

Senators Announce Deal On Gun Trafficking

WASHINGTON (AP) — A bipartisan group of senators has reached a deal on legislation that would for the first time create specific federal prohibitions on gun trafficking and the straw purchasing of firearms.

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy says the bill would establish tough penalties for those who buy a firearm or ammunition with the intent of transferring it to someone else. The measure also would make it a crime to smuggle firearms out of the United States.

The bill was crafted by Leahy, two other Democrats and two Republicans and will be part of a package of four gun control measures that will be considered Thursday by the Judiciary Committee. The committee has taken the lead on the gun violence issue following the December school shootings in Newtown, Conn.

US Cardinals Seek Answers To Allegations

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Cardinals said Monday they want to talk to Vatican managers about allegations of corruption and cronyism within the top levels of the Catholic Church before they elect the next pope, evidence that a scandal over leaked papal documents is casting a shadow over the conclave and setting up one of the most unpredictable papal elections in recent times.

The Vatican said 107 of the 115 voting-age cardinals attended the first day of pre-conclave meetings, at which cardinals organize the election, discuss the problems of the church and get to know one another before voting.

The red-capped "princes" of the church took an oath of secrecy and decided to pen a letter of "greeting and gratitude" to Benedict XVI, whose resignation has thrown the church into turmoil amid a torrent of scandals inside and out of the Vatican.

"I would imagine that as we move along there will be questioning of cardinals involved in the governing of the Curia to see what they think has to be changed, and in that context anything can come up," said U.S. Cardinal Francis George.

The Holy See's administrative shortcomings were thrust into stark relief last year with the publication of documents stolen from Benedict's desk that exposed the petty infighting, turf battles and allegations of corruption, nepotism and cronyism in the highest echelons of the Catholic Church.



George

Dozens Of Fleeing Syrian Troops Killed In Iraq

BAGHDAD (AP) — Dozens of Syrian soldiers who had crossed into Iraq for refuge were ambushed Monday with bombs, gunfire and rocket-propelled grenades in an attack that killed 48 of them and heightened concerns that the country could be drawn into Syria's civil war.

The fact that the soldiers were on Iraqi soil at all raises questions about Baghdad's apparent willingness to quietly aid the embattled regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

The well-coordinated attack, which Iraqi officials blamed on al-Qaida's Iraq arm, also suggests possible coordination between the militant group and its ideological allies in Syria who rank among the rebels' most potent fighters.

Iraqi officials said the Syrians had sought refuge through the Ra-biya border crossing in northern Iraq during recent clashes with rebels and were being escorted back home through a different crossing farther south when the ambush occurred. Their convoy was struck near Akashat, not far from the Syrian border.

Ali al-Moussawi, a spokesman for Iraq's prime minister, provided the death toll and said nine Iraqi soldiers were also killed. The Syrians had been disarmed and included some who were wounded, he told The Associated Press.

Republicans Unveil Government Funding Bill

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans controlling the House moved Monday to give the Pentagon more money for military readiness while easing the pain felt by such agencies as the FBI and the Border Patrol from the across-the-board spending cuts that are just starting to take effect.

The effort is part of a huge spending measure that would fund day-to-day federal operations through September — and head off a potential government shutdown later this month.

The measure would leave in place automatic cuts of 5 percent to domestic agencies and 7.8 percent to the Pentagon ordered by President Barack Obama Friday night after months of battling with Republicans over the budget. But the House Republicans' legislation would award the Defense and Veterans Affairs departments their detailed 2013 budgets while other agencies would be frozen at 2012 levels — and then bear the across-the-board cuts.

The impact of the new cuts was proving slow to reach the broader public as Obama convened the first Cabinet meeting of his second term to discuss next steps.

The Pentagon did say it would furlough thousands of military school teachers around the world and close commissaries an extra day each week. And Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano said the spending cuts were causing delays in customs lines at airports including Los Angeles International and O'Hare International in Chicago.

Facility Resident Dies After CPR Is Refused

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. (AP) — Police on Monday were investigating whether there was any criminal wrongdoing in the handling of a health emergency at an independent living facility where a woman died after a nurse refused to provide CPR.

The facility, Glenwood Gardens, defended its nurse, saying she had followed policy in dealing with the 87-year-old woman who fainted in a dining room.

A police dispatcher who fielded the 911 call was told the woman had a heart problem and was barely breathing.

