

Fiorina's debate success, Clinton's polling woes, and is mass incarceration a new form of welfare?: US national blog round up for 12 – 18 September

USAPP Managing Editor, **Chris Gilson** looks at the best in political blogging from around the Beltway. Our round-up of state blogs will follow over the weekend.

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President Obama, the Democratic Party, and the GOP

On Tuesday this week, *Post Politics* reports that the White House might be willing to back a short-term budget resolution at current spending levels, if it will mean that a government shutdown will be avoided. The current budget runs out at the end of the month, and Obama has vowed to veto any bill – spending or otherwise – which would defund Planned Parenthood (*PoliticusUSA*). *The Fix* meanwhile says that while Obama's Iran deal will pass through Congress, according to a new poll, only 51 percent of Americans support the agreement, and 41 percent oppose it.

Moving on to the Republican Party, *Monkey Cage* explains why some of its members keep threatening to cause a government shutdown. They say that this is because the GOP has a large majority – and thus a larger and more diverse caucus, and because House rules allow for bipartisan coalitions to vote through budget measures without those on the far right of the party. Staying on the GOP, *Hit & Run* writes Wednesday on how President Ronald Reagan haunts the party because of his achievements, something which is holding the party back. *The Fix* says that new polls have shown that the Republican Party's brand has hit a new low, with favorable opinion of the GOP at 32 percent. They ponder whether or not Donald Trump is the cause or the symptom of the party's flagging brand.

Elections and the road to 2016

On Thursday, *Sabato's Crystal Ball* offers some early thoughts on next year's presidential election, and on some of the down-ballot races. *The Fix* looks at what they say are the four distinct trajectories of 2016 election candidates – 'boom and bust' (Scott Walker), 'whatever happened to' (Jeb Bush and Hillary Clinton), 'recent surger' (Joe Biden), and the 'steady risers' (Donald Trump). *Monkey Cage* looks at whether or not voter anger is behind the rising popularity of Donald Trump and Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VA). They comment that the two may not be drawing on people's anger – more the dissatisfaction that many feel about contemporary politics.

The Atlantic addresses a more fundamental issue of the 2016 election – the country's aging voting technology. They say that many voting machines are now more than a decade old, and may be prone to failure.

Turning now to the 2016 candidates themselves, and more specifically, billionaire Donald Trump:

- Trump now has less support from Latino voters than Mitt Romney did in the 2012 election, despite his claims that Latinos love him (*Outside the Beltway*)...
- ...while 60 percent of Americans don't think that Trump is qualified enough to be president (*The Fix*)...



Donald Trump Credit: Gage Skidmore (Creative Commons BY SA)

- ...though he could actually end up being the GOP's nominee for the presidency (*The American Prospect*).
- Is Donald Trump's Ronald Reagan's heir? (*The Atlantic*).
- Has Trump hijacked the Tea Party... (*Hit & Run*).
- ... or is he the 'dubious achievement' of the GOP leadership? (*The American Thinker*)
- We shouldn't stop blaming the media for the rise of Trump, according to the *Monkey Cage*.
- Voters may be turning to Trump because they have no confidence in government (*The Federalist*).
- *The Fix* looks at the 'increased Trump-iness' of the second GOP debate, held on Wednesday evening.
- *Caffeinated Politics* says that Trump is now 'even more pathetic' after not correcting an audience member who stated that President Obama was a Muslim, and not an American, at a rally in New Hampshire.

Moving beyond Trump to the wider GOP primary, *The Fix* writes Monday that the party's strategy to recruit black and Latino candidates has a *gaping hole*. *American Thinker* looks ahead to the post-primary season and the potential realignment on the right that may pit establishment Republicans against conservatives.

