

# THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE WEEKLY UPDATE

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE DNC COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

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## [2013 in Review: The Struggles of the GOP 2016 Field](#)

On Wednesday, DNC National Press Secretary Michael Czin released a memo on the rough year Republican leaders looking into 2016 presidential runs have had. Read a sample of the memo below, and click [here](#) to read it in full.

There are many contenders in the Republican field already, but the primary electorate remains unsatisfied with their choices. Both 2008 and 2012 Iowa Caucus winners [Mike Huckabee](#) and [Rick Santorum](#) are actively exploring a run, and even former Massachusetts Senator [Scott Brown](#) has spent his fair share of time with Iowa and New Hampshire voters.

Over the last year, [Republicans exploring Presidential runs have endlessly sniped at one another](#), trying to jockey for position. But the fact is that their sniping and infighting is the least of the field's problems – their biggest challenges are simply their own actions and shortcomings.

Chris Christie won reelection last month and today is embroiled in a scandal that has triggered subpoenas, multiple resignations and a potential congressional investigation. Marco Rubio was touted as the [savior of the Republican Party](#) earlier this year and today [fights for relevance](#). The rest of the candidates' stories are just as bad – a string of flashes in the pan followed by broken promises, failed policies and worse.

### ***Here's a brief rundown:***

**Chris Christie** has been off to a rocky start since his reelection in November. First it was his [flip flop on the New Jersey Dream Act](#) – almost immediately backing away from his campaign pledge to support in-state college tuition for undocumented students. And now the revelation that close allies of Christie inexplicably closed [multiples lanes leading to the busiest bridge in the world](#), possibly as [political retribution](#). The lane closures caused almost a week of traffic jams that brought surrounding communities to their knees and they've also earned the brash governor bad headlines [back home](#) and [nationally](#) with no end in sight. Faced with scandal and disingenuous flip-flopping Chris Christie's decision to put politics over the people of New Jersey has created a very rocky start to his second term.

**Rand Paul** spent his fall supporting the GOP's shutdown that cost the economy \$24 billion. Paul later tried to distance himself from his shutdown with the ridiculous statement, "[Even though it did appear as if I was participating in it, I said it was a dumb idea.](#)" Just as Paul was working past controversy over his decision to [stand by a senior aide with a history of inappropriate and racially charged remarks](#), he was caught [repeatedly plagiarizing](#) portions of his book and several speeches, taking another hit to his credibility.

**Ted Cruz** has managed to make [enemies on all sides of the aisle](#) this year and became most known for [unapologetically leading](#) his party to shut down the government, causing [major internal party divisions](#) and helping the GOP hit all time [low favorability ratings](#). What's worse, [he's expressed interest in doing it all again](#).

**Marco Rubio** started off the year as TIME Magazine put it, the "[Republican Savior](#)" but is rounding out the year as a political lightweight who's [accomplished very little](#) and who will say anything to stay in the good graces of the [GOP far right base](#). Instead of being the savior, he's been busy trying to play catch-up to his far right colleagues like Cruz and Paul. Like the time he wrote and [passed an immigration bill](#), only to walk away from it and then announced his intention to sponsor a [restrictive abortion bill](#) trying to woo far-right activists.

## Happy Holidays, GOP!

'Tis the season to come together, spend time with loved ones and reflect on years past and future.

But you wouldn't know it from watching the field of Republicans mulling 2016 Presidential runs.

This last year has been marked by endless sniping, recriminations and counter recriminations - and we're still more than two years from the first caucuses and primaries of 2016!

Given Republicans' track record in 2013, their feuding will undoubtedly continue in 2014 and beyond. Get your popcorn - it's going to be fun (for Democrats).

Click [here](#) to watch the DNC's new video showing the love within the 2016 Republican Presidential field.



