

D.C. Council Chair Resigns After Fraud Charge

WASHINGTON (AP) — The chairman of the District of Columbia Council resigned Wednesday effective immediately after being charged with lying about his income on loan applications.

The bank fraud charge against Kwame R. Brown, one of the most influential power brokers in the D.C. government, is the latest allegation of criminal wrongdoing to roil local politics in the nation's capital. It will mean further membership shakeup on the council.

Councilmember Phil Mendelson confirmed to The Associated Press that Brown had resigned.

"I have made some very serious mistakes in judgment for which I will take full responsibility," Brown wrote in a resignation letter obtained by *The Washington Post*. "I have behaved in ways that I should not have. I was wrong, and I will face the consequences of that conduct."

Brown becomes the second councilmember to face criminal charges since January. His departure comes as federal authorities continue investigating the 2010 campaign of Mayor Vincent Gray.

Brown was charged in a criminal information, a document that generally signals that a defendant has agreed to plead guilty. A plea hearing is set for Friday in U.S. District Court in Washington.

On Wednesday, he declined to answer questions or comment on the case following a closed-door meeting with fellow councilmembers.

Syrian Activists Report Wave Of Violence

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian activists have reported a surge of bloodshed in the central Hama province with at least 23 people killed — and possibly many more.

The exact circumstances of the violence were impossible to independently confirm late Wednesday.

Rami Abdul-Rahman, the head of the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, says he has gathered the names of 23 people killed in shelling and other attacks. But the Local Coordination Committees, an activist group, says at least 78 were dead.

The violence in Syria has grown increasingly chaotic in recent months, and it is difficult to assign blame for much of the bloodshed as the country spirals toward civil war.

Large Donations Bring Perks To Supporters

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — If you have \$40,000 to spend, President Barack Obama's campaign has a deal for you.

Write a big check, and you'll get you a picture with the president and a chance to swap political strategy with him — all while enjoying a gourmet meal at the lavish home of a Hollywood celebrity or Wall Street tycoon. And if you get the campaign even more money, you might just end up with a plum post as a U.S. ambassador or an invitation to an exclusive White House state dinner.

Obama not your preference? No problem. Mitt Romney is offering donors perks that include everything from a private dinner with him to seats at the fall debates.

Welcome to the world of high-dollar presidential campaign fundraising.

Five months before the November election, both candidates are stacking their schedules with big-money fundraising events from coast to coast as they look to stockpile cash for the height of the campaign. On Wednesday, Romney was courting donors in Texas while Obama was holding four fundraisers in California that were expected to yield at least \$4.6 million.

Women Targeted For Assault In Tahrir Square

CAIRO (AP) — Her screams were not drowned out by the clamor of the crazed mob of nearly 200 men around her. An endless number of hands reached toward the woman in the red shirt in an assault scene that lasted less than 15 minutes but felt more like an hour.

She was pushed by the sea of men for about a block into a side street from Tahrir Square. Many of the men were trying to break up the frenzy, but it was impossible to tell who was helping and who was assaulting. Pushed against the wall, the unknown woman's head finally disappeared. Her screams grew fainter, then stopped. Her slender tall frame had clearly given way. She apparently had passed out.

The helping hands finally splashed the attackers with bottles of water to chase them away.

The assault late Tuesday was witnessed by an Associated Press reporter who was almost overwhelmed by the crowd herself and had to be pulled to safety by men who ferried her out of the melee in an open Jeep.

Reports of assaults on women in Tahrir, the epicenter of the uprising that forced Hosni Mubarak to step down last year, have been on the rise with a new round of mass protests to denounce a mixed verdict against the ousted leader and his sons in a trial last week.

LinkedIn Users Warned To Change Passwords

LONDON (AP) — Business social network LinkedIn said Wednesday that some of its users' passwords have been stolen and leaked onto the Internet.

LinkedIn Corp. did not say how many of the more than six million passwords that were distributed online corresponded to LinkedIn accounts. In a blog post Wednesday, the company said it was continuing to investigate.

Graham Cluley, a consultant with U.K. Web security company Sophos, recommended that LinkedIn users change their passwords immediately.

LinkedIn has a lot of information on its more than 160 million members, including potentially confidential information related to jobs being sought. Companies, recruiting services and others have accounts alongside individuals who post resumes and other professional information.

There's added concern that many people use the same password on multiple websites, so whoever stole the data could use the information to access Gmail, Amazon, PayPal and other accounts, Cluley said.

Shuttle Enterprise Arrives At Its New Home

NEW YORK (AP) — New Yorkers lined the West Side waterfront to welcome the space shuttle Enterprise as it sailed up the Hudson River on Wednesday to its new home aboard the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum.

The prototype space shuttle rode a barge from Jersey City, N.J. to the Intrepid, where it was hoisted by crane onto the flight deck.

A flotilla of vessels including a police boat, a Fire Department boat and a yellow taxi boat accompanied the Enterprise as it sailed past the Statue of Liberty, the World Trade Center site and other Manhattan landmarks en route to the Intrepid at midtown.

