

Boosts for Clinton and Sanders in the Democrats' first debate, the 'ungovernable' House, and Obamacare's missing billions: US national blog round up for 10 – 16 October

USAPP Managing Editor, **Chris Gilson** looks at the best in political blogging from around the Beltway. Our round-up of state blogs will follow over the weekend.

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President Obama, the Democratic Party, and the GOP

On Wednesday this week, *The Daily Signal* has the [news](#) that President Obama is planning to circumvent Congress on climate regulations once again, by passing the Paris Protocol on climate change without that body's input. They argue that the agreement is a legally binding treaty, and that the Constitution mandates that it be sent to the Senate for consideration. *FreakOutNation* [says](#) that the Obama Administration (via the Department of Justice) is going to boost its efforts to fight against domestic terrorism with the appointment of a 'domestic terrorism counsel'.

Turning to the Democratic Party more generally, *The Fix* [writes](#) Thursday on Representative Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii who has been fighting with the Democratic National Committee (of which she is a vice chair) about whether its chairwoman, Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL) suggested that Gabbard should not attend the first Democratic debate in Las Vegas this week. The drama comes after Gabbard stated that the DNC should host more than six debates.



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On the Republican side, *The Federalist* this week [argues](#) that it is now the time for the GOP to chase black voters as they have not prospered under the last seven years of the Obama administration. They say that the Democrats are taking black voters for granted, and that the Republican Party needs to make them work for their votes. On Tuesday, *Red State* [comments](#) that the Chamber of Commerce is pledging \$100 million to defeat GOP-conservatives in the 2016 election cycle, to 'buy' a new party. They say that while the chamber used to be a force for conservatism in Congress, now it has become a 'breeding ground for corrupt cronyism' which insists on spending programs. *The Daily Signal*, meanwhile, takes some time to [examine](#) what the Tea Party has achieved since it began in 2009. They argue that the movement has changed and 'even slightly fixed' America, as evidenced by the falling deficit despite the launch of expensive government programs such as Obamacare.

Elections and the road to 2016

On Sunday, *Caffeinated Politics* has the [news](#) that just 158 families have contributed nearly 50 percent of the money given to presidential campaigns in this first phase of the race. *Vox Mischiefs of Faction* also [looks](#) at donor this week, dispelling the often circulated idea that super-wealthy donors are pulling US politics farther to the right. They comment that GOP candidates have received more donations simply because there are far more (15) candidates in the field. *The Fix* [writes](#) this week that Republican and Democratic voters want completely different presidents, and not just ideologically. Their data shows that Republicans favor candidates with business experience, while Democrats want someone with a political or governmental record.

In the week that saw the first Democratic debate of the 2016 primary season, *Smart Politics* [says](#) that ex-presidents have collectively been mentioned over 100 times in the current debate season, with Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush leading the pack by far.

The first Democratic debate

The lead up to the debate on Tuesday night in Las Vegas, Nevada, saw a great deal of commentary:

- The debate's format was apparently structured to prevent conflict between candidates ([Red State](#)).
- *FiveThirtyEight* [profiles](#) the candidates who are not either Bernie Sanders or Hillary Clinton – former Senator Jim Webb, former Rhode Island Governor, Lincoln Chafee, and former Maryland Governor, Martin O'Malley.
- *Wonkblog* has four big differences between the candidates, including on gun control and the minimum wage.
- Harvard Law Professor Larry Lessig won't be there – he blames the Democratic Party ([Wonkblog](#)).



L-R – **Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, Martin O’Malley, Jim Webb, Lincoln Chafee**

Credit: [WisPolitics.com](#), [Rand Wilson](#), [Chesapeake Bay Program](#), [Cliff](#), [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Northeast Region](#) ([Flickr](#), CC-BY-NC-2.0 and CC-BY-SA-2.0)

Turning to post debate commentary:

