

## Gun debate continues, Trump calls for Muslim immigration ban, and Ted Cruz ascendant: US national blog round up for 5 – 11 December

*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.*

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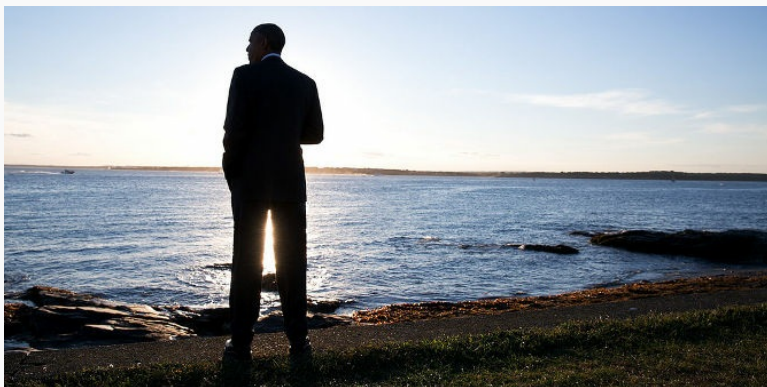
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### President Obama, the Democratic Party, and the GOP

On Sunday night President Obama gave a widely trailed speech on the US approach to tackling ISIS. *The Atlantic* [comments](#) that Obama's speech illustrates the strength and weakness of his logic-driven approach to leadership, in that it shows that Obama knows how to minimize the effects of terrorism, rather than how to eliminate it entirely.



Official White House Photo by Pete Souza

On Wednesday, *Wonkblog* [examines](#) what they say was one of Obama's biggest economic mistakes – leaving places on the Federal Reserve open during the crisis in 2009, rather than filling them with people who could do more to help the economy.

On Thursday, *Red State* has the [news](#) that President Obama has announced that he would sign executive orders on gun control very soon, in the wake of recent mass shootings. Thus far, gun control legislation has stalled in Congress,

so this may be a way for Obama to push through expanded background checks and to close the ‘gun show loophole’ without Congress.

Turning to the Democratic Party more specifically, *Townhall* [argues](#) this week that the party is a ‘death cult’, because of the way in which it takes advantage of tragedies, such as the San Bernardino shooting last week, for political gain.

Turning now to the Republican Party, *Crooks & Liars* writes that the GOP is ‘hard at work’ undermining President Obama at the Climate Change Summit in Paris. They [report](#) that House Republicans approved two resolutions aimed at blocking any new regulations that would reduce US emissions. This week also saw billionaire 2016 presidential candidate Donald Trump step up his rhetoric against Muslims. *PoliticusUSA* [says](#) that a new poll has found that nearly 2/3 of GOP primary voters support Trump’s plans to ban all Muslims from entering the US.

## Elections and the road to 2016

On Thursday, *Sabato’s Crystal Ball* takes a [look](#) at 2016’s down-ballot races. They say that the Democrats are unlikely to threaten the Republican Party’s majority in the House of Representatives, and that the GOP is likely to gain even more governorships.

## The Democrats’ 2016 campaign

While beltway blogging was again dominated by coverage of Donald Trump, some still found the time to cover the Democrats’ primary campaign:

- A big Florida GOP donor is so disgusted by Trump’s campaign, he has vowed to vote for former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, if Trump wins the nomination ([FreakOutNation](#)).
- Given her responsibility for some of the instability in the Middle East, might Clinton be a worse frontrunner than Trump? ([Hit & Run](#)).
- Clinton this week said that the US is not winning the war against ISIS ([Post Politics](#)).
- On foreign policy, is Clinton ‘walking in Obama’s shoes’ by not committing to send ground troops to fight ISIS? ([The Hill’s Congress blog](#))
- Democratic voters are skeptical of Clinton’s reported opposition to the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement. She should lobby against it to convince voters she’s telling the truth ([Crooks & Liars](#)).
- This week, Clinton proposed new tax incentives for manufacturers, and a crackdown on corporate inversions ([Post Politics](#)).
- Vermont Senator, Bernie Sanders doesn’t want to take questions about ISIS – and that’s not good ([The Fix](#)).
- Sanders was also on the defensive over his record on gun control this week in a *Rolling Stone* interview ([Hit & Run](#)).
- Is Google pushing people to vote for Bernie Sanders? ([Wonkblog](#)).



