

Trump's worst week, the Justice Department brings back asset forfeiture, and should the US be the world's 'rent-a-cop'? : US national blog roundup for 26 March – 1 April

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

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The 2016 Campaign

On Sunday, *The Fix* [comments](#) that the media are losing their handle on the election campaign, though they also reckon that they never had much of one in the first place; if it was up to the press, then Ohio Governor John Kasich would be the Republican Party's nominee.

Sabato's Crystal Ball [looks](#) at the Electoral College this week, writing that it's the only thing that really matters in this year's election. They say that in a speculative matchup between former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and New York billionaire Donald Trump, Clinton would likely come out on top with 347 electoral votes to Trump's 191.

The Democratic Campaign and the Candidates

Saturday saw Democratic primaries in Washington, Alaska and Hawaii, all won by Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders. *The Atlantic* [calls](#) the victories a 'stinging rebuke' for Hillary Clinton by voters, which shows that the primary is most definitely over yet.

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

Hillary Clinton

- GOP Congressman Carlos Curbelo stated that he would vote for Clinton over Trump, before quickly walking back his statement ([Crooks & Liars](#))
- Clinton's use of a private email server explains perfectly why people don't trust her ([Hit & Run](#))



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

- Speaking of Clinton's email server, a judge ruled against the State Department this week in a case between it and Judicial Watch ([The Daily Signal](#))
- Our complicated relationship with Clinton ([Americablog](#))
- There's little evidence that those backing Bernie Sanders wouldn't vote for Clinton in a general election ([The Atlantic](#))
- Clinton's going hyperlocal for her showdown with Sanders in the New York primary in a few weeks' time ([Post Politics](#))
- According to some, Clinton lost her temper with a Greenpeace activist at a rally Thursday ([Crooks & Liars](#))

Bernie Sanders

- Bernie and the bird ([FreakoutNation](#))
- At another rally in Wisconsin, Sanders heavily criticised the state's Governor, Scott Walker for making it harder to vote in the Badger State ([PoliticusUSA](#))
- Sanders' huge Washington win this week was exactly what he needed ([The Fix](#))
- Even as Sanders dominates caucuses, he's about to run out of them ([FiveThirtyEight](#))
- Why the superdelegates will not ride to Bernie Sanders' rescue ([Daily Kos](#))...
- ... and why it's going to be very hard for Sanders to gain the 988 delegates that he needs to clinch the nomination ([FiveThirtyEight](#))
- Is Sanders the modern-day Gene McCarthy? ([Caffeinated Politics](#))
- Well, he's not 2016's Barack Obama, in any case ([The Fix](#))
- Speaking of history, Sanders was a trend-setter back on 1967 as well as now ([The Fix](#))
- How Sanders is appealing to a generation suffering from precarious employment and economic uncertainty ([The American Prospect](#))
- For many on the right, though, the popularity of Sanders' 'democratic socialism' is worrying ([Townhall](#))

The Republican Campaign and the Candidates

On Saturday, [The Fix](#) [comments](#) that the GOP has had the 'worst week' in Washington, beginning with an anti-Trump super PAC promoting a picture of Trump's wife Melania, do discourage voters from backing Trump, and

ended with Ted Cruz's denial of a report that he had had five extramarital affairs. *American Thinker* [says](#) that the GOP are facing an impending calamity, whereby they may lose the White House to Hillary Clinton, and watch the Senate revert to the Democrats. They write while some of the Republican Party's likely poor fortunes may simply be a come-down from their successful 2010 and 2014 election results, much of it is down to the Republican elite's inability to thwart the goals of President Obama. *Hit & Run* [argues](#) that Trump has now 'wrecked' the Republican Party, and offers an alternative of what a better GOP might look like, citing Senators Jeff Flake (AZ), Mike Lee (UT), and Rand Paul (KY) as positive models for the party's future. Wrecked or not, the GOP is evolving – at least its stance on immigration is, [writes](#) *The Atlantic*. Younger Republicans are less likely to see immigration as a positive compared to their older counterparts, they say.

