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By *Conn Carroll*

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Debt limit: Today is the day Secretary Tim Geithner said the world would end. Today is the day that the U.S. government is expected to hit the \$14.294 trillion debt ceiling. But instead of Armageddon, the sun rose in the east and Asian markets did not disintegrate. Life in the United States, and everywhere, is proceeding normally. Most Americans will never attach any significance to the fact that this day came and went without the predicted event, but conservatives in Congress will.

Now that the White House's apocalyptic rhetoric on the debt ceiling has been exposed as a fraud, their hand at the negotiating table has been significantly weakened. There will be a deal to raise the debt limit before the fall. It will be short term (lasting no longer than through the 2012 election), it will not contain tax hikes, and it will not fix our long-term deficit problem. The next president will have to tackle that.

Huckabee: Forcing every political reporter to tune into his show Saturday night, many for the first time, Mike Huckabee formally announced he will not be running in 2012. Former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty is the biggest immediate beneficiary since there is now one less option for anybody-but-Romney voters to choose from.

But that benefit could be short-lived if Rep. Michele Bachmann, R-Minn., enters the race. With Huckabee out, the market for populist-evangelical votes is seriously under-served. Bachmann could fill it. We should know by the end of June.

Gingrich: He's done or very close to being done. Whatever chance he did have rapidly disintegrated with his disastrous performance on Meet the Press. First, after being confronted with his own past support, he embraced Mitt Romney's individual mandate. No apologies. Then, he went after he went after House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan's, R-Wis., Path Path to Prosperity as "right wing social engineering."

What is Newt thinking? The entire House Republican caucus voted for the Ryan plan. Does he expect any of them to speak kindly of him now, let alone endorse him? Republican primary voters love the Ryan plan. And they hate the individual mandate. Who is Newt expecting to vote for him?

Government Unions: Unions are shaping up to be a much larger issue in 2012 than they were

in 2008. Weeks after the National Labor Relations Board took the unprecedented step of telling Boeing where they could, or couldn't, build a factory, now ABC News is reporting that the AFL-CIO will file papers to unionize the Office of Management and Budget.

Only mid- and low- level employees would be unionized, but as The Examiner's Mark Tapscott has reported, these employees are key to developing a president's budget and fall outside the oversight scope of FOIA requests.

Polls: According to a new Gallup poll, three in four Americans name some type of economic issue as the "most important problem" facing the country today — the highest net mentions of the economy in two years.

And according to the latest POLITICO-George Washington University Battleground Poll, 60% of voters believe the country is on the wrong track, including 61% of independents.

Righty playbook:

- The Weekly Standard's Fred Barnes highlights a new Joint Economic Committee study showing that the Federal Reserve and a weak dollar are to blame for high gas prices.
- Power Lines' John Hinderaker highlights an Ohio State study showing that while Obama's stimulus created/saved 450,000 government jobs, it also destroyed/forested one million private sector jobs.
- The Heritage Foundation's David John reviews this year's Social Security Trustee's report.
- Cato's Tad DeHaven rounds up this week in government failure.
- The Volokh Conspiracy's Kenneth Anderson looks at AEI's Peter Wallison latest diagnosis of the financial crisis.

Lefty playbook:

- Talking Points Memo is calling Paul Ryan's Path to Prosperity media blitz this week "Phase Out Week."
- The Caucus details how similar Romney and Obama's rhetoric on health care is.
- The Huffington Post's Sam Stein reports that establishment Democrats are not eager to see Russ Feingold run to replace Herb Kohl.
- ThinkProgress hits Newt for being one of the biggest spenders in Congress.

Beltway Confidential debt limit mike huckabee morning examiner Newt Gingrich

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