

# Senate Fails To Override Obama's Veto Of Pipeline

BY DINA CAPIELLO  
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WASHINGTON — The Senate on Wednesday failed to override President Barack Obama's veto of a bill to construct the Keystone XL pipeline, the first of many confrontations between the Republican-controlled Congress and the White House this year over energy policy.

The 62-37 vote is expected to be one of many veto showdowns between Republicans and Obama in his final term. Already, the White House has issued more than a dozen veto threats on legislation.

Proponents of the Keystone bill have said since its introduction

that they didn't have the two-thirds of the Senate vote needed to override Obama's veto. They fell four votes short. But they've already been discussing other ways to force the pipeline's approval, either by attaching it onto must-pass spending bills or other, broader, energy legislation.

"If we don't win the battle today, we will win the war because we will find another bill to attach this pipeline to," said Sen. John Hoeven, R-N.D., the chief sponsor of the bill, before the vote.

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell pleaded with Democrats for more support of a bill that he said advanced the president's own priorities.

"If you're interested in jobs and infrastructure and saving your party from an extreme mistake, then join us," he said. "Vote with us to override a partisan veto and help the president pursue priorities he's advocated in the past."

But two Democrats, Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island and Sen. Edward Markey of Massachusetts, said at a news conference after the vote that further attempts to pass the project would be futile, especially given the failed attempt to overturn Obama's immigration policies using a bill to fund the Department of Homeland Security.

The senators called the push on Keystone "politically delusional" and a "waste of time."

"The Republican pipe dream to pass this pipeline through Congress is over," Markey said. "The Senate today said the president should get to keep his prerogative."

Obama has repeatedly resisted Congress' attempts to force his hand. His veto of the bill, the third of his presidency, said that the bill circumvented longstanding and proven processes for determining whether cross-border pipelines serve the national interest and cuts short consideration of its effects.

The \$8 billion project would transport oil extracted from Canada's tar sands to pipelines linked to Gulf Coast refineries.

Environmentalists have framed the pipeline as a test of Obama's

commitment to address climate change, arguing that it would open up a path for tar sands oil to get to market. Republicans have pushed the pipeline as a job-creating infrastructure project that will supply the U.S. with oil from a friendly neighbor, rather than unstable regimes.

The State Department's analysis found that the oil would be harvested regardless of whether the pipeline is built, a conclusion that the EPA said needed to be re-examined given low oil prices. The same review said the pipeline would create thousands of jobs during construction, but ultimately it would require 35 permanent employees.

## U.S. Ambassador Attacked In S. Korea

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — U.S. Ambassador Mark Lippert was slashed on the face and wrist by a man wielding a weapon with a 10-inch blade and screaming that the rival Koreas should be unified, South Korean police said Thursday.

Media images showed a stunned-looking Lippert staring at his blood-covered left hand and holding his right hand over a cut on the right side of his face, his pink tie splattered with blood.

The U.S. State Department condemned the attack, which happened at a performing arts center in downtown Seoul as the ambassador was preparing for a lecture, and said Lippert was being treated at a local hospital and his injuries weren't life threatening.

YTN TV reported that the suspect — identified by police as a 55-year-old, surnamed Kim — screamed during the attack, "South and North Korea should be reunified." A police official, speaking on condition of anonymity because the investigation was still happening, said the suspect in 2010 threw a piece of concrete at the Japanese ambassador in Seoul.

## House Issues Clinton Email Subpoena

WASHINGTON (AP) — A House committee investigating the deadly 2012 terror attack on a U.S. mission in Benghazi, Libya, has subpoenaed former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's personal emails pertinent to its probe.

In an announcement on Wednesday, the Republican-controlled committee said it also has issued a subpoena to the State Department for all other individuals who have relevant information.

Clinton is the leading contender for the 2016 Democratic presidential nomination though she has not declared she is running. The House panel's announcement comes after it was disclosed that as the nation's top diplomat, Clinton relied on a personal email account rather than one operated by the government.

The AP has reported that Clinton's account was set up on a computer email server traced to her home in Chappaqua, New York.

