

U.S. Fuel Prices Spike; Risk Seen For Obama

NEW YORK (AP) — A surprise surge in gasoline prices is taking some of the fun out of summer.

The national average for a gallon of gas at the pump has climbed to \$3.67, a rise of 34 cents since July 1. An increase in crude oil prices and problems with refineries and pipelines in the West Coast and Midwest, including a fire in California, are mostly to blame.

Analysts don't expect gas prices to get as high as they did in April, when 10 states passed \$4 a gallon and the U.S. average topped out at \$3.94. But this is still unwelcome news in this sluggish economy, since any extra money that goes to fill gas tanks doesn't get spent on movies and dinners out.

The rising prices could also put pressure on President Barack Obama in the heat of his re-election campaign.

When Phil Van Schepen recently went to fill up his dry-cleaning delivery van in Coon Rapids, Minn., he found a Post-it note a driver before him had placed on the pump faulting Obama for high gasoline prices.

Officials Say Al-Qaida Getting Stronger In Syria

WASHINGTON (AP) — Al-Qaida has advanced beyond isolated pockets of activity in Syria and now is building a network of well-organized cells, according to U.S. intelligence officials, who fear the terrorists could be on the verge of establishing an Iraq-like foothold that would be hard to defeat if rebels eventually oust President Bashar Assad.

At least a couple of hundred al-Qaida-linked militants are already operating in Syria, and their ranks are growing as foreign fighters stream into the Arab country daily, current and former U.S. intelligence officials say. The units are spreading from city to city, with veterans of the Iraq insurgency employing their expertise in bomb-building to carry out more than two dozen attacks so far. Others are using their experience in coordinating small units of fighters in Afghanistan to win new followers.

In Syria on Friday, rebel commanders appealed anew for new and better weapons from abroad, complaining that Assad's forces have them badly outgunned from the air and on the ground. In fact, rebel leaders say that with so little aid coming to them from the U.S. and other nations, they are slowly losing the battle for influence against hardline militants. They say their fighters are sometimes siding with extremists who are better funded and armed so they can fight the far stronger Syrian army.

It all could point to a widening danger posed by extremists who have joined rebels fighting the Assad government. Although the extremists are ostensibly on the same side as Washington by opposing Assad, U.S. officials fear their presence could fundamentally reshape what began as a protest movement for reform composed of largely moderate or secular Syrians. The opposition expanded into a civil war pitting Assad's four-decade dictatorship against a movement promising a new, democratic future for the country.

The intelligence also offers some explanation for the Obama administration's reluctance to offer military aid to the anti-Assad insurgency, which Washington says it is still trying to better understand. U.S. officials have repeatedly rejected providing any lethal assistance to the conflict that has killed at least 19,000 people over the past 17 months. With the U.S. weighing its options, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton will discuss the situation with top Turkish officials and Syrian opposition activists in Istanbul on Saturday.

Zakaria Suspended For Copying Writing

NEW YORK (AP) — *Time* editor-at-large and CNN host Fareed Zakaria has been suspended by both the magazine and the network for lifting several paragraphs by another writer for his use in a recent *Time* column.

Zakaria apologized Friday, declaring in a statement he made "a terrible mistake," adding, "It is a serious lapse and one that is entirely my fault."

In a separate statement, *Time* spokesman Ali Zelenko said the magazine accepts Zakaria's apology, but would suspend his column for one month, "pending further review."

"What he did violates our own standards for our columnists, which is that their work must not only be factual but original; their views must not only be their own but their words as well," Zelenko said.

Shortly afterward, CNN said it had removed from the network's website a blog post that "included similar unattributed excerpts," and taken Zakaria off the air indefinitely.

1873 Dime Sells For \$1.6M At Auction

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A dime made in 1873 has cost someone a pretty penny: It sold for \$1.6 million at auction.

An anonymous bidder won the pristine coin, said Chris Napolitano, president of Stack's Bowers Galleries, which auctioned it during an American Numismatic Association convention. With a 15 percent buyer's fee tacked on, the final price for the coin was \$1.84 million, he said.

