

Obama's rest of term to do list, Carson under scrutiny, and Obamacare's back at SCOTUS: US national blog round up for 7 – 13 November

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

Jump to:

[Elections and the road to 2016](#)

[The Democrats' 2016 campaign](#)

[The Republican Party's 2016 campaign](#)

[The fourth GOP Debate](#)

[Government, the Beltway and Congress' agenda](#)

[Foreign policy, defense and trade](#)

[Obamacare and health policy](#)

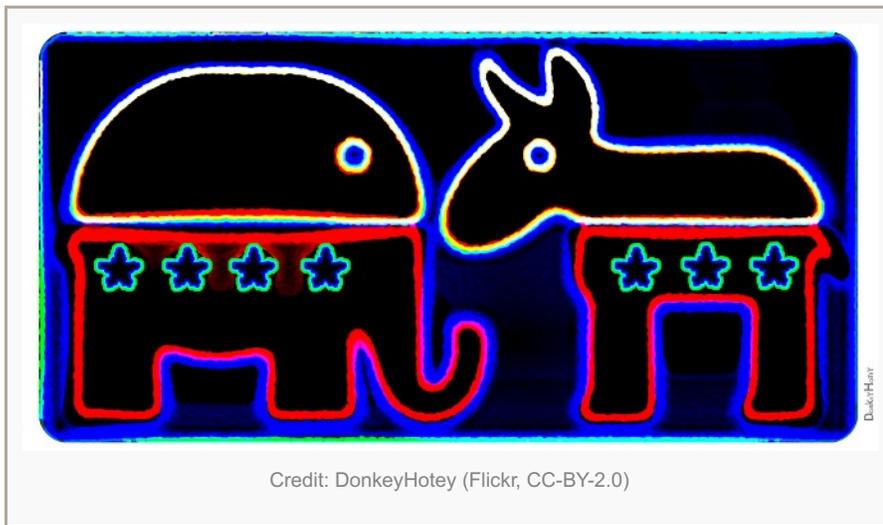
[The economy and society](#)

President Obama, the Democratic Party, and the GOP

On Monday this week, [Powerline reports](#) that President Obama's plans to provide more than five million people with work permits and deportation protection have been dealt another blow, after the US Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit ruled that an existing District Court injunction should remain in place.

[Outside the Beltway comments](#) Thursday that a Senate bill passed earlier in the week pretty much guarantees that President Obama will be unable to fulfill his election campaign promise to close the prison base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The bill has a provision to ban the transfer of prisoners to US soil, which is a key part of the Obama administration's plans to close the Guantanamo Bay prison. Even if Obama is unable to close Gitmo, he still has a number of policy goals for his final year in office, [writes The Fix](#). These include signing an international climate change deal, a political agreement with Syria, and to win the aforementioned court case over his immigration actions.

Moving on to the Democratic Party in general, [PoliticusUSA argues](#) this week that Kentucky's gubernatorial election – which last week saw the GOP candidate Matt Bevin beat Democrat Jack Conway despite the latter's polling lead – should be a wakeup call for the party. They say that Bevin's win shows that religious Republicans still have a large appeal, and that Democrats should not be complacent about next year's elections.



Turning to the Republican Party, *American Thinker* [writes](#) on how the GOP can dominate politics past 2020. They argue that if the party wins in 2016, it needs to grow the economy before making government cuts, not 'come across as harsh towards the illegals', and handle foreign policy carefully.

FreakOutNation [comments](#) this week that despite various missives from both sides of the political spectrum, neither the Democratic nor the Republican Party is dying out, and that arguments could be made that both have never been more firmly entrenched in American society than they currently are.

Elections and the road to 2016

On Monday this week, *The Fix* looks at the many things that the 2016 election is 'about', at least according to the candidates. These range from inequality, to children, to bringing the country together once again. This week also marked one year until the election. *FiveThirtyEight* [advises](#) us to ignore the general election polling at this stage, arguing that since 1944, such polls have only been weakly predictive of the eventual result.

