

## Health Care Law's Big Tax Hikes Hit Wealthiest

WASHINGTON (AP) — Who gets thumped by higher taxes in President Barack Obama's health care law? The wealthiest 2 percent of Americans will take the biggest hit, starting next year. And the pain will be shared by some who aren't so well off — people swept up in a hodgepodge of smaller tax changes that will help finance health coverage for millions in need.

For the vast majority of people, however, the health care law won't mean sending more money to the IRS.

And roughly 20 million people eventually will benefit from tax credits that start in 2014 to help them pay insurance premiums.

The tax increases — plus a mandate that nearly everyone have health coverage — are helping make the law an election-year scorcher. Obama is campaigning on the benefits for the uninsured, women and young adults. His rival, Mitt Romney, and Republican lawmakers are vowing to repeal "Obamacare," saying some health care reforms are needed but not at this cost.

Lots of the noise is about the financial consequences for people who decline to get coverage and businesses that don't offer their workers an adequate health plan. Some 4 million individuals without insurance are expected to pay about \$55 billion over eight years, according to the Congressional Budget Office's estimates. Employers could be dinged an estimated \$106 billion for failing to meet the mandate, which starts in 2014.

## Lawyers: Colo. Shooting Suspect Is Mentally Ill

CENTENNIAL, Colo. (AP) — Attorneys for the suspect in the Colorado movie theater shootings said Thursday their client is mentally ill and that they need more time to assess the nature of his illness.

James Holmes' lawyers made the disclosure at a court hearing in suburban Denver where news media organizations were asking a judge to unseal court documents in the case.

Holmes, a 24-year-old former Ph.D. student at the University of Colorado, Denver, had the familiar, dazed demeanor that he has had in previous court appearances.

Holmes is accused of going on a July 20 shooting rampage at a midnight showing of the latest Batman movie in Aurora, killing 12 people dead and injuring 58 others.

Defense attorney Daniel King made the revelation about Holmes as he argued defense attorneys need more information from prosecutors and investigators to assess their client.

## Face-Chewing Victim: Attacker Seemed Friendly

MIAMI (AP) — A homeless man whose face was mostly chewed off in a bizarre assault alongside a busy South Florida highway told police that his attacker "just ripped me to ribbons."

In a recorded interview with investigators made available Thursday, Ronald Poppo said the man who approached him initially seemed friendly. Then the man, Rudy Eugene, seemed to become angry about something that had happened on Miami Beach, where thousands were partying through the Memorial Day weekend.

"For a while he was acting nice. Then he got flustered. He probably remembered something that happened on the beach and was not happy about it," Poppo told investigators in the interview. It was taped July 19 and first reported Wednesday by Miami news station WFOR-TV.

Poppo said Eugene then "turned berserk" and attacked with his bare hands, screaming that both men would die.

"He just ripped me to ribbons. He chewed up my face. He plucked out my eyes. Basically, that's all there is to say about it," Poppo said.

## Zimmerman's Attorneys Seek Dismissal

MIAMI (AP) — George Zimmerman will seek to have second-degree murder charges dismissed under Florida's "stand your ground" law in the shooting death of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, his attorney said Thursday.

The hearing, which likely won't take place for several months, will amount to a mini-trial involving much of the evidence collected by prosecutors as well as expert testimony from both sides.

"Most of the arguments, witnesses, experts and evidence that the defense would muster in a criminal trial will be presented in the 'stand your ground' hearing," said the statement posted by Zimmerman attorney Mark O'Mara on Zimmerman's official defense website.

Although the posting did not say so, legal experts say it's likely that Zimmerman himself would testify since he is the sole survivor of the Feb. 26 confrontation.

Under the "stand your ground" law, Circuit Judge Kenneth Lester can dismiss the charges if Zimmerman conclusively shows he fatally shot Martin because he "reasonably believed" he might be killed or suffer "great bodily harm" at the hands of the unarmed teenager. The law also says a person has no duty to retreat in the face of such a threat.

## USPS Reports \$5.2B Loss In 3rd Quarter

WASHINGTON (AP) — The nearly bankrupt U.S. Postal Service on Thursday reported losses of \$57 million per day in the last quarter and warned it will miss another payment due to the U.S. Treasury, just one week after its first-ever default on a payment for future retiree health benefits.

