

Obama's Legacy Forms With Help Of Unlikely Allies

BY JULIE PACE

AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON — Long past the prime of his presidency, Barack Obama is defying the lame-duck label and solidifying the contours of his legacy with the help of unlikely allies in Congress and the Supreme Court.

Led by Chief Justice John Roberts, the high court preserved Obama's signature health care law Thursday, hours before a Republican-controlled Congress paved the way for an Asia-Pacific trade pact at the center of the president's international agenda. The Supreme Court also handed Obama a surprise win by upholding a key tool used to fight housing discrimination.

"This was a good day for America," Obama said, speaking from the White House Rose Garden shortly after the court rulings.

For a president deep into his second term, the legal and legislative victories were a vindication of policy priorities that have sapped his political capital and exposed rifts with his own Democratic Party. The back-to-back successes also energized a weary White House, with senior officials and longtime advisers making little effort to hide their glee.

"I don't think that a lot of people expected that a lame-duck president could still very actively lead on every major issue being debated today," said Bill Burton, a former White House and campaign adviser to Obama.

The coming days could bring further clarity to president's legacy, as U.S. negotiators work feverishly to finalize a nuclear deal with Iran ahead of a June 30 deadline. While securing an elusive agreement would mark a major foreign policy breakthrough for Obama, it could be months or even years before it's known if a deal successfully prevents Iran from building a bomb.

Against the backdrop of his recent successes, Obama will also confront the stark limitations of his presidency when he travels to Charleston, South Carolina, Friday to deliver a eulogy for victims of last week's massacre at a black church. Obama has failed to make any progress on gun control legislation, and even against the backdrop of the tragedy in South Carolina, he made clear he had given up hope of pursuing such measures again during his remaining 19 months in office.

Despite the unfinished business Obama will leave

King v. Burwell

The Supreme Court ruled, by a 6-3 vote, that the health care exchanges created by the Affordable Care Act that are run by the federal government are the same as state-run exchanges for the purposes of providing tax credits.



Ruth Bader Ginsburg



Stephen Breyer



Sonia Sotomayor



Elena Kagan



Anthony Kennedy



John Roberts



Samuel Alito



Antonin Scalia



Clarence Thomas



Ruling Opinion written by Roberts

"Here, the statutory scheme compels us to reject petitioners' interpretation because it would destabilize the individual insurance market in any State with a Federal Exchange, and likely create the very 'death spirals' that Congress designed the Act to avoid."

Previous rulings on the Affordable Care Act

National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius 2012

The court ruled that the individual mandate of the ACA, requiring individuals to purchase health care or pay a tax, was a valid use of Congress' authority to impose taxes.

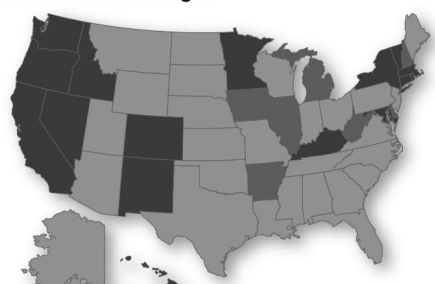
Burwell v. Hobby Lobby 2014

The court ruled that the mandate to provide contraception violated the religious freedom of closely held for-profit corporations.

Dissent Opinion written by Scalia

"The Act that Congress passed makes tax credits available only on an 'Exchange established by the State.' This Court, however, concludes that this limitation would prevent the rest of the Act from working as well as hoped. So it rewrites the law to make tax credits available everywhere. We should start calling this law SCOTUScare."

Health care exchanges



■ Conn. ■ R.I. ■ Del. ■ D.C.
■ State-run exchange
■ State/federal partnership
■ Federally run exchange

Source: United States Supreme Court, National Conference of State Legislatures

Graphic: Tyler Davis, Tribune News Service

behind, Thursday's health care ruling largely answered what has long been one of the biggest questions looming over his White House: Would the sweeping health care overhaul that has fueled so much Republican hostility toward Obama survive his presidency?

Now, that answer is all but guaranteed to be yes.

The Supreme Court ruling marked the second time the justices have saved the health care law, with Roberts writing the majority opinion both times. In an ironic twist, Obama as a senator voted against Roberts when he was nominated by former Republican President George W. Bush.

While House Republicans may still hold votes to repeal the health care measure, as they have already done more than 50 times, the Senate and Obama's veto power prevent such efforts from going any further. And even if Obama is succeeded by a Republican president, fully repealing the

law could become less politically palatable given the millions of Americans who have gained health care coverage through its mandates.

"The 6-3 decision is strong validation of the constitutionality of the law," White House senior adviser Valerie Jarrett said of the court's ruling. "Coupled with over 16 million people who currently have health care who didn't have it before, that makes it very difficult to unwind."

Still, some Republican presidential candidates insisted that remained their goal.

"This decision is not the end of the fight against Obamacare," said Jeb Bush, the former Florida governor. "I will work with Congress to repeal and replace this flawed law with conservative reforms that empower consumers with more choices and control over their health care decisions."

