

## N. Koreans Salute Kim Jong Il In Pyongyang

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP) — North Korea's next leader escorted his father's hearse in an elaborate state funeral on a bitter, snowy day Wednesday, bowing and saluting in front of tens of thousands of citizens who wailed and stamped their feet in grief for Kim Jong Il.

Son and successor Kim Jong Un was head mourner on the gray day in Pyongyang, walking with one hand on the black hearse that carried his father's coffin on its roof, his other hand raised in salute, his head bowed against the wind.

At the end of the 2 1/2-hour procession, rifles fired 21 times as Kim Jong Un stood flanked by the top party and military officials who are expected to be his inner circle of advisers. Kim then saluted again as goose-stepping soldiers carrying flags and rifles marched by.

Although analysts say Kim Jong Un is on the path toward cementing his power and all moves in North Korea so far — from titles giving him power over the ruling party and military and his leading position in the funeral procession — point in that direction, his age and inexperience leave questions about Kim's long-term prospects. Whereas his father was groomed for power for 20 years before taking over, the younger Kim has had only about two years.

He also faces the huge challenges of running a country that struggles to feed its people even as it pursues a nuclear weapons program that has earned it international sanctions and condemnation.

## Iran Treatens To Close Key Oil Passage

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — The U.S. strongly warned Iran on Wednesday against closing a vital Persian Gulf waterway that carries one-sixth of the world's oil supply, after Iran threatened to choke off traffic through the Strait of Hormuz if Washington imposes sanctions targeting the country's crude exports.

The increasingly heated exchange raises new tensions in a standoff that has the potential to spark military reprisals and spike oil prices to levels that could batter an already fragile global economy.

Iran's navy chief said Wednesday that it would be "very easy" for his country's forces to close the strategic Strait of Hormuz, the passage at the mouth of the Persian Gulf through which about 15 million barrels of oil pass daily. It was the second such warning by Iran in two days, reflecting Tehran's concern that the West is about to impose new sanctions that could hit the country's biggest source of revenue, oil.

"Iran has comprehensive control over the strategic waterway," Adm. Habibollah Sayyari told state-run Press TV, as the country was in the midst of a 10-day military drill near the strategic waterway. The comments drew a quick response from the U.S.

## Monitors: Syrian Troops Kill More Protesters

BEIRUT (AP) — Arab League monitors gathered accounts about the Syrian government's crackdown on dissent in the central city of Homs Wednesday as fresh violence flared just dozens of miles away. Activists said troops opened fire on thousands of unarmed protesters, killing at least six.

Though President Bashar Assad's regime has made concessions to the observers, including the release of nearly 800 prisoners, the military was pressing ahead with a campaign to put down mostly peaceful protests.

In the two days since the Arab monitors arrived, activists said troops have killed at least 39 people, including the six shot in the central city of Hama on Wednesday. The continued bloodshed — and comments by an Arab League official praising Syria's cooperation — have fueled concerns by the Syrian opposition that the Arab mission is a farce and a distraction from the ongoing killings.

The opposition suspects Assad is only trying to buy time and forestall more international sanctions and condemnation.

"This mission has absolutely no mandate, no authority, no teeth," said Ausama Monajed, a member of the Syrian National Council, the main opposition group. "The regime does not feel obliged to even bring down the number of casualties a day."

## Bargain Hunters Split Shopping Season

NEW YORK (AP) — The holiday shopping season turned out to be two seasons: the Black Friday binge and a last-minute surge.

Together, they added up to decent sales gains for retailers. And the doldrums in between showed how shoppers have learned to wait for the discounts they know will come.

"The days that the American consumer gets excited about 25 percent off are over," said C. Britt Beemer, chairman of America's Research Group. "Shoppers are keeping their eye on the ball for the big sales events."

In November, spending rose 4.1 percent. And from Dec. 1 to Dec. 24, it rose 4.7 percent compared with the same period last year, according to research firm ShopperTrak. A 4 percent increase is considered a healthy season.

The higher sales are good news for the economy, because they show shoppers were willing to fund a holiday splurge despite high unemployment and other lingering economic woes. Consumer spending, including major items such as health care, accounts for 70 percent of the economy.

