

# Rubio's robotic debate performance, John Kasich's good week, and are Trump and Sanders' New Hampshire wins a rebuke to the political status quo? : US national blog roundup for 6 – 12 February

USAPP Managing Editor, **Chris Gilson** looks at the best in political blogging from around the Beltway.

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## Obama, the Democratic Party, and the GOP

On Monday this week, *The Daily Signal* [writes](#) on what they say is President Obama's 'dismal fiscal legacy', commenting that as he submits his final budget to Congress, his legacy is one of failed leadership and more burdensome government for the American people. Also writing on Obama's budget, *The Atlantic* [says](#) that House Republicans have called the \$4.1 billion proposal a 'progressive manual', and that while most of its proposals will be dead on arrival, Obama is making his contribution to the Democratic Party's future platform.

*Wonkblog* [writes](#) Thursday that judging by a speech President Obama gave at the State Capitol in Springfield Illinois this weekend, where he talked about his continued faith in the American political system, Obama still doesn't understand that in American politics, people have moved so far apart from each other – both politically and geographically – that compromises are no longer a possibility.

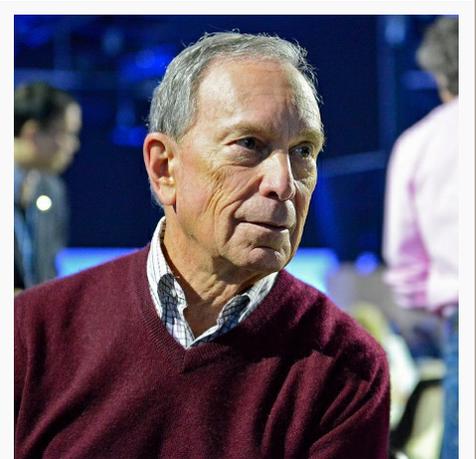
## The 2016 election

We're now very much into the presidential primary season – Iowa's behind us, and the New Hampshire primary was up this week. With all of this primary fever, shouldn't states be seeing a near-constant stream of campaign advertising? Not so [writes](#) *The Atlantic*, who comments that while Iowa saw a political ad every 45 seconds, New Hampshire and South Carolina are seeing far fewer.

On Monday this week, *The Fix* [comments](#) that this year's election should feature the most diverse electorate in US history, with polling research showing that there will be a greater number of black and Hispanic voters compared to 2012.

News continued to circulate this week that former New York City Mayor, Michael Bloomberg is serious about running for the presidency. *Outside the Beltway* [says](#) that very few people actually want Bloomberg to run, other than white, Jewish New Yorkers. *The Fix*, meanwhile [writes](#) that Bloomberg himself would likely not have any patience for the argument that he can't win the presidency, given that his motivating principle is that he knows better than other people.

All this talk of a potential third party candidate like Bloomberg, as well as predictions of brokered convention on the Republican side are all adding up to be 'nirvana' for the media, [says](#) *The Fix*. They comment that it's a bit indulgent to devote too much attention to such speculative plotlines at this point – especially when they are not that useful to voters.



Former New York Mayor, Michael Bloomberg  
Credit: UNclimatechange (Flickr, CC-BY-2.0)

## The New Hampshire Primary

Tuesday this week saw the New Hampshire primary – the first in the 2016 election season. In the lead up, *The Fix* [comments](#) that for billionaire Donald Trump on the GOP, or for Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders on the Democratic side, to not come out on top would require a very big surprise given their recent polling. *United Liberty* [says](#) that the polls in New Hampshire have created a 'political narrative perfect storm' for the GOP, with Trump's lead being 'all over the place', and four candidates apparently fighting it out over second place. Perhaps all of the polling uncertainty is being caused by the 'ridiculous' number of people on the New Hampshire primary ballot, as reported by *The Fix*. They [write](#) that all told, all told there are 58 people on the Democratic and Republican ballots combined. Apparently all that separates anyone from running is \$1,000 and some paperwork.

Following the primary, which was indeed won by Trump and Sanders, *Hit & Run* [comments](#) that their respective victories is a rebuke of the political status quo. They argue that both candidates are running campaigns that are explicitly anti-establishment and anti-Washington, and that are tapping into voters' anger about politics and cronyism. *The Atlantic* echoes this, [writing](#) that New Hampshire had another winner, in that democracy has triumphed over the tight grip of oligarchy on the American political system – at least for now. *Red State*, meanwhile reckons that the biggest winner from New Hampshire was Hillary Clinton – despite the fact that she lost to Sanders by 20 points. They [argue](#) that this is the first and last primary state Sanders will win, and that Clinton is itching to face Donald Trump in a general election, given that his unfavorable ratings are even higher than hers.

