

# NATION/WORLD

## Top Econ. Advisor To Leave White House

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama's top economic adviser, Lawrence Summers, plans to leave the White House at the end of the year, a move that comes as the administration struggles to show an anxious public it's making progress on the economy.

In a statement, the president said he is grateful for Summers' service during a time of "great peril for our country."

"While we have much work ahead to repair the damage done by the recession, we are on a better path thanks in no small measure to Larry's wise counsel," Obama said.

Summers will return to Harvard University, a move a senior administration official said was always part of Summers' long-standing plans. The official said the president asked Summers last fall to stay through 2010 in order to see through the passage of financial regulatory legislation and the continued implementation of the economic stimulus package. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity in order to discuss internal White House matters.

## L.A. Officials Arrested

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The mayor and ex-city manager of the Los Angeles suburb of Bell were among eight current and former city officials arrested Tuesday in a corruption scandal that authorities said cost the blue-collar city more than \$5.5 million in excessive salaries and illegal personal loans.

The district attorney's office said several former and current City Council members were taken into custody along with ex-city manager Robert Rizzo and Mayor Oscar Hernandez.

"This, needless to say, is corruption on steroids," District Attorney Steve Cooley said at a news conference, standing next to a display of pictures of the suspects.

Rizzo, who was making nearly \$800,000 a year, was booked on 53 counts of misappropriation of public funds and conflict of interest. He was expected to be arraigned Wednesday, with officials seeking bail of \$3.2 million.

Rizzo could face several years in prison if convicted, Cooley said. Messages left at Rizzo's home and with his attorney were not immediately returned.

## Tea Party Disjointed, But Energetic

WASHINGTON (AP) — Tea party activists and the Republican establishment are quickly joining forces for the fall elections as fresh cash and energy flow to the upstarts.

Separate tea party groups still squabble over roles for Republican insiders within the movement, but the conservative activists and GOP stalwarts have reached a truce for the common goal of defeating Democrats, heeding calls for unity from Republicans including Sarah Palin.

One group — the nonprofit Tea Party Patriots — on Tuesday announced a \$1 million donation from an anonymous donor, a shot of cash to be spent before the election on voter mobilization efforts. The Tea Party Express is preparing to assist specific candidates, building on its targeted advertising campaigns during primary races in Delaware, Alaska and Nevada.

Meanwhile, the Republican Party and GOP-allied outside groups are already helping some tea party-backed candidates, most notably Sharron Angle who is seeking to unseat Senate Majority leader Harry Reid in Nevada.

"Ultimately, that's what we all hope happens, as citizens," said Tea Party Patriots co-founder Mark Meckler. "The political parties support the candidates that the people support, not the other way around."

## \$30M Seized From Vatican In Probe

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Italian authorities seized euro23 million (\$30 million) from a Vatican bank account Tuesday and said they have begun investigating top officials of the Vatican bank in connection with a money-laundering probe.

The Vatican said it was "perplexed and surprised" by the investigation.

Italian financial police seized the money as a precaution and prosecutors placed the Vatican bank's chairman and director general under investigation for alleged mistakes linked to violations of Italy's anti-laundering laws, news reports said.

The investigation is not the first trouble for the bank — formally known as the Institute for Works of Religion. In the 1980s, it was involved in a major scandal that resulted in a banker, dubbed "God's Banker" because of his close ties to the Vatican, being found hanging from Blackfriars Bridge in London.

The Vatican expressed full trust in the chairman of the bank, Ettore Gotti Tedeschi, and his director-general, identified by the Vatican directory as Paolo Cipriani. It said the bank had been working for some time to make its finances more transparent to comply with anti-terrorism and anti-money-laundering regulations.

# Republicans Block Bill To Lift Military Gay Ban

BY ANNE FLAHERTY  
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans on Tuesday blocked an effort by Democrats and the White House to lift the ban on gays from serving openly in the military, voting unanimously against advancing a major defense policy bill that included the provision.

The mostly partisan vote dealt a major blow to gay rights groups who saw the legislation as their best hope, at least in the short term, for repeal of the 17-year-old law known as "don't ask, don't tell."

If Democrats lose seats in the upcoming congressional elections this fall, as many expect, repealing the ban could prove even more difficult — if not impossible — next year. With that scenario looming, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said that a lame-duck session was being planned and that lifting the ban would be taken up then.

The episode upset advocates who believe that neither President Barack Obama nor Reid did enough to see the measure through.

