

Trump endures as Carson fades, Obama's frustration over mass shootings, and Ryan's vision for the House: US national blog round up for 28 November – 4 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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President Obama, the Democratic Party, and the GOP

On Monday this week, *Roll Call's Potus Operandi* [reports](#) that during the climate negotiations currently underway in Paris, President Obama told other world leaders that the US has helped to cause the climate change 'problem', and that it is ready to help other countries to find solutions.

On Tuesday, *Smart Politics* [writes](#) that Obama has discussed terrorism more in 2015 than in any other year of his presidency – averaging nearly twice a day. They say that he has mentioned terrorism nearly 3,000 times since taking office, showing that he is at least speaking about the issue, even if many are critical of his policy positions.

Wednesday sees *United Liberty* [comment](#) that levels of distrust in government have reached historic highs under President Obama, with a recent study showing that only 19 percent of people trust the government. They say that this is likely because the government has become more inept and corrupt as it has grown under Obama's tenure.

Roll Call's Heard on the Hill has the [news](#) this week that the president's annual State of the Union will be a little early next year, on January 12th. The move up is likely due to the busy political calendar next year that sees caucuses and primaries in early February.

Moving on to the Republican Party, *The Fix* [looks](#) at how the party is getting whiter. They say that this trend is 'very bad' for the party, as Democrats pick up an increasing share of nonwhite voters. *American Thinker*, meanwhile [calls](#) on conservative voters to stop voting in establishment Republicans who work to 'get along' with Democrats once they are elected to office.

Elections and the road to 2016

On Monday, *Roll Call's At the Races* [looks](#) at the gubernatorial races to watch in 2016. They say that the GOP is looking to win in Missouri, West Virginia, New Hampshire, and Montana, while the Democrats are eyeing up Indiana and North Carolina. *Sabato's Crystal Ball* [writes](#) that Democrats may be well placed to pick up an extra House seat in Florida next year now that the long-running redistricting saga in that state has been concluded. On Thursday, *FiveThirtyEight* [examines](#) how demographics will shape the 2016 election. One of their main takeaways is that high support and engagement with African Americans is crucial for Democrats.

Roll Call's Rothenblog [previews](#) four court cases which could have a major impact on the 2016 election, including Supreme Court cases on abortion and redistricting, and the trial of one of the police officers associated with the death of Freddie Gray whilst in police custody in Baltimore earlier this year.



Credit: Kevin Dooley (Creative Commons BY)

The Democrats' 2016 campaign

The Democratic Party currently controls 31 of 99 state legislative chambers, and of those they only have exclusive control of 11. *Daily Kos* [writes](#) this week that the GOP also controls state legislatures in eight states where Barack Obama twice carried the state. They argue that one reason why the Democratic Party does so badly in downticket races may be that their voters are more bipartisan, and are willing to reach across the aisle to support Republicans.

Turning to the 2016 presidential race, *The Fix* [comments](#) Tuesday that Massachusetts Senator, Elizabeth Warren, is winning the Democrats' primary season in that she has been able to push her message of economic populism into the mainstream. Moving on now to the candidates who are actually running for their party's nomination:

- Former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton has called for \$275 billion in extra federal spending on infrastructure – including an infrastructure bank – but has not said how it would be paid for ([Hit & Run](#))
- The GOP has been criticizing Clinton for wanting to cut taxes ([Wonkblog](#)).
- Clinton's email problems have gone dormant – at least for now ([The Fix](#)).
- Despite Clinton's dominance, Vermont Senator, Bernie Sanders has made it clear – he's in the race to win ([Post Politics](#)).



Former Governor of Maryland, Martin O'Malley Credit: Maryland GovPics (Flickr, CC-BY-2.0)

- Former Maryland Governor, Martin O'Malley is now pitching to House Democrats to be their second choice ([Roll Call's At the Races](#)).
- Could an independent presidential bid from former Virginia Senator Jim Webb matter, at least in his home state ([The Fix](#))?

