

Obama visits Nike, radical ideas for Clinton, and Iran deal moves through the Senate: US national blog round up for 2 – 8 May

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

In light of last week's news that economic growth has dropped to a 'miserable' 0.2 percent, *The Daily Signal* looks at how President Obama's recovery compares to that of Republican President Ronald Reagan. They say that the annualized growth rate under Obama after 23 quarters stands at 2.2 percent; this is far lower than what they describe as Reagan's 'sizzling' rate of 4.8 percent. They comment that this is due to Obama's stimulus spending policies being costly and counterproductive. The adherents of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which is currently under negotiations between the U.S. and Pacific nations, have stated that it will lead to higher growth. President Obama is a supporter of the deal, and this week was scheduled to visit the shoe manufacturer, Nike's headquarters in Oregon to promote it. *Crooks & Liars* is *incredulous* that Obama has chosen to visit Nike given that it is famous for using sweatshop labor outside the U.S. to gain an advantage to locally based firms.

Moving on to the Republican Party, *RedState* argues Saturday that the riots and violence recently seen in Baltimore are down to the left's policies which have bowed to the inevitability of such unrest and disruption. *PoliticusUSA* reports that House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) has echoed these sentiments this week, also blaming years of 'failed' liberal policies. They comment that this liberal-blaming is a blatant attempt by Republicans to push their own economic agenda of tax cuts as a cure for a problem which was in turn caused by their own failed policies. *Political Animal* writes this week that the right's general view that any police violence is necessary to quell a violent population runs against the Tea Party's views on liberty and the 2nd Amendment, which cast them as defenders of freedom against government tyranny. They argue that the only government tyranny that conservatives really fear is one where the poor have the ability to constrain their property rights.

Staying on the Republican Party, *The New Yorker* says that the GOP's 'war on science' is getting even worse, after last week the House Science, Space and Technology Committee approved a bill which would cut around \$300 million from NASA's Earth science budget, which will lead to far less useful data on climate change being collected.

Elections and the road to 2016

The elections of 2016 may be 18 months away, but there are a number of results that can already be predicted, writes *Sabato's Crystal Ball*. Only seven states are currently toss-ups, meaning that only 85 electoral votes may be actually up for grabs. *The Atlantic*, meanwhile has a *cheat sheet* for next year's presidential race, covering all the declared and undeclared candidates, who wants them to run, and whether they can win the nomination or not.

Highlights from the Republicans' presidential field this week include:

- Ben Carson and Carly Fiorina's candidacy announcements – *FiveThirtyEight* calls them '[background players](#)'
- Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee's entry into the race (*[Hit & Run](#)*);
- Commentary on New Jersey Governor Chris Christie's sinking chances post-Bridgegate indictments (*[Outside the Beltway](#)*)

- Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker's [promise](#) to make 'right to work' a federal law, plus a poll drop ([Crooks & Liars](#))

The Democratic side of the 2016 campaign was also busy this week:

- Despite criticism, Martin O'Malley is sticking by his record as Mayor of Baltimore ([National Journal](#))
- Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders raised \$1.5 million from small donors on his first day as candidate ([Crooks and Liars](#)), [The Daily Signal](#) has [14 fun facts about him](#), and [The Atlantic](#) says that we shouldn't underestimate him.

There was also a great deal of commentary this week on the Democrats' frontrunner, former Secretary of State and First Lady, Hillary Clinton:



Senator Bernie Sanders Credit: Senate Democrats (Flickr, CC-BY-2.0)

- Only 25 percent of people surveyed in a new poll think she is honest ([White House Dossier](#))...
- ...which may be related to the fact that the Clintons tend to keep their money in cash ([Wonkblog](#)).
- The 'Clinton' reputation has become a burden as Hillary Clinton is now finding her proposals are at odds with the policies of her husband's administration ([The Atlantic](#)).
- [The American Prospect](#) has some [radical ideas for Clinton](#), like calling for drug costs to be controlled and ending subsidies for for-profit colleges
- [Crooks & Liars](#) says she's 'come out swinging' against Republicans in a speech this week which called for a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants

Finally, [Wonkblog](#) has a [helpful guide](#) to the real differences between the Democratic candidates for president. [Hit & Run](#) meanwhile [says](#) that the party's upcoming six primary debates will be a 'joke', but that Clinton should still be concerned.

Government, the Beltway and Congress' agenda

This week [Townhall](#) looks at what they argue is a wasteful government agency – the Export-Import Bank, which will soon be up for reauthorization by Congress. They [say](#) that the "Ex-Im" has squandered billions of taxpayer backed dollars and misrepresented which businesses it has provided assistance to.

