

Obama wins this round on immigration action, the Senate's "ignorant" confirmations, and healthcare spending growth hits a record low: US national blog round up for 29 November – 5 December

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 Saturday, *PoliticusUSA* [reports](#) on President Obama's comments on *Meet the Press* moderator, Chuck Todd's new book on the President. They say that Obama said that Todd's book on the Obama presidency means that Todd is "just sad", as the book was critical of Obama's relationship with the media.

Reaction to President Obama's November executive action on immigration continued this week, with Republicans looking to find a way to hit back at the President over the move. On Monday, *The American Prospect* [writes](#) that Obama has "boxed in" the GOP with his immigration order, given that if a Republican becomes president after the 2016 election, they are likely to find it very hard to reverse the action which would mean deporting thousands and breaking up families. On Thursday, *Outside the Beltway* [reports](#) that 17 states have filed a lawsuit against Obama over his executive action. The suit argues that the order violated Obama's constitutional duty to enforce laws and illegally places new burdens on state budgets. They say that while the lawsuit will be popular among GOP members in those states, its basis is dubious, given that it will be hard for the states to prove they have been injured by the order. On Friday, *The Daily Signal* [writes](#) that Republicans have lost "Round 1" on immigration to Obama, in that the Speaker of the House, John Boehner (OH) has moved from stating that "we are going to fight the President tooth and nail" to suggesting that the party waits until January when it takes over the Senate and has a substantially increased House majority.

This week also saw the White House call for police officers to receive more training before using military equipment as well as asking for \$263 million from Congress for police body cameras, [reports](#) *The Atlantic*. This comes in the wake of continuing protests in Ferguson, Missouri, after a Grand Jury decided not to indict Officer Darren Wilson for his involvement in the shooting death of black teenager, Michael Brown. *Hit & Run* [writes](#) that the White House simply wants to throw more paperwork at police departments rather than scaling back police militarization.

Moving to the Democratic Party more generally, on Saturday *RedState* looks at why Southern Democrats can't win. They say that the Democrats have [four problems](#): that all elections are national (and they therefore suffer from their association with Obama, it is too "counter-cultural" in the south in terms of its views on same-sex marriage and abortion, it has become the party of government largesse, and it hates America. *Crooks & Liars* [writes](#) this week that the Democratic Party does not need to find a better message – as many have suggested such as Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY). Instead, the Party needs to find its soul, which they suggest should be grounded of the more populist values of leaders such as Massachusetts senator Elizabeth Warren.

On Wednesday, *PoliticusUSA* advises the Democrats not to "save the GOP" as they pushed for a shutdown this week, a charge led by Texas Senator Ted Cruz. They [say](#) that the GOP is likely to need some Democratic votes for its government funding package since some hard line Republicans are likely not to vote in favor given that they want President Obama to be confronted more aggressively over his actions on immigration.

Moving across the aisle to the Republican Party, this week *American Thinker* looks at what the GOP's domination of the midterm elections a few weeks ago really means for the party. They [say](#) that the party largely stayed clear

of 'culture war' issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage, instead concentrating on Obamacare and immigration policy, and that these are the sorts of issues that it should concentrate on in the future. On Tuesday, *Wonkblog* [looks](#) at the split between the Tea Party and traditional Republicans on science. They say that a new study shows that there are greater differences within the party on science than between traditional Republicans and Independents. This week also saw the departure from her job as a communications staffer for Tennessee Congressman Stephen Fincher, of Elizabeth Lauten, who had critiqued the behavior and outfits of President Obama's daughters during last week's turkey pardoning ceremony.



Ted Cruz Credit: Gage Skidmore (Flickr, CC-BY-SA-2.0)

RedState [writes](#) that Lauten did not deserve the level of character assassination on her by the press corps, especially after media figures had made a spectacle of George W. Bush's daughters and Sarah Palin's family in the past.

Elections and the road to 2016

With the 2016 House in mind, on Sunday, *Daily Kos* has an early list of Congressional targets for the Democratic Party. They [say](#) that in the Senate, where the party would need to pick up four or five seats to get its majority back they will be likely to concentrate on Senate seats in Illinois, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, North Carolina and Pennsylvania. They say that a House majority for the party is unlikely, given the GOP would have to lose 30 seats. *RedState* [looks](#) at what they say is the Democratic Party's "2016 Senate Problem". They write that as many as five democratic Senators may retire at the election, and that the party is facing a drying pool of candidates to replace them and to fight potentially close Senate races. *Outside the Beltway*, meanwhile, [takes issue](#) with those that have said that the Supreme Court is likely to be the most important issue of the 2016 elections. They say that while the ideological flavor of the next President will be important, this is no difference in how appointments will be made compared to previous presidents, and that the issue is not likely to sway voters in their presidential choice.