This week saw a petition for guns to be allowed at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland in July in spite of a ban. *Crooks & Liars* [says](#) the demands are not surprising, given how much the Republican Party values the Second Amendment. *The Fix* [reports](#) that the Secret Service weighed in on the issue, stating that firearms would not be allowed at the convention. Speaking of the convention, though having suspended his campaign, Marco Rubio has asked state parties to refrain from releasing any of the 172 delegates that he won whilst campaigning, [according](#) to *RedState*. This may either be to deny Trump the nomination or to keep an iron in the fire for Rubio if the convention is contested. *American Thinker* meanwhile [looks](#) at how a contested convention might run, and argues that it wouldn't be a problem for delegates to choose someone who did not run in the primaries, as voters will still get a chance to choose in the general election. As an April Fool's joke, *Crooks & Liars* [suggests](#) 2012 GOP nominee, Mitt Romney.



Credit: Mark Mathosian (Flickr, CC-BY-NC-SA-2.0)

Tuesday night saw a GOP Town Hall in Milwaukee; *RedState* has the four main [takeaways](#), including that 'Donald Trump is a five year old'. Also reporting on the GOP Town Hall, *Post Politics* [says](#) that the three remaining Republican presidential candidates used it as an opportunity to back away from their previous pledges to support the eventual nominee – whoever that may be.

The Golden State may hold the key to who gains the nomination for the GOP. *RedState* [says](#) that a new poll shows a tight race between Trump and Ted Cruz in California, which means that it may be even harder for Trump to get the 1,237 delegates he needs to gain the nomination on the first ballot of the convention.

Looking at this year's Senate races, *The American Prospect* [comments](#) that despite massively outspending Democrats, the GOP may have a hard time keeping the Senate, as the momentum now seems to be with the former party.

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

Donald Trump

- 73 percent of women have an unfavorable view of Donald Trump ([Daily Kos](#))...
- ... and he's losing his war on them as well ([RedState](#))
- How can Trump be so unpopular but still be leading the nomination race? ([The Fix](#))
- Trump is spending much less to get his delegates compared to the other candidates ([The Fix](#))...
- ...though his electoral math isn't adding up ([Roll Call's Rothenblog](#))

- Could California hand Trump the nomination, but doom him on election night? ([The Fix](#))
- If Trump has the most delegates at the convention but doesn't become the nominee, will his voters have been disenfranchised? ([RedState](#))
- Trump has hired a political insider for the convention fight ([The Federalist](#))
- Are Trump's supporters waking up to the fact that he might not gain the nomination? ([RedState](#))
- Why it's the first ballot or bust for Trump at the convention ([FiveThirtyEight](#))
- Some of Trump's supporters are downright scary ([Political Heat](#))
- A new poll from Wisconsin looks like bad news for Trump ([The Fix](#))
- Is Trump actually looking for an exit ramp to get out of the presidential race? ([PoliticalAnimal](#))
- What if Trump's entire campaign was just an elaborate hoax? ([The Fix](#))
- Trump broke his loyalty pledge to support the eventual GOP nominee this week – not that he was ever going to keep it ([The Fix](#))
- Would Trump govern the US like Arnold Schwarzenegger governed California? ([Townhall](#))
- Five running mate ideas for Trump, should he win the nomination ([The Federalist](#))
- Trump's healthcare plan has been unfairly blasted by critics ([Townhall](#))
- Why a Trump victory this year won't lead to a progressive revolution in 2020 ([Daily Kos](#))



Credit: Tony Webster (Flickr, CC-BY-NC-SA-2.0)

- Trump has no idea if he'd start a war with China ([FreakOutNation](#))
- If you thought Ben Carson's foreign policy ideas were crazy, then you should check out Trump's ([Crooks & Liars](#))
- Trump is no non-interventionist ([Hit & Run](#))
- Despite there being many of them, #NeverTrump groups aren't very effective ([Daily Kos](#))
- Trump is not a long-term thinker ([Caffeinated Politics](#))
- What happens when Trump is asked real questions in an interview ([The Federalist](#))
- Why does no-one ever ask who deserves credit for the emergence of Donald Trump? ([RedState](#))
- How Trump hacked the media ([FiveThirtyEight](#))
- Why 'Make America Great Again' is a brilliant political slogan ([The Fix](#))

