

## Obama avoids the border, more leaks from Snowden, and Palin calls for impeachment – US national blog round up for 5 – 11 July

*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.*

### The Democratic Party, the GOP and elections

On Saturday, *The White House Dossier* begins the week by [looking at](#) what they say is President Obama's 'shameful politicization of the Fourth [of July]'. They write that last week Obama administered the oath of allegiance for citizenship to a group of immigrants who had served in the armed forces, but stated that America is 'a nation of immigrants'. They disagree, saying that it is not a nation of first generation immigrants, and that Obama was also wrong to bash Congress for failing to pass immigration reform in his remarks. *The Daily Signal* [joined](#) in the criticism of Obama this week, writing that he and his supporters think that government overreach through executive orders is a good thing. They write that American 'liberalism' is become increasingly illiberal as liberals are more and more willing to bend the rules and use intolerant methods to get their way, regardless of the effects on the Constitution or the law.

President Obama also recently announced that he would be taking executive action on immigration, in light of the Republican held House's refusal to take action. *The Atlantic* [says](#) that this is a surprising reversal for Obama, and one that will see him criticized by Republicans for his continued use of executive power, and by liberals, as he will ask Congress for more power to deport unaccompanied minors. This week saw Obama visit Texas to raise money, but the President avoided visiting the U.S.-Mexico border, [according to](#) *National Journal*. They say that Obama's refusal to visit the border, where U.S. detention



Credit: The White House

facilities have been swamped by a new influx of thousands of border crossers, may make him look like he's avoiding something that is increasingly being referred to as a crisis. Later in the week, *PoliticusUSA* [reports](#) that former Vice-Presidential candidate, Sarah Palin, has recently called for President Obama to be removed from office because of the crisis at the southern border. They say that if Palin wants to advocate for Obama's impeachment, then she needs to point to a law that Obama has broken, and then arguing the point from there.

Last week a new poll was released, stating that Obama is considered to be the worst President since World War II. On Sunday, *Daily Kos* [says](#) that while the poll is 'catnip' for right-wingers, its value is close to nil because incumbent presidents always do badly when people are asked who the best and worst president is. Meanwhile, *Outside the Beltway* [ponders](#) whether or not a GOP takeover of the Senate in this year's mid-term elections might

actually be good for the President. They say that a Republican takeover in both chambers might cause them to overreach, and clash with Obama, which might then cause a backlash in the 2016 presidential election. Looking ahead to 2016, *National Journal* [looks](#) at who might lead the Democratic nomination if Hillary Clinton decides not to run for President. They say that without Clinton in the picture, the field consists of candidates that Democrats either don't want, or don't know, such as Vice President Joe Biden, and New York Governor Andrew Cuomo.

On Tuesday, *United Liberty* [writes](#) that the turnout from this year's primary races has shown that Republican voters are far more motivated than they were in 2010, when the party won control of the House. They say that this is terrible news for Democrats, who are in danger of losing the Senate this coming fall. Staying on the GOP, *National Journal* [reports](#) that the party has chosen Cleveland, Ohio, to host its 2016 convention. They say that in choosing the city over Dallas, Texas, the Republican Party has avoided the problem that the increased exposure for Texas Senator Ted Cruz would have posed, given his Tea Party leanings. *The Political Carnival* is [less positive](#) about the GOP's choice of convention city, saying that over the past five presidential elections, the Republican Party has lost the state where their nomination convention was held. Given that no candidate has won an election without Ohio since JFK, this means that things are looking rather bleak for the Republicans.

Looking at the fall mid-term elections more closely, *The Monkey Cage* [writes](#) on Tuesday that new research shows that moderates are too scared to run for Congress. They say party polarization now means that moderates are less likely to run compared to those who 'fit' the party better. Meanwhile, *Roll Call's Hawkings Here* [profiles](#) the 20 candidates who are almost certain to be headed to Congress this fall by dint of their primary victories in more or less safe seats.