Looking at the 2016 presidential election for the Democrats, on Sunday, *The Atlantic* [reports](#) that the Governor of Massachusetts, Deval Patrick, has ruled out of running for president, at the same time warned a very likely candidate, former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton to be more careful with the rhetoric that she is an inevitable candidate, which may be off-putting to voters. *National Journal*, meanwhile, looks at Clinton, and wonders whether she can win back the white working class from the Republican Party. They [say](#) that support among this group for the Democrats was sparse this year, and that she will have to balance winning back these voters while simultaneously appealing to the young, black and Latino voters who helped President Obama to win twice.



Governor Rick Perry of Texas. Credit: Gage Skidmore (Flickr, CC-BY-SA-2.0)

On the Republican side, *PoliticusUSA* [writes](#) this week that Texas Governor, Rick Perry, is getting ready to “inflict himself” on America in 2016. They say that he looks to be taking steps towards kicking off a 2016 campaign, but he will face an uphill battle given his recent indictment for abuse of power, and the fact that the media seem to be favoring other potential candidates such as New Jersey Governor, Chris Christie. *Outside the Beltway* also [looks at Perry](#), writing on Sunday that it is an open question as to whether or not he can convince donors that he will be a different candidate to his disastrous presidential run in 2012. Meanwhile, *American Thinker* makes a plea for Mitt Romney – the GOP’s 2012 candidate – to not try once again for the job in 2016. They [say](#) it would be an “unmitigated disaster” for the Republican Party given that he came across as wooden, detached and corporate last time around. *Political Animal* looks at similar [pleas](#) against a candidate, but this time it is over Jeb Bush. They say that conservative leaders are lining up to oppose a Bush presidential bid, some even calling him a “moderate Democrat”.

On Tuesday, *National Journal* [writes](#) that Florida’s freshman Senator, Marco Rubio, should be the Republican Party’s front runner. They say that he’s one of the few candidates that could appeal to both the Establishment and Tea Party wings of the party, he’s the most electable Republican given his youth and background, and he has a strong foreign policy background as well. On Thursday, *PoliticusUSA* [reports](#) that a recent speech by former Governor of New York, George Pataki shows that he is likely considering a presidential run. *National Review’s The Campaign Spot* provides a good counterpoint to the relatively wide GOP presidential field, [writing](#) this week that not every good Republican needs to run for President, after Ohio Senator Rob Portman, rules himself out this week.

Government, the Beltway and Congress’ agenda

On Saturday, with Obama’s recent executive order on immigration in mind, *The Daily Signal* [writes](#) that it has reversed the recent presidential trend of the decreasing abuse of executive power. They say that after President Nixon, a backlash against executive abuse for domestic purposes set in, and that this continued during the Reagan and Bush presidencies.

United Liberty reports this week on the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) most “expensive regulation ever”. They [say](#) that last week, Obama proposed a new rule that would lower the amount of ground level ozone that is considered healthy, which could lead to costly new requirements for air pollution permits. On Tuesday, *Hit & Run* [reports](#) that last week the country’s federal debt exceeded \$18 trillion, \$10 trillion more than it was ten years ago.

American Thinker [reports](#) on comments from Attorney General, Eric Holder, this week that police officers can be seen by some as an “occupying force”, in the wake of protests in Ferguson, Missouri, and elsewhere. *Hit & Run* also reports that Holder stated that the Department of Justice is looking to end racial profiling. They [say](#) that the police are seen as an “occupying force” because the “war on drugs” has continued for decades. If this policy does not end, then there is little chance that ending racial profiling will help to address the problem of police abuse of

communities.

Looking at what's been happening in Congress this week, *Roll Call's Hawking's Here* [looks](#) at how committee assignments are made. They say for the victorious Republicans, most of all the "plum" postings went to members of the establishment conservative wing of the party, at the expense of Tea Party members.

In the House this week, *PoliticusUSA* [writes](#) on Monday that Republicans are discussing cancelling President Obama's State of the Union address in January in response to his actions on immigration. By Wednesday, House conservatives were pressing for a short-term plan to fund the government while blocking Obama's moves on immigration, [reports](#) *The Daily Signal*. They say that one option is that the

GOP passes a "cromnibus" spending bill by December 11th, which would combine a short term continuing resolution with omnibus legislation, and would fund all of the government through to September, except for the Department of Homeland Security, which includes immigration enforcement, which would be funded for only a few months. On Thursday, *Daily Kos* [reports](#) that House Republicans have voted 219-197 to "rebuke" the President for his action on immigration – a purely symbolic act.

Remember the Export-Import Bank? *Wonkblog* [writes](#) this week that Congressman Paul Ryan (R-WI) has floated the idea that the GOP may stop the Bank from being reauthorized next spring. They say that the Bank's subsidies are insignificant, as are its profits, and that getting rid of it is not a good use of Congress' time.

