

Cruz and Clinton come out on top in Iowa, House conservatives push back on budget deal, and should Jeb! re-evaluate his run?: US national blog roundup for 30 January – 5 February

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

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Obama, the Democratic Party, and the GOP

On Sunday, *Daily Kos* [reflects](#) on recent jumps in President Obama's job approval ratings. They comment that Obama's favorables minus his unfavorables now sit at minus 3.5, up from minus 7 eight weeks ago. They say that they're not really sure why Obama's approval ratings are on the up, but speculate that the poor quality of the current GOP presidential candidates may well have something to do with it. *Caffeinated Politics* is [proud](#) of President Obama for visiting a mosque in Baltimore this week, writing that despite anti-Muslim sentiments,



Credit: Matt Popovich (Public Domain)

he is sending a message of tolerance and against bigotry. On Monday, *Post Politics* [outlines](#) how the White House is intending to spend \$1 billion in its plans for a cancer 'moonshot', writing that the National Institutes of Health will get \$195 million this year, and that the Food and Drug Administration, Pentagon, and the Department of Veterans' affairs will receive smaller amounts.

Moving on to the Democratic Party more specifically, *The Atlantic* [looks](#) at what they call the 'great Democratic age gap'. They say that age has emerged as the single most important dividing line in the struggle between former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Vermont Senator, Bernie Sanders, for their party's presidential nomination. They say that while Sanders has a commanding lead amongst younger voters, Clinton has a similar one with older voters. Clinton's lead is better for her – older people are more likely to vote.

Turning to the Republican Party, *Wonkblog* [writes](#) this week that it's incredible how much Republicans' views on immigration have changed over the past 15 years. While in general, Americans have become more tolerant of immigration and immigrants, Republicans have become much more conservative, with the issue now a distinctly partisan one. On Wednesday, *Wonkblog* [writes](#) that despite their dislike of him, Obama's presidency has been very good for the GOP; since 2008 there has been a dramatic shift at the state level towards the Republican Party.

The 2016 election

The Iowa Caucuses

Monday night saw the Iowa Caucuses, officially kicking off the 2016 primary season. In the lead up, commentary highlights included:

- Good news for Hillary Clinton from the final Des Moines Register poll ([The Fix](#))
- Former Florida Governor, Jeb Bush and New Jersey Governor Chris Christie were on the march in Iowa, but have struggled to leave a mark on voters ([Post Politics](#))
- Donald Trump's support in Iowa is narrow, but deep ([FiveThirtyEight](#)).
- Given their poor track record of picking the eventual GOP nominee, the Iowa Caucuses don't actually matter that much ([Hit & Run](#))

On the Republican side, Ted Cruz came out on top and Hillary Clinton very narrowly beat out Bernie Sanders for the Democrats:



Credit: Phil Roeder (Flickr, CC-BY-2.0)

Florida Senator Marco Rubio was also a winner, even though he placed third for the GOP, while Donald Trump was a serious loser, despite coming second ([The Fix](#))

- Iowa was a game-changer for the Republicans, but a continuation of the status quo for the Democrats ([Political Animal](#)).

- Why the Iowa Caucuses are insane ([Hit & Run](#))...
- ...and why the Hawkeye State is the hardest to poll ([FiveThirtyEight](#)).
- Very few Americans actually voted in Iowa, and here are some charts to prove it ([The Fix](#)).
- From Iowa, we learned that there is really only room for three candidates, Trump, Cruz and Rubio ([Roll Call's At the Races](#))
- We also learned that Trump lost despite record-setting turnout in Iowa ([Sabato's Crystal Ball](#))
- Thirteen quick takeaways from Iowa, including that Trump's loss is significant, and that Rubio needs to remember that third place is not a win ([The Federalist](#))
- The story that has been circulating this week that Clinton only won because of six coin tosses which went her way was apparently made up ([Daily Kos](#))
- Democratic (and Republican) caucuses are actually not very democratic ([Occasional Planet](#)).
- Why the Iowa Caucuses should be doomed ([Political Animal](#))

