

Dr. Jack Turco, director of health services at Dartmouth College, said Santa might consider greeting children from a few feet away rather than holding them on his lap, or asking children with coughs to stand in a separate line.

"If we take this really seriously, and I think we should because people are dying, it wouldn't be inappropriate to say this is a year maybe we shouldn't do these mass gatherings," he said.

Abundance Of Food Drives Makes It Easy To Help Needy For Holidays (WILNJ)

By The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 18, 2009

With a little more than a week to go before Thanksgiving, and requests for help more numerous this year, the Delaware Food Bank says it is running at about the same donation level as last year, thanks to some big food drives.

Collections by the University of Delaware, Chase, Wilmington Trust, Sallie Mae, Sodexo, DART and the Delaware Air National Guard, among others, have helped keep the shelves and freezers full for Thanksgiving baskets and dinners, said Kim Kostas, spokeswoman for the food bank.

DART's Stuff the Bus campaign saw a big increase in donations, up to 29,152 pounds of food from last year's 18,687.

The food bank, soup kitchens and other ministries that feed the hungry still need turkeys and other items for Thanksgiving dinners and baskets, with a lot of turkey and food drives set for the weekend and Monday to make the holiday deadline.

All say they are experiencing dramatic rises in need because of the continued effects of a depressed economy. At the Ministry of Caring's Emmanuel Dining Room on North Jackson Street, the number of baskets that area residents have signed up for has risen to 1,000 this year from 750 last November.

Here are the ongoing food drives The News Journal has been notified about so far, with new notifications at the top. If your organization is conducting a food drive, please send information about it, including daytime contact phone numbers for drive organizers, to features@delawareonline.com. We welcome Christmas food drive information, but will not print it until after Thanksgiving.

Ministry of Caring

WJBR's Turkeython to benefit The Ministry of Caring will be from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday Vans will be on site at the Pathmarks on Kirkwood Highway, Concord Pike and People's Plaza in Glasgow to collect birds, boxed stuffing and canned goods. Between the three sites, the group hopes to raise 1,000 turkeys. For more information, call 765-1160.

Delaware City Fire Company

The fire company's food drive will be Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and will benefit the Delaware Food Bank.

Non-perishables may be dropped off at the Delaware City Fire House at 815 Fifth St., Delaware City through Sunday. For more information, call 834-9336.

Delaware Military Academy

The academy will hold a turkey drive Saturday between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., and cadets will man a drive-through drop-off site at the campus, 112 Middleboro Road, near Banning Park. This is the second year the academy has collected turkeys that will be donated to Amvets Post 100 for needy military families.

In addition, the cadets have collected items and will be preparing military care packages to be sent to military troops serving abroad. For more information, call 998-0745.

UD Student Government Association

On Thursday and Friday, the Student Government Association at the University of Delaware is sponsoring a Thanksgiving food drive. Collection on Thursday will be from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the gallery at the Perkins Student Center. On Friday, donations can be dropped off from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Multipurpose Room C in the Trabant University Center and in the Collins Room at Perkins. All donations will go to the Food Bank of Delaware.

Bear Library

The Bear Library hosts an ongoing food collection for the Delaware Food Bank. Nonperishable food items are accepted during regular library hours, which are 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Wednesday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Thursday through Saturday; and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. The library is at 101 Governor's Place in Governor's Square Shopping Center. For more information, call the reference desk at 838-3300.

Sunday Breakfast Mission

While Sunday Breakfast Mission leaders report strong response to a WSFS food drive and cash donations, the Wilmington charity had only three turkeys left last week. The mission distributes food boxes to needy families just prior to Thanksgiving, and leaders said they need 1,200 for their Great Thanksgiving Outreach.

Turkeys can be delivered to the mission at 110 N. Poplar St. For more information, call 652-8314.

Harvest Market Natural Food Store

Since June, the Harvest Market Natural Food Store in Hockessin has been making weekly donations of fresh and nonperishable foods to local food banks and shelters. For the month of November, the store has partnered with the Sunday Breakfast Mission to incorporate the donations with additional gifts from customers for the Thanksgiving drive.

Nonperishable donations are accepted all week, and fresh donations may be brought to the store each Wednesday. The store, at 7417 Lancaster Pike, is open 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. during the week and from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday. It is closed Sunday.

Norman Oliver/NOR Enterprises annual turkey drive

Donations of turkeys and nonperishable food, such as stuffing mix and other side dishes, will be collected Tuesday through Tuesday, when they will be distributed to needy Wilmington residents. The drive, more than 25 years old, has a goal of 2,500 turkeys this year.

Donations can be dropped off at NOR Enterprises offices at 1213 B St. in South Wilmington. For more information, call 655-8250.

Giant Food drive

Area Giant Food stores have launched their 22nd annual Good Neighbor Food and Funds Drive.

Through Dec. 31, customers will have an opportunity to donate money or nonperishable food at the cash registers to benefit the Food Bank of Delaware.

Giant allows customers to add \$1, \$3 or \$5 donations to their grocery bills.

The store provides collection carts for food items for the food bank.

Wilmington Jaycees turkey drive

The Wilmington Jaycees hope to provide a full Thanksgiving meal -- turkey included -- for 500 of the city's neediest families through the West End Neighborhood House.

But corporate support in these trying times has been hard to get, so they are asking anyone who gets a free turkey through grocery store points to donate the \$14 they would have spent on a turkey so a needy family can have a happy Thanksgiving.

Donations can be made via Paypal at this link: <http://wilmingtonjaycees.com/Donate-A-Turkey.htm>

Pump It Up Turkey Jump

Pump It Up, an indoor inflatable party facility, will hold a Turkey Jump to benefit the Food Bank of Delaware on Nov. 25.

From 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. that day, anyone who brings a nonperishable food item to donate to the food bank will get \$1 off the admission price of \$8 for the open, non-reserved playtime.

For more information, go to www.pumpitupparty.com.

Friends of Newark Library drive for Food Bank of Delaware

The Friends of the Newark Library maintain an ongoing food drive for the Food Bank of Delaware. Collection barrels are next to the circulation desk.

They accept canned meats, peanut butter, pork and beans, canned soups and stews, fruit juice, beverages, instant breakfasts, canned vegetables, canned beans, canned fruits, rice and rice mixes, pasta and pasta mixes, powdered milk, evaporated milk, powdered creamer, pancake and waffle mix, baking mixes, cooking oils, condiments and powdered or liquid baby formula. They also accept diapers, toothpaste, mouthwash, dental floss, shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, bar soap, liquid hand soap and paper products.

They will not accept baby food or homemade foods.

For more information, go to <http://friendsofthenewarkfreelibrary.webs.com/fooddrive.htm>

Basket Brigade of Delaware

With a goal of 2,000 turkeys, the group is sponsoring a turkey drive, with drop-off locations at all Seasons Pizza locations, and a virtual turkey drive on <http://basketbrigadeofde.org>.

Those who drop off a turkey at Seasons Pizza will receive a coupon for a free medium pizza. Those who donate \$15 or more online will be entered in a drawing for two Eagles tickets, including sideline pregame passes, for the Dec. 27 game against Denver. The drawing will be held on basket delivery day, Nov. 23.

Police Dog Dies After Tumor Is Diagnosed (WILNJ)

By Terri Sanginiti, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 18, 2009

Bandit, a New Castle County policed dog that was rushed to the University of Pennsylvania Matthew J. Ryan Veterinary Hospital after becoming ill, was euthanized Monday after being diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor, police said Tuesday.

The 6-year-old German shepherd suddenly became ill Sunday night and immediately was hospitalized, county police Senior Cpl. Trinidad Navarro said.

Doctors discovered Bandit had an inoperable tumor on his brain stem.

Because of the dog's dire condition and the fact he was suffering, he was euthanized, Navarro said.

Bandit was surrounded by his handler Cpl. Paul Chickadel, family and friends when he died.

Navarro said the last time Bandit worked was Saturday night.

In 2008, Chickadel and Bandit were assigned to the A-Squad. The pair assisted in numerous money sniffs that resulted in \$32,445 in seizures in drug investigations.

The pair handled 389 canine calls for service last year and also supported patrol in making four arrests.

In June, the team was certified in narcotics detection, tracking and patrol work by the National Police Canine Association.

Bandit served on the county police force for four years.

Navarro said arrangements have not been finalized for a memorial service.

Meanwhile, the condition of police dog Diablo, who was wounded last week in the line of duty, remains stable and unchanged, Navarro said.

Diablo developed pneumonia and is recovering from surgery in the hospital's intensive care unit.

Working Together For Young Ones (WILNJ)

By Edward L. Kenney, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 18, 2009

With three early childhood centers -- and another on the way if the upcoming referendum passes -- the Appoquinimink School District has buttressed with action the belief that children should start learning well before grade school.

But it has not stopped there. Rather than wait for children ages 3 to 5 to enroll in the centers, district leaders have developed an outreach program that trains Middletown-area day care providers to give the children an even earlier head start.

"In the past, the school district and the community providers sort of passed [like ships] in the night, so to speak, yet we're all sharing the same kids," said Sandra Cohee, principal at the Cedar Lane Early Childhood Center. "We give them a more in-depth view of what we do at school. This has opened up a conduit of information."

Cohee, the leaders of the other two early childhood centers and an educational diagnostician make up the leadership in a newly formed Preschool Coalition Committee that plans training for the day care providers.

The district has worked with the providers informally for the past 10 years, beginning when the Appoquinimink Early Childhood Center opened its doors as the first such center in the district, she said.

But this year marks an effort to give the initiative better structure, a move necessitated both because of district growth and the growing number of day care centers in the Middletown area, now about 15.

"There are other districts that are doing similar things, but not as formalized as we are doing it," Cohee said. "It's a great idea. And it really has opened up communication, so we are on the same page as the providers."

"Developing this liaison helps to build a bridge," added committee member Lucia Weathers, assistant principal at the Townsend Early Childhood Center.

Licensed day care providers are required by state law to receive 18 hours of training a year in subjects such as classroom management, parental involvement, developing fine and gross motor skills, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

Providers usually have to pay for that training, but the district offers it free, holding sessions as part of evening dinner meetings that have drawn as many as 75 day care people.

Meetings are held every two to three months and are assigned a training theme, Cohee said. One scheduled for January will be about discipline.

Rene Nolen, the principal at the Appoquinimink Early Childhood Center and a member of the Preschool Coalition Committee, said the district also can teach things that will help the children with social skills such as sharing and teamwork, paving the way for the more academic lessons to come.

"Then when they get here, they're ready for reading and words and counting," she said.

"The kindergarten year is so critical," added fellow committee member Kathy Gertley, a district educational diagnostician who used to go out on her own to the day care centers before things got better organized. "It just sets them up for success in their educational career.

"We want them to instill in them the love of learning," she said of the day care providers.

As an owner of the Kiddie Academy childcare center in Middletown, Susan Tudor appreciates the training the district is giving her 20 teachers.

"It's a good opportunity to get those hours and not have to pay for it," she said. "In early childcare, it's definitely not a career you go into to make money. As a business owner, I wish I could say I will pay for all your training, but I can't afford it."

Tudor also likes what the teachers are taking away from the training, which cannot help but benefit the 115 children at her day care center.

"I think it helps educate my teachers, giving them different ideas," she said. "They can kind of feed off each other. I think it gives them a chance to grow together. It keeps my teachers fresh and aware of what's going on out there."

Said Weathers, "Those centers know that we value what they do, and just knowing that helps them to keep coming back."

Police: Liquor Store Clerk Fatally Shoots Would-be Robber (WILNJ)

By Ira Porter, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 18, 2009

One of two men trying to rob a Wilmington liquor store Tuesday night was shot and killed by a store clerk who exchanged fire with the bandits in the store.

Police Master Sgt. Steven Barnes said the man killed in the 9:30 p.m. gunfire at Favor's Liquor Store, 1020 N. Walnut St., was able to exit the store and stagger 30 feet along a sidewalk before collapsing. Paramedics treated him, and he was rushed to Christiana Hospital, where he was pronounced dead at 10:15 p.m.

The second holdup man fled on foot and police were using a dog to try and track him in the area near the store along 10th and 11th streets.

The clerk, said to be in his late 50s or early 60s, was being interviewed at police headquarters. Police said they found a .22-caliber handgun in the store that they think was left behind by one of the men attempting the robbery.

Two women were in the back of the store at the time of the robbery, but police do not know if they witnessed the crime.

Police said two men wearing masks entered the store brandishing handguns and ordered the clerk to hand over money from the register. They then rounded the counter in an attempt to get at the register and grab the cash themselves.

But the clerk also had a gun and opened fire, striking one of the masked men and forcing both to flee. Police do not know if the other gunman was hit during the exchange and were checking to see if any other gunshot victims show up at local hospitals.

Passers-by asked police about what happened as traffic was blocked off between 10th and 11th on Walnut.

A woman, who did not want to give her name, said she frequents the store, and the clerk is a "nice man."

"He usually has good deals on his cigarettes and beer," she said. "If someone tried to rob his store what was he supposed to do? He had to protect himself."

Police did not release the identities of the clerk or the man who died in the incident.

Middletown Chase Ends In Man's Arrest (WILNJ)

By Terri Sanginiti, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 18, 2009

A 19-year-old Townsend man was arrested Monday night after he allegedly stole a car outside a Townsend convenience store and led police on a pursuit through Middletown.

State police charged Vincenzo A. Tollis, 19, of Walnut Street, with felony reckless endangering, motor vehicle theft, disregarding a police officer's signal, resisting arrest, reckless driving, driving while suspended, habitual offender and nine other traffic offenses.

The incident unfolded about 6:38 p.m. outside Townsend Valero Shore Stop at 4235 Dupont Parkway. The car's owner left her 1996 Pontiac Bonneville running in the parking lot while she ran into the store to buy a pack of cigarettes, said state police spokesman Senior Cpl. Jeff Whitmarsh.

Tollis allegedly jumped into her running car and took off.

Police issued a general broadcast to be on the lookout for the car, which was spotted a short time later by some probation and parole officers who were in the Arby's parking lot on U.S. 301 in Middletown.

The probation and parole officers started following the car, which turned into Middletown Village and down Liborio Drive, a dead end street, Whitmarsh said.

At that point, Tollis stopped the car as the officers got out of their vehicle and approached him on foot. As they did, Tollis put the car in reverse and accelerated in the direction of the officers, who had to jump out of the way, Whitmarsh said.

Tollis drove east out of the neighborhood as additional officers converged on the area trying to find the car, he said.

Officers located the car on Cedar Lane Road and said Tollis drove into the community of Dove Run, speeding up and driving recklessly until officers discontinued the pursuit.

Whitmarsh said Tollis then took a fast turn into a curb on Remington Drive, leaving the Pontiac inoperable.

He ran off on foot and was found in a wooded area near Middletown High School by a state police K-9 team.

He is being held in the Young Correctional Institution in lieu of \$13,500 cash bail.

Police are asking any witnesses to the vehicle theft at the Valero Shore Stop to call Troop 9 at 378-5218, ext.622, or Delaware Crime Stoppers at (800)TIP-3333.

Police Say Two Men Robbed Woman's Wedding Ring (WILNJ)

By Terri Sanginiti, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 18, 2009

A Wilmington woman out for an early morning walk Saturday in Brandywine Park with her husband was robbed at gunpoint by two thieves who stole her wedding ring.

Wilmington police later arrested Bryan D. Roberts, of the 1800 block of N. Tatnall St., and Kendal Morris, of the 900 block of Linden St., both 18, and charged them with first-degree robbery, first-degree attempted robbery and conspiracy.

Roberts also was charged with aggravated menacing and carrying a concealed dangerous instrument, Master Sgt. John O'Connor said.

The incident occurred about 7:45 a.m. Saturday in the area of 16th and West streets. According to police, the couple was walking along a footpath when they were approached by the two men, one of whom carried what appeared to be a handgun, O'Connor said.

The man shoved the barrel of the gun in the woman's stomach and said, "Give me what ya got," according to court records.

The victims told the bandits that they didn't have anything.

Then 42-year-old woman took off her gold wedding band and handed it over to the gunman, police said. The two assailants turned to her 42-year-old husband and told him to remove his ring, but he couldn't get it off. The victim said the assailants kept yanking at her husband's ring but couldn't remove it.

Then they patted down the two victims to see if they were hiding any other valuables and ran west on North Park Drive toward the Brandywine Zoo with only the woman's inscribed slender gold band valued at \$50.

The victims provided officers with a description of the assailants and they searched the area and found two men matching the bandits' descriptions headed west in the 1000 block of W. 18th St., O'Connor said.

The officers stopped the duo and found Roberts with a handgun -- later identified as a pellet gun -- in the waistband of his pants under his shirt.

Police later conducted a photo line-up for the victim who identified the two men.

Both men were committed to Young Correctional Institution in lieu of bail.

Troopers Recruiting For NCCo Citizens Academy (WILNJ)

By The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 18, 2009

Delaware State Police are looking for people interested in participating in the 2009-2010 Citizens Police Academy in New Castle County.

Classes will start Dec. 22 and last for seven weeks. They will be held on Tuesday nights at Troop 2 in Glasgow.

Citizens will visit other troops, hear presentations and learn about the state police.

Anyone interested in participating can email dsp_pio@state.de.us or call Senior Cpl. Jeff Whitmarsh at 598-5188 during regular business hours.

Sussex Correctional Inmate, 36, Dies (WILNJ)

By The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 18, 2009

A Newark man in prison for a felony died Friday at Beebe Medical Center in Lewes, prison officials reported Monday.

The Department of Correction said Gernell J. Archie, 36, who was sentenced to more than eight years for possession of a deadly weapon, robbery, and theft, was housed at the Sussex Correctional Institution.

Archie began serving his sentence on March 30, 2008.

He was pronounced dead at 5:55 p.m. His body was to be turned over to the state Medical Examiner's Office.

No foul play is suspected.

BIDEN IN THE NEWS

Police Car Ahead Of Biden Crashes (NYT)

By Anahad O'Connor

[New York Times](#), November 18, 2009

A police car assisting Vice President Joseph R. **Biden** Jr.'s motorcade collided with another vehicle on the West Side of Manhattan on Tuesday as Mr. **Biden** was on his way to appear on a television show, the police said.

The accident took place just before 6 p.m. on the corner of West 49th Street and 10th Avenue as the police car was driving ahead of Mr. **Biden's** motorcade to help clear the way, the authorities said. Mr. **Biden** was on his way to a taping of "The Daily Show With Jon Stewart," which is recorded at a studio on 11th Avenue near West 52nd Street.

The police car, the authorities said, was part of an "advance element" of the motorcade made up of three marked police cars that traveled about three minutes ahead of Mr. **Biden's** vehicle to help clear the way and make sure there were no "breakdown issues" along the way.

As the marked cars traveled west on 49th Street with lights and sirens on, one of them collided with a livery cab at the intersection. Two officers and the driver of the livery cab were taken to a hospital with neck and back injuries, the police said. None of the injuries were serious.

Mr. **Biden** was informed of the crash after taping the show, and spoke with one of the injured officers from Air Force 2 on his way back to Washington, a spokeswoman said. She added that Mr. **Biden** was happy to hear that all those who were injured had been released from the hospital.

It was the second accident involving Mr. **Biden's** motorcade this week. On Monday, a sheriff's vehicle escorting Mr. **Biden's** motorcade in Albuquerque was hit by a car that went around two units blocking an intersection, injuring a sergeant in the vehicle.

Last week, a man in Maryland was killed when he was hit by two Secret Service cars: a limousine sometimes used by Mr. **Biden**, and a Chevrolet Suburban used in his motorcade. Mr. **Biden** was not in the limousine or the Suburban at the time of the accident.

NY Police Car In Accident Ahead Of Biden Motorcade (AP)

By Colleen Long, The Associated Press

[Associated Press](#), November 18, 2009

NEW YORK -- A police car working ahead of Vice President Joe **Biden's** motorcade was involved in a minor traffic accident Tuesday evening, but it wasn't part of the procession and the vice president was unhurt.

Three unmarked police vehicles, with their lights and sirens on, were traveling 5 to 10 minutes ahead of the motorcade on Manhattan's West Side and were checking traffic before **Biden** passed en route to an appearance on "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart," chief police spokesman Paul Browne said.

The cars were going through an intersection when the second one collided with a livery cab around 5:40 p.m. Traffic had stopped for the police, but the livery cab driver pulled out around the line of vehicles and was trying to go through the intersection, police said.

A passenger in the livery cab refused medical attention at the scene. The cab driver and two police officers were examined at a hospital and were released.

The police vehicles had been sent out as a routine patrol ahead of **Biden**, and the motorcade was not involved, Browne said.

Secret Service spokesman Darrin Blackford said the motorcade continued on its route to the Comedy Central channel show's studio, a few blocks from the accident site.

Biden was told about the accident after taping the show. He spoke with one of the injured officers and the officers' supervisor from his plane on the way back to Washington, D.C., his spokeswoman Elizabeth Alexander said.

"He was very happy to hear reports that the injuries were not serious and that all involved have already been released from the hospital," Alexander said.

In another accident involving the vice president this week, a sheriff's deputy was injured Monday in Albuquerque, N.M., when a woman drove around police vehicles blocking an intersection and collided with the deputy's car.

Biden had been in Albuquerque to speak at a campaign fundraiser for two New Mexico Democrats.

Associated Press writer Virginia Byrne contributed to this report.

Police Car Ahead Of Joe Biden's Motorcade Crashes On Way To Film 'Daily Show With Jon Stewart' (NYDN)

By John Lauinger, Daily News Staff Writer

[New York Daily News](#), November 18, 2009

An NYPD squad car traveling ahead of a motorcade for Vice President Joseph **Biden** crashed into a livery cab in rush-hour traffic on the West Side on Tuesday, police said.

The motorcade for **Biden** - in town to film an appearance on "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart" - was not involved in the 5:40 p.m. smash-up, a police source told the Daily News.

Biden made it to the studio just fine, and the taping wrapped up shortly before 7 p.m., a spokesman for Comedy Central confirmed.

The squad car with two detectives scouting the route for the motorcade was headed west on 49th St. when it was T-boned by a cab going north on 10th Ave.

The two detectives suffered minor injuries, and a third person was also injured.

The cab was registered in Nassau County to Zahid Butt. His registration was current but was revoked several times in recent years for lack of automobile insurance, state records show.

