

Court Clears Way For Gay Marriage Expansion

BY MARK SHERMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court unexpectedly cleared the way Monday for a dramatic expansion of gay marriage in the United States and may have signaled that it's only a matter of time before same-sex couples can marry in all 50 states.

Rejecting appeals from five states seeking to preserve their bans, the Supreme Court effectively made such marriages legal in 30 states, up from 19 and the District of Columbia, taking in every region of the country.

Challenges are pending in the other 20 states.

Almost immediately, exuberant couples began receiving marriage licenses previously denied to them. "This is the dream day," said Sharon Baldwin, a plaintiff in a challenge to Oklahoma's ban, as she and her partner got their license in the Tulsa County Clerk's Office.

Directly affected by Monday's orders were Wisconsin, Indiana, Oklahoma, Utah and Virginia. Officials in those states had appealed lower court rulings in an effort to preserve their bans. Couples in six other states — Colorado, Kansas, North Carolina, South Carolina, West Virginia and Wyoming — should be able to get married in short order since those states would be bound by the same appellate rulings that have been on hold.

While county clerks in a number of states quickly began issuing licenses to gay and lesbian couples, in some other states affected by the court's action officials did not sound ready to give up the fight. However, their legal options are limited.

Monday's terse orders from the court were contained among more than 1,500 re-

The state of gay marriage in the U.S.



jected appeals that had piled up over the summer. The outcome was not what either side expected or wanted. Both gay marriage supporters and opponents had asked the court to resolve whether the Constitution grants same-sex couples the right to marry nationwide.

The justices did not explain why they decided to leave that question unanswered for now. They may be waiting for a federal appeals court to break ranks with other appellate panels and uphold state laws defining marriage as between a man and a woman. Or they may see little role for themselves as one court after another strikes down state marriage bans.

Still, the import seemed clear. What the justices did in virtual silence Monday "has to send a signal to the other courts of appeals that the Supreme Court does not think it's so wrong to allow same-sex couples to marry, and that even conservative justices don't think they have a good shot at getting five votes. And that sends a message that this essentially is over," said Jon

Davidson, legal director of Lambda Legal, an advocacy group for gay rights.

Leaders of the National Organization for Marriage predicted a backlash in the form of renewed efforts to pass a constitutional amendment defining marriage as the union of a man and a woman.

"The notion that the people have nothing to say about this — that unelected judges are going to decide it for us — that's preposterous," said John Eastman, the organization's chairman.

However, efforts to pass such an amendment have gained little traction, even in past years when support for same-sex marriage was less robust. NOM's president, Brian Brown, acknowledged that any renewed efforts would be "long and arduous."

The politics of gay marriage have shifted in the past decade. In 2004, it was a wedge issue: Republicans looking to boost turnout in the presidential election put questions of banning gay marriage before voters in nearly a dozen states.

Ten years later, there are

openly gay members of both the U.S. Senate and House. And two openly gay Republicans — Massachusetts' Richard Tisei and California's Carl DeMaio — are running for House seats.

Last November, the Senate approved legislation that would bar workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Fifty-four members of the Senate Democratic majority and 10 Republicans voted in favor of the first major gay rights bill since Congress repealed the ban on gays serving openly in the military four years ago.

But the House, where Republicans have a majority they are all but certain to keep in the next Congress, has not acted on the discrimination measure. And the issue remains a touchstone for many conservatives, especially those in House districts drawn to lean heavily toward the GOP.

Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, a Republican, said Monday that the fight against same-sex marriage "is over" in his state. He said that "it is clear that the position of the court of appeals at the federal level is the law of the land and we're going to go forward enacting it."

But South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson said he would continue to fight to uphold his state constitution's ban on gay marriage.

Evan Wolfson, president of Freedom to Marry, called on the high court to "finish the job" with a national ruling. Wolfson said the court's "delay in affirming the freedom to marry nationwide prolongs the patchwork of state-to-state discrimination and the harms and indignity that the denial of marriage still inflicts on too many couples in too many places."

Islamic State Wages Assault On Syrian Border Town

BY RYAN LUCAS AND LEFERIS PITARAKIS
Associated Press

MURSIPTINAR, Turkey — Islamic State fighters backed by tanks and artillery pushed into an embattled Syrian town on the border with Turkey on Monday, touching off heavy street battles with the town's Kurdish defenders.