Police immediately routed the call to the Bakersfield Fire Department, where a dispatcher pleaded with a nurse at the facility to perform CPR on the woman.

The nurse refused, saying one of the home's policies prevented her from doing CPR, according to an audio recording of the call.

Cabinet

Obama Looks To Environment

EPA Selection Suggests A New Toughness On Climate Change Issues

BY DINA CAPPIELLO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama signaled his willingness to tackle climate change with his pick of Gina McCarthy to lead the Environmental Protection Agency, one of three major appointments he announced Monday.

A 25-year veteran of environmental policy and politics, McCarthy has worked for Republicans and Democrats, including Obama's presidential rival, Mitt Romney, who tapped her to help draft state plans for curbing the pollution linked to global warming. Along with McCarthy, Obama nominated MIT nuclear physicist Ernie Moniz to lead the Energy Department and Wal-Mart's Sylvia Mathews Burwell to head the budget office.



Gina McCarthy, the new head of the Environmental Protection Agency, looks on as President Barack Obama announces three cabinet-level nominations at the White House Monday in Washington.

McCarthy, 58, a Boston native, has led the EPA's air pollution division since 2009, ushering in a host of new rules targeting air pollution from power plants, automobiles, and oil and gas production.

In nominating McCarthy as the nation's top environmental official, Obama is promoting a climate change champion at a time when he has renewed his commitment to address global warming and the agency is contemplating a host of new rules that could help achieve that. But McCarthy will have to balance the administration's ambitions with a dwindling budget: Congress has cut EPA's budget by 18 percent over the last two years, and the automatic budget cuts that went into effect Friday will hinder the agency's energy efficiency programs and climate research.

Moniz, as head of MIT's Energy Initiative, has worked on developing ways to produce power while curbing greenhouse gas emissions.

"They're going to be making sure we're investing in American energy, that we're doing everything we can to combat the threat of climate change, that we're going to be creating jobs and economic opportunity," Obama said.

McCarthy also brings a distinctive pronunciation of carbon dioxide, the chief pollutant blamed for climate change. McCarthy, in her thick accent, pronounces carbon as "cahbon."

"You wouldn't know by talking to her, but Gina's from Boston," Obama said. He then praised her for putting in place over the last four years what he said were "practical, cost-effective ways to keep our air clean and our economy growing."

Already, McCarthy has orchestrated many of the agency's most controversial new rules, such as placing the first-ever limits on greenhouse gases on newly built power plants and a long-overdue standard to control toxic mercury pollution from burning coal for electricity. On her plate, should she be confirmed by the Senate, will

be even more rules — from lowering sulfur emissions from gasoline to controlling global warming pollution from the older coal-fired power plants.

Like those regulations, her nomination is all but guaranteed to spark criticism from Republicans, who charge that the agency is killing jobs and undermining the coal industry. Environmentalists, meanwhile, will be looking to ensure that McCarthy issues the toughest rules possible, particularly when it comes to controlling emissions from the existing fleet of power plants.

Despite the partisanship in Washington, McCarthy has said the environment is a non-partisan issue, saying that the choice "doesn't have to be, 'Can I have a job or can I breathe clean air.'"

But she hasn't backed down when politicians have falsely portrayed her agency's work, such as suggesting EPA was poised to regulate cow flatulence to combat climate change and was looking to go after farmers for spilling milk.

"When I listen to their concerns, I am struck by the fact that what they think we are often doing bears little or no relationship to what we are actually doing," she said in testimony before Congress in April 2011.

Obama called her on Monday "a straight-shooter" who "welcomes different points of views."

Last year, the American Petroleum Institute praised an EPA rule for which she was responsible because it gave drillers two additional years to curb pollution from recently drilled oil and gas wells.

At the state level, McCarthy pressed for federal action to reduce greenhouse gases and was a key player in setting up the nation's first mandatory cap-and-trade system to reduce global warming pollution from power plants in 10 states. As head of Connecticut's environmental department, she is credited with convincing Republican

Gov. Jodi Rell not to abolish a 10-state regional pact, even as other Republicans, including Romney, pulled out.

McCarthy was also Connecticut's point person on the environment when the state joined a lawsuit aimed at forcing the EPA to regulate global warming emissions from automobiles. When the Supreme Court ruled in April 2007 in the state's favor, McCarthy said "there's no downside." Many of the regulations she has helped shape at agency stemmed from that case.