About five minutes later, the motorcade passed by on 49th St., said a witness

Joe Biden Unscathed In West Side Crash (NYPOST)

By Murray Weiss, John Doyle And Laurie Kamens

[New York Post](#), November 18, 2009

A car responsible for clearing a path for Vice President **Biden's** motorcade was involved in a West Side collision that sent three people to the hospital today, sources said.

Biden, who was headed to an appearance on "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart," was not hurt. It was the second accident involving a **Biden** trip in two days.

The latest crash occurred at 5:40 p.m. at West 49th Street and Tenth Avenue.

Biden's motorcade, which was going to make its way uptown to the show's 11th Avenue studio, was about ten minutes away at the time, authorities said.

Cops had stopped traffic on Tenth to clear a path for **Biden** when a livery cab tried to get around it by driving up the left lane.

Meanwhile, three unmarked police cars were headed west on 49th Street. At the intersection the middle car hit the livery cab, police and federal sources said.

"They t-boned him," said Joe Lewis, a clerk at the nearby Skyline Hotel.

The livery driver and two Intelligence Division cops in the middle car suffered neck and back injuries and were taken to Roosevelt Hospital where they were treated and released. The cab had a passenger who was treated at the scene for a minor injury and was released.

Witnesses said the passenger side door of the cab was caved in and the police car's bumper was ripped off.

But cops were able to push the crash cars aside so that **Biden** was able to continue on his way to the studio to tape the show that aired at 11 p.m.

The crash was a bizarre echo of an accident in **Biden's** motorcade on Monday.

The vice president was in Albuquerque, N.M. to help Democratic candidates when a woman drove around two police vehicles who were blocking an intersection for the vice president's motorcade.

The woman struck the car of a sheriff's deputy, who was rushed to a hospital for evaluation.

New York Police In Crash Ahead Of Biden Motorcade (AFP)

[AFP](#), November 18, 2009

NEW YORK - A New York police cruiser driving ahead of US Vice President Joe **Biden's** motorcade struck another car in mid-town Manhattan Tuesday, injuring four people, city police said.

"At 1730 hours (2230 GMT) an advance element comprised of three police cars, lights and sirens operating, was traveling west on West 49th Street when the second of the three struck a Lincoln Town Car," New York Police Department Lieutenant Mike Wysokowski told AFP.

"It was not the vice president's motorcade," the officer stressed, noting that the police were running **Biden's** route "several minutes before the actual motorcade."

He said two officers and two occupants of the other car were hurt. He did not describe the injuries.

Wysokowski said he was not immediately aware of whether the accident affected **Biden's** travel.

The vice president was in downtown New York for a taping of satirical news program The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, where he made no reference to the incident, though he acknowledged that having the street cleared ahead of his motorcade was a welcome vice-presidential perk.

"Hell, I've never driven in New York with no traffic before," he said.

The crash is the third in a week involving the vice president's motorcade or Secret Service detail.

On November 11, the Washington Post reported that two cars normally part of **Biden's** detail hit and killed a pedestrian in Maryland.

On Monday, the Albuquerque Journal reported that a deputy sheriff escorting the vice-president's motorcade in New Mexico was hit and injured by a car.

Accident Involving Biden's Advance Team (WABC)

[WABC](#), November 18, 2009

NEW YORK (WABC) -- An accident involving an advance team for the Vice President's motorcade left two police officers and two others injured.

The accident happened at 10th Avenue and West 49th Street at 5:40 p.m.

Investigators say three unmarked police vehicles, with their lights and sirens on, were traveling ahead of the motorcade on the West Side. One of those police vehicles struck a taxi that had gone around traffic stopped because of the motorcade.

A passenger in the livery cab refused medical attention at the scene. The cab driver and two police officers were examined at a hospital and were released.

The advance team drives the motorcade route several minutes before the motorcade itself. Vice President Joe **Biden** was visiting New York City for a television appearance.

Secret Service spokesman Darrin Blackford said the motorcade continued on its route to the Comedy Central channel show's studio, a few blocks from the accident site.

In another accident involving the vice president this week, a sheriff's deputy was injured Monday in Albuquerque, N.M., when a woman drove around police vehicles blocking an intersection and collided with the deputy's car.

Biden had been in Albuquerque to speak at a campaign fundraiser for two New Mexico Democrats.

Biden's Security Detail Slams Taxi In Midtown (NBCNY)

[NBC New York](#), November 18, 2009

Vice President Joe **Biden** was in midtown today for a taping of the John Stewart show, and his security detail hit a bit of a snag while paving his way to the show.

Three advance vehicles belonging to the NYPD were moving down 49th Street near 10th Avenue when they slammed into the back of a livery cab, officials said. The cars apparently had lights and sirens on at the time, officials said.

Four people -- two NYPD officers and two civilians -- were injured, NYPD spokeswoman Barbara Chen said.

Mr. **Biden** wasn't in the trail of cars at the time. His official motorcade was not affected and continued on as planned, the NYPD said.

Last week, two of the Vice President's official vehicles were involved in a tragedy outside of Washington.

According to The Hill.com, two Secret Service employees struck and killed a man last Wednesday in the cars the agency uses to transport **Biden**.

The vehicles had just been flown back to the D.C.-area from Fort Lewis, Wash., where they had driven the vice president before and after he spoke to a crowd of troops for Veterans Day.

Two NYPD Officers Injured In VP Motorcade Crash (NY1)

[NY1](#), November 18, 2009

Two city police officers suffered minor injuries Tuesday during an accident involving the Vice President Joe **Biden**'s motorcade in Manhattan.

It happened at 49th Street and 10th Avenue in Hell's Kitchen.

Officials say members of the Vice President's advance team collided with a livery cab.

The Vice President was not involved in the accident.

The police officers and the driver of the livery cab suffered minor injuries.

One witness says they saw the police escort but had no idea there was an accident.

"We got to the corner and we saw a bunch of bright lights. And next thing you know I see this. And then they pulling out the guy in this car that car and I'm like what happened?" said one witness.

Vice President **Biden** was on his way to tape an episode of "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart."

Biden's Police Advance Car Involved In Midtown Crash (WINS)

[WINS-AM New York](#), November 18, 2009

WASHINGTON (AP /1010 WINS) -- The Secret Service says a police advance car working ahead of Vice President Joe **Biden's** motorcade was involved in a traffic accident Tuesday evening in New York.

The car wasn't part of the motorcade and the vice president was unhurt. New York City police say two police officers and a livery cab driver were hospitalized with minor injuries.

The accident happened around 5:40 p.m. at West 49th Street and 10th Avenue.

Secret Service spokesman Darrin Blackford says the motorcade continued on its route.

Biden was headed to appear on "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart."

In another accident involving the vice president this week, a sheriff's deputy was injured Monday in Albuquerque, N.M., when a woman drove around police vehicles blocking an intersection and collided with the deputy's car.

Biden had been in Albuquerque to speak at a campaign fundraiser for two New Mexico Democrats.

Previously, on Nov. 11 in Washington D.C., a pedestrian was killed after a crash involving the vice president's motorcade.

VP Biden Makes 6th "Daily Show" Appearance (WDEL)

By Frank Gerace

[WDEL 1150AM](#), November 18, 2009

Vice President **Biden** defends the Obama administration's economic policies on a late-night comedy show.

On Comedy Central's "The Daily Show", **Biden** told host Jon Stewart new job figures on the government's economic stimulus website, recovery-dot-gov, aren't wildly exaggerated.

Biden said the economy's turning around, thanks to the stimulus package, but job recovery will lag behind by about 12 to 18 months.

Biden's appearance on the show was his 6th, the previous one in August 2007, when he was competing with his current boss for the Democratic Presidential nomination.

Biden Bows (HARTC)

By Roger Catlin

[Hartford Courant](#), November 18, 2009

It was a weird coincidence that the two vice presidential candidates in last year's election were both being featured on TV interview shows. Sarah Palin, of course, was all over the airwaves, first on Oprah, and then with Barbara Walters and by the end of the week probably with your local meteorology team.

Then tonight, the elected vice president Joe **Biden** showed up on "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart." **Biden** had appeared on the show before during the campaign (including the day he announced his candidacy for president) but he's never been on as sitting veep.

His role was mostly to defend the administration, with talking points about jobs coming around the corner, inheriting a big mess from the last administration, and how the stimulus money has been used.

Just about the best moment was the beginning, when after a day of cable distress about the President bowing in China, **Biden** and Stewart both met each other with similarly deep bows.

Accounting For Stimulus Jobs: Be Careful What You Wish For (WP)

Congress demands elusive figures, then expresses outrage over errors

By Alec Macgillis

[Washington Post](#), November 18, 2009

Another day, another flurry of outrage over the jobs numbers claimed by the government for the administration's \$787 billion economic stimulus program.

House Appropriations Committee Chairman David R. Obey (D-Wis.) released a blistering statement Tuesday, taking to task flawed data in the federal figures that show \$160 billion in spending had created or saved at least 640,000 jobs.

His criticism came in response to two ABC News stories. The first reported that the administration deleted 60,000 jobs from its list after it became clear that the figures were overstated. Then, on Monday, the network reported that the government had claimed \$761,420 in spending and 30 jobs created in Arizona's 15th Congressional District -- a district that does not exist.

"The inaccuracies . . . are outrageous, and the administration owes itself, the Congress and every American a commitment to work night and day to correct the ludicrous mistakes," Obey said. "We designed the Recovery Act to be open and transparent. . . . Whether the numbers are good news or bad news, I want the honest numbers and I want them now."

But it is worth asking whether the administration's problem stems primarily from its decision to provide the numbers in the first place.

From the start, the Obama administration framed the stimulus act as a job-creating initiative, saying that it would create or save 3.5 million jobs over the next two years. Skeptics noted that this would be a very hard number to verify -- after all, how can one know for sure whether a job has been "saved"? But the administration and congressional Democrats not only stuck with that number, they also promised an unprecedented level of transparency and accountability, saying they would require recipients of the money to report how it had been spent and how many jobs they created or saved with it.

More and more, it is looking like this approach may have been a strategic mistake.

It is exceedingly difficult for even the most conscientious government agency or contractor to calculate the jobs impact of a stimulus grant or contract. How can one know for sure whether a job would have been lost in the absence of stimulus money? If money helped cover someone's paycheck for only a few weeks or months, how should that be counted? If money has been allocated but will not be spent for several months, should its jobs impact be tallied now or later?

A close examination of the stimulus reports suggests plenty of instances in which the number of created jobs is being understated, as some recipients of multiple millions of dollars report that they have yet to save or create a single job.

Even advocates for government transparency wonder whether the Obama administration would have been better off not trying to provide actual job tallies, instead simply requiring clear reports on how the money was spent -- information that is more useful and reliable.

"I would not have framed it as a jobs bill or a jobs law, as they have done," Gary Bass, the director of the government watchdog group OMB Watch, said in a recent interview.

As it is, the administration has left itself open to near-daily assaults on the credibility of the jobs numbers. Finding flaws in the data is as easy as shooting fish in a barrel, and reporters have been all too happy to fire away -- first reporting the numbers with fanfare when they are announced, despite all their obvious shortcomings, and then, days or weeks later, reporting that they are not entirely sound.

The constant barrage of such stories may be taking a toll. In the new Washington Post-ABC News poll, 23 percent of respondents say they think the stimulus act has hurt the economy, and 39 percent say that it has made no difference.

The White House pushed back against Obey's statement Tuesday with a lengthy retort from Ed DeSeve, the adviser to Vice President **Biden** who is in charge of implementing the stimulus. DeSeve argued that it was unfair to slight the administration for culling the 60,000 questionable jobs at the same time as it was being blamed for letting other questionable jobs slip through. The mistakes in the data have represented a sliver of the whole and often are clerical flubs that don't really touch on the heart of the reporting, he argued. "Transparency is going to be messy -- but it is better than the alternative," he wrote.

"It would be great if every report filed was correct the first time, on time, and contained no errors. But that's not realistic when 130,000 reports are being filed in a 10-day period," he said.

Chances are, there will be plenty more outrage-filled reports of faulty figures in the weeks and months to come. Republicans have asked the head of the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, Earl Devaney, to appear Thursday before the House oversight committee. His task: to answer for the validity of jobs numbers that Congress demanded, only to now be surprised to find that they are less than perfect.

Push To Curb Credit-card Rates Fades (BOS)

Democrats resist consumer outcry

By Michael Kranish, Globe Staff

[Boston Globe](#), November 18, 2009

WASHINGTON - Efforts in Congress to cap credit-card interest rates are faltering because of opposition from Democrats and a lack of specific support from the White House, despite growing consumer outrage over a rush by banks to impose rates as high as 30 percent.

During the 2008 presidential campaign, Barack Obama vowed to back a strict limit on credit-card interest rates. But the White House is not yet behind any particular plan this year. While Obama has chastised credit-card companies, his spokeswoman declined to say this week how he planned to follow through on his campaign pledge.

Obama finds the behavior of credit-card lenders "outrageous" and "looks forward to reviewing additional legislation that caps interest rates," but he has not taken a specific position, spokeswoman Jen Psaki said.

Vice President Joe **Biden**, whose home state of Delaware is headquarters to many credit-card companies, did not respond to requests for comment.

The Senate soundly defeated legislation in May that was introduced by Senator Bernard Sanders, the Vermont Independent, to cap most credit-card interest rates at 15 percent. Nearly half of the Democratic senators joined Republicans in defeating the measure, 60 to 33.

Consumer groups say the problem of skyrocketing interest rates has only worsened since that vote, as banks scramble to boost rates in advance of a new rule scheduled to take effect in February, requiring banks to give consumers a 45-day advance notice of rate increases.

Sanders said many of the credit cards in the hands of American consumers are issued by four banks that received taxpayer bailout money after last year's economic meltdown: Citigroup, Bank of America, JP Morgan Chase, and Wells Fargo.

"People are disgusted. We bailed these [companies] out and they then had the gumption to raise interest rates on the American people," Sanders said in an interview.

Sanders said he plans to reintroduce his proposal to cap rates at 15 percent; he predicted it will have more support this time. (Representing Massachusetts, Senator John F. Kerry supported the cap in May; the late Senator Edward M. Kennedy, who was fighting brain cancer, did not vote. Senator Paul Kirk, who took Kennedy's seat, has not declared a position on the issue, his spokesman said.)

But Sanders faces strong opposition from many Democrats, particularly those who have major credit-card business in their states. One prominent opponent, Senator Thomas R. Carper of Delaware, said in an interview that he understands the anger among consumers who have received letters from credit-card issuers informing them of big rate hikes. But Carper said he opposes any effort to cap the rates because it would hurt the ability of banks to charge higher rates to customers who have a greater risk of default.

"The question is, should banks be able to price for risk?" Carper said. "In a free market economy, I think they should."

Carper said that if consumers don't like the credit-card rates, they can pay off their balances and shop for a better rate from another company.

Senator Tim Johnson, a Democrat from South Dakota, another home to credit card companies, explained his vote against credit-card legislation in a May press release. The measure, he said, "could hurt South Dakota jobs and consumers."

The threat of another vote on Sanders's proposal is prompting companies to make a renewed push against caps. Bill Himpler, executive vice president of the American Financial Services Association, an industry trade group, said it is easy "from a populist standpoint" to embrace a cap on interest rates. But he said many firms could continue to offer credit if the rate was capped at 15 to 18 percent, as some have suggested.

"You lose money at 18 percent because it is a very labor-intensive business line to offer consumer credit," he said. "Where you cap rates you end up having credit tightened and the cost of credit being greater for the consumer."

The Consumer Federation of America, which worked to pass the 45-day advance notice requirement on rate hikes that takes effect in February, said it has not taken a position on the Sanders proposal.

"We want to give the law a little time to work," legislative director Travis Plunkett said yesterday. He warned that the federation would closely monitor to see if credit-card companies stop "the most abusive practices."

Senate Finance Committee chairman Christopher Dodd of Connecticut, who supported the 15 percent cap, has proposed legislation that would temporarily freeze certain interest rates, but only until February when the notification law takes effect.

For decades, many states had usury laws capping credit-card interest rates as low as 6 percent. But those rules were upended in 1978 by a Supreme Court ruling that a national lending company based in a state without a rate cap could charge any rate to customers who lived in a state with a cap. As a result, many credit card companies moved to states with lenient rules such as Delaware and South Dakota.

Biden, who served as Delaware's US senator from 1973 until last January, has long been noted for his ties to the credit-card business. **Biden's** top contributor has been MBNA Corp., a company based in Delaware that was a major credit-card issuer and was bought by Bank of America in 2005.

Biden received \$214,000 during his Senate career from MBNA-related donors, according to the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics.

NORM: Biden Finds Rank Has Its Privileges (LVSRJ)

By Norm Clarke

[Las Vegas Review-Journal](#), November 18, 2009

Sometimes you make exceptions at a members-only golf club.

Especially if someone from the office of Vice President Joe **Biden** is on the telephone, calling back a second time with a more pointed request.

It happened Sunday morning at The Golf Club at South Shore, at Lake Las Vegas.

When the first call came in at 7 a.m., asking whether **Biden** could play the course, the PGA professional running the pro shop declined, citing the club's members-only policy.

A few minutes later, another call: a **Biden** staffer telling the club pro "you know the vice president would really like to play" and asked whether he could talk to a manager.

The club reversed its stand, and **Biden** arrived about 11 a.m. with a half-dozen Secret Service personnel.

"We came to our senses, out of courtesy of the position," said Mark Barrett, with a chuckle. He's the club's membership sales director.

Biden's visit "really created a buzz," said Barrett, a welcome boost after recent tough times at Lake Las Vegas.

Biden played 17 holes before heading to a fundraiser for Rep. Dina Titus, D-Nev.

KIMMEL JOINS REGIS AND KELLY

Las Vegas Jimmy Kimmel returns home to join "Live! With Regis and Kelly" for a taping here. Kimmel attended Clark High School and attended UNLV before embarking on a career path that led to his late-night talk-show with ABC.

Regis Philbin and Kelly Ripa tape four shows in two days, starting Sunday, at Encore Theater at Wynn Las Vegas.

The first airing on Monday will include Mark Harmon of CBS' "NCIS," Kelly performing with the cast of "Le Reve, the new "Project Runway" winner and "America Idol" winner David Cook.

Tuesday features Kimmel plus a segment in which Kelly revisits the chapel where she and Mark Conseulo got married May 1, 1996, after eloping.

On Wednesday, Kelly visits the cast of "Love" at The Mirage.

After taking Thursday off for Thanksgiving, Regis and wife Joy on Friday debut their new album "Regis & Joy: Just You -- Just Me." They celebrate their 40th anniversary in March. Also on Friday: Regis takes a helicopter trip along the Strip on his way to the Grand Canyon, several chefs engage in a cook-off with turkey leftovers and Uncle Kracker performs.

MEDIA UPDATE

Former KVBC-TV, Channel 3, weatherman John Fredericks has told friends he's moving to North Carolina. Fredericks recently came under police scrutiny, according to KLAS-TV, Channel 8, and was told by police to stop making calls to a woman he met through an Internet dating service. ...

UFC fan favorite Stephan Bonnar and Andrea Brown, public relations director at MGM Mirage, were married Oct. 30 at a villa in Tuscany, near Siena, Italy. They met nine years ago in Chicago when he became a personal trainer and she was his first client. Bonnar became part of UFC lore on April 9, 2005, when he and Forrest Griffin staged what has been voted the greatest fight in UFC history. ...

Karin Firmani, orphaned at age 4 in Yugoslavia and adopted by an Italian family from Kenosha, Wis., won the meatball/pizza cook-off Tuesday at Ciao Ciao Apizza Angelato, 4460 S. Durango Drive. Judges included comedian Marty Allen, Anthony Crivello of "Phantom: The Las Vegas Spectacular," KVBC-TV, Channel 3, morning show host Kim Wagner and yours truly.

THE SCENE AND HEARD

"Peepshow" star Holly Madison and a Lucille Ball impersonator will take turns stomping grapes about 3 p.m. today at the annual Paris Las Vegas Beaujolais Nouveau celebration. They will play out a scene reminiscent of an iconic "Lucy" scene. The event coincides with the start of the traditional uncorking of Beaujolais in France. ...

Deal of the Day: Happy hour at SeaBlue, a Michael Mina restaurant at MGM Grand. Sunday-Friday, 5:30-7 p.m., half-price lobster corn dogs, half-price calamari, \$1 oysters, \$1 gulf prawns, \$2 draft beers (Stella Artois and Fat Tire).

THE PUNCH LINE

"Nearly had to pull out of campaign after spraining her winking muscle." -- From David Letterman's Top Ten Surprises in the Sarah Palin book

Biden Touts Stimulus Benefits In Vegas (POL)

By Alexander Burns

[Politico](#), November 18, 2009

Vice President Joe **Biden**, speaking at the Atomic Testing Museum in Las Vegas, said the federal stimulus had provided 190,000 Nevadans with unemployment insurance, pumping \$500 million into people's pockets through tax cuts and saving the jobs of about 4,000 educators in the state, according to a pool report of the event.

"In American history, in world history, there's only a handful of inflection points. We are at an inflection point in world history," **Biden** said at a fundraiser for Nevada Rep. Dina Titus, encouraging attendees to get involved in politics to "bend the arc of history - literally, bend it."

"In the next four to six years, our future will be determined for the next 40 years," **Biden** said. "This is a great chance, and this is going to be a tough slog. Next year, this is going to be the place where the decision will be made. Rome wasn't built in a day, but we've come a long way."

The vice president also was scheduled to participate in a roundtable at the Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport - which has received \$11.7 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding to improve air travel - to boost the impact of stimulus spending on small-business lending, clean-technology investment, infrastructure projects and teaching jobs.

Titus, introducing **Biden** at the Atomic Testing Museum, praised Cash for Clunkers, the stimulus package and the first-time homebuyer tax credit.

"Even the old-timers are impressed so much is going on," she said. "It's not a time for the fainthearted."

In addition to the federal stimulus, **Biden** was giving a dose of vice presidential fundraising stimulus to several vulnerable Democratic House members. In Phoenix, he was scheduled to attend a fundraiser

for Reps. Ann Kirkpatrick and Harry Mitchell, and he was planning stops in Albuquerque, N.M., to boost freshman Reps. Harry Teague and Martin Heinrich.