Hours after the militants raised two of their Islamic State group's black flags on the outskirts of Kobani, the militants punctured the Kurdish front lines and advanced into the town itself, the Local Coordination Committees activist collective and the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

"They're fighting inside the city. Hundreds of civilians have left," said Observatory director Rami Abdurrahman. "The Islamic State controls three neighborhoods on the eastern side of Kobani. They are trying to enter the town from the southwest as well."

The center of the town was still in Kurdish hands, Abdurrahman said. Kurdish officials could not be immediately reached for comment.

Since it began its offensive in mid-September, the Islamic State group has barreled through one Kurdish village after another as it closed in on its main target — the town of

Kobani, also known as Ayn Arab. The assault has forced some 160,000 Syrians to flee and put a strain on Kurdish forces, who have struggled to hold off the extremists even with the aid of limited U.S.-led airstrikes.

Capturing Kobani would give the Islamic State group, which already rules a huge stretch of territory spanning the Syria-Iraq border, a direct link between its positions in the Syrian province of Aleppo and its stronghold of Raqqa, to the east. It would also crush a lingering pocket of resistance and give the group full control of a large stretch of the Turkish-Syrian border.

After initially setting up positions to the east, south and west of the town, the Islamic State group shelled Kobani for days to try to loosen up the defenses. Just across the frontier in Turkey, the steady thud of artillery, sharp crackle of gunfire and plumes of smoke rising over the rooftops testified to the intensity of the fight all day Monday.

"ISIS is advancing further toward Kobani day by day," said Ismet Sheikh Hassan, the defense chief for Kurdish forces in the area, using an alternative name for the Islamic State group. "ISIS is fighting with tanks and heavy weapons and they are firing randomly at Kobani. There are many civilian casualties because of the shelling."

VA To Fire Executives In Scandal Response

BY MATTHEW DALY
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Veterans Affairs Department said it is firing four senior executives as officials move to crack down on wrongdoing following a nationwide scandal over long wait times for veterans seeking medical care, and falsified records covering up the delays.

The dismissals are the first since Congress passed a law this summer making it easier for veterans who experience delays to get care outside VA's nationwide network of hospitals and clinics. The law also made it easier for the agency to fire senior officials suspected of wrongdoing, shortening their appeals process to 28 days.

Among those being fired were a top purchasing official at the Veterans Health Administration, directors of VA hospitals in Pittsburgh and Dublin, Georgia, and a regional hospital director in central Alabama, the VA said.

"VA will actively and aggressively pursue disciplinary action against those who violate our values," Deputy VA Secretary Sloan Gibson said Monday. "There should be no doubt that when we discover evidence of wrongdoing, we will hold employees accountable."

But a Republican congressman challenged the VA, saying that at least one of the employees being fired has already announced his retirement. John Goldman, director of the Carl Vinson VA Medical Center in Dublin, Georgia, said last month he was stepping down. Employees at the hospital have admitted to keeping false records to hide long wait times for veterans.

"Bragging about the proposed removal of someone who has already announced his retirement can only be described as disingenuous," said Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee.

Miller called the VA's announcement of Goldman's dismissal a "semantic sleight of hand" that is insulting to veterans and their families hurt by the VA scandal.

US Teen Accused Of Trying To Join ISIS

CHICAGO (AP) — A 19-year-old American left a letter expressing disgust with Western society for his parents before trying to board a plane in Chicago, the first step in his plan to sneak into Syria to join the Islamic State group, according to a federal criminal complaint released Monday.

Mohammed Hamzah Khan, a U.S. citizen who lived with his parents in the Chicago suburb of Bolingbrook, was arrested Saturday while trying to board a plane to Turkey, which borders Syria, at O'Hare International Airport. He is charged with attempting to provide material support to a foreign terrorist group.

Before heading to the airport, Khan allegedly left a three-page, handwritten letter in his bedroom for his parents, explaining why he chose to join the Islamic State. The letter, according to the complaint, read: "We are all witness that the western societies are getting more immoral day by day."

Investigators say Khan also wrote that he was upset that his U.S. taxes were going to kill his "Muslim brothers and sisters," an apparent reference to a bombing campaign against Islamic State militants by the U.S. and other nations. The letter was signed, "Your loving son."

