

## Congress' looming budget showdown, Trump pledges GOP loyalty, and should Jeb campaign in Spanish?: US national blog round up for 29 August – 4 September

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.

Jump to:

[Elections and the road to 2016](#)  
[Government, the Beltway and Congress' agenda](#)  
[Foreign policy, defense and trade](#)

[Obamacare and health policy](#)  
[The economy and society](#)  
[And finally...](#)

### President Obama, the Democratic Party, and the GOP

This week President Obama visited Alaska, announcing Sunday that Mount McKinley in the state (the tallest peak in North America) would be renamed 'Denali', a change which many Alaskans had wanted for some time.

*PotusOperandi* [reports](#) that the move has caused uproar amongst Ohio Republicans (including GOP House Speaker John Boehner), as President William McKinley had also been a governor of that state. Still on Obama, *The American Prospect* [writes](#) this week that the president has a mixed record on school integration. They comment that Obama has done little to encourage voluntary integration efforts, though there have been some efforts made to promote school diversity.



Speaker of the House John Boehner Credit: Gage Skidmore (CC-BY- SA-2.0)

Moving on to the Democratic Party more generally, *The Fix* says that the Iran deal, which is currently before Congress, is unpopular, with 55 percent of Americans against it according to a recent poll. They [comment](#) that the deal could be damaging to Congressional Democrats given its unpopularity. *The American Interest* meanwhile [says](#) that the Democrats may have the beginnings of their version of the Tea Party on their hands with several hotly contested Senate primaries looking to be on the cards.

Turning to the Republican Party, *Outside the Beltway* [looks](#) at a new poll which shows that voters would most likely blame the GOP if the government shuts down in the fall over the funding of Planned Parenthood. On Tuesday, *The Fix* [says](#) that a recent poll which found that more than half of Republicans think that President Obama is a Muslim is probably overstated, especially given that it is a Democratic poll.

## Elections and the road to 2016

This week saw commentary from a number of quarters as to the quality of 2016 presidential polling. *Daily Kos* says that the polling is [deeply weird](#) (especially given that Hillary Clinton is well ahead in national polls by large margins but losing in some states), while *Monkey Cage* [reckons](#) we should be worried about the polls. *Sabato's Crystal Ball*, meanwhile [says](#) that the current race is emblematic of voters' revolt against 'brain dead' politics, as represented by dynastic candidates like Jeb Bush and Hillary Clinton. On Thursday, *Smart Politics* [writes](#) that Republicans and Democrats have record presidential election winning streaks in 36 states. Perhaps the most interesting presidential election news this week was rapper Kanye West's announcement that he would be making a presidential run in 2020, as [reported](#) by *Hit & Run*.

Billionaire presidential candidate Donald Trump remained in the news this week:

- *The Fix* [says](#) that Trump is not a traditional Republican, especially when it comes to issues such as taxation and immigration.
- Speaking of immigration, *Daily Kos* [reckons](#) that Trump's mass deportation plan is a bad idea recycled from the 1930s when nearly 1 million Mexicans were deported.
- The other GOP candidates, though, apparently have much to learn from Trump ( [Townhall](#)).
- That said, Trump did trip up on foreign policy during a radio interview this week ( [Post Politics](#)).
- A new Iowa poll which has Trump's favorables at 61 percent shows just how amazing (and unprecedented) his rise has been ( [The Fix](#)).



Donald Trump Credit: Gage Skidmore (Flickr, CC-BY-SA-2.0)

- Trump has also shown why money in politics is a good thing – it gives other candidates who are not celebrities a chance to fight back ( [Red State](#)).
- For the past few weeks the Republican Party has been trying to force Trump to sign a pledge that he would not run as a third party candidate next year if he did not win the Republican nomination. *The Federalist* [writes](#) that the loyalty pledge is ridiculous...
- ... and even after he did sign it on Thursday, *The Fix* [warns](#) that the loyalty pledge really means nothing.
- Trump does not get on well with fellow candidate Jeb Bush – he [reckons](#) that Jeb should set an example by speaking English when in the US ( [Post Politics](#)).