## Putin: Opposition's Murder A 'Disgrace'

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin says that the killing of a key opposition figure is a "disgrace" to Russia.

In televised remarks to Interior Ministry employees on Wednesday, Putin condemned the death of Nemtsov, who was shot while walking near the Kremlin late Friday. While the Kremlin said Saturday that Putin had sent his condolences to Nemtsov's mother, it was Putin's first public remark on the subject.

"The most serious attention must be paid to high-profile crimes, including those with a political motive," he said. "We must finally rid Russia of the disgrace and tragedy of the kinds of things we recently saw and experienced. I mean the audacious murder of Boris Nemtsov in the very center of the capital."

No suspects have been detained yet in Nemtsov's killing.

## S.C. Divided In Health Care Arguments

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sharply divided along familiar lines, the Supreme Court took up a politically charged new challenge to President Barack Obama's health overhaul Wednesday in a dispute over the tax subsidies that make insurance affordable for millions of Americans.

The outcome in what Justice Elena Kagan called "this never-ending saga" of Republican-led efforts to kill the Affordable Care Act appears to hinge on the votes of Chief Justice John Roberts, whose vote saved the law three years ago, and Justice Anthony Kennedy.

Roberts said almost nothing in Wednesday's 85 minutes of lively back-and-forth, and Kennedy, who voted to strike down the health law in 2012, asked questions of both sides that made it hard to tell where he might come out this time.

Otherwise, the same liberal-conservative divide that characterized the earlier case was evident in the packed courtroom with the same lawyers facing off as in 2012.

## Defense Admits Tsarnaev Bombed Boston

BOSTON (AP) — The question, for all practical purposes, is no longer whether Dzhokhar Tsarnaev took part in the Boston Marathon bombing. It's whether he deserves to die for it.

In a blunt opening statement at the nation's biggest terrorism trial in nearly 20 years, Tsarnaev's own lawyer flatly told a jury that the 21-year-old former college student committed the crime.

"It WAS him," said defense attorney Judy Clarke, one of the nation's foremost death-penalty specialists.

But in a strategy aimed at saving Tsarnaev from a death sentence, she argued that he had fallen under the malevolent influence of his now-dead older brother, Tamerlan.

"The evidence will not establish and we will not argue that Tamerlan put a gun to Dzhokhar's head or that he forced him to join in the plan," Clarke said, "but you will hear evidence about the kind of influence that this older brother had."

## Australia Offers Prisoner Swap

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Australia has offered Indonesia a prison swap deal in an 11th hour bid to save the lives of two Australian drug smugglers who have been transferred to an island prison where they are to be killed by firing squad within days.

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said on Thursday she made the proposal to her Indonesian counterpart Retno Marsudi who had agreed to convey it to President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo. Bishop said she had yet to hear back.

The Australian newspaper reported Bishop had offered to repatriate three convicted Indonesian drug criminals in return for the lives of the Australians, Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran.

## Nearly 1,000 Migrants Rescued Off Italy

ROME (AP) — Italy's Coast Guard is bringing nearly 1,000 migrants to southern Italian ports from several different boat rescues, but 10 migrants perished at sea.

The Coast Guard said Wednesday its vessels and three cargo ships south of Sicily rescued 941 people in seven separate operations that began a day earlier. The migrants had been aboard five motorized dinghies and two larger vessels. One of the migrant boats capsized.

Hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of migrants, fleeing conflicts or poverty, reach Italy weekly on smugglers' boats setting sail from Libya.

The Coast Guard said the migrants claimed to be Syrians, Palestinians, Libyans, Tunisians or from sub-Saharan Africa.

# U.S. Clears Officer In Ferguson Case, Criticizes Police Force

BY ERIC TUCKER  
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WASHINGTON — The Justice Department on Wednesday cleared a white former Ferguson, Missouri, police officer in the fatal shooting of an unarmed black 18-year-old, but also issued a scathing report calling for sweeping changes in city law enforcement practices it called discriminatory and unconstitutional.

