

NBC dumps Trump, Obamacare's next challenges, and Puerto Rico's debt crisis: US national blog round up for 27 June – 3 July

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 Tuesday this week, *Crooks & Liars* [reports](#) that President Obama has announced plans to expand the classification of workers that are eligible for overtime pay. Obama's plan would extend overtime protections to salaried workers earning up to \$50,400 a year – or about 5 million people.

With Supreme Court decisions in favor of marriage equality and Obamacare, as well as the passage of Trade Promotion Authority through Congress, Obama had a very good week last week. But was it his best? No, says *The Fix*, who [argue](#) that if we use poll numbers as a measure, Obama's best week was in May 2011 when his approval jumped by 7 points after Osama Bin Laden was killed. Good week or not, perhaps Obama was feeling upbeat when he laid into Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker and the rest of the Republican Party's 2016 field. *Roll Call's Potus Operandi* [says](#) that while visiting Walker's state of Wisconsin, Obama criticized the Governor's attacks on union rights and education cuts.

Moving on to the GOP – who many say had a rough week last week – *No More Mister Nice* [blog](#) [does not understand](#) why conservatives were so surprised by the Supreme Court's ruling last week given that Obama endorsed same-sex marriage in 2012, and was re-elected. *FiveThirtyEight*, [meanwhile](#) suggests that the party may well come to regret its battle against gay marriage, as the public are becoming more and more in favor, something which may hurt the GOP in 2016.

On Thursday, *Red State* [argues](#) that the GOP needs to use billionaire presidential candidate Donald Trump (who they say is not a serious competitor for the presidency), to push forward issues, such as the challenge of illegal immigration.

Elections and the road to 2016

Moving on to the 2016 horserace, *The Fix* [writes](#) this week that one of the striking aspects of election polling is that many of the potential candidates are relatively unknown; Scott Walker for example, was unknown to more than 40 percent of those polled recently.

United Liberty [says](#) on Tuesday that while no Republican candidate for the presidency agrees with the Supreme Court's marriage equality ruling, some have reacted more absurdly than others. For example, the Governor of Louisiana, Bobby Jindal, recommends that the Court be disbanded, while Senator Ted Cruz of Texas has called for it to have periodic retention elections.

Turning to the Republican Party's candidates more specifically:

- South Carolina Senator, Lindsey Graham warns the GOP against embracing the idea of a constitutional amendment defining marriage as between a man and a woman, arguing that it will hurt the party's election chances ([Post Politics](#)).

- Texas Senator Ted Cruz raised \$4 million in the first 8 days of his campaign, but it seems he will not be able to use a sizeable chunk of it unless he gains the nomination ([National Journal](#)).
- Recently declared candidate, Donald Trump has been [dumped](#) by NBC after making offensive comments about Mexican in his announcement speech ([Crooks & Liars](#))...
- ... though his poll numbers continue to rise despite this negative coverage ([Outside the Beltway](#)).



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

- Former Florida Governor, Jeb Bush has stated that the Confederate flag is racist ([White House Dossier](#))...
- ...and also released 33-years' worth of tax returns, the early release of which may show that Bush knows he has a storm to weather over his financial connections ([Americablog](#)).
- Has Jeb Bush's coordination with his SuperPAC broken campaign finance laws? Potentially ([Daily Kos](#)).
- New Jersey Governor Chris Christie declared his 2016 candidacy this week, in what is likely to be an uphill battle ([FiveThirtyEight](#))...
- ... though Christie has made a smart move by stating that he would enforce the Supreme Court's marriage equality decision rather than fight it ([The Fix](#)).

Democrats running for President also had a busy week:

- Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont should thank fellow Democratic Senator Claire McCaskill (MO) who attacked him for being extreme ([The Fix](#)).
- Extreme may be what people want given that he attracted 10,000 to a rally in Madison, Wisconsin, the largest turnout of any candidate's rally so far ([Informed Comment](#)).
- [Hit & Run](#) [wonders](#) whatever happened to former Senator, Jim Webb, who has been considering a presidential bid...
- ... while [Outside the Beltway](#) has the news that he is running for President – for some reason.
- [The Atlantic](#) has a primer of scandals that have swirled around Hillary Clinton, from Whitewater to Benghazi.
- Clinton released more emails this week from her time as Secretary of State – rather than creating a scandal, they show mundane details such as her struggles with a fax machine ([Crooks & Liars](#)).
- Clinton has raised \$45 million since April ([Post Politics](#))...
- ...though she may be in trouble in Iowa ([The Fix](#)).