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

## The Republican Party’s 2016 campaign

On Wednesday, *FiveThirtyEight* [argues](#) that Americans’ concerns about terrorism in the wake of the recent attacks in San Bernardino and Paris could help the Republican Party. According to new survey data, Americans trust the GOP to handle terrorism over Democrats, 44 to 34 percent. Many of the GOP’s candidates are channeling people’s fears of

terrorism into negative rhetoric about Muslims. *Daily Kos* [reminds](#) us that Republican candidates don't just hate Muslims; they also hate the LGBT community and those who call for civil rights.

*White House Dossier* [writes](#) Tuesday that Obama's Sunday speech on ISIS did little to benefit the American people, and may have actually helped the presidential fortunes of Donald Trump and Ted Cruz, as many voters may see those candidates as possessing the dynamism needed to deal with threats such as ISIS.

*Roll Call's Rothenblog* [says](#) this week that the party's decline with Hispanic voters is only one of the problems that the GOP has – it also needs to improve its image with more moderate, non-Hispanic voters.

Reviewing the polls this week, *The Fix* [comments](#) that while Donald Trump is leading, Texas Senator Ted Cruz is looking more and more like the favorite, and may be the best positioned to win the nomination. *Caffeinated Politics* meanwhile [argues](#) that the GOP's populist bloc – as exemplified by candidates like Trump and Cruz – are leading the party to the edge of a cliff where a national election victory may be impossible. *The Fix* [says](#) that the Republican Party is 'running scared' from Trump and his rhetoric, refusing to condemn his comments about Muslims for fear of a third party candidacy next fall by the New York billionaire. *Daily Kos* [writes](#) that the GOP is in 'panic mode' over Trump, and may have to resort to drafting their unsuccessful 2012 candidate, Mitt Romney to save the day. *Mischiefs of Faction*, on the other hand, [reckons](#) that the GOP is relying on the upcoming primaries to winnow the field of candidates, including – eventually – Trump. *Crooks & Liars* [reports](#) Thursday that GOP leaders are already discussing the possibility of having a brokered convention next year if Donald Trump is not knocked out of the race beforehand.

## Donald Trump

Trump's domination of the news cycle continued unabated this week:

- Trump's Trumpiest interview ([The Fix](#)).
- Trump this week touted himself as a better campaign than Hillary Clinton, who he accused of not being able to keep up with him ([Post Politics](#)).
- Despite leading in the polls, Trump may not win the election – the polls may be overestimating his support ([Monkey Cage](#)),,
- ... or are they underestimating his support? ([The Atlantic](#)).
- Trump is a disaster for the GOP – and they can't do anything about it ([The Fix](#)).
- Will the GOP establishment need Iowa's religious voters to stop Donald Trump? ([FiveThirtyEight](#))
- When the 'Trump moment' is over, will we all pretend it never happened? ([No more mister nice blog](#)).
- If Trump was to pursue an independent candidacy the GOP would almost certainly lose the election, making him the biggest loser ([Roll Call's Rothenblog](#)).
- Muslims could be 'profiled' by law enforcement, Trump suggested on Sunday ([Post Politics](#))...
- ...which was followed on Monday by his call for a total ban on all Muslims entering the country ([Crooks & Liars](#)).
- *Red State* [reckons](#) that Trump's proposal makes even less sense than gun control.
- Despite being widely condemned, Trump's call to ban Muslim immigration is unlikely to hurt him ([Outside the Beltway](#))...



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

- ...though he did end up postponing his planned trip to Israel after a spokesman for the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected Trump's plan to ban Muslims ([Daily Kos](#)).
- Such extreme proposals from Trump have led some to label him as a 'fascist' – *The Federalist* [says](#) that he's a 'dangerous buffoon', but 'No Hitler'...
- ... though he might be a nihilist ([United Liberty](#)).
- Trump himself is apparently unconcerned about being compared with Hitler ([Post Politics](#))
- Trump this week stated that he would 'close up the internet' in order to fight ISIS ([Daily Kos](#))...
- ....which is apparently only something that a dictator would do ([Crooks & Liars](#)).
- Trump's campaign has been described by some as 'post fact' ([The Fix](#))
- Facts or not, Trump is enabled by polls and Republicans (some of whom are reluctant to speak out against him) ([FiveThirtyEight](#)).
- The TV networks are also giving Trump a massive advantage ([Wonkblog](#)).
- Given how cheap a tool it is, is Trump's Twitter account genius? ([The Fix](#))