The rare coin was minted in Carson City, Nev., during a one-day run of dimes.

"Generally speaking, in the coin auction business, you might get a couple of people fighting each other" as they bid, he said Friday. "On this one, we had four or five buyers over a million dollars. We had a fair amount of buyers pursuing it."

The 1873-CC "No Arrows" Liberty Seated dime was auctioned Thursday night. It's part of the Battle Born Collection, which contained one of every coin struck in Carson City before the mint there closed in 1893.

BY JULIE PACE

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — If voters were looking for reasons to keep ignoring the presidential campaign this summer, they got plenty of them this week.

Friday capped a weeklong stretch of campaign character attacks masked in so-called television advertisements that sparked a series of claims that the other guy is fabricating the facts.

"What does it say about a president's character when his campaign tries to use the tragedy of a woman's death for political gain?" screams a new ad from Mitt Romney's campaign that seeks to link President Barack Obama to an outside group's commercial.

Hitting back, White House press secretary Jay Carney took Romney's campaign to task for a Republican group's ad suggesting that Obama isn't an American citizen.

The outrage must mean the ads at issue are blanketing the airwaves in battleground states, right?

Nope. Most of the ads bandied about by the campaigns and their backers this week are only being seen on the Internet or the occasional news show, according to Democrats and Republicans who track what ads are on the air and where. Instead, many of these big announcements of scathing ads are little more than tactical maneuvers aimed at proving a point, generating news coverage or sending up a trial balloon to see if any of the attacks stick.

In some cases, they're not intended for swing-voting viewers who tend to tell pollsters that negative advertising turns them off. Few people are paying attention anyway in the Olympics-filled summer lull before the conventions kick off the fall homestretch.

On one hand, none of this is really all that new.

Who can forget the explosive Swift Boat Veterans for Truth ad in 2004 that questioned Democrat John Kerry's military service? It barely ran on the TV airwaves. Yet, it created

huge controversy. The media coverage of it — including the free airtime it got on news programs — was immense and it so sullied the Massachusetts senator that summer that he could never recover.

Eight years later, the same game is being played but on a changed technological playing field.

Today, campaigns can more swiftly create hard-hitting campaign videos and, with a couple of keystrokes, blast them across the Internet by posting them on YouTube and emailing them to countless people in hopes that they go viral. For free. And without ever having to pay pricey rates to get them on TV.

No one is guiltless of playing this game. To varying degrees, Obama, Romney and their allies are all stretching the truth, taking comments out of context or simply calling each other names.

The president called his Republican challenger's tax plans "Romney Hood." Romney called the president's campaign attacks "Obama-loney," rhyming his new catch phrase with "baloney."

Carney, the Obama spokesman, called a Romney campaign ad on welfare — one that actually is on the air — "categorically false and blatantly dishonest." Eric Fehrnstrom, a senior Romney adviser, said the Obama campaign had sunk "lower than a world-champion limbo dancer."

This comes from campaigns that often declare they wish the other side would focus on substance in an election both call the most important of our lifetime.

To be sure, Obama and Romney do talk about issues like jobs, the deficit and the Afghanistan war as they travel across the country and meet with voters. But any semblance of a substantive campaign is threatening to be drowned out by the increasing vitriol.

The situation reached new heights — or rather low ones — this week with a flurry of ads and unusually heated responses from the campaigns, even by the standards of this already negative race for the White House.

Bill Would Expand Fertility Coverage For Veterans

ERIC TUCKER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The roadside bomb that exploded outside Andrew Robinson's Humvee in Iraq six years ago broke the Marine staff sergeant's neck and left him with collapsed lungs — and without use of his legs. It also cast doubt on his ability to father a child, a gnawing emotional wound for a then-23-year-old who envisioned starting a family with his wife of less than two years.

The catastrophic spinal cord injury meant the couple's best hope for children was in vitro fertilization, an expensive and time-consuming medical procedure whose cost isn't covered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Robinson and his wife were forced to pay out of pocket, with help from a doctor's discount and drugs donated by other patients.

