

Staff.

Writers:

Levi Cooper  
Ethan Hurwitz  
David Arnold  
Aidan Fitzsimons  
Hannah Vickery

Editors:

Austin Margulies  
Anthony C Moraglia

Faculty Advisor:  
Jim Rosengarten

## U.S. Immigration, Revisited

By *Ethan Hurwitz*

Peaking in the summer of 2014 and largely concluding by September of the same year, the Central American migrant crisis saw over one-hundred-thousand undocumented Central American nationals make the perilous and protracted trek from countries such as Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala to the U.S.-Mexico border in search of admittance to the United States. Included in the colossal migration were approximately 66,127 unaccompanied minors from Central America, a comparatively large quantity. The mass exodus was fueled, in large part, by violence and rampant, crippling poverty prevalent in the host Central American countries. The somewhat novel features of this flight from Central America to the United States—namely the number of minors detained at the border, as well as the number of non-Mexican migrants—are proving to be troublesome for the altogether unprepared American immigration courts. Although the migration itself has long since dwindled in magnitude to fairly manageable levels, the tremendous backlog of undocumented children has slowed the already molasses-like immigration courts to a crawl, leaving many with trial dates set as far as three years in the future. But while this sluggish pace of processing is certainly a significant hindrance to the courts and their effectiveness, it alone does not constitute the entirety of the problem, nor would its remedy constitute a complete solution. In short, the situation is not black and white. Yet, while Congress and pundits deliberate, and partisan politics negates seemingly all measures to solve the problem, the issue itself and the children at the border and throughout the country in a state of limbo are not slated to simply disappear. In fact, quite the opposite appears to be true.

(Continued on p.2)

## Iran Deal Roundup

By *Levi Cooper*

In 2008, the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, with the addition of Germany, met to discuss a common goal: stopping a nuclear Iran from causing what seemed to be global panic. Now, almost eight years later, after many sanctions, and countless compromises, the “Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action” (JCPOA) has been officially set in motion by the United States Congress. Many, however, have not followed the long history of how sanctions were originally imposed, and how this deal between world powers intends to lift them.

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Despite this issue being, on the whole, a nuanced one, there does appear to be at least one major agreed-upon factor contributing to the glacial movement of the courts: there are simply not enough judges or staff on hand to field the enormous load of cases. According to Juan Osuna, the director of the Executive Office of Immigration, slashes to the budget have prevented the department from filling vacated positions, or increasing their processing capacity by hiring new judges. After President Obama's initial entreaty to Congress for \$4 billion to help alleviate this dire situation, Juan Osuna reported that new funding for Fiscal Year 2015 has helped reduce the case build-up.

To compound the issue, those judges that are working tirelessly to process the surfeit of cases are themselves being hindered needlessly. Given the past prevalence of unaccompanied minors from Mexico appearing at the U.S.-Mexico border, policy was adopted in Congress that allowed for expedited processing of these children, precisely in order to avoid an inundation of the court system by Mexican minors. That said, there was a provision made in a 2008 law that required all Central American minors detained at the border to be subject to a hearing, during which they would be either admitted to the U.S. or deported back to their country of origin. This means several things. It means that there are exceedingly long judicial processes required in order to send a child through the court system, and that while these solitary children await their hearings, they must be looked after either by a relative in the U.S. or, as is frequently the case, by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Additionally, during this period of flux that can last years, many children have applied for special juvenile status, a green card-granting federal program, putting further stress on the system. All in all, this provision of the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act is causing strain on U.S. immigration agencies, with no true solution offered by our government. While there are clear steps to be taken to accelerate the immigration process within the courts, there are no clear preventative measures to be taken to ensure a manageable flow of immigrants, both for the present and in the future. There are two prevalent, dichotomous schools of thought pertaining to this issue, boiling down essentially to those that strive to keep immigrants out of the country, and those that support providing information to potential immigrants and treating immigration drivers at their sources. Proponents of the former argument contend that more stringent border security that would physically keep migrants out of the country—meaning the U.S. would not have to spend additional time and resources processing them—would create a deterrent climate for prospective immigrants, in turn resulting in less immigration and a decreased potential for migrant crises like that of 2014. Conversely, proponents of the more proactive strategy disagree, arguing that to let the root causes of mass flight from Central America—such as gang violence, poverty, and economic immobility—fester would be folly. Subscribers to this viewpoint argue that concentrating largely on border security rather than aid to afflicted countries will only ensure that the essential agents responsible for emigration, and in turn attempted immigration, are lasting features in those countries that send the most migrants. Rather, they would focus on initiatives to provide accurate information on the admittance of immigrants to prospective expatriates (the idea being that false rumors about easy border admittance to the U.S. would be quelled, and, in turn, fewer families would send their children to America, knowing better their slim chances of staying). Finally, what they hope would be their most lasting effort would be to provide aid to the host countries with the largest population of migrants, in order to facilitate the elimination of emigration drivers.

