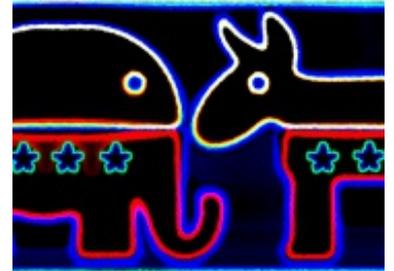


Things looking bad for the Democrats, growing state Medicaid rolls, and should the US rid the world of Boko Haram? – US national blog round up for 10 – 16 May

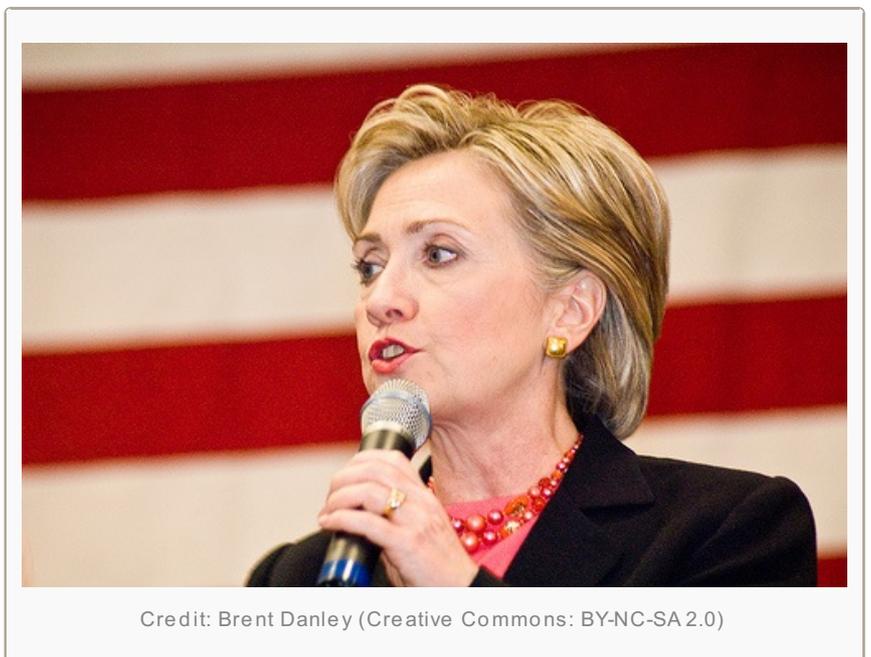
USApp Managing Editor, Chris Gilson looks at the best in political blogging from the Beltway. Our round-up of state blogs will follow on Saturday afternoon.

The Democratic Party, the GOP and elections

On Saturday, *Outside the Beltway* began the weekend by looking at some recent commentary that argues that [progressive bloggers are doing the White House's job](#) in battling attacks from Republicans. They say that while this might be literally true, blogging has become so professionalized that it is nearly indistinguishable from the mainstream media, and that both Republican and Democrat administrations have used the media to their own ends for decades. Even with the help of progressive bloggers, things are still looking 'pretty bad' for Democrats, [writes Lonely Conservative](#). Looking at recent public opinion polling, ahead of the 2014 mid-term elections, they say that President Obama's approval ratings are near 'disastrous. With the President in mind, on Tuesday, *National Journal* wonders if it's [possible for Democrats to win when Obama isn't on the ballot](#), as is the case in the mid-terms this year. They say that Obama's candidacy spurred African-Americans to turn out in 2012, and that the Democratic Party now has a dearth of minority officeholders that voters can get enthusiastic about in the same way.



Moving to commentary on the 2016 presidential election, on Tuesday, *The Monkey Cage* [writes](#) that the victory of Hillary Clinton is by no means a sure thing, given that women in general have a hard time gaining presidential offices in most countries due to the political 'glass ceiling'. Meanwhile, *White House Dossier* [says](#) that Hillary Clinton's problem is that when people look at her record, she is known for five 'Bad Things': Benghazi, the Russia Reset, Monica Lewinsky, Hillarycare, and failing to label the Nigerian faction Boko Haram as a terrorist organization while she was Secretary of State. On Thursday, the *National Review's Campaign Spot*, [writes](#) that the current questions about Hillary Clinton's health would continue into her Presidency, making it potentially 'very messy'.



