

## Cheney slams Obama, Rand Paul announces presidential run, and new debate over police body cameras: US national blog round up for 4 – 10 April

*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

This week in response to an online position posted on the White House's website, President Obama's Senior Advisor, Valerie Jarrett, stated that the administration would support a federal ban on 'conversion therapy' treatments for homosexuals. *Hit & Run* [comments](#) on Friday that it would be very dangerous for the federal government to declare which therapies were legal. On Wednesday, *Daily Kos* [reports](#) on comments from former Vice-President, Dick Cheney, who has recently stated that Obama is the 'worst president that we ever had', and that the nuclear deal agreed with Iran late last week would be a 'terrible burden' for the next president. *The Lonely Conservative* [writes](#) that the federal judge in Texas, Andrew S. Hana, who had issued an order halting President Obama's amnesty executive order, has this week ruled against a motion by the administration that sought for the halt to be lifted.

Moving on to the Democratic Party more generally, on Tuesday, *Townhall* [says](#) that the Democrats are the 'party of lies', and discusses how senior Democrats such as Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi have lied or misled the public in recent months and years. They write that these Democrats should either be thrown in prison for their lies or should forfeit their government pensions. *National Journal* looks this week at what they say is the Democratic Party's 'identity politics' problem. They [comment](#) that one of the reasons why Hillary Clinton has a 'near-lock' on the party's 2016 presidential nomination is because

the party is now dependent on a coalition of 'less-reliable voters' with 'non-traditional candidates'. This week also saw Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel re-elected with nearly 56 percent of the vote compared to just over 44 percent for his challenger Jesus 'Chuy' Garcia. *American Thinker* [says](#) that Garcia's relative success (given that he was mostly unknown until now) shows that the Democratic Party will have to deal with the growing power of the Hispanic vote.

Looking at the Republican Party, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) on Saturday that the GOP should take lessons from the Governor of Indiana, Mike Pence after he found himself at the 'crossroads of a culture war' over that state's Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). They say that Pence's slow reaction to the controversy has effectively killed any presidential ambitions that he might have had, and that being against rights for gay people is now 'suicide' for any potential GOP candidate. On Friday, *Wonkblog* [looks](#) at the Republican Party's economic



Former Vice-President Dick Cheney Credit: [Gage Skidmore](#) (Flickr, [CC-BY-SA-2.0](#))

strategy, commenting that it is from the '90s – the 1890s that is. They say that the GOP's tactic of trying to stop the Federal Reserve from keeping interest rates low or buying bonds with newly printed money is bad economics, and that their constant concern about inflation is a throwback to the Reagan era.

## Elections and the road to 2016

As the 2016 presidential campaign continues to unfold some commentators have argued that the former Governor of Florida, Jeb Bush, has an advantage over his likely Democratic challenger, Hillary Clinton in winning the Electoral College, because the GOP looks to have an advantage in key states like Florida and Ohio. *Political Animal* [says](#) the evidence behind this claim is weak since even with those states behind Bush, the Democrats still have a 'gigantic blue firewall' of states that will vote for their candidate in 2016. In other Jeb Bush news this week, *Daily Kos* [reports](#) on Monday that he identified himself as Hispanic on a Florida voter-registration application form in 2009.

On Sunday, the *Monkey Cage* [looks](#) at what some have said may be a potential problem for the Governor of Wisconsin, and potential presidential candidate, Scott Walker – his dog allergy. They say that while some are concerned that American voters may be against a candidate that isn't dog-friendly, recent research does not bear this out. Compared to the Democrats' presidential bench, the Republican field is massive, with the best part of a dozen candidates likely to throw their hats into the ring, with a couple having already done so. This week *Talking Points Memo* [asserts](#) that despite the size of the GOP field, the race is between Jeb Bush and Scott Walker, because of their political experience and current lack of scandal.

On Monday, *Political Animal* [discusses](#) Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX), one of the GOP's wide presidential field who has actually declared his intention to run for the presidency. They say that Cruz is 'hell-bent' on pushing for the allegiance of conservative evangelicals with new television commercials timed for the Easter weekend and slated to air during Christian-themed programming. *Red State* meanwhile [reports](#) that Cruz has been able to raise \$31 million in the space of a week via Political Action Committees, which means that he should be able to raise enough to compete in the presidential primary season.

The big 2016 news this week was of course Senator Rand Paul's (R-KY) announcement that he would be pursuing the GOP's nomination for the presidency. On Tuesday, after the announcement, *Wonkblog* has a [brief guide to what Paul actually believes](#), including being against government surveillance and against federal government intrusion into locally elected school boards' authority over classrooms. Rand Paul is the son of Ron Paul, who ran for the presidency in 2008 and 2012.



Credit: [Gage Skidmore](#) (Flickr, [CC-BY-SA-2.0](#))

*FiveThirtyEight* [writes](#) this week that the younger Paul is losing his father's base in an effort to seem more mainstream than his father was. Still on Paul, *Hit & Run* [gives](#) five things we need to know about his campaign, including that his strategy is built around appealing to those who don't normally vote Republican such as young people and minorities, and that he is taking donations in Bitcoin.

