

Rove's Clinton criticism backfires, cross-party calls for Shinseki to go over VA scandal, and is Obama's foreign policy cloudy or just right? – US national blog round up for 24 – 30 May

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 Monday, *Daily Kos* [reports](#) that President Obama has designated the 11th National Monument of his presidency thus far, in the form of the Organ Pipe Desert Peaks National Monument of New Mexico. They say that if the Republicans had their way, then Obama and future presidents would have their authority to designate such National Monuments severely limited via a new law which would transfer this authority to Congress.

Last week saw former George W. Bush senior advisor, Karl Rove, question former Secretary of State (and likely 2016 presidential candidate) Hillary Clinton's health and age. *PoliticoUSA* [writes](#) on Wednesday that Rove's comments have backfired with a new poll showing that 67 percent of voters disapprove of the strategy, and that 52 percent support her candidacy. Later in the week, they cover Clinton's 'secret' lunch with President Obama on Thursday, which they [say](#) is more bad news for the GOP, as it shows that the Democratic Party is united behind Clinton. This week wasn't all good news for Clinton – *Crooks & Liars* [writes](#) on the emerging populist challenge led by Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), which looks to rebalance America's values away from injustice and inequality. They say that even if Warren does not run in 2016, her agenda will help to influence that election's debate, especially with Clinton being seen by many as the 'Wall Street candidate'.

On Wednesday, *Outside the Beltway* [casts an eye](#) to the potential Democratic bench for Vice-President in the 2016 election. They say while some have commented that the best candidates for Vice President are often those that have faced national elections before, there are still many viable candidates, including Kristen Gillibrand, Elizabeth Warren and Cory Booker.

Moving to the Republican Party this week, on Tuesday, *United Liberty* [argues](#) that if House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) decides to step down from his job in the coming months, then this would be good for the GOP, as Boehner has become known for his latent hostility towards some of his more conservative colleagues.



Elizabeth Warren Credit: Newshour (Creative Commons BY-NC 2.0)

The ideological clash between 'establishment' Republicans and the more right wing Tea Party has been subject to much discussion and debate in recent months, something that is likely to continue in the lead up to this fall's mid-term elections. On Wednesday, *The Atlantic* [writes](#) that 2012 presidential candidate, Mitt Romney is undefeated in

his endorsement of candidates who have thus far faced primary challengers. They say that Romney's effectiveness may have more to do with the establishment GOP's growing success compared to more 'grassroots' conservatives. That said, the Republican Party is still facing a difficult time in broadening its appeal, [says](#) the *National Journal*. They look at two New Hampshire Congressional candidates, Dan Innis, who is gay, and Marilinda Garcia, who is half Latina, who are both facing difficulties in fundraising, despite considerable support.

On Saturday, *PolitucusUSA* [looks](#) ahead to this week's primaries, writing that they are unlikely to do a great deal to change the woeful gender imbalance in the House and Senate. *National Journal* [reflects](#) on the current primary season, writing that even though many candidates have poured millions into self-funded campaigns, it is a far from surefire way for them to ensure electoral victory in November, given that in the past three election cycles, only 22 percent of self-funders won their races. *Outside the Beltway* [raises](#) another worrying point on Thursday – that fewer than 7 percent of House seats are competitive in this fall's midterms. They say that at most, there are 30 seats up for grabs.

Government, the Beltway and Congress' agenda



Secretary Shinseki, By DoD photo by Erin A. Kirk-Cuomo. (Released) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

This week the ongoing Veterans Affairs scandal continued. On Sunday, *Daily Kos* [looks](#) at the GOP's record on the Veterans Affairs (VA) Department, writing that Senator John McCain (R-AZ) had apologized in 2008 for the poor conditions at the Walter Reed Army Medical Centre, when George W. Bush was president, but more recently his party scuttled any additional funding for the VA by filibustering a bill. Meanwhile, *PolitucusUSA* [says](#) that House Speaker John Boehner wants to harm veterans even more by privatizing the VA, something that would mean veterans have to pay more out of pocket for their healthcare. On Wednesday, *National Review's The Campaign Spot* [wonders](#) why President Obama is not calling for a criminal investigation into the potential falsification of waiting list records at the VA, when Congressional Democrats are doing just that. Still on Wednesday, *United Liberty* [calls](#) on President Obama to fire VA Secretary Eric Shinseki, and replace him with Mitt Romney, who they say has the experience of saving faltering companies and non-profits. *Roll Call's At the Races* [reports](#) that Democrats who are facing 'difficult' races at this year's midterms are also calling for Shinseki's resignation.

In Senate news this week, *Outside the Beltway* [reports](#) on Tuesday that if Mitch McConnell becomes Senate Majority Leader in the next Congress, he will keep in place the minority party's ability to filibuster legislation. They say that even if they do gain the Senate this year, the GOP may be vulnerable in the 2016 midterm elections, and this may be staying their hand on this issue.

