

Trump and Clinton railroad through the ‘Acela Primary’, Cruz/Kasich alliance falters, and the GOP’s bathroom obsession: US national blog roundup for 23 – 29 April

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

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The 2016 Campaign and the Acela Primary

On Saturday, *The Atlantic* [writes](#) that the candidates left in the presidential race are now beginning to vet their potential vice-presidents. This process seems to be happening rather late compared to previous elections, mostly because no-one is yet 100 percent certain who the presumptive nominee will be.

This primary season has been marked by claims by both left and right that the current system is ‘broken’. Well, *Political Animal* has [five easy steps](#) to fix the primary system, beginning with eliminating caucuses, and mandating semi-open primaries. *Townhall* echoes some of the aforementioned negative feeling, [arguing](#) this week that with all the talk about transgender bathrooms, the election season is getting ‘crappier’ by the minute.

On Monday, *Political Animal* [discusses](#) ‘missing voters’ – the idea that millions fewer whites are voting in each presidential election than in the preceding one. They say that Texas Senator, Ted Cruz is using this idea as part of his campaign strategy, as is Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders. Unlike Cruz, Sanders has been pushing the idea for decades, arguing that missing voters are actually those on low incomes. Talking about voters, *Hit & Run* [says](#) that ‘women’s issues’ are dominating this year’s slew of presidential campaign ads; 61 percent of former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s ads reference issues like gender equality, 29 percent of Bernie Sanders’ do, and Ted Cruz’s ads come in at 17 percent.



Credit: Chad (Flickr, CC-BY-NC-SA)

Speaking of Hillary Clinton, *RedState* [writes](#) this week that if she does win in the fall, then the blame should fall on Donald Trump's supporters, given that recent polls show that she would win against him. Ted Cruz, on the other hand, would have a much better chance of winning against Clinton, and is only 3 percentage points behind her in general election matchups. *Daily Kos* [suggests](#) that Trump's strategy against Clinton, if he does face her in the general – is likely to be one of 'misogyny, misogyny, misogyny'.

The Atlantic, meanwhile [writes](#) this week that the presidential election has been marked by unusually consistent cultural loyalties – Sanders dominates among the young, Clinton with older voters, while New York billionaire Donald Trump has a 'deep groove' of support across conservatives, men, and some evangelicals. *Monkey Cage* [reminds](#) us that the populist support for Trump and Sanders is nothing new – populism has been a strong part of presidential campaigns for half a century or more.

One of Trump's refrains is that he will 'Make America Great Again'. But when was America great? *The Upshot* [says](#) that it turns out that the answer to that question depends on who you ask. On Friday, *Monkey Cage* [writes](#) that the most underappreciated aspect of this year's election is that Americans actually feel good about the economy – the best since the mid-2000s, in fact.

On Tuesday, *Hit & Run* [argues](#) that the suggestion this week from *Politico* founder, Jim VandeHei that a third party candidate could have a chance in the fall is a 'bizarre fantasy'.

Moving on to downballot races, *Sabato's Crystal Ball* [writes](#) Thursday that despite the seeming chaos of the presidential race, incumbency is still a powerful force in this year's House primaries.

The 'Acela Primary'

This week saw presidential primaries in Connecticut Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island – the so-called 'Acela primary' after the high speed train which runs through the northeast. Ahead of Tuesday's contests,

FiveThirtyEight [predicts](#) that Donald Trump will likely ‘run over’ Cruz and Ohio Governor, John Kasich in the northeast. *The Atlantic* [wonders](#) if the Democrats’ frontrunner Clinton – like Trump – will be able to sweep the east. *Townhall* meanwhile [warns](#) us to keep the primary in perspective – if Trump wins up to 123 of the 173 delegates at stake across the five states, it will not increase his chances of winning the nomination, given that such a win is already built into projections about his chances. *Smart Politics* [meanwhile](#) reckons that Rhode Island might be about to hold its first ever competitive Republican primary contest.

As expected, the “Trump express” steamrolled its way through the Acela corridor, with Trump winning in all five states, [according](#) to *Powerline*. Celebrating his sweep, Trump declared himself the “presumptive nominee” late on Tuesday [reports](#) *Political Mojo*. *RedState* [reckons](#) that despite Trump’s sweep, the primary results changed little, given that Trump was expected to do well. Hillary Clinton did nearly as well, winning all states but Rhode Island, [writes](#) *PoliticusUSA* effectively knocking Bernie Sanders out of the Democratic nomination race.

