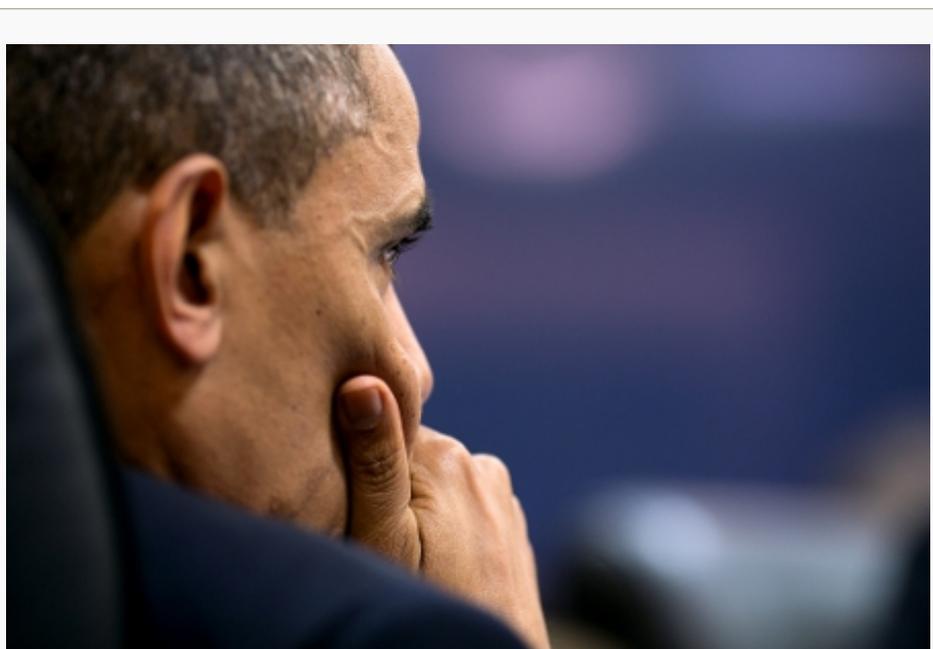


The GOP struggles with women, Chicago Cubs' Obamacare woes, and Burger King heads to Canada – US national blog round up for 23 – 29 August

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

President Obama, the Democratic Party, the GOP and elections

In recent weeks President Obama has come under a great deal of criticism (mostly from right-wing commentators) for his vacation, which began on August 9th. On Sunday, *The Lonely Conservative* sees his time off as another sign that he has 'checked out' of caring about governing in his second term, saying that it is '[Obama's never ending vacation](#)'. *PoliticusUSA* [defends](#) Obama's vacation, writing that he has had fewer vacation days in the past six years than all of Congress will have in 2014. On Monday, *United Liberty* says that Obama is the '[flip-flopper-in-chief](#)', after he called for Congress to reauthorize the Export-Import



Credit: The White House

Bank in his weekly address. They say that Obama's comments that the Bank creates American jobs and helps small businesses fly in the face of his statement in 2008, before he became the Democrats' presidential candidate that the Export-Import Bank was "little more than a fund for corporate welfare".

On Sunday, *Crooks & Liars* [writes](#) that Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) has hit out at former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, calling her a 'war hawk', stating that if she wins the presidency in the 2016, then she will get the U.S. involved in another war in the Middle East. Meanwhile, *Daily Kos* has some advice for Clinton if she does decide to run for the presidency in two years' time. They [say](#) that she should not worry about GOP attacks that she would represent a 'third term' of Obama's presidency, and should highlight Obama's record as well as running on the Democrats' progressive values. On Thursday, *Crooks & Liars* writes that Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) is gearing up for a presidential run in 2016. They [say](#) that Sanders would need to change parties and join the Democrats, and that people underestimate his popularity at their peril, should he decide to run.