Moving on to the GOP's presidential race more generally, *The Fix* has [nine points](#) about the race including that Trump isn't going anywhere, and that attacking Hillary Clinton is a good strategy. *RedState* meanwhile has [five reasons](#) to be hopeful that the primary system will work as it should and deliver a candidate who can beat the Democrats next year. Turning to the candidates themselves:

- South Carolina Senator, Lindsey Graham, is worried that Donald Trump is stealing his ‘angry white guys’ ([PoliticusUSA](#))...
- ... while some think that Graham is better off staying in the Senate, and should withdraw from the presidential race ([RedState](#)).
- Before the rise of Trump, former Florida Governor, Jeb Bush was seen by many as the GOP frontrunner – but this week he has lost three of his top fundraisers ([Outside the Beltway](#)).
- Bush may want to campaign in Spanish – he seems to have more energy when he does ( [The Fix](#)).
- [The Atlantic](#) [wonders](#) if Latino voters will support Bush in spite of his conservative policies.
- Jeb Bush also tried to go on the attack against Trump this week – Trump seems to have barely noticed ([Daily Kos](#)).
- Wisconsin Governor, Scott Walker, had a difficult time this week explaining why President Obama has a better rating than he does in his home state ([Crooks & Liars](#))...
- ...while Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky mocked Walker for being open to the construction of a wall on the Canadian border ([Post Politics](#)).
- Walker may have supposed to have been Trump – but then Trump showed up ([No More Mister Nice Blog](#)).
- This week also saw former HP executive, Carly Fiorina gain a spot in the next top-tier Republican debate, scheduled for September 16<sup>th</sup> ([Post Politics](#)).
- Ben Carson is surging. Blame the media ([Monkey Cage](#)).

Turning to the Democrats’ presidential field:

- Vermont Senator, Bernie Sanders has been trying to clarify his record on gun control after criticisms that he only supports restrictions when it is convenient for him ([Wonkblog](#)).
- Vice President, Joe Biden has been pondering whether he has the emotional energy to run for president ([Post Politics](#)).



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

- Democrats like Hillary Clinton – but they don’t love her ( [The Fix](#) )
- This week saw a new dump of Clinton emails – [Wonkblog](#) may have the [funniest one](#)...
- ...though Clinton may not be laughing as it turns out she may have been distributing classified information via her own server ([The Federalist](#)).
- The media seem to have an unquenchable thirst for Clinton scandals ( [The American Prospect](#) )...
- ...which may be why her image continues to decline ( [The Fix](#) ).

- Though, did ‘Hillary 2016’ ever really make sense for Democrats? ([The Atlantic](#))
- Clinton also launched a ‘gentler’ war on drugs this week – or is her plan more like Richard Nixon’s? ([Hit & Run](#)).
- This week former Maryland Governor, Martin O’Malley called for an expansion of national service, through doubling the size of the Peace Corps and AmeriCorps ([Post Politics](#)).

### Government, the Beltway and Congress’ agenda

This week saw a county clerk in Kentucky sent to jail for failing to obey a judge’s order to issue marriage licenses to gay couples. *The Lonely Conservative* [wonders](#) why if this clerk was sent to jail, then why are federal officials not similarly imprisoned for enforcing immigration laws?

On Tuesday, *Federal Eye* [writes](#) on a major problem facing federal prisons – too many inmates to too few correctional officers. They say the rising officer to prisoner ratio is putting many prison staff at risk of injury and even death.

*Beltway Insiders* this week [writes](#) on what they say is the looming budget showdown in Congress. They say that when they come back later this month, lawmakers will need to decide whether or not to vote through a continuing budget resolution, or an increase to the caps brought in by the 2011 Budget Control Act. They comment that a yearlong continuing resolution would fund the government at the 2015 level, and would delay certain activities as well as denying the Pentagon \$38 billion of their latest budget request.