While both methodologies have their own merits, the common theme throughout all the problems facing U.S. policymakers today is inaction. While there is some debate about the proper course of action to

best curb the many growing immigration issues, to do nothing at all is to guarantee future debacle. That is why it is imperative there be, if nothing else, non-partisan discussion about immigration reform. Although the borders are not at present flooded with a hundred-thousand immigrants, there is still a very real calamity surrounding the immigration system that afflicts this country today.

### **Iran Deal Roundup (continued)**

Iran's nuclear program became public in 2002, at which time the European Union and United Nations imposed a host of sanctions which all but prevented the South Asian country from almost any exportation, access to assets around the globe, and from the possibility of continuing research without risk of being completely ostracized by surrounding nations. These sanctions have caused tremendous inflation in Iran, one of the top ten global exporters of crude oil, and have caused the country's economy to fall into relative recession, as the currency rate has fallen by two thirds, and many industries such as oil are forced to suspend much of their work. The goal was to force negotiation: Iran, a signer of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty ( an agreement not to develop any kind of nuclear weapon), now had the means to enrich weapons-grade uranium, and a dubious track record of agreement-breaking to boot.

Enter the JCPOA. In exchange for Iran's agreement to be forthright with the United Nations and other inspectors, sanctions will slowly start to lift over a ten to fifteen year period. So far, Iran has declared the location of all its nuclear facilities, and will begin to greatly limit the number of centrifuges used to enrich uranium stored at these sites. In addition, Iran will allow the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) frequent access on surprise inspection-related visits. In these ten to fifteen years, the JCPOA allows Iran to enrich uranium and plutonium solely for research and power purposes, while supposedly barring weapons-grade enrichment and reprocessing.

The deal has had its opponents, however. Iran is expected to gain approximately \$150 billion from unrestricted oil and automobile sales. Many outside organizations, such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), believe that these funds might aid secret research, or contribute to ongoing acts of terrorism in the Middle East. Senators against the passage of the deal are quick to point out that Iran has a tense relationship with the State of Israel, a close ally to the United States, and that the lifting of sanctions is not an easily-reversed process, should Iran engage in untrustworthy acts. Furthermore, the IAEA inspection process has its critics, as any officials will have to wait a 24 day challenge period upon surprise visitation, possibly allowing Iran over three weeks to get rid of anything suspicious.

Though Senators originally voted to bring a resolution of disapproval to the floor with the intention to block the nuclear deal, Senate Democrats came to President Obama's aid, eventually scraping together 41 votes in opposition, thus ensuring that the President will not have to veto any disapproval of the agreement. United States officials named October 18 "adoption day," the date the U.S. will begin to lift all sanction-containing statutes, and when Iran will begin to comply with their side of the deal. Though Germany and the United Nations Security Council are unanimous in giving the lifting of sanctions a try, eyes are now on Iran's parliament, as they will have final say in approving this landmark deal.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/mr-obamas-complex-and-costly-bargain-on-iran/2015/07/14/b90fe2fe-2a3a-11e5-a5ea-cf74396e59ec\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/mr-obamas-complex-and-costly-bargain-on-iran/2015/07/14/b90fe2fe-2a3a-11e5-a5ea-cf74396e59ec_story.html)

<http://www.aipac.org/~media/Publications/Policy%20and%20Politics/AIPAC%20Analyses/Issue%20Memos/2015/IransHistoryofCheatin g.pdf>

## **European Migrant Crisis**

*By David Arnold*

In recent months, the world has been horrified and disgusted by the struggle of roughly 4 million people displaced by the brutal civil war in Syria, as well as war in other regions of the Middle East. Thousands of these refugees have drowned in dangerous Mediterranean crossings with human smugglers (who will sometimes fight rescuers in an attempt to avoid prosecution), and tens of thousands of others are stranded on Aegean islands in unofficial refugee camps.