This week saw the second Republican Party candidates' debate on Wednesday evening. *Red State* says that Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal won the second tier debate – though this may have been his only chance as there may not be another 'undercard' debate in this cycle for the GOP, according to *Post Politics*. For *The Atlantic*, the winner was former Hewlett Packard CEO, Carly Fiorina, because of her skill of exploiting the fact that she is a woman in an otherwise all-male field. *Hit & Run* agrees that Fiorina won the debate because of her response to earlier attacks from Donald Trump on her appearance. *The Fix*, meanwhile writes that Fiorina's personal story about the death of her stepchild to drug abuse counted as 'a huge debate moment'. Looking at commentary on the candidates more closely:

- After her debate performance, does the GOP establishment now have a candidate they can embrace in Carly Fiorina? (*Political Animal*).
- Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker has cancelled a long-trailed California GOP convention speech in order to 'resuscitate' what may be a flagging campaign (*PoliticusUSA*)

- *Talking Points Memo* [says](#) that Walker's campaign has collapsed, with his support having fallen from 13 to 2 percent since July.
- Perhaps in response to his campaign woes, Walker announced proposals for a nationwide 'right to work' anti-union law as well as the outlawing of federal worker unions ([Daily Kos](#)).
- Former Texas Governor, Rick Perry recently dropped out of the 2016 race – the first victim of Donald Trump, [writes](#) *The Federalist*.
- Perry himself has meanwhile blamed his campaign exit on his ongoing indictment for abuse of power in Texas ([America blog](#)).
- What does retired neurosurgeon (and 2016 GOP candidate) Dr Ben Carson believe? [Wonkblog](#) has a guide.



Wisconsin Governor, Scott Walker Credit: Chatham House (Flickr, CC-BY-2.0)

Moving on now to the Democratic Party's 2016 presidential primary and down-ticket campaigns, *Daily Kos* [looks](#) at the merits of a '50-state strategy' for the party. With the GOP's second presidential primary debate happening this week, *Crooks & Liars* [wonders](#) why the Democrats haven't begun to stage their own. They say that at this point in the 2007 cycle, there had already been a number of Democratic debates. In recent weeks, excitement about Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders' campaign has been building, with polls showing him ahead in both Iowa and New Hampshire. *Monkey Cage* [says](#) that the Sanders surge does not mean that the Democratic race is wide open, given his lack of support among minority voters. Turning to more specific commentary on the candidates:

- *Ten Miles Square* looks at Sanders' [unorthodox campaign](#)...
- ...while *Red State* [reminds](#) us that he is a socialist...
- ...though *America blog* [reckons](#) that he's not that extreme.
- Sanders also pushed a plan this week to ban privately run jails and prisons ([Post Politics](#)).
- Former Maryland Governor, Martin O'Malley was to propose universal background checks and a minimum age of 21 for gun purchases this week, and was also due to talk to Colorado policymakers about marijuana legalization ([Post Politics](#)).
- *The Fix* [says](#) that former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton's email issues have become a massive political problem for her...
- ...while *The Lonely Conservative* [wonders](#) why there are months-long gaps in the emails from her private server that Clinton turned over to the State Department.
- *FiveThirtyEight* [says](#) that Clinton is stuck in a 'poll-deflating feedback loop' with voters only hearing about negative stories, pushing her ratings further and further down.
- *The Fix* [explains](#) Clinton's problem with women supporters – her support among women has dropped by 29 points according to a recent poll.

Government, the Beltway and Congress' agenda

On Monday, *The Lonely Conservative* has the [news](#) that despite a record high tax collection for the year so far (just over \$2.8 trillion) the federal budget deficit is still running at \$530 billion.

The Food and Drug Administration has introduced new food nutrition labelling in order to help people understand better what they're eating. The *Monkey Cage* [looks](#) at why the move could make people fatter.

Last week Democrats in the Senate were able to successfully prevent the measure of disapproval for the recent Iran nuclear deal from going forward. *The Hill's Congress blog* [writes](#) this week that Congress should monitor the

Iran deal, and not keep trying to kill it.

On Monday, *The Atlantic* looks at when the House of Representatives is able to sue the president, after a federal judge last week ruled that the body had standing to do so over his administration's health care spending.

