White House Watch

- **The President’s Schedule** At 10 AM, President Obama will receive the Presidential Daily Briefing.
- At 11 AM, he will sit down with Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos.
- At 12:05 AM, the two Presidents will hold a working lunch.
- It is not widely known, except by regular and longtime readers of this newsletter, that before an ambassador takes his post, he/she must have his credentials signed off by the head of state in whatever country he/she is going to. Ambassadors from the U.S. have to do it, as do Ambassadors sent to the U.S. from other nations around the globe.
- Presidents often sign off on the credentials in a mass event, known as an Ambassador Credentialing Ceremony. President Obama will hold one of these at 3:30 PM today, accepting into service the Ambassadors of Burma, Israel, Thailand, Romania, The Bahamas, Sao Tome and Principe, Colombia, Bahrain, and Monaco.
- Finally at 4:15 PM, President Obama will meet with Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel.
- Also today, at 2:30 PM, Obama will begin a new push by the White House and congressional Democrats to re-brand the Affordable Care Act. The President will launch the campaign in his speech today, focusing not on HealthCare.gov, but on benefits that the White House say are helping people every day.
- The White House, along with Democrats in Congress, the DNC, Hill committees, and outside organizations, will be talking about a different benefit every day until December 23, the deadline to enroll for coverage that will start January 1.
- This campaign will attempt to take away attention from the rollout and continued glitching of HealthCare.gov, and instead get the media, and in turn Americans, talking about why Obamacare was made into law in the first place.
More about Obamacare in today’s news in the Obamacare Update column below.

Vice Presidential Schedule

Before I begin, I would like to make a note of something. When you see the daily schedules of the President and Vice President, all the times are (usually) local, which is normally Washington, D.C. except when noted.

However, today, Vice President Biden continues his Asia trip, and they are a full 14 hours ahead of Washington time. Since I cannot find a schedule with local times for things that happen later today in Washington, but tomorrow on Tokyo, I am just publishing a schedule with Washington time showing what Biden has done today already:

At 12:30 AM, Vice President Biden visited an Internet company in Tokyo along with Cathy Russell, U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women’s Issues. Russell and her family are longtime confidantes of the Bidens, and before serving as an Ambassador, she was Chief of Staff to Second Lady Jill Biden. Russell’s husband Tom Donilon was National Security Advisor to President Obama before stepping down a few months ago, and his brother Mike is Counselor to Vice President Biden.

At 2:45 AM, the Vice President met with Crown Prince Naruhito, the eldest son of the reigning Emperor and Empress, therefore heir apparent to their throne.

At 3:30 AM, Biden met with Prime Minister Abe Shinzo. The Vice President and Prime Minister Abe will deliver statements to the press at 4:40 PM.

Biden’s trip to the region and recharging relationships with the nations there is crucial.

One of the key issues on the table as he goes there is the fight over China’s air defense zone. China has declared a new restricted flight zone over the East China Sea, where Japan and South Korea already have zones. China says it can have the zone, just like the other countries can have theirs. In this debate, the U.S. falls against China, arguing that it also impacts international airspace.
Obamacare Update