Thinking beyond the presidential election, *Outside the Beltway* [says](#) that despite hating Congress (only 11 percent approve), Americans will still re-elect the same Congress next year. In 2014, 94 percent of House Members were re-elected, despite significant disapproval of the body. In a similar vein, *The Hill's Congress blog* [writes](#) this week that the Republican Party will hold the senate in 2016, mostly due to the Democratic Party's weak candidates in battleground states and the Party's 'stale and outdated' policy ideas.

The Democrats' 2016 campaign

On Monday, *Crooks & Liars* [reports](#) on comments from Vermont Senator, and presidential candidate, Bernie Sanders, on his Democratic rival, former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton. Sanders stated during a news interview that Clinton will be 'infinitely better' as president, even on her worst day, than any Republican candidate on their best. *The Fix* also [looks](#) at Sanders this week, wondering if he is trailing in the polls to Clinton because of demographic reality – he simply does not command the support of non-white voters to the extent that Clinton does.



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

Turning then to the former First Lady and Secretary of State, *Hit & Run* [says](#) on Monday that Clinton's recent proposal to move marijuana from Schedule I to Schedule II of the controlled substances act (which would be less restrictive) falls short, in light of Bernie Sanders' support for repealing the federal prohibition of the drug.

Last week, constitutional scholar Larry Lessig, dropped out of the Democratic race, citing being shut out of the party's primary debates. *Mischiefs of Faction* [reminds](#) us that the presidency is not a reward for people who have excelled in another field – it requires candidates to have succeeded in politics already.

The Republican Party's 2016 campaign

On Monday this week, *Red State* [argues](#) that Republican presidential candidates must always be better than their Democratic opponents. They say that while Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton both made up or exaggerated information on their past, and the media gave them a free pass, GOP candidates who do the same thing are very much not. *PoliticusUSA*, meanwhile, [writes](#) that conservatives, Republicans, and seniors are more motivated to vote in the 2016 election than than groups which lean Democratic.

On Tuesday, *Political Animal* looks at the [two races](#) in the current GOP primary – the one between the frontrunners, billionaire Donald Trump, and retired neurosurgeon, Dr. Ben Carson, and the other between Senator Ted Cruz (TX) and Marco Rubio (FL). *The Fix* meanwhile has a [chart](#) of how each Republican fares against Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders. Carson does well against both, but this far out it is hard to tell what the numbers really mean. *Sabato's Crystal Ball* [comments](#) that white evangelicals will dominate the early part of the GOP's primary calendar. *Outside the Beltway* [warns](#) people off thoughts that the 2012 GOP nominee, Mitt Romney might be able to step in to quell the seemingly unstoppable Trump and Carson, especially given the very close deadline to enter the New Hampshire Primary.

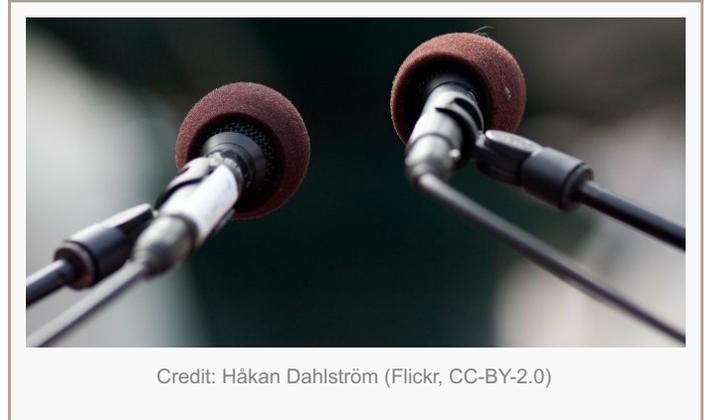
Workblog this week looks at the [one issue](#) that they say all of the GOP candidates agree on – the (lack of) effectiveness of the Federal Reserve.

On the GOP's 2016 Senate campaign, *Red State* [wonders](#) why the National Republican Senatorial Campaign has hired presidential dropout Scott Walker's campaign manager, Rick Wiley.

