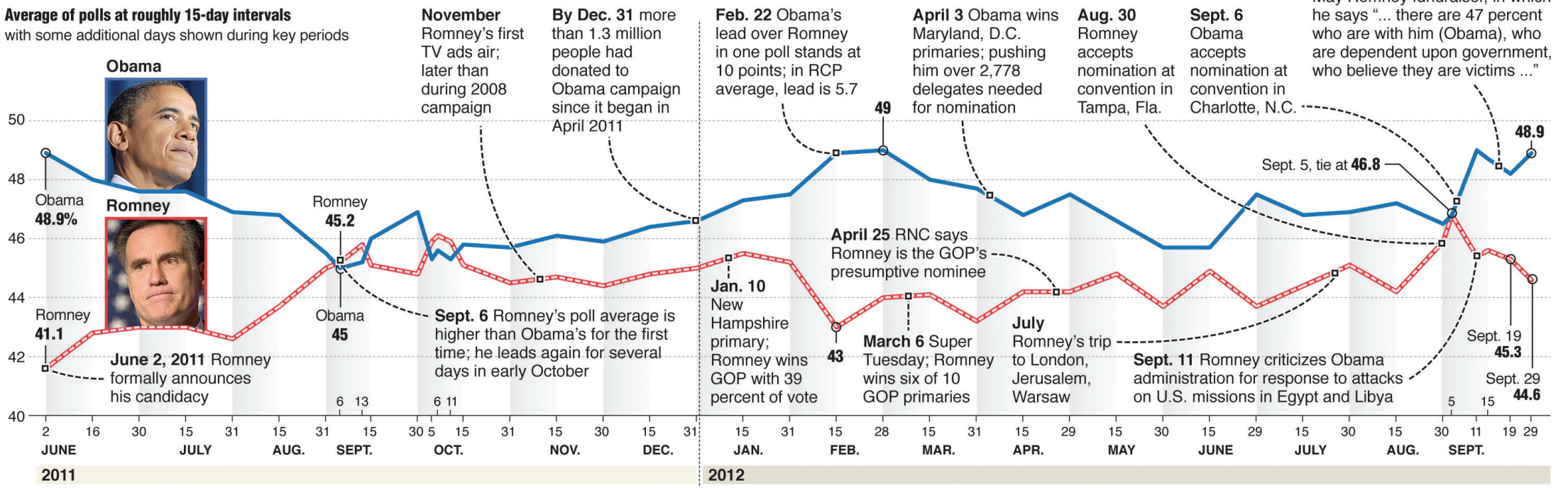


Obama has led Romney in poll averages most of the way

Except for brief periods in September and October 2011, GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney has trailed President Barack Obama in polls averaged by Real Clear Politics. The numbers and some events along the campaign trail:

ELECTION 2012



Romney Says He Might Cut Deductions

BY KASIE HUNT
Associated Press

DENVER — Offering deficit-cutting ideas before his first debate with President Barack Obama, Mitt Romney says he might be willing to reduce income tax deductions used by millions of families for home mortgage interest and health care costs.

He suggested the changes could be part of a plan that includes a 20 percent cut in tax rates across the board, continuation of upper income tax cuts that Obama wants to end and a comprehensive tax overhaul plan that the Republican presidential contender has so far declined to flesh out in detail. Romney says his overall plans would invigorate the slowly recovering U.S. economy.

Both Romney and Obama spent their time mostly in private on Tuesday, preparing for the debate, the president in Henderson, Nev., near Las Vegas, Romney already in Denver where the face-off will take place Wednesday at 9 p.m. EDT. Neither held public campaign events, but Obama took a break from preparation to visit nearby Hoover Dam, and Romney picked up lunch at a Chipotle Mexican Grill near his hotel.

In an interview Monday night with Denver TV station KDVX, Romney said, "As an option you could say everybody's going to get up to a \$17,000 deduction. And you could use your charitable deduction, your home mortgage deduction, or others — your health care deduction, and you can fill that bucket, if you will, that \$17,000 bucket that way. And higher income people might have a lower number."

A Romney adviser said changes in other areas — a taxpayer's personal exemption and the de-

duction or credit for health care — would also be taken into account if deductions were limited as Romney suggested. Combining changes to those two areas with the limit on deductions would maintain Romney's goal of keeping tax burdens the same for wealthy and middle income taxpayers, the adviser said.

