

GOP: N.Y. Election Means Trouble For Obama

WASHINGTON (AP) — Savoring the unlikely of victories, Republicans called their triumph in a New York City congressional race a repudiation of President Barack Obama's policies on the economy and Israel on Wednesday as public and private polls showed his approval ratings plummeting in a district he carried handily in 2008.

"We're not going to sugarcoat it, it was a tough loss," conceded the House Democratic Campaign Committee. Yet party officials and the White House insisted the race was not a referendum on the president as he seeks re-election with the economy stagnant and unemployment stuck at 9.1 percent.

In New York, Rep.-elect Bob Turner, outpolled state Assemblyman David Weprin in a light-turnout election. He will replace former Democrat Rep. Anthony Weiner, who resigned in disgrace earlier this year in a sexting scandal. Represented by Democrats since the 1920s, the district includes portions of Brooklyn and Queens, is home to three times as many registered Democrats as Republicans and is nearly 40 percent Jewish.

Those district demographics customarily spell victory for a Democrat, but in a smattering of interviews on the day after the election, former Obama supporters gave voice to their changed feelings.

"Unfortunately the Democrats have let us down lately," said Anne Lenihan, 65, of Queens, who said she supported the president in 2008. "I'm disappointed in the Democrats and we need change."

Congressional Panel Questions \$528M Loan

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans questioned Wednesday whether the White House rushed approval of a half-billion-dollar loan guarantee for a now-bankrupt solar panel manufacturer once cited as the kind of renewable energy company worthy of federal stimulus money.

Solyndra Inc. was a major presence in Washington and spent millions of dollars on lobbying there, particularly about the Energy Department's loan guarantee program. And its executives raised thousands of dollars for Obama and Democrats in Congress.

The collapse of the Fremont, Calif.-based company once touted by President Barack Obama ultimately left taxpayers on the hook for \$528 million, raising questions if the loan was rushed to accommodate a company event in September 2009 that featured Vice President Joe Biden.

The congressional panel examining the loan disclosed emails that appeared to show senior staff at the Office of Management and Budget chafing about having to conduct "rushed approvals" of federal loan guarantees designed to help jumpstart the nation's renewable energy industry.

"We would prefer to have sufficient time to do our due diligence reviews and have the approval set the date for the announcement rather than the other way around," said one of the emails from an unnamed OMB aide to Biden's office.

Long-Term Care Bankruptcy Warnings Ignored

WASHINGTON (AP) — Even as leading Democrats offered assurances to the contrary, government experts repeatedly warned that a new long-term care insurance plan could go belly up, saddling taxpayers with another underfunded benefit program, according to emails disclosed by congressional investigators.

Part of President Barack Obama's health care law, the program is in limbo as a congressional debt panel searches for budget savings and behind the scenes, administration officials scramble to find a viable financing formula.

A longstanding priority of the late Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports program, or CLASS, was spliced into the health care law despite nagging budget worries. Administration emails and documents reveal that alarms were sounded earlier and more widely than previously thought. Congressional Republicans seeking repeal of the program provided the materials to The Associated Press.

"Seems like a recipe for disaster to me," William Marton, a senior aging policy official in the administration, wrote in an October 2009 email. Marton explained his concern that large numbers of healthy people would not willingly sign up for CLASS, creating a predicament in which soaring premiums for a smaller group of frail beneficiaries would destabilize the program.

That central design flaw has dogged CLASS from the drawing board, and it may turn out to be insurmountable without making the program mandatory for most workers. CLASS remains vulnerable to repeal.

Poverty Hits 50-Year High, U.S. Says

BY DON LEE, NOAM LEVEY AND ALEJANDRO LAZO

Tribune Washington Bureau (2011 MCT)

WASHINGTON — In a grim portrait of a nation in economic turmoil, the government reported that the number of people living in poverty last year surged to 46.2 million — the most in at least half a century — as 1 million more Americans went without health insurance and household incomes fell sharply.

