

A Dim Future For Immigration Reform

Boehner Says Legislation Will Be Difficult To Pass This Year

BY DONNA CASSATA
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Speaker John Boehner said Thursday it will be difficult to pass immigration legislation this year, dimming prospects for one of President Barack Obama's top domestic priorities.

"Listen, there's widespread doubt about whether this administration can be trusted to enforce our laws. And it's going to be difficult to move any immigration legislation until that changes," Boehner told reporters at his weekly news conference.

While Boehner called on Obama to restore that trust, he made no mention of the rank-and-file Republicans who were unenthusiastic about a set of broad principles circulated by the leadership last week. The principles included legal status but no special path for citizenship for the estimated 11 million immigrants who live in the country illegally and tougher border and interior security.

A group of conservative Republicans said Wednesday that Congress should wait until next year to address immigration, arguing that it made no sense to take up an issue that divides the GOP in an election year. They

also argued that the Republicans have a legitimate shot at capturing Senate control and could dictate the terms of any legislation.

"I have made clear for 15 months the need for the Congress and the administration to work together on the issue of immigration reform. It needs to get done. I'm going to continue to talk to my members about how to move forward, but the president is going to have to do his part," Boehner said.



Boehner

The Senate last June passed a bipartisan bill that would tighten border security, provide enforcement measures and offer a path to citizenship for immigrants living here without government authorization.

The measure has stalled in the House where Boehner and other leaders have rejected a comprehensive approach in favor of a bill-by-bill process.

Boehner's pessimistic comments came just two days after Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., told reporters that differences between the Senate's comprehensive approach and the House's piecemeal strategy were an "irresolvable conflict."

"I don't see how you get to an outcome this year with the two bodies in such a different place," McConnell told reporters.

Weather Weary Nation Asks, Why Such A Nasty Winter?

BY SETH BORENSTEIN
AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON — Cold and snow keep battering the Midwest and East, and even Atlanta was temporarily paralyzed. California has been bone dry. Alaska set heat records.

The wild winter somehow became even more wicked Thursday morning when the national average temperature plunged to a brutal 11 degrees — the lowest temperature of a season of extremes.

A weather weary nation asks a simple question: Why?

The answer is the jet stream, the river of air that dictates our weather. Normally the jet stream stays in Canada or the northern U.S., going west to east in a somewhat straight line. But this winter it has plunged south, creating high pressure ridges and low pressure troughs and taking cold polar air south and east and leaving warm, dry weather to the west.

"We are having an unusual jet stream that's giving us crazy cold weather in the East and the ridiculously resilient ridge as it's called in California," said Weather Underground meteorology director Jeff Masters.

Q: Why is the jet stream doing this?

A: There are three different forces probably at work here, but scientists still need to do more research, said Derek Arndt, of the National Climatic Data Center in Asheville, N.C. One is just the random natural variability of daily weather. Another is a mid-length weather feature called the Pacific Decadal Oscillation —



DAVID KENT/FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM/MCT
A worker shovels snow off the sidewalk in front of the Fritz G. Lanham Federal Building Thursday in Fort Worth, Texas.

think of it as a cousin of El Nino — that warms the northern Pacific and helps push the jet stream south. And finally, a new and controversial theory is that a warmer Arctic region and shrinking summer sea ice from man-made global warming has shifted jet stream patterns, making it wavier and bringing more unpredictable weather.

Q: Is it unusual for the weather pattern to last this long?

A: It doesn't happen often, but it's not that unusual either, said Bruce Terry, of the National Weather Service's Weather Prediction Center in College Park, Md.

Q: So how cold was Thursday?

A: The national average

temperature of 11 degrees is the coldest of this winter and will likely be the coldest of the season, according to calculations by Weather Bell Analytics meteorologist Ryan Maue. It was computed from temperatures at 7 a.m. EST in the Lower 48 states.

The lowest was minus 34 in Montana and several areas were minus 20, according to the National Weather Service.

Q: Has this been a record winter?

A: No. Given the unusual heat in the West and the cold in the East, they almost balance each other, Masters and Arndt said. So when the final monthly statistics come out, January in the U.S. won't be near record cold.

"When you compare it to

the 20th century, it was still cold, but not dramatically cold," Arndt said.

Q: Was this just a U.S. thing?

A: No. Parts of South America and Australia have had much warmer than normal weather. Parts of Europe have been cold and stormy, others record warm. For much of January, Greenland was 8 degrees warmer than normal.

Q: When will it end?