Turning to the Democratic side of the presidential race, *Townhall* gives [five things](#) that Republicans need to do in order to beat Hillary Clinton. These include tying Clinton to Barack Obama and his unpopular approach to governing, as well as not allowing Clinton to be portrayed by the media as a victim of the GOP's 'war on women'. On Friday *Red State* writes that Clinton's lead against many GOP candidates, including Rand Paul is melting away. They also [comment](#) on the announcement by the Democratic Governor of Rhode Island, Lincoln Chafee,

that he will launch a presidential exploratory committee; saying that he would be a 'joy' to run against, given that he is a Republican-turned-Independent-turned-Democrat. *Hit & Run* meanwhile [wonders](#) where all the Democratic candidates for president are. None of this may actually matter very much at the moment, given that according to new research, reported by *Outside the Beltway*, most people [aren't actually taking any notice](#) of the 2016 campaign yet.

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

On Monday, *The Daily Signal* [reports](#) that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has lost a 'procedural battle' in an Ohio court fight. They say that a federal judge has granted a motion to compel the IRS to produce the names of 298 conservative organizations that were targeted by IRS official Lois Lerner and her colleagues.

Moving to the judiciary, *Crooks & Liars* [writes](#) on Tuesday that the Supreme Court has refused (for now) to rule on North Carolina's GOP-backed voting restrictions that may influence the 2016 election. The state had asked the Court to uphold the restrictions, which eliminate same day voter registration and out-of-precinct voting, after a federal appeals court ruled in October that they may have violated the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

This week *The Daily Signal* gives [26 economic policy reforms](#) that they say could get passed by Congress. These cover tax policy, energy reforms (such as ending the crude oil export ban), ending the current Washington-centric approach to transport funding, and adopting a path to a balanced budget with a resolution. Harry Reid's recent announcement that he would not be seeking reelection in 2016 has [reopened the debate](#) in the Senate over nuclear waste disposal (Reid had long been opposed to disposing of such waste at Yucca Mountain in Nevada), writes *Roll Call*.

On Thursday, *Wonkblog* [assesses](#) a recent idea from Senator Rand Paul – that members of Congress should be term limited in much the same way that the President is. They say that while it could give individual lawmakers more freedom, it could also expand the power of the presidency as there would be fewer established legislative coalitions.

### **Foreign policy, defense and trade**

Discussion on last week's framework agreement with Iran over that country's nuclear program continued this week, with *Informed Comment* asking if any of the Republican Party's frontrunners for the presidential nomination have a policy on the Iran that excludes [sanctions and bombs](#), as they have mostly all come out against the deal. One member of the GOP who is most definitely not in favor of the agreement is Senator Tom Cotton (R-AR) who, [according](#) to *Freak Our Nation*, stated this week that military action against Iran would not have to be in the form of all-out war, rather it could be a four-day bombing campaign like 1999's Operation Desert Fox against Iraq. *Daily Kos* meanwhile [writes](#) that President Obama has three months to make a formal agreement with Iran, and then sell it to the public, many of whom are skeptical.



Senator Tom Cotton Credit: Gage Skidmore (Flickr, CC-BY-SA-2.0)

On Tuesday, *Hit & Run* casts their eye on what they say is the Republican Party's [foreign policy civil war](#). They say that Senator Rand Paul, who has generally been against increasing America's foreign involvements, has been shifting towards a more orthodox GOP approach.

## Obamacare and health policy

On Monday, *The Daily Signal* has a [chart](#) explaining what they say is Obamacare's '\$800 billion tax hike'. They say because of the Affordable Care Act, Americans will be paying this much more in 18 separate tax increases between now and 2022. *Lonely Conservative* meanwhile [writes](#) that Obamacare's costs are falling on ordinary consumers who have more expensive policies with higher deductibles than before.

On Tuesday, *Wonkblog* [previews](#) what they say is the coming revolution in how employers provide health insurance coverage. They comment that as workers are being asked to pay more for employer-sponsored health plans, more and more are moving over to privately run health insurance exchanges where employees can select their own plans.

With Tax Day only a few days away, *The Hill's Congress blog* [examines](#) the plight of immigrants who have been barred from purchasing health insurance from the Obamacare insurance marketplaces, but may still end up paying the Obamacare lack of coverage penalty because of confusion about the exemption rules.

## The economy and society

This week, *Daily Kos* [reports](#) that initial applications for unemployment compensation remain at a 15-year low, with 281,000 for the week ending April 4<sup>th</sup>. They say that the low figure is deceptive since congressional Republicans in December 2013 refused to renew federal emergency unemployment compensation, which chopped more than 1.3 million from the compensation rolls.

On Sunday, *The Daily Signal* [looks](#) at why colleges in the U.S. are afraid of letting students speak freely, and blames the rise of political correctness which they say makes debate impossible.

*Hit & Run* [says](#) that according to a new poll a majority of voters in three swing states, Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania, support the legalisation of marijuana.

The weekend saw the shooting of a fleeing unarmed black man by a white policeman in South Carolina, which was captured on video by a bystander. *The Daily Signal* [writes](#) that the shooting has reignited the debate over police body cameras, and that bills to introduce them would be voted on in the South Carolina legislature in the coming weeks. On Wednesday, *The Federalist* has a stunning [map](#) of forty years of capital punishment in the U.S., in the wake of the conviction of Boston bomber, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, who could face the death penalty. On Wednesday, *Wonkblog* [reports](#) that nearly 1 in 10 Americans have severe anger issues, and access to guns.



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## And finally...

On Tuesday D.C was in the dark, after a massive power outage, [says Crooks & Liars](#), which also led to a State Department briefing using phone lights to identify reporters asking questions.

Rand Paul's presidential announcement was slightly mired on Tuesday when the video of his speech was taken down by YouTube. The video began with the song, "Shuttin' Detroit Down" which was automatically flagged as a copyright violation by YouTube, [reports Hit & Run](#).

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*Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of USApp— American Politics and Policy, nor*

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