Obama had to flip Washington's standard political scorecard in order to get support for the Asia-Pacific trade pact.

While Republicans are largely supportive of free trade, many of Obama's fellow Democrats fear such agreements put American workers at a disadvantage and have weak environmental protections.

Just two weeks ago, Democrats dealt Obama an embarrassing defeat on trade, leaving him searching for a solution with many of the same Republicans lawmakers who decry the health care law.

The unusual coalition succeeded. On Wednesday, Obama secured the authority to get fast approval for a final Trans-Pacific Partnership deal, and on Thursday, Congress sent a workers' assistance package to his desk.

White House officials cast Obama's successful dealings with Republicans as evidence of what they had hoped would be another piece of the president's legacy: an ability to work with his political opponents and curb Washington's intense partisanship.

Hundreds Attend 1st Funerals For Church Shooting Victims

BY JONATHAN DREW AND MEG KINNARD

Associated Press

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. — A choir and band launched into one of Ethel Lance's favorite gospel tunes and roused hundreds of mourners from their seats Thursday in a crescendo of music at the first funeral for victims of the massacre at a historic black church.

People stood to clap, nod and sway — some closing their eyes under the exertion of the cathartic singing. Ushers walked through the aisles with boxes of tissues for people to dab their tears. An organ, drums and bass guitar provided the rhythm.

The service was fitting for the 70-year-old Charleston native with "an infectious smile," who served with vigor as an officer at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, the congregation's interim pastor said.

"When it was time for the ushers to usher, she had the usher strut," the Rev. Norvel Goff said. "When Sister Lance praised the Lord, you had to strap on your spiritual seat belt."

Police officers stood guard and checked bags as mourners filed in.

Despite pleas to withhold debate until after the funerals, the South Carolina governor's call to remove the Confederate flag from in front of the Statehouse in response to the killings was reverberating around the South. A growing number of leading politicians said Civil War symbols should be removed from places of honor, despite their integral role as elements of Southern identity.

Some authorities have worried openly about a backlash as people take matters into their



JAY KARR/THE ISLAND PACKET/TNS
Jasper County, S.C., deputy sheriff Vicky Hanley salutes as the hearse carrying the remains of Clementa Pinckney arrives at St. John AME Church in Ridgeland, S.C. before a viewing on Thursday.

own hands.

"Black Lives Matter" was spray-painted on a monument to Confederate President Jefferson Davis in Richmond, Virginia, on Thursday, only the latest statue to be defaced. On Tuesday and Wednesday, African-American churches in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Macon, Georgia, were intentionally set afire.

But in Charleston, the early gestures of forgiveness by the victims' families toward a shooting suspect who embraced the Confederate flag set a healing tone that has continued through a series of unity rallies, drawing thousands of people intent on leaving no room for racial hate. "A hateful, disillusioned young man came into the church filled with hate ... and the reaction was love," Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr. said at the day's second funeral, held for Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, 45. "He came in with symbols of division. The confederate battle flag is coming down off our state Capitol."

Before the second service,

more than 100 members of Coleman-Singleton's Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority formed a ring around the main part of the large sanctuary as part of an Ivy Beyond the Wall ceremony. One by one, the women, clad all in white, filed past the open casket with green ivy leaves, then clasped hands and sang.

Funerals for the other victims were set to happen over the next week, including one Friday for Emanuel's lead pastor, the Rev. Clementa Pinckney, where President Barack Obama will deliver the eulogy.

A somber procession of mourners filed past Pinckney's open casket during a viewing Thursday night at the Emanuel church. The state senator also had public viewings Thursday at a church in Ridgeland, South Carolina, and a day earlier in the state Capitol.

Gov. Nikki Haley eulogized Coleman-Singleton, commending her desire to help others.

Jesse Jackson and the Rev. Al Sharpton attended as well, and referred to Dylann Storm Roof, the 21-year-old white man facing nine murder charges.

Sharpton recalled how he spent the morning of June 17 watching Loretta Lynch be sworn in as the nation's first black female attorney general.

"That morning, I saw how far we have come," Sharpton said. "That night, I saw how far yet we have to go."

Authorities said Lance and Coleman-Singleton had welcomed the gunman into their Bible study, where he sat among them for nearly an hour before opening fire.

Lance had served as a sexton at Emanuel for the last five years, helping to keep the historic building clean. She loved gospel music, watched over a family that grew to include her five children, seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren, and pushed them to earn advanced degrees.

"I want my grandmother's legacy to be what she stood for," said granddaughter Aja Risher. "She is going to be a catalyst for change in this country."

Haley started the groundswell against Confederate icons Monday by successfully calling on South Carolina lawmakers to debate taking down the Confederate battle flag flying in front of the Statehouse. Then Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley, also a conservative Republican, brought down four secessionist flags at the Capitol in Montgomery.

Bentley compared the banner to the universally shunned symbols of Nazi Germany, a stunning reversal in a region where the Confederacy was formed 154 years ago and where Jefferson Davis was elected president. By Wednesday, the mayor in Memphis, Tennessee, was calling for the grave and statue of Confederate General and Ku Klux Klan leader Nathan Bedford Forrest to be removed from a city park.

