

Dire approval ratings for an unproductive Congress, cuts to food stamps and unemployment aid, and should Presidential term limits be abolished? – US national blog round up for 30 November – 6 December

USApp Managing Editor, **Chris Gilson**, looks at the best in political blogging from the Beltway. Our round-up of state blogs will follow on Saturday afternoon.

Affordable Care

This week, controversy and debate continued over the implementation of President Obama's signature healthcare policy, the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. On Saturday, *American Thinker* [says](#) that two people who have lost their coverage under Obamacare, and then spoken to the media about it, are now being audited by the IRS. Meanwhile, *Via Meadia* covers the White House's [cancellation](#) of its Obamacare enrollment push, because of concerns over the fragility of the Healthcare.gov website. Still on Saturday, *Daily Kos* [covers](#) comments from Republican Congressman Jack Kingston, of Georgia, who is reported to have said he supports improving the Affordable Care Act, rather than calling for its repeal. *National Journal* also [looks](#) at Knight's comments, and those of another GOP member, Terri Lynn Land (a candidate in Michigan), who said that Obamacare needed to be fixed. They say the fact that both Republicans later withdrew or clarified their statements to say that they did support the repeal of Obamacare is because of an implied threat to them in 2014 from a challenger within their party. *The Foundry* makes the point that repealing Obamacare would still be [easier than repealing prohibition](#), which occurred 80 years ago on Thursday.

This week Healthcare.gov seemed to become less of a headache for the Democratic Party, with the Obama Administration declaring it to be 'fixed' on Monday. In response, *Hit & Run* has a go at trying to sign-up with the website, [finding](#) that it still has problems, taking three attempts for the site to work as it should. *Wonkblog* makes the point that even if it is difficult to sign up for Obamacare, the alternative – being uninsured – is [much, much worse](#), which means that people will continue to try.

The Atlantic [says](#) that even if the website is largely fixed, its initial failure illustrates that there are a 'catalog' of complaints about Obama's management style, which can vary from detachment to micromanagement. *Red State* says that it's very [unlikely](#) that Obama will fire anyone for Obamacare's problems, as the administration has never made 'doing the job right' a priority. *Crooks and Liars* are more [upbeat](#) about Obamacare, writing that the government is actually projected to spend 'billions' less on the program than was originally expected. Apparently this is because of the expansion of Medicaid, as well as less costly subsidies for private insurance.

Government and the Beltway

On Saturday, *Outside the Beltway* comments on an Op-Ed in the *Washington Post* which argues for an end to Presidential term limits. They [say](#) that while the case is a strong one, given that the repeal of the 22nd amendment would need the support of 2/3 of Congress and 3/4 of the states, it's very likely that term limits are here to stay. *United Liberty* [says](#) that given how much power Presidents now have, ending term limits doesn't make sense, and that it was never supposed to be 'a type of royalty', elected or otherwise.

As the year draws to a close, *Hit & Run* [points out](#) that with only 52 laws enacted this year, Congress is on course to becoming the least productive of the past 66 years. They do argue, though, that with many thousands of laws and regulations already on the books, it may be a good think that less legislation has been passed in 2013. On the other side, *PoliticusUSA* [says](#) that House Speaker John Boehner needs to take responsibility for the lack of legislation passed this year in Congress. Boehner blames the Senate, even though it has passed a number of bills – Republicans have simply rejected them, or they have not been allowed to be voted on in the House.

What has been on the Congressional agenda this week is the [negotiation](#) over the budget. On Tuesday, *Daily Kos* reports that the contours of a small budget bargain were beginning to emerge, where entitlements would likely not be affected as much as had been expected, and some new fees may be introduced to raise revenues.

National Journal also [reports](#) on the emerging budget deal, saying on Wednesday that the GOP would be prepared to pass a short term continuing resolution before the House breaks for the holidays next Friday. They are apparently desperate to avoid another government shutdown,

which would occur if no deal is made before 16 January. *The Monkey Cage* takes a look at the [history behind the current budget woes](#), writing that one of the main reasons that spending cuts are now being called for is because of the extra \$1.3-6 trillion in debt created by wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Looking ahead to the 2014 mid-term elections, *The Atlantic* [covers](#) the Democratic Party's hopes that female candidates and an emphasis on women's issues will be a winner for them, especially given the GOP's perceived problem in this area. Still on the Democratic Party, *National Journal* [looks](#) at how support for Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) is becoming a 'litmus test' for Democratic candidates hoping to prove their progressive credentials in the 2014 primaries. Meanwhile, *American Thinker* [says](#) that polling for the Democratic Party's likely candidate for the 2016 Presidential election, Hilary Clinton, shows that her unfavourable ratings have overtaken her favourable, mostly because of the 2012 attack on the American consulate in Benghazi, which occurred while she was Secretary of State. Commenting on the other side of the aisle, *The American Prospect* says that the GOP should stop '[burying](#)' potential Presidential candidates (like Florida Senator, Marco Rubio) before the primaries even start.