A common plan of these refugees is to go through Greece into Eastern Europe, and ultimately end up in a country where they have a chance at making a living. The Greek government, due to its current unemployment crisis, lack of funds, and constant leadership changes, is in no way able to take care of this massive influx of people. As a result, these marooned refugees must be kept alive by charities or the generosity of local people. Out of Greece they find their way North into Croatia, whose government seems to think the solution is to move them northward into Hungary, frequently without giving due warning to the Hungarians, according to the police chief of the Bergenland province in Hungary.

The current Hungarian ruling party has been resistant to the passage of refugees through their nation. In September, the Parliament passed a law setting up heavy border security, with guards and walled sections. Some of the facets of this anti-immigration strategy even violate European Union statutes, which Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban circumvented by declaring a national emergency. However, some of these refugees who get caught in Hungary by the government do get sent up the line to Austria, in the same way Croatia had sent many displaced people to Hungary in the first place.

In Austria, the hope is that they can get rail transport to Germany or another country with welcoming immigration policies and a robust economy. But what must be remembered is that at every stage these refugees, desperate for a new life, often engage the services of untrustworthy human traffickers who put them in extreme danger through violence or sheer negligence. In one particularly gruesome incident, 72 refugees were suffocated when they were all stuffed into the back of a trafficker's truck in Hungary. In fact, the other common route refugees take into Europe, from the anarchic North African nation of Libya into southern Italy is also extremely dangerous, as boats not meant to transport large numbers are filled well past maximum capacity, and then quite often sink in storms.

In many ways, on the European end, the immigration crisis could not have come at a worse time. The EU itself is currently very much divided, Greek finance remains almost dead, and in many countries in the path of the immigrants, xenophobia (irrational fear of foreigners) is being expressed in elections with much more force than usual as a result of economic turmoil. But for how much longer? How much more human suffering can rich countries stand to see before they moderate their stances? We will eventually see.

## **Accuracy of Early Polling Numbers**

*by Aidan Fitzsimons*

It's funny to think: nearly everything I see when I look at any news source under the "US" or "Domestic" heading has to do with the road to the 2016 Presidential Election on November 8<sup>th</sup>, over a full year away. Even our first primary, the famous Iowa Caucus, is not until February 1<sup>st</sup>. Every day, the headlines open with another cog in the wheel that is American politics, and I can't help but think about how much time there is until any of these rumors, suspicions, predictions come to fruition. And if Carly Fiorina can rise in straw polls from 3 percent to second place after one overnight debate,<sup>1</sup> we know that anything can change in over 100 days until the Iowa Caucus.

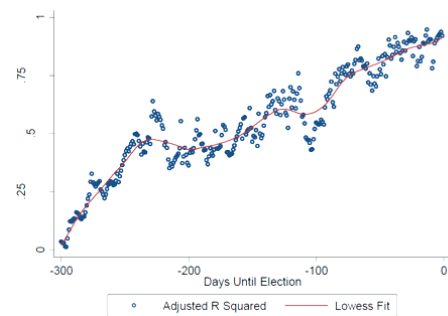
Because of how hard it is for me, or anyone really, to be objective when it comes to the elections, I will be relying solely on data to make my conclusions. When looking at the face value of polling leaders in the year prior compared to actually receiving the nod, the success is split primarily by party.<sup>2</sup> Regarding the Democratic party, in the years analyzed, (see right)<sup>3</sup> early polling leaders yield only a 50% accuracy rate. The Republican party, however, in 7 cases studied, proved to be consistent in terms of favorites yielding a 86% accuracy rate. Following this study

**Democratic Nomination Contests**

Some Early Poll Leaders	Party Nominee
2003 Lieberman, Kerry	Kerry
1999 Gore	Gore
1991 Cuomo	Clinton
1987 Hart	Dukakis
1983 Mondale	Mondale
1975 Wallace, Kennedy	Carter
1971 Muskie	McGovern
1959 Kennedy, Stevenson	Kennedy