From April to June, losses totaled \$5.2 billion, up \$2.1 billion from the same period last year.

The mail agency said it is being hurt significantly by mounting expenses for future retiree health benefits. Those expenses, mandated by Congress in 2006, made up \$3.1 billion of the post office's quarterly loss, while workers compensation tacked on another \$1.1 billion in expenses. The agency's operating loss was \$1 billion, mostly due to declines in first-class mail.

"We have simply reached the point that we must conserve cash," Thurgood Marshall Jr., chairman of the Postal Service's board of governors, said in explaining the payment defaults. He cautioned that the mail agency may have to delay other payments if necessary.

The Postal Service for months has been urging Congress to pass legislation that would allow it to eliminate Saturday mail delivery and reduce the annual health payment of more than \$5 billion. The post office defaulted on that payment last week when the House failed to take action before heading home for a five-week break.

The mail agency says it will miss the second \$5.6 billion payment due on Sept. 30, also for future retiree benefits, as cash runs close to zero.

At a news briefing, Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe made clear that day-to-day mail delivery will not be disrupted in any way despite the cash crunch. But Donahoe expressed frustration with the repeated delays by Congress, which he said is contributing to a lot of "negative talk on finances" that could undermine confidence in the mail agency and its long-term growth.

"Congress needs to act responsibly and move on this legislation," he said. "This is no way to run any kind of business."

The Senate passed a postal bill in April that would have provided financial relief in part by reducing the annual health payments and providing an \$11 billion cash infusion, basically a refund of overpayments the Postal Service made to a federal pension fund. The House, however, remains stalled over a separate bill that would allow for aggressive cuts, including an immediate end to Saturday delivery. Rural lawmakers in particular worry about the impact of closures in their communities.

# Iran Tries To Calm Syria Crisis

BY ELIZABETH A. KENNEDY  
Associated Press

BEIRUT — As Syrian forces struggled to drive rebels from the country's largest city, the regime's key ally Iran tried Thursday to start an alternative political process to address the crisis.

Iran gathered an array of nations ranging from strong supporters of Damascus to far-flung nations a world away from the Syrian civil war.

The one-day forum is unlikely to result in any international consensus, but it shows Iran's resolve to stand by President Bashar Assad as his forces try to crush the 17-month-old uprising.

On Thursday, Syrian rebels said they were low on ammunition but still managed to put up resistance against a regime ground offensive in the city of Aleppo, a center of fighting for more than two weeks.

Tehran billed Thursday's conference as a way to focus on dialogue — an alternative to Western-led initiatives that call for Assad to give up power.

Iran has said in the past that the Syrian regime's critics fail to take into account violence by the rebels.

"Iran is against the killing of unarmed peo-

ple and citizens by any side," Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi said at the gathering.

He also warned that sending weapons to the opposition will only fuel the crisis, and he accused rebels of using civilians as "human shields."

Syrian rebels last week intercepted a bus carrying 48 Iranians in a Damascus suburb and seized them. Rebels claimed the men are military personnel, including some members of Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard, who were on a "reconnaissance mission" to help Assad's crackdown.

Iran, however, says the 48 were pilgrims visiting a Shiite shrine in Damascus. Salehi said Wednesday that some of the pilgrims are retired members of the army and Revolutionary Guard.

The overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim rebels have also seized 11 Lebanese Shiite pilgrims who have been held in northern Syria since May.

Salehi said some 30 countries attended the meeting, including Russia and China, as well as far-off Benin, Cuba and Mauritania. The meeting was called at short notice, and most countries were represented at the ambassador level.

Russia in the past has urged the West to

allow Tehran to take part in international discussions on how to settle the Syrian crisis, arguing that the Islamic republic could play an important role. Moscow has been the main protector and ally of Assad's regime, shielding it from U.N. sanctions over its brutal crackdown on an uprising that has evolved into a full-blown civil war.