Daily Kos has the surprising [story](#) Wednesday that a GOP pollster was 96 percentage points off in a state Delegate race in Maryland.

Powerline [looks ahead](#) to next week’s primary in the Hoosier State. They say that if Trump has a strong performance in Indiana that may help him to secure the nomination. *Caffeinated Politics* [wonders](#) where the state’s GOP Governor, Mike Pence is. People want to know, is he with Trump, or against him? *Smart Politics* [comments](#) that this will be only the second consequential GOP primary for Indiana since 1956. *FiveThirtyEight* [reckons](#) that Indiana is weird, and that it’s actually quite hard to predict how it will vote in the upcoming primary. On Friday, *RedState* [reports](#) that Mike Pence has in fact endorsed Ted Cruz, though he seems reluctant to actively campaign for the Texas Senator.

The Democratic Campaign and the Candidates

On Monday, *PoliticusUSA* [writes](#) that a new poll has shown millennials’ support for Democrats has doubled – something they attribute to the group’s hatred of Donald Trump.

Moving on to what the two candidates have been up to this past week:

Hillary Clinton

- Hillary Clinton wants your guns ([Powerline](#))
- Senator Chuck Grassley (R-AI) indirectly urged someone at the FBI to leak the details of their investigation into Clinton’s private email server ([PoliticusUSA](#))
- While Clinton continues to claim she did nothing wrong in using a private email server while she was Secretary of State, the money trail shows otherwise ([The Federalist](#))
- Clinton apparently helped keep Haiti’s minimum wage at 61 cents an hour when she ran the State Department ([The Lonely Conservative](#))
- Some of Clinton’s potential running mates were discussed this week – among them Julián Castro, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development ([No more mister nice blog](#))



Credit: Hillary for America (Flickr, CC-BY-NC-SA-2.0)

- But why not current Vice President Joe Biden? ([America blog](#))
- Nearly 20 percent of Republicans will vote for Hillary Clinton if Donald Trump wins the GOP nomination ([PoliticusUSA](#))
- Clinton might well have the support of one of the Koch brothers too ([Informed Comment](#))
- Despite some describing her as a ‘Wall Street puppet’, Clinton is actually well-versed in dealing with the banks ([PoliticusUSA](#))
- Clinton has promised that her cabinet will be 50 percent women ([Crooks & Liars](#))
- Of course Clinton is playing the ‘Woman card’ ([White House Dossier](#))
- How Clinton can win the presidency – the right way? ([The Atlantic](#))
- But how can Clinton run on a bad economy? ([Powerline](#))
- After her Acela primary victories Clinton reached out to Bernie Sanders in her victory speech ([Crooks & Liars](#))
- Apparently campaign reporters really don’t like Hillary Clinton ([Kevin Drum](#))
- If the Democratic primary were being held under the GOP’s rules, Clinton’s delegate lead over Sanders would triple ([FiveThirtyEight](#))

Bernie Sanders

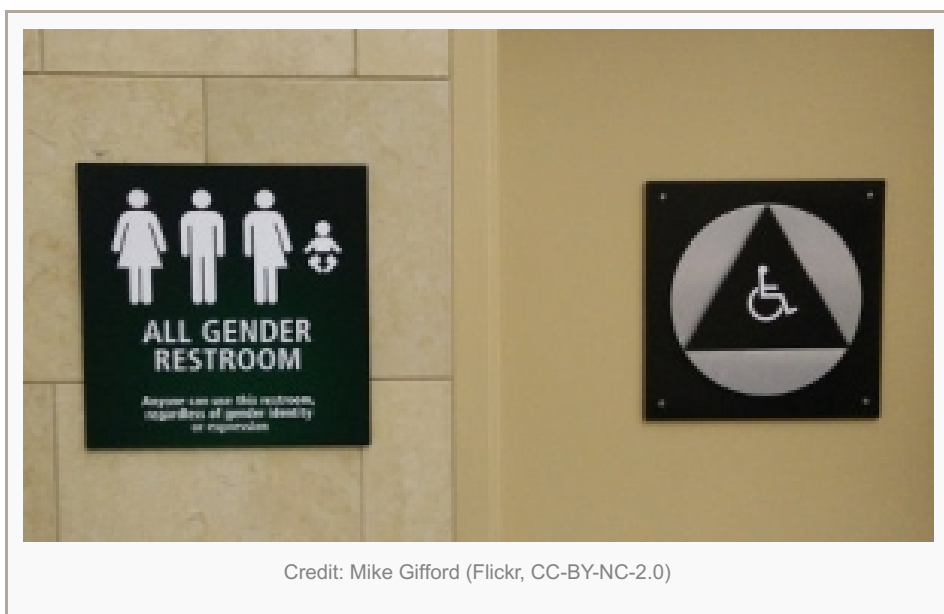
- This week the Vermont Senator stated that he has been unable to assail Hillary Clinton’s lead because “poor people don’t vote” ([RedState](#))
- Sanders has been arguing that the superdelegates who came out in support for Hillary Clinton now deserve a chance to change their minds ([PoliticusUSA](#))
- He also needs open primaries, because he’s not winning the Democrats who do vote ([Mischiefs of Faction](#))
- Sanders also pledged to do everything that he could to help Democrats to beat Donald Trump in the fall ([PoliticusUSA](#))
- Sanders wants to legalize marijuana – and maybe even ban cigarettes ([Hit & Run](#))
- How Sanders is profoundly changing how millennials think about politics ([Wonkblog](#))
- Since it now seems he can’t win the Democratic nomination, he’s setting a new goal of winning the soul of the party in its post-Obama era ([PoliticusUSA](#))
- How it’s the duty of every Sanders supporter to vote for Hillary Clinton ([Americablog](#))