Foreign policy, defense and trade

This week was an important one for U.S. foreign policy, with President Obama announcing a timeline for the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan and giving a major foreign policy speech on Wednesday. *Outside the Beltway* begins the week with a discussion on Saturday of how the U.S. stopped thinking strategically. They [say](#) that the tensions in foreign policy that have emerged since the end of the Cold War shows that America needs to think more about where it intervenes in the world and why.

While many have criticized the so-called 'Obama doctrine' of limited intervention, *Informed Comment* says that the President's foreign policy is 'just right'. They argue that much of what happens on the world stage is out of the administration's control, or has its roots in 'pre-Obama history', and write that: "In a multi-polar world with a multitude of problems, and with financial resources and political will limited, the U.S. cannot solve every issue and right every wrong." *The Left Coaster* takes a more critical view, writing that the Obama administration is no better than that of President George W. Bush, as this week they accidentally released the name of the CIA's top officer in Kabul. They say that it is time for the Obama Administration to run its foreign policy with professionals, rather than directly from the White House. On Tuesday, *Hit & Run* says that June will mark the tenth anniversary of its bombing operations in Pakistan. They say that a new report on the strikes that are aimed at terrorists shows that most of them have been carried out on schools and homes.

The Foundry reflects on Obama's announcement this week that all U.S. troops will be out of Afghanistan by 2016, saying that this is a mistake, since troop commitments should reflect national security imperatives, not political considerations. On Thursday, *Outside the Beltway* looks at President Obama's speech at West Point outlining the future of U.S. foreign policy. They say that the President's vision was 'very cloudy', contained very little new information, and reflected his lack of clear vision for U.S. intervention.

Obamacare and health

With the VA scandal taking up a good deal of commentary space this week, discussion of Obamacare took a back seat compared to recent months. On Monday, *Daily Kos* looks at a new poll which finds that a high percentage of those without insurance are those who do not understand the new law. They also write that 84 percent of the remaining uninsured are were open to getting coverage at the next open enrollment period which starts in November. *United Liberty* covers another poll this week – this one says that 43 percent of Americans oppose Obamacare, compared to 28 percent who support it. They say that this shows that President Obama's declaration that the Obamacare debate is over is laughably absurd.

Meanwhile, *Lonely Conservative* writes that those that get insurance through their employer will soon be hit with higher premiums and co-payments, as more than half of companies have increased their employees' premium shares or co-payments. *Daily Kos* has some more positive news, reporting that many previously holdout insurance companies have been convinced by Obamacare's early successes, and will soon be applying to offer insurance under the exchanges. On Wednesday, *Hit & Run* writes that there has been another delay to the opening of Obamacare's small business exchange, at least for those states that have reason to believe that the new 'employer choice' feature (which would allow small businesses to offer employees a choice of plans on the insurance marketplaces) will lead to insurers raising rates for 2015.

With attention on the VA scandal this week, *Daily Kos* points out that the fact that five million Americans are without Medicaid, because states have refused to expand the program under Obamacare, is also very much a scandal as well.

The economy and society

The weekend saw a tragic mass shooting in Santa Barbara, which left seven dead, prompting renewed calls for tighter laws on guns. On Sunday *Caffeinated Politics* says that the plea for gun control to the National Rifle Association (NRA) and to politicians, from one of the shooting victims' father, Richard Martinez, was 'anguishing' to watch, but that it was one that needs to be heard until we come to grips with the fact that the NRA should no longer set the gun policy agenda. Meanwhile, *Crooks & Liars* reports on call from Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) to revive gun control bills that were defeated after the 2012 Sandy Hook massacre. *PoliticoUSA* echoes this, writing on Tuesday that this latest mass shooting shows that gun control is now more important than ever.

On Sunday, *The Feed* looks at what they call 'America's Biofuel Boondoggle'. With the aid of a graph, they explain that standards set in 2007 on renewable fuels are far, far ahead of current consumption levels (due to fewer miles being driven in more efficient vehicles), and that the ethanol that is being produced does not reduce emissions and raises global food prices.

On Tuesday, *The Atlantic* [argues](#) that trucks are saving the U.S. economy, with higher spending on transportation accounting for 60 percent of all additional dollars spent by households in the past year. Americans may have to buy even more trucks after news on Thursday that the economy shrank in the first quarter of 2014, as reported by *National Review's The Agenda*. They [say](#) that while there are many reasons for the economy's poor performance, government still needs to do more to create the conditions for business enterprises to invest and grow. *Daily Kos* [reports](#), that in the U.S., CEO pay has continued to rise, with the median pay for the head of a large public company now standing at \$10.5 million, compared to the median household income of just over \$51,000.

And finally...

The Foundry [writes](#) on Monday that in North Carolina, Pinterest users who dispense dietary advice may be threatened with criminal penalties, because it may constitute the unlicensed practice of 'dietetics'.

In light of rapper 50 Cent's terrible opening ceremonial pitch at the New York Mets-Pittsburgh Pirates baseball game, *Wonkblog* has a [video of the best and worst celebrity pitches](#) featuring George W. Bush, Cookie Monster, and Sonia Sotomayor.

Daily Kos [reports](#) on Tuesday that a gun range in Oklahoma has been granted a liquor license, the first of its kind for the state.

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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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