

## NATION DIGEST

### Stocks Skid On Fears Of Global Slowdown

NEW YORK (AP) — Stocks and interest rates tumbled after signs of slowing economies spooked traders who were already uneasy about a recovery.

A drop in Asian markets touched off selling after an index that forecasts China's economic activity was revised lower. The losses intensified after news that U.S. consumer confidence fell this month because of worries about the economy. The Conference Board's Consumer Confidence Index dropped by nearly 10 points.

The Dow Jones industrials are down 268 points at 9,870. The Standard & Poor's 500 index is down 33 at 1,041. The Nasdaq composite index is down 85 at 2,135.

Only about 260 stocks rose while 2,800 fell on the New York Stock Exchange. Volume came to 1.6 billion shares compared with 925 million Monday.

### Blagojevich Jurors Hear 'Golden' FBI Tape

CHICAGO (AP) — Jurors in the corruption trial of Rod Blagojevich have heard the best-known of the hundreds of hours of FBI tapes of the former Illinois governor and his inner circle.

In the tape, Blagojevich refers to his power to appoint a senator to replace President-elect Barack Obama as "(expletive) golden" and says he's "not giving it up for (expletive) nothing."

Prosecutors played the excerpt right before court adjourned Tuesday and it's likely to come up in testimony again Wednesday.

The comments appear in a federal affidavit that was filed in December 2008 the day Blagojevich was arrested and has been quoted in news accounts often since then.

Blagojevich has pleaded not guilty to charges including scheming to get a job or a massive campaign contribution for appointing someone to the Senate seat.

### Chicago To Draft New Gun Ordinance

CHICAGO (AP) — Chicago Mayor Richard Daley will push for a strict handgun ordinance to replace its doomed gun ban that will likely include limiting each resident to a single handgun and prohibiting gun stores from setting up shop in the city.

That's according to Daley's top lawyer, Corporation Counsel Mara Georges. She spoke to a City Council committee on Tuesday about plans to propose the new ordinance.

On Monday, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Americans have a right to own a gun for self-defense anywhere they live — a ruling that certainly means the end of Chicago's 28-year-old gun ban.

But one gun rights supporter says many of the city's suggestions all but assure a legal battle, calling them "preposterous" and a violation of gun owners' civil rights.

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# Republicans Challenge Kagan On Military At Harvard

BY DAVID ESPO  
AP Special Correspondent

WASHINGTON — Challenged by Republicans, Supreme Court nominee Elena Kagan said Tuesday the Pentagon's recruiters had access to Harvard Law School students "every single day I was dean" and rejected GOP claims she maneuvered to thwart them.

"I'm just a little taken aback by the tone of your remarks because it is unconnected to reality," retorted Sen. Jeff Sessions of Alabama, first Republican on the Senate Judiciary Committee to question President Barack Obama's choice for the high court in public.

Said Kagan: "I respect and indeed I revere the military."

The exchange came little more than an hour into a full day of questioning by members of the panel, which will vote first on Kagan's appointment to succeed

retiring Justice John Paul Stevens. Barring a major gaffe, the 50-year old Obama administration solicitor general appears well on her way toward confirmation in time to take her seat before the court opens a new term in October.

Kagan also spoke favorably of televising Supreme Court proceedings. "It would be a great thing for the court, and it would be a great thing for the American people," she said.

But she was far less forthcoming when asked whether she believed the Supreme Court had erred last winter in ruling that corporations and unions were free to spend their own funds on political activity.

Kagan said that as solicitor general, she had argued the government's side of the case, which turned out to be a loser in a 5-4 ruling. Pressed to say what her personal views were, she said, "I did believe we had a strong case to make. I tried to make it to the best of my ability,"

she said.

When Sen. Orrin Hatch R-Utah, returned to the subject, she said the issue was now settled law as a result of the ruling.

Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont, the committee's chairman, was first to broach the military recruiting controversy, raising the issue that Republicans had often cited in pre-hearing criticism of Kagan.

"I've only cried once during this process," Kagan said, recalling her reaction to an op-ed article praising her for her treatment of the military, a commentary written by a Marine captain and 2008 graduate of Harvard Law.

The hearings turned testy when Sessions returned to the issue of the military's presence at Harvard Law School, and a controversy that arose when she blocked recruiters from the career services office.

She has said she acted because the

military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy, which bars openly gay men and women from serving, was a violation of the university's anti-discrimination rules. And that as an alternative, she encouraged a campus veterans group to facilitate the Pentagon's recruitment of students.

Sessions disputed Kagan's version of events, saying that for one recruiting season "you gave them (the Pentagon) the runaround. ... You've continued to persist with this view that somehow there was a loophole in the statute that Harvard didn't have to comply with."

Kagan gave no ground, countering that "military recruiting went up that year, not down," when Pentagon's representatives worked through the veterans office on campus.

Responding to Sessions on another issue, Kagan refused to describe her political views as "progressive in the mold" of the president who twice has appointed her to important jobs.

## Dept. Downplays Hype Over Spy Case

BY ROBERT BURNS  
AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON — The scandal over an alleged Russian spy ring erupted at an awkward time for a White House that has staked its foreign policy record on improved cooperation with Moscow, but it appeared unlikely to do lasting damage to U.S.-Russian relations.

The administration sought to dampen tensions, while the Russian government offered the conciliatory hope Tuesday that U.S. authorities would "show proper understanding, taking into account the positive character of the current stage of development of Russian-American relations."

The White House response was notably restrained following the dramatic announcement that 11 people assigned a decade or more to illegally infiltrate American society had been arrested. They are accused of using fake names and claims of

U.S. citizenship to burrow into U.S. society and ferret out intelligence as Russian "illegals" — spies operating without diplomatic cover.

White House spokesman Robert Gibbs labored to show that the arrests were a law enforcement matter — one not driven by the president, even though President Barack Obama was informed — and played down any political consequences.

Obama was asked about the matter by reporters twice Tuesday. He declined to comment both times.

Gibbs said Obama was aware before he met with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev at the White House on Thursday that the case was under investigation, but the two leaders did not discuss it. Another White House spokesman, Tommy Vietor, said Obama did not know the exact timing of the arrests.

The FBI's arrests of 10 Russian spy suspects had to be carried out Sunday partly because one of

the defendants was scheduled to leave the United States, according to the Justice Department. But agency spokesman Dean Boyd declined to identify which of the 10 defendants arrested Sunday was planning to exit the United States.

Officials in both countries left the impression that spy rings remain a common way of doing business.

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin offered a message of restraint during a meeting at his country residence with former President Bill Clinton, who was in Moscow to speak at an investment conference.

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