Khan appeared in a federal court Monday in orange jail clothes, calmly telling a federal magistrate that he understood the allegations. Later, as marshals led him away in handcuffs, the slight, bearded young man turned to smile at his parents at the back of the room.

GM Seeking Car Owners About Fixes

DETROIT (AP) — Eight months after General Motors began recalling more than 2 million cars because of a deadly ignition-switch defect, less than half the owners have gotten their vehicles fixed.

At first, the problem was a shortage of parts. But now the problem is people.

Despite the heavy publicity surrounding the scandal, many drivers evidently haven't heard of the recall or haven't grasped how serious the defect is because it hasn't given them any trouble.

As a result, GM has been forced to go beyond the usual ominous-sounding recall letters.

It has sent out Facebook messages and made phone calls to owners of the cars, mainly Chevrolet Cobalts and Saturn Ions. CEO Mary Barra has even sent a personal letter urging people to get the switches replaced.

Military Surplus Awards Questioned

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Doug Wortham used a Defense Department giveaway program for law enforcement to stock his office with an assault rifle, a handgun and a Humvee — even though the people in his custody are in no condition to put up a fight.

They're dead. Wortham is the Sharp County, Arkansas, coroner. He says the Humvee helps him navigate the rugged terrain of the Ozarks foothills, but he struggled to explain why he needs the surplus military weapons he acquired more than two years ago.

"I just wanted to protect myself," he said. His office isn't the only government agency with limited policing powers and a questionable need for high-powered weaponry to take advantage of the program. While most of the surplus weapons go to municipal police departments and county sheriffs, an Associated Press review shows that a diverse array of other state and local agencies also have been scooping up guns and other tactical equipment no longer needed by the military.

3 Win Nobel Prize For Medicine

STOCKHOLM (AP) — U.S.-British scientist John O'Keefe and Norwegian scientists May-Britt Moser and Edvard Moser won the Nobel Prize in medicine on Monday for discovering the "inner GPS" in the brain that helps us navigate through the world.

Their findings in rats — and research suggests that humans have the same system in their brains — represented a "paradigm shift" in the knowledge of how cells work together to perform cognitive functions, the Nobel Assembly said, adding that knowing about the brain's positioning system may "help us understand the mechanism underpinning the devastating spatial memory loss" that affects people with Alzheimer's disease.

"This year's Nobel Laureates have discovered a positioning system, an 'inner GPS' in the brain, that makes it possible to orient ourselves in space," the assembly said.

Brazil Vote Boosts Overlooked Candidate

SAO PAULO (AP) — Aécio Neves' surprisingly strong showing in the first round of Brazil's presidential election has turned the nation's politics on its head and put him within striking distance of incumbent Dilma Rousseff, but the former governor still faces a heavy task if he is to unseat her.

The business-minded Neves came within 8 percentage points of Rousseff in Sunday's vote and has momentum and a strong central-right party on his side. The challenge for Neves, who was born into affluence and political power, will be to connect with Brazil's poor, millions of whom have directly benefited from Rousseff's policies.

"He needs a more popular dialogue to build a bridge to those voters," said Mauricio Moura, a Brazilian pollster and professor of political strategy at George Washington University.

The 54-year-old economist has three weeks to do it. Neves defied expectations in Sunday's first-round vote, finishing second with 34 percent to Rousseff's 42 percent. Socialist Party candidate Marina Silva, who at one point led Rousseff in polling, finished third at 21 percent and will not advance to the Oct. 26 runoff.

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Linda Zimmerman
**"Some Days are Diamonds, Some Days are Stones:
 Dealing with Metastatic Breast Cancer"**

Linda was employed by HyVee for 16 years, with 14 of those years at the Customer Service Desk. She is the mother of 7 children. Born and raised in Gayville, SD. She lives with her husband Ron in Yankton.

Also speaking: Mary Lee Villanueva, MD
Yankton Medical Clinic, P.C. Board Certified Oncologist/Hematologist

Our Emcee, Mary J. Milroy, M.D., FACS
Yankton Medical Clinic, P.C. Board Certified Surgeon, Specializing in Breast Surgery

Monday, October 20
 Doors open at 11:30am – Lunch will be served at noon – Forum begins at noon

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