

Biden's out of the running for president, Ryan's in for Speaker, and Hillary Clinton's great week: US national blog round up for 17 – 23 October

USAPP Managing Editor, Chris Gilson looks at the best in political blogging from around the Beltway.

[Elections and the road to 2016](#)

[The Democrats' 2016 campaign](#)

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

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

[Foreign policy, defense and trade](#)

[Obamacare and health policy](#)

[The economy and society](#)

[And finally...](#)

President Obama, the Democratic Party, and the GOP



Credit: The White House

On Monday this week, *Political Animal* has the [news](#) that President Obama's approval ratings have rebounded to 51 percent, according to a recent poll. With 45 percent disapproving, these numbers are Obama's best since May, 2013. Later in the week, *Daily Kos* [reports](#) that President Obama has vetoed a \$612 billion 'slush fund' in the form of the 2016 National Defense Authorization Act. The veto is linked to the bill's \$38 billion boost to a fund not covered by the budget, which is also beyond the spending caps put in place in 2011. On Friday, *Post Politics* [writes](#) that although President Obama has stated that he feels that the death penalty is 'deeply troubling', he has not changed his position on its use for particularly heinous crimes.

Moving on to the wider Democratic Party, *Powerline* [wonders](#) if the party can bring 'socialism' into the mainstream. They say that the party's efforts in this vein have accelerated since Vermont Senator (and avowed socialist), Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign has gained in popularity.

On Monday, *The American Interest* [looks](#) at the Democratic Party's weak position nationally. They comment that given that the GOP are likely to retain the Senate – and certainly the House – in 2016, the Democrats have a lot to

lose if they do not retain the presidency.

Turning now to the Republican Party, *Red State* [writes](#) Monday that Republicans would rather lose elections than help conservatives, citing the example of Kentucky gubernatorial candidate Matt Bevin in Kentucky. They say that Republicans are so terrified of Bevin winning the election, they are fleeing the state so that his Democratic rival can win.

This week also saw continued wrangling in the GOP over the speakership of the House of Representatives (of which more later). *The Fix* [says](#) that the 'debacle' is hurting the Republican Party, with a new poll showing that 59 percent of Americans feeling that the disagreement shows that the debate is a sign of dysfunction, not healthy debate. *United Liberty* [comments](#) on Friday that the party is 'stupid', given their poor showing at the Benghazi committee (more on that later as well) and their continued lack of seriousness about the need to raise the debt ceiling.

Elections and the road to 2016

Last week saw many presidential candidates announce their fundraising figures for the last quarter. *Informed Comment* [says](#) that Vermont Senator, Bernie Sanders' campaign has been mostly funded by small donors (average=\$30), while the campaigns of former Florida Governor Jeb Bush and former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, have been buoyed by hundreds of thousands from those who work on Wall Street. Speaking of Wall Street, *The Atlantic* this week [writes](#) that a small number of 'Wall Street types' are calling on the former mayor of New York, Mike Bloomberg to run for president. They say that such calls are not new, dating back to 2006.

The Democrats' 2016 campaign

This was a great week for Hillary Clinton, but not so good for either former Rhode Island Governor, Lincoln Chafee former Senator, Jim Webb, or vice-president, Joe Biden, who all announced that they would no longer be pursuing the Democratic nomination for the presidency. Looking at these candidates in turn:

Hillary Clinton



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

- Clinton this week was hosted by two prominent politicians in Maryland – the backyard of the state's former Governor, Martin O'Malley who is struggling in the primary race ([Post Politics](#)).
- Clinton is now advocating stronger gun laws and is attacking the National Rifle Association – but is she showing real courage? ([The American Prospect](#))
- After months in the doldrums, Clinton's campaign now seems to be back on track ([Outside the Beltway](#))
- The math is clear – Clinton has better odds of winning the White House than anyone else ([Wonkblog](#))...
- ...though some think that she is the unelectable candidate ([The Hill's Congress blog](#))
- If Clinton were to be elected, Representative Mo Brooks (R-AL) reckons that she would make history as the first president to be impeached on her first day of office ([FreakOutNation](#)).

- *Townhall* has [five of Clinton's secrets](#) that the media aren't talking about.
- With Joe Biden's exit from the Democratic primary, Clinton's position has been strengthened even more ([Sabato's Crystal Ball](#)).
- ...and the Democratic Party will need to unite behind her ([Caffeinated Politics](#)).
- Is Clinton's inevitability bad for the Democrats? ([The Federalist](#)).