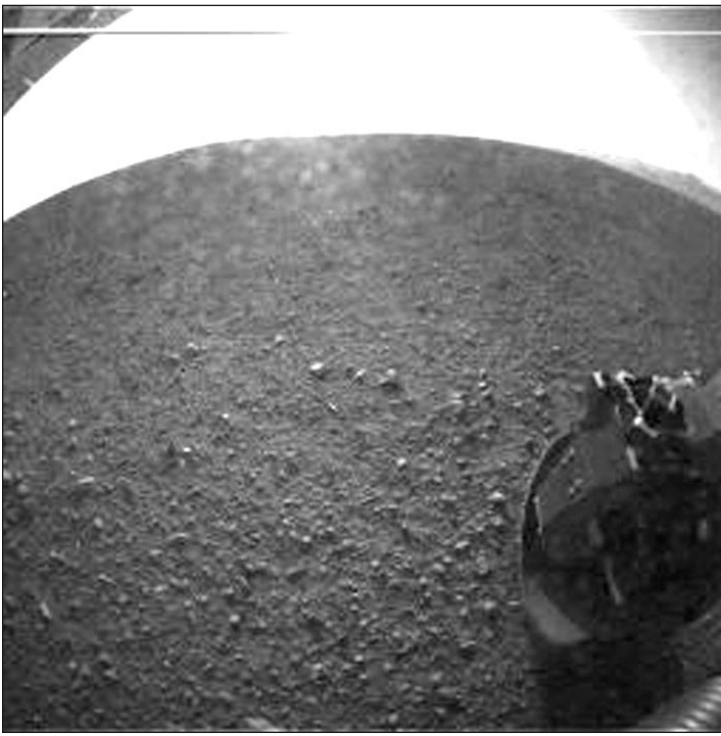
The U.S. dismissed the Iranian gathering. "We think the Iranian behavior in Syria is destructive," State Department spokesman Patrick Ventrell said. "It's just hard for us to imagine that after putting so much effort into keeping Assad in power ... how they can be a constructive actor in facilitating a political solution to the crisis."

On Thursday, government troops and rebels clashed in opposition bastions of Aleppo, a city of 3 million people.

The state news agency claimed Wednesday that Assad's force had regained control of the Salaheddine neighborhood, the main rebel area in Aleppo. But activists said rebels were still putting up a fight there on Thursday.

"The battle is still going on in the streets of Salaheddine and in other neighborhoods in Aleppo," rebel spokesman Abdel Azziz Salameh told The Associated Press. "Our fighters have a shortage of ammunition but they have not withdrawn."

## CURIOSITY'S VIEW



NASA/JPL-CALTECH/MSSS/MCT  
This image was obtained by NASA's Curiosity rover shortly after touchdown on August 6, 2012. The controversial "blotch" is no longer visible. Image is best quality available.

## Now Arriving On Time: Your Flight And Suitcase

BY SCOTT MAYEROWITZ  
AP Airlines Writer

NEW YORK — U.S. airlines are more punctual and less likely to lose your bag than at any time in more than two decades.

Travelers still have to put up with packed planes, rising fees and unpredictable security lines, but they are late to fewer business meetings and are not missing as many chances to tuck their kids into bed.

Nearly 84 percent of domestic flights arrived within 15 minutes of their scheduled time in the first half of the year — the best performance since the government started keeping track in 1988.

The improvement over the first six months of 2011, when 77 percent of flights were on time, is mostly a result of good weather and fewer planes in the sky because of the weak economy.

Airlines are also doing a better job of handling bags. Fewer than three suitcases per 1,000 passengers were reported lost, damaged or delayed from January through June, a record low.

The two areas of improvement are related: When flights are late, bags often miss their connection.

"My flights this year have been way better," said Amanda Schuier, a sales manager for a Kansas City,

Mo., trucking supplier who flies roughly four times a week. "In the past six months, I've only had two delays."

If the current pace continues, the airlines will beat their best full-year performance, recorded in 1991, when nearly 83 percent of flights arrived on time. The worst full year was 2000, when just 73 percent of flights arrived on time, according to an Associated Press analysis of Bureau of Transportation Statistics data.

The worst year for baggage handling was 1989, when nearly eight suitcases per 1,000 passengers were reported late, lost or damaged.

There are still problems. About one out of every six flights is late — and that's after airlines have adjusted schedules to account for congestion, said airline consultant Michael Boyd.

"That's an indictment, not a record," he said.