The Democrats' 2016 campaign

On Monday, [The Atlantic](#) examines the competing Democratic coalitions – and the generational chasm in their age – as represented by Clinton and Sanders. [Political Animal](#) looks at some of the questions which are at stake in the Democratic primary. The main differences between Clinton and Sanders appears to be over their theories of change,

The Democrats' 5th debate

Thursday evening saw Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders meet to debate ahead of next week's New Hampshire primary:

- Ahead of the debate, the 7 big issues, including Clinton's ties to Wall Street ([The Fix](#)).
- After the debate, some felt that Sanders was the winner ([PoliticusUSA](#))...
- ... while others thought that Clinton came out on top, though without scoring a knockout blow ([The Fix](#)).
- Why the debate was good (and a bit bad) for both of the candidates ([The Atlantic](#)).

Looking at the Democrats' candidates more closely now:

Hillary Clinton

- The pro-Clinton Priorities USAAction Super PAC has raised \$50.5 million to date ([Post Politics](#)).
- A majority of Clinton's donors are women, and that could change politics forever ([The Atlantic](#))
- Clinton this week won the endorsement of the *New York Times* ([PoliticusUSA](#))
- Despite narrowly beating Sanders in Iowa, Clinton's coming fight in New Hampshire next week seems unwinnable given the formers double-digit polling lead ([Outside the Beltway](#))
- Why we should be skeptical of polls showing Clinton only up by two points over Sanders ([The Fix](#))
- Why a tie for Clinton in Iowa is actually a win ([The Atlantic](#))...
- ... or is actually worse for Clinton than losing? ([The American Prospect](#))
- Is Hillary Clinton an 'awful' candidate? ([Hit & Run](#))
- Younger voters are not really fans of Clinton – but its not because she isn't progressive enough ([The Fix](#)).
- Does Clinton represent the 'establishment'? Absolutely ([The Atlantic](#))

Bernie Sanders

- Should Sanders 'go negative' on Clinton? Not according to social science ([Monkey Cage](#)).
- Is Sanders 'another George McGovern?' ([Crooks & Liars](#))
- Sanders isn't another Barack Obama; Iowa is likely his 'ceiling' ([Hit & Run](#))...
- ... though he has stated this week that after the close finish in Iowa he can win primaries and caucuses across the country ([Post Politics](#))
- Even if Sanders does manage to keep the race close, he still has a superdelegate problem ([Hit & Run](#)).
- Does coming second in Iowa mark the beginning of the end for Sanders' campaign? ([Red State](#))
- With scrutiny on him post-Iowa, the race is about to get very real for Sanders ([The Fix](#))
- In the 24 hours after the Iowa caucuses Sanders donors have given \$3 million to the Vermont Senator's campaign ([Post Politics](#))
- Sanders' policies are ambitions – even revolutionary – but he would have a very hard time getting them through Congress ([The American Prospect](#))

Martin O'Malley

- On Monday reports came in that the former Governor of Maryland had been forced to secure a loan to keep his campaign afloat, and that some of his campaign staff were working without pay ([Post Politics](#))
- Despite his travails, is O'Malley the most important man in the Democratic race? ([Powerline](#))
- By Tuesday, O'Malley had suspended his campaign, signaling the end of his presidential ambitions ([Red State](#))



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

The Republican Party's 2016 campaign

Ahead of the Iowa caucuses this week, *FiveThirtyEight* says that there are four roads out of Iowa for Republicans – it turns out that their fourth scenario was the correct one. *Crooks & Liars* reckons that the GOP's Iowa caucus results were shocking, but not surprising. *The Fix*, meanwhile reflects that in Iowa, Republican outsiders like Texas Senator Ted Cruz and Donald Trump took twice as many votes as the establishment candidates. Iowa's caucus voters also proved that candidates no longer need to be foreign policy hawks in order to win, with Trump and Cruz both being critical of the US intervention in Libya ([The Atlantic](#)).