On another controversial subject, in a separate local interview ahead of the debate, Romney told The Denver Post that he would honor the temporary permission the Obama administration has granted to many young illegal immigrants to allow them to stay in the country.

Obama announced in June that he would prevent deportation for some children brought to the United States by illegal immigrant parents. Applicants must not have a serious criminal record and must meet other requirements, such as graduating from high school or serving in the U.S. military.

Romney had previously refused to say if he would retain the policy if he won the election.

He granted the interviews as he and Obama looked ahead to the debate, the first of three they will hold before Election Day on Nov. 6.

The debates, expected to draw a huge nationwide audience, takes place with most polls showing Obama slightly ahead both nationally and in the battleground states expected to settle the election.

Away from Denver, the campaign pressed ahead Tuesday on TV airwaves, in courts and in local election officials' offices across the states.

The Romney-supporting independent group Crossroads GPS launched an \$11 million, 10-day ad campaign in eight swing states. Its new ad criticizes Obama's assertion that unemployment would fall if Congress passed his proposed stimu-

lus law. The national unemployment rate still stands above 8 percent.

In Pennsylvania, meanwhile, a judge struck down a much-debated voter identification law, a victory for state Democrats who argued that it would prevent many minorities and elderly people from voting. The judge, Robert Simpson, wrote that he was concerned by the state's stumbling efforts to create a photo ID that would be easily accessible to voters. Pennsylvania, while long considered a battleground state, has backed Democrats in presidential elections for decades, and Romney has trailed Obama in polls there.

On another voter-eligibility matter, Romney's campaign has sent letters to election officials in Wisconsin, Mississippi and Vermont asking that the deadline for receiving ballots from military and overseas voters be extended.

In Denver, in his comments on taxes, Romney also cited the tax plan included in the Simpson-Bowles deficit commission recommendations as a possible course. That plan calls for reducing the top income tax rates. To pay for that, the plan would eliminate or reduce many popular tax breaks, including deductions for charitable donations and mortgage interest.

While Romney did not commit to making any specific changes, saying he would work with Congress, his suggestions were more specific than those he had offered in the past and provided a new window into his thinking on the subject. In the spring, Romney told donors that he would consider eliminating home mortgage deductions for second homes. That conversation, behind closed doors, was overheard by reporters standing on a private sidewalk.

Official: Hezbollah Commander Killed In Syria

BEIRUT (AP) — A Hezbollah commander and several fighters have been killed inside Syria, a Lebanese security official said Tuesday, a development that could stoke already soaring tensions over the Lebanese militant group's role in the civil war next door.

Hezbollah's reputation has taken a beating over its support for the Syrian regime, but any sign that the group's fighters are taking part in the battle raises fears that the conflict could expand into a wider fight engulfing the region.

Hezbollah has stood by Syrian President Bashar Assad since the uprising began 18 months ago, even after the group supported revolts in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Bahrain.

Assad's fall would be a dire scenario for Hezbollah. Any new regime led by Syria's majority Sunni Muslims would likely be far less friendly — or even outright hostile — to Shiite Muslim Hezbollah. Iran remains the group's most important patron, but Syria is a crucial supply route. Without it, Hezbollah will struggle to get money and weapons as easily.

NYPD Monitoring Facebook To Fight Gangs

NEW YORK (AP) — Police investigating two gangs called the Very Crispy Gangsters and the Rockstarz didn't need to spend all their time pounding the pavement for leads. Instead, they fired up their computers and followed the trash talk on Facebook.

"Rockstarz up 3-0," one suspect boasted — a reference to the body count from a bloody turf war between the Brooklyn gangs that ultimately resulted in 49 arrests last month.

Authorities in New York say a new generation of gang members is increasingly using social media to boast of their exploits and issue taunts and challenges that result in violence. And police and prosecutors have responded over the past several years by closely monitoring Facebook and other sites for leads and evidence.

On Tuesday, New York Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly announced plans to beef up the NYPD's cyber crackdown by expanding the use of aggressive online investigative tactics and doubling the size of the department's gang unit to 300 investigators.