### Jeb Bush

- Jeb Bush's SuperPAC has been receiving some large donations – but it's very hard to say who they are from ([Daily Kos](#)).
- That said, both Bush's campaign and his SuperPAC may be nearly broke ([Red State](#))
- Money issues or not, Bush's SuperPAC is getting aggressive against his rivals such as Trump ([Daily Kos](#)).
- Responding to Trump's call to block Muslims from entering the US, Bush said that the proposals help Hillary Clinton ([Post Politics](#)).
- Bush's campaign is falling like a rock ([Red State](#))
- Bush admitted this week that he's an introvert ([Post Politics](#)).

### Marco Rubio

- In response to calls from the left for stricter gun control laws, Marco Rubio said this week that the left never calls for 'bomb control' given that bombs kill as well ([Crooks & Liars](#)).

### Ted Cruz

- This week the Senator from Texas suggested that he wished to bomb ISIS until 'sand glows in the dark' ([Crooks & Liars](#)).
- As of this week, Ted Cruz is the new frontrunner in Iowa ([The Fix](#))...
- ...and what if he wins? ([FiveThirtyEight](#)).
- This week Cruz also surged into second place in GOP national polling ([The Fix](#)).
- Despite his polling successes, the 2016 primary calendar is a challenge for him ([Red State](#)).
- For many, Cruz has become the sane alternative to Donald Trump – how? ([Political Animal](#))



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

- Former GOP Senator and presidential candidate, Bob Dole, really does not like Ted Cruz ( [The Fix](#)).

## Government, the Beltway and Congress' agenda

On Tuesday, *Federal Eye* has the [news](#) that the morale of federal workers has finally 'bottomed out', with only 33.4 percent of employees expressing job satisfaction. They say that while morale is now start going back up again, it is still terrible.

The Supreme Court was in the news again this week, hearing arguments in the *Evenwel v. Abbot* case over how people are counted when legislative districts are drawn. *Monkey Cage* [says](#) that the case revolves around whether or not districts are based on the number of people or the number of eligible voters. They say that if the Supreme Court endorses the latter, then that could mean less voting power for Latinos and Democrats. In other Supreme Court news this week, *PolitcusUSA* [says](#) that some African-American lawmakers have called for Justice Antonin Scalia to review his comments that some African-Americans would do better in 'slower' schools during oral arguments on a case challenging race-based admission policies at the University of Texas.

Moving on to Congress, *The Fix* [argues](#) that a government shutdown is unlikely next week given that a short term spending deal was passed in the last few days, the spending fight is cross-party, and not within the GOP, and Republican leaders really do not want to see a shutdown occur. *PolitcusUSA* [says](#) that Speaker Paul Ryan is 'flopping' in his attempts to control the House Freedom Caucus and other conservative Republicans who want to push the spending fight into 2016.

On Tuesday *The Atlantic* [reminds](#) us that the Senate is still one of the world's whitest workplaces, with only 7 percent of senior Congressional aides being people of color, and only two African American and three Hispanic Senators in the body itself.



Credi: whitehouse.gov

## Foreign policy, defense and trade

On Sunday this week, in the wake of last week's shootings in San Bernardino, *Powerline* [writes](#) that President Obama is a wartime president who doesn't seem to realize it. *The Federalist* [argues](#) that the California shootings illustrates that the US is unable to defeat ISIS, and that the solution lies with Muslims themselves. *The Fix*, meanwhile [says](#) that the President Obama has actually likely 'taken out' more than 30,000 terrorists in his time in office.

*The Atlantic* this week examines the intersection of gun-control politics and anti-terrorism measures in the wake of the San Bernardino shootings. They [comment](#) that Democrats, despite being past critics, have now concluded that no-fly lists are a useful tool that can be used to screen people who are on the lists from buying a gun, while Republicans have decided that this is a breach of due process.

On Wednesday, *Informed Comment* [says](#) that America's biggest enemy is its own Exceptionalism, which meant that the lessons of the Vietnam War went unlearned, helping to lead to recent and current quagmires in the Middle East.