The poverty rate for all Americans rose in 2010 for the third consecutive year, matching the 15.1 percent figure in 1993 and pushing many more young adults to double up or return to their parents' home to avoid joining the ranks of the poor.

Taken together, the annual income and poverty snapshot released Tuesday by the U.S. Census Bureau underscored how the recession is casting a long shadow well after its official end in June 2009.

And at the current sluggish pace of economic growth, analysts don't expect many of these indicators of economic and social well-being to turn better soon.

Census officials wouldn't say definitively what caused the surge in poverty, but it was evident that the root of the continuing misery was the nation's inability to create jobs. The total of Americans who fell below the official poverty line last year rose from 43.6 million in 2009. Of the 2.6 million increase, about two-thirds of the people said they did not work even one week last year.

Those with jobs were much less likely to be poor, but the recession and weak recovery have wiped out income gains of prior years for a broad spectrum of workers and their families. Inflation-adjusted median household income — the middle of the populace — fell 2.3 percent to \$49,445 last year from a year ago and 7 percent from 2000.

"It's a lost decade for the middle class," said Sheldon Danziger, a poverty expert at the University of Michigan.

The number of poor children younger than 18 reached its highest number since 1962, said William Frey, a demographer at the Brookings Institution.

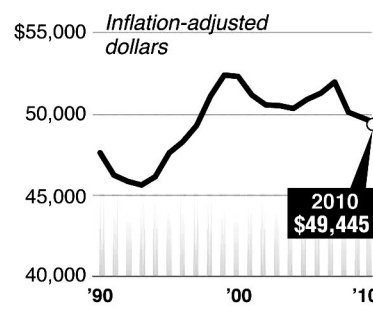
Poverty reached a record high for Latino children, who Frey said accounted for more than half the overall increase in poor children last year. Blacks had the highest child poverty rate at 39 percent, up more than 3 points from last year.

Snapshot of U.S. economic well-being

Poverty continued to increase last year, even though the recession officially ended in June 2009.

Median income dropped

A decline of 6.4 percent since 2001 in median household income



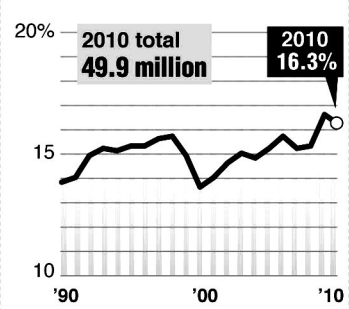
How racial/ethnic groups rank

Asian	\$64,308
White, non-Hispanic	\$54,620
Hispanic*	\$37,759
African-American	\$32,068

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

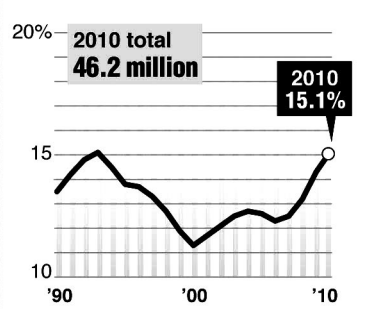
More lacked health insurance

In 2010, 1.5 million dropped from employer-sponsored plans



Poverty rate highest since 1983

Number of poor Americans is the highest since 1959



Hispanic*	30.7%
African-American	20.8%
Asian	18.1%
White, non-Hispanic	11.7%

*Hispanics can be any race

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Overall, poverty was generally higher than the national rate in states with high unemployment and in the South. Mississippi had the highest poverty rate last year, at 22.7 percent, and New Hampshire had the lowest, 6.6 percent.

Overall, the number of 25- to 34-year-old men and women who were living with their parents last spring totaled 5.9 million — a 25.5 percent increase since the recession began in 2007. Nearly half of this group would have been counted as among the poor had they been out on their own, according to Trudi Renwick, chief of poverty statistics for the Census Bureau.