The fourth GOP Debate

Tuesday evening saw the fourth debate of the Republican Primary season. In the lead up, *Mischiefs of Faction* [says](#) that the GOP's debate problem is the remarkable surplus of candidates compared to previous years, who are now spread over fewer debates. *The Atlantic* [says](#) that Republicans were looking for a leader to come out of the debate. As for commentary on the debate itself:

- Opposing raising the minimum wage, Donald Trump said that US wages are too high ([Crooks & Liars](#))...
- ...and also called for the creation of a 'deportation force' to remove undocumented immigrants ([Post Politics](#)).
- Ben Carson slammed the media's hypocrisy for scrutinizing his record and not Hillary Clinton's ([The Federalist](#)).
- Marco Rubio stated that welders make more money than philosophers. [The Fix](#) says he's wrong.
- Former Florida Governor, Jeb Bush staged a comeback ([Red State](#)).
- [The Atlantic](#) reckons no-one won, except for Marco Rubio by default...
- ...while [PoliticusUSA](#) thinks Trump came out on top...
- ...as [does](#)
- [FreakOutNation](#) argues that Kentucky Senator Rand Paul was the winner, given his challenges of Trump and Senator Ted Cruz.
- For [The Fix](#), the debate was boring...
- ... though for some it was the most substantive GOP debate yet ([The Federalist](#)).
- [Wonkblog](#) says that the debate showed the GOP's schism over federal spending...
- ...while for [Perrpectives](#) the '800 pound donkey' in the debates has been the party's poor presidential record around job and economic growth.



Donald Trump

- Trump's biggest asset – his celebrity – may also be his biggest liability if he ends up facing down Hillary Clinton during the general election ([Red State](#)).
- Even Trump's celebrity may be waning – he's not the TV draw he used to be ([The Fix](#)).
- Trump (sounding desperate) this week begged the people of Iowa not to believe Ben Carson's claims ([Post Politics](#)).

Ben Carson

- This week saw Ben Carson unleash a 'litany' of anti-Obama conspiracy theories ([Crooks & Liars](#)).
- Carson's claim that he stabbed someone is key to his appeal to white America ([The Fix](#)).
- Despite all the bad news, Carson had a good week ([Hit & Run](#)).
- During the debate, Carson missed a good opportunity to put questions about his biography to rest ([The Fix](#)).
- Some argue that Carson's apparent incoherence on foreign policy matters disqualify him from the presidency ([Hit & Run](#)).
- Many think that all the extra scrutiny on Carson is unfair. [The Fix](#) disagrees, arguing that he is being treated like a frontrunner.

Jeb Bush

- Jeb Bush is apparently in favor of killing baby Hitler, if given the chance ([Outside the Beltway](#)).

- Given how he has telegraphed his intended attacks on Marco Rubio, Bush is still terrible at running for president ([No more mister nice blog](#))...
- ...and it also turns out that he's having trouble getting on the ballot in some states ([Political Animal](#)).
- Bush's debate performance was good – but he still needs better ones if his campaign is to continue ([Post Politics](#)).



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

Cruz, Paul, and the rest

- Despite being an advocate for religious liberty, Ted Cruz says atheists are not fit to be president ([America blog](#))
- Are the TV networks shortchanging Cruz ([Wonkblog](#))?
- Cruz may be the latest liar in the biographical category ([Crooks and Liars](#)).
- Rand Paul is not an isolationist ([Hit & Run](#))
- Former Hewlett Packard executive, Carly Fiorina simply shrugged this week when confronted with a man who called President Obama a 'Black Muslim dictator' ([Crooks & Liars](#)).
- Fiorina's three-page tax code apparently does exist ([America blog](#))
- Complaining that he was not appearing in either the main or undercard GOP debate this week, former Virginia Governor, Jim Gilmore, has stated that he is not 'some weirdo' ([Political Animal](#))
- Is Ohio Governor, John Kasich, over or underrated ([FiveThirtyEight](#))?
- Should Conservative voters give Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal a chance ([Red State](#))?

Government, the Beltway and Congress' agenda

On Monday this week, [Federal Eye reports](#) that according to a new report, federal employees' salaries lag behind their private sector counterparts by 35 percent on average. Regionally, the pay disparity rises to 51 percent in Washington DC and 49 percent in San Francisco.

[The Daily Signal](#) this week has [ten reasons](#) for the Export-Import Bank to stay dead, including that three companies received 87 percent of all its loan guarantees in 2013 and that 98 percent of exporters have never received assistance from the Bank.