## Gingrich Camp: About \$9 Million Raised

MASON CITY, Iowa (AP) — A spokesman for Newt Gingrich's presidential campaign says the Republican has raked in roughly \$9 million for the last three months of the year, far more than the House speaker has been able to raise in any of the previous quarters.

Gingrich spokesman R.C. Hammond told reporters Wednesday night that Gingrich had paid off some — but not all — of the more than \$1 million in campaign debt he had accumulated earlier this year.

Gingrich has been sliding in new polls with the leadoff Iowa caucuses just six days away. The announcement, coming days before the reporting period ends Dec. 31, seems designed to counter signs that his support was dwindling.

Hammond says the campaign has shelled out about \$500,000 for television ads in Iowa running this week.

# Obama's Policies Get Mediocre Marks

BY PAUL WISEMAN AND DEREK KRAVITZ

AP Economics Writers

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama gets mediocre marks for his handling of the economy and Mitt Romney easily outpolls his Republican rivals in an Associated Press survey of economists.

The economy — and who bears responsibility for it — is likely to be a decisive issue when voters to go the polls next November.

The economy is still struggling to recover from the Great Recession of 2007-2009. The housing market remains weak and a debt crisis in Europe threatens growth in 2012. The unemployment rate is at a recession-level 8.6 percent, up from 7.8 percent when Obama took office in January 2009. That month, the recession was already more than a year old.

Half of the 36 economists who responded to the Dec. 14-20 AP survey rated Obama's economic policies "fair." And 13 called them "poor." Just five of the economists gave the president "good" marks. None rated him as "excellent."

The economists' criticisms vary. Some say Obama was distracted by his health care overhaul. Others say his \$862 billion stimulus program was poorly designed. Still others fault him for not pushing for an even bigger stimulus when the economy proved weaker than expected.

The AP economists expect economic growth to pick up to 2.4 percent next year. That would be an improvement from the under-2 percent growth expected for 2011. But the economists foresee little improvement — a dip to 8.4 percent — in the unemployment rate by Election Day.

Asked which of the Republican presidential candidates would do the best job managing the economy, two thirds of the economists named Romney, one chose former House Speaker Newt Gingrich. The rest didn't pick anyone at all.

Allen Sinai, president of Decision Economics, says Romney, who ran a private equity firm before turning to politics, is the "hands down" choice among Republican presidential contenders squaring off in the Jan. 3 Iowa caucuses.

"Romney's a technocrat," Sinai says. "He's not an ideologue. He has a history in the real world of business."

The Iowa presidential caucuses, which kick the GOP nominating process into high gear, begin Tuesday and polls show Romney in a strong position. Romney has based his campaign on the notion that he has the best chance of beating Obama on the economy because of his private sector experience.

Here's more about what the economists, mostly from banks and other financial firms, independent consultancies and academia, had to say about: —Obama.

Some economists say the Obama administration didn't push hard enough for more government spending or tax cuts to stimulate growth. "They've generally tried to take the right kinds of measures but have often failed to lead with enough vigor to overcome political obstacles," says William Cheney, chief economist at John Hancock Financial Services.

Others say the president tried to do too much, especially by pushing early for legislation to overhaul the nation's health care system instead of focusing on policies to promote growth and create jobs.

"Health care reform wasn't necessarily the most important thing to be dealing with when you're in the midst of the worst recession since the Great Depression," says Joel Naroff, president of Naroff Economics.

Some critics say Obama's 2009 stimulus program relied too much on public works projects that were slow to get going. Decision Economics' Sinai says the president should have favored more tax cuts that put money in Americans' pockets immediately.

Sinai notes that public works projects failed to pull Japan out of a long economic slump that began in the 1990s and continues today. After the money is spent, "you're left with deficits and debt. And someday if you need new government stimulus, you can't afford it. And that's where we are now," Sinai says.

Republican strategist Rich Galen says the GOP has successfully painted Obama as a reckless steward of taxpayer money: "In a Tea Party era where Big Government is the enemy, throwing money at problems is the enemy," he says.

An Associated Press-GfK poll of American adults earlier this month found that 60 percent of American

adults disapprove of Obama's performance on economic issues.

