

## Day Of Confusion Following Court Ruling

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Confusion and uncertainty over gay marriage spread Wednesday as couples in Las Vegas wondered whether they'd be allowed to wed, and partners in Idaho dealt with disappointment after a U.S. Supreme Court ruling blocked them moments before they would have picked up marriage licenses.

Officials and judges in a handful of other states weighed in, meanwhile, in the latest flurry of legal wrangling over an issue that has sparked a series of rulings this week that have left couples in limbo.

In the city that bills itself as the marriage capital of the world, wedding chapels and city officials prepared for a wave of gay couples after a morning of back and forth rulings that stemmed from the Supreme Court decision Monday that effectively made gay marriage legal in about 30 states.

The ruling did not, however, decide the matter for the rest of the nation, and the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, which handles much of the Western U.S., issued a decision Tuesday that appeared to overturn gay marriage bans in cases from Nevada and Idaho, clearing the way for same-sex unions in those states.

## Ex-Aides, Democrats Criticize Obama

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama is finding himself with few friends in Washington.

His former Pentagon chief is criticizing his foreign policy. Longtime political advisers are questioning his campaign strategy. And Democrats locked in tough midterm campaigns don't want Obama anywhere near them between now and Election Day.

The disenchantment with Obama is in part a reflection of inevitable fatigue with a president entering his final year in office. But some Democrats say it is also a consequence of the president's insular approach to governing and his preference for relying on a small cadre of White House advisers, leaving him with few loyal allies on Capitol Hill or elsewhere.

"This president is supremely independent," said Paul Begala, a Democratic strategist and longtime adviser to President Bill Clinton. "In many ways that is a very good thing. He probably came to the presidency owing less to other people than any president in memory. The risk is that independence can morph into isolation."

While White House officials dispute the notion of an isolated or weakened president, there's little doubt that Obama's standing with the American people and his own party has fallen since his resounding re-election in 2012. Battered by a flurry of crises at home and abroad, the president's approval rating has hovered near record lows for much of the year. His party is at risk of losing the Senate in the November midterms and not one Democrat locked in a close race has chosen to make a campaign appearance alongside the president thus far.

## Healthcare.gov Next Edition Unveiled

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration unveiled a new version of HealthCare.gov on Wednesday, with some improvements as well as at least one early mistake and a new challenge.

Officials also said that HealthCare.gov won't display premiums for 2015 until the second week of November. Open enrollment season runs Nov. 15 through Feb. 15. Coverage can start as early as Jan. 1.

On the plus side, the health insurance website will feature a streamlined application for most of those signing up for the first time. Seventy-six screens in the online application have been reduced to 16, officials said. The site has been also optimized for mobile devices.

The goof is a mistranslation in large type on the home page of the Spanish-language version of the site. It's the very first word on the page. Trying to translate "get ready," someone came up with the wrong word in Spanish.

## Syria

# U.S., Allies Chafing At Turkish Inaction

BY DESMOND BUTLER  
Associated Press

ISTANBUL — As U.S. generals and Secretary of State John Kerry warn that a strategic Syrian border town could fall to Islamic State militants, the Turkish military has deployed its tanks on its side of the frontier but only watched the slaughter.

Turkey's inaction despite its supposed participation in a coalition forged to crush the extremist group is frustrating Washington and its NATO allies, and reviving a rebellion by Turkish Kurds.

Amid fears the Kurdish town of Kobani could fall any day, U.S. and NATO officials are traveling to Turkey on Thursday to press negotiations for more robust Turkish involvement in the coalition.

But Turkey is taking a hard line, insisting that it will only consider involvement in military action as part of a broader strategy for ending the rule of Syrian President Bashar Assad. The U.S. and its allies want to keep the focus on the Islamic State group, which they say poses a more global threat.

Emphasizing the U.S. position, Kerry said Wednesday that although the Obama administration is "deeply concerned about the people of Kobani," preventing the town's fall to Islamic State militants was not a strategic objective for the U.S.

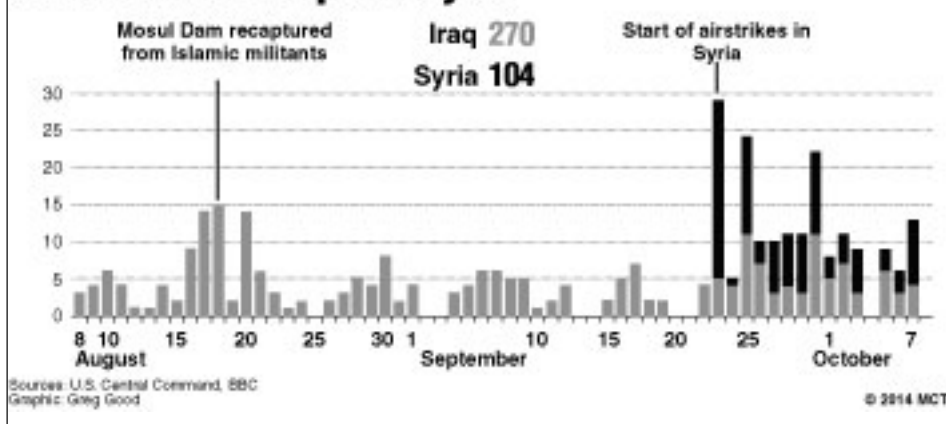
"As horrific as it is to watch in real time what's happening in Kobani, it's also important to remember, you have to step back and understand the strategic objective," Kerry told a news conference in Washington.