The Republican Party's 2016 campaign

On Saturday, *Informed Comment* [looks](#) at the attitude of GOP presidential candidates towards abortion, writing that most want to ban the procedure in even in cases of rape. On Tuesday, *FiveThirtyEight* [says](#) that the Republican Party cannot rely on minority candidates – such as Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal, and retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson – to win minority votes.

On Wednesday, *Outside the Beltway* writes that billionaire Donald Trump [continues](#) to lead the GOP primary, with Texas and Florida Senators Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio moving to battle for second place as Dr. Ben Carson's polling falls. Turning now to The Donald and some of the other candidates:

Donald Trump

- Why Trump's success is not the fault of 'our culture' ([Ten Miles Square](#))...
- ...though the GOP may be reaping what they've sown with their anger and hatred ([Caffeinated Politics](#)).
- Trump may not be an actual fascist, but he's leading us down that path ([Crooks & Liars](#)).
- After months of feting him, the media are now looking for a Trump alternative ([The Fix](#)).
- Why has Trump endured why Ben Carson has faded? ([The Atlantic](#)).
- Perhaps it's Trump's charisma ([Hit & Run](#))
- Trump this week demanded \$5 million from CNN to appear at the December 15 GOP presidential debate ([The Fix](#))...
- ...though by Thursday, Trump had relented fearing that not appearing could damage his front-runner status ([Post Politics](#)).
- If Trump actually wins the nomination, it could split the GOP ([Mischiefs of Faction](#)).
- This week Trump refused to apologize to the New York Times for mocking the disability of reporter Serge Kovaleski last week ([Post Politics](#))

- Last week Trump stated that 100 black pastors were due to endorse him – it turns out they never made such a commitment ([Red State](#))...
- ...and afterwards some of who had stated that they would meet with him withdrew the offer ([Post Politics](#))...
- ...which led to Trump cancelling the press conference entirely ([The Atlantic](#))...
- ... though it was actually revived at the last minute ([The Fix](#)).

Ben Carson

- Can Ben Carson win back evangelicals from candidates like Ted Cruz and Donald Trump who are capitalizing on that group's fear of terrorism in the wake of the Paris attacks? ([The Atlantic](#)).



Donald Trump Credit: Gage Skidmore (Creative Commons BY SA)

Jeb Bush

- George W. Bush's chief strategist, Matthew Dowd, thinks that his brother, Jeb, has 'incredibly low odds' of being the Republican nominee ([The Fix](#)).
- Bush argued this week that Donald Trump is preying on people's fears ([Post Politics](#)).
- Could Bush save the GOP by pouring all his money into ant-Trump attack ads? ([The Fix](#)).
- Will Bush hold fire on Marco Rubio? ([Political Animal](#)).

Marco Rubio

- When asked about his faith this week, Marco Rubio 'blew everyone away' with his answer ([The Federalist](#))...
- ...though some accused him of pandering to religious groups ([America blog](#)).

Ted Cruz

- Florida Democratic Congressman Alan Grayson has gone 'full birther' on Ted Cruz, threatening to file a lawsuit challenging Cruz's eligibility for the presidency given that he was born in Canada ([Red State](#)).
- Cruz made the 'insane' claim this week that Democrats commit the most violent crimes ([PoliticusUSA](#)).
- With claims like the one above, Cruz is starting to sound a bit like Donald Trump ([The Fix](#))...
- ...but is he as big of a jerk as Trump? ([Hit & Run](#))
- [Townhall](#) makes the conservative case for Cruz.
- Is Cruz the GOP primary's 'sleeping giant'? ([The Fix](#)).



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

- Cruz's increasing popularity has put the GOP establishment into panic and paralysis ([Red State](#)).

Chris Christie

- The New Jersey Governor this week garnered the endorsement of the *New Hampshire Union Leader* – but will it matter given his currently low polling? ([Outside the Beltway](#))
- The endorsement means that it's now or never for Christie ([The Fix](#)).
- Both Christie and Ted Cruz should thank Donald Trump and Ben Carson for their recent poll gains ([Townhall](#))
...
- ...though that didn't prevent Christie from criticizing Trump over his recent comments that he saw Muslims celebrating in New Jersey after 9/11 ([Post Politics](#)).