Sabato's Crystal Ball looks at the '[threatening thirties](#)' – where President Obama's approval ratings may soon be going, and the implications for the House and Senate elections in 2014. It's not only Obama that is experiencing poor ratings. According to *American Thinker*, Congress' approval rating now stands at [6 percent](#), less than that for car salespeople.

Foreign policy

On Sunday, *Outside the Beltway* looks into what they call the '[dumbest argument for restoring the draft yet](#)' – so that more members of Congress would be veterans (the number currently stands at 19 percent), and would therefore then be better at governing. The Obama administration intends to eliminate an intercontinental ballistic missile squadron, something that worries *The Foundry*, which [says](#) that the U.S. is the only nuclear-capable country that has not modernized its nuclear forces.

The Lonely Conservative discusses [new rules of engagement for troops](#) in Afghanistan, something they say that will tie the hands of U.S. troops operating there. Meanwhile, still on the topic of Afghanistan, *The Hill's Congress Blog* says that the decision in recent years to reduce and remove American troops from Afghanistan is facilitating the [rise of China](#) (and its influence) in the region. On Tuesday, *Via Meadia* writes about Vice President Joe Biden's visit to Asia (he is in Japan this week) where he reiterated that the U.S. is deeply concerned at China's new Air Defense Identification Zone – which unarmed U.S. bombers entered last week. He [says](#) that the U.S. is giving the Chinese 'mixed messages' as the Federal Aviation Administration has instructed American airlines to obey China's



Credit: whitehouse.gov

new rules. Finally, *Hit & Run* [writes](#) that a new poll has shown that Americans are more against (52 percent) intervening abroad than at any other time in the last fifty years.

The economy and society

This week sees a Federal judge rule that Detroit's bankruptcy process (begun in July) could proceed. A few days before the judgement is made, *Via Meadia* wonders whether or not, as the pension crisis in many U.S. cities spreads, the Federal government will begin to step in to [back these cities up](#).

As people begin to get ready for the holiday season (and the shopping that it often entails), *Paul Krugman* reminds us with a graph that real average hourly earnings for retail workers have [fallen significantly](#) since 1975. On the other side of the debate, *Hit & Run* looks at what they call the 'misguided' action of unions to try and double the wages of fast-food workers this week. *Wonkblog* then looks at those who do not have wages, low or otherwise, writing that at the end of December Congress' emergency aid program for 1.3 million unemployed Americans will run out. They [say](#) that because they will have a hard time finding jobs, there is a real possibility that these workers will simply drop out of the labor force entirely once their aid ends. Meanwhile, *Outside the Beltway* says that proposals for casual dining chains to place tablets at customers' tables may well spell the [end for waiting staff](#).

A reoccurring meme for many political commentators is #BlameObama – i.e. Obama is responsible for any new problems that arise in America. *The Political Carnival* turns the meme on its head by [saying](#) that the welcome news that manufacturing activity in the U.S. should also come under #BlameObama.

On the 80th anniversary of the end of prohibition, *Informed Comment* takes the opportunity to ask why [marijuana isn't yet legal](#).

A bill currently before the House looks to cut food stamp aid by \$3.9 billion. *The Foundry* [defends this cut](#), arguing that even with them, spending on food stamps is predicted to be double 2008 levels over the next decade. *Daily Kos* strongly [disagrees](#), saying that Republicans are wrong in saying that food stamps create dependency, writing that it leads to healthier children which reduces healthcare costs.

On Wednesday, President Obama gave a speech on inequality in America to the Centre for American Progress. *White House Dossier* [writes](#) that Obama's comments on income inequality are a 'fresh heaping of class warfare' which will mean higher spending and increased deficits.

The Atlantic takes Bill Clinton's claim that Democrats are better at running the economy than Republicans to task. They [say](#) that while GDP growth is higher under Democrats, this is more due to luck, such as consumer confidence and increases in business productivity than, specific policies from Democrats.

And finally...

In the lead up to Christmas, *Outside the Beltway* previews and refutes the likely coming 'war on Christmas' commentary.

Roll Call's Heard on the Hill gives an [anecdote](#) of two New York Congressmen who (due to redistricting) have become confused about whose district the recent train New York Metro train crash occurred in.



Lonely Conservative covers a recent report that President Obama would like to host ESPN's [Sport Centre](#) after he leaves office.

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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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