

Why Jeb and Hillary are the wrong candidates for 2016, sexual harassment training for Congress, and the GOP pushes on Benghazi – US national blog round up for 3 – 9 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* [writes](#) that conservatives are already putting their plans together on how to battle potential Democratic presidential nominee, Hillary Clinton. They say that they will focus on her time as First Lady during Bill Clinton's presidency between 1992 and 2000. Meanwhile, *United Liberty* covers comments from Clinton where she expressed dismay that 'anyone' can own a gun. They [say](#) that Clinton has not taken into account that greater background checks may not prevent gun deaths, and that guns can be used to prevent violent crimes.

Moving to the Republican Party, on Sunday, *The Lonely Conservative* wonders [why Republicans are committing suicide](#). They say that the GOP establishment's recent moves towards supporting amnesty for illegal immigrants, and to 'fix' rather than repeal Obamacare, mean that they are missing the chance for a 'wave election' this November. *Crooks & Liars* [reports](#) this week that the former Republican Governor of Florida (now-turned Democrat) Charlie Crist has stated that the racism he saw the GOP exhibit towards President Obama was his main reason for leaving the party.

This month sees primary elections in 11 states ahead of November's mid-term elections for Congress, and *National Journal* has [everything you need to know](#). They say that much of the action is on the Republican side, as the establishment and Tea Party factions of the party fight for control. On Monday, *Outside the Beltway* [writes](#) that this year's mid-term elections are also likely to see gains for the GOP in state legislatures, with five state Senates likely to swing their way. This week saw a GOP primary in North Carolina, where establishment candidate Thom Tillis easily defeated Tea Party challengers. *The Atlantic* [wonders](#) if this is signaling the end of the Republican Party's civil war, as the establishment wing of the party has been pushing resources into defeating far-right candidates, as well as slowly shifting to the right itself. This week also saw Republicans in Congress push ahead their investigations into how much the Obama Administration, and then Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, knew about the attack on the American diplomatic mission in Benghazi in 2012. The GOP has been criticized by some for their use of their new investigations into Benghazi as an opportunity to fundraise for the party, but *The American Prospect* [says](#) that we should not be surprised by this, and that there is no reason for them not to, as the issue has already been politicized.

Despite being more than two years away, speculation abounds over how the 2016 presidential race will run. On Wednesday, *The Monkey Cage* [takes](#) a close look at the Electoral College challenge facing the GOP in 2016. They say that if the popular vote is evenly split, then Democrats have a better than 80 percent chance of winning the election, as they have a significant advantage in swing states. *United Liberty*, considering the increasing support for Jeb Bush among conservatives as a potential presidential candidate in 2016, [says](#) that it is almost like the GOP wants to lose the next presidential election. They write that the Republican establishment has a poor record of choosing the party's nominee in the last two presidential races, and that Jeb Bush will likely evoke negative memories among voters of his brother George W.'s presidency. In a similar vein, *National Journal* [writes](#) on Tuesday that both Jeb Bush and Hillary Clinton are the wrong candidates for the 2016 election, because of their ties with the past, when so much new blood is emerging, especially in the Republican Party.

Government, the Beltway and Congress' agenda

On Sunday, *National Journal* previews the week ahead in Congress, [saying](#) that it is likely to be tense for both the House and Senate as the proposal to approve the Keystone XL pipeline comes up, and the hearings for the next Health and Human Services secretary begin. They also say that the House will be voting on whether or not to call upon Attorney General, Eric Holder to appoint a special counsel to investigate the alleged targeting by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) of conservative groups. On Wednesday, *Red State* [reports](#) that the House has voted to hold former IRS official, Lois Lerner, in contempt of Congress for refusing to cooperate with its investigation.

Roll Call's Hawking's Here [reports](#) on a House vote last week that would reduce Capitol maintenance by \$500,000 in 2015, and instead use the money for enhanced sexual harassment training for members and their aides. They say that the wording of the measure does not mandate the training, and though this is a good first step, much more is needed to change the culture of member misbehavior.

As mentioned above, this week saw a renewed push on Benghazi from Republicans in Congress.