Jamal Simmons, an adviser to the Obama campaign in 2008, said the president must remind voters how bad things were when he took office. The economy lost more than 820,000 jobs the month Obama was sworn in, the biggest drop since October 1949.

Since the job market hit bottom in February 2010, it has produced nearly 2.5 million jobs — 117,000 a month. "Is it enough? Absolutely not, but it certainly ain't what it used to be," Simmons says. Perhaps Obama can take heart from President Ronald Reagan's experience. The unemployment rate was 8.5 percent — a tick away from where it was last month — a year before Reagan was re-elected in a 1984 landslide.

"You have to look at where you would have been if he hadn't gotten the stimulus package through," says Maury Harris, chief economist at UBS Securities. "We might be a lot worse off."

—Romney.

Many of those who chose Romney couldn't cite any of the former Massachusetts governor's economic proposals. Nevertheless, his background won over the economists. Romney graduated from Harvard Business School and served as CEO of Bain & Company, a management consulting business in Boston, and Bain Capital, a spin-off investment firm, in the 1980s and 90s. "He has the experience that the other candidates lack," says Harris of UBS Securities.

Some of his Republican rivals have taken unconventional positions. Texas Rep. Ron Paul advocates abolishing the Federal Reserve and returning to the gold standard. Texas Gov. Rick Perry has said it would be "almost treasonous" for Bernanke to try a third round of bond purchases to jolt the economy before November's election.

Among Romney's chief economic plans: repealing the Obama administration's health-care law; cutting the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 25 percent; and making permanent tax cuts on dividends, interest and capital gains from President George W. Bush's administration.

"He thinks about the economy in a more global way" than his GOP rivals, Naroff says. "He's not a rigid ideologue."

But Romney's business

experience is also vulnerable to criticism. His Republican rivals have blasted him for profiting from putting companies through bankruptcy and laying off workers.

"At a time when the American public is suspicious of corporate wealth and power, that could do real harm to Romney," Simmons says. The economists were not asked to evaluate Obama's economic policies against Romney's or any other Republican candidate.

The economists gave good marks to Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke: 13 rated Bernanke as excellent, 14 as good and nine as fair. He was praised for taking extraordinary steps to calm financial markets after the collapse of Lehman Bros. in 2008 and to jolt the weakest economy in 70 years.

"He's been dealt a tough hand, but played it as well as anybody could," says Scott Brown, chief economist at Raymond James & Associates.

The economists praise Bernanke for his aggressive response to the financial crisis in the fall of 2008. He slashed short-term interest rates to zero, made loans to cash-strapped banks and bought Treasury and mortgage bonds to push down interest rates and calm financial markets.

"The Fed's response (to) the financial crisis and recession was dramatic and swift," says Sean Snaith, an economist at the University of Central Florida.

When the economy stalled in the second half of 2010, Bernanke launched another round of bond purchases to push long-term rates lower.

He has sometimes had to overcome dissent from others on the Fed's rate-setting board. And Bernanke's Fed has had to take the lead in economic policymaking because Congress and the White House are so often ensnarled in partisan bickering.

Still, some economists say Bernanke's Fed has gone too far, that zero interest rates are hurting retirees and savers without delivering many economic benefits.

"Perhaps the greatest criticism might be that the Federal Reserve has tried to do too much — trying to offset the impact of necessary budget cuts, European debt problems and other factors out of its control," says Lynn Reaser, chief economist at Point Loma Nazarene University.

# Fearing Split, Pastors Urge GOP Candidates To Quit

BY THOMAS BEAUMONT

Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Two politically active pastors in Iowa's robust evangelical conservative movement said Wednesday that an effort has been under way to persuade either Rick Santorum or Michele Bachmann to consider quitting the Republican presidential race and endorsing the other to avoid splintering this influential voting bloc's influence in the state's caucuses.

"Otherwise, like-minded people will be divided and water down their impact," said Rev. Cary Gordon, a Sioux City minister. He said he asked Santorum several weeks ago to consider exiting the race but has since endorsed the former Pennsylvania senator, who is rising in polls.

Rev. Albert Calloway, a retired pastor from Indianola, said he asked Bachmann, a Minnesota congresswoman, several days ago to consider quitting the race.