The Iran nuclear deal is actually far from over, [writes](#) *Monkey Cage* on Saturday. They argue that it's important to ensure that Iran complies with the long-term requirements of the deal over the next decade or so.

Last week Secretary of Defense Ash Carter announced that the Pentagon will open all combat roles to women. *The Federalist* [warns](#) us not to believe the hype about women in combat, arguing that few women will be able to qualify for

special operations roles, and that it may lead to issues around morale and unit cohesion.

## Obamacare and health policy

On Monday this week, *Townhall* takes a [look](#) at what they argue is what an affordable health care system would look like. They say that at present, around 5 percent of patients spend nearly half of all health care dollars, and that better management of this sickest 5 percent would mean better outcomes for other patients. *The Hill's Congress blog* this week [comments](#) on what they see as Washington's latest attempt to deny access to affordable health care – efforts in Congress to defund Planned Parenthood.

*The Daily Signal* has a [primer](#) of what you need to know about the Affordable Care Act's 'risk corridor' program, which has been criticized as a bailout for insurers. The program is designed to provide health insurers with protections and spread the potential risks that some may encounter by covering more unhealthy patients than they had done previously. *The Federalist* also [writes](#) on Obamacare this week, commenting that while the president's signature health care reform seems to be repealing itself, but Republicans need to do more to focus on the real problems that Obamacare never tried to address, and to avoid



Credit: Fibonacci Blue (Flickr, CC-BY-2.0)

creating new regulations and complexity. *Townhall reports* Thursday that the Senate has passed a bill which would begin dismantling Obamacare, in a vote which has changed the debate over the program forever, since it also included a repeal of Obamacare's entire Medicaid expansion. Still on Obamacare, *Hit & Run* has the [news](#) Thursday that the Congressional Budget Office has estimated that the program will shrink the country by the equivalent of about 2 million jobs over the next ten years.

## The gun control debate

On Saturday, only a few days after the latest mass shooting in San Bernardino, California, the *New York Times* devoted its front page to an editorial calling for gun control. *The Fix* [argues](#) that it is folly for the paper to make this call, given that its readers are already likely to be in favor of stricter measures, and that it may just end up being fodder for Republican candidates who accuse the media of being biased against them. *Hit & Run* makes the [point](#) that more restrictive gun laws would not have prevented recent shootings in any case. *The Federalist* [writes](#) that the more gun control proponents call for restrictions on firearms, the more guns are purchased.

*America blog* [writes](#) Monday that mass shootings are a bad way to frame the debate over gun violence, and that given the high level of gun-related suicides and shootings by friends and families, we should be talking about guns all of the time. *Powerline*, meanwhile has what they say is [all we need to know](#) about the gun debate in two charts – one which shows that the gun homicide rate has fallen as private firearm ownership has increased, and the other which shows rising un ownership per person and falling gun homicides per 100,000 population.

*The Federalist* [argues](#) this week that the anti-gun 'crowd' needs to be more transparent about its agenda to disarm the US of its guns, and the devastation that it would wreak by inciting a civil war of gun owners against the government.

## The economy and society

On Sunday, *Informed Comment* [looks](#) at a new report which finds that 400 US billionaires are wealthier than nearly 200 million Americans, and ponders whether we have now reached peak inequality. Some of this inequality stems from the dismantling of past working processes into what is now called by many as the 'gig economy' that has led to

increasingly precarious and under-paid work. *The Atlantic* [asks](#) this week when labor laws will catch up with the gig economy, given the difficulty of regulating companies which such as Uber and Airbnb which operate in this economy.

*Hit & Run* [argues](#) this week that we are now seeing the beginning of the end of the war on marijuana, with recreational use of the drug potentially on the ballot in nearly a dozen states next year, and support for legalization standing at 58 percent.

On Wednesday, *The Atlantic* has the [news](#) that the Senate has approved the Every Student Succeeds Act, which rewrites 2001's No Child Left Behind Act. The new Act curtails the authority of the Secretary of Education and returns powers to the states to develop their own standards of accountability for schools.

Back on to gun politics – *Daily Kos* [says](#) that while we are now afraid of gun violence than ever, the murder rate is actually at a 50 year low. *Hit & Run* meanwhile [reports](#) on a new FBI program to better track fatal police shootings. They say that the FBI has no legal authority to force law enforcement agencies to participate in the reporting system, so pressure and incentives will be very important.



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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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