

Obama critiqued over Paris no-show, House rolls back immigration policies, and will Romney run again in 2016?: US national blog round up for 10 – 16 January

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

Late last week, President Obama announced a new plan to make the first two years of community college free for students. On Sunday, *American Thinker* [writes](#) that the proposal is ‘ridiculous’, arguing that we should be teaching students that nothing of value is free, and that the federal government has no business in education – according to the 10th Amendment, it is a matter for the states.

Meanwhile, *PoliticoUSA* [reports](#) that even as the new Republican Congress continues with their push to defund the Department of Homeland Security in response to President Obama’s executive action on immigration last November, the White House will be holding a summit on countering extremism. They say that just as Republicans are jeopardizing national security, the President is acting to keep Americans safe.

President Obama came under a great deal of criticism this week by not attending – or sending anyone from his administration – the massive march against terrorism in Paris over the weekend, which was a reaction to the deadly attacks against the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo. *The Lonely Conservative* [notes](#) Obama’s absence, while *Political Animal* [describes](#) it as an ‘embarrassing no-show’. *Outside the Beltway* [looks](#) at coverage of the controversy, writing that while it would have been hard for Obama to attend the march with such little notice, given security considerations, the administration should have sent Attorney General Eric Holder (who was in Paris at the time), or some other high level official. Finally, *The Federalist* [gives four reasons](#) why we should not be surprised that Obama snubbed the Paris march, including that ‘Team Obama’ thought that the Charlie Hebdo magazine had questionable judgment, and that his administration is not interested, or good at, diplomacy.

Moving on to the Democratic Party more generally, *Wonkblog* [writes](#) on the ‘New Democratic Hope’, as exemplified by California’s Attorney General, Kamala Harris. They say that Harris, who is in the running to contest retiring California Senator Barbara Boxer’s seat, is an ideal candidate, being relatively young, charismatic and accomplished. *RedState* takes a negative view of the party, [writing](#) that it’s ‘demographic shriveling’ is continuing, with the party having lost much of its previous support in white, working-class districts. They say in 2008 and 2012, many voters came out only for Barack Obama, and that without him on the ticket in 2016, it will be hard for the party to win the White House again.

On the other side of the aisle, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) on Monday that the Republican Party is continuing its so called ‘war on women’, with new legislation in Congress and state legislatures that will ban abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy. They say that while the GOP thinks that the measure will be politically palatable, polls show that when voters understand the health risks imposed by 20-week abortion bans, a majority oppose them. On Friday, *The Atlantic* [looks](#) at whether or not the Republican House and Senate will be able to find common ground – which will be vital if they wish to take on President Obama. They say that while the House has a good majority to pass legislation, Senate Republicans still need the help of six Democrats in order to overcome a filibuster, and even more to overcome an Obama veto.

Elections and the road to 2016

Since the Republicans’ wave in the recent 2014 midterm elections, many commentators have opined that the

Democratic Party faces a long road towards retaking the House. *Roll Call's Rothenblog* [writes](#) this week that despite needing to gain 30 seats to win the House, in 2016 they have a better chance than they did last year. This is down the fact that 2016 is a presidential election year, and that many Republican held districts are those which were won by Barack Obama in 2012. The Democrats have a much better chance of retaking the Senate next year; *National Journal* [writes](#) that their Senate hopes turn on three candidates – former Senator Kay Hagan and Russell Feingold in North Carolina and in Wisconsin, and New Hampshire's Governor Maggie Hassan, for that state's Senate seat.

Speculation about the 2016 presidential race continued this week with two candidates ruling themselves out of the running, and one previous contender looking like he will be making another run. *The Atlantic* [writes](#) on Tuesday that while Democratic Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren has stated that she will not be running for president, if she stands by that choice, she will be doing a disservice to her principles and to her party. They say that she is the only person standing between Hillary Clinton and an uncontested nomination, and that if she runs, she would open the party up to a discussion about income inequality and stagnant wages, topics that Clinton is likely to avoid.

Moving across the aisle, *National Journal* [reports](#) that Congressman Paul Ryan will also not be running for the White House in 2016 – stating that he wants to be an impactful member of Congress, after a tough campaign as the 2012 vice-presidential candidate.

The big news this week was of course that Mitt Romney – the 2012 Republican candidate – is eyeing a presidential bid next year. *Wonkblog* [writes](#) on Tuesday that he is 'getting the band back together'. *National Journal* is pessimistic about another Romney bid for the White House, [writing](#) that the odds of him struggling from the outset are high given the crowded field and the fact that he has lost many donors and supporters since 2012.

The GOP's field for 2016 is indeed crowded: *Ten Miles Square* [thinks](#) that former Pennsylvania Senator, Rick Santorum should be the frontrunner, as he came in second in 2012; *Crooks & Liars* [says](#) that former New York Governor George Pataki is now in the running; current Wisconsin Governor, Scott Walker, is interested [reports](#) *National Journal* after his speech this week to the Republican National Committee; and New Jersey Governor, Chris Christie is also keen [writes](#) *The Daily Signal*, after his State of the State speech this week appealed for 'an American renewal'. Not to forget Rand Paul, *National Journal* [writes](#) that he is legally able to tap his biggest donors for campaign cash by running for both the presidency and for re-election to his Kentucky Senate seat in



California Attorney General Kamala Harris Credit: [InSapfoWeTrust](#) (Flickr, [CC-BY-SA-2.0](#))



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

2016.