- He's also succeeded already in pushing Hillary Clinton to the left ([Informed Comment](#))
- Bernie Sanders does in fact have a foreign policy vision. ([Monkey Cage](#))
- Following his rout in the Acela primary, Sanders has begun laying off campaign staffers in the hundreds ([Political Mojo](#))...
- ... which makes sense, given that at this point a comeback would be unprecedented ([FiveThirtyEight](#))
- So what is Sanders' end game? ([Political Animal](#))

The Republican Campaign and the Candidates

On Saturday, [RedState](#) [argues](#) that a Trump White House win isn't one that it's worth they party having. They say that the New York billionaire is 'nothing but a political hack', and that his winning the presidency would cost the party its conservative principles. *American Thinker*, meanwhile [says](#) that the current conservative movement is in crisis, something that Donald Trump has helped to make happen, and continues to encourage. Talking about a GOP realignment, [Monkey Cage](#) [comments](#) that on issues such as immigration and trade, Republican elites, and not Donald Trump are actually out of step with voters.

Do you think the GOP sucks? Well, *The Federalist* [agrees](#). Though they say that it's not as bad as everyone seems to think. [Kevin Drum](#), meanwhile [comments](#) that a new survey shows that Republicans don't seem very happy with the 21st century, preferring the 20th, when "old white folks ruled the country". *Caffeinated Politics* also [talks](#) the GOP, writing that the party is now reaping the results of the anti-intellectualism it's sowed, in the form of Donald Trump. *American Thinker*, meanwhile, [wonders](#) if Trump winning the nomination will help Republican leaders to 'grow a spine', after being batted away for years by the Democrats over issues such as Hillary Clinton's emails and the IRS scandal.



Following the fight in Houston over the transgender Equal Rights Ordinance, and North Carolina's HB2 'bathroom bill', conservatives now seem obsessed with bathrooms. *Political Animal* [tracks](#) the history of this fixation, commenting that it dates back at least to the Equal Rights Amendment. Citing issues such as the Republicans' bathroom obsession, *PoliticusUSA* [writes](#) Thursday that no matter how 'insane' the GOP gets, the media seems to ignore it. These sorts of issues may be contributing to making the GOP unpopular; *Daily Kos* [says](#) that the party's favorability rating has slipped to a more than 20 year low, with 62 percent of the public having an unfavorable impression of the party.

No more mister nice blog [comments](#) Sunday that Ted Cruz's efforts to 'finagle' a win on the second ballot of the GOP

convention in Cleveland might end up giving Donald Trump a win on the first, with voters worrying that the Texas Senator is guilty of 'insider corruption' to get delegates. *American Thinker* [tries](#) to debunk six myths about the Republican primaries, from that the system is too complex for anyone to understand, to if Trump doesn't get 1,237 on the first ballot at the convention, he can't win. *RedState* on the other hand, [reckons](#) that getting 1,237 bound delegates in the primaries is no guarantee that Trump will win – the actual votes could change on the convention floor.

