

Health Law Causing Anxiety, Confusion

WASHINGTON (AP) — Now is when Americans start figuring out that President Barack Obama's health care law goes beyond political talk, and really does affect them and people they know.

With a cranky federal website complicating access to new coverage and some consumers being notified their existing plans are going away, the potential for winners and losers is creating anxiety and confusion.

"I've had questions like, 'Are they going to put me in jail if I don't buy insurance? Because nobody will sell it to me,'" said Bonnie Burns, a longtime community-level insurance counselor from California. "We have family members who are violently opposed to 'Obamacare' and they are on Medicaid — they don't understand that they're already covered by taxpayer benefits.

"And then there is a young man with lupus who would have never been insurable," Burns continued. "He is on his parents' plan and he'll be able to buy his own coverage. They are very relieved."

A poll just out from the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation documents shifts in the country in the month since insurance sign-ups began.

U.S., Egypt Try To Restore Relations

CAIRO (AP) — The United States and Egypt tried Sunday to put a brave face on their badly frayed ties and committed to restoring a partnership undermined by the military ouster of Egypt's first democratically elected president.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry became the highest-ranking Obama administration official to visit the country since the military toppled Mohammed Morsi in July and cracked down on his Muslim Brotherhood supporters.

Those moves led the U.S. to suspend hundreds of millions of dollars in aid. Morsi's trial on charges of inciting murder was expected to begin Monday, at a location east of the capital. There were fears of renewed clashes between his backers and government security forces.

Kerry, who was starting a 10-day trip to the Middle East, Europe and North Africa, and Foreign Minister Nabil Fahmy pledged to ease tensions between Washington and Cairo. Yet the strains were clearly evident.

The State Department expected a frosty reception for Kerry, especially with tensions running high on the eve of Morsi's trial. The department refused to confirm Kerry's brief visit until he landed in Cairo, even though Egypt's official news agency reported the impending trip Friday.

Pakistani Death By Drone Rouses Anger

ISLAMABAD (AP) — The Pakistani Taliban leader killed in a recent U.S. drone strike was behind hotel bombings, assaults on political rallies, beheadings of policemen and suicide attacks on soldiers. But his death elicited little joy in the country where he wreaked most of his havoc and instead stirred widespread anger and suspicion.

At the time of Friday's strike targeting Hakimullah Mehsud, the Pakistani government was engaged in efforts to negotiate a peace deal with militants. Frustrated at years of military campaigns that have failed to end the bloodshed, many Pakistanis had high hopes for this latest peace effort and blame the U.S. for fouling it up.

Mehsud "should have been given the chance to negotiate, and now the consequences have to be borne by Pakistan, not the U.S.," said Syed Ahmed, a small business owner in the southern port city of Karachi.

Also contributing to the anger are fears of a bloody backlash, plus a web of complex conspiracy theories, including the idea that militants such as Mehsud are American or Indian pawns intent on weakening Pakistan.

For years, Pakistan has been fighting militants in the tribal areas that border neighboring Afghanistan, with thousands of civilians and security forces dying in bombings and shootings at the hands of militants.

Term Limit Decision Key To de Blasio Bid

NEW YORK (AP) — The race to elect the next mayor of New York City, which comes to an end Tuesday, in some ways got its start on Oct. 23, 2008.

On that day, after rancorous debate, the City Council voted to overturn term limits, allowing Mayor Michael Bloomberg to get another four years to shape the nation's largest city.

But the aftershocks from that decision shaped much of what has followed in the topsy-turvy campaign to select Bloomberg's successor, a marathon marked by heated debates about hot-button issues, larger-than-life characters and stunning political implosions. And, as voters get set to go to the polls, Public Advocate Bill de Blasio has emerged from the chaotic field poised to be the first Democrat chosen to lead the city since 1989.

Every poll taken since the September primary has de Blasio with a commanding lead over Republican nominee Joe Lhota, a one-time deputy mayor to Rudolph Giuliani. An unabashed liberal, de Blasio said he will usher in a new era of progressive governing by raising taxes on the rich, improving police and community relations and reaching out to those who feel slighted by what they believe were 12 years of Bloomberg's Manhattan-centric policies.

More than any of his rivals for the Democratic nomination, de Blasio positioned himself as the cleanest break from the Bloomberg years, an argument that resonated with many suffering from what has become known as Bloomberg fatigue.

College Presidents: Smaller Jobs Better

ST. LOUIS (AP) — After five scandal-plagued years as University of North Carolina chancellor, Holden Thorp was downright ecstatic to start over on a campus where the term "student-athlete" doesn't evince snickers and groans.