Government, the Beltway and Congress' agenda

On Monday, *Roll Call* [writes](#) that Net Neutrality should be 'low hanging fruit' for Congressional action this year. They say that prior to the Federal Communications Commission ruling (slated for late February) to determine whether or not broadband Internet access is a public utility, Congress should resolve the debate so that Internet openness remains. *The Hill's Congress blog* [warns](#) on Tuesday that we should not be quick to judge a Congress by the number of laws it passed. While many have ridiculed the 113th Congress for being the second most 'unproductive' in legislative history, this measure does not consider the substance of the laws, and that much of today's Congressional legislation is passed in omnibus form. One element of the 114th Congress that can be decried is its lack of women representatives in House committees. They [say](#) that of the House's 21 GOP led committees; only one is headed by a woman.

This week in the House, *The Daily Signal* [reports](#) that GOP Speaker, John Boehner has 'shot down' a Democratic proposal to give middle class families a \$2,000 tax cut, citing concerns about the deficit. They say that the tax cut for those couples earning less than \$200,000 would have been funded by a new financial transactions fee and a tax increase for the top 1 percent of earners. They say that Boehner is only concerned about the deficit for middle class tax cuts, as he recently supported a \$440 billion corporate tax cut. On Wednesday, *The Daily Signal* [writes](#) that the House has voted to roll back four years of President Obama's immigration policies including his recent executive action and an earlier program that allowed immigrants who entered illegally as children to stay. They say that the amendments are attached to a bill that will fund the Department of Homeland Security until September are likely to be vetoed by President Obama.

In the Senate this week, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) on the 15 Democratic Senators who will 'decide the fate of the country' over the next two years that the GOP are in control of Congress. They say that Republicans will be targeting these Senators for their bipartisan legislation, which would also allow them to bypass an Obama veto.

Wonkblog [reports](#) that a new bill could mark the beginning of the end of the controversial Common Core education standard. They say that Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) has released the legislation which will give states more freedom to choose their own academic standards, rather than Common Core's national standards. On Tuesday, *PoliticusUSA* [reports](#) that Independent Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders has interfered with the Republicans' plans by offering an amendment to the bill that would acknowledge that climate change is real and caused by human activities to the bill to authorize the Keystone XL pipeline. They say that while it is doubtful that this and other Democratic amendments will pass, they will force Republicans to debate and discuss issues that they do not wish to talk about. *Daily Kos* [follows up](#); reporting Tuesday that Senate Majority leader Mitch McConnell will not include Senator Sanders' amendment, despite his previous promises to make amendments more open.

President Obama will make his annual State of the Union speech next Tuesday – *The Atlantic* [reports](#) that the Republican Party has chosen the recently elected Senator Joni Ernst of Iowa to respond. They say that Ernst is a smart choice for a party looking to showcase the breadth of its victory in the November midterm elections.

Moving to the judiciary, *FreakOutNation* [reports](#) that the Supreme Court has this week declined to take up a challenge to the Obama administration's signature healthcare law, the Affordable Care Act, or 'Obamacare'. They say that the Association of American Physicians and



Iowa Senator-elect Joni Ernst Credit: Gage Skidmore (Flickr, CC-BY-SA-2.0)

Surgeons and the Alliance for Natural

Health USA had challenged Obamacare's individual mandate which requires people to get insurance or pay a fee. Meanwhile, *The Daily Signal* [looks](#) at four key upcoming Supreme Court cases: a Texas case concerning messages on licence plates, a suit against the Environmental Protection Agency over the costs of its regulations, a *Spider-Man* patent dispute, and a case on whether or not Obamacare's health insurance exchanges can receive federal subsidies.

Foreign policy, defense and trade

On Sunday, *Crooks & Liars* [writes](#) that Senator John McCain (AZ) has stated this week that more 'boots on the ground' in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen, would help to prevent 'lone wolf' terror attacks, but makes no link as to how greater troop numbers would stop such attacks. On Monday, *The Daily Signal* [reports](#) that, in a major embarrassment for cyber-security, a Pro-Islamic State group has hacked the U.S. Central Command's Twitter and YouTube pages.

Obamacare and health policy

On Wednesday, *RedState* [comments](#) that the Obama White House has no backup plan if it loses the Supreme Court case (mentioned above) over Obamacare's subsidies for federal exchanges operating at the state level. *FiveThirtyEight* [writes](#) this week that while many of Obamacare's detractors have argued that the program has led to employers cutting hours so that they have more part time workers (who they do not have to offer health insurance for under Obamacare), the actual number of employers who are doing this is relatively small.

This week *Roll Call* [writes](#) that the GOP-led Congress should give up on repealing the Affordable Care Act as a whole – rather, they should try and repeal the law's 20 new taxes, not allow the individual mandate's tax penalty to increase, protect taxpayers from an insurance company bailout, and repeal the employer mandate which requires businesses with more than 50 staff to provide insurance for full time staff.

The economy and society

Daily Kos [writes](#) this week on the relatively high on-the-job death rates that Latinos face, especially in construction; 9.8 per 100,000 in 2012, compared to 8.6 per 100,000 for the industry as a whole.

Crime in the U.S. has been falling for a number of years. [According](#) to *Wonkblog* this week, no-one knows why.

And finally...

Want to know the location of every goat in the U.S.? *Wonkblog* has a [map](#) for you.

Roll Call's Hawkings Here [looks](#) at House Democrats who are just starting their second terms, and trying to get noticed. Mark Pocan (WI) does magic tricks.

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