Donald Trump Credit: Gage Skidmore (Flickr, CC-BY-SA-2.0)

Outside the Beltway [says](#) that after Iowa, the race for the GOP nomination is now effectively down to three; Trump, Cruz and Rubio. This is a good thing, given the GOP establishment's urgent need to thin its candidate herd ([The Fix](#)). *Red State*, meanwhile [wonders](#) where all the governors have gone in the presidential race. Recent weeks and months have seen many commentators frame the GOP race as one which pits the establishment versus populists. *The Federalist* [writes](#) that that's not the whole story – there are libertarian and Tea Party dimensions as well.

Coming second and third changed Trump and Rubio's nomination chances a great deal, lowering them for Trump and raising them for Rubio. *FiveThirtyEight* [looks](#) at why – it's all about long-run expectations.

Donald Trump

- This may not come as a surprise, but out of every \$16 Trump has spent in the last three months, \$1 has been on hats ([The Fix](#)).
- The success of Donald Trump isn't a 'Black Swan' event – it was entirely predictable that the race would fall to such an outsider ([Political Animal](#))
- Trump is the least favorably viewed presidential candidate since at least 1992 ([The Fix](#)).
- This week saw Trump attack the Supreme Court's decision last year to legalize same-sex marriage across the country ([Post Politics](#)).
- Is 'Trumpmania' different from 2008's 'Obamania'? ([Red State](#))
- The media are gloating after Trump's second place loss in Iowa this week ([The Fix](#))...
- ...and Trump reckons he's now being treated unfairly by the media ([FreakOutNation](#))
- One of Trump's main strengths – and weaknesses – is his reliance on support from white males with less than a college education ([Outside the Beltway](#))
- Post-Iowa, Trump has accused Ted Cruz of 'stealing' the Iowa caucus by putting out a release that Ben Carson was quitting the race ([The Fix](#))

Ted Cruz

- Prior to the caucus this week, a mysterious man was apparently following the Texas Senator around, accusing him of liking the band, Nickelback ([FreakOutNation](#)).
- Also ahead of the main event, some commentators reckoned that Cruz had worn out his welcome in Iowa after he was criticised by state officials for sending out an official-looking 'voter violation' mailer to encourage his supporters to caucus ([Daily Kos](#)).

- So Cruz won in Iowa. How did he do it? He dominated Trump among strong conservatives, and attracted the support of many first-time caucus goers ([The Fix](#)).
- Cruz also won Iowa because of his support from evangelicals. The same support would mean he'd lose the general election ([Hit & Run](#)).
- A significant part of Cruz's win was his 'stunning' victory over Iowa's ethanol cartel ([Hit & Run](#)).
- Cruz's Iowa win looks similar to Mike Huckabee's in 2008 and Rick Santorum's in 2012 – and that's bad news ([The Fix](#)).
- Now that he has won Iowa, where does Ted Cruz go from here? ([FiveThirtyEight](#))
- In the three days following his Iowa win, Cruz managed to raise \$3 million ([Post Politics](#))



Marco Rubio

- Why GOP voters should look to the general election and give the Florida Senator a chance ([Townhall](#))
- Rubio's campaign took in more than \$14 million last quarter, but spent even more ([Post Politics](#))
- Despite coming in third in Iowa this week, Cruz still delivered a victory speech – and the media ate it up ([Daily Kos](#))
- Since his third-place finish, Rubio has picked up endorsements from two senators and two representatives, and now has more than former Florida Governor, Jeb Bush ([FiveThirtyEight](#))
- He may have reason to celebrate – polls post-Iowa, showing him moving ahead of Ted Cruz in the run up to the New Hampshire primary ([The Fix](#))

Jeb Bush

- The former Florida Governor's Super PAC took in \$15 million in the second half of 2015, but spent \$54 million, leaving \$59 million in the bank at the beginning of 2016 ([Daily Kos](#))
- Speaking of money, Bush was, dollar-for-dollar, the biggest loser in Iowa with only 2.8 percent of the vote ([Hit & Run](#))
- Given his poor Iowa showing, should Bush be re-evaluating his run? ([Red State](#))

Ben Carson



Dr. Ben Carson Credit: Gage Skidmore (Flickr, CC-BY-SA-2.0)

