

New Storm Bears Down On Sandy Victims

NEW YORK (AP) — A nor'easter blustered into New York and New Jersey on Wednesday, threatening to swamp homes all over again, plunge neighborhoods back into darkness and inflict more misery on tens of thousands of people still reeling from Superstorm Sandy.

Under ordinary circumstances, a storm of this sort wouldn't be a big deal, but large swaths of the landscape were still an open wound, with many of Sandy's victims still mucking out their homes and cars and shivering in the deepening cold.

Thousands of people in low-lying neighborhoods staggered by the superstorm just over a week ago were warned to clear out, with authorities saying rain, wet snow and 60 mph gusts in the evening could bring more flooding, topple trees wrenched loose by Sandy, and erase some of the hard-won progress made in restoring electricity to millions of customers.

"I am waiting for the locusts and pestilence next," New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie said. "We may take a setback in the next 24 hours."

In New Jersey, public works crews worked to build up dunes along the shore to protect the stripped and battered coast, and new evacuations were ordered in a number of communities already emptied by Sandy. New shelters opened.

Britain Says Obama Win Is An Opportunity

BEIRUT (AP) — Britain called on the U.S. and other allies Wednesday to do more to shape the Syrian opposition into a coherent force, saying the re-election of President Barack Obama is an opportunity for the world to take stronger action to end the deadlocked civil war.

Also Wednesday, Turkey said NATO members — including the United States — have discussed using Patriot missiles along the Syrian border. It was unclear whether the purpose was to protect a safe zone inside Syria or to protect Turkey from Syrian regime attacks.

The announcements come as U.S. allies appear to be anticipating a new, bolder approach from Obama now that he has won a second term.

"With the re-election of Obama, what you have is a strong confidence on the British side that the U.S. administration will be engaged more on Syria from the get-go," said Shashank Joshi, an analyst at London's Royal United Services Institute, a security think tank.

It remains to be seen, however, if the U.S. plans to change course in any significant way.

Large Earthquake Hits Guatemala; Many Dead

SAN MARCOS, Guatemala (AP) — A 7.4-magnitude earthquake struck off the Pacific coast of Guatemala on Wednesday, ravaging a small state near the Mexican border, where three people were confirmed dead and as many as 100 missing, according to preliminary reports from the country's president.

The mountain village of San Marcos, some 80 miles (130 kilometers) from the epicenter, suffered much of the damage with some 30 homes collapsing in its center. Hundreds of frightened villagers were on the streets, one of which was cracked open by the temblor, the strongest to hit Guatemala since a deadly 1976 quake that killed 23,000.

More than 300 people, including firemen, policemen and villagers, worked at a sand extraction site to rescue seven people reported buried alive, including a 6-year-old boy that had accompanied his grandfather to work.

"I want to see Giovanni, I want to see Giovanni," the boy's mother, Francisca Ramirez frantically cried. "He's not dead. Get him out."

President Otto Perez Molina updated the casualties throughout the day, earlier reporting as many as 15 dead and saying that three were confirmed by mid-afternoon. He said 100 more people were missing.

Pot Votes In 2 States Challenge U.S. Drug War

DENVER (AP) — First came marijuana as medicine. Now comes legal pot for the people.

Colorado and Washington have become the first states to allow pot for recreational use.

Those who have argued for decades that legalizing and taxing weed would be better than a costly, failed U.S. drug war now have their chance to prove it.

While the measures earned support from broad swaths of the electorate in both states on Tuesday, they are likely to face resistance from federal drug warriors.

As of Wednesday, authorities did not say whether they would challenge the new laws.

As the initial celebration dies down and the process to implement the laws progresses over the next year, other states and countries will be watching to see how the measures work.

Busier Airports, Full Planes For Thanksgiving

NEW YORK (AP) — The recipe for Thanksgiving travel is likely to make travelers a little bitter this year.

Americans can expect airports to be busier and planes to be fuller than ever, according to a forecast by the main trade association for U.S. airlines two weeks ahead of the holiday. And fares are already more expensive than a year ago.

Airlines for America expects nearly 24 million travelers to fly from Friday, Nov. 16, through Tuesday, Nov. 27. That's up slightly from a year ago. Last year's tally was flat from 2010. Traffic on the nation's airlines is still 10 percent below the peak travel years of 2006 and 2007.

This year's uptick is in line with "the sluggish but consistent economic recovery," aviation consultant Mark Kiefer said. The unemployment rate has improved in recent months, as has consumer confidence — two key indicators of travel demand.

For those traveling on the busiest days around Thanksgiving, planes are expected to be close to 90 percent full, the trade group says. That would be a record for the holiday. That forecast is an average, so expect most flights at peak hours to be completely full.

Sunday, Nov. 25 is projected as the busiest travel day, followed by Wednesday, Nov. 21 and Monday, Nov. 26.