- For some, Hillary Clinton was the clear winner ([Outside the Beltway](#))...
- ...while others said that she had the debate that she needed to shift the media narrative away from the controversy over her private email server ([Daily Kos](#)).
- Or perhaps her email controversy is here to stay, despite Bernie Sanders' statement that “the American people are sick and tired of hearing about your damn emails” ([Post Politics](#)).
- Apparently only Democrats are actually sick and tired of hearing about Clinton’s emails ([The Fix](#)).
- [FiveThirtyEight](#) reckons that the media underestimated Clinton in the lead-in to the debate, but have overestimated her performance in it.
- [Wonkblog](#) looks at why Bernie Sanders loves Denmark (who used it as an example during the debate) and why Clinton does not.
- Speaking of Sanders, [The Atlantic](#) says that he did better on Tuesday night than the pundits had predicted.
- So well, in fact, that he raised \$1.3 million in the four hours after the debate began ([Post Politics](#)).
- [Hit & Run](#) has an overview of how the ‘also-rans’ of O’Malley, Webb and Chafee did in the debate...
- ...while [Americablog](#) argues that the Democratic Party was the winner overall.
- This was the first presidential candidates’ debate that had adults on stage ([Crooks and Liars](#)).
- [Wonkblog](#) has a helpful Venn diagram showing the differences between the Democrats’ and GOP’s debates.
- The debate clarified that many libertarian views – such as a more isolationist foreign policy – have gone mainstream ([Hit & Run](#)).
- [The Federalist](#) rounds up the [25 craziest](#) things said at the debate.
- Republican presidential candidate, Mike Huckabee did apparently not cover himself in glory with his live tweeting of the Democratic debate ([The Fix](#)).

The Democrats' 2016 campaign

Moving on to the Democratic Party's candidates more generally:

- As of Monday, everyone still hated Hillary Clinton ([Red State](#)).
- Was House Majority Leader, Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), right when he stated last week that the House's Benghazi Committee had damaged Clinton? ([The Fix](#))
- Clinton is apparently easier for the GOP to beat next year than Vice President Joe Biden would be – should he choose to enter the race ([Red State](#)).
- Bernie Sanders has a problem with minority voters – now may be his big chance to woo them ([FiveThirtyEight](#)).
- Over 13,000 people attended one of Sanders' rallies this week, where he spoke on gun violence and immigration reform ([Post Politics](#)).
- Are guns Bernie Sanders' Achilles heel? ([The Fix](#))
- Sanders' brand may be both 'dangerous and popular' ([Red State](#))...
- ...popular enough for him to pick up another endorsement – this time from House Representative Keith Ellison (D-MN) ([Crooks & Liars](#)).
- Apparently, more Americans support Bernie Sanders than they do Donald Trump ([The Fix](#)).

The Republican Party's 2016 campaign

Looking to the other side of the presidential race:

- GOP activists are probably wrong when they think that a strong conservative can win the White House next year ([Monkey Cage](#)).
- Ohio Governor John Kasich this week told a forum audience that people would have to 'get over' cuts to their Social Security benefits ([Crooks & Liars](#)).



Jeb Bush Credit: Gage Skidmore (Flickr, CC-BY-NC-2.0)

- Former Florida Governor, Jeb Bush, has sunk nearly \$5 million on ads in New Hampshire since September – with zero effect on his polls ([PoliticusUSA](#)).
- A Bush campaign worker grilled Donald Trump on women's rights this week – but Bush is apparently just as bad ([Daily Kos](#)).
- Speaking of Trump – he wants Secret Service protection ([Post Politics](#)).
- Trump has received nearly \$4 million in campaign donations over the past three months ([Post Politics](#))
- Which two candidates' will drop out of the race next? It could be Governors Chris Christie and John Kasich ([Monkey Cage](#)).

- Even if they don't drop out, Kasich and Christie may still be in danger of missing out on the main stage at the next GOP debate (*Outside the Beltway*).
- Neurosurgeon Ben Carson's poll numbers have been rising despite his recent offensive statements (*Daily Kos*)...
- ...though for some, he does not seem to be serious about running for president, given that he has put his campaign on hold in favor of his book tour (*Red State*).
- This week, Kentucky Senator, Rand Paul, brushed off the concerns of those who might be fired because of their sexual orientation, stating that if that happens "there are plenty of places that will hire you" (*America blog*).
- Paul also live-streamed a day of his campaign this week to the befuddlement of some (*Red State*).
- Is Louisiana Governor, Bobby Jindal, about to bow out of the race? (*The Atlantic*).
- Why the GOP should nominate Ted Cruz (*Roll Call's Rothernblog*).

Government, the Beltway and Congress' agenda

On Tuesday, *The Atlantic* previews the coming 'death penalty feud' at the Supreme Court. They say that the Court will hear four death penalty cases this term which center around how trial judges instruct juries, juries' roles, and racial discrimination.