A: Soon enough. In Northern California, heavy rains are coming. A predicted eastern winter snowstorm this weekend is looking less mighty than it did a few days ago. It's not soon enough for the meteorologists who predict it.

"I'm sick of it," said the weather service's Terry.

US Sees Russian Hand In Envoy's Bugged Call

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two senior American diplomats, thinking their conversation about the Ukraine was secure and private, were caught disparaging the European Union in a phone call that was apparently bugged, and U.S. officials say they strongly suspect Russia of leaking the conversation.

The suspicions were aired Thursday after audio of the call was posted to the Internet and amid continuing criticism of the United States in Europe and elsewhere over NSA spying on foreign leaders and U.S. They also came as the Russia-hosted Winter Olympics opened under tight security to prevent possible terrorist attacks and highlighted distrust between Washington and Moscow that has thrived despite the Obama administration's attempt to "reset" relations with the Kremlin.

The White House and State Department stopped just short of directly accusing Russia of surreptitiously recording the call between the top U.S. diplomat for Europe, Victoria Nuland, and the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt. But both took pains to point out that a Russian government official was the first or among the first to call attention to the audio of the conversation that was posted on YouTube. The State Department said the incident marked a "new low in Russian tradecraft."

White House spokesman Jay Carney pointed to the Russian official's tweet and Russia's clear interest in what has become a struggle between pro-Moscow and pro-Western camps in the former Soviet Republic.

Banned Carry-On Items Get Through Russian Security

BY KARL RITTER
Associated Press

SOCHI, Russia — Despite a temporary Russian ban on liquids in carry-on luggage, some air travelers heading to the Sochi Olympics through Moscow have brought toothpaste and other toiletries past security checkpoints without any problems.

Security concerns ahead of the Sochi Games were renewed after the U.S. Homeland Security Department warned airlines flying to Russia that terrorists may try to smuggle explosives into the country in toothpaste tubes.

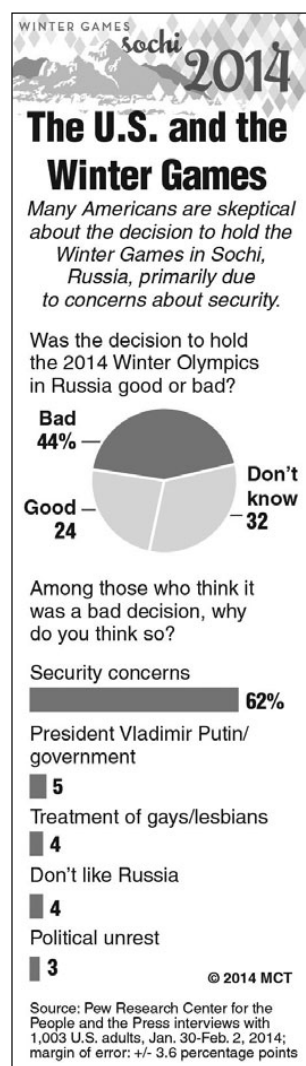
Yet six Associated Press employees arriving in Moscow from across the world or beginning their journey there passed through security without having to remove toothpaste, hand lotion or water bottles from their carry-on luggage.

Another AP journalist, arriving in Moscow from Singapore, said a security official checked his deodorant and then returned it, but didn't notice or make mention of a very small tube of toothpaste.

Other air travelers heading to Sochi also said their experience of Russian airport security was surprisingly hassle-free.

"It was pretty chill. I had an empty 1-1/2 liter water bottle because I was hoping to fill it up on the plane but no one checked it," said Matt Segal, an Australian tourist who traveled from Moscow to Sochi on Thursday. "No one has pulled it out and asked about it."

The no-liquids rule applies to anyone departing from a Russian airport, in-



cluding transit passengers, said Russian Transport Ministry spokeswoman Nataliya Nesterova. She said it was up to airports to make sure it is enforced.

The seemingly sporadic enforcement underscores the difficulty that governments face in ensuring that airport personnel in many places, screening thousands of impatient people in a compressed period of time, maintain consistent practices as

they try to prevent attacks that could be both human and public-relations disasters.

And even if practices are consistent inside a single country, the many points of transit that travelers pass through en route to Sochi fall under the jurisdiction of multiple governments.

An AP journalist starting a three-leg trip to Sochi in Detroit on Thursday had to leave his toothpaste and deodorant behind after an airline official told him he couldn't bring those items to Russia in his carry-on luggage.

