

## Wonkbook: How committed are Americans to civil liberties?

By Evan Soltas – June 11, 2013

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Wonkbook's Number of the Day: 56 percent. That's the percentage of Americans who find the NSA's secret phone-records collection program "acceptable." 41 percent find it "unacceptable."

Wonkbook's Quotation of the Day: "I don't look at this as being a whistle-blower," Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) said. "I think it's an act of treason."

Wonkbook's Graph of the Day: The elderly are working.

Wonkbook's Top 5 Stories: 1) Snowden in focus; 2) immigration floor debate may begin today; 3) S&P raises U.S. credit outlook; 4) a decade of shale oil; and 5) Obama administration gives in on Plan B.

1) Top story: How committed are Americans to civil liberties?

Most Americans back NSA tracking phone records, prioritize probes over privacy. "A large majority of Americans say the federal government should focus on investigating possible terrorist threats even if personal privacy is compromised, and most support the blanket tracking of telephone records in an effort to uncover terrorist activity, according to a new Washington Post-Pew Research Center poll...Overall, 56 percent of Americans consider the NSA accessing telephone call records of millions of Americans through secret court orders "acceptable," while 41 percent call the practice "unacceptable." *Jon Cohen in The Washington Post.*

Will NSA leaks put surveillance programs in legal jeopardy? Experts have doubts. "[E]xperts and lawyers who have been through the legal wars over surveillance sounded a strong note of caution Monday, saying the government fiercely resists such lawsuits on national security grounds. About 70 suits were filed after the George W. Bush administration's warrantless wiretapping was revealed in 2005; nearly all have been dismissed, including one thrown out by a federal appeals court Monday." *Jerry Markon in The Washington Post.*

NSA leaks put focus on intelligence apparatus's reliance on outside contractors. "Never before have so many U.S. intelligence workers been hired so quickly, or been given access to secret government information through networked computers. In recent years, about one in four intelligence workers has been a contractor, and 70 percent or more of the intelligence

community's secret budget has gone to private firms." *Robert O'Harrow Jr., Dana Priest and Marjorie Censer in The Washington Post* .

Rewind: It's time to take another look at Dana Priest and William M. Arkin's project, "Top Secret America." *The Washington Post*.

Carney declines to comment on Snowden, defends U.S. surveillance policy. "I will say at the outset that there is obviously an investigation underway into this matter," Carney told reporters during his daily briefing. "And for that reason, I am not going to be able to discuss specifically this individual or this investigation . . . nor would I characterize the president's views on an individual or an ongoing investigation." *Juliet Eilperin in The Washington Post*.

@jbarro: I think it's not very productive for this story to be about Snowden. For policy, the information matters a lot more than he does.

Biden takes questions on NSA, guns and immigration. "Biden usually engages reporters as he walks the halls of Congress. But as he moved from the Senate Chamber to the Old Senate Chamber to reenact Chiesa's swearing-in for cameras, Biden was relatively tight-lipped on whether recent leaks regarding eavesdropping programs at the National Security Agency are adversely affecting national security." *Ed O'Keefe in The Washington Post*.

NSA leak is treason, says Feinstein. "I don't look at this as being a whistle-blower," Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) said. "I think it's an act of treason." *Jeremy Herb in The Hill*.

@pouremecoffee: Is Snowden a hero or a traitor? Stay tuned if you can only hold one simplistic juvenile idea in your head at a time.

White House petition to pardon Snowden gathers steam. "More than 26,000 people are petitioning the White House to pardon Edward Snowden, the National Security Agency contractor who has admitted leaking information about the nation's classified surveillance programs. The petition, launched late Sunday afternoon, gathered more than 26,074 signatures by 5 p.m. Monday." *Juliet Eilperin in The Washington Post*.

@jamespoulos: Hey guys, let's fight over Snowden's ranking on the Heroic Hero of Heroism Scale instead of uniting in firm opposition to the security state

Snowden isn't safe in Hong Kong. Try France. "Edward Snowden, the former government contractor who exposed the NSA's massive surveillance of U.S. cell networks and Internet activity last week, is currently hiding out in Hong Kong...Hong Kong has an extradition treaty with the United States signed by President Clinton in December 1996, right before sovereignty over the city transferred from the United Kingdom to China." *Dylan Matthews in The Washington Post*.

@normative: Though, if you DO think Snowden is a traitorous criminal, shouldn't you be concerned about a system that gave him keys to the spy machine?