Biden Stops By Albuquerque For A Fundraiser (NMI)

By Matthew Reichbach

[The New Mexico Independent](#), November 18, 2009

Vice President Joe **Biden** appeared in Albuquerque for a fundraiser for potentially vulnerable Democratic Congressmen Martin Heinrich and Harry Teague on Monday. Congressman Ben Ray Lujan was in attendance but was not a focus of the fundraising.

Biden spoke for a little more than half an hour at the Hotel Albuquerque, according to a pool report by Albuquerque Journal writer Dan Boyd. The "about 100? attendees paid \$1,000 to attend the event.

"They're good Democrats, but they also have heads of their own and minds of their own and it seems to me that's what you guys produce out here," **Biden** said, speaking of Heinrich and Teague.

The two Democrats are a part of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee's Frontline Program, a program designed to help vulnerable Democratic candidates win re-election.

The state Republican party issued a statement saying that the fundraising event showed that Teague was "desperate" because Republican candidate Steve Pearce outraised Teague in the 3rd quarter of 2009. Teague still has more cash on hand.

"To the detriment of New Mexico families, Representative Teague has delivered votes that further the left-wing agenda of Nancy Pelosi and the Obama administration," Republican Party of New Mexico executive director Ryan Cangioli. "Today, Vice President **Biden** is returning the favor by helping Mr. Teague fill his campaign coffers safely outside Teague's district where many of these policies are unpopular."

In a separate statement, the party noted that Heinrich had attacked his Republican opponent for not reimbursing the county for \$5,000 incurred for security for a fundraising event headlined by then-President George W. Bush.

More from the pool:

Biden said both representatives are fighting to better the lives of middle-class families, and contrasted that with Republican members of Congress who he described as believers in Wall Street.

"I know what the Republicans are against," he said. "I haven't figured out what they're for."

"Change really has come to Washington," Teague said. "But we still have a lot of work ahead of us."

"It is incredible to have someone there who not only knows the last names of heads of state, but actually knows them," Heinrich said of **Biden**. **Biden** served as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee while a member of the Senate.

Biden also addressed the financial crisis that has been a source of concern for many Americans.

"We inherited a black hole this country had fallen into," he said. "I don't think anybody knew how deep this recession was at the time."

Lt. Gov. Diane Denish, House Speaker Ben Lujan, D-Santa Fe, former Oklahoma senator Fred Harris, New Mexico Democratic Party Chairman Javier Gonzales and former U.S. ambassador to Spain Ed Romero were all also in attendance according to the pool report.

This wasn't the first fundraiser for **Biden**, who has attended 26 fundraisers for Democratic House members so far this year according to Hotline. Tomorrow, **Biden** will be at a more public event - the Vice

President will be on the Daily Show with Jon Stewart. It will be the first time a sitting Vice President has appeared on the show, though it will be **Biden's** sixth appearance overall.

Biden appeared in Mesilla, New Mexico last year during the Presidential campaign.

Part of **Biden's** motorcade was involved in an accident, according to the Albuquerque Journal.

"Police say a woman drove around two police units blocking the intersection and hit a car driven by a sergeant with BCSO," the paper reported on their blog.

In 2006, a Rio Rancho police motorcycle officer that was part of a George W. Bush motorcade was involved in a fatal crash in Albuquerque. Print

Biden Returns To State To Give Dodd Campaign Maximum Attention (NHR)

By Mary E. O'Leary

[New Haven Register](#), November 17, 2009

For the third time this fall, U.S. Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn., is getting personal attention from the top echelon of the Obama administration as he faces his toughest re-election in 30 years.

Vice President Joseph **Biden** will come to Hartford Dec. 11 to stump for Dodd at a \$500 a plate luncheon fundraiser at the Connecticut Science Center.

This comes two months after **Biden** shared a platform at the Fairfield Park and Ride with the senator, where the vice president drew attention to the use of federal stimulus money for a nearby Merritt Parkway project.

President Barack Obama then headlined a \$1,000 a plate fundraiser for Dodd in Stamford on Oct. 23. The event raised \$1 million for the Democratic Party, Dodd's re-election and for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee.

"The vice president and Senator Dodd worked hand-in-hand on so many issues throughout the years, and he knows first-hand how hard Chris has worked for the people back home in Connecticut.

"We expect this event to be an entertaining one, with a lot of good-natured ribbing, as well as some serious talk about the work Chris is doing for the people of Connecticut and the country, while partnering with President Obama and Vice President **Biden**," said Jay Howser, Dodd's campaign manager.

The latest Quinnipiac University Poll said voters disapproved 54 percent to 40 percent of the job Dodd is doing.

In a head-to-head match-up with Rob Simmons, Dodd would lose 49 percent to 38 percent, while also losing to newcomer Linda McMahon, 43 percent to 41 percent.

A total of five Republicans are vying for the GOP nomination to run against Dodd, and Dodd either loses or ties in theoretical match-ups with all of them, although 49 percent to 88 percent of the voters say they don't know enough to offer a favorable or unfavorable opinion about them.

The senator, as chairman of the Banking Committee, is advancing financial regulation and credit card reforms, while also leading the fight on health care - all of which are top priorities for the Obama administration.

The poll found 56 percent of the voters support giving people the option of being covered by a government health insurance plan, which Dodd has been championing, but for those whose major concern is the economy, the poll found they favor a Republican candidate.

The poll has been criticized by Dodd supporters as over-representative of registered Republicans and unaffiliated voters and for not tapping likely voters who are more likely to cast a ballot in 2010.

At this point in the race, they are not as concerned with the head-to-head outcomes, but there is expected to be an increased effort among women and unaffiliated.

The high profile fundraisers are good for bringing in money, but don't necessarily translate into voter support.

The Quinnipiac University Poll found 75 percent of the voters said Obama's visit doesn't make a difference on how they will vote on Dodd.

As Karzai Starts New Term, Doubts Grow That He'll Finish (MCT)

By Dion Nissenbaum

[McClatchy](#), November 18, 2009

KABUL, Afghanistan - On the eve of Afghan President Hamid Karzai's swearing-in for a second term, speculation is growing that he could be forced to step aside before he finishes his next five years in office.

The challenge before him is monumental: Regain the trust of voters disenchanted by the fraudulent election that returned him to power, assure frustrated world leaders that the billions of dollars spent trying to stabilize Afghanistan haven't been wasted or stolen and, with the help of U.S. and NATO forces, recover control of large parts of the country from Taliban fighters.

The 51-year-old president has to please contradictory forces to survive: the discredited Afghan political allies who helped him win re-election, and the international community, which is demanding an end to cronyism and to pervasive government corruption.

Karzai has to assure President Barack Obama quickly that he has a credible partner if Obama decides to send as many as 40,000 more American soldiers to the fight in Afghanistan.

Karzai will have to help build a competent Afghan military capable of battling emboldened insurgents who now are operating in much of his country. He also has to contain a thriving opium industry that's the source of 90 percent of the world's heroin supply, often with the complicity of corrupt officials and police officers.

"It would take a miracle," said Abdullah Abdullah, the one-time foreign minister who abandoned a planned runoff against Karzai earlier this month because of concerns that the second round of voting could be as tainted as the first round was. "And, as Muslims, we don't believe miracles are possible now."

"The leadership in Afghanistan is getting more and more oblivious to the situation on the ground," Abdullah told McClatchy. "It's becoming obsessed with its own ideas, which are out of touch with reality."

The mood at the inauguration Thursday at the presidential palace is likely to be decidedly more somber than it was five years ago, when then-Vice President Dick Cheney led a high-profile delegation to Kabul as Karzai became Afghanistan's first democratically elected president.

Vice President Joe **Biden**, who has a strained relationship with Karzai, won't attend. Few world leaders are planning to fly to Kabul for an inauguration that will take place under heavy security, bracing for potential Taliban attacks.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the highest-profile American leader who's expected to take part in the inauguration, warned Karzai last weekend that the United States might suspend civilian aid to Afghanistan unless he takes new steps to prevent the money from being squandered or stolen.

With Karzai chafing at the international pressure, Obama's advisers are divided over how much support to offer the Afghan president.

Army Gen. Stanley McChrystal, America's top military commander in Afghanistan, has warned Obama that the United States could lose the war against the Taliban unless he agrees to send as many as 40,000 more soldiers over the next year.

However, some administration officials are reluctant to pursue an Iraq-style "military surge" until they're convinced that Karzai will match it with a "political surge" capable of restoring a measure of confidence in the Afghan government.

Chief among the skeptics is U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, a retired Army general, who's raised reservations about a major infusion of troops without a commitment from Karzai to fight corruption.

Eikenberry outlined his concerns Monday when he joined top Karzai ministers in unveiling a new anti-corruption task force in Kabul.

"Ordinary Afghans must be convinced that the powerful can no longer exploit their positions to make themselves wealthy while the less fortunate struggle to find work and to feed their families," Eikenberry said.

"The appearance of luxurious mansions around Kabul with many expensive cars ... surrounded by private armed guards, is a worrisome sign that some Afghans are cheating their people while claiming to be in their service."

Eikenberry and American officials in Kabul have been working quietly with Karzai to ensure that discredited Afghan leaders don't dominate his next Cabinet.

American and Afghan officials told McClatchy that the U.S. had given Karzai a list of 40 people whom it considered clean enough to be part of the new Cabinet. However, Karzai also faces pressure to reward shady political allies who helped him win re-election. Should he fall short of U.S. demands, some expect the Obama administration to push the Afghan president from power long before his term ends.

Sarwar Mohammed Roshan, who served as Karzai's campaign manager when he ran for president the first time, said the U.S. might have to support a caretaker government eventually to replace Karzai.

"If we don't do something drastic, believe me, we will be sorry," said Roshan, who suggested that adding more troops now would be counterproductive. "Bringing in more troops and keeping the status quo would create the impression that the Americans are making Afghans kneel before this (Karzai) gang."

Ashraf Ghani, the former finance minister who challenged Karzai for the presidency this year, echoed those concerns.

"Hamid Karzai assumes his second term as president without a honeymoon," Ghani wrote in a recent opinion piece for The Guardian newspaper in London.

"He faces a crisis of both domestic and international confidence," Ghani wrote, "and has the option to become either a statesman or an outcast."

MORE FROM MCCLATCHY

Taliban on motorcycles prove no match for U.S. helicopters

Another Afghan war: Media leaks spark administration fight

Taliban gain foothold in once-stable Afghan north

Check out McClatchy's politics blog: Planet Washington

ABC's Nightline Admits They're In Town For Joe Arpaio's Sweep, Denies Coordination; And Graffiti On Joe's Jai (PNT)

By Stephen Lemons

[Phoenix New Times](#), November 18, 2009

Joe claims ABC just happened to be in town when the sweep started in this Channel 3 piece

Following up on my blog post of yesterday, wherein I quoted sources telling me that Arpaio's latest anti-immigration sweep was done with an out-of-town film crew in mind, specifically one from ABC national news, I finally got a rep from ABC on the horn. She confirmed that a crew from ABC Nightline was in Phoenix for the sweep, but denied that the dragnet had been staged for ABC's purposes.

"No, not at all," replied Nightline spokeswoman Alison Bridgman of the allegation. "We were already there. We've done profiles of Sheriff Joe in the past. This was already arranged."

Bridgman explained that an interview with Arpaio had been scheduled for Monday, and that the news show learned of the sweep while on the ground in Phoenix. She said Nightline correspondent Martin Bashir did the interview with our corrupt top constable. So far, there's no air date for the piece, according to Bridgman.

During his press conference yesterday, Arpaio copped the same line when someone asked him about ABC being along for the ride.

from Joe's Twitter

Well, it's only saying what everyone thinks...

"Oh, so I arranged this because ABC is here?" asked Joe, rhetorically. "The answer is no, we happened to be here. And they're smart enough to know that they may want to film the sheriff."

Thing is, ABC could be on the level, and Arpaio, not. Would it surprise anyone that Arpaio's PR hacks made sure the ABC interview was planned for a day a sweep was to begin? Or orchestrated one just because a big media outlet was swingin' by?

See, I know Arpaio tipped off others that there would be a sweep, and that ABC was flying in. Everything was set in stone as of last week. If that ain't a fix, I don't know what is.

Arpaio's credibility sunk to an all-time new low after he claimed on his Twitter account yesterday that he'd had a meeting with Vice President Joe **Biden**, who'd flown in to Phoenix to pimp the effect of the stimulus on job creation. According to **Biden**'s deputy press secretary Annie Tomasini, Arpaio showed up uninvited to a meeting **Biden** had with local Democrats at the Wyndham Hotel. All he got was a handshake in the hallway as **Biden** was leaving.

Which makes me wonder about this new Joe Tweet where he claims that one of his buildings has been tagged with an obscenity. (Specifically, the Sheriff's office property building, part of his vast incarceration complex.) Arpaio maliciously suggests that activists protesting his news conference may have done it.

Puente leader Salvador Reza scoffed at this latest piece of Joe baloney, denying responsibility on behalf of his movement.

How do we know this isn't another fake story our two-faced sheriff's shilling? (Joe does have a pic on his Twitter page, which I've reproduced above.) I'll have to drive down to Durango to check it out, and, hopefully, compliment the artist.

Makes me wonder: How secure can Joe's jails be if you can walk right up to one of his secure buildings and spraypaint humongo letters on the side? What's to keep someone from sticking a ladder up there? Sheesh.

Arpaio Launches New Immigration Sweep (YVW)

By Mike Sakal And Bill Bertolino

YourWestValley.com, November 18, 2009

Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio launched a two-day crime-suppression and illegal-immigration sweep on Monday, as dozens of protesters lined a south Phoenix street close to where the sheriff outlined the plans at a crowded press conference.

It is the second such operation since the federal government stripped Arpaio of street-level immigration patrols under the direction of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Arpaio contends he still can seek to identify illegal immigrants during street patrols using state laws against human smuggling and sanctions for employers who knowingly hire illegal immigrants.

The sheriff said his office plans to target semi-trailers and other load vehicles along alternative routes Valleywide, where human smugglers could be attempting to avoid checkpoints, such as those along Interstate 10 and Interstate 17, en route to drop houses.

"We are also noticing a significant change in travel routes," Arpaio said. "State highways still remain the main travel paths for smugglers and their co-conspirators, but more and more vehicles are being apprehended at alternative, out-of-the-way routes."

Arpaio said anyone who films the stops along the interstate, including what he described as "open-borders groups," would be arrested, saying it is illegal to stop and stand unless it's an emergency.

"These open-borders activists will be warned only once," he said.

Dozens of protesters along Lower Buckeye Road stood with signs carrying statements, such as "We are human" and "I will not be bullied."

During the press conference, Arpaio downplayed questions about whether he was grandstanding while Vice President Joe **Biden** and the national media were in town. **Biden** spoke in Phoenix Monday morning about the national economy.

"This is just another example of Arpaio's lack of respect for the Obama Administration and he continues to thumb his nose at the administration," said protestor Lydia Guzman, president of SOMOS America. Guzman was among a group of protestors across the street from the entrance of the MCSO training building.

"Arpaio's sweep was nothing but political posturing," she said.

Mercedes Mercado-Ochoa, a member of the Mesa Association of Hispanic Citizens, said she believes Arpaio is doing the sweeps just to impress the national media in town.

"He's spending so much taxpayer money on these crime sweeps that it's not funny anymore," she said. "He should be held accountable to the taxpayers for the amount he is spending on these sweeps."

The sweep will entail 200 members of Arpaio's volunteer posse and reserves, as well as sheriff's office deputies. Helicopters will also assist in the operation, which Arpaio said will have a "substantial focus" on the crime of human smuggling.

This is Arpaio's 13th crime sweep. Since March 2006, the sheriff's office reports it has arrested a total of 3,532 human-smuggling suspects or illegal immigrants.

The sheriff's sweeps have drawn criticism that Arpaio's deputies racially profile people. The U.S. Department of Justice is investigating Arpaio's office over allegations of discrimination and unconstitutional searches and seizures.

AP Turns Heads For Devoting 11 Reporters To Palin Book 'Fact Check' (FOX)

By Robert Shaffer

[FOX News](#), November 18, 2009

Reviewing books and holding public figures accountable is at the core of good journalism, but the Associated Press' treatment of Palin's book seems an unprecedented move at the wire service.

Sarah Palin is no normal politician, and at the Associated Press, apparently "Going Rogue" is no normal book.

When the former Republican vice presidential candidate and former Alaska governor wrote her autobiography, the AP found a copy before its release date and assigned 11 people to fact check all 432 pages.

The AP claims Palin misstated her record with regard to travel expenses and taxpayer-funded bailouts, using statements widely reported elsewhere. But it also speculated into Palin's motives for writing "Going Rogue: An American Life," stating as fact that the book "has all the characteristics of a pre-campaign manifesto."

Palin quickly hit back on a Facebook post titled "Really? Still Making Things Up?"

"Imagine that," the post read. "11 AP reporters dedicating time and resources to tearing up the book, instead of using the time and resources to 'fact check' what's going on with Sheik Mohammed's trial, Pelosi's health care takeover costs, Hasan's associations, etc. Amazing."

The AP, an organization with over 4,000 employees and 49 Pulitzer Prizes earned for asking the hard questions, wouldn't comment on their own reporting for this story.

Reviewing books and holding public figures accountable is at the core of good journalism, but the treatment Palin's book received appears to be something new for the AP. The organization did not review for accuracy recent books by the late Sen. Ted Kennedy, then-Sen. Joe **Biden**, either book by Barack Obama released before he was president or autobiographies by Bill or Hillary Clinton. The AP did more traditional news stories on those books.

The attraction to Palin doesn't appear to be partisan, since AP didn't fact-check recent political tomes by Republicans Rudy Giuliani or Newt Gingrich.

The AP, however, regularly writes "fact checks" for major political speeches, such as a September health care speech by President Obama.

Doug Underwood, a University of Washington journalism professor who covered Washington politics in the late 1970s for Gannett, said Palin brings some negative attention on herself with a history of bad interviews and misstatements. In addition, the press cannot ever be perfectly consistent or fair, he said.

Still, the media treated **Biden** and Palin differently, he said.

Biden's book "Promises to Keep" became an instant best-seller when he was chosen to be Obama's running mate, but was not fact-checked by the AP and only received passing interest. In a story last year on **Biden's** Vietnam War draft deferments due to asthma, the reporter notes **Biden** didn't mention the malady in his book.

Palin is not the standard presidential possibility for 2012, Underwood said.

"She's a figure who's a politician, but also a part of popular culture," he said.

Palin supporters believe 11 reporters poring over every word of her book is excessive- and further proof of the media's obsession and maltreatment of the hockey mom from Wasilla.

"They're obsessed with trying to discredit her," said Adrienne Ross, New York state organizer for the 2012 Draft Sarah Committee. "Because she's a conservative woman, they make fun of her accent, comment about her looks. She doesn't come in the package they want her to come in."

WHAT TO WATCH (WP)

By Garance Franke-Ruta

[Washington Post](#), November 18, 2009

-- President Obama started his Wednesday in Beijing, on what was Tuesday night in Washington, by sitting down with reporters from CBS, CNN, Fox and NBC. He also met with Chinese President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao. In the evening, he departs for Seoul.

-- Back in the Eastern time zone, first lady Michelle Obama takes her nutrition and health messages to Hollin Meadows Elementary School in Alexandria in the morning, highlighting the Agriculture Department's Healthier U.S. School Challenge.

-- It's also a day for the first and second ladies to focus on the White House's military families project. Jill **Biden** stuffs packages and speaks at the first "USO Care Package for Women" party, at the Rayburn House Office Building on Capitol Hill in the morning. In the afternoon, she and the first lady will host a gathering at the White House celebrating women in the military. Veterans and current servicewomen will be joined there by Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. James Cartwright, members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and their wives, and other military and administration officials.

-- The Labor Department releases the consumer price index for October, and the Commerce Department releases the October housing-starts report.

-- The Senate Judiciary Committee at 9:30 a.m. holds an oversight hearing on the Justice Department. Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. testifies.

Person, Fran

18 Nov 2009 16:03:32

To: amperson@rosemontseneca.com

Cc:

Bcc: amperson@rosemontseneca.com

Fw: Vice Presidential News Clips for Wednesday, November 18, 2009

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 09 10:06:24 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Part

Reasons for Withholding:

b(6),P6

Notes:

redaction of personal email address

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Bernal, Anthony R. EOP/OVP

27 May 2016 18:18:00

To: Mackler, Alexander, hbiden@rosemontseneca.com", "Mackler, Alexander
Cc: Anthony Bernal [personal email address], "Jill Tracy, Flynn, John, Chung, Kathy,
Beau and Hallie Biden [personal email address], "Ethan Rosensweig, Chung, Kathy, >", "Flynn, John
Bcc:
Re: [personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 10:43:23 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Bernal, Anthony

30 May 2016 14:53:15

To: J.T. Godfrey, Hunter Biden, Chung, Kathy, Flynn, John, Mackler, Alexander, Mackler, Alexander, >, "Chung, Kathy, >", "Flynn, John

Cc: Ethan Rosenzweig, Reilly, John, Reilly, John

Bcc:

[personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 10:58:13 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Chung, Kathy S. EOP

07 Jun 2015 21:15:50

To: hbiden@rosemontseneca.com

Cc: Mackler, Alexander, rhb@rspdc.com", "Mackler, Alexander

Bcc:

Re: Phone numbers

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Fri Jul 26 11:54:28 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

P6,b(6)

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Mackler, Alexander

07 Jun 2015 18:38:54

To: hbiden@rosemontseneca.com

Cc: rhb@rspdc.com", "Chung, Kathy, Chung, Kathy

Bcc:

Re: Phone numbers

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Fri Jul 26 11:49:00 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

b(6),P6

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Gitenstein, Mark H.

14 Mar 2016 18:17:21

To: Chung, Kathy, Jill Biden,
hbiden@rosemontseneca.com", "abiden@dcjustice.org", [personal email address], [personal email address], "Ricchetti, Steven,
[personal email address], "Mackler, Alexander, hurricane5155@gmail.com", "Mel Monzack, Ricchetti, Steven,
>", "Mackler, Alexander, >", "Chung, Kathy
Cc: Muldoon, Anne Marie, Bernal, Anthony R., Person, Anne, >", "Bernal, Anthony R.
Bcc:
RE: [personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 09:54:49 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Hunter Biden

07 Jun 2015 17:45:05

To: Mackler, Alexander, Mackler, Alexander

Cc: rhb@rspdc.com", "Chung, Kathy, Chung, Kathy

Bcc:

Re: These are all cell numbers.

