

TPA is resurrected, Jeb! and Trump announce, and does the GOP have an Obamacare alternative?: US national blog round up for 13 – 19 June

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.

President Obama, the Democratic Party, and the GOP

On Wednesday this week, *PotusOperandi* [reports](#) that the White House Press Secretary, Josh Earnest has warned that President Obama will veto the Defense Appropriations Bill, currently making its way through Congress, unless there is a deal to also raise domestic spending. At the end of last week, the House of Representative voted down a Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Bill, which because of its link to the previously passed Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) Bill has stymied President Obama's trade agenda. *The Atlantic* [looks](#) this week at how Obama may well get his trade deal after all – by conspiring with Republicans against Democrats who are against the agreement.

This week saw the tragic shooting of 9 people in black church in Charleston, South Carolina. President Obama gave a statement to the nation on the shootings on Thursday – *The Fix* has a [timeline](#) of Obama's many responses to shooting incidents throughout his presidency, beginning with the April 2009 shooting in Binghamton New York.

Moving on to the Democratic Party and the left, *RedState* [shows](#) sarcastic enthusiasm for the Democratic Party's latest 'rebrand'. They say that attempts by party strategists to refocus the party's message in the wake of their defeats in last November's midterm elections are likely to be doomed given the poor record of the strategists themselves. *American Thinker*, meanwhile, [wonders](#) if the left has reached its 'jump the shark' moment, with Americans having 'had enough' of the political correctness that prevents them from speaking the truth.

Looking at the right, *Crooks & Liars* places some of the blame for the shooting in South Carolina this week on the Republican Party, [arguing](#) that the hate shown by the shooter, Dylann Roof, had been worked up by the 'right wing machine'.

Elections and the road to 2016

On Wednesday, *National Journal* [looks](#) at the GOP's multi-million dollar campaign against Democratic Governor, Maggie Hassan ahead of the state's 2016 Senate race. What makes the campaign odd is that Hassan has not even declared her candidacy against incumbent Senator, Kelly Ayotte.

Some commentators have put forward the National Popular Vote as an alternative to the Electoral College, which would give the presidency to the candidate with the most popular votes across the 50 states. *Ten Miles Square* [says](#) the idea isn't a great one as it would mean that people in every county in every state would have to 'figure out' who voted for whom.

Moving on to the Democratic side of the 2016 presidential race:

- Former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, made a speech Saturday to officially begin her campaign – *Wonkblog* [says](#) that she is running on an old liberal concept of growing government to fix the economy.
- *The Atlantic* reckons Clinton's agenda is '[uninspiring](#)' and devoid of soaring rhetoric...
- ...though all the 2016 polls are essentially about how popular Clinton is ([The Fix](#)).

- Vermont Senator, Bernie Sanders, has been drawing contrasts with Clinton on trade, the Iraq vote, and campaign finance ([Crooks & Liars](#))...
- ...but we shouldn't read too much into his apparent surge in New Hampshire ([Outside the Beltway](#)).

The GOP's 2016 presidential field is proving to be much, much, larger than that of the Democrats – and even those who have declared they are not running may be having an influence. [Outside the Beltway](#) says that 2012's nominee and former Massachusetts Governor, Mitt Romney, is serving as a middle man between the candidates and big money donors to produce a more mainstream candidate that will avoid the 'mayhem' of his own race. [Monkey Cage](#), meanwhile looks at who the most conservative Republican presidential candidate is according to Twitter networks – perhaps surprisingly the result is a near tie. [The Fix](#) warns that the immigration issue might cripple the GOP's nominee even before the election. Delving into some of the candidates more closely:



• Former Florida Governor, Jeb Bush Credit: [Michael Vadon](#) (Flickr, [CC-BY-SA-2.0](#))

Wisconsin Governor, Scott Walker, may have lied about UK Prime Minister David Cameron making negative comments about the direction of American leadership ([Crooks & Liars](#)).

- Former Florida Governor, Jeb Bush announced he was running for the presidency this week – [PoliticusUSA](#) reckons he is trying to hide his Bush name by adopting 'Jeb!' as a campaign logo.
- [Hit & Run](#) has [five things](#) that we need to know about Bush's campaign...
- ... while [The Daily Signal](#) reports that he has pledged 19 million new jobs and 4 percent economic growth if elected.
- [Mischiefs of Faction](#) say that Bush has [too many opponents](#)...
- ... which may have something to do with the polls (and pols) which say that he is a weak front-runner ([FiveThirtyEight](#)).
- Billionaire Donald Trump also announced his presidential candidacy this week, with a typically bombastic speech. [Daily Kos](#) says he is already hilarious...
- ...and the [Daily Signal](#) thinks that his 'fake' campaign is a 'cry for help'.
- Only one GOP candidate turned up to the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials' convention – former surgeon Dr Ben Carson ([Daily Kos](#)).

Government, the Beltway and Congress' agenda

This week the Federal Reserve was due to unveil its latest strategy for pulling up the American economy – but will anyone actually believe it? [Wonkblog](#) examines why the Fed's forecasts aren't trusted – it turns out most think that it's being too optimistic.

On Tuesday, [The Federal Eye](#) looks at the odd case of \$54 million the Department of Veterans Affairs spent on prosthetics – all in \$24,999 amounts, \$1 less than the limit on the Department's purchasing cards.