"I've never seen a space shuttle, and I'm looking at one," said Thomas Hoffer, 69, who described himself as homeless. "I'm just spellbound."

Fashion photographer Stewart Shining, 47, said his young nephews in California had emailed him to ask if he could see the Enterprise.

Unions Lost Big In The Wisconsin Recall

BY SAM HANANEL
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Gov. Scott Walker's definitive victory in Wisconsin's recall election is already reverberating in other state capitals. It exposed the shrunken political muscle of the unions that tried to oust him, underscoring their vulnerability to attacks from the right and inability to retaliate.

Republicans in some nearby states where anti-union measures failed this year say they now plan to use Walker's victory to mount renewed efforts in 2013.

Instead of ejecting the Republican who slashed state and local government workers' job benefits and bargaining rights, the union-instigated recall has made Walker a heroic model for conservatives five months before the November election.

"I think it's bad news for the labor movement," said John Russo, a labor studies professor at Youngstown State University. "It gives the impression they are not as strong as they once were, which they are not."

Labor leaders maintain that the fight was worth it, that the massive protests against Walker and bitter divisions it created will make other governors and legislators think twice before making similar forays against unions.

But Walker's victory is encouraging Republicans in other states to push ahead with their own efforts to curtail unions' power and chop away at the benefits gained for their members over the years.

GOP lawmakers in states such as Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri and New Hampshire are likely to push harder for right-to-work legislation or other measures that restrict automatic union dues collection.

No labor fight had so captivated Americans since President Ronald Reagan fired 11,000 air traffic controllers for illegally striking in 1981, a move that encouraged businesses to take tougher stands against unions and helped precipitate a steep decline in union membership.



JOHN KLEIN/MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker speaks with workers on Wednesday, a day after winning a recall election.

"I consider it bigger than the air traffic controllers," said Gary Chaison, a professor of industrial relations at Clark University in Worcester, Mass. "I think it's going to embolden employers in bargaining and discourage workers from joining unions. I think it's hitting unions on all fronts."

Republicans in some states near Wisconsin are paying attention.

"Not only is there the momentum in favor of the kinds of reforms that Governor Walker advocated for and got passed, but there becomes a competitive issue," said Minnesota state Sen. Dave Thompson, a Republican who's sponsoring an amendment to his state's constitution to make Minnesota a right-to-work state.

"It becomes harder for places like Minnesota to compete economically with states that make positive reforms that benefit the business climate and make life easier on taxpayers," Thompson said.

In Missouri, state Sen. Dan Brown is hoping the Wisconsin recall results will encourage the Legislature's large, yet reluctant GOP majorities to move forward next year with bills limiting some union powers.

Brown wants to pare back mandatory wages on public works projects and halt the perpetual deduction of union dues from public employee paychecks by requiring annual written authorization.

After Republicans swept to power in dozens of state legislatures in 2010, unions have spent millions battling anti-labor measures across the country. They were already smarting this year after Indiana became the first state in a decade to pass right-to-work legislation and Michigan banned automatic deduction of union dues from teacher paychecks.

Their loss in Wisconsin far overshadowed the unions' biggest political win in the past year, when Ohio voters last November struck down in a referendum a law pushed by Republican Gov. John Kasich curbing collective bargaining rights for public workers.

Public employee unions suffered two more losses Tuesday in California. Voters in San Diego approved a ballot measure that imposes a six-year freeze on pay levels used to determine pension benefits for city workers. A measure approved in San Jose requires city employees to pay up to 16

percent of their salaries to keep their retirement plan or accept more modest benefits.

AFL-CIO political director Mike Podhorzer said unions should get more credit for the Ohio win and for collecting nearly 1 million signatures to initiate the Wisconsin recall. Walker and his supporters spent \$47 million — compared with Democrats' \$19 million — to counter a strong union ground game that pushed voter turnout to levels usually seen during presidential contests.

"This is not an experience many politicians want to go through," Podhorzer said.

Still, the turnout effort fell short of producing the unions' hoped-for results. Exit polls showed voters from union households breaking 63 percent to 37 percent for Democratic Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett. That's virtually the same as in the 2010 governor's race, even though union households represented a bigger greater share of the electorate this time.

Walker had convinced his Republican-dominated Legislature that limiting collective bargaining rights and making union members pay more for their health coverage and pensions was necessary to plug a \$3.6 billion state budget shortfall. Labor leaders claimed he also wanted to cripple unions by banning automatic dues deduction for public employees.

Since the new Wisconsin law took effect, the state's second largest union, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, has lost nearly half of its members in the state, according to internal documents obtained by The Associated Press. The documents show that between March 2011 and February 2012, Wisconsin membership in AFSCME dropped from 63,577 to 34,942.

As national union membership has dwindled to just 11.8 percent of the workforce, the one growth area in recent years has been among teachers, firefighters and other government employees. Public sector workers now represent more than half of all union members.

