

Wild Animals Killed After Owners Suicide

ZANESVILLE, Ohio (AP) — Sheriff's deputies shot nearly 50 wild animals — including 18 rare Bengal tigers and 17 lions — in a big-game hunt across the Ohio countryside Wednesday after the owner of an exotic-animal park threw their cages open and committed suicide in what appeared to be one last act of spite against his neighbors and police.

As homeowners nervously hid indoors, officers equipped with high-powered rifles and shoot-to-kill orders spread out through fields and woods to hunt down about 56 animals that had been set loose from the Muskingum County Animal Farm by its owner, Terry Thompson, before he shot himself to death Tuesday.

After an all-night hunt that extended into Wednesday afternoon, 48 animals had been killed and six captured alive and taken to the Columbus Zoo, authorities said. The only animals believed still on the loose were a wolf and a monkey.

Those destroyed included six black bears, two grizzlies, a baboon and three mountain lions.

Poll: Many Open To Ousting President Obama

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans have yet to find a Republican they'd clearly prefer over President Barack Obama, although half say the president does not deserve re-election.

Among Republicans, the desire to oust Obama is clear, according to a new AP-GfK poll. But it has not resolved divisions over the choice of a nominee. Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney is reasonably popular, but he has not pulled away from the field.

Former pizza company executive Herman Cain runs close to Romney as the candidate Republicans would most like to see on the ballot, but many Republicans are reluctant to back a man who has never held office. Texas Gov. Rick Perry lags in the poll, which was conducted before Tuesday night's combative debate in Las Vegas.

In the poll, Romney was the choice of 30 percent of Republicans, with Cain about even at 26 percent. Perry was preferred by 13 percent, and Rep. Ron Paul of Texas topped the list of those in single digits.

GOP Presidential Contest Gets Personal, Nasty

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Talk about nasty. The bitter, face-to-face sniping at this week's Republican debate was just a prelude to the coming weeks as Mitt Romney's rivals seek to tear him down before the leadoff Iowa caucuses.

Increasingly on the defensive, Romney is being hammered on old issues — like an accusation of hiring illegal immigrants to work on his yard — and is creating new openings for everyone from Rick Perry to President Barack Obama.

"You won't hear a lot of shape-shifting nuance from me," Perry told Republicans gathered in Las Vegas on Wednesday, hitting Romney anew the day after the two sparred onstage during a debate. "I'm going to give the American people a huge, big old helping of unbridled truth."

The target was Romney, who over the years has reversed his positions on a series of issues that conservatives champion. And the sharper, more personal tone seems sure to shape the campaign in the next month as Perry looks to undercut the former Massachusetts governor's standing at the head of the pack.

U.S. Complains To China About Tibetan Deaths

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States is complaining to China about conditions that are reported to have led eight Tibetan Buddhist monks and one nun to burn themselves to death in China's Sichuan province.

In response to a question, the State Department issued a statement of concern Wednesday about the self-immolations near the Ngaba Kirti monastery in Sichuan.

The State Department says the acts clearly represent anger and frustration with regard to Tibetan human rights inside China, including religious freedom.

The department is urging Chinese leaders to address what it calls "counterproductive policies" in Tibetan areas that it says have created tensions.

Medicare Costs To Reduce S.S. Increase

BY STEPHEN OHLEMACHER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — That didn't last long. About 55 million Social Security recipients will get their first increase in benefits next year since 2009 — a 3.6 percent raise. But higher Medicare premiums could erase part of it.

For some, higher Medicare Part B premiums could wipe out as much as a fourth of their raise from Social Security, according to projections by the trustees who oversee the programs.

Medicare is expected to announce 2012 Part B premiums as early as next week. The premiums, which cover doctor visits, are deducted automatically from monthly Social Security payments.

The Social Security Administration announced the pay increase Wednesday, offering a measure of comfort to millions of retirees and disabled people, many of whom have seen their retirement accounts dwindle, home values drop and out-of-pocket medical costs rise in the years since their last raise.

Starting in January, 55 million Social Security recipients will get increases averaging \$39 a month, or just over \$467 for the year. In December, more than 8 million people who receive Supplemental Security Income, the disability program for the poor, will get increases averaging \$18 a month, or about \$216 for the year.

In all, 1 in 5 U.S. residents stand to get a raise from the cost-of-living adjustment, or COLA.

Advocates for seniors say the raise is welcome and overdue. "It may be cold comfort, however, once they see just how high next year's Medicare premiums will go," said Max Richtman, president and CEO of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare.