The new provost at the private Washington University spends little time worrying about academically suspect jocks — as a Division III school, WashU doesn't even award athletic scholarships. It's a far cry from Chapel Hill, where an academic fraud investigation found dozens of athletes taking no-show classes, along with assorted other abuses, and led to Thorp's resignation from the top job at his alma mater — the sole college he applied to as a high school senior in Fayetteville, N.C.

"I wanted to get back closer to the academic side of things," said Thorp, who arrived in St. Louis three months ago. "Washington University, more than a public university, is on the whole more unapologetically devoted to academic achievement as its primary focus." For him, "that is a liberating feeling."

His move down the academic chain surprised many, but Thorp is not alone among college CEOs seeking such refuge, especially those who have weathered the turbulent world of big-time sports. Current and past college presidents, as well as education industry observers, say many campus heads are unprepared for the white-hot glare that campus athletics emit when things go wrong, from player arrests to NCAA investigations and coach firings — or in Thorp's case, all three.

"There were a lot of misconceptions about college sports," Thorp said, alluding to the notion that at UNC, the quest for athletics success would never compromise the school's academic standards. "In some ways, I was as much a part of this as anybody, protecting people from some of the tough truths about college sports."

'Ender's Game' Takes Box Office

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "Ender's Game" scored the No. 1 slot at the weekend box office, earning \$28 million in its opening weekend and sending "Jackass Presents: Bad Grandpa" into second place, according to studio estimates Sunday.

"Ender's Game," based on the novel by Orson Scott Card, stars Asa Butterfield and Harrison Ford as intergalactic soldiers.

Paramount's candid-camera comedy starring Johnny Knoxville disguised as an old man brought in another \$20.5 million in its second weekend, with a domestic total reaching more than \$62 million.

Overseas, "Thor: The Dark World" earned \$109.4 million in its first international weekend. The superhero sequel opens domestically next weekend.

New Venue For Morsi Trial In Egypt

BY MAGGIE MICHAEL

Associated Press

CAIRO — Egyptian authorities on Sunday moved the trial of the ousted Islamist president to a new location at another end of the capital, a move apparently aimed at thwarting mass rallies planned by the Muslim Brotherhood in his support when it opens on Monday.

Facing charges of incitement of violence with 14 others in connection to clashes last December, Mohammed Morsi has been held at an undisclosed location since his July 3 overthrow by the military. The trial will be his first public appearance since then, possibly enflaming an already tense political atmosphere as animosity between Morsi's Islamist supporters and Egypt's security establishment steadily deepens.

"For (the Islamists) it will be like taking revenge on the police and the military," said lawyer Khaled Abu-Bakr, representing three victims of the December clashes. "I really hope that no blood is spilled tomorrow," he added.

The change of the venue was announced at a tumultuous news conference by appeals court judge Medhat Idris, who threw his statement in the air and stormed out of the room when Morsi supporters shouted in protest at the change.

He later told The Associated Press by telephone that the trial will not be aired live. Other details about the proceedings, including where Morsi will be held during them, remain secret.

A security official said Morsi will probably be taken back to the place he has been held instead of being transferred to a normal prison after the first session, for fear his supporters would turn the prison into a "focal point of endless protests."

The new venue is a heavily fortified police academy in an eastern Cairo suburb, already used for the trial of another former president — Hosni Mubarak — toppled in a 2011 uprising. He is accused of failing to stop the killing of protesters.

Egypt witnessed one of its worst bouts of violence in decades on Aug. 14, when security forces violently cleared protest camps set up by Morsi



Morsi

supporters, sparking days of unrest that left more than 1,000 dead. Since then, violent incidents have multiplied: a suicide car bomber tried to assassinate Interior Minister Mohammed Ibrahim in September, and dozens of members of the security forces have been killed in a string of drive-by shootings, explosions and car bombs. Churches have been torched, and in an attack in Cairo last month, five Copts and one Muslim were killed in drive-by shooting at a church.

Both government officials and Morsi's supporters forecast bleak scenarios for Monday, with each side accusing the other of plotting killings, including that of Morsi himself.

A senior Interior Ministry official told the AP his ministry had received information that Brotherhood supporters will engage in acts of violence, "including assassinations of top religious figures, suicide attacks and targeting military facilities."

"We expect a kind of hysteria and rioting when Morsi shows up in court," he added.

A Brotherhood-led group has called for mass rallies, while the interior minister has ordered the deployment of large numbers of security forces to guard the trial venue.