Moving to the Republican Party, *The Lonely Conservative* [writes](#) that Texas Governor Rick Perry is making the most out of his recent indictment by selling t-shirts with his mug shot on the front. Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) is another rising star within the GOP. On Tuesday, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) that while Rubio was 'okay' on immigration reform, his scolding of by DREAM activists who recent interrupted one of his speeches in North Carolina show that he is trying to appeal to conservatives now that he has a presidential run on his mind.

On Tuesday, *RedState* [looks](#) at the growing animosity between the National Republican Senatorial Committee

(NRSC) and the Republican base. They say that, in combination with groups like the Chamber of Commerce, the NRSC has attacked conservative groups and painted the Tea Party and its candidates as racists. They say by treating its base as an enemy, the GOP is losing the voters in Senate primary races who would normally be reliable and dependable. Women are another group that the Republican Party is struggling with, writes *Crooks & Liars* this week. They [say](#) that a new GOP study shows that female voters view the party as intolerant and stuck in the past. They say that Republicans need to understand that they are unpopular with women because their policies 'suck'.

Looking ahead to this November's mid-term elections, *Outside the Beltway* [says](#) that while the GOP seems poised to retake control of the Senate, there are still no signs that this year will see a Republican wave, meaning that their Senate bid may fall flat. On Monday, *The Daily Signal's The Campaign Spot* [wonders](#) if the Democratic Party is set to win the mid-term get out the vote fight, given their massive number of field offices and spending in states like Arkansas. Meanwhile, *The American Prospect* [looks](#) at the consequences for the party if they do lose the Senate this year. They write that even if the GOP does retake the Senate, then Democrats will almost certainly take it back in 2016, as there will be 24 GOP-held seats up for grabs compared with only 9 Democratic ones. Seven of the Republicans' seats are in states that Obama won in 2012.

Government, the Beltway and Congress' agenda

On Tuesday, *The Daily Signal* looks at a proposal from the Obama Administration which would recognize groups of Native Hawaiians as tribes, and allow them to become separate and sovereign, independent of the U.S. government. They [say](#) that such an action would be unconstitutional (as only Congress has the authority to recognize Indian tribes) and would amount to secession for certain Hawaii residents.

The recent unrest in Ferguson, Missouri, has raised questions about the use of excessive force by police departments in the U.S. This week, *Crooks & Liars* writes that one of the reasons why there is little data on police use of excessive force is that law enforcement agencies are often not forthcoming with the data. They [say](#) that this lack of data violates a federal law, the 1994, Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, and that Eric Holder, the Attorney General is ultimately responsible for the annual compilation of this data.

On Tuesday, *United Liberty* [writes](#) that information on Internal Revenue Service's actions before after its targeting of conservative groups became public knowledge is continuing to come to light. They say that the Blackberry of IRS official, Lois Lerner, who is at the centre of the investigation, was destroyed after the congressional investigation had begun. They say that the fact that the IRS did not save the information on Lerner's Blackberry is 'utterly irresponsible'.

This week *Daily Kos* [reports](#) that House Republicans, led by Speaker, John Boehner of Ohio, have allocated \$350,000 towards their lawsuit against President Obama. They say that given the law firm they have hired to pursue the suit charge \$500 an hour, \$350,000 may not go very far. They say that the money is really a 'slush fund' to keep the lawsuit issue alive through the mid-term election season. On Wednesday, *The Atlantic* looks at whether or not the House GOP will shut down the government once again, when the funding bill passed in January expires at the end of September. They [say](#) that House GOP leadership is increasingly worried that conservative members will not go along with a simply continuing resolution to fund the government.



Speaker of the House John Boehner Credit: Gage Skidmore (Creative Commons BY SA)

Foreign policy, defense and trade

This week saw continuing commentary on how the U.S. should tackle the forces of the Islamic State (or ISIS) in Iraq. On Saturday, *The Daily Signal* [writes](#) that America has every reason to act against the growing terrorist forces in Iraq, but that the best way to restore peace and security to the region is not one that requires massive U.S. ground forces on Iraqi soil. They say that instead, the U.S. should work to marginalize Iran's destructive influences, helping Kurdish forces with air support, intelligence and supplies, as well as giving support to Jordan which has been weakened by housing more than 600,000 Syrian refugees. Meanwhile, *Daily Kos* writes that politicians and the media in the U.S. need to '[stop freaking out](#)' about ISIS. They say that ISIS represents zero threat to the U.S., and that there is a greater danger in the reaction to their perceived threat in restricting freedom and democracy.