But the state of Connecticut also sued the Bush administration for a limit on ground-level ozone, the primary ingredient in smog, which McCarthy believed was too weak. That standard is still in place, thanks to a decision by Obama to stall the fast-tracking of a stricter smog limit that had been drafted by McCarthy's division at EPA.

Environmentalists praised the nomination on Monday, stressing her pragmatic approach to solving environmental problems and her ability to work with both parties.

Former Obama climate adviser and Clinton EPA administrator Carol Browner said in an interview that McCarthy has "a good understanding what the president needs to do, wants to do on climate change, which is to find the sweet spot for everyone, from the environmentalists to the states to companies."

But conservatives immediately stressed her role in what they view would as destructive policies from EPA.

"McCarthy will continue the regulatory attack on oil, coal and natural gas with the result that Americans will experience increasing energy costs and high unemployment rates," said Thomas Pyle, president of the Institute for Energy Research, a conservative think tank that receives some support from the fossil fuel industry.

Biden On Iran Threat: Obama Is Not Bluffing

BY JOSH LEDERMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Lamenting intense uncertainty throughout the Middle East, Vice President Joe Biden told a powerful pro-Israel lobby Monday that it's in the United States' interest to protect Israel against threats to its existence.

In a prelude to President Barack Obama's upcoming trip to Israel — his first as president — Biden vowed a nimble and resolute U.S. response to a fluctuating array of threats in Iran, Syria and Egypt and said only through engagement would the U.S. navigate the challenges presented by the Arab Spring.

He told the more than 13,000 Israel supporters at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's annual conference that efforts to delegitimize Israel represent the "most dangerous, pernicious" change he's witnessed in relation to Israel's security, and said Obama would continue to be a bulwark against attempts to undermine the Jewish state.

"It is not a matter of debate. Don't raise it with us. Do not raise it with us," Biden said. "It is not negotiable."



Biden

Arguing the U.S. and Israel have a shared interest in preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, which Israel views as an existential threat, Biden said the U.S. still prefers a diplomatic solution, but said the window for such opportunities is closing. He said the Obama administration would not back down from its pledge to intervene militarily should all other options fail.

"President Barack Obama is not bluffing," Biden said.

But Biden cautioned that if Israel or the U.S. acted too hastily, it

could risk losing the backing of the international community.

"It is critically important for the whole world to know we did everything in our power, we did everything that reasonably could have been expected, to avoid any confrontation," Biden said to muted applause. "That matters because God forbid we have to act, it's important that the rest of the world is with us."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, speaking to the conference by video link from Jerusalem, pushed back against such hesitations, reflecting the degree of tension still present between the U.S. and its closest Mideast ally in their joint efforts to stave off a nuclear Iran.

"From the bottom of my heart

and from the clarity of my brain, words alone will not stop Iran. Sanctions alone will not stop Iran," Netanyahu said.

The U.S. and world nations have imposed a crippling set of sanctions on Iran's oil and financial industries in hopes of forcing Tehran back to the negotiating table and persuading it to give up nuclear ambitions. Israel and Netanyahu have repeatedly hinted its readiness to use military strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities, an endeavor the United States likely would be dragged into.

Iran insists that program is intended for peaceful purposes such as power generation and medical uses.

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Introducing Dr. Adams
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Yankton Medical Clinic, P.C. is pleased to announce the association of Brent Adams, MD, Board Certified Orthopedic Surgeon

Dr. Adams is originally from Yankton, completed his undergraduate degree at South Dakota State University, and is a graduate of The University of South Dakota School of Medicine.

Dr. Adams completed his orthopedic surgery residency at the University of Kansas-Wichita and a fellowship in spine surgery at the Twin Cities Spine Center in Minneapolis, MN. He is board certified in orthopedic surgery and has also been a faculty member for the University of Kansas-Wichita orthopedic surgery residency program.

He will provide care for a multitude of musculoskeletal conditions with a subspecialty focus in spine surgery. Conditions that he will treat include cervical and lumbar spinal stenosis, scoliosis, disk herniations, sciatica, arthroscopic rotator cuff repair, total joint replacement of the hip, knee and shoulder, fracture care, carpal tunnel surgery and athletic injuries.

He is a member of the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, North American Spine Society, and Scoliosis Research Society.

Dr. Adams will begin seeing patients at the Yankton Medical Clinic, P.C. March 11, 2013.

Appointments can be made by calling 605-665-1722.

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