In recent statements, a coalition led by Morsi's Brotherhood described the trial as a "farce" and reiterated that it regarded him as the "elected, legitimate president" of Egypt. "This is a naive tool to break our will and our determination," it said Sunday.

Shaimaa Awad, a member of the group's political party, said it envisages several scenarios for the day of the trial. One of them, she said, sees the authorities bringing in Morsi for a swift and a secretive session. The second scenario, she said the group fears, is that authorities exploit the protests in order to create chaos and "liquidate Morsi."

"There is real fear Morsi would be assassinated during violence, and protesters depicted as trying to break into the courtroom," she said.

"We know our presence could backfire, but we cannot simply not go. We have to be there. When you know that your president is brought in to be humiliated, you ought to be outside to show that he is not alone," she added.

Meanwhile, a newspaper known for close ties to the military published what appeared to be the first pictures of Morsi from his detention. Daily el-Watan published a transcript of remarks it says were made by Morsi and captured on video, describing him as being "in total denial" and saying "I am the president of the republic, in accordance to the constitution." Later in the day, it posted a video showing Morsi wearing a blue track suit, sitting on a chair and speaking calmly.

The paper quoted him as saying: "I will represent myself in front of any court ... I am not involved in killings of the protesters ... I will tell judges that."

A military official said the video was leaked to the paper in order to give his supporters a first glance of the former president to lessen the impact of the shock of his first public appearance.

Meanwhile, in Egypt's restive northern Sinai Peninsula, troops killed three alleged militants Sunday, a military official said, discovering rocket launchers, mortars, and rocket-propelled grenades in an abandoned house in the city of Rafah. Hours later, suspected militants killed two soldiers in a drive-by shooting at a check point near the Suez Canal city of Ismailia, a security official said.

Officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the press.

International rights groups have called for fair trial for Morsi.

In a Sunday statement, London-based Amnesty International said Morsi's trial is a "test" for the Egyptian authorities, who must grant him the "right to challenge the evidence against him in court," said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Amnesty's Middle East director.

Morsi is being tried along with 14 other Brotherhood members and allies including top leaders Mohammed el-Beltagy and Essam el-Erian.

Morsi's family considers the trial illegitimate and will not attend, his son Osama told The Associated Press. Awad said they feared they would be mistreated and humiliated.

Virginia A Test For Democrats, Obama Rallies For McAuliffe

BY PHILIP ELLIOTT AND

JOSH LEDERMAN

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Va. — President Barack Obama cast Republican Ken Cuccinelli on Sunday as part of an extreme tea party faction that shut down the government, throwing the political weight of the White House behind Democrat Terry McAuliffe in the final days of a bitter race for governor.

Seeking an upset, Cuccinelli cast this week's Virginia gubernatorial election as a referendum on Obama's troubled national health care law.

National issues that have divided Democrats and Republicans spilled into the race and colored the final hours of campaigning ahead of Tuesday's vote. As one of just two gubernatorial races in the nation, the results of Tuesday's elections could hold clues about voter attitudes and both parties' messages heading into the 2014 midterm elections.

Obama tore into Cuccinelli as an ideologue unwilling to compromise, while Cuccinelli was telling his supporters that Tuesday's election will be a test for the health care law and McAuliffe's support for it.

"No more Obamacare in Virginia. That's the message we can send," Cuccinelli said in Weyers Cave, a small town northwest of Charlottesville, as he began a day that was taking him from airport to airport, many in Republican-rich regions in southern and western Virginia.

A short time later, in northern Virginia on the outskirts of Washington, Obama said a vote for McAuliffe would be a vote for progress.



Obama

He said Cuccinelli wanted Virginia voters to forget that the Republican's like-minded counterparts in Congress just weeks

earlier had taken the economy, the nation and the economy hostage, hurting Virginians in the process.

"Now he says it's in the rearview mirror. It can't be in the rearview mirror if this is your operative theory of politics." Obama told a crowd of 1,600 gathered in a high school gymnasium in Arlington.

Polls show McAuliffe ahead and campaign finance reports show dramatically lopsided results, with the Democrats outstripping and outspending Cuccinelli and his allies by a wide margin. Television airtime was tilted in McAuliffe's favor by 10-to-1.

That has led Cuccinelli, the state's attorney general who led the unsuccessful lawsuit to overturn the health law, to focus on reaching conservative voters almost exclusively. He uses his campaign stops to energize his own backers, many of whom disapprove of the president and detest his health care law.

"If you want to fight Obamacare, if you want to tell Washington that Virginians have had enough of Obamacare, then I need your vote," a hoarse Cuccinelli said at an airport rally in Roanoke.

