

Romney, GOP Cash In With Wealthy Donors

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama on Monday said he raised \$71 million in June for his re-election campaign, after Republican candidate Mitt Romney reported \$106 million during the same period. It was the second consecutive month that Romney collected more cash and underscores the challenge for Obama ahead of November.

The grim news for Obama came as his campaign officials have publicly worried they were on track to lose the money race. Obama's campaign manager, Jim Messina, in an email to supporters just three days ago, said: "Their gap is getting wider, and if it continues at this pace, it could cost us the election."

Obama is fighting on two fronts to keep the presidency: On one hand, he faces Romney's own war chest that pays for campaign operations. On the other, he has to push back against the hundreds of millions of dollars flowing to GOP-aligned "super" political action committees, or PACs, which have aired continual attack ads aimed at Obama and his record.

Indeed, wealthy donors have been instrumental in helping Romney beat Obama. When he broke fundraising records last month, Romney's campaign praised small-dollar donors it said made it possible. But it was actually a small and often wealthy number of donors responsible, who gave an average of about \$2,400 each, according to an Associated Press analysis.

Like Obama, Romney often touts the high percentage of donors who gave less than \$250, underscoring the perception that a large, grassroots group of Americans want him in the White House. Romney's campaign said that about 94 percent of 571,000 donors gave those amounts in June, or about \$22 million.

Companies Win Cut In Pension Contributions

WASHINGTON (AP) — A new law will let companies contribute billions of dollars less to their workers' pension funds, raising concerns about weakening the plans that millions of Americans count on for retirement.

But with many companies already freezing or getting rid of pension plans, many critics are reluctant to force the issue.

Some expect the changes, passed by Congress last month and signed Friday by President Barack Obama, to have little impact on the nation's enormous \$1.9 trillion in estimated pension fund assets. And it is more important, they suggest, to avoid giving employers a new reason to limit or jettison remaining pension benefits by forcing them to contribute more than they say they can manage.

The equation underscores a harsh reality for unions, consumer advocates and others who normally go to the mat for workers and retirees: When it comes to battling over pensions, the fragile economy of 2012 gives the business community a lot of leverage.

"That wouldn't do our members any good" if the government forces companies to make pension contributions they can't afford, said Karen Feldman, benefits policy specialist for the AFL-CIO, the giant labor federation that supported the legislation.

Annan Seeking Iranian Help With Syria Plan

BEIRUT (AP) — International envoy Kofi Annan tried to rescue his peace plan for Syria by seeking help Monday from Iran, a staunch ally and military backer of President Bashar Assad's regime.

Before flying to Tehran, Annan said he had agreed on a new approach with Assad to stop the violence, which activists say has killed more than 17,000 people since the conflict began in March 2011.

Annan did not spell out the agreement or say what kind of involvement he saw for Iran in resolving the crisis. Anti-regime fighters dismissed any role for Iran in a plan they and some experts say has little hope of succeeding.

The United States has rejected Iranian participation in international meetings on the crisis in Syria.

46 Years Later, Airmen Lost In Crash Reunited

ARLINGTON, Va. (AP) — Ever since Sherrie Hassenger's husband went missing with five other U.S. airmen over Laos in 1965, her purpose has been to wish and to hope he would come home. When those men's remains were buried in a single casket Monday at Arlington National Cemetery, she said, some of that purpose was taken away.

"All I listen to is '50s, '60s music," she said. "When I saw those Air Force men in those dress blues, just like back then, I just wanted to go up and hug them and kiss them. It felt like maybe I could find a piece of my husband in them."

The charred remains of the six airmen — identified not through DNA matches but through dental records, personal items and other circumstantial evidence — were buried in a single casket with full military honors, as is common in situations where remains can't be conclusively linked to a specific individual. The remains are representative of six Air Force servicemen: Col. Joseph Christiano of Rochester, N.Y.; Col. Derrell B. Jeffords of Florence, S.C.; Lt. Col. Dennis L. Eilers of Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Chief Master Sgt. William K. Colwell of Glen Cove, N.Y.; Chief Master Sgt. Arden K. Hassenger of Lebanon, Ore.; and Chief Master Sgt. Larry C. Thornton of Idaho Falls, Idaho.

The Air Force gave all six posthumous promotions, a military spokeswoman said.

Episcopalians OK A Trial Gay Blessing

BY RACHEL ZOLL
 AP Religion Writer

Episcopal bishops approved an official prayer service for blessing same-sex couples Monday at a national convention that also cleared the way for transgender ordination.

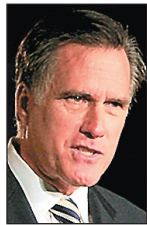
At the Episcopal General Convention in Indianapolis, the House of Bishops voted 111-41, with three abstentions, to authorize a provisional rite for same-sex unions for the next three years. The liturgy next goes to convention's deputies for their authorization.

In a separate vote Monday, the full convention approved new anti-discrimination language for transgendered clergy candidates and church members. Some dioceses already ordain transgendered people or elect them to positions of parish leadership. However, advocates for the amendment argued they needed an explicit statement of acceptance as the churchwide policy.

The Rev. Carla Robinson, who is transgendered and a vicar of All Saints Church in Seattle, said she was lucky to have the backing of parishes and bishops when she was considering ordination, but she said others haven't had the same support.

