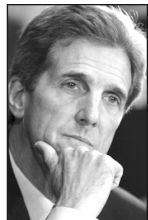


Obama Nominates Kerry For Sec. Of State



Kerry

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama on Friday nominated Sen. John Kerry as his next secretary of state, elevating the longtime lawmaker and foreign policy expert to the top diplomatic job he had coveted.

“He is not going to need a lot of on-the-job training,” Obama said, standing alongside Kerry at the White House. “Few individuals know as many presidents and prime ministers or grasp our policies as firmly as John Kerry.”

If confirmed by the Senate, Kerry would replace Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, who plans to leave Obama’s Cabinet early next year. Clinton, who is recovering from a concussion sustained in a fall, did not attend the Roosevelt Room announcement.

The 69-year-old Democrat is expected to be easily confirmed by his Senate colleagues. He would be the first of what are expected to be several new faces on Obama’s national security team, including a new defense secretary and director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The son of a diplomat, Kerry has served as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and is a decorated Vietnam veteran who was critical of the war effort when he returned home to the United States. He has represented Massachusetts in the Senate since 1985.

Bells Toll In Connecticut Town For Victims

NEWTOWN, Conn. (AP) — The chiming of bells reverberated throughout Newtown on Friday, commemorating one week since the crackle of gunfire in a schoolhouse killed 20 children and six adults in a massacre that has shaken the community — and the nation — to its core.

Gov. Dannel P. Malloy gathered with other officials in rain and wind on the steps of the Edmond Town Hall as the bell rang 26 times in memory of each life lost at Sandy Hook Elementary School. The gunman also killed his mother before the massacre, and himself afterward.

Officials didn’t make any formal remark, and similar commemorations took place throughout the country.

Though the massacre does not rank as the deadliest school shooting in U.S. history — that happened at Virginia Tech — the tender age of the victims and the absence of any apparent motive has struck at Americans’ hearts and minds. The gunman used a military-style assault rifle loaded with ammunition intended to inflict maximum damage, officials have said.

The White House said President Barack Obama privately observed the moment of silence.

Egypt’s Islamists Clash With Opponents

ALEXANDRIA, Egypt (AP) — Thousands of Islamists clashed with their opponents on Friday in Egypt’s second largest city, Alexandria, a day before the second leg of voting on a proposed Islamist-backed constitution that has polarized the nation.

Meanwhile, the country’s Islamist President Mohammed Morsi made a last-minute move to tighten his grip on power by appointing 90 members to parliament’s upper house, a body set to wield temporary lawmaking powers if the constitution is approved by referendum.

In Alexandria, on the Mediterranean coast, riot police swung batons and fired volleys of tear gas to separate stone-throwing Muslim Brotherhood members and ultraconservative Salafis on one side, and youthful protesters on the other. The clashes started when the two groups met just after Friday afternoon prayers at the city’s main mosque near the coastal road.

Witnesses say youth set fire to four vehicles — two buses and two cars — belonging to Islamists, sending thick black smoke through the upscale city center. The demonstrators, some of whom carried black Islamic battle flags, withdrew under a heavy cloud of tear gas some two hours after the clashes began. Fighting continued into dusk along the corniche, near the Medical School and famed Alexandria Library.

At least 42 people were treated for injuries, with some rushed to the hospital, a city health official said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief reporters.

Celebrants In Mexico Mark ‘Cosmic Dawn’

MERIDA, Mexico (AP) — Dec. 21 started out as the prophetic day some had believed would usher in the fiery end of the world. By Friday afternoon, it had become more comic than cosmic, the punch line of countless Facebook posts and at least several dozen T-shirts.

At the ruins of the ancient Mayan city of Chichen Itza, thousands chanted, danced and otherwise frolicked around ceremonial fires and pyramids to mark the conclusion of a vast, 5,125-year cycle in the Mayan calendar.

The doomsayers who had predicted apocalypse were nowhere to be seen. Instead, people showed up in T-shirts reading “The End of the World: I Was There.”

Vendors eager to sell their ceramic handicrafts and wooden masks called out to passing visitors. “Buy something before the world ends.”

And on Twitter, #EndoftheWorld had become one of the day’s most popular hash tags.

US Judge: Bring Back Fed Assault Weapons Ban

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — A federal judge who sentenced the man who shot former U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords said in an article published Friday that it’s time to bring back the federal assault weapons ban.

U.S. District Judge Larry Burns said in the opinion piece in the *Los Angeles Times*, “Congress must reinstate and toughen the ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.”

His comments came on the same day that the National Rifle Association declared a no-retreat stance in the face of growing calls for gun control after the Connecticut shootings that claimed the lives of 26 children and school staff a week ago.



OLIVIER DOULIERY/ABACA PRESS/MCT
Wayne LaPierre, executive vice-president of the National Rifle Association of America (NRA), speaks at a news conference at the Willard Hote Friday in Washington. The nation’s largest gun lobby called for Congress to require armed security guards in every school, saying it would help prevent such acts of mass violence from happening again.

Parents Hesitant About NRA Armed Schools Proposal

BY CHRISTINE ARMARIO

AP Education Writer

MIAMI — The nation’s largest gun-rights lobby called Friday for the placement of an armed police officer in every school, but parents and educators questioned how safe such a move would keep kids, whether it would be economically feasible and how it would alter student life. Their reactions ranged from supportive to disgusted.