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Fri Jul 26 11:18:04 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

b(6),P6

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Hunter Biden

07 Jun 2015 18:31:32

To: Mackler, Alexander, Mackler, Alexander

Cc: rhb@rspdc.com", "Chung, Kathy, Chung, Kathy

Bcc:

Re: Phone numbers

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Fri Jul 26 11:48:05 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

b(6),P6

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Elizondo, Carlos E.

22 Jun 2015 15:57:05

To: Hunter Biden (hbiden@rosemontseneca.com),
(hbiden@rosemontseneca.com), "Kathleen Biden [personal email address], "DL-OVP-Office of Dr. Biden, DL-OVP-West Wing,
Mackler, Alexander, [personal email address], "Baker, Sarah, McGrail, John, Eric Schwerin (eschwerin@rosemontseneca.com),
Mackler, Alexander, >", "Baker, Sarah, (eschwerin@rosemontseneca.com), ">", "DL-OVP-Office of Dr. Biden,
>", "DL-OVP-West Wing, >", "McGrail, John
Cc: Lance, Ginna, Lance, Ginna
Bcc:
[personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Thu Mar 21 10:56:38 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Person, Fran

Tue, 15 Dec 2009 06:10:24 -0500

To: amperson@rosemontseneca.com

Bcc: amperson@rosemontseneca.com

Fw: Vice Presidential News Clips for Tuesday, December 15, 2009

Attachments: [VPNewsClips091215.doc](#) (206.5 KB), [VPNewsClips091215.pdf](#) (323.1 KB)

----- Original Message -----

From: Bulletin News <VP-Editors@BulletinNews.com>

To: Alexander, Elizabeth

Cc: Escudero, Adrian V.; Hoffman, Alan L.; Tomasini, AnnMarie; Bernal, Anthony R.; Blinken, Antony J.; Woyak, Brian J.; McKeon, Brian P.; Russell, Catherine M.; O'Donnell, Courtney; Hogan, Cynthia C.; Martens, Donald R.; Hire, Elisabeth; Oxhorn, Elizabeth A.; Allen, Elizabeth M.; Ryan, Evan M.; Person, Fran; Ziskend, Herbert M.; Carney, James F.; Bernstein, Jared; DeGraaf, Jason P.; O'Connor, Kevin C; White, Kirsten B.; membersOVPVPMILAIDE@whmo.mil <membersOVPVPMILAIDE@whmo.mil>; Donilon, Michael C.; Smith, Michele; Vela, Moises V.; Orloff, Nancy; Isaac, Nicole M.; Selfridge, Peter A.; Blesman, Rachel; Klain, Ronald A.; Swan, Ryan S.; Fletcher, Sarah; Rosenthal, Sarah L.; Hawkins, Stacey T.; Henry, Sudafi; McSweeney, Terrell P.; McNulty, Thomas P.; Dirksen, Ward F.

Sent: Tue Dec 15 05:59:36 2009

Subject: Vice Presidential News Clips for Tuesday, December 15, 2009

TO: THE VICE PRESIDENT AND STAFF

DATE: TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2009 -- 6:15 AM EST

-----TODAY'S EDITION-----

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL STORIES:

- + Newark Raises Tax To Plug Budget Hole (WILNJ)
- + Markell, Sebelius Urge Vaccinations Against Swine Flu (WILNJ)
- + Trash Wars Take High-tech Turn (WILNJ)
- + Rehoboth Beach To Dump Treated Waste Into Ocean (WILNJ)
- + Wilmington Looks To Pay For Sludge (WILNJ)
- + High Costs May Be Hindering Hybrids (WILNJ)
- + AstraZeneca Defending Crestor Patents (WILNJ)
- + On Other Side Of Police Tape, Students See EMS In Action (WILNJ)
- + Captain, Passenger Escape Burning Boat (WILNJ)
- + Holiday Blues (WILNJ)
- + Choose Toys Not Only For Fun Value, But Safety Value (WILNJ)
- + Food Bank Makes Plea For More Donations (WILNJ)
- + Brandywine Park Sugar Bowl Soon Will Be Back -- Sweeter Than Before (WILNJ)
- + What To Do When Mom And Dad Are Sick, Too (WILNJ)
- + 4 Accused Of Invading Wrong Home In Stickup (WILNJ)
- + Amid Burst Of Security, Accused Smuggler Sentenced (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Police: Millsboro Citizen's Academy Restarting (WILNJ)

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL EDITORIALS:

- + It Is Americans' Responsibility To Help Curb Teens' Drug Abuse (WILNJ)
- + End Confusing Budget Process By Restoring Fiscal Discipline (WILNJ)

BIDEN IN THE NEWS:

- + Obama Touting Home Energy Efficiency Program (AP)
- + Obama Clean-Energy Investments Creating Jobs, Biden Report Says (BLOOM)
- + Biden Updates Obama On Recovery Act Investments In Clean Energy Projects (ABC News)
- + Tracking The Stimulus: Vice President Provides Update On Clean Energy (HILL)
- + Biden, Industry Big Shots To Discuss Piracy Fight (LAT)
- + White House To Hold Anti-piracy Roundtable (HILL)
- + Hollywood Meets D.C. White House Confab To Discuss Enforcing Piracy Laws (VARIETY)
- + Joe Biden's Secret Mission (DB)
- + What's Plan B If Biden Doesn't Run In Delaware? (RC)
- + 'Difficult Cycle' In 2010 For Dems' Seats In Play (USAT)

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL STORIES:

NEWARK RAISES TAX TO PLUG BUDGET HOLE (WILNJ)

By Rachel Kipp, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 15, 2009

NEWARK -- Homeowners in Newark will see their property-tax bills rise by an average of \$90 next year as part of the 2010 operating budget passed by City Council Monday night.

Council voted 5-2 to adopt the \$38.6 million budget, which includes a tax hike of 9 cents per \$100 of assessed value. The increase is four times larger than the 2.25 cents per \$100 of assessed value bump from 2009.

The tax hike and other increases come as Newark officials try to bridge the financial gap created by a slumping economy and the annual loss of \$380,000 from Chrysler, the city's largest taxpayer. The site of the closed Chrysler plant was recently bought by the University of Delaware, which is tax-exempt.

Newark also has depleted its cash reserves by about half in the past half dozen years, from \$25 million to \$30 million in 2002 to about \$12 million today. The cash reserve and revenue challenges prompted Moody's Investors Service to lower Newark's bond rating from double to single A on a scale used to determine how cheaply a government can borrow money by selling bonds. Triple A is the top rating.

"If we're looking for a better time, as in now is not a good time to add fees and increase taxes, I would say I don't think there is a good time to raise fees and increase taxes," said councilman Jerry Clifton, who estimated that the city faces a seven- to 10-year window before efforts begin to pay off. "But there are serious issues we need to address now [including] our reserves and our pension funds. These aren't things that are going to wait."

Sparking the most debate was a plan proposed in the budget to create a new revenue stream by enacting a new utility fee for property owners to help pay stormwater costs.

While most council members were supportive of creating the stormwater utility, they were concerned about passing a budget that included a line item for an expected revenue source that doesn't yet exist.

Council ultimately voted to remove the stormwater utility line item from the budget and asked the city staff to find a way to account for the \$350,000 it was expected to raise. For now, the money is targeted to come out of the city's already depleted cash reserves, although council charged the staff with coming up with an alternative.

"I suggest that we just bite the bullet, raise the tax rate to what we need to operate, develop a fully embellished stormwater utility proposal that we can react to and hope that, next year, implementing that might eliminate need for a subsequent property-tax increase," Councilman Doug Tuttle said.

Finance Director Dennis McFarland said it would be difficult to find \$350,000 in trims to the budget. "If there were an easy \$350,000 to cut, it would have been in the budget," he said.

But other council members worried that the city cannot continue to rely on property taxes to balance the budget without losing the advantage Newark has by having a lower tax rate than other area municipalities.

"The moment we come close to the county [tax rate], that is when we know we've lost," Councilman Paul Pomeroy said. "If we have another year of 7- or 8-cent tax (per \$100 of assessed value) increases, we're at that point."

The budget also tries to account for lost revenue from property and real estate transfer taxes by implementing trash-bin collection fees at apartment complexes. Eight city staff positions will be eliminated, most by not filling jobs.

"Last year, we recognized that the economy was not good and that people were struggling and we tried to do our part by lessening the blow," Councilman Ezra Temko said. "In doing that, we ended up tabling a lot of hard questions and ended up with a deficit. It would be irresponsible for us to do that this year."

MARKELL, SEBELIUS URGE VACCINATIONS AGAINST SWINE FLU (WILNJ)

By The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 15, 2009

Swine flu cases may be down but with the traditional flu season just starting, health officials are warning the public "it isn't over yet."

That was the message Monday from Gov. Jack Markell and U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, who announced a public service campaign urging that people, particularly children, be vaccinated against the virus. The 30-second spot features Markell and PBS' Sid the Science Kid and is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=jl-qdJ1ypI8. A link to the video is on www.delaware-online.com.

About 41 million Americans already have been infected by the swine flu virus this year with 200,000 of them hospitalized. As of mid-November, about 10,000 people had died from the virus.

In Delaware, there have been 1,960 confirmed cases, including five deaths, since the fall flu season began. The total number of cases since swine flu first surfaced in the spring is 2,607.

So far, the state has distributed about 190,000 doses of the vaccine, including 42,000 to children in public and private schools. Vaccination teams have visited every school in the state at least once and now are returning to elementary schools for the second doses required for young children, Markell said.

But many more people still need to be vaccinated, officials said.

"We have a window of opportunity to make sure people get vaccinated and get protected," Sebelius said. "Flu usually lasts until May ... so we still have time to get ahead of the virus."

Markell said state officials are trying to keep the public's attention on the virus.

"We've got to keep the momentum going," he said. "This could still take off in any direction because this [virus] is so unpredictable." Additional Facts

Watch video

">

" type="application/x-shockwave-flash" allowscriptaccess="always" allowfullscreen="true" width="320" height="265">

TRASH WARS TAKE HIGH-TECH TURN (WILNJ)

By Esteban Parra And J.I. Miller, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 15, 2009

On a Saturday in late November, Kennard Ringgold Sr. steered a huge dump truck into a state-run green landfill near Red Lion.

Passing by signs clearly marked yard waste only, Ringgold parked his rig and dumped a pile of paper, plastic and treated lumber measuring four feet deep, 20 feet long and eight feet wide. It was the sort of chemical-laden heap that requires state workers to clear by hand before tree branches and leaves can be composted and recycled.

If he had legally dumped his trash at a landfill, Ringgold would have paid about \$60, a fraction of the \$600 he ended up paying after he was caught in the act by a surveillance camera.

In a sting entering its 19th month, the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control has charged 15 people with illegal dumping in New Castle County.

Accused dumpers often deny guilt until they are confronted with the photos, said Chief William "Chip" McDaniel, DNREC enforcement director.

"A picture is worth a thousand words," McDaniel said. "I have literally seen a picture of the person with a [dump truck] lever in their hand, dumping the load out. That's pretty powerful when you take that to the judge and show it to him."

A dozen cameras, about the size of an old house phone, are mounted on private farmland in Sussex County, beside streams in Kent County and along isolated New Castle County roads where residents have complained about trash scofflaws.

McDaniel did not know the number of people caught by cameras in Kent and Sussex counties.

In Ringgold's case, DNREC officers were called about a person dumping large amounts of waste at DART's Mid-County yard waste site off a stretch of Du Pont Highway near Delaware City and the Valero refinery.

The 58-year-old Wilmington trucker was gone by the time DNREC officers arrived, but the images were unmistakable. Ringgold said he was helping remove material from a relative's church and took it to a place suggested by a man he remembers only as Art.

"The guy told me to dump it here," Ringgold said. "He said it was all right because he dumped there a couple of years ago."

Ringgold would not have used the site had he known it was illegal, he said. "No way. No way. I'm sorry I did it because ... I don't do stuff like that."

"I'll never dump there again."

Economical choice

Because they don't have the same funding as police agencies, DNREC's enforcement officers came up with the idea of placing the trail cameras, which are commonly used by hunters while tracking wild game.

"The normal surveillance camera that transmits to a laptop, they start at \$10,000," said Sgt. James H. Faedtke, DNREC's enforcement investigator. "We were able to put out 12 cameras for less than \$5,000."

DNREC's cameras are triggered by movement or heat and are able to take pictures day and night.

The photos are stored on memory cards, which are collected by a DNREC officer who downloads the images onto a computer. The images are sharp enough to enlarge a person's face with little distortion.

Among the images captured so far are two women who seem to be smiling as they unload a sofa frame off their pickup; a pair of men removing trash from the back of a vehicle on a rainy summer evening; and the driver and passenger in a yellow dump truck holding a conversation while unloading trash along a New Castle County road.

DNREC released the images to The News Journal for this story, and McDaniel said DNREC may regularly release photographs of wanted dumpers on its Web site, which would be available to citizens and other news media.

To legally dispose of waste at a Delaware facility, the state charges \$61.50 a ton for loads over 120 pounds. Waste weighing less than 120 pounds costs a flat rate of \$4.35.

Illegal dumping is a misdemeanor, and arrest warrants are issued for suspects. The fine for illegally dumping starts at \$500 and goes up to \$1,500 for each subsequent violation. A judge can order the violator to remove the waste, pay for its removal or perform community service.

Crime-fighting tool

The state's cameras are, in some ways, similar to surveillance equipment used by cities and property owners to deter crime.

Comprehensive data on the number of surveillance cameras nationwide is not available, because they are employed by federal, state and local agencies -- and some of that information is confidential. But there's no question their use is becoming more common.

Private businesses and even homeowners use them inside and outside their buildings. Traffic cameras monitor the

flow of vehicles on public roads, while red-light cameras catch scofflaws in the act. Wildlife agencies in several states also have used them to catch poachers and others who violate hunting and fishing laws.

Lancaster, Pa., known for its Amish farmers and tourist attractions, has been building one of the nation's largest camera surveillance systems -- 165 for a town of roughly 50,000 people. The cameras are monitored by employees of a nonprofit group called the Lancaster Community Safety Coalition, who notify police when they see something suspicious.

In Wilmington, the nonprofit Downtown Visions is contracted to operate more than 20 cameras downtown. Other cameras cover about 70 blocks and are operated by banks, stores and corporate offices.

Just how much help the cameras provide in deterring crime is questionable. A New York University study published this year found that cameras at two housing complexes in New York City had little or no effect on crime rates. A University of California study showed that surveillance cameras in San Francisco had no impact on violent crime, although property crimes dropped by 24 percent.

DNREC, though, is convinced the cameras are discouraging illegal dumping. While statewide reports show illegal dumping is up by 10 percent for the year -- from 411 cases to 456 -- environmental protection officers said they have noticed a decrease in illegal dumping where cameras have been deployed.

Apart from DNREC's surveillance, The News Journal has spent months exposing illegal dump sites around the state. The series of stories have focused on the trash heaps and rivers of litter that mar the state's off-road woodlands, corn and soybean fields, and state highways.

"People are talking," said Officer Casey W. Fountain, who handles the camera program in New Castle County.

"We got to keep moving," Fountain said, comparing trash surveillance to other police activity. "You can't run radar on Route 1 in the same spot every day, all day.

"You got to move it around." Additional Facts

WHOM TO CALL

While surveillance cameras help capture those who illegally dump waste, Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control's Environmental Crimes Unit asks the public to report any illegal dumping by calling its 24-hour hotline at (800) 662-8802 or by calling #367 for Verizon Wireless customers.

This number also can be used to suggest locations where a camera may help catch illegal dumpers.

REHOBOTH BEACH TO DUMP TREATED WASTE INTO OCEAN (WILNJ)

By Molly Murray, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 15, 2009

Rehoboth Beach commissioners voted Monday to dispose of the city's treated sewerage water through a pipe that discharges to the ocean, saying that it is the least-costly option and can be operated without damaging the coastal environment.

Details of the proposal had prompted more than 500 people to send e-mails to the city in November urging a different solution. Members of the Delaware Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation suggested the town look at land disposal of the waste.

But commissioners unanimously chose the ocean plan over one that would have sprayed the treated waste on open land.

Russ Merritt said his Surfrider group is concerned about ocean discharge for several reasons, not the least of which is the worry of an ocean spill or mishap.

Rehoboth's peak sewer discharge need is in summer -- the same time the most people are swimming in the ocean.

"Are we going to be able to notify people fast enough?" Merritt asked when the alert was sent out last month.

Local real estate agent Pat Campbell-White, who lives outside the city limits, said she was disappointed by the city's decision.

White, a longtime activist for the Inland Bays, once joked that she would be willing to stuff her body into Rehoboth's discharge pipe on the banks of Lewes & Rehoboth Canal to get the city out of the environmentally sensitive Inland Bays.

The ocean outfall, while accomplishing one goal, is short-sighted, she said.

"It's linear thinking," she said. "They are just diluting" the wastewater "and they are not doing anything to recharge the groundwater."

Campbell-White said she believes city officials had their minds made up before the discussion started and they never gave the land application option proper study or consideration.

Cost benefits, local control

The ocean just off Rehoboth Beach is an essential fish habitat. And that raises concerns about the impact wastewater -- even clean wastewater -- could have on an important ecosystem, Merritt, of the Surfrider group, said.

The debate over land application versus ocean discharge, for many city residents, came down to a financial one. At a hearing last month, several residents said they favored the cost benefits and local control of an ocean outfall.

Hen and Chicken Shoals, an important fish habitat, lies northeast of Rehoboth Beach. It is considered a key nursery area for sharks. In addition, bottlenose dolphins routinely move along Rehoboth's shoreline. Smiley the dolphin is the symbol of the Rehoboth Beach-Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce.

The city began studying options in 2005. Rehoboth is under a court order to stop discharging treated wastewater into the Lewes & Rehoboth Canal by Dec. 21, 2014.

The deadline came after city officials challenged limits for discharging treated sewage into the Inland Bays. Rehoboth's discharges into the canal ultimately flows into Rehoboth Bay.

State officials ruled that municipal and industrial treatment plants must stop discharging into the bays or their

tributaries to meet federal requirements. Rehoboth, with a treatment discharge of up to 3 million gallons a day, is identified as a key polluter of Rehoboth Bay -- even with a state-of-the-art treatment plant.

City officials, who protested the ruling, received additional time to study options. In 2005, Rehoboth's consulting engineer outlined a series of disposal options, recommending a proposal to build an ocean outfall that would discharge treated wastewater well off the beach as the most viable and cost-effective option. The estimated price tag was more than \$100 million.

Yet considering the cost of resort-area land, the price was good compared with the more expensive option of buying land to spray the treated water.

Other ocean outfalls in area

Such a plan is not new for Delaware. Sussex County's South Coastal Ocean Outfall has been in operation for more than two decades. Serving a large area from Selbyville to the coast, the outfall is just south of Bethany Beach with the discharge point 1.25 miles off the beach.

Rehoboth officials considered land application but had difficulty finding large enough tracts of undeveloped land or owners who were willing to sell. The city also considered partnering with a private wastewater utility, but some officials and residents worried about losing direct control over future rates.

The average city homeowner pays \$325 a year in sewage fees. Under any of the proposed alternatives that city officials considered Monday, sewage bills would go up. The range of price for the ocean outfall options is \$550 to \$630 annually per property owner. The land application price range was \$1,010 to \$1,420.

City Commissioner Stanley Mills said he voted for the ocean outfall proposal because of the cost, the city's ability to control future operation, maintenance costs and customer rates and the fact that technologies are available to safely build and operate an ocean outfall.

During the permitting process and environmental impact work, state regulators will ensure the outfall doesn't do environmental harm to water quality or marine life, Mills said.

Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control Secretary Collin O'Mara said last month that he wanted a scientific review of the options with an eye to long-term environmental impacts, particularly the potential effects of sea level rise in eastern Sussex County. Among the concerns, he said, is whether saltwater intrusion would be an issue.

Deputy Secretary David Small said Monday that the department has a policy of promoting beneficial reuse of wastewater, such as the spray plan, but this was a local decision. The department will do a rigorous environmental review, he said.

The water quality off Delaware's beaches generally is considered good, and the state is graded well by environmental watchdog groups that monitor recreational water quality.

The current program involves detailed sampling three times a week and a Web site where state officials post results.

Rehoboth's existing treatment plant opened in 1987. Back then, city officials were under a court order to build a new plant. The existing plant will be used, with some modifications, with this latest proposal.

The next step for city officials is to file a notice of intent with the state's Clean Water Advisory Council. That group approves funding for water and wastewater construction. The city must file its notice of intent by late January.

WILMINGTON LOOKS TO PAY FOR SLUDGE (WILNJ)

By Adam Taylor, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 15, 2009

WILMINGTON -- Now that the city can no longer dump treated sludge from its sewage plant at a nearby landfill, it has to truck the material to a western Pennsylvania facility, officials said Monday.

On Thursday, Mayor James M. Baker's administration will ask City Council to reopen the city's \$145 million operating budget to pay for the shipping and disposal, Public Works Commissioner Kash Srinivasan said.

The Pennsylvania landfill, located in the town of Kersey, will charge \$60 a ton, which Srinivasan said was a reasonable price based on industry standards across the country. Wilmington's plant produced about 140 tons of sludge a day.

But that's about twice what the city was paying to dump the sludge at Pigeon Point, Srinivasan said.

It will cost \$750,000 to dispose of the sludge for the rest of the fiscal year, which is about half over and ends in June, Baker's Chief of Staff William S. Montgomery said. Council will vote on whether to take that amount of money from the Water-Sewer Fund to pay for the disposal.

It will cost \$1.5 million for the fiscal year that starts in July. That money will probably come from higher water-sewer bills, Montgomery said.

"We're in the midst of a multiyear plan to improve the health of the Water-Sewer Fund, which will include rate increases for a few years," he said. "This new expense will be added to the equation when the budget process starts early next year."

About 156,000 customers that use Wilmington's sewage-treatment plant on Hay Road between I-495 and the Delaware River are from suburban New Castle County. About 29,000 customers are within city limits.

Council President Norman D. Griffiths, who plans to vote for the city's request Thursday, expects the county government to pay its fair share of the additional \$750,000 in disposal costs.

"But we've been in negotiations with the county for a few years about other sewage issues and we haven't always seen eye to eye, so I'm not all that optimistic about that," he said.