Jim Webb

- Tuesday saw Jim Webb drop out of the race, though he did not rule out an independent run ([Red State](#))
- [The Fix](#) says that Webb's focus on white, working-class voters was short-sighted, given that they now make up a relatively small part of the Democratic bases.

Joe Biden

- Given his recent poll showings, Joe Biden was the real loser of the first Democratic debate ([The Fix](#)).
- In the early part of the week, the media were again presaging a Biden presidential announcement – apparently the 12th timeline ([The Fix](#)).
- Biden should have announced that he was running on September 13th, according to his polling average ([The Fix](#))...
- ...but he didn't, instead announcing Wednesday that he would not be running. [FiveThirtyEight](#) says that he made the right choice, given how late it is, and his outsider status.

Bernie Sanders

- Democrats like Bernie Sanders – they just don't think that he can win ([The Fix](#)).
- This week Sanders stated that he was open to legalizing the use of marijuana ([Post Politics](#))...
- ...and also came dangerously close to stating that he was a non-believer ([America blog](#)).

The Republican Party's 2016 campaign

On Saturday, [PoliticoUSA reports](#) that six Republican presidential hopefuls spent more money than they raised in the third quarter; former New York Governor George Pataki, South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham, and Kentucky Senator Rand Paul. Looking at the GOP candidates specifically:

Donald Trump

- Trump this week suggested that his tough policies would have prevented 9/11, and that Jeb Bush should stop defending his brother, George W. over the attacks ([Post Politics](#)).
- Trump deserves to be congratulated – it's his third full month in the lead ([The Fix](#)).
- One theory for why Trump is ahead at the moment is because the blue collar GOP primary electorate has consolidated around him while the white collar wing remains more fragmented ([Political Animal](#)).
- With his success, the GOP have realized that they have a Donald Trump problem ([Hit & Run](#)).
- Trump is either invincible, or doomed ([FiveThirtyEight](#)).
- Trump has been a big critic of other candidate's use of SuperPACs – though it turns out that he has one of his own ([Daily Kos](#)).
- Trump should never apologize for any of his controversial remarks – saying sorry would make people like him less ([Monkey Cage](#)).
- Many have accused Trump of talking down to voters – it turns out that he actually is ([Freak Out Nation](#)).

Jeb Bush



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

- With Trump's comments and an ongoing spat with Florida Senator, Marco Rubio, Jeb Bush has not had a good time this week ([Red State](#)).
- Bush's name is his greatest liability – but also a major asset ([The Atlantic](#)).
- Bush should skip the Iowa caucuses given his low polling there ([The Fix](#))
- With falling poll numbers, Bush's campaign is cutting back on campaign staff and spending, and plans to refocus on core messages ([Hit & Run](#))
- Some, however, wonder if Bush is getting ready to drop out of the race ([The Federalist](#))

Ben Carson

- As of Friday two polls put former neurosurgeon, Ben Carson ahead of Donald Trump in Iowa ([Daily Kos](#))
- Carson is the least understood presidential candidate, and it's good for him ([The Fix](#))
- Is Carson's candidacy providing a shield for the GOP against accusations of racism? ([Daily Kos](#)).

The rest

- Rand Paul is being urged by concerned GOP members to abandon his presidential bid, as they feel his Kentucky Senate seat may be at risk ([FreakOutNation](#)).
- Given the rate that his campaign is burning through money, are Marco Rubio's presidential ambitions in a death spiral? ([Red State](#))
- Now polling at 1 percent, Lindsey Graham may not even make the next tier 2 GOP debate ([FiveThirtyEight](#)).
- Hey, whatever happened to Carly Fiorina? ([The Atlantic](#))

Government, the Beltway and Congress' agenda

On Thursday, *Federal Eye* [looks](#) at whether or not the federal pay system is flexible enough to recruit and retain the best quality staff.

Recent weeks have seen Republicans in the House of Representatives tie themselves into knots over who could replace outgoing Speaker, John Boehner (R-OH). *Ten Miles Square* [reckons](#) that coalition government between the GOP and the Democrats could be one solution.



