

Victim's Mother Pursues Trademarks

SANFORD, Fla. (AP) — The mother of slain Florida teenager Trayvon Martin has filed papers seeking to trademark two slogans based on his name.

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office filings by Sybrina Fulton are for the sayings "I Am Trayvon" and "Justice For Trayvon." The applications were filed last week.

The applications say the trademarks could be used for such things as DVDs and CDs. An attorney who filed the papers says Fulton wants to protect intellectual property rights for use in projects to help other families in similar situations.

Neighborhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman has claimed he shot the 17-year-old Martin in self-defense. Martin's family claims racial profiling was behind the killing, which has become a national racial flash-point. Martin was black. Zimmerman's father is white and mother Hispanic.

Pope Benedict XVI Lands In Cuba

SANTIAGO, Cuba (AP) — Pope Benedict XVI arrived in Cuba on Monday in the footsteps of his more famous predecessor, saying he holds great affection for Cubans on both sides of the Florida Straits and heart-felt hopes for reconciliation.

President Raul Castro warmly greeted the pope, who said he was coming as "a pilgrim of charity" as he arrived at the sweltering airport in Santiago, Cuba's second largest city.

The pontiff, who last week said Marxism "no longer responds to reality," gave a more gentle tweak to his hosts by expressing sympathy for all islanders, including prisoners.

"I carry in my heart the just aspirations and legitimate desires of all Cubans, wherever they may be," he said. "Those of the young and the elderly, of adolescents and children, of the sick and workers, of prisoners and their families, and of the poor and those in need."

In his own remarks, the Cuban leader assured Benedict his country favors complete religious freedom and has good relations with all religious institutions.

'Pink Slime' Maker Halts Some Work

LUBBOCK, Texas (AP) — The maker of "pink slime" suspended operations Monday at all but one plant where the beef ingredient is made, acknowledging recent public uproar over the product has cost the company business.

Craig Letch, director of food quality and assurance for Beef Products Inc., declined to discuss financial details, but said business has taken a "substantial" hit since social media exploded with worry over the ammonia-treated filler and an online petition seeking its ouster from schools drew hundreds of thousands of supporters. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has decided school districts may stop using it and some retail chains have pulled products containing it from their shelves.

Federal regulators say the product, which has been used for years and is known in the industry as "lean, finely textured beef," meets food safety standards. But critics call the product an unappetizing example of industrialized food production.

Beef Products will suspend operations at plants in Amarillo, Texas; Garden City, Kan.; and Waterloo, Iowa, Letch said. About 200 employees at each of the three plants will get full salary and benefits for 60 days during the suspension. The company's plant at its Dakota Dunes, S.D., headquarters will continue operations.

GOP Hits Obama On 'Flexibility' Comment

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — President Barack Obama told Russia's leader Monday that he would have more flexibility after the November election to deal with the contentious issue of missile defense, a candid assessment of political reality that was picked up by a microphone without either leader apparently knowing.

Obama's Republican opponents pounced on the comment, saying the president has a hidden agenda that could include concessions to the Russians if he is re-elected this fall.

"This is my last election," Obama is heard telling outgoing Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. "After my election, I have more flexibility."

Medvedev replied in English, according to a tape by ABC News: "I understand. I will transmit this information to Vladimir," an apparent reference to incoming President Vladimir Putin.

Obama and Medvedev did not intend for their comments, made during a meeting in Seoul, South Korea, to be made public.

House Votes To Ease Financial Regulations

WASHINGTON (AP) — To the chagrin of consumer groups, the House gave overwhelming bipartisan approval Monday to two bills easing requirements that President Barack Obama's overhaul of financial regulations impose on some exotic financial instruments blamed for helping trigger the 2008 financial crisis.

Lawmakers of both parties said they were relaxing rules that would otherwise inhibit the ability of companies to manage the risks of prices and investments, ultimately reducing their profitability and job creation. Consumer groups said legislators were bowing to the interests of their corporate and finance-world contributors and taking steps that might prove harmful to the public.

The instruments are called derivatives, assets tied to the value of commodities like petroleum or fluctuating economic variables like interest rates.

One measure, approved 357-36, would exempt some derivative trades between related companies from rules including requirements that they set aside money to cover possible losses. Firms sometimes move a derivative from one subsidiary to another that might be in a better position to handle the risk involved, perhaps because one has more capital or could enjoy a tax advantage.

The other bill passed 370-24 and would provide similar exemptions to companies called end-users that directly use the commodity tied to the derivative. For example, airlines sometimes purchase derivatives tied to the cost of jet fuel as a hedge against price increases.

Health Care Reform

Justices Move To Heart Of Overhaul

BY MARK SHERMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As demonstrations swirled outside, Supreme Court justices signaled on Monday they are ready to confront without delay the keep-or-kill questions at the heart of challenges to President Barack Obama's historic health care overhaul. Virtually every American will be affected by the outcome, due this summer in the heat of the election campaign.

On the first of three days of arguments — the longest in decades — none of the justices appeared to embrace the contention that it was too soon for a decision.

Outside the packed courtroom, marching and singing demonstrators on both sides — including doctors in white coats, a

Republican presidential candidate and even a brass quartet — voiced their eagerness for the court to either uphold or throw out the largest expansion in the nation's social safety net since Medicare was enacted in 1965.

Tuesday's arguments will focus on the heart of the case, the provision that aims to extend medical insurance to 30 million more Americans by requiring everyone to carry insurance or pay a penalty.

A decision is expected by late June as Obama fights for re-election. All of his Republican challengers oppose the law and promise its repeal if the high court hasn't struck it down in the meantime.

On Monday, the justices took on the question of whether an obscure tax law could derail the case.

Audio of the day's argument can be found at: <http://apne.ws/H8YR1x>

The 19th century law bars tax disputes from being heard in the courts before the taxes have been paid.

Under the new health care law, Americans who don't purchase health insurance would have to report that omission on their tax returns for 2014 and would pay a penalty along with federal income tax on returns due by April 2015. Among the issues facing the court is whether that penalty is a tax.

Solicitor General Donald Verrilli Jr., defending the health law, urged the court to focus on what he called "the issues of great moment" at the heart of the case. The 26 states and a small business group challenging the law also want the court to go ahead

and decide on its constitutionality without delay.

But one lower court that heard the case, the federal appeals court in Richmond, Va., has said the challenge is premature. No justice seemed likely to buy that argument Monday.

The justices fired two dozen questions in less than a half hour at Washington attorney Robert Long, who was defending the appeals court ruling.

"What is the parade of horrors?" asked Justice Sonia Sotomayor, if the court were to decide the penalties were not a tax and the health care case went forward? Long suggested that could encourage more challenges to the long-standing system in which the general rule is that taxpayers must pay a disputed tax before they can go to court.

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