Griffiths was referring to two years of contentious talks that are still ongoing about how much the county should pay to

dispose of raw sewage at the city's wastewater-treatment plant. New Castle County's government has no wastewater-treatment plant of its own in the most northern part of the county.

At issue is the method each side uses to calculate the amount owed. The county wanted to base the costs on the number of gallons going into the treatment plant, while the city depends on engineering estimates to figure the bill.

County Executive Chris Coons' spokesman, C.R. McLeod, said Monday the county had no comment on the new expense.

Earlier this year, the city increased water-sewer fees by 18 percent, which resulted in an additional \$60 to the average customer's bill. Calculations on how much bills will go up now that the sludge can no longer be dumped at Pigeon Point have not been done yet, Montgomery said.

Officials conceded earlier this year that deciding not to raise fees in 2008 -- because it was an election year -- set back the timeline to return the Water-Sewer Fund to financial solvency.

Taking the sludge to Pigeon Point has long been controversial. The state government has said that Wilmington's contractors who run the sewage plant illegally deposited more than 100,000 tons of mixed sludge, ash and other materials.

Those issues are still the subject of intergovernmental disputes and legal appeals over cleanup, monitoring and removal issues.

HIGH COSTS MAY BE HINDERING HYBRIDS (WILNJ)

By Andrew Eder, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 15, 2009

High battery costs are likely to delay the widespread adoption of plug-in hybrid electric vehicles for decades, according to a new government-sponsored report.

The analysis by the National Research Council found that the cost of building a plug-in hybrid -- such as the cars Fisker Automotive wants to build in Delaware -- is as much as \$18,000 more than a conventional car, largely because of the cost of rechargeable lithium-ion batteries.

"Costs will decline with technology improvements and economies of scale, but Li-ion batteries are already being produced in great numbers and are well along their learning curves," according to the committee of experts that authored the report. "The steep early drop in cost often experienced with new technologies is not likely."

The high cost of the batteries will make the cars harder for automakers like Fisker to sell, even though operating costs are lower than for gasoline-powered cars and that gap will get larger as gas costs rise.

The study concludes that tens or hundreds of billions of dollars in government subsidies will be needed over many years to make plug-in hybrids cost-effective for consumers.

The council suggested that policymakers need to hedge their bets and support a variety of alternative fuels.

Officials at Fisker, which plans to make a plug-in hybrid family sedan in Delaware beginning in 2012, defended their business plan, noting that they believe the cost of lithium-ion batteries will drop much more rapidly than the council's study suggests.

The report was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy, which has been investing billions of dollars in auto and battery makers to speed the development of electric-car technologies. President Barack Obama has set a goal of having as many as 1 million plug-in electric vehicles on U.S. roads by 2015, and major automakers and startups alike are working to develop vehicles that run either partially or completely on electricity.

Among the Energy Department's beneficiaries is Fisker, an Irvine, Calif.-based startup that received a \$528.7 million loan earlier this year and subsequently announced plans to build a plug-in hybrid vehicle at the Boxwood Road assembly plant near Newport. Fisker's Delaware venture also will be backed by \$21.5 million in loans and grants from the state.

Fisker spokesman Russell Datz said the forecasts used by the company to develop its business model contradict the National Research Council's report.

"Lithium-ion battery technology will come down rapidly in price relatively quickly, and PHEVs [Plug-In Hybrid Electric Vehicles] will make up the vast majority of sales of advanced-technology vehicles over the next 10 years or so," Datz said.

The council's report said the type of plug-in hybrids being developed by Fisker would cost about \$18,100 more to build than a conventional car, including \$14,000 for the battery pack.

The Energy Department hopes its investments in battery technologies will drive costs down as much as 50 percent in the next three years, but the council's report said the department's goals "are extremely aggressive and are unlikely to be reached by the target date or even for a significant time beyond."

Gov. Jack Markell and Alan Levin, director of the Delaware Economic Development Office, led a concerted effort to bring Fisker to Delaware in the summer and fall. The deal was announced in late October.

The plant is expected to employ 2,500 workers by 2014, with 650 on the job in 2011.

From the consumer's perspective, the higher cost of plug-in hybrids would be offset somewhat by lower operating costs, since a mile driven on electricity is less expensive than a mile on gasoline. But the council's report said it would likely take several decades before the fuel savings offset the higher initial costs.

And many consumers would need to upgrade their home's electrical service to charge their cars, at a cost of \$1,000 to \$2,000.

Fisker's first car, the Karma luxury sedan, is set to hit the market next year at a price of \$87,900. The company hopes to sell its planned next vehicle, a family-oriented sedan being developed under the name Project Nina, at a starting price of \$39,900, including a \$7,500 federal tax credit.

Datz said the Karma will actually be less expensive than many of the luxury sedans with which it will compete. When Fisker begins producing the Nina, it is targeting an annual production of about 115,000 vehicles.

"We think that's a pretty conservative number," Datz said.

In the most optimistic scenario, about 40 million plug-in hybrids could be on the road by 2030, the council's report says. A more realistic projection is for 13 million plug-in hybrids by 2030, about 4 percent of the U.S. fleet of 300 million vehicles -- and that assumes that the current level of government support continues, the report says.

Even with such support, plug-in hybrids are expected to have little impact on oil consumption before 2030 because of their limited adoption, according to the report.

But Datz said Fisker's argument is, "You've got to start somewhere."

"There's no magic bullet to reducing reliance on foreign oil or cleaning up the environment," he said. "It's not going to happen overnight."

ASTRAZENECA DEFENDING CRESTOR PATENTS (WILNJ)

By Staff And Wire Reports

Wilmington News Journal, December 15, 2009

AstraZeneca Plc will "vigorously defend" patents covering its best-selling cholesterol-lowering drug Crestor after a U.S. magistrate rejected a request to throw out some claims, spokesman Neil McCrae said.

AstraZeneca and Shionogi & Co., which developed Crestor, sued generic drug makers, including Apotex Inc. and Novartis AG's Sandoz, in December 2007 in federal court in Wilmington to block generic copies of Crestor. The generic drug makers then claimed AstraZeneca and Shionogi misled the patent office when they sought rights to the inventions.

Magistrate Judge Leonard Stark, in a Dec. 12 ruling, rejected the request from AstraZeneca and Shionogi to throw out those allegations. The case will go to trial in February before U.S. District Judge Joseph Farnan.

The British pharmaceutical giant has its U.S. headquarters in Fairfax and employs about 5,000 people in Delaware. The stakes for AstraZeneca are high -- the future of one of its biggest products, a drug that generates billions of dollars in global sales. In 2006, Crestor posted worldwide sales of \$2.03 billion.

The fight against Crestor generics is one of three AstraZeneca is waging to protect the final years of unimpeded sales for three of its major drugs.

Crestor is AstraZeneca's third-best selling product after its acid-reflux drug, Nexium, and its drug for schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, Seroquel. Crestor's patent expires in 2016.

Nexium's U.S. patents expire between 2014 and 2019, and the core U.S. patent for Seroquel expires in 2011.

Analysts do not see the local court's decision as a major setback.

"Judge Stark did not indicate which way the court is leaning in this matter," wrote Seamus Fernandez, an analyst with Leerink Swann & Co. in Boston, in a Dec. 12 note to clients. "We still believe the odds favor AstraZeneca given the high hurdle involved in proving inequitable conduct, but the hearing and subsequent recommendation have raised our risk threshold regarding the outcome."

McCrae said AstraZeneca was not surprised by the decision, as it can be difficult to get summary judgment on allegations of inequitable conduct.

"We remain confident that we will prevail on the issues at trial," McCrae said in a telephone interview. "AstraZeneca has confidence in its intellectual property covering Crestor and we'll continue to vigorously defend the patents protecting the product."

ON OTHER SIDE OF POLICE TAPE, STUDENTS SEE EMS IN ACTION (WILNJ)

By Edward L. Kenney, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 15, 2009

Nothing in the dry, lifeless pages of a textbook could quite prepare emergency medical services high school students for the rush of riding in the back of a paramedic vehicle.

"Your heart starts pumping and your blood starts flowing. You don't know what to expect," said Jake Carrow, one of two seniors in the EMS program at St. Georges Technical High School near Middletown taking part in a weekly ride-along program with New Castle County paramedic units.

"It's just really exciting to go out and actually be there and help someone," fellow participant Elizabeth Gliniak said. "Everything just clicks when you're out there. It all comes together. All the nervousness goes away when you're in the ambulance truck."

Lt. Dan Seador, in charge of recruitment and continuing education for the county's EMS, said the arrangement with St. Georges is the first time the paramedics have worked formally with a school.

"I think it's a great opportunity for them to test the water a little further," Seador said of the EMS students. "I don't think they very often get a chance to do that at that level."

"It's a dose of reality, because emergency medicine is raw; it's not a nice, tidy package," added school EMS instructor Cookie Immediato, who approached the county about starting the program.

"I can teach the book all day long," she said, "but I can't teach the emotions and everything else. This is a really quick way of knowing if this job is a job that is really for you or not."

Immediato, who served as a nationally registered paramedic from 1991 to 2008 before coming to the school, also reached out to several fire companies -- Aetna Hose Hook & Ladder of Newark, Mill Creek and Delaware City -- to allow some of her EMS students to ride along regularly on emergency runs this year.

Both Carrow and Gliniak also have participated in emergencies with the fire companies, but they said those calls often

deal with basic life support, as opposed to the more intense advanced life support that the county so often handles.

Working different shifts and at rotating stations for the county, both students said they have been on more than a dozen emergency responses with its units -- most of them calls reporting subjects with chest pains, respiratory distress and the like -- since joining the program last month.

"No accident yet," said Gliniak, 17, who wants to be a pediatric nurse. "I'm hoping. I want to see one. It's kind of exciting. I'm not wishing one on someone, but ..."

Gliniak said she likes making a difference in people's lives, although the work is tough sometimes.

"Some things you see -- and you just want to cry," she said. "But you've got to hold it in. You're there to help someone. You have to put all your feelings behind you."

Carrow, 18, who wants to join the police or military, said the county's paramedics have allowed him to do some basic tasks at emergency scenes, such as taking a victim's blood pressure or placing an oxygen mask over someone's face.

"It depends who you ride with and how comfortable they are with you," he said of his involvement. "They'll let you do some things. And they'll answer questions and stuff."

The two students said they have both learned a lot.

"It gives you an idea of what happens before the Band-Aids go on," Carrow said.

"It's preparing me for what I'm about to see if I'm going to be a nurse," said Gliniak, who was recently accepted into the Beebe School of Nursing in Lewes.

Immediato, who also has gotten her EMS seniors working co-op jobs this year at Christiana Hospital and the Veterans Affairs Medical Center near Elsmere, breaks new ground with each step she takes, she said. There is not much else in Delaware like St. Georges Technical's EMS program. The school itself opened only three years ago, and she is just this year beginning to roll her students out into the community for real-life experiences.

"I truly wanted them to see what it was all about," she said. "I've already had a student we had to talk through some situation because he was at his first CPR. He was a little shaken up by it. They think when you do CPR, someone will miraculously wake up, because that's what you see on TV. But it doesn't always happen that way."

CAPTAIN, PASSENGER ESCAPE BURNING BOAT (WILNJ)

By Staff And Wire Reports

Wilmington News Journal, December 15, 2009

Two people were rescued Monday from a burning powerboat off Ocean City, Md., officials said.

The 40-foot Viking sport-fishing boat My Col Col was heading north in the Atlantic Ocean when it caught fire about 200 yards off of 118th Street about 7:50 a.m., Maryland Natural Resources Police said.

The boat was being operated by David Lee Catrino, 41, of Ocean City, and he had one passenger, Ollie Charles Powell, 38, of Berlin, Md. While two Coast Guard rescue boats and a commercial towing service were en route to the scene, another nearby boat, the Get Some, arrived and took Catrino and Powell aboard. They were then transferred to the tow boat. By 9:30 a.m., the boat had burned close to the water line, said Petty Officer John Miller, a spokesman with the Coast Guard in Portsmouth, Va.

The boat was towed to the shoreline, where firefighters from Ocean City extinguished the blaze. No one was hurt.

HOLIDAY BLUES (WILNJ)

By Kelly Bothum, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 15, 2009

This time of year is never easy for Jean King. Six years ago today, she lost her husband, Bob, to cancer after 43 years of marriage. His death in 2003 came four years after one of the couple's daughters also died from cancer.

King stays close to her children and grandchildren, reveling in their successes like any proud mother and grandmother. But sometimes she struggles with the loss of two people she loved so dearly. Once-beloved holiday traditions, like baking Christmas cookies, just seem too difficult anymore. So is being home, surrounded by all the memories.

But rather than drown in her sadness, King has found a way to channel her emotions into something productive. For the last three years, she's been a volunteer through RSVP, a national program that matches willing volunteers over age 55 with nonprofit organizations looking for help.

These days she volunteers weekly with the Salvation Army, making sure the people who come seeking food, toys and other holiday assistance have the proper paperwork to qualify them for services. She also helps out at the Delaware Agricultural Museum and the Modern Maturity Center, which sponsors RSVP in Kent County.

Volunteering keeps her spirits high, but it also helps her to feel like she's honoring the lives of her late husband and daughter.

"Helping other people, it's just wonderful," King said. "You feel like you are doing something to make their lives better. You see these families and you want to help them all."

It's supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year, but the holiday hoopla and excitement can be alienating for people who have suffered the loss of a loved one. The memories come flooding back, along with a sense of longing and loss. The feelings remain no matter how long the loved one has been gone, said Judy Pierson, a licensed clinical psychologist with Delaware Hospice.

"This time of the year is very much associated with memories," Pierson said. "People think grieving is this linear process and you cross the finish line at some point. There are some good days and some bad days. Some times of the years are so potent. They can be a trigger."

Other types of loss can be just as debilitating. Parents whose grown children have moved out may feel the sting of an empty nest this holiday season. Millions of Americans have lost jobs during the country's economic downturn, forcing sharp cutbacks in gift-giving and other holiday traditions. Still other folks are combatting emotional, physical and mental illnesses year-round that keep them feeling isolated from those around them.

But there are ways to fight the holiday blues so you can still find something to celebrate this season. In keeping with the season of giving, we offer the following tips to help those struggling through a difficult time. They're worth remembering for all of us -- whatever the situation -- because taking care of yourself is perhaps the best gift to give your loved ones.

Acknowledge your loss or struggle

It's important to admit to yourself -- and to others -- that this holiday is going to be a struggle. That doesn't mean you're going to spend the last weeks of the year hiding under the blankets in your bed, but it may mean you don't want to celebrate like everyone else.

Talk to friends and family ahead of time about what's going on, Pierson said. If a job loss has you cutting back on the holidays this year, be honest about it instead of making excuses or avoiding a gift-giving situation.

If you're headed to a holiday gathering and missing a loved one, think about bringing along a small token that can symbolize that person. Carry in your jacket or purse a pair of earrings, cuff links or other memento that belonged to your loved one. It's an inconspicuous reminder that can help you feel stronger, particularly in a social situation.

"They can reach in and touch it and make them feel like they still have that bond," Pierson said. "It gives them that intimacy even if the person is in spirit."

And don't be afraid to talk about your deceased loved one -- chances are, other people you know want to talk about them, too, but they may be worried about upsetting you.

Take time

When people suffer a loss, they rarely give themselves enough time to actually deal with how they're feeling. They try to hurry up the process in the hopes that at the end they will feel better. That is rarely the case, Pierson said.

Most people believe it takes about two months to recover from the loss of a loved one. But therapists who work with grieving people say it takes at least two years, and even then issues still emerge over time.

"Grief lasts as long as it lasts," said Marianne Biddle, a registered nurse and psychotherapist. "It's unique to us."

One of the keys to making it through a rough time is giving yourself permission to feel however you are feeling. That means it's OK to have fun and laugh at a party even if you just lost your job and don't have something lined up in the future. You don't have to feel guilty about enjoying yourself just because your circumstances have changed.

In the same way, if you don't feel like going to the neighborhood New Year's Eve party this year because you previously attended it with your late husband, politely decline the invitation. Don't feel like you have to accept every invitation just because it is offered. Instead, pick one or two that are the most meaningful to you. But don't be surprised if you don't feel the same about celebrating as other guests.

"It's normal for people who have lost someone to feel annoyed by all the chit-chat they hear at the holidays," Pierson said. "Hearing everyone else's problems may feel a little petty if you're grieving."

Put yourself first

Yes, be selfish. Eat well, get plenty of sleep and avoid temptations to overindulge in alcohol. Prune needy friends and family or people who put too many demands on you when you're not feeling up to it.

It can be difficult for people to think about their own needs ahead of others, but if you won't do it for yourself, then do it for the ones you love, Pierson said. Focusing on you during this time helps you to be in a better place mentally and physically, and that benefits the people around you.

Staying physically active boosts your mood and gets you thinking about something other than your current situation, said Biddle, who has been a therapist for more than 35 years. "Doing whatever it is that you enjoy -- walking, gardening, going to that place you're fond of -- allows you to invest yourself outside of yourself," said Biddle, who has led support groups for people coping with loss. "If we're just on the sofa sitting, then we're thinking just about ourselves, and our body, mind and spirit all become consumed with the grief."

During this time, it may help to lower your own expectations of how you should be doing, Pierson said. Perhaps this isn't the year to host the whole family for Christmas dinner because you don't have the money or energy to cook. Maybe this is the year you opt for gift cards instead of extravagant gifts.

"This is a time when you may need to disappoint others in order to not disappoint yourself," she said. "Give yourself permission to do less."

Help someone else

Scott Beck has always felt passionate about making sure other people have enough to eat. In the past, he gave money to the Food Bank of Delaware and Feed the Children, a national organization dedicated to providing food, medicine and other necessities to children around the world.

Recently, the 56-year-old Lebanon man hasn't had much extra money to share. So he's donating his time instead to help others. For the last six weeks, he has been spending about 20 hours a week volunteering at the Food Bank's Milford location. Beck, who has issues related to anxiety and seasonal affective disorder, said volunteering has helped him to see beyond his own problems. The job has given him a purpose in his life he was previously lacking.

"I believe if you can marry a personal passion with a volunteer effort, it makes it special," Beck said. "It feels natural. It doesn't feel like work. This whole experience has been a beautiful thing for me."

Carol Lettieri, volunteer coordinator for RSVP at the Modern Maturity Center, said that's a common reaction. About 1,000 people in Kent County volunteer through RSVP.

"When you see people less fortunate and it hits home that you are a catalyst in helping them to have something better, it just makes you feel really good," she said. "I've seen a lot of people who are going to be alone on Christmas or not going to be going with their family for that big Christmas, but they'll volunteer and it jump-starts them for the rest of the year."

Don't go it alone

If you're hurting, this isn't the time to pull the tough-guy routine. Ask for help. Seek out a friend or family member who will listen. Join a support group. Find people who care, Biddle said. "Sometimes you don't need words, just someone to be there with you or just that reinforcement of being cared about," she said.

A community center can be a great resource because there's almost always something going on, Biddle said. It's a place where people naturally congregate and form easy connections. There are usually different groups and activities, all with a fluid, relaxed feel.

Sometimes people are hesitant about going somewhere new but, once they finally get up the nerve, they wish they had gone sooner. At least that's what Kathy Samworth hears from the participants in the GEM program offered by Jewish Family Services in Talleyville. GEM, which stands for Growth, Education and Mental Fitness, was created to help people deal with the loneliness that can develop as people get older.

GEM offers yoga, computer classes, knitting and other programs on a weekly basis. Referrals from friends are how most people find out about GEM, although the program is open to anyone over age 55.

One of the greatest benefits of GEM is the friendships that have developed among members, Samworth said. Many arrange lunch dates and other outings outside the program.

"I've had people come and say, 'Well I've been wanting to come for a year.' They just hadn't worked up the courage," Samworth said. "I think once they come, they realize how much there is here." Additional Facts

About RSVP

RSVP is the country's largest volunteer network for people 55 and older. The program, part of the Corporation for National and Community Service, helps connect older people who want to volunteer with organizations who need help.

In Delaware, more than 3,000 senior citizens participate in RSVP, which stands for Retired Senior and Volunteer Program. It is sponsored by the state in New Castle and Sussex counties, and through the Modern Maturity Center in Kent County.

For more information, call 255-9882 in New Castle County; 734-1200, ext. 129, in Kent County; and 856-5815 in Sussex County.

CHOOSE TOYS NOT ONLY FOR FUN VALUE, BUT SAFETY VALUE (WILNJ)

By Hiran Ratnayake, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 15, 2009

Zhu Zhu Pets may be the hottest holiday gifts for kids right now, but an investigation into whether the toy is dangerous was enough to deter Lilian Latan from buying one.

Latan, who lives in Middletown, has two daughters, ages 6 and 4. She reads safety labels before buying toys and games and pays attention to investigations and recalls.

"Especially with the 4-year-old, I still have to be very careful" about her putting things in her mouth, Latan said. "I read everything about a toy, and if it's small and if it's something that looks like candy, I won't buy it."

More than 3 billion toys and games are sold in the U.S. each year -- most between Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. As if battling long lines and high demand for certain toys during the holiday season isn't enough, parents also must make sure gifts are safe.

Consumer confidence has waned in recent years, prompted by recalls of toys deemed unsafe. In 2008, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission recalled 162 toys. That same year, there were 19 toy-related deaths and about 172,700 toy-related injuries to children younger than 15 that required urgent care.

So far this year, there have been 38 toy recalls. The commission attributes the drop to increased enforcement at the nation's ports, cooperation with other countries, industry compliance with federal safety rules and consumer awareness and education.

Still, there have been some high-profile recalls and investigations. The commission recently opened an investigation into the popular Zhu Zhu Pets after the consumer watchdog group GoodGuide reported that the toy hamsters contain higher-than-allowed levels of antimony. If ingested, the heavy metal can sicken children. Cepia, the maker of Zhu Zhu Pets, has disputed the findings.

YoYo Joe's Toys & Fun, an independent toy store in Talleyville, sells Plan Toys, which are made from rubberwood and are painted with soy-based ink.

"When people are looking for things that are safe, that's where we point them," owner Joe Mitchell said. "They tend to be a little more expensive, but they are very popular."

Many recalled toys were manufactured in China. But Mitchell said parents shouldn't dismiss every China-made toy, since most toys bought in the U.S. are made in China. "If you go by looking for things not made in China, you'll have a very small selection," he said.