Senator Rand Paul (R-KY), Credit: Stumpsources.org (Flickr, CC-BY-NC-SA-2.0)

The US will reach its borrowing limit by November 3rd, but with the House GOP preoccupied with finding a new speaker, whether or not it will be raised on time is still in question, [writes](#) *The Atlantic*. *The Daily Signal*, meanwhile [reports](#) that Senators Rand Paul (R-KY) and Representative Mick Mulvaney (R-SC) have revived a budget plan to cut the deficit in half ahead of the looming debt limit. Their proposal would cut \$207 billion from the deficit and cap spending at 18 percent of GDP, balancing the budget by 2021.

On Friday, *Roll Call's Beltway Insiders* [calls](#) for better House rules, after the GOP's conservative House Freedom Caucus called for more power for rank and file Republicans as a condition for them to support a new speaker. They argue that a better solution would be to devolve power to all members, not just Republicans, so that all can participate in policymaking. *Monkey Cage* [says](#) that the Freedom Caucus' insistence on the 'Hastert Rule' (where the Speaker will only bring legislation to the floor which has the support of the majority of the majority), is endangering the GOP.

PoliticusUSA has the [news](#) this week that the Department of Justice has released their report into the alleged targeting of conservative groups by the Internal Revenue Service, and found no evidence of criminal wrongdoing.

Paul Ryan and the House Speakership Race

The big news from the capitol this week was the GOP's attempt to find a new speaker to replace John Boehner. The week began with Washington waiting on whether or not the current chair of the Ways and Means Committee (and former vice presidential candidate) Paul Ryan (R-WI) would decide to run for the speakership ([Outside the Beltway](#)). *Perspectives* meanwhile [reckons](#) that the cult of Paul Ryan is 'comical', and that he is not as an attractive choice for Speaker as many would think. *The American Prospect* [thinks](#) that while he may seem reasonable next to the House Freedom Caucus, he holds many extreme positions.

Tuesday sees Ryan state that he will run for Speaker, but only if he has the full support of all GOP factions, if he would be able to keep some of his family time, and if the procedural rule of the motion to vacate the chair, which can be used to remove the Speaker, can be changed ([The Daily Signal](#)). *Red State* [argues](#) that these demands would amount to House conservatives signing their own death warrant. *The Fix* [points out](#) that while Ryan may be saving his party by taking the Speakership, he is essentially scotching any presidential ambitions he may have. *The Atlantic* also [reckons](#) that Ryan's desire to protect his family time is likely to be a pipe dream.



Representative Paul Ryan Credit: Gage Skidmore (Creative Commons BY SA)

Thursday night sees Ryan officially announce that he would join the Speakership race, after he received the

backing of a supermajority of the House Freedom Caucus on Wednesday ([The Atlantic](#)). [FiveThirtyEight](#) argues that it's very unlikely that Paul will be able to bridge the divisions in the House GOP, especially as long a Democrat sits in the White House. On Friday, [Daily Kos](#) says that Ryan has already caved to a demand of the House Freedom Caucus – he will delay the discussion about reforming the motion to vacate the Speaker to another time.

Hillary Clinton and the Benghazi Committee

The other (arguably just as big) news out of DC this week was Hillary Clinton's widely anticipated testimony to the GOP-dominated House Select Committee on Benghazi on Thursday. In the lead-up to the testimony, [FiveThirtyEight](#) says that for the most part, Americans don't care anymore about the September 2012 attack on the US diplomatic mission in Libya. [Red State](#) on the other hand, gives [five reasons](#) while Benghazi still matters, the chief one being that four Americans died. On Tuesday, [The Daily Signal](#) has [five key questions](#) that the panel could ask of Clinton. [The Fix](#) says that the committee is unavoidably partisan against Clinton.

In the wake of the hearing, [The Fix](#) has [the eight most heated exchanges](#) from the session, and then later [comments](#) that Clinton triumphed at the hearing by not losing her cool in the marathon 11 hour session. [PoliticusUSA](#) [reckons](#) that the GOP may have just handed Clinton the White House, as many will have been impressed by her endurance.

