

Clinton's email troubles, Netanyahu addresses Congress, and Obamacare at the Supreme Court: US national blog round up for 28 February – 6 March

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

This week was a turbulent one in Washington DC, with the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu giving a controversial address to Congress warning of Iran's nuclear program, and revelations surfacing about Hillary Clinton's use of a private email account during her tenure as Secretary of State. On Monday, ahead of the address, *Town Hall* wonders why President Obama is so opposed to Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech. They [say](#) that instead of sending his representatives, such as National Security Advisor Susan Rice to talk shows (who explained that Netanyahu's speech would be destructive for the relationship between the U.S. and Israel), he should front up himself. President Obama copped more criticism from *American Thinker* this week, who [write](#) that he 'poses an existential threat to Western civilization', due to his policies of retreat and appeasement towards Iran, which may lead to the country gaining nuclear weapons.

Last week the Republican Party held its annual Conservative Political Action Conference, where many Republicans lined up to criticize the President for lacking a military strategy for dealing with the threat of ISIS for fear of upsetting Iran, [writes](#) *PoliticusUSA*. They describe the criticism as 'lunacy' given that the President has already confronted ISIS with a strategy, and that Iran is concerned with defeating ISIS as much as any other nearby country is.

Much of the last four months has been characterized by various attempts from the Republican Party to thwart the President's November executive action to delay the deportation of millions of undocumented immigrants. While a judge recently issued an injunction against the action, [according](#) to *The Lonely Conservative*, 100,000 undocumented immigrants have already been granted work permits, and the Department of Justice has no plans to undo what has already been done. On Tuesday, *The Daily Signal* looks at whether or not President Obama could raise taxes without the approval of Congress. They [say](#) that while he does not have the constitutional authority to unilaterally raise taxes, the administration is considering acting on its own to close some tax loopholes.

Moving on to the Republican Party, this week *The Atlantic* [writes](#) that the GOP had had a 'wasted winter'; after they abandoned an effort to tie the funding of the Department of Homeland Security to the rolling back of Obama's immigration policies. They say that despite having a majority in both the House and the Senate, there are major questions as to whether the party is able to govern, or if it will continue to pick fights that it is unable to win.

Elections and the road to 2016

On Thursday, *Roll Call's At the Races* [says](#) that the 'Democratic floodgates' have opened for the newly open House seat of Chris Van Hollen in Maryland. Van Hollen is planning to run for the Senate in Maryland to try and succeed outgoing Senator Barbara Mikulski. They profile the at least 12 potential contenders for the House Seat, mostly State Senators and Delegates.

Moving on to the still-large Republican 2016 presidential field, *Ten Miles Square* [writes](#) this week that New Jersey Governor, Chris Christie, lost the contest last year, when he was tied to the 'Bridgegate scandal', because the party is unlikely to nominate a moderate governor from a blue state who is also attached to a scandal.

On Sunday, *The Daily Signal* [looks](#) at another, much more popular potential candidate, Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker. They say that Walker has changed his view on immigration, from being generally in favor of a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants to opposition, because of what he called Obama's 'mishandling' of the issue, and after talking to voters. At the moment, Walker is facing former Florida Governor, Jeb Bush for the top spot in the GOP's nomination race. *National Journal* [says](#) that the battle between Walker and Bush is underway, with 18 percent of Republican voters supporting Walker, compared with 16 percent for Bush, according to a recent poll. Despite his higher level of support, Walker may have cause to be worried about Bush; *White House Dossier* [reports](#) this week that Jeb Bush is now raising around \$1 million every day, and that by the second quarter of this year, he will have taken in about \$100 million.

Every year the Conservative Political Action Conference runs a straw poll of attendees' presidential preferences. [According](#) to *The Daily Signal*, Kentucky Senator Rand Paul topped this year's poll with 26 percent of the vote, and was followed by Scott Walker who came in at 21 percent.

Another Republican who is interested in running for President, Dr Ben Carson, was in the news this week over his comments on homosexuality. *Political Animal* [says](#) that in an interview, Carson stated that he thought that homosexuality was a choice, because people "go into prison straight — and when they come out, they're gay."

The Democratic Party's frontrunner also had a troubled week, with revelations surfacing that she used a private email for correspondence while Secretary of State. *National Journal* [says](#) that if we think she is having a bad time now, the scrutiny on her (and her policy positions) will be much worse after her campaign kicks off in April. On Wednesday, in her first response to the scandal, Clinton tweeted to say that she wanted her emails to be released to the public:

Hit & Run [comments](#) that despite her sentiments, she doesn't actually want the public to see her emails, because the Department of State did not have them in the first place.

Government, the Beltway and Congress' agenda

This week the Supreme Court heard debate in a case from Arizona that argues that it is the role of state legislators to draw congressional boundaries, and not of an independent redistricting commission. *The Daily Signal* has a [good outline](#) of the case, its constitutional implications, and what is at stake.