Chris Christie Is Entering 2016 Race

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie is entering the 2016 Republican presidential nomination contest and will announce that Tuesday at his old high school, several people familiar with his plans told The Associated Press.

The Republican leader of a Democratic stronghold has been laying the groundwork for a White House run for months. In 2012, he decided against seeking the GOP nomination to challenge President Barack Obama, and focused on his duties in the state and planning a re-election campaign.

This time, Christie, battered and bruised following a political scandal at home, will not be a potential front-runner when he joins a field of more than a dozen major GOP candidates. Instead, he is trying to emerge from a pack of senators, governors, businesspeople and others, with more people expected to join in coming weeks.

The people familiar with Christie's plans spoke to the AP on Thursday on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to pre-empt Christie's announcement. His plans were first reported by WNYC radio in New York.

"I think it's great timing," said Leighton Lord, a friend of Christie since college who has been serving as his informal liaison in the early-voting state of South Carolina. "The field is still very unsettled and I think a lot of people are still looking for someone they want to support."

Guard Denies Knowing Of Escape Plans

PLATTSBURGH, N.Y. (AP) — A prison guard charged in connection with the escape of two killers admitted providing them with tools, paint, frozen hamburger and access to a catwalk electrical box, but claims he never knew they planned to bust out, authorities say.

As the search for the convicts entered its 20th day Thursday, Gene Palmer was released on \$25,000 bail after his arrest on charges of promoting prison contraband, tampering with evidence and official misconduct.

Palmer, 57, became the second Clinton Correctional Facility employee to be charged since Richard Matt and David Sweat used power tools to cut their way out of the maximum-security prison in far northern New York on June 6.

Prison tailor shop instructor Joyce Mitchell, 51, stands charged with helping them break out.

But in contrast to the allegations against Mitchell, Palmer said he was an unwitting helper.

State Dept. Unable To Find Emails

WASHINGTON (AP) — The State Department cannot find in its records all or part of 15 work-related emails from Hillary Rodham Clinton's private server that were released this week by a House panel investigating the 2012 attack in Benghazi, Libya, officials said Thursday.

The emails all predate the Sept. 11 assault on the U.S. diplomatic facility and include scant words written by Clinton herself, the officials said. They consist of more in a series of would-be intelligence reports passed to her by longtime political confidant Sidney Blumenthal, the officials said.

Nevertheless, the fact that the State Department says it can't find them among emails she provided surely will raise new questions about Clinton's use of a personal email account and server while secretary of state and whether she has provided the agency all of her work-related correspondence, as she claims.

"She has turned over 55,000 pages of materials to the State Department, including all emails in her possession from Mr. Blumenthal," said Nick Merrill, a Clinton campaign spokesman, when asked about the discrepancy.

Clinton is running for the 2016 Democratic presidential nomination.

Islamic State Extremists Attack 2 Cities

BEIRUT (AP) — After weeks of setbacks, militants from the Islamic State group launched swift counteroffensives Thursday on predominantly Kurdish areas of northern Syria, killing and wounding dozens and setting off car bombs, activists and officials said.

The two-pronged attack on the northeastern city of Hasakeh and the border town of Kobani came two days after an Islamic State spokesman acknowledged that the group might lose some battles but would not be defeated. The spokesman, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, had urged militants to strike back at their foes during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and "shake the ground beneath them."

The early morning assault by IS captured part of Hasakeh, which has long been divided between Syrian Kurds and the military forces of President Bashar Assad.

The militants also hit Kobani, a northern town on Syria's border with Turkey that had become a symbol of Kurdish resistance against the Islamic State extremists. The Kurdish forces, backed by a campaign of U.S.-led airstrikes, drove the militants from Kobani and surrounding villages in January.

Thursday's fighting in Kobani killed 35 civilians and Kurdish fighters, and 14 extremists, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. It was the first time in six months the militants, who set off three car bombs, had managed to enter the town, the group said.

Univision Drops Miss USA After Remarks

NEW YORK (AP) — A Univision network is dropping the Miss USA pageant and the company says it will cut all business ties with Donald Trump in a spiraling controversy over comments the Republican presidential candidate made recently about Mexican immigrants.

Univision said Thursday it would pull the plug on its Spanish-language coverage of the pageant July 12 by its UniMas network. It also has severed its business relationship with the Miss Universe Organization, which produces the Miss USA pageant, due to what it called "insulting remarks about Mexican immigrants" by Trump, a part owner of Miss Universe.

During his presidential campaign kickoff speech last week, Trump portrayed immigrants from Mexico as "bringing drugs, they're bringing crime, they're rapists, and some, I assume, are good people." He also called for building a wall along the southern border of the U.S. The remarks drew condemnation from the Mexican government as "biased and absurd."

NBC is scheduled to go forward with its own pageant coverage, as it has done since 2003. But in a statement Thursday, the network sought to separate itself from Trump's remarks.

"Donald Trump's opinions do not represent those of NBC, and we do not agree with his positions on a number of issues, including his recent comments on immigration," NBC said.

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