Mitchell also recommends that parents stick with well-known brands. "Big manufacturers have gone to very big lengths to make sure their toys are safe," he said.

Whether Zhu Zhu Pets, Plan Toys or Barbie dolls are on your children's wish lists, here are 10 safety tips to help guide you through the rest of the holiday shopping season.

1. Buy age-appropriate toys.

Just like you consider your child's age, interest and skill level when determining if they'd enjoy a gift, you also want to consider those same characteristics for safety purposes. Follow the age recommendations on the toy package to ensure that you are getting a safe gift for your child.

"Various toys are geared for certain ages, not only for the cognitive level but also with the pieces and parts that come with them," said Sean M. Elwell, injury prevention coordinator of the trauma program at Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children in Rockland. "Toys for the older age group may have some smaller pieces that could be a choking hazard."

2. Inspect all toys.

Young children can choke on small toys, so keep them out of reach. They also shouldn't play with balloons, magnets or toys with small parts that easily come off or could break off. Older toys should be inspected and, if necessary, repaired or discarded.

Magnets can cause serious damage if swallowed, said Dr. Stephen Murphy, medical director of the trauma program at the duPont Hospital.

"We had a case of a toddler who swallowed a couple magnets with opposite poles (that magnetized), and a piece of tissue was caught between them," he said. The toddler survived but needed surgery.

"Our point is that if you prevent something at step 1, 2 or 3, you never have to get to step 15 or 16," Murphy said.

3. Read all instructions and heed warnings of proper use.

A product that isn't assembled correctly could break during use and injure a child, Elwell said. In addition, toys that seem safe can be hazardous when used in unintended ways, so read all enclosed instructions and warnings.

Popular items such as the electronic Easy-Bake Oven can be particularly hazardous when not used properly, but even basic items like yo-yos can be dangerous if children aren't careful when using them.

4. Fill out registration forms.

By filling out and mailing the registration form contained in the toy packaging, you can be quickly alerted if there's a recall on the product. Many toy manufacturers allow people to register their products online.

5. Buy the proper safety accessories.

If you're buying a riding toy as a gift, you should also buy a helmet and any other safety gear. Wearing a bike helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission. You should also buy a helmet with skateboards, in-line skates, scooters, snowboards and any other riding toys.

"A lot of times a parent will think, 'I want to get them that big red shiny bike,' but those little items are just as important," Elwell said.

6. Separate toys by age.

Children should be taught to put away their toys when they are finished playing with them. And older siblings should be instructed to keep their toys away from younger siblings. Safe storage not only keeps the home clean, it helps prevent injuries such as tripping over toys.

7. Avoid buying used toys.

You may get a discount at a garage sale, but you may unknowingly be buying a recalled product.

It's also less safe to buy toys that aren't new. Used items may become damaged -- and subsequently, unsafe -- over time. For example, the plastic material in a tricycle could become degraded after years of storage in a garage. "We've seen some plastics that weather has taken a toll on," Elwell said.

8. Keep batteries and chargers away from children.

Young children should be kept away from all batteries, chargers and adapters, since those products can pose thermal burn hazards. Read all instructions and warnings that come with these products -- especially chargers, since they often lack a device to prevent them from overcharging. Batteries, like magnets, also can cause serious problems if a young child swallows one, Murphy said.

"If you swallow a battery, it's leaking while in your digestive tract, and it can erode part of the wall of your intestines," Murphy said. "You have to be prudent and you've got to keep an eye on the kid or keep it away."

9. Keep toy packaging away from children.

"Plastic packaging can potentially be a choking hazard as well as a poisonous hazard," said Elwell, who works at the Nemours Safety Store in the main lobby of the duPont Hospital. "The packaging -- the Styrofoam and the plastic -- some of those things can be more appealing than the actual toy, and it will be ingested and they can choke on it."

10. Stay updated.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission keeps a comprehensive list of all recalled toys at www.cpsc.gov. The list includes the manufacturer, picture of the item and description of the recall.

FOOD BANK MAKES PLEA FOR MORE DONATIONS (WILNJ)

By Robin Brown, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 15, 2009

With donations down in the hard economy, the Food Bank of Delaware on Monday issued a plea for help.

President and Chief Executive Officer Patricia Beebe said donations to this year's holiday food drive are 24,313 pounds less than last year -- and need continues to grow.

"It's up dramatically," Beebe said, adding that the nonprofit, which for years has distributed food to more than 90,000 needy residents a year through member agencies and feeding sites, plans to release new Delaware hunger statistics next month.

Many Delawareans "continue to be generous with their volunteer time, money and food," she said, but the significant shortfall in donations is raising concerns.

"More Delawareans are out of work and more families and individuals are lining up for emergency food assistance," she said. "Whether you can donate just a few cans or several bags full, every little bit helps to feed hungry Delawareans."

Community Relations Manager Kim Kostas said the impact of the shortfall can be seen easily when the pound-shortage is translated into aid to the needy.

"With 24,313 pounds of food," Kostas said, "we could provide 810 thirty-pound food packages." Each package is enough to feed a family of four for three to four days, she added.

To help bridge the gap, the food bank issued a plea for businesses, schools, faith- and community-based groups to hold benefit donation drives.

The food bank offers tips, posters and other help for organizing donation drives at fbd.org. Financial donations also are accepted at the Web site.

The most-needed foods include tuna and other canned meats, peanut butter, hearty soups, dried beans, canned fruit and vegetables, hot and cold boxed cereals, pasta and macaroni and cheese, long-grain rice, turkey gravy, instant mashed potatoes, pancake mix, cranberry sauce, pasta sauce and seasoned stuffing mix.

Beebe said anyone can drop off tax-deductible donations of nonperishable foods in unbreakable containers, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays at Food Bank of Delaware sites near Newark at 14 Garfield Way in Delaware Industrial Park off Del. 72 between Chestnut Hill Road and Old Baltimore Pike or its Milford Facility at 1041 Mattlind Way.

Tax-deductible donations also may be sent to Food Bank of Delaware, 14 Garfield Way, Newark, DE 19713 or made online at www.fbd.org.

For more information, including volunteer opportunities, call 292-1305.

BRANDYWINE PARK SUGAR BOWL SOON WILL BE BACK -- SWEETER THAN BEFORE (WILNJ)

By Robin Brown

Wilmington News Journal, December 15, 2009

A long-lost landmark is being reincarnated in Wilmington.

A picturesque pavilion called The Sugar Bowl for its dome lid was lost in Brandywine Park more than a half-century ago after use as a bandshell, an observatory overlooking the Brandywine and a setting for picnics and wedding photos.

Details of its demise are unclear. The Hagley Museum & Library says the 27-foot tall, 110-foot diameter pavilion was razed around 1940. Others say it disintegrated over years or may have sustained irreparable damage in 1954's Hurricane Hazel.

Its image endures on old pastel postcards but just its granite base and concrete foundation were left by the north end of Washington Street Bridge. Its remains inspired civic activist David Hudson, twice Delaware poet laureate, to dream of its revival. Before his 2003 death, Hudson rallied support for a new Sugar Bowl to boost park use and public appreciation.

Meanwhile, Delaware State Parks Director Chaz Salkin and architect Don Homsey spotted the long-gone Sugar Bowl as a landmark worth replacing.

They went to Friends of Wilmington Parks and said, "This might be a project you can sink your teeth into," said Executive Director Mike Porro.

The nonprofit group (www.FriendsOfWilmingtonParks.org) finished restoring Jasper Crane Rose Garden in 2004 and adopted the Sugar Bowl in 2006. Supporters include foundations, park users, elected officials, community leaders, engineers, architects, planners, the city and the state parks division -- some backers giving time and help for years.

Architects and planners used the old postcards for reference "because they are really the only images we have of what it looked like," said Friends' President Ed Weirauch.

The goal was to replicate the original Sugar Bowl, but the new one will have strengths it lacked -- a 10-ton steel skeleton, just erected, that won't disintegrate and concrete reinforced with glass fiber, Porro said.

With about \$350,000 raised and \$250,000 more needed, the friends plan a public campaign to raise the rest next year, Porro said. Tax-deductible donations may be sent to Friends of Wilmington Parks, Box 435, Montchanin DE 19710.

The new Sugar Bowl, due to be done in 2010-11, will serve all of the original's functions plus public art and historic interpretation -- including how and when the landmark became a memory, if more research finds answers, Porro said. It also will honor the Delaware National Guard, which has no monument in the state, he said.

When it's done, as dreamer Hudson used to say, The Sugar Bowl again will stop park guests as they give it a good look and say, "How sweet it is."

WHAT TO DO WHEN MOM AND DAD ARE SICK, TOO (WILNJ)

By Carolyn Butler, The Washington Post

Wilmington News Journal, December 15, 2009

I recently had one of those moments that only other parents or full-time caregivers of young children are likely to understand: I was holding my miserably sick baby, who was sneezing, coughing and drooling all over me, when my 3-year-old stumbled in and said, "My belly hurts," just before throwing up all over the lot of us. As I cleaned up and tried to comfort both kids, I couldn't help but wonder which I'd start doing first: hacking or vomiting.

One of the many things I took for granted before I had kids -- besides the bliss of a good night's sleep and keeping my clothes clean for a full day -- was relative good health, particularly during cold and flu season. Since having my boys, I have suffered through a dazzling array of ailments right along with them, from multiple bouts of bronchitis to pinkeye and every 24-hour stomach virus imaginable. Among the four of us in the house, I don't think there's been a moment without

a runny nose since the end of summer.

While there has been little research on the topic, experts agree that the caregivers of young children are far more likely to fall ill than adults without kids.

"We see it in practice all the time, pretty consistently: Parents get sick more often," says Thomas Campbell, chair of the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry and co-author of "Families and Health." "Young kids are a reservoir of germs, and if they're at day care, preschool or any place else where they're around other children, they're in a super-virus environment and the perfect vectors for illness and for passing viruses around. Kids hug and touch and share toys and saliva and cough all over each other, and then parents hug and kiss their kids. Nothing else compares, contact-wise -- we don't go to work and hug and kiss our colleagues."

Lack of sleep and increased stress can also hamper immune response, Campbell notes.

Sociology professor Debra Umberson, co-author of a forthcoming review on parenthood's effect on well-being in the Journal of Marriage and Family, agrees that children are "disease vectors," but they also can be helpful to adult health in the long term.

"Once you have children," she says, "you tend to take better care of your health, in terms of behavior like drinking, smoking and other risk-taking, which offers benefits and protects you from mortality. But on the other hand, [parents] also exercise less and gain more weight than folks who do not have children, which is not good."

Another byproduct of raising these smiling, sneezing petri dishes is that a stomach bug that affects a child for all of an afternoon can fell an adult for days. "You would think that you've had 30 or 40 years of exposure to these types of viruses and so you'd be protected, but very often it doesn't turn out that way," says Campbell, citing hepatitis A and chicken pox as classic examples of illnesses that are typically mild for children and much more serious for adults.

And Umberson adds: "Once you get sick when you have little kids, you can't take care of yourself -- you have to take care of everyone else -- and so it's harder to recover. It takes longer and is more unpleasant."

I've wondered if it's futile even to try to stop the spread of infection in our house. But Benard Dreyer, a pediatrics professor at the New York University School of Medicine, says it can be done. He suggests proper (read: almost obsessive) hand washing and the liberal use of hand sanitizers. He also recommends staying out of waiting rooms in doctor's offices and the emergency room -- "major reservoirs for disease" -- if possible.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently released recommendations for preventing the spread of H1N1, but presumably for any other virus, too, in the home that include such optimistically impractical tips as constantly wearing a mask, isolating sick people in their rooms and staying at least six feet away from them.

The CDC is "adapting what is recommended to health-care facilities for the home, but nobody runs their home like a hospital -- it's not doable," Dreyer says. "What you really need to do is use your judgment about your own situation -- like if you're pregnant or have a newborn, you may actually want to use masks -- and then take the basic principles and apply them to your home in a realistic way."

Still, don't despair if you catch that cold. All this shared illness has an upside.

"Once a child starts to develop a functioning immune system, at about 6 months, then the exposure to general viruses and germs that you find at day care, school, the supermarkets, the playground or parties, which is hard to avoid, isn't particularly a bad thing, because it helps build and stimulate the immune system," says Robert Shearin, a pediatrician in Bethesda, Md. "If you're getting that kind of exposure year after year, we hope it will be able to help kids fight other infections and stay healthier later on."

So if you're a parent or full-time caregiver of small children, stock up on Kleenex, wash your hands as often as possible, pray for some luck and know that someday this, too, shall pass.

4 ACCUSED OF INVADING WRONG HOME IN STICKUP (WILNJ)

By Robin Brown, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 15, 2009

Four suspects have been arrested in a home-invasion robbery that police said they committed at a mistaken address.

Six University of Delaware students -- four male residents and two female guests -- were left bound with duct tape over their mouths in the 1:20 a.m. break-in Nov. 30 in the 500 building of University Courtyard Apartments on Scholar Drive.

The suspects are Dustin J. Hults, 20, of the 100 block of Roosevelt Ave., Newport; Michael A. Ortiz, 20, and Joel M. Ortiz, 21, of the 1500 block of Dilworth Road in Willow Run near Elsmere; and Vincent J. Baiocco, 21, of the 2300 block of N. Washington St. in Wilmington, said Lt. Brian Henry, Newark Police Department public information officer.

Investigators "confirmed that the defendants were actually targeting another apartment where they believed they would find drugs and/or drug money, but mistakenly entered the victims' apartment," Henry said. He did not reveal which unit the four meant to hit, but said an investigation of that site is continuing.

Arrested Saturday at their homes, each is charged with six counts of first-degree robbery, first-degree burglary, weapons offenses and other crimes, Henry said.

Failing to post bail, all were committed to Young Correctional Institution in Wilmington, he said.

According to police, the robbers -- three with guns, one with a knife -- made noise in a hall until a resident opened the door a bit, then shoved their way into the living room. A guest suffered a bruised eye when the door hit her; no one else was hurt.

The intruders searched the place and stole a safe along with other undisclosed belongings but found no drugs, according to police, who said the men -- one using a bandanna to cover his face -- had brought along three backpacks and a pillow case.

After they left, reportedly in a silver four-door car parked south of the complex, a resident got loose and called police. When police searched Hults' home, they found some of the stolen property, Henry said. More was found in a search of Michael Ortiz's car, which was used in the getaway, he said.

An air gun used in the robbery also was found in Ortiz's car, and investigators determined that the intruders' other guns were air guns or BB guns, Henry said.

The same apartment was burglarized when residents were gone for UD's Thanksgiving break, but nothing valuable was taken and items usually stolen in burglaries were left there, Henry said. Detectives are investigating whether the incidents are linked.

AMID BURST OF SECURITY, ACCUSED SMUGGLER SENTENCED (WILNJ)

By Sean O'Sullivan, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 15, 2009

The J. Caleb Boggs Federal Building in downtown Wilmington was surrounded by dozens of police vehicles during the morning rush hour Monday as police officers, some in body armor, paced back and forth behind traffic barricades.

Nearby, blue command-post tents blocked Ninth and French streets. A Delaware State Police helicopter patrolled overhead amid whispers about police snipers on rooftops.

Attorney Joe Green thought Vice President Joe Biden was making a surprise visit. Ryan Rios, who works in a nearby law office, was unsettled by the largely unannounced and unexplained high-profile police presence.

Some who asked were informed that it was a "traffic survey;" others were told it was unspecified "police activity."

"It" was the sentencing for Amir Hossein Ardebili, the 36-year-old Iranian national whose case was unsealed by federal prosecutors a week and a half ago.

He was sentenced to five years in federal prison by Chief District Judge Gregory M. Sleet for smuggling, conspiracy, money laundering and multiple violations of the Arms Export Control Act. Authorities say he purchased prohibited electronics and other equipment with military applications from the United States, for the government of Iran.

U.S. Marshal for Delaware David W. Thomas said Monday's security precautions were put in place because of threats on Ardebili's life. Thomas declined to offer specifics. "In our business, we have to be right 100 percent of the time," he said.

Thomas said it was the highest level of security he'd ever overseen at the courthouse in his eight years and it may have been the heaviest level of protection ever thrown around the J. Caleb Boggs Building.

According to prosecutors, Ardebili attempted to buy gyroscopes that could be used in fighter aircraft and missile guidance systems, phase shifter chips that could operate complicated radar systems to allow weapons systems to lock onto multiple targets, and computers needed to upgrade Iran's fleet of aging F-4 warplanes.

His arrest in the Republic of Georgia in October 2007 was the culmination of a years-long international sting operation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. He was extradited to Delaware under top-secret security in January 2008, pleading guilty several months later behind closed doors. The case was prosecuted in Delaware because as part of a bogus business deal, Ardebili sent a \$3,000 down payment to a bank account in Delaware.

In court Monday, Ardebili's attorney, Edmund "Dan" Lyons Jr. said his client was a small-time operator who was just trying to make a living in his native country when he was busted by U.S. agents.

The police presence outside the courthouse stood in stark contrast to that description.

State employees in the Carvel State Building across the street were not told what was going on. One said she was told by a police official only that "someone important" was going to be at the courthouse.

However, prosecutors had announced two weeks ago, in unsealing the case, that Monday would be Ardebili's sentencing date, and Rios and a co-worker, Sylla Slawski, said they had figured out what was going on after hunting for information online. "It makes us feel safe," Slawski said.

In court, Ardebili was an unassuming presence, dressed in a gray T-shirt and khaki pants.

His comments to the court, in sometimes broken English, were briefly interrupted so Ardebili could compose himself after choking up.

He told Sleet that he was no international arms merchant and was not a political or religious zealot. "I never wanted to harm anyone," he said, saying that many of the prohibited items he purchased on behalf of Iran had civilian uses. He said he never dealt in guns or ammunition.

Conflicting information

Assistant U.S. Attorney David Hall said that, although many of the items had other uses, the digital air computers he tried to buy had no other use but in the F-4. Hall also said that in undercover videos, Ardebili admitted he knew the items were to be used by the Iranian military for a missile defense system.

Hall also pointed out that in those recordings, Ardebili stated that Iran was seeking to improve and upgrade weapons because its leaders "believe war is coming" with the United States.

Ardebili said some of his comments to undercover agents were a bluff, an exaggeration, "to show myself as a big man," who could make deals happen. "It is the nature of the business," he said.

Lyons asked for a sentence of time served, or about two years, stating that Ardebili was one of hundreds of such independent procurement agents used by Iran to try to get around U.S. embargoes. He is "a little guy ... a cog," Lyons said. The lawyer said Ardebili had trouble coming up with a \$6,000 down payment for the deal that led to his arrest.

More than just a cog?

Ardebili was not an international arms merchant, making deals from a yacht in the Mediterranean and selling weapons to the highest bidder, Lyons said, but a man who lives in the house he grew up in with his parents. The trip to the

Republic of Georgia was Ardebili's first outside Iran, he said.

Hall responded that Ardebili was far from unsophisticated in his business -- which involved money laundering to hide the source of payments and complicated shipping practices, involving front companies in other nations, to mask the destination of contraband goods.

And though Hall conceded that Ardebili was not living "on a yacht," he said Ardebili was nonetheless involved in more than \$1 million in purchases annually for the Iranian government.

Lyons said his client, who has a degree in electrical engineering, made about \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year and operated out of a small office with one employee and one partner.

Sleet, in handing down his sentence, agreed with prosecutors that Ardebili's actions presented a threat to U.S. security. But the judge said Ardebili's remorse appeared genuine and that combined with "additional information that has been brought to my attention," a sentence of five years was appropriate.

Each of the nine charges against Ardebili carried a maximum punishment of up to 20 years in prison but the federal sentencing guideline range in the case was between 12 and 14 years.

Hall and U.S. Attorney David Weiss said they were satisfied with Sleet's ruling. Lyons said it was reasonable.

An uncertain future

About 60 minutes after the hearing, three sport utility vehicles emerged from a garage at the federal courthouse, with Ardebili riding in one, and sped away. Shortly after, traffic barriers were taken down and the police presence faded from around the court building. Normal order slowly returned.

Many, including Sleet, said the real question for Ardebili will come when he has completed his incarceration. "In effect, you are a man without a country," Sleet said, adding it appears Ardebili will not be able to return to Iran.

No one would comment about whether Ardebili cooperated with U.S. authorities, but Lyons said no matter what the reality is, Iranian officials will conclude that his client did, making it difficult, if not impossible, for him to return home.

Ardebili's wife is now in the United States, Lyons said, though she did not attend Monday's proceeding. The rest of his family remains in Iran.

Generally, foreign nationals who are convicted of felonies are automatically deported, but Lyons said it is possible for such a person to remain in the U.S. after they have served their sentence.

DELAWARE POLICE: MILLSBORO CITIZEN'S ACADEMY RESTARTING (WILNJ)

By Alex Ruoff, The (salisbury, Md.) Daily Times

Wilmington News Journal, December 14, 2009

MILLSBORO -- The <http://www.millsboropd.com/> Millsboro Police Department is restarting its Citizen's Police Academy to give residents an inside look at local crime fighting.

"It's an in-depth look at how we do business," Chief John Murphy said.

The academy is scheduled for Tuesday nights starting in January, with two-hour classes on leadership in law enforcement, courtroom procedures, the process of becoming a police officer and other topics.

This marks the fourth annual Citizen's Police Academy since 2004. The classes were not held last year because of scheduling conflicts with the department's Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies accreditation process.

Murphy said the classes aim to show Millsboro residents just where their tax money is going and the methods implemented to keep their city streets safe.

"We hope to pass information on that will help them better see why we do what we do," he said. "A good example is the Taser. A lot of people don't know the amount of training an officer goes through before he can carry one and why we have them."

Murphy said the classes will tour the department's headquarters, display their current police procedures, and explain the methods implemented by police to enforce law in Millsboro.

Millsboro resident Lucas Hurwenkil said he participated in the classes in 2006 and enjoyed the experience of seeing the police department behind the scenes.

"It was cool," he said. "I didn't know what to expect, but I think I got a lot out of it."

According to Murphy, his department gets feedback from the classes as well.

"Everyone who comes tells us about their experiences and I think we get something out of it, too," he said. "It's not just us telling them."

Pot-Nets resident Herman Duvall said he'd be interested in the tour of the Sussex Correctional Institution.

"I'd take my son to show him where he's not supposed to end up," he said.