Despite what some – especially those in the Granite State – have been saying, New Hampshire doesn't actually pick presidents. *Red State* [reminds](#) us that in every contested primary since 1992 New Hampshire has picked a candidate who has either lost their party's nomination or the general election.

## The Democrats' 2016 campaign

With Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton close in the polls – and in the early primaries – we could be in for a relatively long Democratic primary season. *Political Animal* [reckons](#) that could be a good thing; recalling 2008's long campaign which saw Obama aggressively organize against Clinton, which led to his campaign being stronger for the general election.

As rivals, Clinton and Sanders are quick to point out how different they are from one another. But as Senate colleagues (as they were from 2000 to 2009, they disagreed on very little – noting the same way more than 93 percent of the time – writes *The Fix*.

*Daily Kos* [says](#) that no one seems to be talking about the negative effect on Latino voter turnout that immigration enforcement may be having. With many undocumented immigrants afraid to open the door in fear of deportation, they will not be opening up to election canvassers.

Do the Democrats have an enthusiasm problem in this election season? *The Fix* [says](#) that they might, with Iowa caucus and New Hampshire primary turnout significantly down on its 2008 levels, and Republicans looking much more enthusiastic about voting in November.



On Thursday, *PoliticusUSA* has the [news](#) that over 140,000 supporters of Bernie Sanders have signed a petition which demands that Democratic super delegates (who are free to change their minds no matter what the primary results are) honor the results of the popular vote.

### The Democrats' 6th debate

On Thursday evening Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders met for the 6<sup>th</sup> Democratic debate in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. *The Fix* [says](#) that Hillary Clinton was the big winner, and that this was the best debate of the election, with the former Secretary of State being in control all night. *Post Politics* on the other hand [writes](#) that Sanders won on points, but did not 'take any of Clinton's turf'. *Political Animal* [reckons](#) that the debate showed that Sanders has a clear vision for his candidacy, while Clinton has more of a 'no we can't attitude' towards his grand ideas.

*PoliticusUSA*, meanwhile, has [five reasons](#) to be glad you watched the debate, including that it showed that both candidates agreed on the goal of universal healthcare, and that it made the contrasts between how they both use (or don't use, in Sanders' case), SuperPACs. *Hit & Run* [comments](#) that Sanders' best moments were on foreign policy issues, with the Vermont Senator criticizing Clinton for her Senate vote in favor of the Iraq War, and his support for aggressive US foreign policy. *Red State* [says](#) that the debate was just 'two old white people yell[ing] at each other'. Turning to the two candidates, then:

### Hillary Clinton

- Why can't Clinton find a good answer on her links with Goldman Sachs? She may not actually have one ( [The Fix](#) )
- Women aren't buying Clinton's line that they should vote for her because she would be the first woman president ( [Red State](#) ).
- Feminist activist and former Secretary of State Madeline Albright recently criticized women who did not plan to vote for Hillary Clinton – no-one involved with the subsequent 'flap' over the comments has much to be proud of ( [The Fix](#) ).
- Will Clinton be able to convince voters that they're not just settling? ( [The Atlantic](#) ).
- Given her difficulties with beating Bernie Sanders, is Clinton's campaign on the verge of a meltdown? ( [Powerline](#) )
- Is Clinton's biggest campaign problem....Hillary Clinton? ( [The Fix](#) )
- With a new State Department inquiry into her private email server, Clinton's already bad post-New Hampshire week got worse ( [The Fix](#) )...
- ... though Clinton might be able to get out of her email woes through her rhetorical acumen ( [The Federalist](#) )

- Clinton lost in New Hampshire this week – we shouldn't assume that she'll win in Nevada next Saturday ([The Fix](#))...
- ... or is she still in good shape after her New Hampshire loss? ([Mischiefs of Faction](#))
- What was noticeable about Clinton's New Hampshire loss was the generational split; she lost young women to Sanders by more than 60 points ([Hit & Run](#)).
- In the wake of her loss, Clinton has been trying to stop the Sanders surge ([The Atlantic](#)).
- Despite missing out on the support of many young people, the Black Establishment has chosen Clinton ([FiveThirtyEight](#)).