...And investigators are poring over his life. "Leak investigators are scouring National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden's personal and professional life to try to determine if anyone helped him gather secret documents about sensitive intelligence programs before he gave them to reporters, according to people familiar with the probe. Officials said they haven't

found evidence suggesting he had an accomplice, but they need to investigate further to be sure that no other leaker or potential leaker is associated with him.” *Devlin Barrett and Eric Morath in The Wall Street Journal.*

Explainers: 7 facts about Booz Allen Hamilton, 5 ways to stop the NSA from spying on you, and how to use metadata for analysis. *Neil Irwin and Timothy B. Lee in The Washington Post, Kieran Healy in Slate.*

SEIB: The many paradoxes of Obama. “He is the constitutional-law professor and civil libertarian who, it’s now become clearer, has overseen expanded intelligence surveillance programs that he acknowledges shade civil liberties. He is the supposed darling of the press whose administration has overseen more aggressive pursuit of journalists’ sources than any of his predecessors. He is the critic of George W. Bush’s national-security policies who has maintained many of them, even expanded some. He is a man skeptical of many political conventions who is, arguably, the most successful Democratic politician of his generation.” *Gerald F. Seib in The Wall Street Journal.*

MILBANK: Snowden’s anti-secrecy backlash. ” is precisely their effort to hide such a vast and consequential program from the American public that caused this pressure valve to burst. Instead of allowing a democratic debate about the programs in broad terms that would not have compromised national security, their attempts to keep the public in the dark have created a backlash in which the risks to national security can’t be controlled.” *Dana Milbank in The Washington Post.*

BROOKS: The solitary leaker. “Though thoughtful, morally engaged and deeply committed to his beliefs, he appears to be a product of one of the more unfortunate trends of the age: the atomization of society, the loosening of social bonds, the apparently growing share of young men in their 20s who are living technological existences in the fuzzy land between their childhood institutions and adult family commitments.” *David Brooks in The New York Times.*

Music recommendations interlude: James Taylor, “Shower the People,” 1988.

### *Top op-eds*

CARROLL AND FRAKT: How to look younger and fix Medicare too. “One way to curb this growth is to leave decisions about spending to the beneficiaries, but increase deductibles and co-payments. Another is to use evidence and data to recognize which interventions work best and for whom, and to cover procedures that do, something called “value-based insurance design.” These two approaches aren’t as different as they appear.” *Aaron Carroll and Austin Frakt in Bloomberg.*

BLINDER: Fiscal fixes for the jobless recovery. “Suppose Congress enacted a partial tax holiday that allowed companies to repatriate profits held abroad at some bargain-basement tax rate like 10%. The catch: The maximum amount each company could bring home at that low tax rate would equal the increase in its wage payments as measured by Social Security records.” *Alan S. Blinder in The Wall Street Journal.*

PAUL: Big Brother is watching us. “No one objects to balancing security against liberty. No one objects to seeking warrants for targeted monitoring based on probable cause. We’ve always done

this. What is objectionable is a system in which government has unlimited and privileged access to the details of our private affairs, and citizens are simply supposed to trust that there won't be any abuse of power. This is an absurd expectation." *Rand Paul in The Wall Street Journal*.

PONNURU: The real reason young people don't like Republicans. "They are deeply concerned, on the other hand, about economic issues. And Republicans have a lot of work to do on them. A majority of young voters think the party's economic policies played a big role in the recession. They don't follow Republican politicians in thinking that higher taxes on the rich are higher taxes on small business. Although they tend to agree with Republicans about the future of entitlement programs for the elderly, they are much more worried about the here-and-now." *Ramesh Ponnuru in Bloomberg*.

Tumblr interlude: Art history in GIFs.

### 2) *Floor debate on immigration may begin today*

Immigration bill faces early tests. "The bipartisan group of eight senators that crafted the bill is still torn over how much to adjust the legislation to win additional support, particularly from Republicans looking to strengthen requirements for border security. Border security is a particularly sensitive issue, because the legislation sets security benchmarks that must be met before anyone currently in the country illegally can receive green cards and become legal permanent residents." *Sara Murray and Corey Boles in The Wall Street Journal*.

Ominous signs of progress for immigration bill. "Over the past 24 hours, the immigration reform effort has gotten two key GOP shows of support from Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.) and the outside group Crossroads GPS. But even as it appears on the surface that the bill is inching toward passage as the Senate takes it up this week, the support of Ayotte and Crossroads actually demonstrate what a tough path the bill faces." *Aaron Blake in The Washington Post*.

Many amendments as legislation move forward. "The Senate Judiciary Committee considered more than 100 amendments to immigration legislation last month before sending it to the full Senate, which is expected to begin debate on the bill on Tuesday...[E]ven as they begin a floor fight that is likely to last until the Fourth of July recess, senators from both parties are readying dozens more amendments in an effort to shape the most significant overhaul of the nation's immigration laws in a generation." *Ashley Parker in The New York Times*.

Say whaaa headlines interlude: "City in Mexico postulates a cat as candidate for mayor."

### 3) *S&P raises U.S. credit outlook*

S&P raises outlook on U.S. credit rating. "Standard & Poor's raised its outlook on the U.S. credit rating to "stable" from "negative" on Monday, giving a vote of confidence to the U.S. economy and potentially taking some heat off lawmakers to reach an agreement to close a budget gap. S&P cited the economic resilience and monetary credibility of the U.S. as factors that drove the brighter outlook. There is now a less than 1-in-3 chance of a downgrade in the near term, the ratings firm said as it maintained its double-A-plus credit rating." *Nicole Hong in The Wall Street Journal*.