The class is free, but applicants must register and pass a background check beforehand. Those interested are asked to apply early to ensure registration because of limited seating. Additional Facts

IF YOU GO

WHAT: Millsboro Police Department's Citizen's Police Academy

WHERE: Millsboro Police Department, 307 Main St. in Millsboro

WHEN: Registration begins now. Classes are scheduled for Tuesdays, Jan. 12 to 23.

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL EDITORIALS:

IT IS AMERICANS' RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP CURB TEENS' DRUG ABUSE (WILNJ)

Wilmington News Journal, December 15, 2009

The war on teen drug use is stymied by a softening of young people's perceptions about the harm done by smoking marijuana, using Ecstasy, drinking alcohol and using smokeless tobacco.

The annual Monitoring the Future study of eighth-, 10th-, and 12th-graders shows decreases in some grades in the use of cocaine, methamphetamine and hallucinogens.

However, there are disturbing trends of teens abusing both prescription and over-the-counter drugs. Seven of the 10 drugs most abused by high school seniors are prescription or over-the-counter drugs acquired primarily from teens' friends or relatives. The rate for use of inhalants in the last 30 days among 10th-graders increased.

Marijuana, considered by some as a "gateway" drug to more dangerous addictive substances, and binge drinking get a favorable assessment by teens.

Among eighth- and 10th-graders, the perception of "great risk" associated with marijuana use declined; perceived harmfulness of marijuana deteriorated among eighth-graders; and peer disapproval of marijuana use has declined.

Although use of alcohol among teens has declined, it remains the most commonly abused substance. Fewer 10th-graders viewed weekend binge drinking as harmful and fewer high school seniors disapproved of having one or two drinks daily.

In calling these findings to the attention of policymakers, it's incumbent on the rest of Americans to consider their ability and responsibility to trend this research in a more positive direction.

For some, leading by example will be difficult. Drug-using baby boomers -- ages 50 to 59 -- increased their illegal substance use since 2002, from 2.7 percent to 4.6 percent in 2008.

This was the generation at the peak of drug use among youth in the United States in the late 1970s.

END CONFUSING BUDGET PROCESS BY RESTORING FISCAL DISCIPLINE (WILNJ)

Wilmington News Journal, December 15, 2009

The U.S. budget process was probably designed to befuddle the average citizen. That may keep the public fat and happy in good times, but lately that confusing process is scaring the public.

The latest appropriation passed by Congress -- a \$447 billion omnibus spending bill -- is as befuddling as can be and more.

The bill, which is going to President Obama to sign, contains thousands of earmarks and double-digit increases for many federal departments. No doubt some of these increases are needed, at least in the short run, to combat the loss of jobs to the recession.

But many of the earmarks and the special favors are still hidden in the bill. They will slowly emerge, over the next few weeks. And each revelation will infuriate the public more.

The bill includes another \$650 billion for Medicare and Medicaid expenditures, for a total of \$1.1 trillion. Worse, the bill combines six of the 12 annual spending bills that the House and Senate haven't been able to pass so far this year. So more budget bills are coming.

Many economists argue that now is not the time to worry about the growing deficit. They say that job creation is more important in the next few months. Granted. But Congress has a habit of authorizing spending and avoiding cutbacks. Considering the rising deficit, the size of the stimulus package and whatever a health care measure ends up costing, the time has come for Congress to get serious about the nation's finances.

A bipartisan commission should be charged with finding ways to cut this spending and restore fiscal discipline. The commission should be formed now so that no time is lost in correcting the current policy. Sen. Kent Conrad, a Democrat, and Sen. Judd Gregg, a Republican, proposed such a panel. Congress should follow their advice.

BIDEN IN THE NEWS:

OBAMA TOUTING HOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAM (AP)

AP, December 15, 2009

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Hoping to jump-start his plans for job growth, President Barack Obama is pushing Congress to pass incentives for homeowners who retrofit their homes to make them more energy-efficient.

The president planned to visit a Home Depot store in Northern Virginia on Tuesday to make the case that outfitting houses to be more energy-efficient will create jobs and save families money on their energy bills. It's the fourth time in less than two weeks that the president will preside over a high-profile jobs event, as he calls attention to his efforts to bring down the nation's double-digit unemployment rate.

Last week, the president proposed a new spending plan that would provide tax breaks for energy-efficient retrofits in homes. The plan also calls for small business tax cuts and new spending on highway and bridge construction. The administration hasn't put a price tag on the plan, but it could cost more than \$150 billion.

The White House hopes the appeal of the retrofitting program -- which some administration officials have dubbed Cash for Caulkers -- will be similar to the now-expired Cash for Clunkers program, which offered rebates for trading in used vehicles for more fuel-efficient ones. At a White House jobs summit earlier in the month, Obama told Home Depot chairman Frank Blake that home improvement companies would be key partners in this program.

Obama has also proposed expanding stimulus initiatives that promote energy efficiency and clean energy jobs. Currently, about \$8 billion of the \$787 billion stimulus package goes toward energy-saving investments in homes. The White House has said investments like installing insulation, sealing leaks and modernizing heating and air conditioning equipment will pay for themselves many times over.

In a memo for the president, Vice President Joe Biden said stimulus spending and other initiatives will lead to 1 million

home energy-efficiency retrofits by 2012. The report also said the U.S. is on track to double renewable energy generation, including solar, wind and geothermal, in three years.

OBAMA CLEAN-ENERGY INVESTMENTS CREATING JOBS, BIDEN REPORT SAYS (BLOOM)

By Catherine Dodge

Bloomberg News, December 15, 2009

Dec. 15 (Bloomberg) -- President Barack Obama's clean-energy initiatives will help create more than 700,000 jobs and allow the U.S. to double its renewable-power generation in three years, according to a report by Vice President Joe Biden.

Biden, in a memo on administration efforts to shift to a clean-energy economy, said projects in the \$787 billion economic stimulus package are contributing to "unprecedented growth" in renewable energy, such as wind and solar, and improving manufacturing for new clean-energy technology.

"The recovery act is not only about rescue and relief, it's about reinvestment," Jared Bernstein, Biden's chief economic adviser, said on a conference call with reporters. He called Biden's report a "comprehensive assessment" of the administration's clean-energy efforts.

Government investments in transportation will help spur the development of plug-in hybrid and electric vehicles, including three new electric-vehicle plants, the first in the U.S., the report said.

The memo said the administration also will provide loan guarantees to two companies for construction of three to four new nuclear reactors "by the end of our first two years in office."

Investments of \$23 billion in renewable generation and advanced energy manufacturing included in the recovery plan will likely create 253,000 jobs and leverage more than \$43 billion in additional investment that may support another 469,000 jobs, the Biden report said.

The administration is "solidly on track" to meet its goal of saving or creating 3.5 million jobs under the stimulus plan, Bernstein said. The U.S. has lost about 7.2 million jobs since the recession began in December 2007.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said last month the stimulus package had generated between 600,000 and 1.6 million jobs so far.

The stimulus package approved by Congress and signed by Obama in February included about \$80 billion for clean-energy programs designed in part to spur the growth of so-called green jobs. Republicans say the U.S. jobs data are evidence Obama's stimulus plan is failing to create jobs.

The unemployment rate last month was 10 percent, down from a 26-year high of 10.2 percent in October.

To contact the reporter on this story: Catherine Dodge in Washington at cdodge1@bloomberg.net

BIDEN UPDATES OBAMA ON RECOVERY ACT INVESTMENTS IN CLEAN ENERGY PROJECTS (ABC NEWS)

By Karen Travers

ABC News, December 15, 2009

President Obama will be in Copenhagen on Friday for climate change talks and Vice President Biden has given him some reading material for the flight over.

The White House has released a memo that Biden presented to the president outlining ways that funding from the administration's \$787 billion Recovery Act funding is making progress for toward a cleaner, more energy efficient economy. The report details ways that stimulus funds have been used toward advances in renewable energy, energy grid modernization, home energy efficiency projects and green automobiles.

"I'm pleased to report that the administration is laying the foundation for a clean energy economy that will create a new generation of jobs, reduce dependence on oil and enhance national security," Biden begins his memo to Obama. "Through the Recovery Act and more effective use of programs already in existence, the administration is taking the critical steps to transform the United States into a global clean energy leader."

Over \$80 billion from the Recovery Act has been invested in clean energy technology, which the Obama Administration says is "the largest single investment in clean energy in U.S. history." The administration says that investment will produce \$150 billion in clean energy projects

Obama heads to a Home Depot store in Northern Virginia on Tuesday to discuss how energy saving home projects help the economy with labor, manufacturing, and small business leaders. On Wednesday, Biden will talk about clean energy and the manufacturing industry at a Middle Class Task Force event on Wednesday.

Below are examples from Biden's report, where the administration says it has made progress on clean energy projects as a result of Recovery Act investments:

- Renewable Energy: The U.S. is on-track to double renewable energy generation, including solar, wind and geothermal, and double renewable manufacturing capacity in just three years because of Recovery Act investments.

- Vehicles and Fuels of the Future: Over the next six years, three new electric vehicles plants-the first ever in the U.S.- and 30 new battery plants will be fully operational because of the Administration's \$16 billion investment in plug-in hybrids, all-electric vehicles and the infrastructure needed to power them, as well as new clean fuels. When President Obama took office there were just 2 advanced battery and electric drive component factories in the U.S.

- Grid Modernization: Twenty-six million smart meters will be installed in U.S. homes by 2013 - more than triple the number currently in service - as a result of the Administration's \$4 billion Recovery Act investment in a smart energy grid and the one-to-one match in private sector funding. This technology allows consumers to monitor and regulate their own energy usage and costs.

- Energy Efficiency: Because the Administration is making the largest single investment in home energy efficiency in

U.S history through the Recovery Act and other initiatives, nearly one million home energy efficiency retrofits will have happened by 2012.

. Carbon Capture: Because of Recovery Act funding and existing loan guarantee authority, there will be 5 commercial scale power plants operating with large carbon capture sequestration facilities by 2015. When President Obama took office, there were zero.

. Science and Innovation: Through the Recovery Act, the Administration is investing \$400 million in some of the most advanced research in wind, solar, and geothermal technologies through the ARPA-E program to make these clean sources of energy more affordable and easier to store and transport. A year ago, this critical program was unfunded.

TRACKING THE STIMULUS: VICE PRESIDENT PROVIDES UPDATE ON CLEAN ENERGY (HILL)

By Jim Snyder

The Hill, December 15, 2009

The vice president's office has released an update on the green revolution.

There's not much new there. But the memo from VP Joe Biden, whose duties include overseeing the stimulus, gives a run-down of the administration's efforts on clean energy specifically as President Barack Obama prepares to join the climate change talks in Copenhagen later this week.

In total, the Recovery Act invests \$80 billion in clean energy, according to the memo. That includes \$23 billion to renewable generation and advanced energy manufacturing; \$16 billion on the "vehicles and fuels of the future"; \$4 billion to upgrade the electric power grid; \$5 billion for a weatherization program designed to make low-income homes more energy efficient; \$10 billion for carbon capture and sequestration; and \$12.6 billion for advanced research and development.

Carol Browner, director of the new White House Office of Energy and Climate Change Policy, said the money for renewable energy would support more than 15 gigawatts of new wind, solar, geothermal and other renewable energy sources that would power four to five million homes a year.

The public money could "leverage" another \$43 billion in private investment. In total, the public and private investment in renewable energy could support nearly 470,000 jobs, the administration contends.

Jared Bernstein, the vice president's chief economic policy advisor, said the stimulus bill was a "twofer" - that is, a way to help the economy and improve the environment.

BIDEN, INDUSTRY BIG SHOTS TO DISCUSS PIRACY FIGHT (LAT)

By Joe Flint

Los Angeles Times, December 15, 2009

Vice President Joe Biden, Atty. Gen. Eric H. Holder Jr. and FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III are among the top government officials meeting with entertainment industry leaders Tuesday afternoon at the White House to discuss how best to fight piracy of intellectual property.

In its release detailing the meeting, the White House said the round-table discussion that Biden will lead is aimed at showcasing the Obama administration's "commitment to enforcing laws against the piracy of intellectual property."

Industry chiefs who are expected to be participating in the meeting are Viacom CEO Philippe Dauman, Warner Bros. Entertainment CEO Barry Meyer, NBC Universal CEO Jeff Zucker and Sony Pictures CEO Michael Lynton. Directors Guild President Taylor Hackford will also participate. Other government bigwigs scheduled to be at the table include Commerce Secretary Gary Locke, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and Secret Service Director Mark Sullivan.

No word if Michael and Tareq Salahi will also be dropping by.

WHITE HOUSE TO HOLD ANTI-PIRACY ROUNDTABLE (HILL)

By Kim Hart

The Hill, December 15, 2009

Vice President Joe Biden will hold a roundtable discussion tomorrow afternoon about enforcing anti-piracy laws. A notice from the White House calls the meeting "the first of its kind, and will bring together all the stakeholders to discuss ways to combat piracy in this rapidly changing technological age."

Attorney General Eric Holder, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and Commerce Secretary Gary Locke will be in attendance.

So will CEOs from some of the biggest media companies that have been most effected by the piracy of music, movies and other copyrighted material.

The list includes, Sony Pictures CEO Michael Lynton, Warner Music Group CEO Edgar Bronfman, and Harper Collins CEO Brian Murray.

And there may be a few questions directed toward NBC CEO Jeffery Zucker about the company's proposed mega-merger with Comcast.

Victoria Espinel, the newly confirmed Intellectual Property Enforcement Coordinator in the White House, will also be there.

HOLLYWOOD MEETS D.C. WHITE HOUSE CONFAB TO DISCUSS ENFORCING PIRACY LAWS (VARIETY)

By Paul Harris

Variety, December 15, 2009

Studio chiefs and showbiz CEOs will gather at the White House today for a roundtable discussion on piracy hosted by Vice President Joseph Biden. Called Operation Holiday Hoax, the enforcement action was conducted Dec. 8-13 and involved federal agents and officers in 41 states. It resulted in the seizure of 708,000 products in the U.S., ranging from Christmas ornaments to footwear, according to ICE chieftain John Morton. Parallel operations in Mexico netted some 255 tons of counterfeited goods, he said. The operation resulted in seven initial arrests, along with machines used to produce counterfeit goods.

Morton said the joint operation was purposely timed to hit purveyors of counterfeit products as they ramped up for the busy holiday season. He said it targeted a variety of counterfeiters and trademark pirates, distributors, associates, shippers, warehouses, salespeople and vendors. Besides putting a dent in the criminals' holiday profits, we are getting out the word to consumers that counterfeits are everywhere," he said.

"Buying them harms the economy and the industries that create the real thing." The MPAA and the RIAA assisted in the operation, and Glickman and Bainwol participated in a news conference to announce the results of the action.

Morton said the principal focus was to hit distribution points at the peak of their holiday inventories, seize a maximum number of goods and develop investigative leads for future arrests. He predicted future joint operations involving other countries as part of increased enforcement of counterfeit merchandise.

The Obama administration is calling the meeting a first-of-its-kind event to highlight ways to combat piracy in the face of fast-changing technology.

Biden will be joined by an array of administration officials including Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano, Attorney General Eric Holder and Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke, as well as FBI director Robert Mueller and Secret Service director Mark Sullivan.

Among the CEOs scheduled to attend are Sony Pictures Entertainment's Michael Lynton, Warner Bros. Entertainment's Barry Meyer, Viacom's Philippe Dauman, NBC Universal's Jeff Zucker and Warner Music Group's Edgar Bronfman, as well as News Corp.'s Michael Regan, the Walt Disney Co.'s Richard Bates, MPAA chairman Dan Glickman and Recording Industry Assn. of America chairman Mitch Bainwol. Universal Music Group president Zachary Horowitz, AFTRA national executive director Kim Roberts Hedgpeth, IATSE international president Matthew Loeb, DGA president Taylor Hackford, DGA national exec director Jay Roth, National Music Publishers Assn. CEO David Israelite and SAG national exec director David White are also scheduled to be there. The industry has been on a lobbying push for greater enforcement of piracy laws and has praised Obama's choice for its "copyright czar," Victoria Espinel, who fills a position mandated by a law that passed last year and was signed by President Bush. But there has been concern about the ability of the industry to fight piracy as the FCC considers "Net neutrality" rules, which would prohibit Internet service providers from favoring one site over another in the speed of the delivery of Web content.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced Monday that a coordinated anti-counterfeit sweep by the U.S. and Mexican governments has netted more than \$26 million worth of bogus products, including more than 29,000 DVDs and CDs.

JOE BIDEN'S SECRET MISSION (DB)

By Richard Wolffe

Daily Beast, December 15, 2009

Far from a rebuke of Biden's wishes on Afghanistan, Obama's decision was close to the vice president's true position, Richard Wolffe reports. But now Biden is left with a familiar challenge: sell the war strategy without gaffes.

According to the newspaper accounts, Joe Biden should be an unhappy man. He just lost the internal debate about the new Afghanistan strategy and is now required to sell the policy to anxious Democrats and the skeptical media.

So it came as something of a shock to congressional Democrats to hear the vice president declare his true position in a meeting at the White House late last month, as the Afghan policy meetings were drawing to a close.

"Just so everyone knows," Biden corrected his questioner, "I'm not for drawing down the troops."

"Why can't we just withdraw the troops?" asked one member, appealing to the war skeptic in the office of the vice president.

"Just so everyone knows," Biden corrected his questioner, "I'm not for drawing down the troops."

In fact, Biden-for all his pressure to limit the scale and scope of the new Afghan mission-ended up as an advocate for another 10,000 to 15,000 troops to be deployed to the war zone. Instead of backing a pure counterterrorism strategy, Biden himself was a compromiser with those wanting to beef up the counterinsurgency approach beloved by the generals.

Biden's main job through the internal debate was to open up the space for his boss to pick a hybrid strategy between withdrawal and escalation: a limited mission with no lofty goals of establishing democracy, and with a clear end-date for the start of the drawdown.

White House officials say the vice president is now playing the role of character witness to his former friends in Congress, telling them that the president is committed to the narrower strategy and the beginning of the withdrawal in July 2011-no matter what the public comments of Defense Secretary Robert Gates.

"There's a lot of speculation as to how sincere that date is. It's very sincere," said one senior White House official. "As commander in chief and secretary of defense, you cannot draw categorical lines in the sand about what are the right troop movements 18 months in advance. But it's as firm a commitment as you can make in this environment."

Biden's role as a vocal questioner of the top brass revolved around a simple concern: that the internal debate needed to focus on strategy more than the raw number of troops. Was it worth committing more money and lives to Afghanistan if the core leadership of Al Qaeda was hiding across the border in Pakistan, a nuclear-armed neighbor with a far greater

strategic interest to the United States?

For Biden, stabilizing the Afghan government was only a means to an end-to maintain intense pressure on Al Qaeda. He had no interest in the old liberal, and now neoconservative, goal of nation-building.

As a supporter of an extra 15,000 troops, compared to Obama's final decision of twice that number, Biden ended up closer to the final result than his media image as an opponent of any buildup.

But he was still some way off, and that leaves the vice president with his trickiest-yet familiar-challenge: to sell the strategy in a way that helps the president and yet remains truthful to his own concerns.

If history is any guide, Biden can stumble badly when speaking for himself rather than sticking to his talking points. Then again, if Obama really wanted someone to stick to his talking points, he could have chosen Evan Bayh as his No. 2.

WHAT'S PLAN B IF BIDEN DOESN'T RUN IN DELAWARE? (RC)

By Greg Giroux, Roll Call Staff

Roll Call, December 15, 2009

In the nearly 12 months since Vice President Joseph Biden moved to the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, it has been a foregone conclusion in national and Delaware political circles that his eldest son, state Attorney General Beau Biden (D), would run in the special election in November for his father's former Senate seat.

Appointed Sen. Ted Kaufman (D), a longtime friend and political aide to Joseph Biden, was viewed as a seat-warmer for Beau Biden, and officials in both parties have been gearing up for a generational showdown between the 40-year-old Biden and 70-year-old Rep. Mike Castle, the likely Republican nominee.

But what happens if Biden doesn't run?

Few have asked the question because of the perceived inevitability of a Biden Senate campaign. But at this stage, it appears that Democrats don't have a Plan B - it's Biden or bust.

Delaware Democrats have been deferring to Biden as he nears a final decision. He's expected to make an announcement sometime next month, after the holiday season.

"We still fully hope and expect Beau Biden to run," said Eric Schultz, a spokesman for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. "It's critical that we hold on to the vice president's seat, so we're going to make sure that state has the resources that it needs in order to win."

John Daniello, chairman of the Delaware Democratic Party, said he speaks to Beau Biden once or twice per month but declined comment when asked if he thought Biden would run for the Senate.

Daniello said there is plenty of time to wage a Senate campaign.

"This urgency for people to announce before we're even into the year of the election doesn't make sense to me," Daniello said.

If Biden does decide to run, the Delaware race would become among the most competitive of the 2010 cycle. But in his absence, Democrats would have to scramble to field a serious candidate and prevent Republicans from winning the seat for the first time since 1960.

Though the state has been trending Democratic, the party doesn't have a replacement candidate of Biden's political stature. Former Lt. Gov. John Carney, who was passed over for the Senate appointment that went to Kaufman, is running to replace Castle in the House and wouldn't challenge Castle for the Senate seat. Chris Coons, the New Castle County executive, might be interested in running if Biden doesn't, though he's not well-known statewide.

Kaufman has said he won't run in 2010, though there's been some speculation that the Biden family might try to persuade Kaufman to reconsider if Beau Biden chooses not to run.

Biden, meanwhile, has avoided much public comment about his political future since returning in late September from a year in Iraq as a captain in the Delaware Army National Guard.

"Am I considering it? Absolutely. Absolutely," Biden said in mid-October on "Good Morning America." "But I'll be making a decision in due course."

Political analysts cautioned against interpreting Biden's reticence as a sign that he may not run. Delaware is a sparsely populated state, and Biden has the near-universal name recognition that other prospective candidates lack. Biden's familial tie to the White House would enable him to raise the funds needed to wage a top-flight campaign.

And by delaying an announcement until January, Biden would not have to file a campaign finance report until mid-April, keeping political opponents in the dark about the strength of his fundraising.

Even as Biden has been mum about the Senate race, his office has been actively promoting its accomplishments - including beefing up penalties for child predators and a lawsuit Delaware is pursuing to block the Army Corps of Engineers from deepening the Delaware River.