The row over the funding of Planned Parenthood continued this week – *The Atlantic* [says](#) that conservatives are demanding a budget standoff over funding the organization, something that House Speaker John Boehner is keen to avoid. In response, some House members are openly threatening to revolt against Boehner.

Moving on to the Senate, *Americablog* [reports](#) Wednesday that President Obama now has enough votes (34) for the Iran deal to sustain a presidential veto if Congress issues a motion of disapproval for the agreement. *American Thinker*, on the other hand, [argues](#) that the Senate should sue President Obama in order to block the deal with Iran, because it is a treaty and therefore must be ratified by a 2/3 vote by the body.

### Foreign policy, defense and trade

How much should the US spend on defense? On Sunday, *The Daily Signal* [poses](#) this question, writing that the answer should be based on deciding what the US needs to protect and what threatens the country’s vital interests. They comment that while both President Obama and Congressional Republicans want to raise the defense budget to \$561 billion for 2016, it should really be higher – \$52 billion higher. Speaking of defense spending, *The Atlantic* [says](#) that from 2018, the Pentagon will be pitting its new F-35 Joint Strike Fighter against the venerable A-10, to see if the latter should be phased out. *The American*



USAF F-35 fighters Credit: [US Air Force](#) (Flickr, [CC-BY-NC-2.0](#))

*Interest*, meanwhile [reports](#) that the US is planning to deploy F-22 fighter jets and drones to Eastern Europe in order to reassure NATO allies there.

On Wednesday, *The Hill's Congress blog* [argues](#) that there has been a dangerous dismissal of foreign policy experience in the current presidential race. They say that Americans seem largely detached from most international challenges, and the presidential field largely reflects this as well. *The Federalist*, meanwhile, [writes](#) on why the GOP's presidential candidates should talk about Afghanistan. They say that Afghanistan could be a political winner for the candidates as it would be an easy way to launch low-risk attacks against President Obama and former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton.

*American Thinker* [writes](#) on Iran's power in the Middle East, commenting that it is in a much stronger position strategically than it was three years ago given its involvement with Syria's civil war. They say that Iran will never be a partner to Western influence in the Middle East, and therefore cannot be trusted as a nuclear state.

### **Obamacare and health policy**

This week *Townhall* [argues](#) that hospitals are the 'Big Box' stores of healthcare that are best avoided. They say that hospitals are doing the equivalent of price-gouging through measures such as charging a 'facilities fee' for services, and that patients would be better off in smaller 'medical homes'.

On Thursday, *Daily Kos* has the [news](#) that the Obama administration has proposed new rules which would end bias and discrimination against transgender people.

### **The economy and society**

Do you know how much you owe? [According](#) to *The Atlantic*, many Americans seriously underestimate the amount of debt they have – especially when it comes to credit cards and student loans.

With millions of schoolchildren heading back to class, *The Federalist* [argues](#) that home-schooling is okay too, and that we should also keep in mind that school does not cover everything in any case.

With the high profile case of Kentucky county clerk, Kim Davis, who this week refused to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples, *The Fix* [argues](#) that we have now entered the 'George Wallace' stage of the same-sex marriage fight, with state officials blocking federal orders and directives.

On Wednesday, *The Daily Signal* [reports](#) on a new study which shows that half of immigrant households receive some type of government welfare – significantly outpacing native-born Americans who use benefit programs.



The Democratic Party has formally endorsed raising the national minimum wage to \$15 an hour. *The American Interest* [argues](#) this week that such a raise would hit manufacturers the hardest, and damage that industry's nascent comeback.

*Wonkblog* [looks](#) at the hidden death toll from guns – the tens of thousands of gun-related suicides, which every

year far outnumber gun related homicides.

### **And finally...**

Want to know where people move in the US, when they come from overseas? *Wonkblog* [has a map for you](#).

One thing that the 2016 presidential race has been lacking has been talk of extra-terrestrials. Not anymore ( [Hearo on the Hill](#) ).

*Featured image credit: Jeb Bush Credit: Gage Skidmore (Flickr, CC-BY-NC-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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