- According to Trump, the top three roles for the federal government are security health care, and education ([Hit & Run](#))
- Trump's hard-line message on immigration has been near perfect for the GOP base ([The Fix](#))
- Trump's Tuesday Town Hall was a 'classic' ([The Fix](#))
- Trump's campaign manager, Corey Lewandowski was arrested this week on charges of battery against Breitbart reporter, Michelle Fields at a campaign event on March 8th ([The Atlantic](#))
- Trump's denying reality in defending Lewandowski ([PoliticusUSA](#))
- Trump was 'tripling down' on the Lewandowski affair by Tuesday ([The Fix](#))
- This week three protestors launched lawsuits against Trump for alleged assault and battery stemming from violence at a campaign rally in Louisville, Kentucky ([PoliticusUSA](#))
- The biggest Trump news this week was his statement that he would 'punish' women who had abortions after he had made the practice illegal ([Crooks & Liars](#))
- Trump's abortion comments are 'way outside the mainstream' ([FiveThirtyEight](#))
- How the media should handle Trump's abortion comments, and his subsequent flip flop ([The Fix](#))
- Trump's campaign is taking on water ([The Fix](#))
- Trump picked the worst time to have the worst week of his presidential campaign ([The Fix](#))

Ted Cruz

- Ahead of that state's primary next week, this week the Texas Senator gained the endorsement of Wisconsin Governor, Scott Walker ([Post Politics](#))



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

- Ted Cruz did not attack Donald Trump's Wife ([The Fix](#))
- A new poll in the Badger State puts Cruz up ten points over Trump ([Post Politics](#))
- Cruz could win on the second convention ballot by making John Kasich his vice-president ([White House Dossier](#))

John Kasich

- The Ohio Governor isn't running to win primaries – he's running to win a contested convention ([Daily Kos](#))

- Kasich is actually actively thwarting his chances at gaining the nomination at the convention ([RedState](#))
- Why does Kasich sound so much like a Democrat? ([RedState](#))...
- ...and why doesn't he get more media coverage? ([The Fix](#))
- Kasich may seem boring – but that's no reason why he shouldn't terrify you ([Daily Kos](#))
- Is Kasich about to be kicked off the ballot in Montana ([RedState](#))

The Obama Administration

On Sunday, *PoliticusUSA* has the [news](#) that President Obama's approval rating has jumped to 53 percent, and that only 44 percent disapprove of him – a complete reversal from his position a year ago. Despite his high approval ratings, *Townhall* [reckons](#) that many Americans are angry over what they say are his failures in addressing the country's economic problems, with the post 2009 recovery the weakest in recent memory.

This week in a speech President Obama lamented the 'balkanized' state of the US media; *The Fix* [says](#) that he's right, but that he also has contributed to the state of the media.

Obama this week also announced that he would be granting clemency to 61 federal prisoners, most of whom are low-level drug offenders. *The Atlantic* [says](#) that the announcement brings Obama's total commutations to 248, and is part of his desire to address decades-old drug-related sentencing laws.



Credit: IIP Photo Archive (Flickr, CC-BY-NC-2.0)

Does Obama have an unacceptable love for communism? *Townhall* [seems](#) to think so. They say that comments he made during his trips to Cuba and Argentina last week that there wasn't a great deal of difference between socialism and capitalism are ignorant of history. Also on foreign policy, *The Atlantic* [looks](#) at Obama's early promise to end America's wars, writing that while he did state that he was not 'seeking new dragons to slay', many dragons have remained on Obama's watch.

