

The draft Elizabeth Warren movement, Obamacare subsidy rulings and Americans' appetite for intervention wanes – US national blog round up for 19 – 25 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

This week saw one court rule in favor – and one against – a key part of the Affordable Care Act (or 'Obamacare'), which may put the program's subsidy for health insurance in those states that lack state exchanges in jeopardy. On Tuesday, *PoliticoUSA* [calls](#) the ruling a 'call to arms for liberals'. They say that for liberals, it is not enough to vote in presidential elections, watch Congress pass legislation, and to then 'stay at home' for the mid-terms – what is needed are durable majorities that will allow the president to appoint liberal judges.

On Monday, *Crooks & Liars* looks at recent polling that found that President Obama was the 'worst' president since World War II. They [write](#) that despite Obama's accomplishments, such as killing Osama Bin Laden, falling unemployment, and averting wars in Libya, Syria and Ukraine, news organizations are pushing the poll result even though it used 'loaded' questioning.

Late last week Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) addressed the Netroots Nation conference in Detroit, fuelling the speculation that she has her eye on a presidential bid in the 2016 election. Despite this speculation, Warren herself has repeatedly stated that she is not running for the job, something that *Daily Kos* says is a [good thing](#). They write that not only would she 'get crushed' by likely candidate, Hillary Clinton, but she would also lose all her current effectiveness in the Senate, where she is needed. Meanwhile, *National Journal* [examines](#) the liberal movement to draft Warren to run for the presidency, writing that while she is already building a political machine, the recently launched 'Ready for Warren' group seems to exist to benefit its own members.

Daily Kos [looks](#) at the plan discussed at the Netroots Nation conference for Democrats to beat the Republican Party's gerrymandering of state legislatures and the House of Representatives. They say that in 2012, Democrats gained more than 1.5 million votes than the GOP, yet the latter controls the House and that if they target gerrymandered seats to flip in state house races, that could help to start the redistricting fight back at the national level.

Moving to commentary on the Republican Party this week, *Roll Call's At the Races* [writes](#) on the influence of 'mega-churches' on recent GOP primaries. They say that already this year, three candidates with links to large churches have won primaries decisively, despite shifting opinion on social issues such as same-sex marriage. On Monday, *Daily Kos* [says](#) that Republican infighting over June's primary result in Mississippi has gone national, as Virginia's ex-Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli has demanded a defunding of the National Republican Senatorial Committee after accusing of GOP senators of funding ads that urged Democrats to vote for the incumbent Senator Thad Cochran over his Tea Party challenger Chris McDaniel.

Looking at the party more generally, *United Liberty* [writes](#) that Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky, considered by many as a potential 2016 presidential candidate for the party, has recently been explaining that the GOP can find electoral success if it learns how to stay out of Americans' personal lives and to abandon corporate welfare.

On Wednesday, *Daily Kos* [reports](#) that Republican 2012 presidential candidate, Michele Bachmann is considering another bid for the White House. They say that despite her claims of experience in presidential debates, she was nearly one of the first candidates to drop out of the race in 2012.

There was continued discussion of this November's mid-term elections this week. On Thursday, *Sabato's Crystal Ball* writes that while the GOP has 'decent' odds to take the Senate, this year's election will not be a 'wave' election as 2006 and 2010 were. Meanwhile, *The Atlantic* looks at the 'one number' that will decide this year's election – Democrats' vote share among those that make less than \$50,000 a year. They say that this measure has consistently explained how elections have swung for the past decade, and this year things are not looking good for the Democrats by this measure. Many candidates are only too happy to gain endorsements from high-ranking party members. This week, *Outside the Beltway* reports that a new survey has found that endorsements from Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren and Texas GOP Senator Ted Cruz do not have a great deal of influence on the voting public.

Government, the Beltway and Congress' agenda

On Monday, *Daily Kos* reports that President Obama has issued an executive order to bar federal contractors from discriminating against workers on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. They say that the executive order is not only a response to Congress' inaction on the issue, but also to the recent *Hobby Lobby* decision, as the order does not include a broad religious exemption of the kind used in the Supreme Court case.

Wonkblog writes this week that the four year old Dodd-Frank Act, which set rules on financial regulation in response to the Great Recession, has only 52 percent of its rules in force. They say that while it is in improvement over the 31 percent in force two years ago, 45 percent of rulemaking deadlines have still been missed by regulators.

Meanwhile, *The Lonely Conservative* is worried about the state of the country's national debt. They say recent estimates from the Congressional Budget Office that the national debt will go up by \$40 trillion in the next two decades, could be too low, and that the actual figure may be over \$100 trillion.

On Tuesday, writing for *The Daily Signal*, Representative Jeb Hensarling (R-TX) has five facts that President Obama should remember about the Export-Impact Bank, whose future is in doubt. The facts include that the bank does not create jobs, does not return money to taxpayers, and that it only financed 1.6 percent of U.S. exports in 2013.

Daily Kos writes this week that any hopes that House Republicans would allow a vote on extending the emergency unemployment aid that ended in 2013 has faded with the passage of a bill to prevent the lapsing of the Highway Trust Fund. They say that the Democratic Party had hoped to use the money from 'pension smoothing' to offset the costs of the measure, but instead the GOP has used it to finance the Highway Trust Fund.

