

GOP Convention Strained By Abortion Dispute

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Every now and then, an event awakens the ever-slumbering tensions between the Republican Party’s two core wings: social conservatives and corporate interests.

A Missouri congressman’s comment about rape and pregnancy was one such moment, and it came just as Republicans were hoping for a united front at their convention to nominate Mitt Romney for president.

A full-blown rupture — such as the one at the 1992 convention, when a defeated candidate declared a national “culture war” — seems unlikely. But even a modest squabble between key party factions might raise concerns in a tight presidential race.

Romney joined other mainstream Republicans in denouncing the Aug. 19 remarks by Rep. Todd Akin, the party’s Senate nominee in Missouri. Akin said rape victims can generally avoid pregnancy because “if it’s a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down.”

Romney called Akin’s comments “offensive and wrong.” He unsuccessfully urged Akin to quit the Senate race.

AP-GfK Poll: Raise Taxes To Save Soc. Security

WASHINGTON (AP) — Most Americans say go ahead and raise taxes if it will save Social Security benefits for future generations. And raise the retirement age, if you have to.

Both options are preferable to cutting monthly benefits, even for people who are years away from applying for them.

Those are the findings of a new Associated Press-GfK poll on public attitudes toward the nation’s largest federal program.

Social Security is facing serious long-term financial problems. When given a choice on how to fix them, 53 percent of adults said they would rather raise taxes than cut benefits for future generations, according to the poll. Just 36 percent said they would cut benefits instead.

The results were similar when people were asked whether they would rather raise the retirement age or cut monthly payments for future generations — 53 percent said they would raise the retirement age, while 35 percent said they would cut monthly payments.

Afghanistan: Militant Haqqani Killed In Strike

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The son of the founder of the powerful Haqqani network was been killed in an airstrike in Pakistan, Afghanistan’s intelligence agency said Sunday, providing the first public confirmation of rumors that have been swirling for days about the key member of a militant group the U.S. considers one of the most dangerous in the region.

The Taliban rejected reports of Badruddin Haqqani’s death, however, saying that he was alive and well in Afghanistan.

Haqqani’s death would be a serious blow to the organization founded by his father, Jalaluddin Haqqani. The group, which has ties to both the Taliban and al-Qaida, has been blamed for a series of high-profile attacks and kidnappings in Afghanistan, particularly in and around the capital city of Kabul, and poses perhaps the biggest threat to stability in the country.

Shafiqullah Tahiri, the spokesman for Afghanistan’s National Directorate of Security intelligence agency, said Haqqani was killed last week in an airstrike in Pakistan. He did not provide any further details, and would not say what information the agency’s operatives were basing their conclusion on.

U.S. officials have declined comment on the reports.

Apple Jurors Grappled With Complex Issues

SAN JOSE, Calif. (AP) — The decision Friday by the panel of people from many walks of Silicon Valley life was one that experts say could dramatically alter the future of computer tablet and phone design if the verdict stands. But the case also is part of a trend that has accompanied an explosion in the number of patent infringement cases, especially in the technology sector.

Increasingly these highly complex disputes are being decided by juries, rather than judges, and the juries tend to issue more generous awards for patent violations.

That has companies on the receiving end of successful patent infringement lawsuits crying foul and calling for reform in the patent system, but it also has some legal experts questioning whether ordinary citizens should be rendering verdicts and fixing damages in such high stakes, highly technical cases.

“That’s a great question ... and it’s the subject of a fair amount of current debate,” said Notre Dame University law professor Mark McKenna.

Police Study Case Of Teen Allegedly Held Captive

WASHINGTON PARK, Ill. (AP) — Authorities in southwestern Illinois are continuing their investigation of a man charged with aggravated criminal sexual abuse in connection to a St. Louis teenager who claims she was held captive in his home for three years.

Police charged Steven Johnson of Washington Park with several crimes, including promotion of prostitution. But none of the charges, so far, allege that the woman was held against her will. His mother, Owida Johnson, faces two counts of child endangerment.

Washington Park Police Chief David Clark says the investigation is ongoing. However, he declined comment further Sunday, four days after several heavily armed police officers raided the Washington Park house.

Authorities say both suspects are in custody. Their family members allege the victim isn’t being truthful.

Earthquakes Rattle Southern California

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Dozens of small to moderate earthquakes rattled Southern California on Sunday, shaking an area from rural Imperial County to the San Diego coast and north into the Coachella Valley.

The largest quake, magnitude 5.3, struck at 12:31 p.m. about three miles north-northwest of the small Imperial County farming town of Brawley, according to Paul Caruso, a geophysicist with the U.S. Geological Survey. It was followed minutes later by a magnitude-4.9 quake.

The first quake had a magnitude of 3.9 and hit at 10:02 a.m. It was followed by a smaller quake about 90 seconds later in the same area near the southern end of the Salton Sea, and other smaller quakes followed within six minutes of the first shock.

Several glasses and a bottle of wine crashed to the floor and shattered at Assaggio, an Italian restaurant in Brawley, said owner Jerry Ma. The shaking was short-lived but intense, he said.

“It felt like there was quake every 15 minutes. One after another. My kids are small and they’re scared and don’t want to come back inside,” said Mike Patel, who manages Townhouse Inn & Suites in Brawley. A TV came crashing down and a few light fixtures broke inside the motel, Patel said.