- With sinking poll numbers and continuing troubles on foreign policy, the retired neurosurgeon's campaign appears to be imploding before our eyes ([FreakOutNation](#))
- This week Carson took a break from the campaign trail – to get some 'fresh clothes' ([The Fix](#))
- Carson's campaign appears to be spending like crazy as well ([The Atlantic](#))

The rest

- Former Arkansas Governor, Mike Huckabee dropped out of the GOP primary on Monday after a poor showing in Iowa – he mostly lost because he didn't have the support of evangelicals as he did in the past ([The Atlantic](#))
- Ohio Governor John Kasich this week vowed to stay positive, and called on his opponents to halt their negative ads ([Post Politics](#))
- Kasich this week claimed that he wouldn't be bringing God into his campaign, which is strange as he refers to the Bible all the time ([Red State](#))
- This week saw Kentucky Senator also wind up his presidential campaign – one that appears to have peaked long before it actually began ([The Fix](#)).
- Former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum ended his presidential bid this week as well ([Crooks & Liars](#))

Government, the Beltway and Congress' agenda

Looking at the Supreme Court, [The Atlantic](#) writes Sunday that Justice Samuel Alito has emerged as the most solidly conservative justice on the current bench. They say that in his ten years on the Supreme Court Alito has not disappointed conservatives who pushed for his nomination.

Moving on to Congress [The Daily Signal](#) looks at Representative Daniel Webster's (R-FL) plans to save money. He returned more than \$384,000 in unspent funds last month, and reckons Congress can make a lot of savings.

This week President Obama and House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) had a lunch date. [The Fix](#) says that the meet was 'largely pointless' given that the two have little incentive to work with one another. Ryan may have bigger fish to fry – House conservatives have been pushing back against the spending levels in last October's budget deal ([The Daily Signal](#)). Many of these conservatives are part of the Tea Party's class of 2010 – and many of them are on their way out, writes [The Fix](#). They say that aside from the eight retirements announced already for this year, 18 out of the original 84 have headed for the exits since 2010.

Foreign policy, defense and trade

Townhall [wonders](#) if the passage of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's authorization of war against ISIS will mean a war against the American people given that it is likely to endanger their civil and economic liberties.

Informed Comment [looks](#) at foreign policy and the Democratic primary, writing that Bernie Sanders simply isn't comfortable with the issue, and therefore has not paid a great deal of attention to the issue. Talking about candidates' foreign policy views, *Monkey Cage* [writes](#) Thursday that Donald Trump's views are actually quite mainstream,



Credit: David (Flickr, CC-BY-NC-SA-2.0)

This week the Chiefs of the Army and the Marine Corps stated to Congress that women should be required to register for the draft just as men are. *Outside the Beltway* [says](#) that while some have argued that making women subject to the draft might make war less likely, this is really not likely to be a brake on politicians' desire to go to war or not.

Obamacare and health policy

Red State [reports](#) Saturday that the Obama administration is 'desperate' to meet the end of January Obamacare deadline by getting as many young people as possible to sign up. Later in the week, *Outside the Beltway* [comments](#) that Obamacare's predicted effects – in the form of massive losses for insurance companies leading to rate increases – are coming true. *Perspectives* [argues](#) that despite all the naysayers, supporters of health care reform need to keep their eyes on the prize – health care which is universal, continuous and more affordable.



Credit: Will O'Neill (Flickr, CC-BY-2.0)

This week saw the infamous drug company CEO Marin Shkreli testify before Congress on drug prices. *The Hill's Congress blog* [writes](#) that drug costs are a bigger problem than Shkreli – who was recently under fire for increasing the price of a \$13.50 pill to \$750 overnight – the industry is in need of more competition and transparency.

The economy and society

The Daily Signal this week has the [news](#) that in the recently released 2016 Index of Economic Freedom, the US has placed 11th out of 178 countries. They say that the country's decreasing economic freedom is down to less fiscal freedom and more government regulation. Speaking of the economy, *Wonkblog* [wonders](#) how long the US small recovery will be able continue 'chugging along'. Economic recovery aside, unemployment is still the fate of too many poor black boys, [writes](#) *The Atlantic*.

Jeb Bush Featured image credit: [Gage Skidmore](#) (Flickr, [CC-BY-SA-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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