**Republican Nomination Contests**

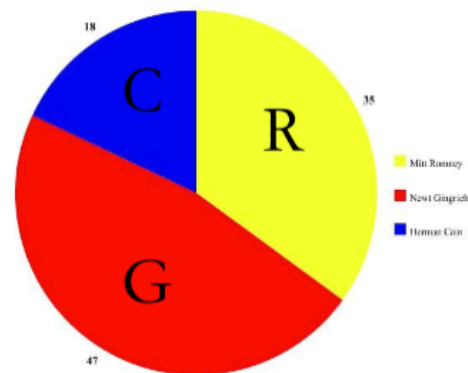
Some Early Poll Leaders	Party Nominee
1999 Bush	Bush
1995 Dole	Dole
1987 Bush	Bush
1979 Reagan, Ford	Reagan
1967 Romney, Nixon	Nixon
1963 Rockefeller	Goldwater
1959 Nixon	Nixon



alone, we may very well see a Trump Republican nod come July 18<sup>th</sup> at the Republican National Convention. Can the same be said for Hillary Clinton? Not quite. But not all studies agree; in another study looking specifically at the Democratic nod in eleven elections, political analysts Chris Wlezien and Robert Erikson analyze how close prediction data is to actual voting results using a 1-100 scale.<sup>4</sup> For those who are not familiar with statistics,  $R^2$  data valued between

0 and 1 represents the percentage that the predictive data reflects the actual data; in this case, the baseline for a .75 (75%) was accurately predicting the winning candidate, and everything past that details how accurate the division of votes were. Looking at the graph (see above-left)<sup>5</sup> produced by Wlezien and Erikson, the data fails to even pass the threshold of 50% reliability until about 150 days out.

This data is relatively conclusive, showing that as we approach the election, the likelihood of accurate prediction increases.. However, one factor cannot be overlooked; the news cycle today looks radically different, especially regarding modern technology. In an election even as recent as 2000, the technology we know today was yet to have been invented. To put it in perspective, Facebook was launched in 2004, Twitter in 2006, and the first iPhone came out in 2007. Technologies like this have exponentially increased the speed of a news cycle, as pure critical mass of press is no longer limited by paper constraints or distribution costs and can reach your fingertips instantly. Truthfully, the only election that mimics the lack of publishing constraints that we as a nation enjoy during the 2016 election is that of the 2012 Republican primary. Unfortunately, the data for the Democratic primary is skewed by the convention that the incumbent president has such a great advantage.<sup>6</sup> So, when looking at October through December polling for the 2011 Republican nod, we find the data that is perhaps most meaningful to our case in 2016. After tallying up winners of nearly 100 polls over three months,<sup>7</sup> Newt Gingrich was declared the winner of 47 polls, Herman Cain was declared winner of 18 polls, and Mitt Romney was declared winner of 35 polls with a few ties (see graph at right).<sup>8</sup>



Following the 2012 primary election as a model for our current technological capabilities and its effect on polling results, these numbers can clearly not be trusted.

From this, we can reasonably conclude that times have changed, and so has the accuracy of our political polling. With technology changing as fast as it is, we must re-evaluate based on new parameters of what it means to be a voter. Everything can change within twenty minutes, and a

candidate can go from first to last at the drop of a hat; for this reason, political polling accuracy has plummeted over the past few elections, and it can be suspected that the downward trend of accuracy will continue.

<sup>1</sup><http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2015/09/poll-fiorina-gets-huge-bump-from-gop-debate.html#>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.pewresearch.org/2007/02/14/how-reliable-are-the-early-presidential-polls/>

<sup>3</sup><http://themonkeycage.org/2011/05/do-early-polls-predict-anything/>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.boundless.com/political-science/textbooks/boundless-political-science-textbook/congress-11/congressional-elections-81/the-power-of-incumbency-446-1638/>

<sup>5</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nationwide\\_opinion\\_polling\\_for\\_the\\_Republican\\_Party\\_2012\\_presidential\\_primaries#2011\\_polls](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nationwide_opinion_polling_for_the_Republican_Party_2012_presidential_primaries#2011_polls)

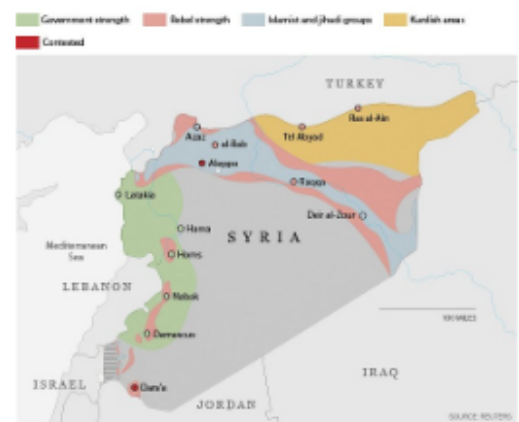
## Causes of the Syrian Refugee Crisis: A History of Civil Violence

