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November 2, 2014: Today's Papers

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Title: Today's Papers

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11/2/2014—Lots of news regarding religion, law and politics in the Sunday newspapers—and I have not yet gotten to the NY Times. The Tribune Review has a story about the fears of some religious leaders about government interference with religion. Since the First Amendment is alive and well, there is not much to this story. Government may interfere, or try to, with what churches do—that is what the ministerial exception is about (the Hosanna-Tabor case)—but government can do nothing about what preachers say about homosexuality. The notion of hate speech laws as a threat to religion is fanciful. The Post-Gazette has three stories of interest. There is a review by Rebecca Denova of Karen Armstrong's new book, *Fields of Blood*, which argues that greed and power drive wars in history, not religious dogma. Religion is used to drive emotion, however. Many years ago, the Nazi political theorist, Carl Schmitt, made the same point—the “us-them” distinction brings all differences along with it. Then there is the op-ed by Jack Kelly, which the PG is not allowing me to access, but you can find it, in which he castigates Democrats for race baiting. The odd thing about this column is that it does not go after any Democratic Party candidates, but instead criticized activists in Ferguson, Missouri, for their insistence on race as the central factor in the shooting of Michael Brown. But I'm sure most of the people there who say this honestly feel that way. I wonder where Jack Kelly was when President Nixon employed his new south strategy or the elder President Bush ran his ad campaign linking Governor Dukakis to a black murderer. Still, if there is race baiting for political purposes, it is deplorable. I just don't think Kelly has identified any. Finally, there is the election itself, pretty certain now to return the Senate to Republican hands. This will prove a mixed blessing for Republicans. With both houses of Congress, they will be expected to pass legislation. Can they? Will the voters like what they do? Will President Obama's vetoes both allow him to be relevant and remind voters that they mostly agree with him? Will the next two years allow the Democrats to run as the out Party in 2016?