A big development this week was the 'alliance' between Ted Cruz and Ohio Governor, John Kasich to stop Trump. *The Atlantic* [writes](#) that the two candidates agreed to collaborate against The Donald in Indiana, Oregon, and New Mexico. On Monday, *FiveThirtyEight* [wonders](#) if the Kasich-Cruz alliance will actually work. *The Upshot*, meanwhile [says](#) that the deal has the potential to stop Trump. After less than a day though, *Political Mojo* [reports](#) that the deal is unravelling with neither candidate having told voters in the states in question to support the other candidate. *Hit & Run* [says](#) that even though Donald Trump has swept the five states of the 'Acela primary', the Republican Party will continue to fracture, with tactics like the doomed Kasich-Cruz pact accelerating the breakup. *Red State* [reckons](#) that whatever happens at the convention, the Republican Party will be "left on life support *at best*": a Trump nomination will "result in a mass exodus from the party", while if Ted Cruz wins the nomination, Trump supporters will tear down what remains of the GOP. The GOP are now resigned to Trump being their nominee, [says](#) *Outside the Beltway*.

Daily Kos [comments](#) on Thursday that it's hard to be a Republican woman while Donald Trump is calling the shots in the party; any women in the GOP's senior leadership just don't want to talk about Trump.

Voteview [drills down](#) in discussing the split in the GOP to the House level, writing that though they are likely to keep the House, a Republican caucus of around 220 members post-election (as some are predicting), would be less likely to be cooperative in passing appropriations bills than they are now. *FiveThirtyEight* [reports](#) that Republicans in competitive House, Senate, and gubernatorial elections this year are distancing themselves from Trump.

Turning now to the GOP's candidates, and beginning with The Donald:

Donald Trump

- Why Trump can't win the nomination, in one easy lesson ([RedState](#))
- ...though he may only be two states from victory ([The Upshot](#))
- If he wins in Indiana next week, the nomination is Trump's to lose ([FiveThirtyEight](#))
- If Ted Cruz wins, will Indiana put an end to Trumpmania? ([Townhall](#))
- But maybe Trump doesn't need Indiana at all anyway? ([The Upshot](#))
- Why those that support Ted Cruz shouldn't give up in the face of Trump's apparent inevitability ([Red State](#))
- Is Trump actually the presumptive nominee at all? ([Townhall](#))
- Would Trump winning the nomination be his own worst nightmare? ([The American Prospect](#))
- If Trump is to be stopped, then his false narratives must be countered ([Townhall](#))
- Will rioters hand the election to Donald Trump? ([Powerline](#))
- Are the media inflating Trump's delegate numbers? ([Red State](#))



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- Two thoughts on Trump's chances in the fall: more educated voters may desert him, or those who are worried about trade may flock to him ([TPM](#))
- How Trump is similar – and different – to Richard Nixon ([Tropics of Meta](#))
- A recent speech by Trump shows his tendency to pander to racists and bigots ([RedState](#))...
- ...and he's not likely to tone down his rhetoric anytime soon either ([Crooks & Liars](#))
- Mary Pat Christie's gave Trump's sexism the "eye roll of the campaign" this week ([Daily Kos](#))
- How Trump is harming the GOP with his racist, anti-immigrant rants ([Caffeinated Politics](#))
- Trump may be worth a lot less than he claims to be ([RedState](#))
- Trump stated this week that he will not campaign for the eventual GOP nominee, if it's not him ([RedState](#))
- Trump called for unity, and then told the GOP he doesn't need their unity ([PoliticusUSA](#))
- Trump is not a big fan of the way that John Kasich eats ([Crooks & Liars](#))
- Donald Trump won't do any more debates – why not? ([American Thinker](#))
- Six reasons why Donald Trump isn't fit to be president ([Townhall](#))
- Despite the claims of some, Trump is not over 50 percent in national polling ([RedState](#))
- How Trump is the candidate of American decline ([Informed Comment](#))
- Despite statements that Trump would be acting 'more presidential', there seems to be few signs that this is actually happening ([Crooks & Liars](#))
- Trump actually is a "crude, ill-bred, uncouth dimwit" ([Red State](#))
- Trump gave a major foreign policy speech Wednesday – it turns out his foreign policy does not improve when it's read for a teleprompter ([Kevin Drum](#))
- Others reckon that Trump's foreign policy plans are 'incoherent' ([The Atlantic](#))
- Five glaring contradictions in Trump's foreign policy speech ([The Federalist](#))
- How Trump's foreign policy is just "GOP boilerplate", only more confused ([Informed Comment](#))
- Trump didn't actually oppose the Iraq War... ([Kevin Drum](#))
- ...though he doesn't seem to be aware that the US invaded Iraq first ([Crooks & Liars](#))