[American Thinker wonders](#) why the FBI is spending \$80 million on a new gun.

In late September, the then Speaker of the House, John A. Boehner announced his resignation from the Speakership and the House of Representatives, effective the end of October. [Smart Politics says](#) that at 220 days, Boehner's Ohio seat will have the longest non-election year vacancy in 46 years. Speaking of being away from Congress, [The Daily Signal looks](#) at how Members explain missed votes. Excuses include travel delays, to declining to vote at all. [Daily Kos](#) has the [news](#) that while the Senate will only be in session for 31 weeks next year, the House will work even less, with 28 weeks in session planned.



Credit: Ron Cogswell (Flickr, CC-BY-2.0)

Foreign policy, defense and trade

On Tuesday, *The Daily Signal* [argues](#) that the Obama Administration still lacks a strategy to counter Russia and China. They say that none of the new strategies recently outlined by Secretary of Defense, Ash Carter, are likely to improve the strategic situation.

Is the US losing the fight against ISIS in Syria and Iraq? [According](#) to *Outside the Beltway* that may well be the case, as they argue that the 'alliance' against ISIS exists mostly on paper, something they say could call the whole endeavor to be put into question.

With Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visiting the White House this week, *The Hill's Congress blog* [argues](#) that President Obama needs to recognize Palestine now, saying that the US holds the key to bringing the violence between Israelis and Palestinians to an end. *The Lonely Conservative* meanwhile [wonders](#) what it would be like to be a 'fly on the wall' in the meeting between the two leaders.

Informed Comment [looks](#) at the US' continuing involvement in Afghanistan, which they term 'America's military money pit', given that up to \$60 billion has already been spent in often poor reconstruction efforts in the country.

Obamacare and health policy

On Saturday, *The Atlantic* has the [news](#) that the Affordable Care Act will once again go to the US Supreme Court, this time in a case which addresses the question of whether the government can require religious nonprofits to allow their employees to get contraceptive care with their health insurance.

PoliticusUSA [says](#) that President Obama has encouraged more people to sign up for Obamacare in order to further decrease the uninsured rate.

Federal Eye [warns](#) this week that, for many, coverage bought under Obamacare can cost much more for couples than for whole families. *Daily Kos*, meanwhile [reckons](#) that the days of Obamacare's 'Cadillac tax' – the 40 percent levy on high quality and high cost health insurance plans – are numbered, given that there is bipartisan agreement that it should be repealed.

Since Obamacare was launched in 2013, a dozen of its state-based cooperatives have failed. *The Lonely Conservative* puts the [cost of these failures](#) at \$1.23 billion.

On Tuesday, *The Atlantic* [examines](#) the poor state of pregnancy care in America. They write that the country's high-cost system does not lead to first-rate outcomes.

The economy and society





Credit: jar [o] (Flickr, CC-BY-2.0)

On Sunday this week, *Hit & Run* [says](#) that we should not be overly concerned that President Obama has ordered the release of 6,000 felons from federal prisons for this week, since they are actually nearly all low-level, non-violent, drug offenders with no history of violence.

On Veterans Day, *The Fix* [looks](#) at the US' graying veteran population. As of this year 6.8 percent of people have served in the military; by 2043 it will be under 4 percent.

On Tuesday, *The Atlantic* [reports](#) that the tech company, Salesforce has erased its gender pay gap by revising its payroll to ensure that both men and women are being paid equally for similar jobs. *FiveThirtyEight* [wonders](#) why voters don't believe that the economy is getting better, despite the fact that, by most measures, it is.

This week the University of Missouri was the site of student protests over the university's failure to provide a safe space for students from racism and racist threats. *The Atlantic* [says](#) that the case is an example of campus hate-speech rules going farther than the law. *The Federalist* takes the conservative line, [arguing](#) that freedom cannot coexist with what they term 'campus political correctness'.

Featured *image*: Dr. Ben Carson Credit: [Gage Skidmore](#) (Flickr, [CC-BY-SA-2.0](#))

[Please read our comments policy before commenting.](#)

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.

Shortened URL for this post: <http://bit.ly/1QAPiem>

- CC BY-NC 3.0 2015 LSE USAPP

"