## In the States

- On Wednesday, the Wisconsin Democratic Party hit Scott Walker for his failed jobs plan [after news came out](#) that the state dropped to 37th in the nation in job growth. The party's [news release](#) said that the jobs added numbers are "the worst numbers for a one year period in the past three years." Click [here](#) to view the release and a statement from Wisconsin's Democratic Party Chair, Mike Tate.
- On Wednesday, the Louisiana Democratic Party [awarded the "Naughtiest" Politico of the year award to Gov. Bobby Jindal](#). Louisiana Democratic Party Executive Director Stephen Handwerk said, "Louisiana's voters know if their elected officials have been bad or good, and the policies of Governor Jindal have been one failure after another. . . . In addition, Jindal has put his political ambitions over the needs of the people of Louisiana in choosing to reject federal Medicaid dollars to expand access to health care for hundreds of thousands of uninsured Louisianians. For that and more, Jindal is our 'Naughtiest' politico of 2013." Read the full release [here](#).
- On Tuesday, the [Alaskan Democratic Party criticized Alaska Governor Parnell](#) for rejecting Medicaid expansion and denying healthcare to the state's working poor. The Party's release explained a [report from Alaska Public Radio Network](#) that individuals making less than \$14,000 per year with no dependent children wouldn't be able to afford health coverage because of Parnell's decision. In the release, Mike Wenstrup, Chair of the Alaska Democratic Party, said, "Parnell's rejection of Medicaid expansion demonstrates an appalling disregard for the economic realities facing working Alaskans, many of whom can't afford private health insurance." Click [here](#) to read the full release.
- On Tuesday, DNC Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz attended an LGBT community forum in Ferndale, Michigan. At the event she called the GOP rebrand effort a failure after Michigan Republicans tolerated homophobic remarks from a party leader and national Republicans have blocked anti-discrimination legislation that would protect LGBT Americans. See coverage of the visit here: [MLive](#) | [Huffington Post](#)

## **DNC Chair: "2014 Strategy Update"**

On Wednesday, Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz sent an email to supporters updating them on the Democrats strategy to win elections in 2014. Here's what she had to say:

*Friend –*

*One of the things you learn right away in Democratic politics is that there's no magic to winning elections -- and that's actually good news.*

*What you really need is good strategy, smart people, and ideas you're proud to stand behind -- all of which we have. But it also takes a lot of hard work to tell our story to voters.*

***The first thing we're going to decide in 2014 will be how much we're able to do -- and our decision will be based heavily on the resources we have at the end of the year. So if you're willing to back up our plan to win next year, please donate \$10 or more right now.***

*Here's what we're doing with your support:*

- 1. Recruiting and training organizing talent across the country.*
- 2. Maintaining and building our digital edge.*
- 3. Expanding access to the ballot box.*
- 4. Holding Republicans accountable and promoting the Democratic agenda.*

*If we continue doing these four things with all our resources, all our party's talent, and all the energy and passion of supporters like you and me, I guarantee you we'll see more Democrats elected in 2014.*

***Chip in before our last deadline of 2013 to make sure we can execute our full plan to win in 2014:***  
**<https://my.democrats.org/Our-Strategy-In-Action>**

*We can't just leave this to chance -- in the next few days, we have to be absolutely certain that we'll have the resources now to start executing our strategy.*

*Thanks for doing your part,*

*Debbie*

*Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Chair  
Democratic National Committee*

*P.S. -- My first meeting of 2014 will be to review how much we raised between now and the end of the year, and to decide whether we can do all of the things we need to do to win in 2014. **[Pitch in to make sure we can.](#)***

## [State by State Benefits of ACA](#)

On Thursday, the White House released state by state reports that highlight the benefits of the Affordable Care Act for consumers and the cost of the GOP's plan of repealing the law in human and economic terms. People in all 50 states are experiencing the benefits of a healthcare system that expands access to affordable health care through exchanges and Medicaid expansion, provides rebates to families so their hard-earned dollars are used for care rather than lining insurance company pockets, stops the practice of charging women more because of their gender or denying coverage based on preexisting conditions, and ensures Americans can get important preventive care without a copay. The GOP plan would take these benefits away and revert us back to the old broken health care system.

Click below to see the DNC's newest graphic of the specific benefits individuals are seeing in the states:



View the White House's national report [here](#).

View the White House's state by state reports [here](#).

## [President Obama Honors the One-Year Anniversary of the Tragedy in Newtown, CT](#)

In his weekly address, President Obama honored the 20 children and 6 educators that lost their lives in the Newtown, Connecticut shooting.