This week [RedState](#) argues that another government shutdown would not be perilous for Republicans, as many have suggested. They [comment](#) that while 2013's shutdown was down to failed budget negotiations, one this year would be because the President had vetoed appropriation bills, and would therefore be responsible in a way that he had not been before.

Moving on to the Senate, [American Thinker](#) [writes](#) Sunday on the 'curious supporters' of Senator Bob Corker's (R-TN) bill which would give Congress a say in the deal with Iran over that country's nuclear program, which is currently being negotiated. Pro-Israel groups are apparently supporting the measure, despite the concern of many in the GOP that it will merely delay Iran's nuclear ambitions, not curtail them. On Thursday, [The Atlantic](#) [reports](#) that the Iran bill has cleared the Senate, and will now move on to the House in the coming weeks. The bill will still not make it easy for Congress to reject the deal, as if lawmakers do not approve or disapprove of the deal after 30 days, it would still take effect, and any act of disapproval would still be subject to a presidential veto.

On Sunday [Political Animal](#) [writes](#) that the Republican Party, which has been putting together a budget in recent

weeks, wants \$194 billion in additional cuts to employees of the federal government. They say that pension benefits and employee health benefits are likely to be the targets of the cuts. *PoliticusUSA* comments Tuesday that the GOP's budget will also throw 27 million Americans off their health insurance by disabling the federal health insurance exchanges.

Foreign policy, defense and trade

On Friday, *Informed Comment* reports that overwhelming public approval for the current talks with Iran gives momentum to a peace deal. They write that despite the disapproval of conservatives, polls have shown that 77 percent of Americans prefer a negotiated settlement over military intervention.

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) has become well known for her advocacy of reforms for the military that address the concerns of the victims of sexual assault. *Daily Kos* says that Gillibrand has released a new report which shows that sexual assaults committed by members of the military continue to be vastly underreported even as the military has claimed to be making progress with the issue.



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On Wednesday, *The Hill's Congress blog* makes the argument that trade between China and the U.S. is not only growing the U.S' economy, it is also slowing climate change. They say that since President Obama announced a historic agreement between China and the U.S. to reduce emissions, China has now become more open to U.S. 'clean tech'.

Two important reports from *Outside the Beltway* this week: 1) The second Circuit Court of Appeals in New York has ruled that the National Security Agency's data mining program is illegal; and 2) Germany has announced that it will cut back cooperation with the U.S. in intelligence matters after revelations of U.S. spying on German businesses and Europeans.

Obamacare and health policy

On Monday, *Daily Kos* has a worrying story that rural communities are facing an 'alarming rate' of hospital closures, especially in the South and Midwest, where states have refused Obamacare's Medicaid expansion. They say that 50 rural hospitals have closed since 2010, with the pace accelerating in recent years.

Since it was first passed in 2010, the GOP has unsuccessfully tried many times to repeal the Affordable Care Act. *The Daily Signal* looks at another method by which Republicans could try again – via budget reconciliation.

This week, *Hit & Run* reports on a new study from the RAND Corporation, which looks at recent changes in health coverage. They say that the study has shown that nearly 17 million people have gained insurance since September, 2013, but also that only 4.1 million of these gained it via Obamacare exchanges.

The economy and society

The Atlantic looks at lessons from Norway on how to get more women in boardrooms. Quotas which require boards to maintain a certain gender balance look to be a good start.

Most migrants to the U.S. come from Mexico, right? Wrong. *Outside the Beltway* reports that according to a new study, India and China have surpassed Mexico as America's primary immigration sources.

Wonkblog examines the increasing difficulty of getting a loan in the Deep South compared to the rest of the country.

Americablog has a comprehensive [look](#) at the extent of institutional racism in the U.S., in order to counter those who think that it does not exist. *Daily Kos*, [meanwhile](#) says that out of the 50 largest U.S. cities, only one has a police force that isn't more white than the population.

White House Dossier [says](#) that while the U.S. economy added 223,000 jobs in April, the labor force participation rate of 62.8 percent is still at a historic low level.

And finally...

Republican presidential candidate Carly Fiorina apparently neglected to register the domain, CarlyFiorina.org. According to *FreakOutNation*, now it's now run by someone who is using it to tell the world how many people she laid off while she was CEO of Hewlett Packard – 30,000.

Outside the Beltway [comments](#) that the 40-hour work week may now be an anachronism.

Want to watch former Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK), sing Elton John's 'Rocket Man'? Well, thanks to *Roll Call*, [you can](#).

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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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