The Beltway and the Supreme Court

On Friday, *Wonkblog* [says](#) that tens of thousands of people have now lost access to their food stamps. They explain that a mandate has now taken effect which stipulates that those who receive food stamps must find a job within three months and work 20 hours a week; the three month allowance has now ended, despite the fact that unemployment remains high in many places. They also [report](#) this week that the Justice Department has resumed the 'Equitable Sharing Program', which gives police the option of seizing assets in cases where local law enforcement had a relationship with federal authorities. This policy allows police to keep up to 80 percent of the assets they seized.

Turning to Congress, *The Daily Signal* [writes](#) Wednesday that House Republicans have proposed a new fix for Puerto Rico's budget mess. The plan would appoint an independent oversight board to guide the territory out of its \$70 billion debt crisis, and encourage it to negotiate these debts with creditors voluntarily. Still in the House, *Outside the Beltway* [wonders](#) if we are seeing the end of Speaker Paul Ryan's (R-WI) honeymoon, with an April 15 deadline for a budget plan likely to be missed.

Republicans in the Senate show no sign that they will hold hearings on President Obama's nominee to fill the Supreme Court's empty seat – Merrick Garland. *Monkey Cage* has [new data](#) which shows just how liberal Garland is – center left, but not extreme.

Moving on to the Supreme Court's docket, *Outside the Beltway* [writes](#) Wednesday that the Court is looking for a way to work around the current 4-4 tie on cases concerning religious objections to the Affordable Care Act's birth control mandate. The Court has apparently issued a letter to the parties involved asking them to address how contraceptive coverage might be obtained through the petitioners employers or insurance companies, but without the petitioners' involvement.

Foreign policy, defense and trade

On Monday, *Political Animal* [looks](#) at Cuba and the electoral politics of the US. They comment that despite not working, one of the major reasons the US embargo stayed was the political power of Cuban Americans – especially in the swing state of Florida. Generational change among that group means that a majority of Cuban Americans now support better relations with Cuba. On similar lines, *Monkey Cage* [wonders](#) what the point of the Cuba embargo was given that it did not push the country towards Democracy.

The US must revolutionize how it understands the Middle East says *The Hill's Congress blog*. They [argue](#) that for the past generation, US policy in the Middle East has been a litany of failures, mostly because those who shape such policies do not have a true picture of what is actually happening in the region.



Credit: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Flickr, CC-BY-2.0)

One of Donald Trump's emerging foreign policy platforms is for countries that he considers to be 'free riders' on US military power, like Japan and South Korea to begin to pay their own way. *The Federalist* [argues](#) this week that the Americans are not the world's 'rent-a-cops', and that American military planners need to focus more on the distinction between defending America's interests and those of others. *Hit & Run* meanwhile [says](#) that the US would be richer and safer if Europe paid for its own defense.

Obamacare and health policy

On Monday, *The Daily Signal* gives [three ways](#) Obamacare's insurance regulations could cost be costly, including age rating restrictions and benefit mandates. Later in the week they have [four facts](#) which show that Obamacare

isn't aging all that well.

The economy and society

While many of those on the right have accused President Obama of downplaying the risk of terrorism in the US following last week's attacks in Brussels, *Informed Comment* [reminds](#) us that 30 Americans worldwide die because of terrorism every year, while 130,000 die in accidents.

On Monday, *The American Prospect* [says](#) that California's minimum wage deal – which increases it to \$15.00 an hour – is the biggest win the 'Fight for 15' has had yet, but that many states may be facing an uphill battle to do the same.

With only three million now receiving cash assistance from the government (down from 13 million in 1995), have we witnessed the end of welfare as we know it? *The Atlantic* [says](#) that Bill Clinton may well have been successful in his pledge to 'end welfare as we know it'. *Political Animal* [examines](#) policy changes across the states, writing this week that we are seeing a growing divide between policies in red and blue states, often leading to different rates of economic growth.

On Friday, *Wonkblog* [looks](#) at what they call 'the little recovery that could'. They comment that the story of the economy for the past five years has been one of increasing jobs, steady wage growth and falling unemployment.

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