Rear Adm. John Kirby, the Pentagon press secretary, also conceded Kobani could fall because "air power alone is not going to be enough to save that city."

"We all need to prepare ourselves for the reality that other towns and villages — and perhaps Kobani — will be taken by ISIL," Kirby said, adding that the key to eventually defeating the militants is to train and enable indigenous ground forces.

Turkey is ambivalent about

## Airstrikes in Iraq and Syria



the fight across its border, because of its distrust of the Kurdish fighters protecting Kobani, also known as Ayn Arab. It views them as an extension of the Kurdish PKK, the rebel group that has waged a long and bloody insurgency against Ankara. In recent days, Turkish officials have emphasized that they view both the Islamic State group and the PKK as terrorist groups.

Left unsaid is which group they view as the greater threat. But, Turkey's strict neutrality as the lightly-armed Kurds face annihilation speaks volumes.

While Turkey maintains it does not want Kobani to fall, Turkish officials say they will not enter combat until they are assured that the U.S.-led coalition has a long-term strategy in Syria. They see Assad as a greater nemesis on their border than even the Islamic State. Taking out the militants without a plan to fill the inevitable vacuum, they say, will lead to further chaos that will only strengthen Assad. They want the U.S. to set up a no-fly zone and a humanitarian corridor, as well as ramp up assistance to Syrian rebels battling to overthrow Assad.

With its ambitious demands, Turkey may be betting that its geography makes it an indispensable partner and that it can leverage that position to force the U.S. and its allies to expand the coalition mission — an assumption that is causing frustration in Washington and strains within

NATO, a senior U.S. administration official said. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak on the record.

On Thursday, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, as well as President Barack Obama's two envoys to the anti-Islamic State coalition, retired Gen. John Allen and Ambassador Brett McGurk, arrive for talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to push for greater Turkish action.

Adding to the pressure on Ankara, Kurds in Kobani and in Turkey accuse the Turkish government of standing idly by while their people are being slaughtered and even impeding their own efforts to save Kobani. The anger boiled into violence Tuesday, amid widespread protests that threatened to derail promising talks to end three decades of insurgency by the PKK militant group. Nineteen people were killed as Kurdish activists clashed with police and members of an Islamist group in Kurdish areas across the country. The jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan has warned that the peace process will end if Kobani falls.

While two days of U.S.-led airstrikes seem to be slowing the advance of thousands of Islamic State fighters armed with heavy weapons, Kurdish officials warn they have failed to turn the tide.

"The airstrikes have helped. They were good strikes, but not as effective as we want them to be," said

Idriss Nassan, deputy head of Kobani's foreign relations committee. "Kobani is still in danger and the airstrikes should intensify in order to remove the danger."

Around noon Wednesday, warplanes believed to be from the U.S.-led coalition bombed Islamic State positions near Kobani. One airstrike, visible from the border, struck a hill and an open space near the town. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Wednesday's strikes targeted Islamic State fighters east of Kobani.

The U.S. Central Command said in a statement that coalition forces had launched airstrikes on six locations around Kobani since Tuesday. Kirby, the Pentagon spokesman, said there were mixed reports about how many Islamic State militants pulled back from the town under pressure from the air.

"We don't have a force inside Syria that we can cooperate with and work with," Kirby said, adding that the U.S. administration is planning to train and arm 5,000 moderate opposition Syrian fighters at sites elsewhere in the Middle East and then insert them back into Syria to take on Islamic State forces.

Since Monday night, the strikes have killed 45 Islamic State fighters in and around Kobani, targeting 20 separate locations and destroying at least five of their vehicles, said the Britain-based Observatory, which relies on a network of activists inside Syria.

# Hong Kong Leader Faces Crisis Over Report Of Secret \$6.4-Million Deal

BY DAVID PIERSON  
Los Angeles Times

HONG KONG — Hong Kong's top government official, Leung Chun-ying, faced a new crisis Wednesday after an Australian newspaper reported that the embattled chief executive pocketed millions of dollars in secret fees from an engineering firm in exchange for supporting its interests in Asia.

Citing a secret contract, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that Leung accepted \$6.4 million from Australian engineering firm UGL in relation to the company's purchase of DTZ Holdings, a British property services firm. Leung was a director at DTZ and chairman of its Asia Pacific operations at the time.

Leung, who is currently dealing with mass demonstrations against his administration over calls for greater self-rule, did not register the earnings as a public official.

Leung's office released a statement Wednesday defending the deal by explaining it was conducted before he became chief executive and that he was paid after he resigned from DTZ.

Those payments, made in two installments, came after he assumed the territory's top government post, the newspaper said. The *Herald* reported that DTZ was insol-

vent at the time of the deal, which left the company's "other shareholders and creditors with nothing, wiping out investments and debts worth tens of millions of dollars."