Moving on to Congress, *The Fix* agrees with Representative Trey Gondy (R-SC) that the house is essentially 'ungovernable', with it looking very difficult for any Speaker to be approved with the necessary 218 House votes in the wake of Speaker John Boehner's (R-OH) planned departure. *The Hill's Congress blog* reckons that before Boehner leaves, he should present a clean suspension of the debt-limit to the House, ahead of the limit being reached in early November. In recent days, many have speculated that someone from outside the House of Representatives could be elected Speaker. Not so, says the *Daily Signal*, explaining that the Constitution says that the House should choose 'their' Speaker, i.e. someone from the House.

On Tuesday, following the accusations of a fired Benghazi Committee staffer that the committee is a political ploy to hurt Hillary Clinton, *The Atlantic* wonders if it has reached a turning point.

PoliticusUSA says that Senate Majority Leader, Mitch McConnell, has put a huge 'ransom' on raising the debt limit, which President Obama will never agree to – raising the age of eligibility for Medicare and restricting the Environmental Protection Agency's ability to uphold clean water standards.

Foreign policy, defense and trade

On Saturday, *American Thinker* wonders if the recent deal with Iran over that country's nuclear program is a fait accompli. *The American Interest* meanwhile argues that Iran isn't that interested in promoting a stable order in the Middle East, in cooperation with the US.

Political Animal gives an overview of what they say is President Obama's 'grand strategy' for the 21st century, which is largely focused on correcting the country's past foreign policy disasters.

Powerline says that according to a recent survey, only 26 percent of Americans think that the US is winning the



US Supreme Court Credit : OZinOH (Creative Commons BY NC)

war on terror, down from 52 percent when Obama was elected.

On Thursday, *Outside the Beltway* has the [news](#) that President Obama would announce that the ongoing withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan would be halted, and the current troops there will remain until 2017. They say that the news is a stark indication that the US' longest war is not coming to an end any time soon.

The American Interest [writes](#) this week on the US' standoff with China in the South China Sea. They say that the US will be sending ships through China's 12-mile exclusion zone after China has continued to build facilities on artificial islands.

Obamacare and health policy

On Saturday this week, *Daily Kos* [says](#) that the expansion of Medicaid is reducing the rate of uninsurance, at least in the states which are allowing it. The states which have expanded Medicaid now have an uninsured rate of just below 9 percent, while those that haven't have a rate of about 14 percent.

The Daily Signal [comments](#) on a new report which has found that health insurers have lost a great deal of money selling plans under the Affordable Care Act – AKA Obamacare. They say that the losses of up to 12 percent will mean higher premiums over time. *Townhall*, meanwhile [investigates](#) Obamacare's 'missing billions' – the \$2 billion in funding not spent on setting up state exchanges but has not yet been returned to the federal government

Who pays hospital bills when patients can't? *The Atlantic* [says](#) that, at non-profit hospitals, unpaid bills become bad debts for the patient, or are written off, amounting to \$57 billion nationally.

The economy and society

America is becoming increasingly pessimistic, [writes](#) *The Atlantic*, with most people not feeling great about the long term prospects for the quality of education, the growing elderly population, corporate decision-making, and governmental dysfunction.

On Tuesday, *Ten Miles Square looks* at new statistics which show that nearly 63 percent of the US jail population have never been convicted of a crime. The cause? Increasingly stringent bail conditions.

In the wake of recent tragic shootings across the country, there has been a resurgent debate over the role of 'gun free zones'. *American Thinker* [reckons](#) that they are illogical, because they are based on the voluntary compliance of the people who are likely to not care about gun control laws of any kind.



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Writing at *Wonkblog*, former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers [argues](#) that fixing America's roads would pay for itself, with road users benefiting from reduced operating costs because of higher quality infrastructure.

On Tuesday, *Political Animal* [praises](#) federal and state regulators for looking into 'big beer', after allegations came to light that the brewer, Anheuser-Busch InBev is seeking to curb market competition by buying distributors.

Wonkblog this week [compares](#) the American middle class to other middle classes across the world – it turns out that it is worse off.

And finally...

Post Politics [reports](#) that a man who previously presented Jeb Bush flowers was thrown out of a Q&A with Donald Trump.

Recent presidential candidates have written 172 books. But only one helped a candidate to win ([The Fix](#)).

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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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