Tropical Storm Isaac Targets Gulf Coast

BY MATT SEDENSKY  
Associated Press

KEY WEST, Fla. — Tropical Storm Isaac barely stirred Florida Keys residents from their fabled nonchalance Sunday, while the Gulf Coast braced for the possibility that the sprawling storm will strengthen into a dangerous hurricane by the time it makes landfall there.

It was on course to strike land on the seventh anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, a powerful storm that crippled New Orleans and the Gulf Coast and became a symbol of government ineptitude. Forecasters expected Isaac to pass the Keys late Sunday before turning northwest and striking as a Category 2 hurricane somewhere between New Orleans and the Florida Panhandle on Wednesday.

The National Hurricane Center issued a hurricane warning for a large swath of the northern Gulf Coast from east of Morgan City, La. — which includes the New Orleans area — to Destin, Fla. A Category 2 hurricane has sustained winds of between 96 and 110 mph (154 to 177 kph).

Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal called a state of emergency and suggested that people begin leaving low-lying parts of the state. He also said he may skip a speaking engagement later this week at the Republican National Convention in Tampa unless the threat to his state subsides. Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley has also canceled his trip to the convention because of Isaac.



WALTER MICHOT/MIAMI HERALD

A person ventures out into the storm at Clarence Higgs Beach Sunday as Tropical Storm Isaac hit Key West, Fla.

Beach and shoppers at area malls.

In Key West, Emalyn Mercer rode her bike while decked out with a snorkel and mask, inflatable arm bands and a paddle, just for a laugh. She rode with Kelly Friend, who wore a wet suit, dive cap and lobster gloves.

“We’re just going for a drink,” Mercer said.

“With the ones that are brave enough like us,” Friend added.

Along famed Duval Street, many stores, bars and restaurants closed, the cigar rollers and palm readers packed up, and just a handful of drinking holes remained open.

But people posed for pictures at the Southernmost Point, while at a marina Dave Harris and Robyn Roth took her dachshund for a walk and checked out boats rocking along the waterfront.

“Just a summer day in Key West,” Harris said.

That kind of ho-hum attitude extended farther up the coast. Edwin Reeder swung by a gas station in Miami Shores — not for fuel, but drinks and snacks.

“This isn’t a storm,” he said. “It’s a rain storm.”

With a laugh, Reeder said he has not stocked up aside from buying dog and cat food.

The forecast wasn’t funny, however. Isaac was expected to draw significant strength from the warm, open waters of the Gulf of Mexico, but there remained much uncertainty about its path.

The Gulf Coast hasn’t been hit by a hurricane since 2008, when Dolly, Ike and Gustav all struck

the region. Florida, meanwhile, has been hurricane-free since it was struck four times each in 2004 and 2005.

Hurricane center forecasters are uncertain of the storm’s path because two of their best computer models now track the storm on opposite sides of a broad cone. One model has Isaac going well west and the other well east. For the moment, the predicted track goes up the middle.

Florida Panhandle residents stocked up on water and gasoline, and at least one Pensacola store ran out of flashlight models and C and D batteries. Scott Reynolds, who lives near the water in Gulf Breeze, filled his car trunk with several cases of water, dozens of power bars and ramen noodles.

“Cigarettes — I’m stocking up on those too,” he said.

Forecasters stressed that the storm’s exact location remained extremely uncertain — a fact not lost on Tony Varnado as he cut sheets of plywood to board up his family’s beach home on Pensacola Beach. With the storm’s projected path creeping farther to the west, the Mandeville, La., resident joked he might be boarding up the wrong house.

“I’m going to head back that way as soon as we are done here to make sure we are prepared if hits there,” he said.

Before reaching Florida, Isaac was blamed for seven deaths in Haiti and two more in the Dominican Republic, and downed trees and power lines in Cuba. It bore down on the Keys two days after the 20th anniversary of Hurricane Andrew, which caused more than \$25 billion in damage just north of the island chain.

In Tampa, convention officials said they would convene briefly on Monday, then recess until Tuesday afternoon, when the storm was expected to have passed. Scott canceled his plans to attend convention events on Sunday and Monday.

At Miami International Airport, more than 550 flights Sunday were canceled. Inside the American Airlines terminal, people craned for a look out of one of the doors as a particularly strong band of Isaac began lashing the airport with strong rain and high wind.

Michele Remillard said she was trying to get a seat on a flight to New Orleans, well aware the city could be affected by Isaac later this week. In coastal Plaquemines Parish, La., crews rushed to protect the levees that keep floodwaters from reaching that New Orleans suburb.

“It’s a little scary,” said Remillard, who was in town for a wedding. “But I need to get home, you know? And if the storm comes my way again, who knows, I might have to come back here.”

As of 5 p.m. EDT, the storm was centered about 40 miles (65 kilometers) south of Key West, according to the National Hurricane Center in Miami. Isaac had top sustained winds of 60 mph (95 kph) and was moving to the northwest at 16 mph (26 kph).

Tropical storm-force winds extended outward up to 205 miles (335 km) from the center, meaning storm conditions are possible even in places not in Isaac’s direct path.



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