### Bernie Sanders



Former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton. Credit: LBJ Foundations (Flickr, CC-BY-2.0)



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

- Does the Vermont Senator have the lock on the youth vote? We may not know until Super Tuesday ([Political Animal](#)).
- Less than 18 hours after winning in New Hampshire, Sanders had smashed the fundraising record, raising \$5.2 million ([PoliticusUSA](#)).
- Why Sanders' New Hampshire win was historically massive ([The Fix](#)).
- Sanders won decisively in the Granite State, but he's still well behind the eight-ball in terms of delegates compared to Clinton ([Political Animal](#))...
- ...and there's still zero evidence of his intended 'political revolution' ([Wonkblog](#)).
- Sanders is facing a tough series of primaries in March, but he might be able to survive by targeting big states with fewer minority votes such as Illinois and Ohio ([The Fix](#)).

- Sanders is actually Obama's real successor – and that's bad for everyone ([The Federalist](#)).

## The Republican Party's 2016 campaign

On Sunday, *The Atlantic* [says](#) that there are now three demographic of supporters for GOP presidential candidates to support; evangelical conservatives, and non-evangelicals with and without a college degree. How different are Senators Ted Cruz of Texas and Marco Rubio of Florida? *Roll Call's Hawkings Here* [comments](#) that while they do differ in style, in terms of Senate votes, there's not all that much between them (nor between them both and other GOP Senators). Cruz and Rubio aside, it's time for the GOP to treat Donald Trump as the frontrunner [argues FiveThirtyEight](#), given that his performance in the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primary echoes that of past Republican presidential candidates like Mitt Romney.

Reflecting on the New Hampshire result, *The Fix* [argues](#) that it's difficult to imagine it going any worse for establishment GOP, given that rather than Marco Rubio coming second after Trump, there was a three-way split between Rubio, former Florida Governor, Jeb Bush and Rubio for that side of the party. *Outside the Beltway* [writes](#) in a similar vein, commenting that while Trump won in New Hampshire, the GOP is still not sure who the 'anti-Trump' candidate should be.

On Wednesday, *The Fix* has the interesting [observation](#) that 4 of the 7 people who have led the Republican race – New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, Kentucky Senator Rand Paul, and Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker – are now out of it.

## The Republican Party's 8th debate

Saturday night saw seven Republican presidential candidates meet for the party's 8<sup>th</sup> debate in Manchester, New Hampshire:

- Ahead of time, *The Fix* [examines](#) what they say are the top 7 issues in the debate, including the economic recovery, immigration, and supporting the eventual nominee.
- The moderators didn't do the best job of introducing the candidates on Saturday night ([Crooks & Liars](#)).
- The debate was something of a disaster for Marco Rubio who gave the same answer four times, and was steamrolled for it by Chris Christie ([Daily Kos](#))...
- ...which then led to the Florida Senator's name spiking on social media ([The Fix](#)).
- If Rubio was the debate's biggest loser, then Ted Cruz and Jeb Bush were the winners ([Red State](#)).
- *The Fix* [agrees](#) on Rubio being the loser, but calls our attention to the growing Cruz-Trump 'bromance' which was on display during the debate.
- The five worst foreign policy moments of the debate ([Informed Comment](#)).

Looking on commentary on the GOP candidates themselves, and starting with The Donald:

## Donald Trump

- Trump won just about every group in New Hampshire this week ([The Fix](#))
- The New York billionaire can now apparently count a white supremacist Super PAC as among his supporters ([Red State](#)).
- Given how badly Trump seems to be running his campaign, does he actually want to be president? ([Crooks & Liars](#))

- Former president Jimmy Carter thinks that Trump would make a better president than Cruz. Why? He's malleable ([Informed Comment](#)).
- He's also the establishment candidate – like other politicians, he takes his voters for granted ([The Federalist](#))
- Speaking of his views on torture, Trump this week said that he would authorize measures which go 'beyond waterboarding' ([The Fix](#)).
- Trump repeated the word 'pussy' when a woman at a Trump rally used the term to describe Ted Cruz. Apparently it's one of the least awful things he's said ([Hit & Run](#)).
- How West Virginia explains Trump's political success ([The Fix](#)).
- Explaining the unexpected breadth of Trump's appeal ([The Atlantic](#))
- Does Trump represent the end of 'the end of history'? ([Wonkblog](#))