A bill being considered in the Senate would expand the VA's medical benefits package so other veterans, and their spouses or surrogates, don't have to bear the same expense. The department currently covers a range of medical treatment for veterans, including some infertility care, but the legislation would authorize the VA to cover the cost of IVF and to pay for procedures now covered for some critically injured active-duty soldiers.

The bill's also meant to help

wounded veterans start families as they return home from war and to address a harrowing consequence of combat that can radically change a couple's marriage but gets less attention than post-traumatic stress disorder and brain injuries.

"It's common sense: a male veteran cannot have a kid by himself. It doesn't happen. They need obviously to have it with their wife or a partner," said Robinson, of Florence, N.J., who is now 29 and was injured in a 2006 explosion in Al Anbar province. "So for the VA to say, 'Oh, we can only cover this part of it,' it just kind of doesn't make sense."

In vitro fertilization, the process of mixing sperm and eggs in a laboratory dish and transferring the resulting embryo into a woman's uterus, costs thousands of dollars and each cycle can take weeks. It's physically taxing too, requiring hormone injections and other invasive steps, and can take multiple tries to produce a viable pregnancy.

More than 1,800 veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have suffered pelvic fractures and genitourinary injuries since 2003 that could affect their reproductive abilities, according to Pentagon figures provided to Sen. Patty Murray, the bill's sponsor and chairwoman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee.

"Because they served our country, they now can't have a family, which is part of their dream," said the Washington state Democrat, who hopes the committee will pass the bill after returning from August recess. "I think we now have a responsibility to not take that dream away."

Combat injuries can affect a soldier's ability to reproduce in any number of ways, said Mark Edney, a Maryland urologist and Army reservist who treats veterans. For men, a blast to the genitalia can harm sperm-producing testicles, while a spinal cord injury can cause erectile dysfunction or ejaculatory problems. For women, shrapnel can injure the pelvis and fallopian tubes, preventing fertilization.

Although expertise exists to help them become parents, Edney said veterans with fertility problems form a "relatively small subset of patients that are just forgotten in terms of policy."

The legislation would likely

have helped spouses like Brenda Isaacson, who said the VA's insurance plan covered the cost of recovering sperm from her husband, Chuck — an Army staff sergeant paralyzed by a 2007 helicopter crash in Afghanistan — but not the more than half-dozen IVF attempts the couple underwent before finally having a daughter nearly a year and a half ago. She bristled at being told by officials that infertility services were not medically or psychologically necessary.

"You tell that to a man who's just been wounded — that it's not psychologically necessary to have children — when that's all we'd talked about, having babies," she said.

"The culture has changed. There's a lot more veterans who need this," she said, adding that the VA was looking closely at the proposal.

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Friday, August 17, 2012

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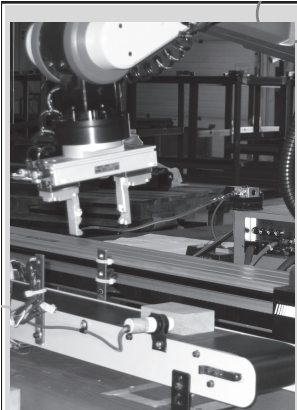
I, _____, state that I am the parent or legal guardian of _____, a minor child, I hereby give my consent for _____ to participate in the Kiddie Parade sponsored by Yankton Riverboat Days, Inc. In considerations for my child or ward's participation, I agree to waive any liabilities, claims, actions, damages, costs, or expenses which I or my child or ward or our assignees, successors, or heirs may have against Yankton Riverboat Days, Inc., as a group or as individual committee members, directors, volunteers or employees, which may arise out of my child or ward's participation in the Kiddie Parade.

BY SIGNING BELOW, I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THIS FORM, AND I REALIZE THAT BY SIGNING I AM RELEASING YANKTON RIVERBOAT DAYS, INC., FROM ANY LIABILITY.

Dated this _____ day of _____, 2012. _____

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Black Hills State University
 Office of Admissions
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