Foreign policy, defense and trade

This week, *The Daily Signal* gives ten ways that the U.S. should respond to Russia's alleged role in the tragic



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downing of Malaysian Flight MH 17 last week, from being prepared to isolate Moscow diplomatically to lifting restrictions on energy exports to Europe. On Saturday, *Informed Comment* [says](#) that U.S. efforts to engage Europe's major governments over the issue has been complicated by recent revelations of spying by the National Security Agency, as their domestic constituencies are clamoring for a bold response to American surveillance. The *Monkey Cage* goes into [further details](#) about the row over surveillance between the U.S. and Germany, writing that Germans are so angry about the revelations because of their previous infatuation with Obama, and that Germans take privacy rights very seriously because of their experience with totalitarian dictatorships during the 20th century.

Last year saw a breakthrough in negotiations between the U.S. and Iran over the latter country's nuclear program. While the deadline for the negotiations to end has come and gone, *Red State* writes this week that the countries involved have agreed to a four-month extension to the talks, which conveniently moves them past the mid-term elections in the U.S. They [say](#) that this will mean that Democrats will not have to defend another of Obama's foreign policy failures on the campaign trail. On Sunday, *The Daily Signal* has some unusual [praise](#) for Secretary of State John Kerry, who they say has averted a crisis in Afghanistan by brokering an agreement between presidential candidates who had been accused of election fraud. They say that Kerry's success is in contrast to Obama's foreign policy 'muddle'.

Outside the Beltway [writes](#) this week that even though we are facing a very 'active' time in international affairs, this has not caused the American public to be more supportive of a more interventionist foreign policy. They say that only 17 percent of people say the U.S. should do more to counter Russian aggression in the Ukraine, and 19 percent favor more involvement in Iraq's civil war.

Obamacare and health policy

The big Obamacare news this week was the rulings on Tuesday on the Affordable Care Act's subsidies for people on the federal insurance exchanges, in those states that have rejected state exchanges. *Outside the Beltway* [reports](#) that two Federal Circuit Courts of Appeal ruled on the subsidies, with one in Virginia upholding them and the other, in Washington D.C rejecting them. *National Review's The Agenda* [writes](#) that if the D.C. Circuit Court's decision stands, then residents of 36 states will cease to receive subsidies under the law. This could mean up to 5 million people facing a rise in premiums of 76 percent.

In other Obamacare news this week, *The Lonely Conservative* [writes](#) on Sunday that the White House has 'illegally' rewritten the Obamacare law, by exempting U.S. territories such as Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. They say that last year, the Obama Administration told the territories that they could not be legally exempted, but they are singing a different tune now. Meanwhile, *The Feed* [writes](#) that while insurance companies are getting new customers through Obamacare, but that this may not last long, as consumers are confused about their own plans, meaning that many of these signups won't last. *The Daily*



Obamacare Protest at Supreme Court Credit: Tabitha Kaylee Hawk (Creative Commons BY NC ND)

Signal has [more](#) negative Obamacare news on Tuesday this week, reporting that Quality Software Systems Inc., the firm picked late last year to fix the problems with the Healthcare.gov website is facing new allegations of cronyism as the company was bought by UnitedHealth Group, which has a subsidiary which also offers plans under Obamacare.

Not all of the commentary on Obamacare was negative this week – *The Atlantic* [writes](#) that advertising earlier this year that attempted to dissuade people from signing up to the healthcare program actually increased the take-up of Obamacare.

The economy and society

This week commentary on the crisis at America's southern border continued. *The Daily Signal* writes on Saturday that simply throwing money at programs aimed at absorbing illegal immigrants will not end the crisis. They [say](#) that America needs to enforce its immigration laws, and that President Obama's executive orders which allowed people who had arrived illegally as children to work has encouraged more people to come to the U.S. Meanwhile, *National Journal* writes that despite their efforts, most candidates for governor in border-states can do little to solve their voters' most pressing issue – the immigration crisis. They [say](#) that immigration is the province of the federal government, not the states, and that federal law prevents the local National Guard from doing more to support federal border control efforts.

On Tuesday, *Daily Kos* [reports](#) that in 14 states deaths from guns now exceed motor vehicle related deaths. They say that while cars are dangerous, stricter regulations are making them safer, yet guns largely lack safety regulations. Meanwhile, *Wonkblog* [writes](#) that the old chestnut of locking people up to prevent crime may not be true – crime trends in states like New York and New Jersey show that crime has fallen as the prison population has. Later in the week, they [look](#) at the death penalty in the wake of the prolonged execution of a man in Arizona. They say that prolonged executions are unlikely to make people less in favor of the death penalty, as those who support it say that condemned prisoners must pay for their crimes.

And finally...

On Monday, *Hit & Run* [reports](#) that a sheriff in Michigan has changed the color of prison outfits in his county from orange to black and white stripes, because people on the outside have started to emulate the same uniform from the TV series *Orange is the New Black*, and that they wish to avoid confusion.

This week, *Wonkblog* [writes](#) that a new poll has found that *Star Wars* villain, Darth Vader, is actually polling higher in the 2016 presidential stakes than all of the GOP and Democratic hopefuls.

Hit & Run also [reports](#) this week that a man has been arrested in Connecticut for passively aggressively stabbing a watermelon.

Featured image: Elizabeth Warren Credit: Newshour (Creative Commons 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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