- **HealthCare.gov Relaunches, Gets 750k Visitors** One day after the Obama Administration said it would work for the “vast majority” of people, HealthCare.gov had 750,000 visitors as of 5:30 p.m. ET.
- The White House had said the website could handle 800,000 users in a day, and 50,000 at once, but the site started using its new queuing system before hitting that mark. The new system emails users having a hard time with the site when it is working faster.
- Traffic was high just days after the Administration said it met its self-imposed deadline of improving the site by the end of November. According to the *Washington Post*, by noon, 375,000 people had used the site - twice as many than a normal Monday - leading to increased page loading times and error rates.
- **Obama to Enroll in Insurance from Exchange** White House press secretary Jay Carney said Monday that President Obama will sign up for insurance from an Obamacare exchange.
- There has been no White House comment on this recently, although a spokesperson had said Obama would do it after the Affordable Care Act passed in March 2010. Republican attempts to force the President to use the exchange had failed. Carney refused to expand on when Obama would sign up or if his results would be open to the press.
- Members of Congress and their staffers are able to, but aren’t forced, to enroll in health insurance under Obamacare, although it is the only way they can get insurance as employees of the government, and if they do so they must use the D.C. exchange. President Obama, meanwhile, could use the exchange in D.C., or the federal one at HealthCare.gov as an Illinois resident. HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius has gotten similar questions about signing up with the Affordable Care Act, but cannot as a Medicare enrollee.
- This act on the part of the President is largely symbolic, because of the medical care – the best in the world – extended to all Commanders-in-Chief and their families, no matter who is in office.
Wherever the President is, whether it may be the White House, Air Force One, his motorcade, a foreign country, or an event around the nation, he is closely shadowed by a White House doctor. The White House Medical Unit has an office in the building, and consists of five doctors, five nurses, as well as physician assistants and medics—all of whom undergo combat training and an additional year of training to be a White House doctor. Treatment is completely free for the president, vice president, and their families.

In addition, all military hospitals will give the president instant access, and can call in any specialist from around the world—because who says no to the President? Chief Executives usually go to nearby Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. It is there that Ronald Reagan underwent two surgeries while in office—the first time invoking the 25th Amendment and making Vice President George Bush “Acting President” as he was unable to perform the duties of the office. In addition, Walter Reed has hosted the autopsy of John F. Kennedy’s body the night he was shot, and treatment of former President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who died there.

While at Walter Reed (or any military hospital), the president isn’t charged for outpatient care, although he technically is for inpatient care (but the hospital commander can waive the bill), as well as copays and deductibles.

And even if Obamacare was passed for the uninsured and these dissatisfied with their current plans (and I wouldn’t be if I were the president), the law’s namesake does seem to be planning on signing up for insurance, even if we don’t know the details.

**Election Central**

- **2016 Central: Rick Perry in South Carolina** Gov. Rick Perry (R-TX) is in the “first in the South” primary state today.
- He will be headlining the South Carolina Republican Party’s Winter Dinner in Spartanburg, a fundraiser for the upcoming 2014 elections. While in the Palmetto State, Perry will also meet with a local Rotary Club today. On Wednesday, the Texan will head to Greenville for the Annual Meeting of the Electric Co-ops of South Carolina, and to attend a local Boy Scouts
event. Perry was an Eagle Scout himself and such events are not uncommon, although he did oppose the Boy Scouts’ decision to permit openly gay scouts.

- Just under three years until the 2016 presidential election, Rick Perry has already visited the early primary states of South Carolina and Iowa multiple times each.
- The states are familiar ground for Perry, who crisscrossed them in his 2012 bid for the GOP presidential nomination. While he had momentum in August/September 2011, by the time the primaries rolled around, the Perry for President effort was lagging. The Texan finished fifth in Iowa and then sixth in New Hampshire two weeks after that, and dropped out just days later, right before South Carolina.
- Now, some pundits say Perry’s 2012 attempt could give him an advantage in 2016, but the fact is it probably wouldn’t. Failed presidential candidates don’t often succeed in comebacks four years later (Mitt Romney is an example, although he did win the nomination). In addition, most memories of Perry’s campaign are negative, such as the moment at a debate when he failed to remember the third agency he would abolish, instead just saying “oops”.
- Nevertheless, activity in South Carolina does seem to hint of laying groundwork for 2016.

**Today In…**

- **1818** Illinois joins the union as the 21st state.
- **1828** In a rematch between President John Quincy Adams and former General Andrew Jackson, Jackson comes out the victor. Back then, elections were held over a two-month long period, and today was the day the results were announced. As they were, a mob came in Adams’ White House celebrating his defeat.
- **1995** The United Nations declares it International Day of Persons with Disabilities for the first time, a celebration that continues on December 3 today. Since 2009, President Obama has also made this a national holiday by presidential proclamation. The theme this year is “Break Barriers, Open Doors: for an inclusive society and development for all”.

Question of the Day

- Can you name any presidential candidates that won a major-party nomination after trying to clinch it four years before?