"The whole thing is a political train wreck," said Richard Socarides, a White House adviser on gay rights during the Clinton administration.

Democrats included the repeal provision in a \$726 billion defense policy bill, which authorizes a pay raise for the troops among other popular programs. In a deal brokered with the White House, the measure would have overturned the 1993 law banning openly gay service only after a Pentagon review and certification from the president that lifting the ban wouldn't hurt troop morale.

But with little time left for debate before the November ballot, the bill languished on the Senate calendar until gay rights groups, backed by pop star Lady Gaga, began an aggressive push

to turn it into an election issue. Earlier this month a federal judge in Los Angeles declared the ban an unconstitutional violation of the due process and free speech rights of gays and lesbians.

The decision was the third federal court ruling since July to assert that statutory limits on the rights of gays and lesbians were unconstitutional.

Reid agreed to force a vote on the bill this week and limit debate, despite Republican objections. A Nevada Democrat in a tight race of his own this fall, he also pledged to use the defense bill as a vehicle for an immigration proposal that would enable young people to qualify for U.S. citizenship if they joined the military.

Republicans alleged that Reid was using the defense bill to score political points with the Democratic base.

"This is not a serious exercise. It's a show," said Senate GOP

leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky.

Democrats countered that the bill merely reflects public opinion. Recent polls suggest that a majority of Americans think the ban on gays in the military should be overturned.

"We're going to fight for this," said Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

But at least for now, the question of how and when to change the policy returns to the Pentagon, which had set a December deadline to complete a study of the effects of lifting the ban. Defense Secretary Robert Gates has said that he supports Obama's goal of repeal, but Gates made it clear he thought the process should move gradually.

It is not clear how quickly the Pentagon might make its own recommendations. Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell declined

to comment Tuesday on what he called "an internal procedural matter for the Senate."

Initially, advocates had thought that Democrats might win the 60 votes needed to overcome GOP objections and advance the bill. Sen. Susan Collins, a moderate Maine Republican, was seen as a crucial vote because she supports overturning the ban.

But Collins ultimately sided with her GOP colleagues in arguing that the bill shouldn't advance because Republicans weren't given sufficient chance to offer amendments to the wide-ranging policy bill.

Democrats also failed to keep all of their party members in line. Democratic Sens. Blanche Lincoln and Mark Pryor, both of Arkansas, voted with Republicans to scuttle the bill. The vote was 56-43, four short of the 60 required to advance under Senate rules.

# AP Poll: Health Care Law Making Us Muddle-Minded

BY RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR AND TREVOR TOMPSON  
Associated Press Writers

WASHINGTON — Six months after President Barack Obama signed the landmark health care law, the nation still doesn't really know what's in it.

More than half of Americans mistakenly believe the overhaul will raise taxes for most people this year, an Associated Press poll finds. But that would be true only if most people were devoted to indoor tanning, which got hit with a sales tax.

Many who wanted the health care system to be overhauled don't realize that some provisions they cared about actually did make it in. And about a quarter of supporters don't understand that something hardly any-

one wanted didn't make it: They mistakenly say the law will set up panels of bureaucrats to make decisions about people's care — what critics labeled "death panels."

The uncertainty and confusion amount to a dismal verdict for the Obama administration's campaign to win over public opinion. Before the final votes in Congress, Obama personally assured wavering Democrats he'd take the case to the American people after the law passed. But it hasn't worked. And in the final stretch before the midterm elections Republicans are united by their call for repeal.

"I'm insecure about a document that was as big as the health care bill and wonder if anybody understands exactly what's in it," said Diann Kelley,

61, a retiree from Marietta, Ga., who says she's "somewhat opposed" to the law. The AP poll was conducted by Stanford University with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

"The main fear is the cost," explained Kelley. "I'm not sure that we can afford to take on something quite as massive as the health care reform with the economy the way it is."

It's not that Kelley has a negative opinion about everything in the law. The prohibition on health insurance companies denying coverage to people because of pre-existing medical conditions "is really a fine idea," she said.

The poll's questions included a true-or-false quiz on 19 items, some of which are in the law and others not. People were also asked how confident they were

about their answers. For the most part, majorities picked the right answers. But a sizable number also got things wrong. And right or wrong, people were unsure of their answers. Two-thirds or more were uncertain about their responses on

eight of nine core provisions of the legislation. Analysis of the findings indicated a split as far as the impact of accurate knowledge, between Democrats and independents on one side and Republicans on the other.

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