Already, there are an estimated 10,000 sworn officers serving in schools around the country, most of them armed and employed by local police departments, according to a membership association for the officers. Still, they’re deployed at only a fraction of the country’s approximately 98,000 public schools, and their numbers have declined during the economic downturn. Some departments have increased police presence at schools since last week’s shooting rampage at a Connecticut elementary school that left 26 dead, but say they can only do so temporarily because of funding.

The National Rifle Association said at a news conference that it wants Congress to fund armed officers in every American school, breaking its silence on the Connecticut shootings. The idea made sense to some anxious parents and teachers, but provoked outright anger in others.

“Their solution to resolve the issue around guns is to put more guns in the equation?” said Superintendent Hank Grishman of the Jericho, N.Y., schools on Long Island, who has been an educator for 44 years. “If anything it would be less safe for kids. You would be putting them in the midst of potentially more gunfire.”

Where school resource officers are already in place, they help foster connections between the schools and police, and often develop a close

enough relationship with parents and children that they feel comfortable coming forward with information that could prevent a threat, said Mo Canady, executive director of the National Association of School Resource Officers.

But an Oklahoma educator who teaches at a school with armed officers described the NRA’s proposal as a “false solution,” though she’s not opposed to the presence of more police.

“I teach at a school that has four armed police officers on campus every day, but it’s more than a quarter of a mile from the main office to my room, and I’m not even the farthest room away,” said Robillard, a French teacher at Westmoore High School. “If (a student) put a loaded gun in their bag and came to my classroom and pulled it out and started shooting, by the time the police officer figured out what was going on and got to my classroom, we’d all be dead. This whole hallway could be dead before a policeman got here.”

Around the country, school systems sometimes rotate armed officers through schools or supplement them with unarmed safety agents. New York City’s school district is the largest in the country with more than 1 million students. The NYPD has 350 armed officers who rotate throughout the school system, and they’re supplemented by unarmed safety personnel who also report to the department. In Philadelphia, school officials have rejected armed patrols in city schools and instead use unarmed school police.

In rural Blount County, Ala., a tobacco tax is used to fund a squad of nine armed sheriff’s deputies and a supervisor who are assigned to work inside the system’s 16 schools on a full-time basis, superintendent Jim Carr said Friday. They also assist in sports games and other after-school events.

Hagel Apologizes For Gay Comment

WASHINGTON (AP) — Chuck Hagel, the former U.S. senator believed to be President Barack Obama’s leading choice for defense secretary, apologized Friday for remarks he made in 1998 about an openly gay nominee for an ambassadorship.

In a brief written statement, the Republican said his comments about James C. Hormel were “insensitive” and did not re-

fect his views “or the totality of my public record.” The Vietnam veteran served two terms in the Senate, retiring in 2009.

In an interview with the *Omaha World-Herald* in 1998, Hagel said he believed that for a U.S. ambassador, “it is an inhibiting factor to be gay.” He referred to Hormel as “openly, aggressively gay.”

Fiscal Cliff

Obama: There’s Still Time For Deal

BY DAVID ESPO

AP Special Correspondent

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama issued a stern summons to congressional leaders Friday to approve legislation before year’s end to prevent tax increases on millions of middle class Americans and prevent an expiration of long-term unemployment benefits for the jobless.

One day after House anti-tax rebels torpedoed Republican legislation because it would raise rates on million-dollar-earners, Obama said he still wants a bill that requires the well-to-do to pay more. “Everybody’s got to give a little bit in a sensible way” to prevent the economy from pitching over a recession-threatening fiscal cliff, he said.

He spoke after talking by phone with House Speaker John Boehner — architect of the failed House bill — and meeting with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid.

“I still think we can get it done,” Obama said as he struggled to pick up the pieces of weeks of failed negotiations and political maneuvering.

The president spoke at the end of a day in which stocks tumbled and congressional leaders squabbled as the fiscal cliff drew implacably closer.

“How we get there, God only knows,” said Boehner at a morning news conference, referring to the increasingly tangled attempts to beat the Jan. 1 deadline and head off the perilous combination of across-the-board tax hikes and deep spending cuts that threaten to send the economy into recession.

There was no immediate response from his office to the president’s remarks.

Obama spoke shortly before a scheduled departure for Hawaii for Christmas, but in an indication of the importance of the issue, told reporters he will be returning to the White House next week.



Obama

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Christmas Deadlines

The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan will be closing at noon on Monday, December 24.

The following deadlines will apply:

Wednesday, December 26 newspaper – Thursday, December 20, 5 p.m.
Thursday, December 27 newspaper – Friday, December 21, 5 p.m.
Friday, December 28 newspaper – Monday, December 24, noon
Wednesday, January 2 newspaper – Thursday, December 27, 5 p.m.
Thursday, January 3 newspaper – Friday, December 28, 5 p.m.
Friday, January 4 newspaper – Monday, December 31, noon
Out On The Town will run Monday, Dec. 24 & Thursday, Dec. 27 – Deadline Wednesday, December 19, 5 p.m.

There will be no newspaper on Tuesday, December 25, 2012.

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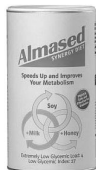
Christmas Day so our employees can spend the holiday with their families. We will re-open at 6:00am on Wednesday, December 26.

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