The President explained that the "unspeakable violence" is unacceptable and that the American people have the opportunity and responsibility to create real change.



He said, "As a nation, we can't stop every act of violence. We can't heal every troubled mind. But if we want to live in a country where we can go to work, send our kids to school, and walk our streets free from fear, we have to keep trying. We have to keep caring. We have to treat every child like they're our child. Like those in Sandy Hook, we must choose love. And together, we must make a change."

Watch his remarks [here](#).

## **Christie's Bridge Scandal Isn't Going Away**

Though Chris Christie may think the growing controversy surrounding the lane closures at the George Washington Bridge is just "[hullabaloo](#)," To the people of New Jersey, this is a serious matter, and they're looking for answers.

As the [Star-Ledger wrote on Friday](#), "an explanation that once seemed utterly ridiculous – that the lanes were closed to create traffic havoc in the town of Fort Lee as some sort of political retribution against the town's Democratic mayor – has actually emerged as the only logical explanation."

Despite Christie's best effort to sidestep the issue and dodge direct questions from the press, Christie's bridge flap is proving to be a liability. Just take a look at some of the local coverage:

### **Star-Ledger: Bridgegate? Chris Christie's national ambitions could be hurt by GWB controversy**

KEY POINT: "Questions about the incident have fueled a scandal that even Christie's masterful team of brand managers can't make go away."

### **New York Post Editorial: George Washington Bridge lane closures remain a mystery**

KEY POINT: "Clearly, the public needs answers about why those lanes were closed, and lawmakers in Trenton have rightly sent out new subpoenas."

### **Star-Ledger's Moran: Bridge-gate scandal nips at Christie's heels**

KEY POINT: "Stay tuned. Bridge-gate may wind up as a stalemate. But for now, there is blood in the water. And questions that need answers."

### **Star-Ledger's Mulshine: My prediction on how we can expect Chris Christie's crisis with the GW Bridge to develop**

KEY POINT: "And this ain't over yet, not by a long shot."

Chris Christie still hasn't given a straight answer to one simple question: Why did his allies shut down the lanes to the bridge?

Until Christie explains why – and how – this happened, the scandal won't go away.

The DNC has released two videos to help everyone understand the controversy and its implications. To view the videos, click on the links below:



[http://youtu.be/En\\_43F4yclc](http://youtu.be/En_43F4yclc)



<http://youtu.be/BFG16-mSbe8>



## [A Few End of Year Thoughts on Where Things Stand In the States](#)

On Thursday, DNC Communications Director Mo Elleithee released the following memo on the political state of play going into 2014. Despite the best efforts of the Republican Party, support for Obamacare has remained constant, and Americans across the country are already experiencing the benefits.

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Before everyone begins to scatter for the holidays (as I'm about to do in a few hours... helllllooo Miami!), I thought it might be a good time to pause and reflect on where things stand politically as we finish out the year and head into the 2014 election cycle.

If you believe what you read on Twitter (which I know *no one* reading this email does!), you'd have no choice over the past few weeks but to believe that Democrats were in free-fall over the Obamacare rollout. Never mind our strong electoral wins in 2012 and 2013 – both won while withstanding unrelenting attacks on Obamacare from the other side. Republicans could barely contain their glee as they prepared to run yet another campaign on this singular issue.

To be clear, the rollout *was* rocky. Democrats from the President on down were frustrated and disappointed. And yes, we took a hit in the polls.

But while the Administration took the glitches seriously and sprang into action to do the right thing for the American people, we believed that the politics would take care of itself once a few things happened:

- 1) People's initial frustration and disappointment would subside as the website began to work better, more people would begin to sign up for more affordable plans, and Republican predictions of calamity would be debunked.
- 2) People would begin to understand the two competing plans: Democrats are united in their efforts to fix the ACA where it needs to be fixed, strengthen it where necessary, and amplify it where it was working well. Republicans would simply root for the law's failure in a continued effort to scrap the whole thing.
- 3) People would begin to see all of the benefits they and their families were already receiving under the Affordable Care Act, and understand what they would lose if the Republicans got their way.
- 4) People would remember that the Republicans are so hell-bent on taking those benefits away that they'll take the country to the brink. *After all, in their last repeal effort they went so far as to shut the government down, causing a \$24 billion hit to our economy.*

And so, over the past few weeks, the Obama Administration focused on putting fixes in place – and the American people saw real success. At the same time, the White House, Democrats in DC and across the country, and other advocates of reform all set out to highlight the many different benefits of the Affordable Care Act – as well as the human and economic costs of repeal.