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

This week saw former National Security Agency (NSA) employee Edward Snowden release another round of documents from the Agency. *The Atlantic* [says](#) that Snowden's latest leak is 'devastating' to those who defend the NSA, as it contains a vast amount of personal information. They argue that whether the NSA is collecting information illegally or not, it should not be trusted with such sensitive data that it has proven it is incapable of safeguarding.

Moving to another government agency, on Wednesday, *Red State* [says](#) that the Obama Administration has 'covered-up' the current scandal over the alleged targeting of conservative groups by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). They say that recently uncovered internal IRS emails show that former official Lois Lerner, who is at the center of the scandal, was actively working with other officials to hide her emails and communications from Congress.

On Tuesday, *Hit & Run* writes that one of the main takeaways from the rollout of the Administration's flagship healthcare program, Obamacare, late last year, is that the government is not adept at developing software. They [say](#) that even now, many months later, much of the back end of the software that communicates with insurers is incomplete, which has helped to lead to 2.6 million applications containing inconsistencies.

Moving to Congress, this week *PoliticoUSA* [reports](#) that House Republicans are planning on spending up to \$3.3 million investigating the 2012 attack on the American compound in Benghazi. They say that this budget for their special committee is greater than that given to the House Veterans Affairs and Ethics Committees, and that it is a political tool to enhance the GOP's chances in the mid-term elections this November. Last week GOP Speaker John Boehner announced that he plans to pursue a lawsuit against President Obama over his use of executive orders. On Friday, *Occasional Planet* writes that the lawsuit is '[politics as usual](#)', and that Boehner is overlooking history – Obama has enacted 182 executive orders, compared with 291 for his predecessor George W. Bush. This week also saw the release of the text of the bill to authorize the lawsuit in Congress. The *White House Dossier* [says](#) that the lawsuit will focus on the unilateral changes Obama made to the Affordable Care Act.

Across the aisle, *Crooks & Liars* [writes](#) on Wednesday that Democrats in Congress have swiftly drafted a bill which would override last week's Supreme Court decision that found that employers could refuse to provide contraceptive coverage in their employees' healthcare plans because of their religious beliefs. They say that the legislation would ensure that women would have access to birth control coverage even if their employers had such objections. While this bill is very unlikely to pass in the House, its death is another thing that Democrats can use to

'hammer' the GOP in this year's elections and in 2016.

On Thursday, *Outside the Beltway* [writes](#) that the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress is set to become the least productive in history. They say that Congress is on track to enact a total of 251 laws, which would be the lowest amount since 1973.

### **Foreign policy, defense and trade**

On Saturday, *Outside the Beltway* [reports](#) that the U.S. has grounded its new fleet of F-35 fighter jets after one caught fire as it was preparing to take off at an air base in Florida. They say that this is yet another setback for a very expensive plane that has been beset by woes for many years.

*National Review's The Agenda* also has

U.S. military power in mind. They [write](#) on Sunday that some commentators are beginning to question the received wisdom of American military superiority, as more countries begin to spend more on defense.

*United Liberty* [describes](#) President Obama's foreign policy as 'crazy' this week, as his Administration now appears to be deciding whether or not to support the regime of Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad against the ISIS insurgents in Iraq. They write that Obama's foreign policy of moving closer to Iran and potentially Syria will be dangerous for its historic allies in the region, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Israel.

This week, *The Atlantic* [takes](#) the centennial of the outbreak of World War I to look at how wars always end up hurting the most vulnerable Americans. They write that World War I was a repressive period for many Americans, and exemplifies how while war breeds unity, it is often at the expense of those who become associated (through their religion, race, or politics) with the enemy.

*The Hill's Congress Blog* [looks](#) at potential response to the crisis in Ukraine, arguing on Monday that unilateral sanctions against Russia over its actions there are not a good idea. They say that such sanctions need to be multilateral in order to be effective, otherwise there is a risk that unilateral sanctions will 'boomerang' with foreign companies filling the void left by U.S. firms.