- Why the Texas Senator's unbound delegates may end up backing Trump at the convention ([White House Dossier](#))
- Ted Cruz's ground game may not be as great as some say it is ([Red State](#))
- Is Cruz too conservative to stop Donald Trump ([FiveThirtyEight](#))
- Cruz loyalists this week swept all of Maine's at-large delegates ([Red State](#))
- Cruz's announcement of former Hewlett-Packard executive, Carly Fiorina shows that he knows his campaign is in trouble ([Hit & Run](#))
- Fiorina burst into song during Cruz's announcement this week ([Crooks & Liars](#))
- Five reasons Cruz chose Fiorina to be his Veep ([Townhall](#))
- Can Carly Fiorina save Cruz's candidacy? ([FiveThirtyEight](#))
- ... and is she the answer to Cruz's "woman problem"? ([Daily Kos](#))
- Fiorina is actually a gift from Cruz to Hillary Clinton ([Crooks & Liars](#))
- Former House Speaker, John Boehner described Ted Cruz as 'Lucifer' this week – but Lucifer has more friends ([Daily Kos](#))
- Cruz scored a win against a millennial this week who asked the Senator to sign his copy of *The Communist Manifesto* ([Red State](#))



John Kasich

- Why the Ohio Governor is the dumbest man in America ([Red State](#))
- Kasich claimed to be vetting potential vice-presidential candidates this week ([Crooks & Liars](#))
- If Kasich does not quit the primary race, then Trump will win on the first convention ballot ([Red State](#))

The Obama Administration

On Sunday, [PoliticoUSA reports](#) that the Obama administration has announced a new process from the Department of Education to identify and assist federal student loan borrowers with disabilities who may be eligible for a loan discharge. This means that many older Americans who receive Social Security benefits will no longer have these benefits skimmed for student loan repayments.

Is the Obama administration anti-science? [Red State](#) thinks so. They [argue](#) that those on the left are in favor of raising the minimum, despite the fact that math dictates that this will mean fewer people are hired, and that the science on climate change is far from settled.

Early on in Obama's presidency, there was some controversy over the removal of a bust of UK World War II Prime Minister, Winston Churchill from the Oval Office, which had been there during the presidency of George W. Bush. [Kevin Drum explains](#) that Obama decided to replace the bust with one of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

[White House Dossier](#), meanwhile, [accuses](#) President Obama of 'whining' for not getting credit for the economy, even

as it sits barely above recession.

The Beltway and the Supreme Court

On Tuesday, *The Hill's Congress blog* [calls](#) on policymakers on Capitol Hill and the White House to fix the country's "ailing international tax system". They say that countries in the OECD are attempting to grab more taxes from US companies operating abroad, which will shrink the taxes that those companies will pay at home. *The Federalist* meanwhile, complains that no-one seems to care about the federal debt, despite the fact that it is very important. They [argue](#) that by 2035, interest on the debt will be the country's second-largest expenditure.



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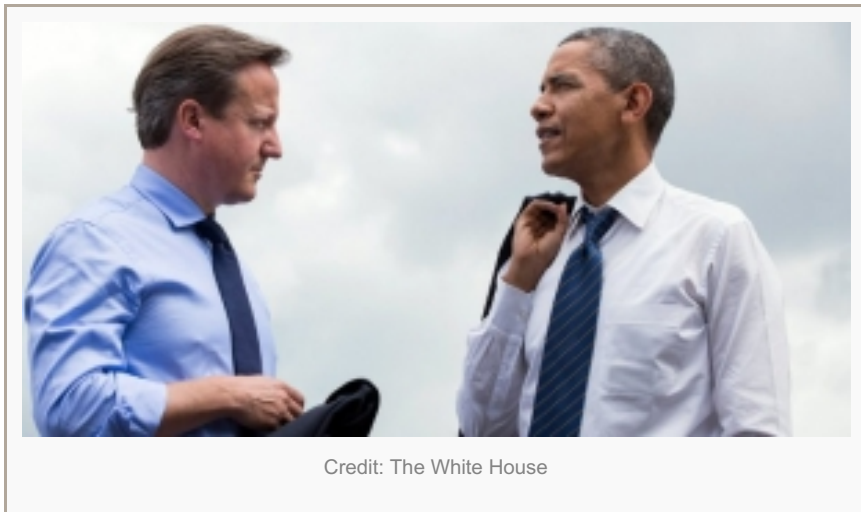
Turning to Congress, *The Atlantic* this week [writes](#) on the increasing irrelevance of the Congressional Black Caucus, commenting that it has clashed with Black Lives Matter protestors and other activists who are concerned about the group's ties to private prisons and big tobacco.