The dual reports marked the culmination of months-long federal investigations into a shooting that sparked protests and a national dialogue on race and law enforcement as the tenure of Attorney General Eric Holder, the first black person to hold that office, draws to a close.

In pairing the announcements, the Obama administration sought to offset community disappointment over the conclusion that the shooting of Michael Brown was legally justified with a message of hope for Ferguson's majority-black citizens. Officials announced 26 recommendations, including training officers in how to de-escalate confrontations and banning the use of ticketing and arrest quotas, for the police force and municipal court.

Holder called the federal report a "searing" portrait of a police department that he said functions as a collection agency for the city, with officers prioritizing revenue from fines over public safety and trouncing the constitutional rights of minorities.

"It is not difficult to imagine how a single tragic incident set off the city of Ferguson like a powder keg," Holder said.

Ferguson Mayor James Knowles III said the city had cooperated with the Justice Department and has made some changes, including a diversity training program for city employees. But the Rev. Al Sharpton, the chief eulogist at Brown's funeral, countered that Knowles' remarks — during a six-minute news conference where the mayor took no questions — were "mostly evasive, insignificant, and showed a total failure to address the need for a change in leadership at the police department."

The decision not to prosecute Darren Wilson, the white officer who was cleared in November by a state grand jury and has since resigned, had been expected. To win a federal civil rights case, officials would have needed to prove that Wilson willfully deprived Brown of his rights by using unreasonable force.

Instead, the report found no evidence to disprove Wilson's testimony that he feared for his safety during the Aug. 9 confrontation. Nor were there reliable witness accounts to establish that Brown had his hands up in surrender when he was shot, Justice Department lawyers said.

One of Wilson's attorneys, Neil Bruntrager, said his client was satisfied with the outcome. Brown family lawyer Benjamin Crump said the family was not surprised but very disappointed, and one of



DAVID CARSON/ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH/TNS  
Michael Brown's mother, Lesley McSpadden, pictured at far right, leaves the FBI offices in St. Louis after meeting with federal officials on Wednesday.

Brown's uncles, Charles Ewing, said he believed Wilson was "getting away with it."

"I really was hoping they would have come up with better findings because this whole thing just does not add up," Ewing said. "Everything just doesn't make sense."

While nights of protests over Wilson's actions drew hundreds of protesters in recent months in Ferguson, only about 30 braved sub-freezing weather to gather Wednesday night outside the suburb's police station, at times blocking traffic in defiance of police warnings to clear the road.

While the federal government declined to prosecute Wilson, it found the shooting occurred in an environment of systematic mistreatment of blacks, in which officials swapped racist emails and jokes without punishment and black residents were disproportionately stopped and searched without good reason, fined for petty offenses and subjected to excessive police force.

The report on the department found its lack of racial diversity — only four of 54 commissioned officers are black — undermined community trust. It also said the city relied heavily on fines for raise revenue and issued arrest warrants for minor infractions including jaywalking and late fees. The confrontation that led to Brown's death began when Wilson directed him and a friend to move from the street to the sidewalk.

The document was filled with examples of what it called a discriminatory criminal justice system. Among them: One black woman spent six days in jail because of a parking violation. A lawful protest was broken up with a police warning of "everybody here's going to jail."

And a black man sitting in a car with tinted windows was accused without cause of being a pedophile by an officer who pointed a gun at his head.

Between 2012 and 2014, black drivers were more than twice as likely as others to be searched during routine traffic stops, but 26 percent less likely to be carrying contraband.

The report also included seven racially tinged emails, including some from city officials who remain employed, that did not result in punishment. The writer of one 2008 email stated that President Barack Obama wouldn't be in office for long because "what black man holds a steady job for four years." Knowles, the mayor, said one employee was fired and two others are on leave over the emails.

The report's recommendations, if accepted by city officials, could lead to an overhaul of basic police and court practices. Those include improving officer supervision, better recruiting, hiring and promotion, new mechanisms for responding to misconduct complaints and a new system to reduce fine amounts.

Federal officials on Wednesday described Ferguson city leaders as cooperative and seemingly open to change, saying there were already some signs of improvement. The city, for example, has eliminated bond requirements for many municipal offenses and has extended a program that allows individuals to have warrants recalled and assigned a new court date.

