is considering going back to university to finish his degree, though they advise him not to, so that he can run on a platform of resentment for elites.

Still on the GOP, *Roll Call's At the Races* [writes](#) on Tuesday that a seven week 'gauntlet' of Senate primaries

starting in May is set to decide how successful the Tea Party will be in this year's mid-term elections. On Thursday, *Daily Kos* [says](#) that many Republicans are calling for Congressman Vance McAllister (LA) to resign after he was caught kissing a staffer on camera.

### **Government, the Beltway and Congress' agenda**

On Saturday, *The Political Carnival* [says](#) that President Obama may be forced to put a Tea Party judge on the federal bench in Pennsylvania. They blame Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy's (VT), chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, likely refusal to end the 'blue-slip' tradition that allows home-state senators to veto judicial nominations in their state.



On Monday, *Daily Kos* reports that former CIA director, Michael Hayden, has [criticised](#) the chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) as being too 'emotional' to be able to produce a fair report on the Agency's practices against terrorism. On Tuesday, *United Liberty* [says](#) that the House Ways and Means Committee will ask the Justice Department to pursue a criminal case against ex-IRS official, Lois Lerner. Lerner has been at the centre of an inquiry into alleged targeting by the IRS of conservative groups. They write that it is unlikely that the Attorney General, Eric Holder, will take any action, as the Justice Department has shown little interest in the investigation.

Staying in Congress, but moving to the House, on Thursday the *National Journal* [reports](#) that several dozen House conservatives may be scheming to force Speaker John Boehner aside next year. They [say](#) that many conservatives are increasingly irritated with Boehner's cautious approach, and would like to remove Boehner, and the House Majority Leader, Eric Cantor. Meanwhile, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) on Thursday that the House has passed Representative Paul Ryan's (WI) 2014 budget, 219 to 205, with all Democrats voting against. They say that the budget resolution will repeal Obamacare, essentially end Medicare, and cut food stamps. On Monday, the Senate passed an extension to emergency unemployment assistance for millions of Americans, and on Wednesday *Roll Call* [reports](#) that the House GOP is considering bringing the extension to the House floor, but only if the proposal is tied to job measures and tax breaks. Are members of Congress underpaid? Representative James Moran (D-VA) [thinks so](#), according to *Roll Call's Hawkings Here*. They [write](#) that while Moran's comments have been sharply criticised by many, the fact that members decide the nearly \$4 trillion federal budget, and that their salaries are lower than that of many professionals, such as doctors and bankers, does give his views some credence.

On Tuesday, *Hit & Run* [profiles](#) a new report from the Government Accountability Office that says that there are hundreds of instances where federal agencies are giving the same or similar services to the same or similar beneficiaries, likely costing the taxpayer millions.

### **Foreign policy and defense**

This week the Senate's Intelligence Committee voted to declassify their 6,300 page report into the CIA's activities after 9/11 (mentioned above). *Informed Comment* [writes](#) on Sunday that in 2013 the State Department has warned that the report contained information on CIA 'black site' prisons in other countries, and that disclosure of the Committee's report would create troubling diplomatic situations for those countries, and also threaten intelligence relationships.

This week *The Feed* [reports](#) that the Secretary of Defense, Chuck Hagel, has been in Japan reassuring officials that the U.S. is committed to Japan, after their apparent concerns over U.S. inaction over Ukraine. With Ukraine in mind, *The Monkey Cage* [reports](#) on a new study that finds that the less Americans know about where the country is, the more they feel that America should intervene. Meanwhile, on Tuesday, *The Foundry* [writes](#) that the U.S. needs a long term plan for how it will deal with Russia, now that it views the country as an adversary, rather than a partner after Russia's actions in the Ukraine.

On Wednesday, *Roll Call* [writes](#) that President Obama faces a tough political dance in pursuing his international trade agenda. He currently faces opposition from labor unions over plans for trade pacts with Asia and Europe, who want to avoid NAFTA-style agreements, which have proven to be bad for American workers.

### **Affordable Care**

*Outside the Beltway* [writes](#) on Saturday that one unfortunate, and unanticipated, consequence of the Affordable Care Act, is that those who do not have health insurance already, will not be able to buy it until November, as insurance companies stop selling plans until next year. *The Lonely Conservative* also criticises Obamacare, this time, because it means an affordable health plan for children in New Jersey has had to be ended because it did not cover everything that is mandated under Obamacare. They [write](#) that 1,800 families will be affected. Meanwhile, *Wonkblog* [reports](#) that the Obamacare health insurance exchange in Washington DC is unique, in that it is signing up young people at the highest rate of any exchange, and that only 15 percent of signups are from people that qualify for federal assistance (compared to 83 percent nationally).

This week also saw the resignation of the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius. *Wonkblog* [writes](#) on Thursday that while Sebelius was not forced out, she was out of favor, and her departure may help the Democrats put some distance between them and the program's troubled launch.

### **The economy and society**

On Saturday, *Daily Kos* looks at polling data on attitudes towards LGBT rights over the past 40 years. They [write](#) that one reason for people's move towards for both workplace equality and legal sexual relations is that they may have found out that they have a friend or relative who is gay.

*The Foundry* [writes](#) this week that average Americans are more and more becoming victims of excessive regulation, at a cost of at least \$73 billion annually. They say that not only does this excess of regulation hurt businesses, but that it also increasingly restricts people's lifestyle choices. They [say](#) lawmakers should require congressional approval before any new major regulation takes effect. Still on regulation, *United Liberty* [writes](#) on Monday that state legislatures are pushing back on federal proposals to ban online gambling, saying that such measures should be left to the states.

On Monday, *Wonkblog* [reports](#) that Twitter is surprisingly good at predicting unemployment, citing new research that predicts unemployment claims against tweets and then tracks them against actual unemployment claims.

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

*Outside the Beltway* [reports](#) on the world's largest game of Tetris, played on the side of a skyscraper in Philadelphia.

*FreakOutNation1* [writes](#) on Monday that a woman was arrested in Texas after she complained to police that a dealer had sold her substandard marijuana.

Also in Texas, *Crooks & Liars*, [reports](#) that the Mayor of Pasadena (a Houston suburb) dropped a gun in the middle of a City Council Meeting. Guns are banned in such meetings.

*Featured image credit: President Obama and Kathleen Sebelius (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)*

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

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