On Tuesday, *The Hill's Congress Blog* [argues](#) for the greater representation of district banks on the Federal Reserve's Open Market Committee. They say that allowing more district bank presidents to vote on monetary policy decisions might help to ensure more stability in monetary policy.

Apart from Benjamin Netanyahu's address, Congress also saw a surprising turn in the politics around the funding of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Late last week, House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) was defeated in his motion to fund the DHS for three weeks to give time for further negotiations with the Senate, and was only able to pass a one week bill. The *Monkey Cage* [says](#) that Boehner's defeat was unusual in that he had expected the support of the majority of the GOP's majority, but the bill failed after he lost 50 members in his caucus. By Wednesday, the House GOP's efforts to roll back President Obama's immigration actions by defunding DHS had collapsed, according to *Talking Points Memo*. They [say](#) that Speaker Boehner allowed a vote on the 'clean' DHS funding bill for the rest of the year, after eschewing another stopgap bill, and not wanting to risk a shutdown.



Former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton. Credit: LBJ Foundations (Flickr, C-BY-2.0)

On Monday, *Roll Call's at the Races* [reports](#) that the longest serving woman in Congress, Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) would be stepping down after serving 28 years in the Senate, and 10 in the House. Staying on Senate matters, *Daily Kos* [says](#) that a vote there failed to override President Obama's veto of the Keystone XL pipeline approval bill, 62 votes to 37, with a 2/3 majority having been needed for the override.

Foreign policy, defense and trade

Tuesday saw the Israeli Prime Minister address Congress, warning against any deal with Iran over that country's nuclear program. Ahead of the speech, *PoliticoUSA* [reports](#) that Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), who is Jewish, has slammed Netanyahu's statements that he speaks for all Jews, calling him 'arrogant', and stated that his speech is a political move only two weeks before elections in Israel. After the speech, *The Daily Signal* [says](#) that Congress should listen to Netanyahu's warnings on the potential deal with Iran, as in its current form it preserves the nuclear option for the country. *Hit & Run* is more critical of the Israeli leader's speech, [arguing](#) that he reiterated arguments he has made on previous occasions on Iran's nuclear threat. *America Blog* [calls](#) Netanyahu's speech 'cynical', writing that he did his best to thwart the current nuclear talks with Iran, and to scare Israeli voters into voting for him ahead of a tight election. The *Monkey Cage* injects some [data](#) into the debate, writing that according to a survey, 61 percent of Americans favor a deal that would allow Iran to undertake a limited enrichment program, alongside inspections.

Obamacare and health policy

This week the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the King v. Burwell case, which centers on whether or not the Affordable Care Act made provision for the federal government to provide health insurance subsidies to people in states that have not established their own dedicated health insurance exchanges. *Wonkblog* [looks](#) at why it would be difficult for Obamacare to recover if the case is lost – especially as the individual mandate which requires people to have health insurance if it is 'affordable' would no longer apply. *Town Hall* meanwhile has [what they say](#) are the top five myths about the case, including that the lawsuit is purely the result of a legislative 'drafting error'. Whatever the Supreme Court decides, most voters do not want to see their subsidies taken away, with 63 percent disapproving [according](#) to a new poll cited by *Daily Kos*. *The Daily Signal* makes the case against Obamacare this week, with a new [infographic](#) that shows its damaging effects, including its costs, and the tax increases necessary to fund it.

After the oral arguments on Wednesday, *Hit & Run* has a [summary](#), including that Justice Anthony Kennedy may be sceptical of the challengers' argument, and that Chief Justice Roberts is keeping his opinions to himself.

The economy and society

The U.S. is a beacon of successful capitalism to the rest of the world, right? Wrong – at least [according](#) to *The Daily Signal* this week, which says that the U.S. has not had a true free enterprise system for decades – rather it has what they call 'smiley faced socialism', given how much government directs the means of production. Despite U.S. capitalism's alleged flaws, the dollar is strong right now compared to other countries. *Wonkblog* has a look at the [best places to visit](#) while it's still strong: Europe and Russia top the list at the moment.

On Tuesday, *The Atlantic* [reports](#) that more Americans are accepting of gay marriage than ever. They say that



resistance to same-sex marriage is more muted compared to previous civil rights movement and that it is not a politically decisive issue anymore.

While the economy now seems to be on the up, with unemployment at 5.7 percent, wages are still relatively stagnant. *Wonkblog* [looks](#) into this, writing that despite the low-ish unemployment rate, there are many people stuck at the margins of the labor force, who are underemployed or long-term unemployed.

And finally...

Daily Kos [says](#) that this week Representative (and noted climate change skeptic) James Inhofe (R-OK) threw a snowball on the House floor to support his argument against human-induced climate change.

Wonkblog [reports](#) that the Drug Enforcement Agency has warned that if Utah allows a bill that patients could be treated with edible marijuana, 'stoned rabbits' may end up being the result.

The Capitol Hill fox is back! *Roll Call's Heard on the Hill* [says](#) that the animal was spotted on Monday on congressional grounds.

Featured [image](#): Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addresses Congress 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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