The race is going to be decided by the few Virginians who choose to vote. The state Board of Elections chief says turnout could be as low as 30 percent of registered

voters and the campaigns see 40 percent turnout as the goal.

"If mainstream Virginians from both parties don't turn out to vote, you're letting the tea party decide Virginia's future," McAuliffe said. More than 114,000 Virginians have already voted early.

That doesn't mean Cuccinelli is yielding.

Cuccinelli kept an intense focus on the health care law, knocking McAuliffe for wanting to use the law to expand Medicaid and add 400,000 Virginians to the program. McAuliffe says the program keeps Virginia tax dollars at home, but Cuccinelli says it will be a drag on the state budget and tie future governors' hands.

"Once you get in, there's no getting out," Cuccinelli said, then referred to the popular Eagles' song about a hotel where people could "check in but never leave."

"It's like Hotel California," he said.

Obama's pitch for McAuliffe constituted a last-minute push by the White House and prominent Democrats to close the deal in the race's final days. McAuliffe, the former Democratic National Committee chairman, has had help from former President Bill Clinton and former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Vice President Joe Biden was to do his part Monday, and first lady Michelle Obama lent her voice to radio ads backing McAuliffe.

Cuccinelli campaigned Saturday with Republican National Committee chairman Reince Priebus and Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker. Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida and former Rep. Ron Paul of Texas were expected to join

him Monday.

Obama won Virginia in the presidential election last year by just 3 percentage points, racking up big margins in the Democrat-rich Washington suburbs where he campaigned Sunday, but carrying far fewer votes in the more conservative, southern parts of the state that have been a focus for Cuccinelli. One year later, Obama and Democrats are struggling with a health care rollout that's turned into a political fiasco, and hope a McAuliffe victory will help Democrats regain their footing.

Democrats see Virginia as a test case for other competitive states and are eager for a win there to show their approach to governing is resonating with voters ahead of the 2014 midterm elections.

That's especially true when it comes to the recent fiscal crisis, in which House Republicans refused to approve government funding unless Obama agreed to debilitating changes to "Obamacare." Democrats emerged politically strengthened from the debacle and are looking to Virginia to see whether that advantage will translate into real gains in elections.

Obama has been aggressively fundraising for Democrats, but has sought to limit the risks. He and Biden didn't announce events for McAuliffe until after it was clear the Democrat was far ahead in the polls; the same was true with New York mayoral candidate Bill de Blasio. In New Jersey, this year's only other gubernatorial race, the Democrat is far down in the polls and Obama isn't offering any assistance.

White House, Lawmakers: No Clemency For Snowden

BY KIMBERLY DOZIER

AP Intelligence Writer

WASHINGTON — The White House and the leaders of the intelligence committee in Congress are rejecting National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden's plea for clemency.

"Mr. Snowden violated U.S. law," White House adviser Dan Pfeiffer said Sunday about the former systems-analyst-turned-fugitive who has temporary asylum in Russia.

"He should return to the U.S. and face justice," Pfeiffer said, adding when pressed that no offers for clemency were being discussed.

Snowden made the plea in a letter given to a German politician and released Friday. In his one-page typed letter, he asks for clemency for charges over allegedly leaking classified information about the NSA to the news media. "Speaking the truth is not a crime," Snowden wrote.

Snowden's revelations, including allegations that the U.S. has eavesdropped on allies including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, have led to calls by allies to cease such spying, and moves by Congress to overhaul U.S. surveillance laws and curb the agency's powers.

But head of the Senate Intelligence Committee said if Snowden had been a true whistle-blower, he could have reported it to her committee privately.

"That didn't happen, and now he's done this enormous disservice to our country," said Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif. "I think the answer is no clemency."

The chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, Rep. Mike Rogers, called clemency for Snowden a "terrible idea."

"He needs to come back and own up," said Rogers, R-Mich. "If he believes there's vulnerabilities in the systems he'd like to disclose, you don't do it by committing a crime that actually puts soldiers' lives at risk in places like Afghanistan."

Rogers contended that Snowden's revelations had caused three terrorist organizations to change how they communicate.

Both lawmakers addressed word that President Barack Obama did not realize Merkel's personal phone was being tapped.

Rogers implied that he didn't believe the president, or European leaders who claimed they were shocked by Snowden's allegations.

"I think there's going to be some best actor awards coming out of the White House this year and best supporting actor awards coming out of the European Union," he said "Some notion that ... some people just didn't have an understanding about how we collect information to protect the United States to me is wrong."

Feinstein said she didn't know what the president knew, but said she intended to conduct a review of all intelligence programs to see if they were going too far.