On Saturday, *PoliticusUSA* [reports](#) that Elijah Cummings (D-MD) has criticized Darrell Issa's (R-CA) 'stunt' of subpoenaing Secretary of State John Kerry to give testimony to the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee over the affair. The GOP also established a House select committee this week to investigate the Benghazi attack – *Outside the Beltway* [says](#) it might end up being a good idea if it provides a meaningful critique of President Obama's foreign policy, and is not simply a witch hunt.

On Wednesday, *The Atlantic* [bemoans](#) the fact that Congress has been unable to pass an infrastructure bill that would update the U.S.' crumbling infrastructure and energy economy, especially in a time of low interest rates.

Foreign policy and defense

On Monday, *The Foundry* [writes](#) on comments from historian Robert Kagan that the world needs the United States, at a time when the country's foreign policy is on a path of failure. If the U.S. pulls back, and cuts defense budgets, they say, then chaos will ensue. Meanwhile, *Outside the Beltway* [says](#) that U.S. military spending dwarfs that of Russia and China, who, combined, spend less than half what the U.S. does. Back at *The Foundry*, they [report](#) on Wednesday that the Chairman of the House Committee on Armed Services has said that President Obama's foreign policy is a 'mess', but also that Republicans bear some responsibility, by 'falling into his trap' during the budget process.

Affordable Care

On Monday, *PoliticusUSA* [writes](#) that the fact that the percentage of Americans without health insurance has hit its lowest point since 2008 is proof that Obamacare is working. They say that the uninsured rate is down to 15.6 percent, and that this makes it increasingly difficult for Republicans to deny the success of the Affordable Care Act. *Daily Kos*, meanwhile, [says](#) as Obamacare has gone from success to success, Fox News has started to discuss other topics – topics such as Benghazi, which has seen its number of mentions jump through the roof in the last few weeks. On Tuesday, after a 3 percent Medicaid mortality reduction was found by researchers in Massachusetts, they [wonder](#) how many lives might be saved if Medicaid were to be expanded to the 24 states that are currently saying no to the program. Their answer? As many as 5,700 by 2018. Finally, *The Foundry* has [nine Obamacare predictions](#) that have come true, including that the enforcement of the individual mandate is a



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'nightmare', and that the law will create new disincentives to work.

The economy and society

On Saturday, *The Political Carnival* [says](#) that a guns store owner in Maryland has received death threats for trying to sell 'smart guns', which are weapons that only coded to only be usable by certain people. They write that in their opposition, to the technology, the National Rifle Association is being 'dumb'.

One of the major debates in American social politics is the one over immigration reform. On Monday, *The Atlantic* [writes](#) that the debate is over skills as much as numbers, as American immigration policies since 1965 have tilted more and more towards the unskilled and poorly educated. They say that immigration reform will only work if it focuses on human capital, and should have the goal of reducing the total number of migrants, but raising their skill level.

On Monday, *Crooks & Liars* [covers](#) the disconcerting story this week that the massive online retailer, Amazon.com, prefers to pay disgruntled workers up to \$5,000 to quit, rather than dealing with their complaints.

The U.S. economy is barely growing, something that *The Foundry* is [quick to place blame](#) on the Obama Administration's massive stimulus packages of 'government make-work', and Obamacare, which they say incentivizes businesses not to hire workers. They compare the current recovery to the Reagan recovery, which they say had twice the amount of growth. They say that both Presidents Reagan and Obama inherited terrible economic crises, but Reagan's policies of tax cuts and slashing regulations helped private businesses to thrive, and that Obama has essentially done the opposite.

On Tuesday, *The Atlantic* [looks](#) at the demographic shift facing the U.S., writing that in 2029, one in five Americans will be over 65, up from one in seven today.

And finally...

Hit & Run [writes](#) on Tuesday on Texas' \$5 per patron 'pole tax' on strip clubs. They say that the Texas Entertainment Association challenged the tax six years ago, calling it unconstitutional, and that despite a great deal of legal wrangling, the issue remains unresolved.

FreakOutNation [reports](#) that a Florida judge has rejected a motion from a man who wanted to marry his 'porn-filled computer' in order to demonstrate what he feels is the absurdity of same-sex couples getting married.

Wonkblog [reports](#) on a recent World Bank Report that finds that nearly 1/3 of its PDF reports have never been downloaded, 40 percent had been downloaded fewer than 100 times, and only 13 percent, more than 250 times.

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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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