"The next generation is going to be terribly punished if we don't find more jobs," said Timothy M. Smeeding, director of the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin. Studies have shown the effects of recessions and job losses can hurt a worker's earnings for many years into the future.

The census report, coming shortly after President Barack Obama unveiled a proposed \$447 billion package of tax cuts and spending to revive job growth and the recovery, was seen as intensifying the debate over the government's role in helping the poor and unemployed at a time of budget deficits and painful cutbacks in public services.

Unemployment benefits, the Census Bureau said, helped lift about 3 million people above the poverty line, and Obama's latest proposal includes continuing the aid.

The report "underscores yet again why these programs must be maintained to rebuild the economy," said Christine Owens, executive director of the National Employment Law Project, referring to unemployment insurance and Social Security benefits.

But conservative groups expressed their concerns about Americans' growing reliance on such programs, including government health insurance.

"It raises the issue of whether we can afford this," said Nina Owcharenko, director of health policy studies at the Heritage Foundation. "These entitlement programs are unsustainable."

The census report found more Americans again lost health insurance in 2010, continuing a decade-long erosion in coverage that pushed the percentage of uninsured to 16.3 percent, the highest ever recorded. But the decline in health coverage slowed between 2009 and 2010 and was not statistically significant, according to census analysts.

The number of young people between 18 and 24 who had insurance increased significantly, possibly reflecting the effect of the new health care law, which allows dependents up to age 26 to remain on their parents' health plans.

The decline in insurance coverage was fueled largely by employers dropping health benefits as health care costs continued to rise, a trend that has reduced the percentage of Americans who get health benefits through work from a peak of 65.1 percent in 2000 to

55.3 percent last year.

During that period, the average annual premium for an employer-provided family health plan more than doubled to \$13,770 from \$6,438, according to surveys by the nonprofit Kaiser Family Foundation.

As Americans lost coverage through work, they have increasingly relied on government programs such as Medicaid.

"The real policy take away is the importance of protecting the safety net," said Families USA Chief Executive Ron Pollack, a leading consumer advocate. "Medicaid is the lifeline."

By the Census Bureau's latest measure, the poverty threshold last year was an income of \$11,139 for one person and \$22,314 for a family of four.

The government's official poverty rate doesn't count food stamp benefits and low-income tax credits as income. If those programs, which totaled about \$150 billion last year, were included, millions more people would have been counted as being above the poverty line.

At the same time, analysts said, other factors understate the extent of people struggling to meet their basic needs.

Experts agree that the government's poverty thresholds, designed in the early 1960s, don't reflect people's spending and living needs in today's economy.

The Census Bureau is scheduled to release alternative measures of poverty in October.

Procedural Snarl Could Shutdown FAA

BY JOAN LOWY
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A single Republican senator's objections plus another partial shutdown of the Federal Aviation Administration at the end of this week, potentially putting thousands of workers out of jobs and depriving the government of \$30 million a day in uncollected airline ticket taxes.

Senate rules don't allow lawmakers to shift from the bill they're currently working on, a disaster aid bill, to a stop-gap funding measure for the FAA and highway programs without the consent of all lawmakers, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said Wednesday.

Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla., is refusing to give his consent. Coburn wants to change the highway portion of the stopgap transportation bill that the House passed on Tuesday by eliminating a requirement that states spend 10 percent of their highway program dollars on "transportation enhancements" like bike and walking paths and projects aimed at drawing tourists.

Without directly naming Coburn, Reid effectively accused the GOP senator of acting like a "dictator" by insisting the rest of the Senate accept his amendment.

"It's a pretty good way to legislate around here, be a dictator and say either take this or leave it," Reid said. "I'm convinced his issue would lose overwhelmingly. But he's holding this legislation up, and we are in a position now legislatively that I can't get ... to this bill prior to Friday, when the FAA expires."