Representatives for DTZ and UGL could not be reached for comment.

Ma Ngok, an associate professor of government and politics at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, said the news would further erode confidence in Leung in the semiautonomous Chinese city of 7 million people.

"If it's proven he's done something wrong or illegal, that will of course ruin whatever credibility he has left," Ma said.

Thousands of demonstrators participating in sit-ins that have shut down key parts of Hong Kong for nearly two weeks have been calling for Leung's resignation.

The chief executive has been vilified by the protesters as a yes man for Beijing. The demonstrators are demanding that Beijing honor promises made to allow residents to vote for the next chief executive by 2017.

Beijing has indicated that it plans to screen candidates for the position instead.

Hong Kong officials and student leaders plan to begin formal talks Friday aimed at resolving the standoff.



STUART LEAVENWORTH/MCCLATCHY/MCT  
Crowds have dwindled at Admiralty, the main protest site in Hong Kong, China, as seen here on Tuesday. But the smaller crowds make it easier for protesters and supporters to move between traffic barriers on a major thoroughfare in Hong Kong blocked off from traffic since September 28.

## Rounds

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run by both Republicans and Democrats, that have looked at it so far," he said. "They have all come up with the same analysis — there is no conspiracy involved and the wrongdoing has been pinpointed on one individual, and that was Richard Benda. He was never charged with it because he took his own life, but other than that, the state investigation focused on Richard and on no one else. I have never been the object of the federal or state investigations that have occurred. All of the investigations have concluded in the same manner."

He added that he doesn't foresee the issue being put to rest before the election season is over.

"We will have millions of dollars spent — most of it, negative ads from out of state," he said. "It wouldn't surprise us a bit to see the Democrats spend over \$3 million in just personal attack ads. They have no hope of winning this unless they can stay away from the real issues, and they have no hope of winning this unless they can do a character assassination on me, which is what they'll try to do. We've recognized that from day one and the only thing we can do is correct the misinformation and trust the people of South Dakota."

Rounds said the best way to ultimately restore confidence in the federal legislative branch is to get results.

"I believe in results, and that's what we have to do here," he said. "We have to put together a plan and execute the plan. We can't be sitting back waiting — we've got to jump into the middle of it. We have to pass a budget every year. We have to pass the REINS Act, which will rein in the bureaucracy in the federal government. We've literally got to start the regular order of business back in the United States Senate where we discuss and debate and move bills through and vote them up or down. Today, that's not happening."

A Survey USA poll released Tuesday showed a tightening race in South Dakota with Rounds in the lead with 35 percent, former South Dakota Senator Larry Pressler at 32 percent, Democrat Rick Weiland at 28 percent and Independent Gordon Howie at 3 percent.

Rounds said a close race was the expectation all along.

"It's going to be a knockdown-drag-out," he said. "We knew that two years (ago) when we started. We knew that every single Senate seat in the United States is worth the same number of votes. ... We knew we would have lots of challenges along the way. We've done our best to raise the resources to correct misinformation that we knew would also come and we're going to do the best with the resources we've got."

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## Schools

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If Wednesday's meeting is any indication, the five schools are moving in the direction of a secondary school with grades 7-12. The study committee members pointed out a high school with grades 9-12 would cost less at first. However, they noted the middle school-high school of grades 7-12 would carry a number of advantages, particularly for the younger students.

The study committee also discussed the importance of reaching consensus on items and how to address any disagreements.

At Wednesday's meeting, the study committee also set the agenda for the Nov. 12 meeting, starting at 7 p.m. in the Wausa school gym.

The meeting will be facilitated by Marcia Herring and John Spatz with the Nebraska Association of School Boards (NASB).

The planned speakers include Dr. Michael Chipps, president of Northeast Community College (NECC) of Norfolk, Nebraska; Dr. Cory Epler with the Nebraska Department of Education; and Lincoln attorney Rex Schultze, who has worked with school consolidations and can speak on the legal aspects.

The Wausa meeting will also provide the opportunity for the study committee to present information from its sub-committees on the areas of curriculum and instruction, legal, architecture, investigative and economic/labor.

At Wednesday's meeting, the study committee discussed ways of publicizing the Wausa meeting and also addressing any public misconceptions and misinformation.

The *Press & Dakotan* has received emails expressing opposition to the five-school proposal. The concerns include the large size of the proposed district, whether students — particularly young children — would face long bus rides, the impact of a larger

student body on academics and extracurricular participation, and the perceived loss of community identity.

At Wednesday's meeting, the study committee emphasized the need to draw a large audience from all five school districts to the Wausa meeting. Bob Marks, the superintendent for Wausa and Bloomfield, said the Wausa gym can hold an audience of 1,000.

Creighton superintendent Jeff Jensen encouraged an overflow crowd.

"We need the public to feel informed," he said. "It's important that we get as many people as possible."

Watch for additional coverage on the five-school effort in a future edition of the *Press & Dakotan*.

For more information, visit online for the five-school link on each school's website.

You can follow Randy Dockendorf on Twitter at [twitter.com/RDockendorf](https://twitter.com/RDockendorf). Discuss this story at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net).

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