On Thursday, *Crooks & Liars* [reports](#) that Germany has announced that it has ordered the expulsion of the senior American intelligence official in the country, in retaliation for the alleged U.S. recruitment of spies in the country.

### **Obamacare and health policy**

This week saw continuing critiques of President Obama's signature healthcare reform, Obamacare. On Monday, *The Lonely Conservative* [warns](#) that we should 'brace ourselves for Obamacare's September surprise'. They say that health insurance rates for 2015 are likely to start to rise in the early fall, which will hurt Democrats ahead of the mid-term elections. On Tuesday, the *White House Dossier* looks at another case that could 'crush' Obamacare – *Halbig vs Burwell*. They say that the ruling, which is expected soon, is over whether or not the subsidies of the Affordable Care Act can be used by the federal exchanges operating in states that refused to set up state health insurance exchanges. They [say](#) that the letter of the law never intended for the federal exchange to be subsidized in this way. *Hit & Run* looks at recent claims that Obamacare has expanded healthcare coverage to 20 million people. They [say](#) that while it's not certain how many have obtained coverage under Obamacare's various provisions, but that 20 million is almost certainly an overstatement.

*The Feed* looks at another rising cost – this time it is vaccines, which they say now cost over \$2,100 for a person from birth to the age of 18. They [write](#) that many doctors have stopped offering vaccinations to the general public as they lose money on them, as insurers don't reimburse for the full expense.



Speaker of the House John Boehner Credit: Gage Skidmore (Creative Commons BY SA)

*Daily Kos* looks at the politics of Obamacare this week, [writing](#) that Republicans are now wondering if running against the program in this year's mid-term elections will work for them, given recent polls that show that the majority of people want the law kept and improved.

## The economy and society

*The Feed* [writes](#) this week that the demand for office space in the U.S. is below where history says it should be – only 52 percent of the space that went vacant amid the economic downturn has been reoccupied. They say that companies are more reluctant to expand, and are trying to pack more employees into tighter spaces, partly in an effort to encourage greater collaboration.

On Sunday, *Crooks & Liars* writes that the crisis facing the U.S. at its southern border is a direct result of the administration of the previous President George W. Bush. They [say](#) that a 2002 human trafficking law, reauthorized in 2008, meant that unaccompanied children from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala could not be sent back without going through the deportation process, thus leading to the current deportation backlog at the border. Later in the week, *Outside the Beltway* [writes](#) that the crisis at the border has many causes from lax border enforcement to the aforementioned law on the deportation of unaccompanied children, and that there is no simple solution, especially as enforcement with additional resources would require Congress to act.

On Thursday this week, *United Liberty* [writes](#) that the thirteen states that saw minimum wage increase at the beginning of the year have kept over 120,000 workers out of employment according to a new study. They say that rather than artificially raising wages, policymakers need to consider policies that improve job creation. Still on the minimum wage, *Wonkblog* [writes](#) on Thursday that the tipped minimum wage of \$2.16 has not changed for 23 years, meaning that the tip credit (the difference between the federally mandated wage and the tipped wage) has risen from \$3 in the 1980s to more than \$5 today.

## And finally...

This week *The Volokh Conspiracy* [looks](#) at 'weird laws', including pointless declarations like Chico, California's ordinance that states that "[n]o person shall produce, test, maintain or store within the city a nuclear weapon".

On Monday *Hit & Run* [celebrates](#) the 86<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the debut of sliced bread – which they say was actually banned in 1943 to conserve wax paper.

Finally this week, *Outside the Beltway* [reports](#) that during a visit to Denver, President Obama shook hands with a supporter wearing a horse's head mask.

*Featured image: Sarah Palin Credit: Gage Skidmore (Creative Commons BY SA)*

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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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