By *Austin Margulies*

In recent months, our World has bore witness to the climax of an immigration crisis of Syrian refugees, a timeline of tragic events and humanitarian reflection. The current influx of Syrian refugees spans the globe, with hundreds of thousands of migrants crossing borders into European, North American and Middle East countries. The current state of this Syrian crisis is the result of a half-decade of domestic turmoil and civil unrest between the country's government, and its organized citizens. The millions of Syrian nationals fleeing their homeland follow a universal and time-tested immigration narrative: enduring hardship for the promise of a safer and more prosperous life.

The Arab Spring of 2011 featured the overhaul of multiple Middle East governments through violent and non-violent anti-government protests. During the early months of 2011, uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt sparked citizen revolutions in neighboring nations such as Libya and Yemen, prompting a "domino effect" across the region of protests against authoritarian governments. With most of the area in rebellion, Syria would follow suit in March of 2011, when protests began in the capital of Damascus as crowds demanded democratic reform and the release of political prisoners. As the Syrian revolution turned violent, President Bashar al-Assad announced that his entire executive cabinet had resigned; however, he himself would stay in power. Assad wanted to create the illusion of legitimate governmental change, yet while he stayed in power, his regime continued to hold political prisoners, and crack down on rioters in the same fashion as before the protests.

The Syrian people, upset by the lack of any concrete change, began to organize formal groups of rebellion. Assad refused to release his political prisoners, enact any democratic reform, or allow the Syrian people to have a true voice in politics. The Free Syrian Army (FSA), founded by several ex-Syrian soldiers who defected in protest of Assad, led the military charge against the regime. Once this concrete act of insurgency was established at the end of 2011, President Assad sparked the ensuing bloodbath in the early months of 2012. At the turn of the year, rebel forces carried out a series of guerilla attacks on multiple government entities, prompting a heavy-handed response from the Syrian Army. Assad's forces continued with a strong offensive, attempting to systematically weed out the rebel forces in major urban centers, such as Damascus.



As clashes became more and more frequent in populated cities, the country's citizens were opened to a vulnerable situation. Shelling on civilian homes, and accusations against both sides for the use of

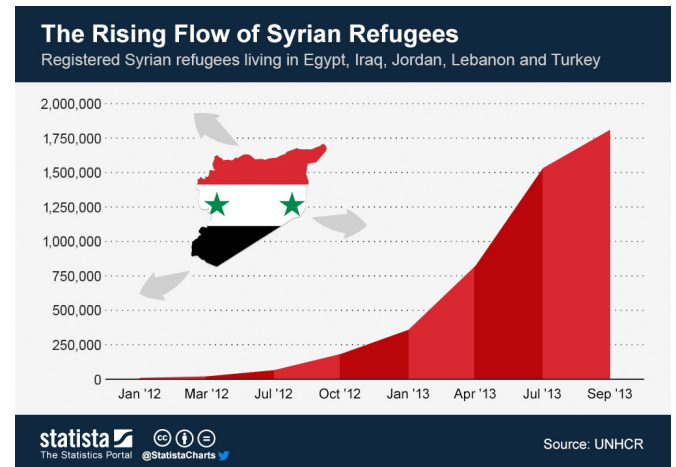
chemical attacks, led to the prompt exodus of Syrians fleeing their country for a safer life.

One of the most impactful events of the war was the Ghouta chemical attack, a rocket assault on the suburbs of Damascus, exploding the gas sarin across densely populated areas. The Ghouta attack prompted international outrage, with many organizations putting the blame on Assad's forces, while others accused the FSA. The death toll estimates from this single offensive range from 281 to 1,729 deaths. Even those who wished to stay found it nearly impossible, as trade channels fell under the control of each side of the war, bringing the abundance of basic necessities to an unlivable level in populated areas.