The annual cost-of-living adjustment is tied to an inflation measure released Wednesday. The measure, which was adopted in the 1970s, produced no COLA in 2010 or 2011 because inflation was too low. Those were the first two years without a COLA since automatic increases were enacted in 1975.

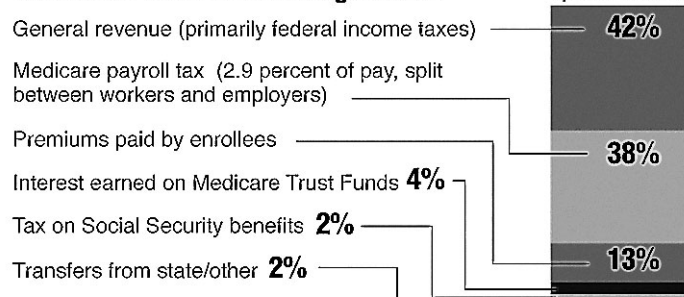
Monthly Social Security payments average \$1,082, or about \$13,000 a year.

Medicare Part B premiums must be set each year to cover

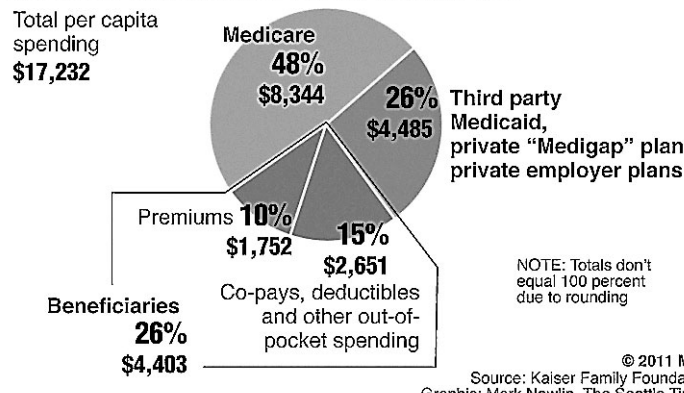
Paying for Medicare

Since its inception in 1965, Medicare has relied on a variety of revenue sources. Contrary to common perception, Medicare payroll taxes paid by workers and their employers cover less than half of Medicare's costs. In turn, Medicare pays for less than half of beneficiaries' total health-care expenses.

Sources of Medicare funding in 2009



Who covered the cost of Medicare beneficiaries' health care in 2006



25 percent of program costs. By law, they have been frozen at 2009 levels for about 75 percent of beneficiaries because there has been no increase in Social Security payments.

That means the entire premium hike has been borne by the remaining 25 percent, which includes new enrollees, high-income families and low-income beneficiaries who have their premiums paid by Medicaid, the federal-state health care program for the poor.

The 2009 premium levels are \$96.40 a month. Most of those who enrolled in the program in 2010 pay \$110.50 a month and most of those who enrolled in 2011 pay \$115.40.

In May, the Medicare trustees said they expected the Part B premium to be \$106.60 a month in 2012, a figure that could change when the actual premium is set. At that rate, about a quarter of Medicare beneficiaries would see their premiums go down. The rest would pay \$10.20

more each month, erasing about a fourth of Social Security COLA for the average recipient.

An Obama administration official suggested the Part B premium could be lower than the projection, but did not reveal the amount.

"The administration will have an announcement about premiums in the days ahead that we believe will alleviate some of these concerns," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. The official was not authorized to speak publicly about the upcoming announcement.

AARP Executive Vice President Nancy LeMond said the COLA "underscores the importance of Social Security as the only guaranteed, lifelong and inflation-adjusted source of retirement income for most Americans."

"Unfortunately," she added, "the increase announced (Wednesday) will not completely ease their burden. Medicare

premiums are also expected to rise for many. And with the decline in housing values, deep losses to retirement and savings accounts, and skyrocketing health and prescription drug costs, millions of older Americans continue to struggle to make ends meet."

The amount of wages subject to Social Security taxes will also go up next year, resulting in a tax increase for about 10 million workers, the Social Security Administration said. This year, the first \$106,800 in wages is subject to Social Security payroll taxes. Next year, the limit will increase to \$110,100.

Workers pay a 6.2 percent Social Security tax on wages, which is matched by employers. For 2011, the tax rate for workers was reduced to 4.2 percent. The tax cut is scheduled to expire at the end of the year, though President Barack Obama wants to expand it and extend it for another year, an effort that Congress is likely to approve.

Federal law requires the program to base annual payment increases on the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers, or CPI-W. Officials compare consumer prices in the third quarter of each year — the months of July, August and September — with the same months in the previous year.

If consumer prices increase from year to year, Social Security recipients automatically get higher payments, starting the following January. If prices drop, the payments stay unchanged.