Government, the Beltway and Congress' agenda

On Monday this week, *The Daily Signal* [comments](#) on a new report from Senator James Lankford (R-OK) which cites 100 examples of how the government wastes money. These include federally mandated school lunch standards which cause students not to eat enough as well as \$250 million for a training project for 60 Syrian rebels fighting ISIL.

Congress faces a budget deadline of December 11th to pass an omnibus spending package. *Roll Call's* [218 reports](#) that House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy has stated that the GOP would not shut the government down, and would even push for a short-term Continuing Resolution to December 18th if there is no agreement by the 11th.

Daily Kos has the [news](#) Wednesday that Congress reached a compromise on a \$305 billion bill which would fund infrastructure projects for five years and reauthorize the Export-Import Bank through to 2019. They say that while the bill is better than recent 'patchwork' extensions, it does not pinpoint a consistent revenue source for the measure.

On Thursday, *The Atlantic* [says](#) that House Speaker Paul Ryan has laid down his legislative vision for the House, arguing that the GOP has been too timid in recent years. Ryan, they write, wants Congressional Republicans to put together a "complete alternative to the left's agenda" in Congress in 2016.

Moving on to the Senate, *Smart Politics* [looks](#) at which states give their Senators the lowest marks. Kentucky and Kansas have the lowest ratings, while Vermont and Wyoming lead with the highest.

Crooks & Liars [reports](#) that the Senate voted on Thursday to repeal Obamacare and to defund Planned Parenthood, in a bill that would be almost certainly vetoed by President Obama if it reached him.



Foreign policy, defense and trade

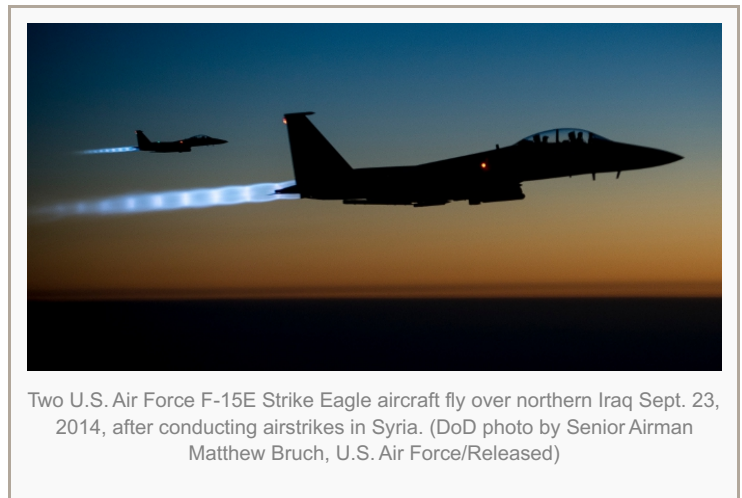
Monkey Cage [looks](#) at one provision of the recently negotiated Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement (which Congress is gearing up to vote on); Investor-State Dispute Settlement. They say that under the new rules, frustrated investors could sue the US, and it also would not get the US government off the hook for American firms' disputes.

This week, *The Fix* [looks](#) at how much the US actually spends on refugees – in terms of government spending; it's

about \$1.56 billion a year at the moment.

After calls from Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Lindsay Graham (R-SC) that the US should reoccupy Iraq and invade Syria, *Informed Comment* [writes](#) that the US is likely to suffer much greater losses than it did in the Iraq War, and that the operations would likely cost trillions. *Monkey Cage* meanwhile [looks](#) at why we can only contain ISIS, not ‘bomb it back to the Stone Age’.

On Thursday, *Hit & Run* has the [news](#) that the Pentagon has announced that for the first time, women will be able to assume all combat roles in the US military.