By the end of 2012, over 500,000 Syrians were classified as refugees, meaning civilians forced to leave their homes because of war or persecution. As the onslaught of fighting escalated, and the Syrian population became more at risk, 2013 would see the Syrian refugee count tick over two million. Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey accepted the most refugees, each taking in over 500,000 by the end of 2013. While a portion of refugees fled to organized camps set up to harbor the large influx, roughly 60% of Syrians who fled their homeland did so by traveling in small packs, exploited by cheap labor and the attempted recruitment from armed military groups.

The current makeup of control over Syrian land consists of three parties: rebel groups such as the Free Syrian Army, the Assad regime and the Islamic State (ISIS). The consistent turnover in land inhibits the ability of any group to create sustaining economies and efficient governing bodies. All risk of life aside, it will be impossible for Syria to successfully move forward as a nation with approximately 11 million internally displaced citizens; a population without sturdy homes, a sense of well-being, sufficient education, or the ability to purchase needed goods, will leave no body of people left to be governed, once the fighting settles. The Islamic State has attempted to build working economies in their territory; however, humanitarian atrocities such as public beheadings and sexual assault, have left those being ruled over with little to no trust in the ISIS leadership.

A lack of any working government is not the leading hurdle for Syria to rebuild as a country: in order to end this mass exodus of innocent civilians, the four-year bloodbath of territorial fighting will need to cease for Syrians to feel safe in returning to their homes and their old ways of life. A solution will only come from concrete diplomatic cooperation on behalf of President Bashar al-Assad and his opposition, in addition to peace from the Islamic State. For the time being, we see millions of people, run from their homes, searching their region and world for a new and more promising way of life.



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## Planned Parenthood Controversy

*By Hannah Vickery*

During the summer, anti-abortionists created a video that captured conversations between Planned Parenthood officials. The videos accuse Planned Parenthood of selling fetal tissue and organs, which is illegal. Planned Parenthood provides tissue to researchers for research, but the videos are suggesting otherwise. There were eight videos released and ever since the first one, there has been outcry from across the country. Republicans have been pushing for a bill to defund Planned Parenthood while Democrats have been fighting against this bill.

Both parties have different views. Republicans want to defund Planned Parenthood to limit abortion because of the disturbing information shared in the recent videos. Planned Parenthood has been accused of discussing the sale of pre-natal body parts and muscle tissue, evoking outrage from anti-abortion groups, mainly because selling human body parts is illegal in the United States. Planned Parenthood immediately condemned the supposed conspiracy, stating the accusations to be false. Democrats disagree with Republicans, saying that if they defund Planned Parenthood they are not just defunding abortion clinics, but also other sources of health care for low-income women. Abortion has been a long discussed subject in politics, but this video has sparked new interest and objection.

“Statistics suggest that about 3 percent of its [Planned Parenthood's] services are abortions”, meaning that by defunding Planned Parenthood, they would really be affecting the other health care procedures like birth control, information about sexually transmitted diseases and so on. Since June, there have been multiple attempts by the right wing of Congress to write and pass bills that would defund Planned Parenthood; however, the left wing has successfully avoided these attempts since there were "60 votes needed to proceed to an up-or-down vote on the measure" but the Republicans did not achieve this.

The central problem with this feud is that the end of the current fiscal year is nearing and Congress has yet to make a decision. Planned Parenthood is funded by the federal government, thus making it a problem with our government spending. If Congress does not make a decision soon, the government will be at risk of a shutdown. A government shutdown is when "Congress creates a funding gap," which is when a company costs a certain amount of money but the government does not give them that the amount they need by not agreeing on funding for a federally funded agency. In this situation, a government shutdown can happen because Congress has not settled on the funding for Planned Parenthood, a federally funded agency. Some Republicans stand behind their beliefs and continue to push for a Planned Parenthood defund bill, while others see the economic blow a government shutdown could lead to. Democrats are still urging to keep funding for Planned Parenthood and to make this final before the government shutdown.

Now there is talk about having a Select Committee to deal with this decision. Select Committees are created by the Senate and used, occasionally, to make decisions on impending legislation. This was first heard from Republican Marsha Blackburn, setting off the Democrats. Democrats believe that this is another way for the Republicans to create another “taxpayer-funded Select Committee,” a way for them to get their defunding bill passed. However, Republicans just see this as a way to come to a decision.

<http://www.usnews.com/news/the-report/articles/2015/08/07/the-never-ending-planned-parenthood-abortion-fight>

<http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/08/04/fight-over-planned-parenthood-funding-is-far-from-over>

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