Government, the Beltway and Congress' agenda

Reactions to the Supreme Court's rulings last week continued into this one – [American Thinker](#) [writes](#) that the Court has recently begun 'brazenly' usurping the powers of the federal legislature, and that Americans now need to realize that they are governed by judicial rather than political decision-making. On Monday, [The Atlantic](#) [reports](#) on the Supreme Court's ruling against the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) new regulations against

mercury and other toxin emissions from coal power plants. They say that decision is a rare loss for environmentalists at the Supreme Court which had until recently ruled in the EPA's favor on similar cases. Staying on the Supreme Court, *The Volokh Conspiracy* [wonders](#) why two justices, Justice Breyer and Justice Ginsburg, have waited until now, after decades on the Court, to argue that the death penalty is categorically unconstitutional. They speculate that the move is a cumulative effect of their workload – they spend a surprising amount of time on capital litigation when there are 'only' around 40 executions per year.

On Wednesday, the Charter of the Export-Import Bank expired for the first time in its more 80-year history. *The Atlantic* [says](#) that it is a victory for conservatives who say it exemplifies a form of crony capitalism where government assistance goes disproportionately to large companies which do not need it.

GovBeat [writes](#) this week that at least 700 new state laws were to go live on Wednesday, from job creation bills in Alabama, loosened fireworks regulations in Georgia, and introduced a 48-hour wait on abortions in Tennessee.

Foreign policy, defense and trade

The American Interest [reports](#) that Iran's foreign ministry announced this week that the country's negotiations with the United Nations' P5+1 would be extended – they were due to end on Tuesday. They say that the real deadline is July 9th – if no agreement is reached by then, Congress' review period extends from 30 to 60 days, a longer period in which sanctions cannot be lifted. *The Left Coaster* also [comments](#) on the Iran talks, writing Wednesday that the Obama administration should not be afraid to walk away from them if Iran does not allow inspections of military sites and scientists by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

On Tuesday, *The Hill's Congress blog* [looks](#) at the future of Republican Party in the context of Kentucky Senator Rand Paul's alternative to the current 'bleak' perspective of the need for U.S. intervention in the world's trouble-spots. They say that the GOP must now embrace change, which will make the country safer.



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This week [saw](#) an 'historic' step in U.S.-Cuba relations, with the announcement by President Obama that the two countries would be reopening embassies after 54 years. *Post Politics* says that the embassy reopening is only the first phase in the path towards normalizing relations between the two countries.

Despite foreign policy successes such as Cuba, *The American Interest* [says](#) that the Pentagon has given a 'poor report card' for Obama's foreign policies, commenting that the report's concerns that the world order is deteriorating is not a good endorsement of the president's policies.

Obamacare and health policy

The American Prospect [writes](#) this week that while Obamacare has survived its most recent challenge at the

Supreme Court, there may be an uphill battle ahead to realize its full potential. They say that while most of the program's existential threats are in the past, further expanding coverage is an immediate challenge, with incremental gains likely to become harder and harder. *The Atlantic* [says](#) that Republicans should stop their efforts to repeal Obamacare, and instead should reform it by fixing its funding mechanism, letting states run their Medicaid programs their way, and ending the employer mandate. *The Hill's Congress blog* [echoes](#) this, commenting that the cost of Obamacare's subsidies remains a challenge, and that more is needed to reduce healthcare costs at state level. *Outside the Beltway*, meanwhile has a [look](#) at the remaining legal challenges to Obamacare, including the House of Representative's lawsuit against the program and a challenge to the Affordable Care Act under the Constitution's origination clause.

This week California Governor Jerry Brown signed a stringent vaccination law, which many have denounced as limiting personal freedoms. *Wonkblog* looks at the [history of the fight over vaccines](#), tracing the battle back to the American Revolution.

The economy and society

The U.S. territory of Puerto Rico has been in the news in recent days because of its unfolding debt crisis. *The Atlantic* [reports](#) on Tuesday that the island may be at risk of defaulting as it is unable to pay its debt. They say that falling tourism, low employment and decreased competitiveness are some of the territory's problems which have been building for a number of years.

Crooks & Liars [says](#) this week that at least six Southern black churches have been damaged or destroyed by fire in the wake of the shooting in South Carolina by a white supremacist.

On Wednesday, *The Atlantic* [examines](#) whether states are able to ignore the Supreme Court's marriage equality ruling. Despite the claims of GOP presidential candidates Ted Cruz and Mike Huckabee, it looks like they cannot. *The American Thinker* meanwhile [says](#) that the Supreme Court's decision is the new *Roe v Wade*, the landmark 1973 case which legalised abortion. They comment that the Supreme Court's decision last week may well create a 'pro-marriage' movement analogous to the pro-life movement. In the wake of the Supreme Court's decision, some commentators have argued that polygamy should be the next practice to be legalized. *The Fix* [comments](#) that while support for the practice is on the rise, it is not the new gay marriage, mostly because the practice is just not that common.

And finally...

Caffeinated Politics has a good [round-up of newspaper front pages](#) covering the Supreme Court's marriage equality decision.

President Obama sang 'Amazing Grace' this week at the funeral of South Carolina State Senator Clementa Pinckney, who was shot dead in Charleston, South Carolina in June. *The Fix* has a [compilation](#) of the other times the president has broken into song.

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

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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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