A group of voters that united behind former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee's winning caucus campaign in 2008 fear that this year's caucuses could be won by former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney or Rep. Ron Paul, R-

Texas. Neither track as closely to the religious right as Santorum, Bachmann or Texas Gov. Rick Perry.

Santorum, long dismissed and short on campaign money, has diligently campaigned in Iowa for more than two years. A CNN poll of Iowa caucus-goers released Wednesday showed Santorum leaping into third place in Iowa, at 16 percentage points, behind Romney and Paul.

In recent weeks, Santorum has picked up the endorsements of key social conservatives, including former gubernatorial candidate Bob Vander Plaats, who led the successful effort last year to oust three Iowa Supreme Court judges who were part of the court's unanimous 2009 decision to allow gay marriage.

Bachmann too has rallied Iowa's influential conservative clergy. Many, like Jeff Mullen, pastor of one of the Des Moines area's mega churches, helped lead Bachmann's winning campaign for Iowa's Republican presidential straw poll last August. But since then, Bachmann has faded in polls, although Wednesday she planned to conclude an ambitious effort to campaign in all of Iowa's 99 counties.

The CNN poll showed Bachmann with support of 9 percent of likely GOP caucus-goers, up slightly from the last poll. Perry had 11 percent, also up slightly.

Bachmann told reporters on her campaign bus between stops in Iowa on Wednesday she wasn't quitting and planned to announce additional clergy who were supporting her candidacy.

"The pastors who have endorsed my campaign want to see me as the next president of the United States," Bachmann said.

Gordon, who helped lead the campaign against the judges, said the fear of a divided social conservative vote is widespread among the state's evangelical clergy. However, few have actually reached out to candidates, he said.

Brad Cranston, a pastor from Burlington, said he too is worried that social conservatives will split their vote and lose influence over the eventual GOP nominee, but he has not yet tried to contact any candidates.

"It's more and more obvious it needs to happen for either Bachmann or Santorum to move forward," said Cranston, who has endorsed Bachmann.

## OBITUARIES

### Donna Hannahs

Donna Marie Hannahs was born November 23, 1948 in Burke, SD to Thomasine and Arthur Hannahs. She moved with her family to Rapid City, SD and later New Underwood, SD where she graduated high school.

For Donna, Burke was always her "home." It was here where she returned to raise both her sons. During the years while her own children were young, Donna worked as a daycare provider to several other local children. She cherished those years and loved sharing stories about them. She was a beloved aunt and grandmother who loved the sound of children's laughter filling her home. Donna also enjoyed cooking and baking, always collecting new recipes to try out on her numerous friends and neighbors in the area. She greatly appreciated all the support she received from her community, especially during her last few years of illness.

Donna passed away on Decem-



Hannahs

ber 25, 2011 at Sanford Hospital in Vermillion, SD. She had just celebrated her 63rd birthday. She is survived by her two sons and five grandchildren, Shawn Hannahs, of Yankton, SD (JD, Sidney, Shelby, and Wyatt); Jeff and his wife Shari Hannahs of Sioux Falls, SD (Harley); her mother, Thomasine Hannahs, of Rapid City, SD; her brother, Tim Hannahs, of Vermillion, SD; and by her six nieces (Echo, Jenny, Heather, Dana, Courtney, and Alexa) and one nephew (Phillip).

She was predeceased in death by her father, Arthur Hannahs; brother, Ken Hannahs; and sister-in-law, Wanda Hannahs. Memorial services for Donna Hannahs, age 63, of Vermillion, SD and formerly of Burke, SD will be held on Friday, December 30, 2011 at 2:00 PM at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Burke. Burial will be in

the Graceland Cemetery, Burke.

Visitation will be one hour prior to the service at the Church. Please visit [www.clausenfuneralhome.com](http://www.clausenfuneralhome.com) for a complete obituary.

Yankton Press & Dakotan  
December 29, 2011

### Margaret 'Meg' Quintal

VERMILLION — Margaret "Meg" Savely Quintal, 67, of Vermillion died Sunday, Dec. 25, 2011, at her home in Vermillion.

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