Republicans say the Senate could have passed the transportation bill in time if Reid hadn't brought up the disaster aid bill first. Because Coburn and several other GOP senators also opposed bringing up that measure, Reid on Tuesday set in motion parliament-

tary procedures that would allow the Senate to pass the disaster aid bill by Saturday.

Democrats have been negotiating with Coburn, with Senate Minority leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., acting as a go-between. But Coburn said in speech on the Senate floor late Wednesday that he won't back down with regard to transportation spending. He said he wouldn't object if Reid split off the FAA portion of the bill and passed that separately before Friday. Since that would change the bill, the House would have to pass the bill as well before the deadline.

A spokesman for Reid didn't immediately reply to a request for comment on Coburn's offer.

Pointing to the nation's 146,000 bridges that are structurally deficient, Coburn said it's wrong to require states to spend money on projects that don't enhance safety when they could spend the money on repairing or replacing bridges. He released a list of 40 enhancement projects that he described as low priorities, including \$111,804 for a sanctuary for white (albino) squirrels in Kenton, Tenn. Gibson County, where Kenton is located, calls itself "The Home of the White Squirrel" because families of white squirrels live throughout the town.

Among other projects on his list were \$150,000 to build a critter crossing in Monkton, Vt., for

migrating salamanders and other amphibians whose numbers are dwindling in part due to roadway traffic, \$250,000 build a twin dragons arch over the entrance to Los Angeles' Chinatown neighborhood, and \$500,000 to restore windows, doors, bricks and shutters in a Toledo, Ohio, lighthouse.

However, most enhancement dollars go to more parochial projects like bike paths and walking trails, according to the Transportation Department. States, not the federal government, chose which enhancement projects they want to fund.

"I would think we would rather repair these 146,000 bridges rather than redecorating a (road) side," Coburn said.

A partisan standoff between House Republicans and Senate Democrats forced the FAA to partially shut down for two weeks this summer. Nearly 4,000 FAA workers were furloughed and more than 200 airport construction and safety projects halted, affecting tens of thousands of other workers. The government lost nearly \$400 million in airline ticket taxes because airlines no longer had authority to collect the fees.

Without congressional action, the FAA would face another partial shutdown on Friday, when its current operating authority expires.

OBITUARIES

LaVerne Johnson

LaVerne M. Johnson, 97, of Yankton died Wednesday morning, Sept. 14, 2011, at Avera Sister James Care Center, Yankton.

Mass of Christian Burial is at 10:30 a.m. Saturday at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Yankton, with the Rev. Mark Lichter officiating. Burial will be at approximately 1:15 p.m. at St. Patrick's Cemetery, Wakonda.

Visitations is 4-7 p.m. Friday at Opsahl-Kostel Funeral Home and Crematory, Yankton, with the family present at 5:30 p.m. A rosary will begin at 7 p.m. followed by a video tribute and a 7:30 p.m. Scripture service. Visitations will resume one hour prior to the service at the church.

George Eells

IRENE — George H. Eells, 93, of Irene and formerly of Hartington, Neb., died Tuesday, Sept. 13, 2011 at Sunset Manor, Irene.

Funeral Services are at 11 a.m. Monday at Wintz Funeral Home, Hartington, with the Rev. Gary Kimm officiating. Burial will be at the Rose Hill Cemetery in Pender, Neb.

Visitation is at 9 a.m. Monday morning until service time at the funeral home.



It's Simple!

Draw A Holiday Scene On 8.5"x11" White Paper and Submit It To The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan

- Top drawings selected will be printed on Christmas cards. The cards will be sold with proceeds going to our Newspapers In Education Program
- The winners will be featured with their picture and first name in the Press & Dakotan and will receive a full package of the Christmas cards.
- Child's first name and age will be printed on the back of the Christmas Card.

Mail or bring to:
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Any questions contact Noelle at 665-7811 ext. 112

Please write child's first name, age, phone number and school on back of drawing.

Entry deadline September 30, 2011.
Press & Dakotan staff will judge drawings.

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