

## Grimm goes while Scalise stays, questions for Clinton, and the Jeb boom: U.S. national blog round up for 27 December – 2 January

*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 Saturday, *PoliticusUSA* [writes](#) that President Obama is finally getting credit from the public for the economic recovery that the U.S. is currently experiencing. They say that recent polls show higher approval ratings for the President, and that they are likely to continue to improve as the economy blossoms. *Daily Kos* also looks at public opinion this week, [writing](#) that despite the reality, the public is unaware that the deficit has decreased and that the number of deportations of illegal immigrants has risen considerably, instead mostly believing his critics who have stated the opposite.



President Barack Obama meets with advisors in the Roosevelt Room of the White House (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

*American Thinker* is [critical](#) of President Obama this week, writing that while he 'loves to throw Bible verses around', he has only been to church 18 times during his presidency, while having golfed more than 200 times. On Sunday, *RedState* writes that Obama's 'true great failure' is the loss of more than half a dozen gubernatorial races since 2010, which illustrates the Democratic Party's ebb in government outside of the presidency. They [say](#) that the coalition that helped Barack Obama's election and re-election was designed specifically for that purpose, and had been of help to few others. On Tuesday *United Liberty* [comments](#) that Obama has had a 'terrible' 2014, which has seen his party routed in the midterm elections, low public approval ratings and events such as the Bowe Bergdahl prisoner swap and the NSA spying revelations.

On Sunday, *Daily Kos* looks at three ways they say the Republican Party will sabotage the government and the economy in 2015. These [include](#) cuts to the Internal Revenue Service, which is likely to increase the estimated \$500 billion 'tax gap' of fraud and evasion, and 'cooking the books' by introducing dynamic scoring to the Congressional Budget Office.

### Elections and the road to 2016

Looking ahead to the 2016 presidential election, *Political Animal* [looks](#) at what they call, 'the Jeb boom', after

recent polls have shown the former Florida Governor, Jeb Bush breaking into a solid lead amongst potential Republican presidential candidates. *RedState* meanwhile [writes](#) against the inevitability of a Jeb Bush candidacy writing that it is time for Americans to ‘declare our independence from Monarchy’ and the Bush dynasty.

On the Democratic side, *National Journal* this week has [nine questions](#) for former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, who is widely tipped for the party’s 2016 nomination. These questions include when she will announce, who her campaign manager will be, and whether or not she will do anything to reach out to progressive activists.

### **Government, the Beltway and Congress’ agenda**

On Monday, *Lonely Conservative* [discusses](#) a new report from the Government Accountability Office that has found that nearly every federal agency is ill-prepared to deal with a major disaster. *The Atlantic*, meanwhile, [looks](#) at another agency that has also garnered a great deal of negative press in the past year –the National Security Agency (NSA). They say that while the NSA touts itself as being committed to transparency, the recent release of its own internal reports into its law and policy violations since 2001 (which the Agency fought) show that it has continually broken laws, with little or no punishment for its employees who have been found to have done so. On Monday, *Daily Kos* praises the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau – brainchild of Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA). They [say](#) that the Bureau has helped the Pentagon to close a loophole in the way that military personnel can allocate their pay so that it is harder for them to be exploited by unscrupulous companies. In the three years since it was introduced, the agency has recovered more than \$4.6 billion for consumers harmed by illegal practices by financial institutions.

*Hit & Run* is highly critical of the IRS this week, [writing](#) that planned cuts of \$346 million to its budget aren’t enough considering Federal government receipts are still increasing. A bit of a diet for the government won’t hurt, they say. *The Daily Signal* is also [critical](#) of government waste this year, showcasing seven ‘ridiculous’ projects the government spent tax dollars on in 2014. These include \$400,000 paid to transport foreign journalists around U.S. breweries and distilleries, and \$50 million for information that is mostly freely available online.

Looking at Congress this week, *The Daily Signal* [writes](#) that despite what many have felt, the just finished 113<sup>th</sup> Congress was not the least productive in history. They say that it is the second least productive with 296 laws passed compared to 283 in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress. Will the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress be more productive, or just as gridlocked as the last? *Political Animal* [warns](#) that President Obama and Congressional Republicans are likely to lock horns in ‘epic policy battles’ in 2015, with the threat of yet another shutdown over the budget still present. *The Lonely Conservative* [writes](#) this week that President Obama is already promising to veto the GOP’s bills, and that this is going against the will of the American people who have voted the Democrats out of power in Congress. On Thursday, *The Daily Signal* has some [suggestions](#) for Congress’ New Year’s resolutions. These are mostly what the Republican Party did not deliver in 2014, such as repealing Obamacare and securing the border.