The political result of all this? The free fall stopped, we started climbing back, and are actually positioned for 2014.

- **The ACA is as popular as it's ever been – and that's fine electorally.** As we've seen in poll, after poll, after poll, the past few weeks have shown the popularity of the ACA climb [back to pre-rollout levels](#). Those levels have been remarkably consistent over the past several years, including where they were when Democrats won big in both 2012 and 2013.

*(Remember: in the one electoral test we've seen since the ACA's rollout – the Virginia gubernatorial race that occurred during the middle of the rocky roll out – [the exit polling showed that barely more than a quarter of voters considered health care their top issue](#), and the voters were split nearly evenly with that group. Cuccinelli's attempts to make it a negative referendum on Obamacare simply didn't work.)*

- **The ACA's popularity has bounced back among several key groups.** As Greg Sargent pointed out over at [The Washington Post](#), support for the ACA cratered among several key groups after the rollout, only to start roaring back in the last month – including young people under 30 (+20 in the last month); independents (+9); moderates (+10); and even among conservatives (+16) and Republicans (+9). And among the uninsured, a [NYT/CBS poll](#) out today shows that nearly 6 in 10 said having insurance would improve their health care better and 56 percent said they were more likely to get insurance by March 31.

- **People don't want repeal. Period.** As [poll](#), after [poll](#), after poll shows, people could not be more clear about the fact that they want to fix the law – not repeal it.
- **People trust President Obama more than they do Republicans on the issue of health care.** The [Washington Post/ABC News poll](#) shows that people give the President his biggest advantage since 2010 over Republicans on who they would rather have implement health care reform. The [Pew/USA Today poll](#) shows that “far more Americans express confidence in Obama than Republican congressional leaders to do the right thing when it comes to health care policy.”
- **The Democratic Party is still more popular than the Republican Party.** According to [Gallup's most recent poll](#), people view the Democratic Party more favorably than they do the GOP by a margin of 10 points. Among self-described moderates, that margin grows to 20 points – a big problem for Republicans headed into the midterms.
- **The implementation of Obamacare is still more popular than Congressional Republicans.** In the most recent [Washington Post/ABC News poll](#), Congressional Republicans receive a 24% approval rating – a full 10 points lower than opinions of the President's “implementation of the new health care law.”

Let that sink in for a moment.

**Even after two full months of negative press and attacks, people liked the rollout of the Affordable Care Act more than they like Congressional Republicans – by a double-digit margin!**

It appears that Republicans made three fundamental miscalculations:

- 1) They predicted that people would rather repeal the ACA than fix it. (They don't.)
- 2) They predicted that people would be OK with a government shutdown over this. (They weren't.)
- 3) And they predicted that law would be a disaster. (It's not – it's actually working for millions of Americans.)

So, are we winning right now? Who knows. But what the polling tells me is that the other side most definitely is *not* winning right now, despite all of their bluster.

At the end of the day, elections are about choices. And Democrats have been making a comeback ever since we started making the choice crystal clear: we are the party that wants to make the ACA work better so that more people have access to affordable and better health care. They are the party that wants to take that away, and is so determined to return to the old system that they were willing to shut the government down.

I like that choice.

Plus, that doesn't even begin to get into all the other issues Democrats are working on that the GOP is ignoring due to its obsession with ACA repeal – issues like commonsense immigration reform, employment non-discrimination, and jobs.

Nor has it factored in the complete and utter failure of the “GOP Rebrand” that has left *more* Americans feeling alienated and discriminated against by Republican rhetoric and policies.

Tie all this together, and we've got a good story to tell.

I'm *really* looking forward to telling it when the campaigns get under way next year.

In the meantime, I hope you all have the happiest of holiday seasons. We'll see you in the New Year!

**- Mo Elleithee**