Credit: Brent Danley (Creative Commons: BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Moving across the aisle to the Republican Party, on Monday, *Crooks & Liars* [reports](#) that House Majority Leader, Eric Cantor was heckled by Tea Party members in a meeting of the Virginia's GOP. This week saw Ben Sasse win the GOP primary in Nebraska, making him the next likely Senator from the Cornhusker State. *The Atlantic* mulls the implication of Sasse's win for the GOP, [writing](#) that he is a 'fusion' candidate who has

ingratiated himself with the right wing of the party, and can unite the party's base and establishment.

This week also saw commentary on Republicans' policy positions; on Monday, *The Foundry* [reports](#) on comments from Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) that his party should not go 'too crazy' on voter ID, and should not make it the GOP's defining issue. They say that Paul is wrong, and that Republicans have just been trying to improve electoral integrity to protect all voters. Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) made waves this week with comments that human activity was not causing climate change in the way that scientists are portraying it. *Wonkblog* [writes](#) on Tuesday that Rubio's comments show the GOP's problem with climate science: senior members of the party with presidential ambitions have to be careful not to alienate the party's base, who largely disagree that climate change is human-related. Looking ahead to 2016, *Caffeinated Politics* [says](#) that the number of presidential primary debates for the GOP has been cut to ten or fewer, down from the twenty in 2012 which may have crippled Mitt Romney's electoral chances.

On Monday, *The Atlantic* looks at a recent study of how much people trust their state's government. People in Illinois are the least trusting, and North Dakota, the most. They [say](#) that state's economies and population sizes are a factor in trust levels, and also that trust in state and local government has been trending down at the national level in recent years.

Government, the Beltway and Congress' agenda

Last week the Supreme Court ruled that opening local government meetings with prayers was constitutional, which sparked commentary from the right on the implications for the separation of church and state. While in theory the ruling covers any religion, *PoliticusUSA* [writes](#) on Saturday that a local official in Roanoke, Virginia, has already proposed that non-Christian prayers before meetings should be excluded. They reflect that the Supreme Court's ruling risks encouraging more 'Christian-only' sentiment on prayers from counties.

In further developments on Benghazi, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) that the House Benghazi Committee Chairman, Trey Gowdy (R-SC) stated this week that he had some 'big questions' for Hillary Clinton on the lead up to the September 2012 attack on the American diplomatic mission. They say that Gowdy's questions have already been answered when Clinton previously testified to the House Foreign Affairs Committee. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) has been uncertain as to whether or not Democrats will be appointed to the Benghazi panel, but *Crooks & Liars* has an [idea](#) – they should appoint Alan Grayson (D-FL), as he will be able to cut through the 'Republican mythology' if he is on the committee.

On Sunday, *PoliticusUSA* [reports](#) on comments from Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), responding to the likelihood that the Democrats may lose the Senate this fall, that the GOP is avoiding the real issues, and that what Republicans have been doing in the House, including many votes to repeal Obamacare, is 'not how you run a country'.

Monday sees *Daily Kos* [report](#) on Democratic opposition in the Senate for President Obama's nominee for the Georgia Federal District Court, Michael Boggs. They say that Democrats are opposed to Boggs because of his votes in the Georgia legislature against same-sex marriage, and to reinstate a version of the Confederate flag as the state flag. They say Boggs' nomination is a symptom of GOP obstruction on judicial nominees, as Obama gave them their pick on two nominations to prevent them from obstructing judges for vacancies in Georgia.

The IRS scandal continued this week, with *The Foundry* [writing](#) on Thursday that Judicial Watch had obtained emails that show that the Obama Administration lied when it tried to pin the scandal of targeting conservative groups on staff in an Ohio branch office. They say that the Washington DC office was coordinating to hold up Tea Party groups' non-profit status applications to extra scrutiny.