Cruel June For Obama, Dems — And Could Get Worse

BY DONNA CASSATA
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Just one week old, June already is proving a cruel month for President Barack Obama and the Democrats — and it could get a lot worse.

The political blows from Tuesday's bitter loss in Wisconsin's gubernatorial recall and from last week's abysmal unemployment numbers, bad as they were, could multiply before the month is out.

The Supreme Court will pass judgment shortly on the president's signature legislative achievement — the 2010 law overhauling the nation's health care system — and also will decide on his administration's challenge to Arizona's tough immigration law. If Chief Justice John Roberts and the court strike down all or part of the health care law, it could demoralize Democrats who invested more than a year — and quite a few political careers — to secure the bill's passage.

And in Arizona, aside from the big immigration case, the Democrats are fighting to hold onto the House seat of Gabrielle Giffords, who resigned in January to focus on recovering from her gunshot wound. In next Tuesday's special election, former Giffords aide Ron Barber is locked in a close race with Republican Jesse Kelly, who lost to her in 2010 by just 4,156 votes.

Facing an election-year summer fraught with political peril, the Democrats are struggling to revive supporters' spirits and counteract developments that could energize Republicans and solidify public opinion that the country is on the wrong track and in need of new leadership.

In a video pep talk to supporters this week, Obama campaign manager Jim Messina acknowledged the challenge. "We need to stay focused, work hard and ignore

the ups and downs," he said.

Even before the votes were counted in Republican Gov. Scott Walker's win over Democrat Tom Barrett Tuesday night, there was hand-wringing and second-guessing among Democrats on Capitol Hill.

— The jobs numbers have them worried that they'll be running on a weak economy, with the White House — and them — getting the blame.

— Wisconsin's implications for the general election and for organized labor in general have some asking why Obama didn't get more involved than an 11th-hour tweet.

— The looming Supreme Court decision on the health care law has some Democrats insisting the White House and the party did a terrible job selling the overhaul to the American people.

In Wisconsin, millions of dollars spent on Walker's behalf trumped labor's get-out-the-vote effort in a swing state that suddenly moves up on the battleground list in the presidential race. Republicans also have set their sights on the seat of retiring Wisconsin Sen. Herb Kohl in a race that probably will pit Democratic Rep. Tammy Baldwin against the winner of the Aug. 14 GOP primary. Tommy Thompson, a former governor who was secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services under President George W. Bush, faces former

Rep. Mark Neumann, state Assembly Speaker Jeff Fitzgerald and millionaire hedge fund manager Eric Hovde.

Eager to see a broad upside for the recall result, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney said voters in Wisconsin "recognize we just can't keep going down the same path that we're on. It ends up in calamity. ... I'm convinced that the American people recognize, or they will by the time the election comes, that we've got a very stark choice, two very different paths."

There's no shortage of Democratic advice on how Obama should frame the message for voters in the next five months.

Hours before Walker's win, Rep. Alcee Hastings, D-Fla., said Obama should have gone to Wisconsin to help Barrett.

"I don't understand what he stood to lose in Wisconsin. I can't make that make sense," Hastings said in an interview. He wondered if Obama had been overly worried about alienating the "3 or 4 percent Republicans that may have voted for him the last time," and added, "Nobody, nobody knows what so-called independents are going to do." In 2008, Obama won the state, 56-42 percent.

Labor is a core Democratic constituency, and Hastings fears that Walker's win will provide cover for efforts to undermine collective

bargaining rights for unions.

On Wednesday, House Republicans emerging from their weekly closed-door meeting said the mood was clearly upbeat after the Wisconsin win and the task ahead will be keeping high political expectations in check.

Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, cast the message in economic terms and oft-repeated GOP arguments.

"The American people have had it with big government, high taxes and a regulatory system that knows no bounds, and they want elected officials to take control of the situation so the American job creators can go back to doing what they do best, creating jobs," Boehner told reporters.

The economy trumps all issues, and the worse-than-expected 69,000 jobs created in May and an uptick in the unemployment rate to 8.2 percent worry Democrats.

Rep. Peter Welch, D-Vt. said if the public perception is of an economy getting better, as it was until May, "then it's much more favorable to the election being a choice between Obama and Romney. My view, Obama wins that easily. If it becomes just a referendum on Obama, i.e., the economy, then we're playing more defense than we want to."

The next batch of jobs numbers comes out July 6.

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Name: _____ Gender: M / F

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Date of Birth (optional): _____

Month and Year of Diagnosis: _____ Type of Cancer: _____

T-Shirt Size (circle): YM, YL, S, M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL, 4XL

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* Please contact me about volunteer opportunities with the American Cancer Society. Yes/No

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Survivor Registration forms can also be completed on the Yankton Relay For Life website at www.relayforlife.org/yanktonSD (click on Survivors & Caregivers) **by June 15th** to ensure t-shirt size.

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