With a relatively small number of days left in the legislative calendar before the government's funding runs out on September 30th, and many in the GOP refusing to budge over the defunding of Planned Parenthood, another shutdown looms. *Daily Kos* says that the only ideas that the GOP's leadership has had to avert the shutdown have been bad ones, such as putting forward a stand-alone antiabortion bill. *Outside the Beltway*, meanwhile, says that a new poll has shown that the 71 percent of Americans do not want the government to shut down over the funding of Planned Parenthood.

Foreign policy, defense and trade

On Sunday this week, *The Daily Signal* argues that America is suffering from a 'crisis of confidence' over the superiority of its economic system and its system of government. *The Hill's Congress blog*, meanwhile says that President Obama's foreign policy in the Middle East is a 'trainwreck' ever since he took office, having made poor decisions on Libya and withdrawing troops from Iraq.

Townhall writes this week that despite the massive refugee crisis now facing Europe, the US has taken more than its share, especially given that wealthy European nations did not offer to help by accepting some of the thousands of migrants from Central America who have come to the US in recent years. *Informed Comment*, on the other hand, argues that the US can and should do more for the Syrian refugees.

On Wednesday, *American Thinker* accuses President Obama of ignoring Chinese provocation in Alaska after it sent five warships into Alaskan territorial waters while the president visited the state.

The Hill's Congress blog says that the Obama administration should do more to end the ongoing conflict in Ukraine by relying on its deal making skills – not weapons or sanctions.

Obamacare and health policy

Many in the media have been warning that Obamacare premiums are likely to rise soon – and by large amounts. *Daily Kos* says that next to none of the proposed rate increases are actually starting to be set by the states yet. *The Daily Signal* meanwhile is concerned over the October 1st government mandated change to medical billing which they argue will cause 'chaos' in healthcare.

The Federalist writes this week that the Supreme Court has likely not seen the last of Obamacare regulation, with religious liberty exemptions to Obamacare's contraceptive mandate likely to head the Court's way in the next year.

Despite ongoing court challenges and other concerns about Obamacare, the GOP seems to have largely moved on from it as a campaign issue, writes *Daily Kos*.

The economy and society



Credit: John Sonderman (Creative Commons BY NC)

On Sunday, *The Daily Signal* writes that five years on from the recession, only 21 percent of small businesses say that they've recovered. They say that this is mostly down to government regulation which places a huge burden on businesses which are often run by only one person.

This week *The Atlantic* writes on where not to be old and jobless, despite recent optimistic job reports. They say that if you need to find a job and are over 55, you should avoid San Jose, California, and El Paso, Texas. Also on the subject of workers, *Crooks & Liars* says that according to a new study, labor's falling share of corporate incomes have meant that workers have missed out on as much as \$535 billion since 2000.



Credit: Niklas Morberg (Flickr, CC-BY-NC-2.)

On Wednesday, *The Atlantic* argues that mass incarceration has become a new form of welfare in the US, which acts as a perverse form of social spending which uses the power of the state to address social problems 'at the back end'.

This week a schoolboy in Texas was arrested for bringing in a digital clock to his school, which educators and lawmakers thought was a bomb. *Wonkblog* says that the boy, Ahmed Mohamed, is not alone – well behaved minority boys are more likely to be imprisoned than whites who cause trouble.

The Federal Reserve decided to leave interest rates as they were, reports *Outside the Beltway*, which to many was a surprise, they say, as the Fed had been signalling for months that a rate rise was inevitable at some point.

And finally...

For Star Wars fans – if Bernie Sanders is Yoda, does that make Donald Trump Jabba the Hutt (*No More Mister Nice blog*)?

How Caddyshack can explain the Presidential race (*The Atlantic*).

Wednesday night's Republican debates were apparently longer in words than *The Great Gatsby* (*Wonkblog*).

Featured image: Carly Fiorina 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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