Social Security payments increased by 5.8 percent in 2009, the largest increase in 27 years, after energy prices spiked in 2008. But energy prices quickly dropped and home prices became soft in markets across the country, contributing to lower inflation in the past two years.

As a result, Social Security recipients got an increase in 2009 that was far larger than actual inflation. However, they couldn't get another increase until consumer prices exceeded the levels measured in 2008. This year, consumer prices in July, August and September were 3.6 percent higher than those measured in 2008, resulting in the COLA.

Online:
Social Security Administration's COLA site: <http://www.ssa.gov/cola/>

Violence Erupts After Huge Marches In Chile

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — Violence again hit Chile's capital Wednesday as small groups of hooded youths clashed with police and marred an otherwise peaceful march by as many as 100,000 students demanding changes in public education.

Two huge marches, organized with approval from authorities, converged in a demonstration in Santiago calling on President Sebastian Pinera to expand the central government's role in educating Chileans.

The changes sought by students who have been protesting and boycotting classes nearly six months would fundamentally overhaul a school system that has been steadily privatized since the 1973-90 dictatorship. Pinera has insisted on more targeted reforms, such as increasing state subsidies so that poor students can afford to attend private institutions.

As Wednesday's demonstration broke up, small groups confronted police and violence spread quickly. A gas station was attacked, with vandals taking hoses and spraying flammable gasoline around. Police hosed the area down and kept others away, cutting off electricity to avoid sparking a huge fire.

Smaller protest marches Tuesday also had a violent fringe element of hooded rioters who tried to attack a gas station and set fire to a bus whose passengers had fled.

Student leader Camilo Ballesteros has said such violence only strengthens the government's efforts to paint striking students as out of control. On social networks, student activists are increasingly questioning who is responsible for the violence, with some raising the possibility that pro-government instigators are fostering trouble.

Chile's deputy interior minister, Rodrigo Ubilla, said early Wednesday that two police officers were injured overnight and 263 people were arrested nationwide "in another day of violence and destruction." No additional numbers of arrests and injuries were immediately available after Wednesday's demonstration.

How To Keep Courts Running After Terror Attack

BY MARK SHERMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A new report from experts on government continuity says a terrorist attack that killed four or more Supreme Court justices would significantly hamper the ability of the entire federal judiciary to carry out its work.

The authors said a diminished Supreme Court would be unable, under federal law, to rule on key issues, including fundamental questions of presidential succession in the event of a catastrophic strike that wiped out the highest levels of the executive branch, Congress and the courts.

They urged relatively minor changes in federal law to allow the courts to keep working, including creating an emergency court that would function only until the Supreme Court had the minimum six justices it needs to hear and decide cases.

The report by the government scholars grows out of the Continuity in Government Commission that was formed after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

The commission previously made recommendations regarding presidential succession and reconstituting Congress following an attack.

The latest effort is the work of Norman Ornstein and John Fortier of the American Enterprise Institute, and Thomas Mann of the Brookings Institution.

It acknowledged that putting the high court back together would not be as urgent as reconstituting Congress and the executive branch. "But it is a matter that cannot be ignored," the report said.

Perhaps the most provocative and potentially troubling issue highlighted in the report is the president's power to name several new justices, or even the entire court, without congressional approval for a period that could last a few months or as long as a year and a half.

The Constitution gives the president the power to make what are called recess appointments, temporary appointments to jobs that otherwise require Senate confirmation. Recess

appointments only last until the end of the congressional session and can only be made when the Senate is not in session.

If the appointments are made in good faith and after informal consultation with congressional leaders, the temporary justices could allow the court resume its work quickly.

But the authors foresaw more difficulty if the president were expecting challenges to his legitimacy in office or actions he was

planning. In that case, "he might fill a court with recess appointees who would be sympathetic to his point of view. He would appoint the court that might then be called upon to be an independent check on the president," the report said.

A temporary emergency court, set up before a crisis arises, but only coming to life following a catastrophe, would be well placed to deal with urgent court matters in the event the

Supreme Court is unable to do its work, the report said.

Any surviving justices would sit on the court along with other judges chosen from a pool. Decisions of the temporary court could be appealed to the Supreme Court, after it was up and running again.

The report:
<http://www.aei.org/docLib/Supreme-Court-Continuity.pdf>

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Contest Rules:

1. By submitting a photograph, you give this newspaper permission to publish said photograph in our publications and 2012 Calendar.
2. Employees of this newspaper and contest sponsors, as well as their relatives, are not eligible to win.
3. All submissions must be received by this newspaper by Oct. 30, 2011. Online voting decision is final.

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