

Pres. Pushes To Expand Benefits

WASHINGTON (AP) — A year after the Supreme Court struck down a law barring federal recognition of gay marriages, the Obama administration granted an array of new benefits Friday to same-sex couples, including those who live in states where gay marriage is against the law.

The new measures range from Social Security and veterans benefits to work leave for caring for sick spouses. They are part of President Barack Obama's efforts to expand whatever protections he can offer to gays and lesbians even though more than half of the states don't recognize gay marriage. That effort has been confounded by laws that say some benefits should be conferred only to couples whose marriages are recognized by the states where they live, rather than the states where they were married.

Aiming to circumvent that issue, the Veterans Affairs Department will start letting gay people who tell the government they are married to a veteran to be buried alongside them in a national cemetery, drawing on the VA's authority to waive the usual marriage requirement.

In a similar move, the Social Security Administration will start processing some survivor and death benefits for those in same-sex relationships who live in states that don't recognize gay marriage. Nineteen states plus the District of Columbia currently recognize gay marriage, although court challenges to gay marriage bans are pending in many states.

For Tim Sagen of Fort Collins, Colorado, the implications could be profound. A retired electrical engineer, Sagen receives higher Social Security payments than his 79-year-old partner, Ken Hooie. The two will celebrate their 47th anniversary in August but until now would have been prevented from accessing each other's benefits.

Ukraine's President Orders Cease-Fire

KIEV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's president ordered his forces to cease fire Friday and halt military operations for a week against pro-Russian separatists in the country's east — the first step in a peace plan he hopes will end the fighting that has killed hundreds.

The Kremlin dismissed the plan, saying it sounded like an ultimatum and lacked any firm offer to open talks with insurgents.

Petro Poroshenko, making his first trip to the east as Ukraine's president, said that the cease-fire will run until the morning of June 27 and that his troops reserve the right to fire back if separatists attack them or civilians.

"The Ukrainian army is ceasing fire," he said in a statement. "But this does not mean that we will not resist. In case of aggression toward our troops, we will do everything to defend the territory of our state."

Separatists in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions have declared independence from his government in Kiev, occupied public buildings and fought with heavy weapons against Ukrainian troops.

IRS Head: No Apology For Lost Emails

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defiant before skeptical Republicans, the head of the IRS refused to apologize Friday for lost emails that might shed light on the tax agency's targeting of tea party and other groups before the 2010 and 2012 elections.

Instead, Commissioner John Koskinen accused the chairman of a powerful House committee of misleading the public by making false statements based on incomplete information.

The contentious back-and-forth didn't end there. Later in the hearing, Rep. Paul Ryan, the Republicans' vice presidential candidate two years ago, told Koskinen bluntly that "nobody believes you."

"I have a long career. That's the first time anybody has said they do not believe me," said Koskinen, who came out of retirement in December to take over the IRS. Previously, he served in other positions under Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

The hearing showed that emotions are running hotter than ever in the dispute over the IRS and political fundraising.

VA: Many Sr. Execs. Got Bonuses

WASHINGTON (AP) — About 65 percent of senior executives at the Veterans Affairs Department got performance bonuses last year despite widespread treatment delays and preventable deaths at VA hospitals and clinics, the agency said Friday.

More than 300 VA executives were paid a total of \$2.7 million in bonuses last year, said Gina Farrissee, assistant VA secretary for human resources and administration. That amount is down from about \$3.4 million in bonuses paid in 2012, Farrissee said.

The totals do not include tens of millions of dollars in bonuses awarded to doctors, dentists and other medical providers throughout the VA's nearly 900 hospitals and clinics.

Workers at the Phoenix VA Health Care System — where officials have confirmed dozens of patients died while awaiting treatment — received about \$3.9 million in bonuses last year, newly released records show. The merit-based bonuses were doled out to about 650 employees, including doctors, nurses, administrators, secretaries and cleaning staff.

Iraq's Top Cleric Increases Pressure On Al-Maliki

BY HAMZA HENDAWI
 Associated Press

BAGHDAD — The most respected voice for Iraq's Shiite majority on Friday joined calls for the country's prime minister to form an inclusive government or step aside, a day after President Barack Obama challenged Nouri al-Maliki to create a leadership representative of all Iraqis.

Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani's thinly veiled reproach was the most influential to place blame on the Shiite prime minister for the nation's spiraling crisis.

The focus on the need to replace al-Maliki comes as Iraq faces its worst crisis since the withdrawal of U.S. troops in 2011. Over the past two weeks, Iraq has lost a big chunk of the north to the al-Qaida-inspired Sunni militants of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, whose lightning offensive led to the capture of Mosul, the nation's second-largest city.

The gravity of the crisis has forced the usually reclusive al-Sistani, who normally stays above the political fray, to wade into politics, and his comments, delivered through a representative, could ultimately seal al-Maliki's fate.

Calling for a dialogue between the political coalitions that won seats in the April 30 parliamentary election, al-Sistani said it was imperative that they form "an effective government that enjoys broad national support, avoids past mistakes and opens new horizons toward a better future for all Iraqis."

Deeply revered by Iraq's majority Shiites, al-Sistani's critical words could force al-Maliki, who emerged from relative obscurity in 2006 to lead

the country, to step down.

On Thursday, Obama stopped short of calling for al-Maliki to resign, but his carefully worded comments did all but that. "Only leaders that can govern with an inclusive agenda are going to be able to truly bring the Iraqi people together and help them through this crisis," Obama declared at the White House.