Obamacare and health policy

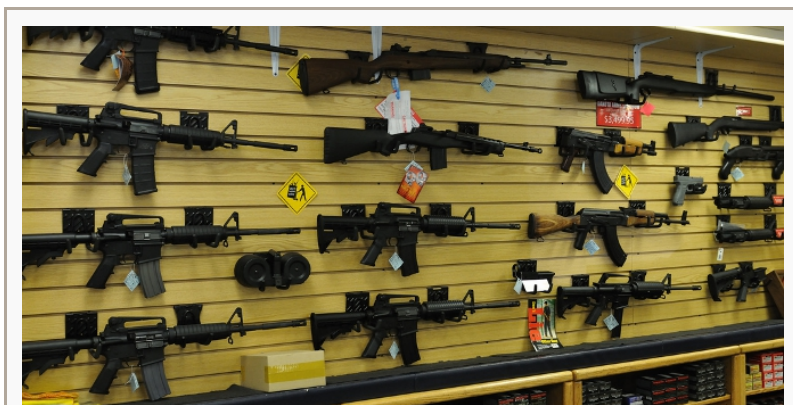
Townhall Monday [argues](#) that the president’s signature healthcare reform – the Affordable Care Act (or ‘Obamacare’) – is a ‘ponzi scheme’ which needs healthy people to participate in order for it to be a success.

What’s the link between the Baltimore riots of earlier this year and the Affordable Care Act? *Monkey Cage* [says](#) that a recent proposal in Baltimore for a rate increase for the Johns Hopkins Health System (which would have provided 1,000 jobs for city residents) was nixed, meaning fewer employment opportunities for city residents.

Mass shootings and the gun control debate

This week was a particularly bad one for mass shootings in the US – Friday saw a gunman shoot dead two civilians and one police officer, and injure nine others at a Planned Parenthood Clinic in Colorado Springs, and two gunmen killed 14 in San Bernardino California on Wednesday, the same day that a gunman in Savannah, Georgia shot four, killing one. On Monday, before the San Bernardino shooting, *Wonkblog* [reported](#) that there had been 351 mass shootings in 334 days of the year. *FiveThirtyEight* [writes](#) that mass shootings have become more common in the US, though overall gun homicides have declined.

Red State gives [five reasons](#) why the Colorado Springs shootings were not terrorism – as some have maintained. These include that there were no real ‘root causes’ for the violence and that it was not the result of any ‘blowback’.



Credit: Michael Saechang, Flickr CC-BY-SA-2.0

The Atlantic [covers](#) President Obama’s ‘resigned anger’ after the San Bernardino shootings on Wednesday, commenting that despite pushing hard for stricter gun laws (that often have overwhelming public support), he has

achieved nothing legislatively.

On Thursday, *Wonkblog* [compares](#) US violence to that of other countries – the differences are striking. The US has less than 5 percent of the world’s population, and yet has between 1/3rd and ½ of all of the world’s guns.

Crooks & Liars [takes](#) conservatives to task for the ‘cheap dodge’ of legislators offering their ‘thoughts and prayers’ for those affected by gun violence, but who actually take money from the National Rifle Association. Speaking of gun promoters – two gun makers’ stocks jumped after the San Bernardino shooting, writes *Wonkblog*.

The economy and society

On Saturday, *The Atlantic* [examines](#) how the economic fates of cities such as St. Louis – which were once similarly prosperous – diverged. They argue that beginning in the late 1970s, public policies swung from promoting regional income equality to those which favoured deregulation and greater regionalism.

Speaking of policy reforms, on Sunday, *The Daily Signal* has [12 possible economic policy reforms](#) which could save the average household up to \$4,440 a year.

The US territory of Puerto Rico has had some major fiscal problems in recent months. *The American Interest* has the [news](#) this week that Puerto Rico was preparing itself for its first debt repayment default.

On Tuesday, *Occasional Planet* [writes](#) on how many US companies are doing very well out of using prison labor, with prisoners earning from \$0.25 to \$1.15 per hour. Such companies include Whole Foods, McDonald’s and Wal-Mart.

The Atlantic [discusses](#) the US welfare state on Thursday, commenting that it’s a terrible name for what is an essential safety-net in the current ‘gig economy’.

Monkey Cage [looks](#) at how what use to be fringe attacks on Muslims (which have become characteristic of Donald Trump) in America became mainstream.

Featured image credit: The White House

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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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