It's A 50-50 Nation, Give Or Take

BY CALVIN WOODWARD
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The election laid bare a dual — and dueling — nation, politically speaking, jaggedly split down the middle on the presidency and torn over much else. It seems you can please only half of the people nearly all of the time.

Americans retained the fractious balance of power in re-electing President Barack Obama, a Republican House and a Democratic Senate, altogether serving as guarantors of the gridlock that voters say they despise. Slender percentages separated winner and loser from battleground to battleground, and people in exit polls said yea and nay in roughly equal measure to some of the big issues of the day.

Democracy doesn't care if you win big, only that you win. Tuesday was a day of decision as firmly as if Obama had run away with the race. Democrats are ebullient and, after a campaign notable for its raw smackdowns, words of conciliation are coming from leaders on both sides, starting with the plea from defeated Republican rival Mitt Romney that his crestfallen supporters pray for the president.

But after the most ideologically polarized election in years, Obama's assertion Wednesday morning that America is "more than a collection of red states and blue states" was more of an aspiration than a snapshot of where the country stands.

"It's going to take a while for this thing to heal," said Ron Bella, 59, a Cincinnati lawyer who lives in Alexandria, Ky. He is relieved Obama won, but some of his co-workers are in a "sour mood" about it.

"They feel like the vast majority of the country wanted Romney, and the East and the West coasts wanted Obama," he said. "I'm not sure exactly why that is, but there just seems to be such hatred for Obama out there."

Compromise was a popular notion in the hours after Obama's victory and an unavoidable one, given the reality of divided government. But the familiar contours of partisan Washington were also in evidence, especially the

notion that compromise means you do things my way.

As Democratic Rep. Steve Israel of New York put it, "If you refuse to compromise, we are going to beat you." Israel, chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, said the election showed "if you are an extremist tea party Republican, you are going to lose."

Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky said pointedly that Republicans will meet Obama halfway "to the extent he wants to move to the political center" and propose solutions "that actually have a chance of passing."

In New York's bustling Times Square, hope, skepticism and the usual polarities were all to be found when people talked about the president. "He may not have done a great job in my mind but I kinda trust him," said Jerry Shul. "I have faith he will get with the Republicans and get something done."

A less-flattering George Dellemand called this "a moment of truth" for the country. "I guess we have to wish for the best now, but I still think he is socialism."

In Miami, Karen Fitzgerald, 55, wore a black dress and said she was in mourning over Romney's defeat.

"It's an upsetting day," she said. But she took some comfort from her Democratic friends on Facebook, who have stopped chiding the other side in their posts. "Now they're all saying we need to work together and be united," she said. "Maybe we can."

In Springfield, Ohio, an "elated" Frank Hocker, 67, hoped Republicans would get the message to get out of Obama's way. "There was a backlash," he said. "For this obstructionist House and those tea party people, I hope they learned their lesson. I hope they learned their lesson: Don't stop the progress of this country."

In Chicago, Obama supporter Scherita Parrish, 56, predicted the president will reach out to Republicans but may not get much back. "But the people have spoken," she said. "They need to lick their wounds, get on with it and start working with the president."

Unity is a challenge not just for

Election results

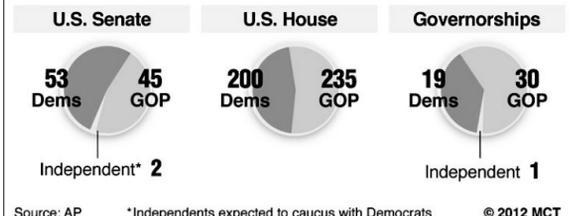
Results as of 5 p.m. ET Nov. 7

Presidential race

Obama Wins
Romney Wins
Too close to call



Congressional, gubernatorial races



Obama but for the Republicans, who won less than 30 percent of the growing Hispanic vote and not even one in 10 black voters. Obama built a strong Electoral College majority, if only a narrow advantage in the popular vote, despite losing every age group of non-Hispanic white voters.

Surveys of voters found Obama's health care law to be as divisive as ever, with just under 50 percent wanting it repealed in whole or part, and 44 percent liking it as is or wanting more of it.

But democracy doesn't care about exit polls, either, and the election almost certainly means Republicans can forget about trying to roll it back now.

In reaffirming divided government, though, Americans all but ensured colossal fights are ahead over the shape of government and

Obama's agenda. He is out to break a wall of Republican opposition to tax increases on the wealthy — a move that about half the voters in exit polls thought was a good idea. And extraordinarily difficult negotiations are imminent as the president and Congress try to make a deal to avoid the "fiscal cliff" — steep spending cuts and a variety of tax increases in January.

In the end, voters split about equally on whether Obama or Romney would be better at handling the economy.

Then again, they were divided down the middle on whether Obama or his predecessor, George W. Bush, deserves most of the blame for the economy's problems.

So it goes in the 50-50 nation, give or take.

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Saturday

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