The Iranian-born al-Sistani, believed to be 86, lives in the Shiite holy city of Najaf, south of Baghdad, where he rarely ventures out of his modest house on a narrow alley near the city's Imam Ali shrine and does not give media interviews. His call to arms last week prompted thousands of Shiites to volunteer to fight against the Sunni militants who now control a large swath of territory astride both sides of the Iraq-Syria border.

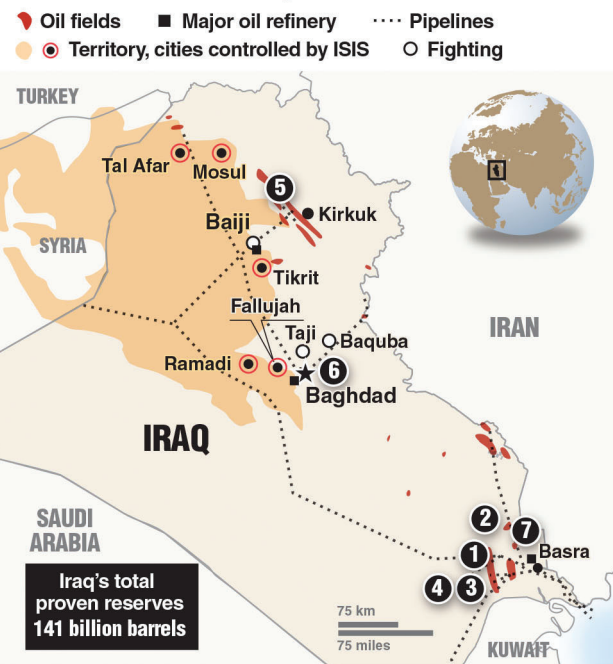
The extent of al-Sistani's influence was manifested in the years following the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq when he forced Washington to modify its blueprint for the country and agree to the election of a constituent assembly that drafted the nation's constitution.

For the past two years, he has shunned politicians of all sects, refusing to receive any of them to show his disillusionment with the way they run the country. However, the danger posed by the Islamic State militants appears to have forced him to say more.

His call to arms has given the fight against the Sunni insurgents the feel of a religious war between Shiites and Sunnis. His office in Najaf dismissed that charge, with his representative, Ahmed al-Safi, saying Friday: "The call for volunteers targeted Iraqis from all groups and sects. ... It did not have a sectarian basis

Most of Iraq's oil is in south

Iraq has the world's fifth biggest proven oil reserves. Most of the oil is in the south, away from the current fighting. The largest fields and where the ISIS insurgents have control:



| Oil field | Estimated reserves | In billions of barrels |
|-----------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Rymailia | | 17.7 |
| 2. Majnoon | | 13.0 |
| 3. West Qurna 2 | | 13.0 |
| 4. West Qurna 1 | | 8.7 |
| 5. Kirkuk | | 8.7 |
| 6. East Baghdad | | 8.0 |
| 7. Nahr Bin Uma | | 6.5 |

Source: Securing America's Future Energy, World Energy Outlook, BBC, Reuters, Iraq Oil Almanac © 2014 MCT

and cannot be." Al-Maliki's State of Law bloc won the most seats in the April vote, but his hopes to retain his job are in doubt with rivals challenging him from within the broader Shiite alliance. In order to govern, his bloc must first form a majority coalition in the new 328-seat legislature, which must meet by June 30.

If al-Maliki were to relinquish his post now, according to the constitution the president, Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, would assume the job until a new prime minister is elected. But the ailing Talabani has been in Germany for treatment since 2012, so his deputy,

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| Download Limits? | NO DATA LIMITS | YES (2G/5G/10G Plans) | YES (5G/10G/20G Plans) |
| Service Area Coverage | Yankton SD and NE Areas | Yankton SD and NE Areas | Yankton SD and NE Areas |
| Price | Plans starting at \$59.95/mo. | Plans start at \$50.00/mo. for data plans with limits as part of voice/data bundles | Plans start at \$60.00/mo. |
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Come Join The Fun
June 27 & 28, Riverside Park!

This year's Relay For Life is getting revved up with a great theme of "There's No Place Like HOPE"! This Wizard of Oz inspired theme is going to be threaded through the entire night with special games, reenactments, special themed laps, and prizes for everyone willing to come down and help us celebrate our survivors and remember those we have lost to cancer. Take a look at this great line up of ceremonies and activities:

- 4:30pm Survivor Registration
- 5:00-7:00pm.....Community Meal – EVERYONE WELCOME! Pork Loin, chips, carrots, watermelon and drink. Survivors eat free. Everyone else is minimum donation of \$5.
- 5:45pm.....Survivor Picture
- 6:00-9:00pm.....Relay Store
- 6:15pm.....Survivor Lap/Ceremony
- 7:30pm.....Lewis & Clark Theatre Company presents the return of "Wicked Witch of Oz"
- 8:00pm.....Fight Back Ceremony
- 8:30pm.....ACS Fight Back Line Dance
- Emerald City Talent Search – Bring your talents to share with others!
- 9:30pm.....Luminaria Ceremony
- 10:00pm.....Raffle Drawing
- Ruby Red Shoes competition! Everyone gets to vote. There is a \$5 entry fee and prizes will be awarded. Please make sure to have your entries turned in by 6:00pm.
- 11:00pm.....Laser Tag
- Midnight.....Wizard of Oz Quiz Bowl!
- 3:00am.....Flying Monkey Games!
- 4:30am.....Darla's Boot Camp!
- 5:00am.....Breakfast
- 5:30am-6:00am.....Closing Ceremony & Clean Up

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