The reinforcements will focus less on established gangs like the Bloods and Crips and more on loosely knit groups of teenagers who stake out a certain block or section of a housing project as their turf and exact vengeance on those who trespass or fail to show the proper respect.

White House Widening Covert War In North Africa

BY KIMBERLY DOZIER
AP Intelligence Writer

WASHINGTON — Small teams of special operations forces arrived at American embassies throughout North Africa in the months before militants launched the fiery attack that killed the U.S. ambassador in Libya. The soldiers' mission: Set up a network that could quickly strike a terrorist target or rescue a hostage.

But the teams had yet to do much counterterrorism work in Libya, though the White House signed off a year ago on the plan to build the new military task force in the region and the advance teams had been there for six months, according to three U.S. counterterror officials and a former intelligence official. All spoke only on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the strategy publicly.

The counterterror effort indicates that the administration has been worried for some time about a growing threat posed by al-Qaida and its offshoots in North Africa. But officials say the military organization was too new to respond to the attack in Benghazi, where the administration now believes armed al-

Qaida-linked militants surrounded the lightly guarded U.S. compound, set it on fire and killed Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans.

Republicans have questioned whether the Obama administration has been hiding key information or hasn't known what happened in the immediate aftermath of the attack. They are using those questions in the final weeks before the U.S. elections as an opportunity to assail President Barack Obama on foreign policy, an area where he has held clear leads in opinion polls since the killing of Osama bin Laden in 2011.

On Tuesday, leaders of a congressional committee said requests for added security at the consulate in Benghazi were repeatedly denied, despite a string of less deadly terror attacks on the consulate in recent months. Those included an explosion that blew a hole in the security perimeter and another incident in which an explosive device was tossed over the consulate fence. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton told Congress in a letter responding to the accusations that she has set up a group to investigate the Benghazi attack, and it is to begin work this week.

As of early September, the special operations teams still consisted only of liaison officers who were assigned to establish relationships with local governments and U.S. officials in the region. Only limited counterterrorism operations have been conducted in Africa so far.

The White House, the CIA and U.S. Africa Command all declined to comment.

"There are no plans at this stage for unilateral U.S. military operations" in the region, Pentagon spokesman George Little said Tuesday, adding that the focus was on helping African countries build their own forces.

For the Special Operations Command, spokesman Col. Tim Nye would not discuss "the missions and or locations of its counterterrorist forces" except to say that special operations troops are in 75 countries daily conducting missions.

The go-slow approach being taken by the Army's top clandestine counterterrorist unit — known as Delta Force — is an effort by the White House to counter criticism from some U.S. lawmakers, human rights activists and others that the anti-terror fight is shifting largely to a secret war using special opera-

tions raids and drone strikes, with little public accountability. The administration has been taking its time when setting up the new unit to get buy-in from all players who might be affected, such as the U.S. ambassadors, CIA station chiefs, regional U.S. military commanders and local leaders.

PAST AL NEUHARTH AWARD WINNERS



Coming to USD, Thursday, Oct. 4 2012 Al Neuharth Award for Excellence in the Media Honoring Marilyn Hagerty



Marilyn Hagerty

Join us for an evening with newspaper columnist and Internet sensation Marilyn Hagerty, 86, as she receives the 2012 Al Neuharth Award for Excellence in the Media. Hagerty, who writes columns for the North Dakota *Grand Forks Herald*, drew widespread media attention earlier this year when her straightforward feature story about the opening of the first Olive Garden restaurant in Grand Forks went viral on the Internet. Her long and storied journalism career included time at the University of South Dakota, where she was Al Neuharth's first editor at the student newspaper, *The Volante*.



Al Neuharth

The award, recognizing lifetime achievement, is named for USA TODAY and Freedom Forum founder Al Neuharth, a South Dakota native and 1950 USD journalism graduate, who will be on campus to honor Hagerty as a model journalist dedicated to serving local communities through consistently fair, truthful and relevant coverage.

This event is free and open to the public.

THURSDAY
October 4

6:15 p.m.
Doors open for general seating.

7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Award presentation and remarks by Marilyn Hagerty.

Aalfs Auditorium, Slagle Hall
The University of South Dakota
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Vermillion, South Dakota

General seating is first-come, first-served.

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Rebroadcast Sun., Oct. 7, at 1 p.m. CT

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