### Ted Cruz

- Will the Texas Senator's conservatism fly with voters this year? ([Townhall](#))
- Why the next five weeks are looking very good for Cruz ([The Fix](#)).
- Cruz's wife Heidi this week reassured voters in South Carolina that Cruz is a theocrat ([America blog](#))

### Marco Rubio

- Did Rubio's 'robotic' debate performance doom him in the Granite State? Only he knows for sure ([The Fix](#))
- Despite the GOP establishment's hopes that Marco Rubio will have crossover appeal to conservatives and moderates, Rubio is definitely more the former than the latter ([Daily Kos](#))...
- ... something which was illustrated by his comments this week that victims of rape should have their rapists' babies rather than have an abortion ([FreakOutNation](#))
- After his debate debacle, Rubio's more conservative foes in the media are seeing hope ([Post Politics](#))
- Though some think that he is likely to rebound quickly ([Red State](#)).
- Despite his conservative critics, Rubio is still the best chance the Republican Party has at the presidency ([The Federalist](#))...
- ... which may require a brokered convention according to the candidate himself ([Daily Kos](#))
- Rubio was confronted in New Hampshire this week by a gay man who asked him if he wanted to 'put him back in the closet' ([Post Politics](#))

### John Kasich

- The Ohio Governor had a great week, placing second in New Hampshire; his success is mostly down to gaining the votes of moderates ([The Fix](#)).
- Kasich is the anti-Trump ([FiveThirtyEight](#))
- Some argued this week that Kasich was continuing this week to make deceptive claims about Obamacare in South Carolina ([The Federalist](#))

## Jeb Bush

- Can former president, George W. Bush save his brother by campaigning in South Carolina? ([Raw Story](#))
- Jeb's Super PAC is pouring \$1.7 million into ad buys in South Carolina ahead of the February 20<sup>th</sup> primary ([Post Politics](#))

## Chris Christie

- Is Chris Christie too close to Hillary Clinton? ([Red State](#))
- After his thrashing of Marco Rubio in Saturday night's debate, some were talking of the triumphant return of the New Jersey Governor ([The Atlantic](#))...
- ...but it was sadly not to be with Christie pulling out of the race Wednesday after placing 6<sup>th</sup> in New Hampshire ([Outside the Beltway](#))
- Christie's campaign was ill-timed and unremarkable ([The Fix](#))...
- ... and it failed because he was too moderate, and his 'tell it like it is' brand was usurped by Donald Trump ([FiveThirtyEight](#))
- Christie's national legacy is one of bipartisanship with Democrats ([Power Line](#))



## Ben Carson

- Despite numerous calls for him to quit, the former neurosurgeon says he can't leave the race, because of calls from supporters for him to stay in ([Outside the Beltway](#))

## The rest

- Former Hewlett Packard executive, Carly Fiorina dropped out of the race after finishing 7<sup>th</sup> in New Hampshire ([Outside the Beltway](#))

## Government, the Beltway and Congress' agenda

On Friday, [The Atlantic](#) writes that Attorney General, Loretta Lynch has announced that the Department of Justice will be suing the city of Ferguson, Missouri, after an agreement after the municipality failed to address concerns that it had violated federal law and the First, Fourth and Fourteenth amendments.

[Red State](#) reports this week that the Supreme Court has halted the implementation of President Obama's Clean Power plan, which would place restrictions on coal-fired power plants. They say that the Court has blocked the plan until a court has heard the case against it sometime this summer.

Turning to Congress, the [Mischiefs of Faction](#) reminds us that the body is a part-time legislature given that many legislators are often fundraising, often spending up to four hours a day on the phone to donor compared to two doing actual Congressional business.

[The Fix](#) says that House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) is facing the biggest test of his tenure thus far – his own budget. They comment that GOP leaders in Congress want to start discussions over the 2017 budget at the spending levels

of last year's deal, a \$30 billion increase. This has House conservatives up in arms, given that they opposed last year's spending bill. Moving to the Senate, *The Daily Signal* [reports](#) that the GOP-controlled body was on the verge of appointing another judge nominated by President Obama, in the form of Rebecca Ebinger for a district judge position in Iowa. The appointment comes on the heels of a deal made between GOP and Democratic leaders in December brokered by Chuck Grassley (R-IA) which will see the approval of Obama's nominees up to this coming Monday.