...But they're only proving their own irrelevance. "When S&P (or its competitors, Moody's or Fitch) rates a corporate bond, it is providing useful information about the probability that the company will default on its debt. It can kick the tires, examine the quality of the company's balance sheet, the integrity of its managers, the stability of its revenues. Life is then simpler for investors buying corporate bonds. But sovereign debt is different...If you assign credit ratings, and the issuer's bonds rise in value after a downgrade and fall in value after an upgrade, you might start to ask yourself whether your ratings are actually telling people anything very useful." *Neil Irwin in The Washington Post.*

Explainer: Key economic data coming your way this week. *Amrita Jayakumar in The Washington Post.*

Interview: Why a Romney economic adviser, Kevin Hassett, wants the government to just hire people. *Dylan Matthews in The Washington Post.*

Furman nominated to chair Council of Economic Advisers. "President Obama on Monday nominated Jason Furman, a longtime Democratic economic policy thinker who has served him as a top adviser since the 2008 presidential campaign, to be chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers." *Zachary A. Goldfarb in The Washington Post.*

Going to college is worth it — even if you drop out. "Michael Greenstone and Adam Looney, who've done some of the most comprehensive work on the returns to college, have estimated the returns on going to college without getting a degree. They're very high! On average, college dropouts make \$8,000 a year more than high school graduates without any college, or \$100,000 more over their lifetimes. Taking into account the cost of going to college for a certain period (1.83 years on average, for these students), the return on investment is significantly lower than that for bachelor's degrees or professional degrees (a category which includes medical, law and dental degrees, but not PhDs or master's degrees), but still higher than stocks, bonds, or any other conventional investment." *Dylan Matthews in The Washington Post.*

Can investors make money in social services? "Six states are moving to develop so-called social impact bonds, marking a broad expansion of an experiment that taps private investors to fund capital-hungry social programs. Connecticut, Illinois, New York, Ohio, South Carolina and Colorado won a competition initiated by Harvard University and the Rockefeller Foundation, which will provide them technical assistance with developing bond programs." *Michael A. Fletcher in The Washington Post.*

More art interlude: An illustrated timeline of painters' lives.

#### 4) *The shale-oil decade*

World has 10 years of shale oil, reports US. "Global shale resources are vast enough to cover more than a decade of oil consumption, according to the first-ever US assessment of reserves from Russia to Argentina. The US Department of Energy estimated "technically recoverable" shale oil resources of 345bn barrels in 42 countries it surveyed, or 10 per cent of global crude supplies. The department had previously only provided an estimate for US shale reserves, which it on Monday increased from 32bn barrels to 58bn." *Gregory Meyer in The Financial Times.*

At Energy Department, nepotism is 'open and widely accepted,' report says. "Energy Department inspector general Gregory H. Friedman said in the report last week that one of the

agency's senior managers advocated for three of his college-age children to be hired for department internships last year...Federal law prohibits public officials from appointing, employing or even advocating for their children or relatives to be hired within their agencies." *Josh Hicks in The Washington Post.*

The IEA thinks we can still avoid 2°C of global warming. Here's how. "1) Targeted energy efficiency measures in buildings, industry and transport accounts for nearly half the emissions reduction in 2020, with the additional investment required being more than offset by reduced spending on fuel bills. 2) Limiting the construction and use of the least-efficient coal-fired power plants delivers more than 20% of the emissions reduction and helps curb local air pollution. The share of power generation from renewables increases (from around 20% today to 27% in 2020), as does that from natural gas." *Brad Plumer in The Washington Post.*

Arts triple interlude: Painted in Microsoft Excel.

#### *5) Feds to allow over-the-counter Plan B*

Feds to allow over-the-counter Plan B sales. "The Obama administration will comply with a court order to allow over-the-counter emergency contraceptive sales to women and girls of all ages, according to documents filed late Monday. While the Department of Justice initially appealing this policy, it has now asked a judge with the Eastern District Court of New York to withdraw that challenge, provided he approves the federal government's plan for compliance." *Sarah Kliff in The Washington Post.*

Lawmakers descend on health-policy summit. "Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) and House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) will join more than a dozen other lawmakers on Wednesday at a policy seminar that is likely to focus heavily on ObamaCare. The seminar, held by BakerHostetler in Washington, D.C., will provide a platform for 19 lawmakers to discuss a range of healthcare and budgetary issues." *Elise Viebeck in The Hill.*

The doctor will see you now. Or the nurse. Or the physician assistant. "If a doctor was available that same day, most respondents wanted to see the physician. But if seeing the doctor meant a day or two wait, preferences tended to switch to nurse practitioners and physician assistants." *Sarah Kliff in The Washington Post.*