On Tuesday, *Roll Call's Five by Five* [looks](#) at whether or not Congress should authorize air strikes in Syria. They write that there is a difference of opinion between some Senators and Representatives, with some arguing that the authorization for the use of force in the 2003 Iraq war is no longer valid, while others say that ISIS's 'monstrous' actions would justify Obama acting alone.

The Monkey Cage writes this week on what they term is the '[curious case of America's failing diplomacy](#)'. They say that Obama's response to critics of his administration's perceived failings –that there are limits to American power – is seen by many as a cop-out. They say that America's limited power is no surprise – many major foreign policy goals, such as the expansion of NATO and the decapitation of Al-Qaeda have already been achieved, and that those that remain are naturally harder to achieve. Meanwhile, *The American Interest* also [looks](#) at America's declining power, writing on Tuesday that U.S. influence is 'dripping away'. They say that leaders in the Middle East not believe that the U.S. can be safely ignored when it makes threats or promises.

Obamacare and health policy

On Monday, *Daily Kos* [looks](#) at the Affordable Care Act in states like Kentucky, writing that how it is labelled is important. They say that while voters have a negative impression of Obamacare under the name 'the Affordable Care Act', they tend to rate local versions, such as Kentucky's 'Kynect' favorably.

Obamacare continued to come in for continued criticism from right-leaning blogs this week. On Tuesday, *Hit & Run* [writes](#) that a third of Obamacare's federal exchange contracts are over budget, with total costs likely to balloon beyond the currently expected \$1.7 billion. On Wednesday, *The Daily Signal* [writes](#) that about 4 million people will have to pay a fine in 2016 for not signing up for coverage, and that nearly 70 percent of these people earn less than 400 percent of the federal poverty level. A surprising victim of Obamacare is the Chicago Cubs baseball team, according to *United Liberty*. They [report](#) that their already awful season is being made worse due to a shortage of ground staff, who have been put on reduced hours so that they do not have to be provided with health insurance under the program.

The economy and society

On Monday this week, *Crooks & Liars* [urges](#) legislators to stop militarizing local police departments, in the wake of two weeks of protests in Ferguson, Missouri, after the shooting of an unarmed Black teenager, Michael Brown. They say that it is important to vote for progressives who will back legislation that will halt the use of taxpayer dollars to arm local police forces with military equipment. Meanwhile, also with Ferguson in mind, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) that the media have been a tool used to misrepresent and demonize Black men, which then makes societal integration that much more difficult. *The Monkey Cage* [looks](#) at protests in America, writing that even though a majority of Americans think that protesters actions in Ferguson went too far, protests like these raise issues that cannot be ducked by society and political leaders.

This week also saw the fast food company, Burger King, attacked for its move to Canada, to escape high taxes in the U.S. *Hit & Run* [writes](#) that while the company has been blasted for being 'unpatriotic', it is well within its rights to make the move, so long as U.S. tax rates are higher than Canada's.

In the wake of the accidental death of a gun instructor, who was killed by a 9-year old who was handling an Uzi semi-automatic at a firing range, *Wonkblog* [writes](#) that in 30 states, a child can legally own a rifle or shotgun, even though federal law prohibits handgun ownership for those under 18.

And finally...

The Monkey Cage [looks](#) at which city is more expensive to live in – London or Los Angeles.

The Atlantic [reports](#) on a new study that looks at how music can influence online shopping choices. Want people to buy a barbecue? Then play the sounds of birds chirping.

Finally, *Outside the Beltway* [says](#) that the British Embassy in Washington D.C. has marked the 200th anniversary of the burning of the White House by British forces in the War of 1812 by baking a White House themed cake.

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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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