### Foreign policy, defense and trade

On Saturday, *Power Line* [wonders](#) when support for Israel became such a political issue, given that for a very long time there was a bipartisan consensus on sympathy with the country. Now, they say, fewer than 50 percent of Democrats say that they sympathize with Israelis over the Palestinians compared to 83 percent of Republicans.



House Speaker Paul Ryan Credit: Gage Skidmore (Creative Commons BY SA)

Would any of the top candidates on either side of the aisle stop America from being 'World Police'? *Hit & Run* [writes](#) that while the GOP candidates would increase military expending (except for Trump who would hold it steady), both Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton would at least keep spending at its current levels. *The Atlantic* meanwhile [looks](#) at the very different views of Sanders and Trump on foreign policy. While Trump want to keep the world out through building walls and removing foreign influences, while Sanders wants to challenge the idea of American exceptionalism by looking to Europe for inspiration on social policies.

Dan Drezner, a well-known professor of international politics at Tufts University recently wrote that Donald Trump is a champion of the realist view of foreign policy. *Monkey Cage* [says](#) that he's wrong, and that the real champion is actually Barack Obama, who in recent years has signaled his administration's reluctance to intervene overseas after long-running involvements in Iraq and Afghanistan. *Political Violence @ a Glance* [talks](#) on how the US should respond to terrorist attacks, arguing that for the most part the US devotes too many resources to anticipating, preventing and responding to such attacks.

*Red State* [says](#) that the humiliation of the US has continued under the Obama administration, as Iran broadcast images to the wider Persian Gulf of a weeping US soldier who was taken prisoner (and later released) by Iran in July.

### Obamacare and health policy

In January's state of the union address, President Obama announced that Vice-President Joe Biden would be leading a 'moonshot' initiative to end cancer. *The Atlantic* [looks](#) at what the \$1 billion initiative would actually entail, writing that the effort may be able increase coordination between drug companies, but is not likely (by Biden's own admission) to be a 'silver bullet' cure.

*Post Politics* [reports](#) that the Obama administration is to ask Congress for \$1.8 billion to fight the Zika virus abroad, and to prepare for it in the US. They say that the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention has also gone on high alert, with more than 300 staff there working to monitor and coordinate a response to the virus.



Credit: Neon Tommy (CC-BY- SA-2.0)

Moving on to Medicaid, *Lonely Conservative* [writes](#) that in states which have expanded the program, Obamacare's loosened eligibility requirements mean that those with net worths which can be measured in the millions are able to register. Speaking of Obamacare, *The Daily Signal* [says](#) that \$750 million of the program's tax credits may have ended up going to 500,000 people who were not eligible, including many illegal immigrants, according to a new Senate report.

One of the cornerstones of Bernie Sanders' healthcare reform proposals is universal healthcare. *PoliticoUSA* [argues](#) that the US can't have universal healthcare – as Europeans do – simply because Americans are not interested in paying the higher taxes which would go with it.

*Wonkblog* looks at [three very American reasons](#) why people in the US are so unhealthy – drugs, guns and motor vehicle accidents.

### **The economy and society**

Much of the discussion around the state of the economy touches on the fact that for most, wages have been stagnant in recent years. *The Atlantic* [looks](#) at one group which is getting raises – those full-time workers who are switching jobs.

On Wednesday, *Wonkblog* [reports](#) that the financially embattled US territory of Puerto Rico is considering a new proposal to ease its financial crisis. The plan would protect the holders of \$7.6 billion in senior bonds issued by a government entity, and would limit interest payments for the next four years, but extend them into the future.

*The Hill's Congress blog* [writes](#) this week that the recently agreed Trans-Pacific Partnership deal is not a problem for US jobs, as some of the deal's critics have argued. They comment that many American jobs hang in the balance because of a lack of skilled talent in the country – not because of trade with Pacific Rim countries.

Moving on to prison policy, *Wonkblog* [says](#) that recent years have seen a large decline in the black incarceration rate, but that almost no one has been paying attention.

Recent months have seen a great deal of attention focused on the water quality crisis in Flint, Michigan. *Daily Kos* [comments](#) that Flint's crisis reflects the wider country's water problem with many streams tapped by water utilities covering 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the population not even covered by clean water laws, and many lead pipes still remaining despite their being banned three decades ago.

On Friday, *FiveThirtyEight* [writes](#) that according to a new survey, college freshmen are more politically engaged than they have been in decades, with a greater chance that they would be willing to take part in a student protest than in previous years.

Featured [image](#) John Kasich 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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