"I stand here as a priest today because my diocese specifically said that my gender identity and expression didn't disqualify me from the discernment process," Robinson said from the floor of the convention. "I ask that as a church we do the same for my trans sisters and brothers."

While critics of the different measures registered their opposition during the convention debate, many conceded ahead of the vote that they were in the minority.



Romney

Decision 2012

Obama Issues Call For Tax Cuts

BY JULIE PACE
 Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama, eager to shift election-year attention away from the nation's lackluster jobs market, called on Congress Monday to extend tax cuts for families earning less than \$250,000 a year while allowing taxes to rise for households making more.

"Let's not hold the vast majority of Americans and our economy hostage while we debate the merits of another tax cut for the wealthy," said Obama, flanked by a dozen people the White House said would benefit from the tax cut extension advocated by the president.

Obama wants Congress to pass a one-year extension of the Bush-era tax cuts for households making less than \$250,000 before they expire at the end of the year. He said the outcome of his November election contest with Republican rival Mitt Romney would then determine the fate of the tax cuts for higher income earners.

"My opponent will fight to keep them in place. I will fight to end them," he said.

White House spokesman Jay Carney said Obama "would not sign" a bill that extended the whole range of tax cuts in full.

Out of 118.7 million U.S. households in 2010, about 2.5 million had incomes of \$250,000 or more, according to estimates by the Census Bureau. The median household income was \$49,445, which means equal numbers of households earned less and more.

Obama has long supported ending the tax cuts for those making more than \$250,000. But the White House and the president's re-election team are reviving his arguments now as a way to paint congressional Republicans as obstruction-



Decision '12

tending the tax cuts for all income earners. His campaign spokeswoman Andrea Saul said Monday that Obama's proposal amounted to a "massive tax increase" and proved that the president "doesn't have a clue how to get America working again and help the middle class."

The contours of the tax debate are largely the same as they were when the cuts were due to expire at the end of 2010. While Obama opposed an extension for higher income earners then as well, he ultimately agreed to full two-year extension, in part to win concessions for other legislation.

Democrats see the tax debate as part of a larger coordinated attack on Romney, which includes intensifying calls for him to explain offshore bank accounts and release several years of tax returns.

The strategy is aimed at portraying Romney, whose personal wealth could exceed \$250 million, as disconnected from middle-class voters.

Romney aides say the Democratic attacks on the presumptive GOP nominee's wealth an "unfounded character assault."

Cybersecurity Chief Urges Congress Action

BY ROBERT BURNS
 AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON — The head of the Pentagon's Cyber Command on Monday called for swift action in Congress to sort out roles, standards and authorities for government agencies charged with defending against destructive computer attacks.

Army Gen. Keith Alexander, speaking at the American Enterprise Institute think tank, said the time for legislative action is now, before the nation is hit with a major cyberattack — an event he called increasingly likely.

"The conflict is growing, the probability for crisis is mounting," he said. "While we have the time, we should think about and enact those things that we need to ensure our security in this area. Do it now, before a crisis."

Numerous government agencies play a role in defending the nation's computer infrastructure, including the Defense Depart-

ment, the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI.

Referring to the prospect of a destructive — not just disruptive — attack on vital U.S. computer systems, Alexander said, "I do think that's coming our way. You can see this statistically; the number of attacks is growing."

Alexander made no mention of the less worrisome, but still bothersome, computer hacking that infected hundreds of thousands of personal computers around the world with malicious software as part of an online advertising scam. The FBI took down the hackers late last year and set up a temporary safety net of Internet servers. The servers were turned off Monday, but apparently only a small fraction of Internet users were left without access.

Among the key issues before Congress is the matter of encouraging companies and the federal government to share information collected on the Internet to help

prevent electronic attacks from cybercriminals, foreign governments and terrorists. Lawmakers also are considering a bill aimed at improving coordination between the private and public sectors on research and development on cybersecurity.

Alexander also cautioned that

while al-Qaida is not now capable of destructive computer attacks on the U.S., the terrorist group could acquire that aptitude.

"I don't see it today, but they could very quickly get to that — they and others. That does concern me," he said.

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Fast FAQs from RTEC

Did You Know ...

- That Black Hills State University offers classes right here in Yankton?

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Did You Know ...

- That classes are scheduled to fit your busy life?

Because many students are also working part-time or full-time, courses in this BHSU program are taught in the late afternoon/evening and normally meet just one time per week. Some will be taught face-to-face, others will be offered at RTEC via DDN, and thanks to a special agreement, general education courses can be completed at Mount Marty College.

Did You Know ...

- That students who complete this program are in high demand?

Students in this BHSU program complete courses in everything from computer aided drafting and robotics to Lean concepts and human resource management. By the time they complete it, they will have acquired both the technical and management/supervisory skills that will place them in demand in today's high-tech manufacturing world.

Did You Know ...

- That BHSU also offers certificate programs?

Like the Advanced Manufacturing degree, these certificate programs were developed with input from local industry and will help you acquire skills that you'll need to advance in your career. Choose from Industrial Leadership and Management, Advanced Computer Aided Manufacturing, Mechanical Computer Aided Drafting or Lean Concepts and Management.

Did You Know ...

- That you still have time to register?

BHSU's Fall 2012 courses at RTEC begin Aug. 28th. You still have time to complete your application, apply for financial aid and register for classes. Then you can develop the skills required to enter the workforce or to advance your career.

Take the first step and contact RTEC today!



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