

## Obama's 'latte salute', the fickle Senate and Eric Holder's contested legacy: US national blog round up for 20 – 26 September

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, and the GOP

On Monday, *American Thinker* [writes](#) on what they say is the 'utter failure' of President Obama. They write that the delays to his signature healthcare reform, Obamacare, alongside his new status as a 'warmonger' president, show that he has done almost nothing at all. On Wednesday, *PoliticusUSA* [responds](#) to the criticism leveled at Obama for his 'latte salute' earlier in the week, where the President saluted a man in uniform with a latte in his hand, while disembarking from Marine One on his way to the United Nations. They say that the tradition of presidents saluting soldiers only began with President Ronald Reagan and that President George W. Bush saluted troops whilst holding his dog on multiple occasions.

Many Republicans have been critical of the President for his use (or intended use) of executive actions in recent months. On Tuesday, *Hit & Run* writes that Obama's latest target for executive action is to address corporate inversions (where U.S. companies move their headquarters overseas to avoid tax). They [say](#) that this action shows that Obama only wants Congress to do what he wants, and when they disagree with him (as has been the case with corporate inversions), then he will go ahead and take action anyway.

While much attention has been placed on the likelihood that former Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton, will run for the presidency for the Democratic Party in 2016, the *Monkey Cage* [wonders](#) why the current Vice President Joe Biden, is not in the frame, despite being good at his job. They say that Biden isn't doing well in the presidential polls because no one is taking his presidential prospects seriously. *American Thinker*, meanwhile, [asks](#) if Biden should step down from his current job given all of his gaffes.

Moving across the aisle to the Republican Party, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) on Monday that the Party is not moving to the middle, despite 'hitting the mute button' on some of its more extreme Tea Party members, such as Senator Ted Cruz (TX). On Thursday, *The Daily Signal* [looks](#) at ten ways that conservatives can appeal to Hispanics, without becoming more liberal. They say that by adopting measures such as increasing school choice, ending affirmative action, ending bilingual education, and by returning to assimilationist policies, among others, this will begin to address some of the long term problems facing Hispanics. *Hit & Run* takes a [look](#) at the GOP's 'post-election reboot', writing that it does not seem to be able to articulate new plans to cut the size, scope and spending of government, which makes the party seem very similar to the Democrats.

Looking ahead to the 2016 Presidential election for the Republican Party, *National Journal* [writes](#) on what they say is the GOP's 'foreign policy problem'. They write that the Party may face a tough challenge in 2016, given that of their prospective candidates, only Senator Marco Rubio (FL), has foreign policy credentials in what may be an election driven by foreign policy issues. On Thursday, *Hit & Run* [revisits](#) the possibility that 2012 Presidential candidate, Mitt Romney might run for the Republican nomination in 2016. They are nonplussed at the idea, given that he offered nothing to the 2012 ticket other than 'bland respectability'.

### The Midterm elections

On Saturday, *Roll Call's At the Races* [reports](#) that in August, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee raised nearly \$6 million more than the National Republican Congressional Campaign Committee, bringing their

cash in hand to over \$54 million. On Monday, *Caffeinated Politics* [writes](#) that the political map looks difficult for the Democrats this fall, and wonders if their 'ground game' will be able to save them. They say recent efforts to increase voter identification and get out the vote in Senate races may be able to make some difference.

*PoliticusUSA* [reports](#) that the Republican Party may try to 'steal' the Senate this year by 'rigging' the election in Kansas. They say that attempts by the Kansas Secretary of State, Kris Kobach, to keep a Democrat who had withdrawn from the race on the ballot should worry Democrats, as it may help the incumbent Republican, Pat Roberts, to win.



Mitt Romney on the campaign trail, 2011 Credit: Gage Skidmore (Flickr, CC-BY-SA-2.0)

On Wednesday, *Roll Call's Rothenblog* [writes](#) on two Senators who have cause for worry in this election cycle, Kansas Republican Jerry Moran, and Colorado Democrat, Michael Bennet. Both are the respective chairs of their party's Senate Campaign Committees, and both may well be the first chairs to see the defeat of a home state colleague in the last four decades. Meanwhile, *The Atlantic* [looks](#) at how the Senate became so 'fickle', with neither party controlling the body for more than eight consecutive years since 1980. They say that this volatility marks a change from most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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

On Saturday, *PoliticusUSA* [writes](#) that House Republicans' 'record of failure and shame' continues to grow after they passed fewer laws in this Congress, and 'left town' earlier than any Congress since 1960. They say that House Republicans cancelled their remaining votes late last week and adjourned until after the November midterms.

*Outside the Beltway* [reports](#) this week on comments from Chief Justice John Roberts, who stated that in the current political environment, Justices Antonin Scalia and Ruth Bader Ginsburg would not be confirmed, given their ideologies.

We all know that government wastes money – but just how much? *The Daily Signal* writes on Monday that a new poll shows that Americans think that Washington wastes 51 cents in every dollar it spends. They [say](#) that Americans' perception of government waste has been growing with the size of the federal budget over the past thirty years.

This week *The Atlantic* [looked](#) at the latest movements towards Washington D.C being granted statehood after a Senate committee held a hearing into the matter. They say that while a bill to create a 51<sup>st</sup> state is unlikely to move through Congress, it is part of a larger conversation about the civil rights of the city's people who have no voting representation in Congress.

Last Friday saw the White House fence jumped by an intruder who made it as far as the door of the executive mansion before being subdued by the Secret Service. On Monday, *The Daily Signal* [writes](#) that Washington should not react to the event by making government buildings less accessible to the public, as this would be a 'disturbing encroachment' on free society.