On Thursday, *National Journal* [reports](#) on the Supreme Court's ruling this week that states do not have to allow the Confederate flag to be displayed on specialty licence plates. They say that the Court has stated that since the plates are messages which come from state governments, the states do not have to endorse the Confederate flag.

Moving on to the House – *Roll Call's 218* [says](#) that the Republican Party's leadership is pushing back on members of the party who last week voted 'No' on bringing Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) to the floor, with three members losing their deputy whip positions. TPA is not dead, however. *Crooks & Liars* [writes](#) on Thursday that the bill has been resurrected and passed by the House with the hopes that it will pass in the Senate as a standalone measure.

Heading over to the Senate, *Roll Call's Beltway Insiders* [has](#) an interesting piece on why the chamber plays 'legislative bait and switch', where language from one Senate bill ends up in another, often unrelated, House bill. This week the Senate passed an amendment to the 2016 National Defense Authorization Act, which strengthens the ban on torture. *Daily Kos* [details](#) the 21 Senators who voted against the amendment, who they say think the U.S. should torture people.

Foreign policy, defense and trade

On Saturday, *The Daily Signal* [writes](#) that when President Obama leaves office, the U.S. military will be smaller than it was before 9/11, something they say will make the country worse off. Declining military or not, the U.S. is going to continue to spread it around – *Outside the Beltway* [reports](#) that the U.S. is preparing to store military equipment in several Eastern European NATO states, in what they say is likely a signal to Russia about their determination to respond to any threats. Is introducing capitalism into the military a way of reducing waste? *Roll Call's Beltway Insiders* [agrees](#) with a recent call from Senator John McCain (R-AZ) to return the responsibility managing programs acquisition to the military services in exchange for direct accountability.

The American Interest [calls](#) for a renewed U.S. pivot towards Europe in light of the current crisis facing Greece.

Moving to trade issues, *Wonkblog* [looks](#) at why NAFTA was passed in Congress in the 1990s, but why the Trans-Pacific Partnership has largely failed. They say that earmarks and the openness of the text were contributing factors to NAFTA's success.

Obamacare and health policy

This week healthcare commentary was dominated over speculation on the Supreme Court's upcoming ruling on the *King v. Burwell* case which revolves around the legality of the Affordable Care Act's subsidies for federal Obamacare exchanges based in states which did not set up their own exchanges. *American Thinker* [writes](#) that the case is about more than just tax credits – it is about a president who overstepped the key provisions of the law without Congressional approval. On Tuesday, *Daily Kos* [has the news](#) that Arkansas, Delaware, and Pennsylvania have all had approval from the Department of Health and Human Services to create their own state-based Obamacare exchanges, which would avoid the consequences of a Supreme Court decision to remove the federal exchange's subsidies.

If the subsidies are thrown out by the Supreme Court, then millions will face much higher premiums, especially in Republican dominated states. On Sunday, *PoliticoUSA* [says](#) that House Representative Paul Ryan (R-WI) 'fell



U.S. Supreme Court Credit : OZinOH (Creative Commons BY NC)

apart' during an interview and admitted that the Republican Party has no alternative. *Roll Call's Hawkings Here* [says](#) that the GOP is not quite ready for the Supreme Court to rule in the favor, given their lack of proposals to deal with the consequences. Thursday sees *The Hill's Congress blog* [report](#) that a Republican alternative to Obamacare is now emerging – the plan would involve a flat rate health tax credit, no mandates, a flexible savings account, and equal tax subsidies for all.

The economy and society

The shooting in Charleston, South Carolina this week has again prompted debate over the effectiveness of gun control. In a piece which was posted before the shooting, *Political Animal* [gives](#) an example from Connecticut of where gun control measures have helped lead to fewer gun deaths. In the wake of the shooting, *The Atlantic* [looks](#) at how black churches have been the target of attacks for generations.

On Tuesday, *Wonkblog* [examines](#) why the U.S. homeownership rate is likely to continue to fall. They explain that as the age of marriage and childbearing rises, people are putting off buying homes, and that this combines with stagnant wages and high student debt levels to depress home ownership rates.

The Atlantic [looks](#) into the under-investigated wage gap between gay and straight people, writing that heterosexual men earn more than gay men, who in turn earn more than lesbian women, who themselves earn more than heterosexual women.

On Wednesday, *The American Prospect* [warns](#) against the outlawing of abortion, as some states are attempting, citing the example of El Salvador where a ban led to women using clandestine and dangerous methods to obtain the procedure.

This week the U.S. Treasury announced that they would be placing a woman's image alongside that of Alexander Hamilton on the \$10 bill. *Wonkblog* [says](#) that the Treasury should have replaced Andrew Jackson on the \$20 instead, given how much he did wrong on the economy.



Credit: [Chris Potter](#) (Credit: Flickr, [CC-BY-2.0](#))

And finally...

To celebrate Flag Day on Sunday, *Hit & Run* has some [examples](#) of 'DIY' flags from the early days of the American Republic.

Wonkblog has a [chart](#) of the animals that are most likely to kill you this summer. Don't worry about sharks, but you may want to avoid bees, wasps and hornets.

Monkey Cage has the [results](#) of a new study that finds that bartenders are more likely to be Democrats, while beer wholesalers, Republicans. Cheers!

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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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