The Atlantic [reported](#) on another unfolding scandal on Thursday, that of the failure of the Veterans Affairs Department to quickly compensate veterans for their disabilities. They write that Obama has failed to fix the backlog of 300,000 claims that have been pending for more than 125 days. They say the failure is a mixture of increasing claims due to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, combined with the fact that Veterans

Affairs only embraced electronic filing in 2013.

Former Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner has also been in the news this week, with his a new book on the financial crisis due to be published. *Wonkblog* [writes](#) on Tuesday that Geithner's central paradox when fighting the financial crisis in 2007-2009 was how to win over the public at the same time as bailing out Wall Street.

Foreign policy, defense and trade

On Saturday, *Informed Comment* looks at the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal, currently under negotiation between the U.S. and Asia. They [say](#) that the current deal is classified, and only the White House, other negotiating leaders and representatives from corporate America can see it.

Recent weeks have seen calls for the Obama Administration to intervene in Nigeria to help 300 Nigerian schoolgirls kidnapped by the Boko Haram militia group. *Hit & Run* [says](#) that the current 'emotionalism' and the #BringBackourGirls trend on Twitter is not a way to create a coherent and effective foreign policy, and that the U.S does not have to rid the world of Boko Haram.

Affordable Care

On Monday, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) that while the Obama Administration's flagship healthcare reform, the Affordable Care Act ('Obamacare'), is still not popular with many Americans, they oppose its repeal, according to new polls. The GOP may have even given up on their attempts to repeal Obamacare according to [reports](#) from *PoliticusUSA* this week that Republicans have scheduled no hearings or votes for its repeal in the coming weeks.

From the conservative point of view, *Hit & Run* has [three ways to make Obamacare 'less completely awful'](#), including allowing all people to buy catastrophic plans, forcing insurers to compete in a national market, and reducing impediments to growing the supply of medical care. On Tuesday, *The Lonely Conservative* [points out](#) that even though 8 million Americans have signed up for Obamacare, this does not mean that they are all satisfied customers, given that many have been negatively affected through higher health costs and narrower choices.

Wonkblog [reports](#) on the 17 states that have seen increases in their Medicaid rolls, even though they refused Obamacare's expansion of the program. They write that these states have seen more than 500,000 new Medicare enrollees.

The economy and society

On Saturday, *The Foundry* [discusses](#) the Obama Administration's expected approval for a 500-mile green energy transmission line project through Arizona and New Mexico. They say that the electric power line project is a national security risk due to the proximity of one section to a cruise missile testing site in New Mexico.

This week college football player Michael Sam was [drafted](#) into the NFL, making him the first openly gay player in the league, reports *Crooks & Liars*. On Tuesday, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) that marriage equality cases are in courts across the U.S., from Alaska to Virginia.

On Thursday, *Crooks & Liars* [reports](#) that fast-food workers in Miami, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston and New York were on strike. They are demanding a doubling of their pay to \$15 an hour and the right to unionize.

In the wake of last week's botched execution in Oklahoma, *The Atlantic* [looks](#) at the inhumanity of the death penalty, and unpacks its relationship with historic racism in the U.S.

The Hill's Congress Blog [argues](#) this week against a new report from Standard and Poor's which calls for additional infrastructure spending of \$1.3 billion. They say that new infrastructure spending would divert the

limited number of skilled workers from existing private sector projects, and that Washington politicians lack the nous to identify projects that will be the most economically effective.

And finally...

Crooks & Liars [covers](#) a new survey that finds that Liberals and Conservatives don't even like the same food. They say that while Liberals prefer to eat at chain restaurants like the California Pizza Kitchen, Conservatives prefer O'Charley's.

Still on a food theme, *Caffeinated Politics* [writes](#) on Monday that there is an apparent relationship between Maine divorces and margarine consumption.

FreakOutNation [reports](#) that President James A. Garfield's tomb in Cleveland was recently broken into, and 13 commemorative spoons were taken from a display case. The thief, however, left behind some cash in a donation box.

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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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