On Thursday afternoon, Attorney General Eric Holder announced that he would be resigning after more than five

and a half years. Looking at his term as Attorney General, *The Atlantic* [writes](#) that President Obama has lost a key ally in Holder, and that who he nominates to succeed him will offer some hint as to how the President intends to close out his term in office. *The Daily Signal*, meanwhile, [looks](#) at what they say are Eric Holder's seven worst actions as Attorney General. Top of their list are Operation Fast and Furious, an enforcement operation that left a U.S. border agent dead, his failure to conduct a 'real' criminal investigation into the recent IRS scandal, and failing to advise the President against taking actions that would violate the Constitution and federal law.

## Foreign policy, defense and trade

This week saw the U.S. commence bombing operations against Islamic State (ISIS) targets in Syria. On Monday, *Hit & Run* [writes](#) that President Obama did not seek Congressional authorization to act against Syria, despite suggesting it would a year ago when actions there were first mooted. *The Feed* [writes](#) this week on the parallels between President Obama and his predecessor, George W. Bush in foreign policy. They say that both Presidents had to deal with the growth of a religious movement based on hate and violence and the associated practical, strategic, moral and legal problems that brings.

*Outside the Beltway*, meanwhile, wonders how the President's war against ISIS will be paid for if it continues for a considerable period. They [say](#) that this will be especially important given that political consensus on budget issues are often very difficult to achieve. President Obama addressed the United Nations this week – *White House Dossier* is [critical](#) of his comments, writing that he does not get that the U.S. is actually at war with ISIS. For *American Thinker*, ISIS is not the most dangerous foe that the U.S. faces – Iran is. They [say](#) that the current negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program are going nowhere, and that it is developing long range missiles that could potentially reach the U.S.

On Tuesday, *Hit & Run* [writes](#) that the U.S. and China both pledged 'nothing' at the United Nations Climate Summit this week, with both countries holding off on making additional pledges regarding future emissions.

## Obamacare and health policy

This week saw various aspects of Obamacare come under fire from conservatives. On Sunday, *The Daily Signal* [writes](#) that conservatives are taking President Obama to task for his previous guarantee that taxpayers' money will not pay for abortions under Obamacare. They say that a new report from the Government Accountability Office shows that more than 1,000 Obamacare plans cover abortion. On Monday, *Hit & Run* reports on a new survey of physicians that has found that 46 percent of Doctors give Obamacare a grade of 'D' or 'F'. They [say](#) that only a quarter of physicians gave the program an 'A' or 'B' grade. Meanwhile, *United Liberty* writes that Obamacare's employer mandate, which requires business with 50 or more full time employees to offer health insurance benefits, is now the target of a new campaign from business groups. They [write](#) that the campaign aims to raise the hourly threshold of what constitutes 'full time' work from 30 to 40 hours.

*The Feed* is not critical of Obamacare this week, but they do [say](#) that it is irrelevant. They write that one year after it was launched, the Affordable Care Act has achieved little, with only 26 percent of those shopping on exchanges having been previously uninsured. On Tuesday, *Daily Kos* has some positive Obamacare related news. They [report](#) that the program has attracted 25 percent more insurance companies for 2015, compared with this year.

How often do you go to the doctor? *Occasional Planet* writes this week that it is probably less often than in other countries. They [say](#) that on average, Americans visit their doctor just over four times a year, compared with five times for the UK, nearly seven times in Germany, and thirteen times in Japan.

## The economy and society

Last week saw Scotland vote against independence from the rest of the UK. But do people in American states want independence too? *Crooks & Liars* [writes](#) on Saturday that 25 percent of Americas would be fine with their state peacefully leaving the U.S. and its federal government, and that this sentiment was evenly spread across all income brackets except for those who earned more than \$150,000. Also inspired by the Scottish referendum, *Outside the Beltway* [looks](#) at whether we should let 16 and 17 year olds vote, though they do say that there is no real national movement in the U.S. to extend the franchise in this way.

This weekend saw marches across the world to coincide with the United Nations Climate Summit. *The Feed* [says](#) the march in New York which 300,000 fill the streets of New York was 'futile', because it will lead to no laws changing, and no political balance tipping. One thing that definitely makes a difference is vaccination. The *Monkey Cage* writes this week that anti-vaccination beliefs in California are leading to outbreaks of measles and whooping cough. They [say](#) that the idea among parents that vaccines are unsafe, unnecessary or ineffective spreads like a disease itself.



Obamacare Protest at Supreme Court Credit: Tabitha Kaylee Hawk (CC-BY-NC-ND-2.0)

On Monday, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) that the U.S. is 'doing broadband wrong'. They say that U.S. broadband infrastructure is in need of massive infrastructure development if it is to get above its current 16<sup>th</sup> place world ranking for broadband penetration.

How much food do we throw away? More than you're likely to think, [writes](#) *Wonkblog* this week. They say that in 2012, Americans binned around 35 million tons of food according to the Environmental Protection Agency, a 20 percent increase from 2000, and three times what was discarded in 1960. They say that in the U.S., food waste accounts for a fifth of the country's garbage.

### And finally...

*The Lonely Conservative* [says](#) that this week Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA) went to a Louisiana State football game and helped a tailgater with a keg stand.

*Daily Kos* [looks](#) a new Republican Party advertisement aimed at women, which portrays women 'breaking up' with Barack Obama.

Did you know that Alaska legalized marijuana 39 years ago? Neither did most people. *Wonkblog* [has more](#).

*Featured image*: President Barack Obama talks with Attorney General Eric Holder to discuss the situation in Ferguson, Mo., in Chilmark, Martha's Vineyard, Mass., August 14, 2014. (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 of the London School of Economics.

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