In the Senate, *Daily Kos* [looks](#) at comments from the Democrat’s Majority Leader, Harry Reid (D-NV) – about what he expects as Minority leader in the next Congress. They say that his new mission is to block the GOP from doing ‘crazy stuff’.

While the House does not sit until January 6<sup>th</sup>, this week saw important developments for the Republican majority. At the beginning of the week, evidence came to light that the Republican Majority Whip, Steve Scalise (R-LA) has spoken to a conference organized by a white supremacist group in 2002. *Red State* [writes](#) that while Scalise is not a racist, his problem is one of judgment. They say that his push for electability, allowed him to go to the group of David Duke, a former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. *Hit & Run* [writes](#) that Scalise’s legislative record – that of a ‘hard core’ conservative is more troubling to libertarians than his speaking record. *Daily Kos* [reports](#) on Tuesday that Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) has thrown Scalise a ‘life preserver’ by stating that his actions were an error in judgment and that he has his full confidence as Whip. The Scalise affair has done little to help John Boehner – *National Review’s The Campaign Spot* [writes](#) that a new poll shows that he is not particularly popular with Republican voters.

Staying in the House, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) on Monday that Michael Grimm, (R-NY) is to resign from his Staten Island seat after pleading guilty to tax fraud. They say that despite Democrat Bill de Blasio’s popularity as Mayor of New

York the GOP are still likely to have an edge in the upcoming special election.

## Foreign policy, defense and trade

On New Year's Day, *Informed Comment* [looks ahead](#) to President Obama's biggest foreign policy challenges in the Mideast. These include fighting the forces of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, and continuing negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program. *National Review's The Campaign Spot* [wonders](#) how long a U.S. embassy in the Iranian capital of Tehran would stay open. They say that recent years have seen attacks on U.S. diplomats in their facilities in Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Tunisia, Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan, which does not bode well for a new U.S. facility in Iran.

*FreakOutNation* [writes](#) this week that the 13-year long war in Afghanistan has now ended – but that no-one has noticed. They say that the U.S. and NATO formally ended their war in the country in a ceremony on Sunday, but that it was low-key due to the threat of Taliban strikes.

On Wednesday, *The Atlantic* [takes an in-depth look at those who are crossing the Mexico-U.S. border illegally](#). They say that for the first time in over 60 years, more non-Mexicans than Mexicans are crossing the border; 257,000 were apprehended in 2014 compared to 229,000 Mexicans.



Representative Michael Grimm (R-NY) Credit: [House GOP](#) (Flickr, CC-BY-NC-2.0)

## Obamacare and health policy

*Wonkblog* writes on Saturday that the Obama administration may be missing a major chance to boost enrollment in its Obamacare program. They [say](#) that while 6.4 million people have already signed up for health plans in 2015, having people sign up during the fall is a bad idea as for many, it is one of the most emotionally and financially stressful times of the year. *Daily Kos*, meanwhile, [takes a look](#) at Obamacare's 2014, from House Republican's attempts to craft a replacement plan, to falling uninsurance rates and Medicare cost savings.



Border Wall Mural in Nogales, Mexico. Credit: [Jonathan McIntosh](#) (Flickr, CC-BY-NC-SA-2.0)

## The economy and society

On Tuesday, *Wonkblog* [reports](#) that more adults are now using marijuana in states that have legalized the drug, but usage amongst teens is trending downwards, according to the most recent National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

*Daily Kos* [writes](#) that since the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook more than two years ago, there have been 21 deadly school shootings, which have killed 32 and injured 11.

Many are concerned about the skyrocketing levels of student debt amongst American college students. This week, *Crooks & Liars* [looks](#) at whether or not this crushing debt is bringing back indentured labor, as it is virtually impossible to escape.

On Wednesday, *American Thinker* [compares](#) President Obama and President Reagan's records on economic

growth. They say that in terms of real GDP, real disposable income, and the federal deficit, Reagan wins out.

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

*National Journal* [looks](#) at 2014's best gaffes, featuring President Obama, Hillary Clinton, Vice President Joe Biden, and Senator Rand Paul (R-KY).

*Wonkblog* [lists](#) things commentators thought would happen in 2014, but didn't.

*The Daily Signal* has the [best political Instagrams of 2014](#).

Featured [image](#): Speaker John Boehner and Rep. Steve Scalise Credit: [Speaker John Boehner](#) (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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