When flights are on time, it isn't just good for passengers — it also helps the airlines' bottom lines. The industry says it costs an average of \$75 a minute to operate a plane. Last year, domestic delays cost airlines an estimated \$5.2 billion. U.S. airlines made a combined \$577 million in profit last year.

## Romney Says Obama, Allies Perpetuating Lies In TV Ads

BY JULIE PACE AND KASIE HUNT  
Associated Press

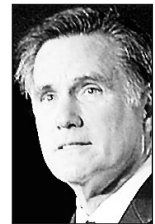
NEW YORK — Mitt Romney on Thursday accused President Barack Obama and his allies of launching personal attacks and perpetuating lies about him in TV ads. The Republican also rolled out a new commercial of his own that questioned Obama's values and accused the president of waging war on religious freedom.

Obama's campaign disputed that charge.

"I am seeing some of the ads out there. I don't know whatever happened to a campaign of hope and change," Romney said, alluding to Obama's previous campaign slogan, during an interview on Bill Bennett's radio program, "Morning in America." "I thought he was a new kind of politician. But instead, his campaign and the people working with him have focused almost exclusively on personal attacks ... It's really disappointing."



Obama



Romney

In the interview, Romney argued that Obama "keeps on just running" ads that various fact-checking organizations have called inaccurate. "They just blast ahead," he said, instead of pulling the ads off the air. But the candidate ignored the fact that he has kept his own ads assailing Obama on the air after these groups have found their claims to be false.

Romney talked generally about ads in the interview but didn't directly refer to a commercial by Democratic outside group that has dominated the campaign in the last two days.

His campaign has called "despicable" an ad by Priorities USA Action that features a man whose wife died of cancer after he lost his health insurance when he was laid off from a company that was bought by the private equity firm Romney once ran. "I do not think Mitt Romney realizes what he's done to anyone, and furthermore I do not think Mitt Romney is concerned," the man, Joe Sopic, says in the ad.

Obama's campaign has refused to ask the group to pull the spot. Speaking at a rally in Pueblo, Colo., Obama bemoaned the influence of super PACs supporting Romney. He told voters they would see "more negative ads, more money spent than you have ever seen in your life." He made no mention of similar

groups supporting his campaign.

Bill Burton, a former White House aide and a co-founder of Priorities USA Action, said the ad does not suggest that Romney was responsible for Sopic's wife's death.

"We're not saying Mitt Romney is culpable," Burton told CNN.

The back and forth over the commercial underscored the degree to which the White House campaign has become intensely negative and personal as polls show the race close three months before the Nov. 6 election. Negative commercials from both the candidates and their backers are flooding the roughly nine states that are the most competitive in the hunt to win the 270 Electoral College votes needed for victory.

As controversy raged over the outside group's commercial, Romney's team rolled out one of its own Thursday that asks: "Who shares your values?"

It continues: "President Obama used his health care plan to declare war on religion, forcing religious institutions to go against their faith."

The spot revives a months-old debate over new health rules mandating insurance coverage for birth control without co-pays. Religious institutions have said the rules would force them to violate their faith. Obama says exemptions for churches and compromise language on charities fully protects religious freedom.

"When religious freedom is threatened, who do you want to stand with?" the ad asks and says the answer is Romney. The ad is on the Web. Romney's campaign said the spot would also be broadcast on television, but didn't specify in which markets.

Obama spokeswoman Lis Smith responded to the ad, saying: "President Obama believes that, in 2012, women should have access to free contraception as part of their health insurance, and he has done so in a way that respects religious liberty."

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## 50th Anniversary

**Mr. & Mrs. Gene Bormann**

Mr. and Mrs. Gene and Kitty (Apland) Bormann of Mission Hill, SD will celebrate their 50th Wedding Anniversary on August, 19, 2012 they were married on 8/19/62.

The couple have 4 children: Jeff (Peggy) of Mesa, AZ; Scott of Mission Hill, SD; Todd (Matt) of Anchorage, AK and Wendy Olson of Mission Hill, SD. The couple has 9 grandchildren.

Their children will be hosting an Open House on Sunday, August 19th from 1 - 4 pm at the Vangen Lutheran Church, 300 W 3rd St, Mission Hill, SD. Friends and relatives are invited to attend.

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