Moscow airport officials didn't immediately return calls Thursday seeking comment about enforcement of the ban, which runs from January to April, well after the Olympics and Paralympics end. Russian deputy prime minister Dmitry Kozak had no comment Thursday on the toothpaste warning from the U.S. Homeland Security Department in the U.S.

"I don't have any reaction at this point. We're checking this information," Kozak told reporters Thursday at a news conference in Olympic Park.

He said Russia can guarantee the safety of people attending the Sochi Games as efficiently as any other government hosting a major event.

"I believe that warnings about Sochi, about Russia were superfluous, and the threat levels in Sochi are just like they are in Boston or London," he said. "I would like to reiterate that security in Sochi will be no worse than in New York, London, Washington or Boston."

Syrian Rebels Free Hundreds In Attack

BEIRUT (AP) — A suicide bomber blew himself up at the gates of a Syrian prison Thursday and rebels stormed in behind him, freeing hundreds of inmates as part of an offensive aimed at capturing key government symbols around the northern city of Aleppo.

Government forces, meanwhile, dropped crude "barrel bombs" in deadly airstrikes as both sides escalated their fight for the strategic city ahead of a second round of peace talks set for next week. Opposition leaders threatened to suspend the talks over the barrel bombings.

In the past six days alone, the makeshift weapons — containers packed with explosives, fuel and scrap metal — have killed more than 250 people in Aleppo, including 73 children, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

They include at least 11 who died Thursday — six of them from the same family — in the opposition-held neighborhood of Masaken Hanano.

Videos uploaded by activists showed the aftermath, including men weeping amid ravaged buildings and corpses covered with blankets on the pavement.

Another Insurance Extension Possible

The Obama administration is considering an extension of the president's decision to let people keep their individual insurance policies even if they are not compliant with the health care overhaul, industry and government officials said Thursday.

Avalere Health CEO Dan Mendelson said Thursday that the administration may let policyholders keep that coverage for as long as an additional three years, stressing that no decision has been made. Policymakers are waiting to see what rate hikes health insurers plan for the insurance exchanges that are key to the overhaul's coverage expansions.

"The administration is entertaining a range of options to ensure that this individual market has stability to it, and that would be one thing that they could do," he said.

Avalere Health is a consulting firm, but Mendelson said his company was not advising the administration on exchange policy. He said he has had informal discussions with administration officials about the extension, but he didn't identify them.

Health and Human Services spokesman Joanne Peters confirmed that the issue is under discussion, saying: "We are continuing to examine all sorts of ways to provide consumers with more choices and to smooth the transition as we implement the law. No decisions have been made."

MLK's Children Battle Over Nobel Medal

ATLANTA (AP) — A generation after the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s death, his children are fighting again over control of his legacy.

This time it involves two of his most cherished possessions: his Nobel Peace Prize medal and the Bible he carried.

King's daughter Bernice King has both items, and she says her brothers, Dexter King and Martin Luther King III, are demanding she hand them over so they can be sold.

It is the latest in a string of disputes over the years that some historians have come to see as a sad and unseemly footnote to history that could damage King's name.

New Guidelines Target Strokes In Women

Just as heart attack symptoms may differ between men and women, so do stroke risks.

Now, the American Heart Association has issued its first guidelines for preventing strokes in women. They focus on birth control, pregnancy, depression and other risk factors that women face uniquely or more frequently than men do.

The advice applies to patients like Denise Miller, who suffered a stroke last year that fooled doctors at two northeast Ohio hospitals before it was finally diagnosed at the Cleveland Clinic. She was 36 and had no traditional risk factors.

"There was nothing to indicate I was going to have a stroke," other than frequent migraines with aura — dizziness or altered senses such as tingling, ringing ears or sensitivity to light, Miller said.

These headaches are more common in women and the new guidelines issued Thursday flag them as a concern. Miller recovered but has some lingering numbness and vision problems.

Hagel Orders Urgent Push For Ethics

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel wants military leaders to inject more urgency into ensuring "moral character and moral courage" in a force suffering a rash of ethical lapses.

Hagel has been worried by a string of scandals that has produced unwelcome publicity for the military. But after new disclosures this week, including the announcement of alleged cheating among senior sailors in the nuclear Navy, Hagel on Wednesday demanded a fuller accounting of the depth of the problem.

Last month the Air Force revealed it was investigating widespread cheating on proficiency tests among nuclear missile launch officers in Montana, and numerous senior officers in all branches of the armed forces have been caught in embarrassing episodes of personal misbehavior. The Air Force also is pursuing a drug use investigation.

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