Foreign policy, defense and trade



Two U.S. Air Force F-15E Strike Eagle aircraft fly over northern Iraq Sept. 23, 2014, after conducting airstrikes in Syria. (DoD photo by Senior Airman Matthew Bruch, U.S. Air Force/Released)

On Wednesday, [Outside the Beltway](#) has the [news](#) that the US and Russia have reached a deal on the airspace over Syria, with warplanes from both countries both operating there. Still on Russia, [American Thinker](#) [wonders](#) if Russia is outpacing the US military, given that it has upped its military spending twentyfold over the past 15 years. In the wake of Russia's involvement in Syria, [The Hill's Congress blog](#) [looks](#) at how vision can be restored to US foreign policy.

As mentioned earlier, President Obama this week vetoed the defense authorization bill – [The Daily Signal](#) says that Obama is using the defense bill for political leverage, rather than dealing with it on its merits.

This week saw Canada elect a new government in the form of Justin Trudeau's Liberal Party. [The American Interest](#) [looks](#) at what Canada's new Prime Minister means for the US, speculating that he will likely forge better, closer, relations.

[Informed Comment](#) [speculates](#) on what would have happened had the US not invaded Iraq in 2003.

Obamacare and health policy

On Monday, [Red State](#) sarcastically [writes](#) that the Affordable Care Act – Obamacare – is 'doing great', and that it is likely to be a political liability for the Democrats in 2016. They say that not only are Obamacare's health

insurance co-ops self-destructing, but Obamacare's enrollment estimates are unlikely to be reached. *The Daily Signal*, meanwhile, [reports](#) that Texas, Kansas and Louisiana have all filed a new lawsuit against Obamacare. The suit claims that the IRS' imposition of a fee as a condition of states continuing to receive Medicaid funds is unconstitutional. Staying on the topic of fees, *The American Interest* [says](#) that the penalty for remaining uninsured is set to double to either \$695 or 2.5 percent of taxable income.

The Hill's Congress blog [writes](#) Wednesday that the Affordable Care Act is short-changing nursing homes. They say that by using four year old hospital wage date as a proxy for nursing home labor costs, means that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services are not annually adjusting Medicare payments for nursing homes by enough.



Credit: Stephen Melkisetian Flickr, BY-NC-ND 2.0

Political Animal [looks](#) at a new study which has found that those states which have not expanded Medicaid are seeing their existing Medicaid costs increase. They comment that at some point pragmatism will have to break through and Republican states will soften their stance on Medicaid expansion.

This week the GOP's 2012 presidential candidate, Mitt Romney, stated that if it hadn't been for the health reform that he put into place whilst governor of Massachusetts, Obamacare wouldn't exist, and millions would not have health insurance. *Wonkblog* [writes](#) that this seems to be like a contradictory position from someone who ran on repealing Obamacare.

The economy and society

The American Interest [writes](#) this week on the perils of raising the minimum wage. They say that since Wal-Mart increased its base wage to \$9 an hour, its stock prices – and profits – have fallen significantly.

American oil producers have been banned from exporting for forty years, but not they are lobbying Washington hard to lift the restriction. *The American Prospect* [says](#) that the push to repeal the ban shows how desperate shale companies are getting because of low prices.

On Monday, *The Atlantic* [argues](#) that affordable housing would be much fairer if we were to treat it in the same way that we treat food stamps. They say that by making affordable housing programs based on narrow revenue streams, and not general funds (as food stamps are), the number of households that are given help is far below those that need it.

The Daily Signal [looks](#) at what they call the rise of the educated and underbanked. They comment that young people are taking out bigger and bigger student loans for an education which has lower and lower returns.



Credit: Kris (Flickr, CC-BY-2.0)

On Thursday, *Wonkblog* [covers](#) what they refer to as a large change in how people in the US are dying from gunshots. They say that while gun homicides are down, suicides have increased in the last 20 years. *Outside the Beltway*, meanwhile [says](#) that a new poll has shown that a majority of Americans believe that allowing people to carry concealed weapons would make them safer.

And finally...

Crooks & Liars [writes](#) in defense of the Washington Post reporter who accidentally published a story saying that Joe Biden was running for president on its website.

The White House is apparently spending \$700,000 on standing desks (*The Daily Signal*).

Want to know if you are a democratic socialist like Bernie Sanders? *Wonkblog* has a [handy quiz](#) that you can take in order to find out.

Featured image: Vice President Joe Biden Credit: [jstreetdotorg](#) (Flickr, [CC-BY-NC-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/1i448Me>

- CC BY-NC 3.0 2015 LSE USAPP