In the last five years, the Justice Department has investigated roughly 20 police departments over alleged civil rights violations. Some have led to the appointment of independent monitors and have been resolved with negotiated agreements in which the police department commits to major changes in its practices. Federal officials say they hope to avoid a protracted court fight with Ferguson to force change.

"It is time for Ferguson's leaders to take immediate, wholesale and structural corrective action," Holder said.

# Coal Mine Blast Kills At Least 24 In War-Torn Ukraine

BY NATALIYA VASILYEVA  
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DONETSK, Ukraine — A rebel-held city scarred by months of conflict in eastern Ukraine suffered more tragedy Wednesday when a methane gas explosion in a coal mine killed at least 24 workers and left nine missing.

As rescue efforts stretched past sundown, separatist authorities were accused by Ukraine's government of failing to do enough to save the lives of the miners.

The blast occurred before dawn more than 1,000 meters (3,200 feet) underground at the Zasyadko mine in the city of Donetsk in the coal-rich Donbass region. Nearly a year of bitter fighting by pro-Moscow rebels and Ukrainian troops in the east has killed more than 6,000 people.

Rebel officials said the accident was caused by the ever-present danger of methane gas, rather than artillery fire.

There were contradictory accounts of the toll of dead and missing by the rival authorities. The rebel government that controls Donetsk was slow to divulge informa-

tion, while a senior official in the capital of Kiev was swift to give a death toll of 32, only to retract it several hours later.

The blast occurred as 230 workers were in the mine, and nearly 200 of them were quickly evacuated, but uncertainty lingered throughout the day about dozens of others.

Rebel officials insisted into the afternoon that only one person had died. But a slightly wounded miner who gave his name only as Sergei told The Associated Press that he saw five bodies being pulled out.

By nightfall, Yuliana Bedilko, a representative for the rebel-managed rescue services at the site of accident, said another 23 bodies had been located below ground, bringing the overall number of confirmed dead to 24.

Under cover of darkness, a truck pulled up in the heavy rain to the mine's opening in preparation to take the bodies away. A woman emerging from the mine was heard wailing in grief from a distance.

Rebel officials had said earlier that 32 workers were unaccounted for, suggesting 16 still remained trapped as of the evening. A news agency run by the separatist govern-

ment reported that 14 people were injured in the accident.

Igor Murygin, a 42-year-old miner being treated for burns at a hospital in Donetsk, said he was blown off his feet by the explosion.

"When I came to, there was dust everywhere. People were groaning," said Murygin, who suffered burns over 20 percent of his body.

The mine had recently installed new equipment and nothing appeared to be out of order, he added.

Speaking in Kiev, Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk accused rebels of preventing a team of 60 Ukrainian rescuers from reaching the mine to provide assistance. But leading rebel representative Denis Pushilin denied that Ukrainian authorities had offered any help.

"If we truly need assistance, we will turn to Russia," Pushilin was quoted as saying by the rebel-run Donetsk News Agency.

Miners arriving for their morning shift ended up doing most of the work to clear away debris. Reaching the stricken section was complicated because the entrance that was closest to the accident had been shut by the artillery fire that has beset Donetsk.

Separatist officials arrived

at the mine throughout the morning, but all refused to respond to questions, frustrating relatives of miners looking for answers.

Valentina Petrova came to the mine looking for her 47-year-old son, Vladimir.

"He was supposed to retire next year. Everyone is angry that they say on TV that 32 people died, but nobody tells us anything," she said.

The mine has a history of deadly accidents, including one in November 2007 that killed 101 workers, and two more the following month that killed a total of 57.

Workers complained about many safety violations at the site.

"We work like crazy for peanuts. We want this place to be safe. We want our children to be able to work here," said a miner who only gave his first name, Kostya.

He told the AP that two of his brothers had been injured in earlier explosions at the mine.

Safety officials say 99 people were killed in Ukraine's coal mines in 2014, with 13 of those deaths directly attributable to the fighting in the east, where mines have frequently been hit in artillery duels.