The Daily Signal has [12 amendments](#) to watch for in the coming defense authorization fight in the House, including Russian rocket engines and women in combat. *Daily Kos* [reports](#) that the House Armed Services Committee has voted to re-legalize anti-gay discrimination by federal contractors, gutting President Obama's 2014 executive order barring gender discrimination in the federal government.

Moving on to the Senate, *Outside the Beltway* [says](#) that voters don't seem to care about the fight to fill the current vacant Supreme Court seat, meaning that incumbent Republicans aren't likely to pay much of a political price for refusing to hold hearings on President Obama's choice to fill the vacant seat, Merrick Garland.

Foreign policy, defense and trade

On Saturday, *Informed Comment* writes that the US is confused over Russia's real intentions in Syria. They [say](#) that while some US officials have warned that Russia's reassertion of military backing for Syrian President Bashar Assad means that the US should respond, while others have argued that the US should not escalate its involvement with Syria. *White House Dossier* [comments](#) that the State Department is now trying to deny its earlier pledge that that there would be "no boots on the ground" in places such as Syria and Iraq, after President Obama announced that 250 special operations troops would be going to Syria.



Obama has been pivoting back to Europe, [writes](#) *The American Interest*. They write that leadership from the president in this area is welcome, and will make it easier for his successor to make the case to the American people that pivoting back to the world is the best thing for the country to do. Talking of European issues, *Daily Kos* discusses why the UK's potential Brexit from the European Union matters to the US. They [say](#) that any change in Europe's economic balance will affect the US, and a Brexit would be a victory for the anti-immigration nativist crowd, which is a school of thought that is already too influential in the US already.

Talking of trade issues, Donald Trump [says](#) that NAFTA destroyed America, according to *Hit & Run*. They argue that he's not correct, given that in the decade and a half after the agreement passed, the US unemployment rate fell and wage rose.

Obamacare and health policy

On Monday, *Townhall* [argues](#) that patients should pay the price of health care, since when they rely on private insurance, Medicare or Medicaid to pay them, they forfeit their power as consumers, and doctors and hospitals have little incentive to lower prices.



The Federalist [writes](#) that it's time to stop bailing out Obamacare, given that enrollment is far below initial projections, and insurers are facing mounting losses. They say that the program's cost-sharing subsidies are actually unappropriated funds, which will cost the government \$130 billion over the next ten years. One of the health insurers facing mounting costs is UnitedHealthcare. They've responded by pulling out of Obamacare's exchanges. *The Daily Signal* [says](#) that the retreat means that consumers buying coverage on the exchanges will have fewer choices and less competition. *Townhall*, meanwhile [reckons](#) that Obamacare is bankrupting the country, with

national health expenditures approaching 20 percent of GDP.

This week House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) suggested that Obamacare's guarantee to accept anyone who applies and the community rating which guarantees the same price for all, could be rescinded. *Kevin Drum* [says](#) that this isn't a great idea, given that high-risk pools have a lousy history. *Daily Kos*, meanwhile [argues](#) that the market system seems to be working well for Obamacare, with most insurance companies that are involved making profits.

The economy and society

On Wednesday, *The Atlantic* [argues](#) that too many elite American men are obsessed with working hard and getting rich. In a piece that's definitely linked, *Wonkblog* [writes](#) that for women aged 21 to 24, the gender wage gap keeps getting worse.

The Upshot this week [thinks](#) on why productivity is so weak, and gives three theories, including that earlier waves of technology and management innovations have essentially been put into place. *The Atlantic* meanwhile [argues](#) that it's now basically impossible to revive US manufacturing to be the centerpiece of the US economy as it once was.



Credit: Kris (Flickr, CC-BY-2.0)

Hit & Run [looks](#) at a recent study which says that a few new gun laws could reduce gun deaths by over 90 percent. They conclude that the study's conclusions aren't really plausible.

The Atlantic this week [examines](#) the stubborn persistence of Confederate monuments across the US. They [say](#) that there are about 1,500 such monuments and that the fierce resistance to their removal shows that some of the issues which were at stake during the Civil War still remain unsettled.

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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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