In the Senate this week, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) on Monday that the current Majority Leader, Democrat Harry Reid, is threatening to keep the Senate in session for another week if they are unable to make a deal on the budget in the next few days.

Late last year, the Democratic Senator introduced the so-called 'nuclear option', which eliminated the filibuster for all but the highest judicial nominations. *The Monkey Cage* [writes](#) that the incoming Republican Senate under the leadership of Mitch McConnell (R-KY) is unlikely to restore the filibuster, in order so that a potential Republican President could easily have their nominees confirmed, and because they are unlikely to be harmed by the ban in the near future. Talking of judicial vacancies, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) on Saturday that there are now many seven state judicial vacancies that have been open for more than two years, showing that the Senate has quite a task ahead of it in its lame duck session. On Wednesday, *RedState* [takes the Senate to task](#) for confirming two "dangerously ignorant" Obama-nominated ambassadors. They say that the newly confirmed ambassadors to Hungary and Argentina were unqualified, and have been given the positions as a reward for their campaign contributions.

On Tuesday, *Outside the Beltway* [looks](#) at the Supreme Court's deliberations this week over the dividing line between free speech and illegal online threats. The case involves rapper Anthony Elonis who posted violent rap lyrics to Facebook, mostly directed at his estranged wife. Meanwhile, *Americablog* looks at how the next Attorney General, Loretta Lynch could save the country, the Obama administration, and the Democratic Party itself. They [say](#) that if Lynch decided to use the full power of the Department of Justice, then she could prosecute large financial institutions for misdeeds, grant pardons for more drug users, and enforce ant-trust laws.

Foreign policy, defense and trade

On Tuesday, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) that the annual defense authorization bill will not include language that the Obama administration had ordered that would allow the military prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, to be closed. The bill's provision to allow the transfer of terror suspects to U.S. soil was stripped out.

Obamacare and health policy



US Attorney General Eric Holder Credit: Ryan J. Reilly (CC-BY-2.0)

On Saturday, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) that the President's signature healthcare reform, the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) needs a further push for greater Latino enrollment. They say that nearly a quarter of the Latino population is still uninsured, and that there are still barriers to their enrollment, such as a lack of Spanish-language resources, and the general confusion of the enrollment process. *The Lonely Conservative* [writes](#) that more Americans than ever are delaying getting healthcare treatment because of high costs.

On Wednesday, *Hit & Run* [wonders](#) if Democrats are starting to regret introducing Obamacare, after retiring Iowa Senator Tom Harkin stated that passing the law in its current form was a mistake, and instead it should have opted for a single-payer option.

On Tuesday, *Wonkblog* has some positive [news](#) in that hospitals are now killing an estimated 50,000 fewer patients because of avoidable errors over the past three years. Meanwhile, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) that U.S. healthcare spending growth hit a 53-year low in 2013, at 3.6 percent. They say that the slowdown is due to the Great Recession, as well as the slow growth in Medicare spending.

The economy and society

The Daily Signal [writes](#) on Tuesday that President Obama should not end the practice of military equipment going to police departments. They say that it would be a mistake if the result was the ending of the Section 1033 program, which provides police forces with equipment, given that only 4 percent of it is military-grade equipment. *The American Prospect*, [meanwhile](#), gives ten ways in which the legal system is biased against justice for those wrongly killed by the police, after a Grand Jury in Staten Island, New York, did not indict the white New York Police Department Officer whose chokehold killed Eric Garner, an unarmed black man. They say that not only is there a double standard for charging citizens and police, but that the legal framework protects cops. *The Federalist* [writes](#) this week on how Americans can find common ground on the Ferguson affair, in that both the middle classes and the residents of Ferguson, and those that sympathise with them feel victimised by "the system".

On Monday, *Wonkblog* [looks](#) at comments from comedian Chris Rock that White Americans are much less racist than they used to be. They say that his comment that Barack Obama only became president because white people allowed him to be is also largely true.

Daily Kos [writes](#) on Thursday that fast food workers are on strike across the country once again – this time they are demanding a \$15 an hour wage. They say that the movement is spreading to airport, home care, and convenience store workers across industries.

The Atlantic [examines](#) America's declining abortion rate, writing that in 2011, it was at its lowest rate in almost 40 years. They say that the rate is falling because more and more unwanted pregnancies are being taken to term, mostly because single motherhood is now seen as more acceptable by society.

And finally...

Wonkblog [looks](#) at the Presidents people remember, and the ones that are mostly forgotten. They say that most people can remember the first few, and the most recent.

Hit & Run [writes](#) that Los Angeles may be on the verge of legalizing street vending – opening up the way for its strongest 'street drug' – bacon wrapped hot dogs.

National Journal has a [round-up for the weirdest 2016-election themed gifts](#) for the politico in your life, from a Marco Rubio wristwatch to a Ted Cruz themed t shirt.

Featured image: President Barack Obama makes Thanksgiving Day phone calls Credit: The White House

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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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