There are political risks for Biden in a Senate campaign. Not least is that the Republicans have fielded their strongest possible opponent in Castle, the state's at-large Representative since 1993 and a former governor who has crossover appeal to independents and Democrats. Castle led Biden 45 percent to 39 percent in a poll conducted Nov. 30-Dec. 2 by the Democratic firm Public Policy Polling Inc.

And at just 40 years old, Biden will have other opportunities to run for Senate. If Castle is elected next year, he would be up for re-election in 2014, when he will turn 75. The state's other Senator, Tom Carper (D), will be 65 when his seat comes up next in 2012.

Democratic strategists think they could win a Castle-Biden race in part by running a campaign on a theme of generational change between Biden and Castle. They think it could parallel the state's 2000 Senate race, in which the 53-year-old Carper unseated 79-year-old Sen. Bill Roth (R) even though Roth was a well-regarded veteran officeholder.

With no candidate to promote just yet, Democratic officials are training their fire on Castle in an effort to erode his standing in the state. They claim his voting record has moved to the right.

After Castle voted last week against a Democratic-written overhaul of financial regulations, the DSCC said Castle "gave a big wet kiss to Wall Street."

After the House last month narrowly passed a bill to overhaul health care policy, Democratic strategists speculated that Castle's "no" vote would be a political liability in the Senate race. But the PPP survey found that voters, by 46 percent to 43 percent, oppose rather than support the health care measure.

Castle is "an independent, experienced statesman, and he's earned respect from both Republicans and Democrats," said Brian Walsh, a spokesman for the National Republican Senatorial Committee. "Whether it's Beau Biden or anyone else, they're going to have a very uphill climb against someone like Mike Castle."

'DIFFICULT CYCLE' IN 2010 FOR DEMS' SEATS IN PLAY (USAT)

By Kathy Kiely, Usa Today

USA Today, December 15, 2009

WASHINGTON - Veteran Tennessee Rep. Bart Gordon on Monday became the fourth centrist Democrat in three weeks to announce his retirement, leaving his party with another tough-to-defend seat in next year's elections.

"It's going to be a difficult cycle for Democrats," said Stuart Rothenberg, publisher of the non-partisan Rothenberg Political Report.

Gordon is one of 11 Democrats who have announced they will not run for re-election. On the Republican side, 12 House members are retiring or running for another office, such as Delaware's Mike Castle, who has announced his bid for the Senate seat long held by Vice President Biden. Rothenberg rates seven of the Democratic open seats as potentially changing parties, compared with three Republican open seats.

"We have more swing districts overall," said Rep. Chris Van Hollen, a Maryland Democrat who heads his party's congressional campaign committee. "We've said from Day One that this is going to be a very challenging cycle."

Both parties work hard to keep retirements to a minimum, because incumbents generally have an advantage in winning elections. In 1994, the retirement of 28 Democrats proved the harbinger of a Republican takeover of the House.

Democrats who have announced retirement plans so far have all done so for personal reasons, Van Hollen said, but he acknowledged he's talking to others who are worried about next year's election. "We are ... assuring them they are going to have strong support," he said.

Campaign-finance reports filed last month with the Federal Election Commission showed Van Hollen's Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee with \$14.5 million in the bank. The National Republican Congressional Committee had \$4.2 million.

Gordon is the third member of the Blue Dog Coalition, a group of centrist Democrats, to announce plans to retire since Nov. 23. The others are Reps. John Tanner of Tennessee and Dennis Moore of Kansas. Another deficit hawk, Rep. Brian Baird of Washington, announced his retirement last week.

Rep. Jim Matheson of Utah, a co-chair of the Blue Dog Coalition, said Democrats need centrists to maintain their 81-seat edge in the House.

"Blue Dogs have a proven track record of winning in moderate-to-conservative districts," he said. "The next election cycle will be no different."

Republicans say it's no accident that moderate Democrats are opting not to face the voters next year. "Blue Dog Democrats would rather roll over and retire than face the political headwind that is barreling toward them," said Ken Spain, a spokesman for the Republican congressional committee.

Former congressman Charles Stenholm, a Texas Democrat who helped found the Blue Dog Coalition, said he thinks that some of his former colleagues are feeling frustrated and under siege.

"It's better to go out on your own terms than to be forced out," said Stenholm, who served 26 years in the House before losing his seat in 2004.

DISNEY LOBBYIST PRESTON PADDEN TO EXIT (LAT)

Padden, who has represented media firms in Washington for more than three decades, will join the University of Colorado Law School as a senior fellow and adjunct professor.

By Joe Flint

Los Angeles Times, December 15, 2009

Walt Disney Co.'s Preston Padden, who has been one of the entertainment industry's biggest lobbyists in Washington for more than three decades, is retiring as executive vice president of worldwide government relations at the media giant.

Padden, 62, will leave his post in January to later become a senior fellow and adjunct professor at the University of Colorado Law School. He will continue to advise Disney on strategic issues in the interim.

Disney didn't name a replacement and said it was hiring a search firm to identify candidates. Richard Bates, Padden's No. 2 in Disney's Washington office, has been mentioned as a potential successor to Motion Picture Assn. of America Chief Executive Dan Glickman, who is stepping down next year.

As part of Padden's departure, Disney said it was putting Alan Braverman, its general counsel, over the company's Washington operations. Padden had reported directly to Disney Chief Executive Robert Iger.

Among the key issues facing Disney in Washington are piracy and media regulation. Theft of intellectual property has become such a problem for the industry that Vice President Joe Biden is holding a meeting Tuesday with entertainment

industry leaders and key government officials at the White House to discuss how to stop piracy. As one of the biggest content producers and owner of ESPN and other cable networks, Disney uses its Washington office to engage in battles over cable programming costs. Disney also owns many big-city television stations that are subject to government oversight.

While many Washington insiders prefer to keep a low profile and work behind the scenes, Padden cut a wide swath in the media world. A brash executive, Padden relished his reputation as an in-your-face lobbyist willing to take on lawmakers and industry rivals over issues including cable regulation and the merger of America Online and Time Warner.

Padden first rose to prominence at News Corp., where he oversaw its Washington operation when the Fox network was just getting off the ground and needed help from regulators to grow. Fox had a strong run of FCC wins on his watch.

But at Disney, Padden had to be reined in and adjust his style to the company's less confrontational approach.

Although Padden was a practiced Washington insider, his efforts to move beyond the Beltway were less successful. News Corp. Chairman Rupert Murdoch tapped him to lead the company's short-lived satellite venture, America Sky Broadcasting, which never got off the ground. Disney named him president of the ABC network, but that stint also didn't last long.

Padden is the second senior Disney executive to leave the company in the last three months. Earlier this fall, former Disney Studios Chairman Dick Cook was forced out by Iger, who was unhappy with the performance of the movie division.

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VICE PRESIDENTIAL ***News Clips***

PRODUCED FOR THE OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

TO: THE VICE PRESIDENT AND STAFF

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WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL STORIES

Newark Raises Tax To Plug Budget Hole (WILNJ)

By Rachel Kipp, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](http://www.bulletinnews.com), December 15, 2009

NEWARK -- Homeowners in Newark will see their property-tax bills rise by an average of \$90 next year as part of the 2010 operating budget passed by City Council Monday night.

Council voted 5-2 to adopt the \$38.6 million budget, which includes a tax hike of 9 cents per \$100 of assessed value. The increase is four times larger than the 2.25 cents per \$100 of assessed value bump from 2009.

The tax hike and other increases come as Newark officials try to bridge the financial gap created by a slumping economy and the annual loss of \$380,000 from Chrysler, the city's largest taxpayer. The site of the closed Chrysler plant was recently bought by the University of Delaware, which is tax-exempt.

Newark also has depleted its cash reserves by about half in the past half dozen years, from \$25 million to \$30 million in 2002 to about \$12 million today. The cash reserve and revenue challenges prompted Moody's Investors Service to lower Newark's bond rating from double to single A on a scale used to determine how cheaply a government can borrow money by selling bonds. Triple A is the top rating.

"If we're looking for a better time, as in now is not a good time to add fees and increase taxes, I would say I don't think there is a good time to raise fees and increase taxes," said councilman Jerry Clifton, who estimated that the city faces a seven- to 10-year window before efforts begin to pay off. "But there are serious issues we need to address now [including] our reserves and our pension funds. These aren't things that are going to wait."

Sparking the most debate was a plan proposed in the budget to create a new revenue stream by enacting a new utility fee for property owners to help pay stormwater costs.

While most council members were supportive of creating the stormwater utility, they were concerned about passing a budget that included a line item for an expected revenue source that doesn't yet exist.

Council ultimately voted to remove the stormwater utility line item from the budget and asked the city staff to find a way to account for the \$350,000 it was expected to raise. For now, the money is targeted to come out of the city's already depleted cash reserves, although council charged the staff with coming up with an alternative.

"I suggest that we just bite the bullet, raise the tax rate to what we need to operate, develop a fully embellished stormwater utility proposal that we can react to and hope that, next year, implementing that might eliminate need for a subsequent property-tax increase," Councilman Doug Tuttle said.

Finance Director Dennis McFarland said it would be difficult to find \$350,000 in trims to the budget. "If there were an easy \$350,000 to cut, it would have been in the budget," he said.

But other council members worried that the city cannot continue to rely on property taxes to balance the budget without losing the advantage Newark has by having a lower tax rate than other area municipalities.

"The moment we come close to the county [tax rate], that is when we know we've lost," Councilman Paul Pomeroy said. "If we have another year of 7- or 8-cent tax (per \$100 of assessed value) increases, we're at that point."

The budget also tries to account for lost revenue from property and real estate transfer taxes by implementing trash-bin collection fees at apartment complexes. Eight city staff positions will be eliminated, most by not filling jobs.

"Last year, we recognized that the economy was not good and that people were struggling and we tried to do our part by lessening the blow," Councilman Ezra Temko said. "In doing that, we ended up tabling a lot of hard questions and ended up with a deficit. It would be irresponsible for us to do that this year."

Markell, Sebelius Urge Vaccinations Against Swine Flu (WILNJ)

By The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

Swine flu cases may be down but with the traditional flu season just starting, health officials are warning the public "it isn't over yet."

That was the message Monday from Gov. Jack Markell and U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, who announced a public service campaign urging that people, particularly children, be vaccinated against the virus. The 30-second spot features Markell and PBS' Sid the Science Kid and is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=jl-qdJ1ypl8. A link to the video is on www.delaware-online.com.

About 41 million Americans already have been infected by the swine flu virus this year with 200,000 of them hospitalized. As of mid-November, about 10,000 people had died from the virus.

In Delaware, there have been 1,960 confirmed cases, including five deaths, since the fall flu season began. The total number of cases since swine flu first surfaced in the spring is 2,607.

So far, the state has distributed about 190,000 doses of the vaccine, including 42,000 to children in public and private schools. Vaccination teams have visited every school in the state at least once and now are returning to elementary schools for the second doses required for young children, Markell said.

But many more people still need to be vaccinated, officials said.

"We have a window of opportunity to make sure people get vaccinated and get protected," Sebelius said. "Flu usually lasts until May ... so we still have time to get ahead of the virus."

Markell said state officials are trying to keep the public's attention on the virus.

"We've got to keep the momentum going," he said. "This could still take off in any direction because this [virus] is so unpredictable." Additional Facts

Watch video

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" type="application/x-shockwave-flash" allowscriptaccess="always" allowfullscreen="true" width="320" height="265">

Trash Wars Take High-tech Turn (WILNJ)

By Esteban Parra And J.I. Miller, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

On a Saturday in late November, Kennard Ringgold Sr. steered a huge dump truck into a state-run green landfill near Red Lion.

Passing by signs clearly marked yard waste only, Ringgold parked his rig and dumped a pile of paper, plastic and treated lumber measuring four feet deep, 20 feet long and eight feet wide. It was the sort of chemical-laden heap that requires state workers to clear by hand before tree branches and leaves can be composted and recycled.

If he had legally dumped his trash at a landfill, Ringgold would have paid about \$60, a fraction of the \$600 he ended up paying after he was caught in the act by a surveillance camera.

In a sting entering its 19th month, the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control has charged 15 people with illegal dumping in New Castle County.

Accused dumpers often deny guilt until they are confronted with the photos, said Chief William "Chip" McDaniel, DNREC enforcement director.

"A picture is worth a thousand words," McDaniel said. "I have literally seen a picture of the person with a [dump truck] lever in their hand, dumping the load out. That's pretty powerful when you take that to the judge and show it to him."

A dozen cameras, about the size of an old house phone, are mounted on private farmland in Sussex County, beside streams in Kent County and along isolated New Castle County roads where residents have complained about trash scofflaws.

McDaniel did not know the number of people caught by cameras in Kent and Sussex counties.

In Ringgold's case, DNREC officers were called about a person dumping large amounts of waste at DART's Mid-County yard waste site off a stretch of Du Pont Highway near Delaware City and the Valero refinery.

The 58-year-old Wilmington trucker was gone by the time DNREC officers arrived, but the images were unmistakable. Ringgold said he was helping remove material from a relative's church and took it to a place suggested by a man he remembers only as Art.

"The guy told me to dump it here," Ringgold said. "He said it was all right because he dumped there a couple of years ago."

Ringgold would not have used the site had he known it was illegal, he said. "No way. No way. I'm sorry I did it because ... I don't do stuff like that.

"I'll never dump there again."

Economical choice

Because they don't have the same funding as police agencies, DNREC's enforcement officers came up with the idea of placing the trail cameras, which are commonly used by hunters while tracking wild game.

"The normal surveillance camera that transmits to a laptop, they start at \$10,000," said Sgt. James H. Faedtke, DNREC's enforcement investigator. "We were able to put out 12 cameras for less than \$5,000."

DNREC's cameras are triggered by movement or heat and are able to take pictures day and night.

The photos are stored on memory cards, which are collected by a DNREC officer who downloads the images onto a computer. The images are sharp enough to enlarge a person's face with little distortion.

Among the images captured so far are two women who seem to be smiling as they unload a sofa frame off their pickup; a pair of men removing trash from the back of a vehicle on a rainy summer evening; and the driver and passenger in a yellow dump truck holding a conversation while unloading trash along a New Castle County road.

DNREC released the images to The News Journal for this story, and McDaniel said DNREC may regularly release photographs of wanted dumpers on its Web site, which would be available to citizens and other news media.

To legally dispose of waste at a Delaware facility, the state charges \$61.50 a ton for loads over 120 pounds. Waste weighing less than 120 pounds costs a flat rate of \$4.35.

Illegal dumping is a misdemeanor, and arrest warrants are issued for suspects. The fine for illegally dumping starts at \$500 and goes up to \$1,500 for each subsequent violation. A judge can order the violator to remove the waste, pay for its removal or perform community service.

Crime-fighting tool

The state's cameras are, in some ways, similar to surveillance equipment used by cities and property owners to deter crime.

Comprehensive data on the number of surveillance cameras nationwide is not available, because they are employed by federal, state and local agencies -- and some of that information is confidential. But there's no question their use is becoming more common.

Private businesses and even homeowners use them inside and outside their buildings. Traffic cameras monitor the flow of vehicles on public roads, while red-light cameras catch scofflaws in the act. Wildlife agencies in several states also have used them to catch poachers and others who violate hunting and fishing laws.

Lancaster, Pa., known for its Amish farmers and tourist attractions, has been building one of the nation's largest camera surveillance systems -- 165 for a town of roughly 50,000 people. The cameras are monitored by employees of a nonprofit group called the Lancaster Community Safety Coalition, who notify police when they see something suspicious.

In Wilmington, the nonprofit Downtown Visions is contracted to operate more than 20 cameras downtown. Other cameras cover about 70 blocks and are operated by banks, stores and corporate offices.

Just how much help the cameras provide in deterring crime is questionable. A New York University study published this year found that cameras at two housing complexes in New York City had little or no effect on crime rates. A University of California study showed that surveillance cameras in San Francisco had no impact on violent crime, although property crimes dropped by 24 percent.

DNREC, though, is convinced the cameras are discouraging illegal dumping. While statewide reports show illegal dumping is up by 10 percent for the year -- from 411 cases to 456 -- environmental protection officers said they have noticed a decrease in illegal dumping where cameras have been deployed.

Apart from DNREC's surveillance, The News Journal has spent months exposing illegal dump sites around the state. The series of stories have focused on the trash heaps and rivers of litter that mar the state's off-road woodlands, corn and soybean fields, and state highways.

"People are talking," said Officer Casey W. Fountain, who handles the camera program in New Castle County.

"We got to keep moving," Fountain said, comparing trash surveillance to other police activity. "You can't run radar on Route 1 in the same spot every day, all day.

"You got to move it around." Additional Facts

WHOM TO CALL

While surveillance cameras help capture those who illegally dump waste, Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control's Environmental Crimes Unit asks the public to report any illegal dumping by calling its 24-hour hotline at (800) 662-8802 or by calling #367 for Verizon Wireless customers.

This number also can be used to suggest locations where a camera may help catch illegal dumpers.

Rehoboth Beach To Dump Treated Waste Into Ocean (WILNJ)

By Molly Murray, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

Rehoboth Beach commissioners voted Monday to dispose of the city's treated sewerage water through a pipe that discharges to the ocean, saying that it is the least-costly option and can be operated without damaging the coastal environment.

Details of the proposal had prompted more than 500 people to send e-mails to the city in November urging a different solution. Members of the Delaware Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation suggested the town look at land disposal of the waste.

But commissioners unanimously chose the ocean plan over one that would have sprayed the treated waste on open land.

Russ Merritt said his Surfrider group is concerned about ocean discharge for several reasons, not the least of which is the worry of an ocean spill or mishap.

Rehoboth's peak sewer discharge need is in summer -- the same time the most people are swimming in the ocean.

"Are we going to be able to notify people fast enough?" Merritt asked when the alert was sent out last month.

Local real estate agent Pat Campbell-White, who lives outside the city limits, said she was disappointed by the city's decision.

White, a longtime activist for the Inland Bays, once joked that she would be willing to stuff her body into Rehoboth's discharge pipe on the banks of Lewes & Rehoboth Canal to get the city out of the environmentally sensitive Inland Bays.

The ocean outfall, while accomplishing one goal, is short-sighted, she said.

"It's linear thinking," she said. "They are just diluting" the wastewater "and they are not doing anything to recharge the groundwater."

Campbell-White said she believes city officials had their minds made up before the discussion started and they never gave the land application option proper study or consideration.

Cost benefits, local control

The ocean just off Rehoboth Beach is an essential fish habitat. And that raises concerns about the impact wastewater -- even clean wastewater -- could have on an important ecosystem, Merritt, of the Surfrider group, said.

The debate over land application versus ocean discharge, for many city residents, came down to a financial one. At a hearing last month, several residents said they favored the cost benefits and local control of an ocean outfall.

Hen and Chicken Shoals, an important fish habitat, lies northeast of Rehoboth Beach. It is considered a key nursery area for sharks. In addition, bottlenose dolphins routinely move along Rehoboth's shoreline. Smiley the dolphin is the symbol of the Rehoboth Beach-Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce.

The city began studying options in 2005. Rehoboth is under a court order to stop discharging treated wastewater into the Lewes & Rehoboth Canal by Dec. 21, 2014.

The deadline came after city officials challenged limits for discharging treated sewage into the Inland Bays. Rehoboth's discharges into the canal ultimately flows into Rehoboth Bay.

State officials ruled that municipal and industrial treatment plants must stop discharging into the bays or their tributaries to meet federal requirements. Rehoboth, with a treatment discharge of up to 3 million gallons a day, is identified as a key polluter of Rehoboth Bay -- even with a state-of-the-art treatment plant.

City officials, who protested the ruling, received additional time to study options. In 2005, Rehoboth's consulting engineer outlined a series of disposal options, recommending a proposal to build an ocean

outfall that would discharge treated wastewater well off the beach as the most viable and cost-effective option. The estimated price tag was more than \$100 million.

Yet considering the cost of resort-area land, the price was good compared with the more expensive option of buying land to spray the treated water.

Other ocean outfalls in area

Such a plan is not new for Delaware. Sussex County's South Coastal Ocean Outfall has been in operation for more than two decades. Serving a large area from Selbyville to the coast, the outfall is just south of Bethany Beach with the discharge point 1.25 miles off the beach.

Rehoboth officials considered land application but had difficulty finding large enough tracts of undeveloped land or owners who were willing to sell. The city also considered partnering with a private wastewater utility, but some officials and residents worried about losing direct control over future rates.

The average city homeowner pays \$325 a year in sewage fees. Under any of the proposed alternatives that city officials considered Monday, sewage bills would go up. The range of price for the ocean outfall options is \$550 to \$630 annually per property owner. The land application price range was \$1,010 to \$1,420.

City Commissioner Stanley Mills said he voted for the ocean outfall proposal because of the cost, the city's ability to control future operation, maintenance costs and customer rates and the fact that technologies are available to safely build and operate an ocean outfall.

During the permitting process and environmental impact work, state regulators will ensure the outfall doesn't do environmental harm to water quality or marine life, Mills said.

Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control Secretary Collin O'Mara said last month that he wanted a scientific review of the options with an eye to long-term environmental impacts, particularly the potential effects of sea level rise in eastern Sussex County. Among the concerns, he said, is whether saltwater intrusion would be an issue.

Deputy Secretary David Small said Monday that the department has a policy of promoting beneficial reuse of wastewater, such as the spray plan, but this was a local decision. The department will do a rigorous environmental review, he said.

The water quality off Delaware's beaches generally is considered good, and the state is graded well by environmental watchdog groups that monitor recreational water quality.

The current program involves detailed sampling three times a week and a Web site where state officials post results.

Rehoboth's existing treatment plant opened in 1987. Back then, city officials were under a court order to build a new plant. The existing plant will be used, with some modifications, with this latest proposal.

The next step for city officials is to file a notice of intent with the state's Clean Water Advisory Council. That group approves funding for water and wastewater construction. The city must file its notice of intent by late January.

Wilmington Looks To Pay For Sludge (WILNJ)

By Adam Taylor, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

WILMINGTON -- Now that the city can no longer dump treated sludge from its sewage plant at a nearby landfill, it has to truck the material to a western Pennsylvania facility, officials said Monday.

On Thursday, Mayor James M. Baker's administration will ask City Council to reopen the city's \$145 million operating budget to pay for the shipping and disposal, Public Works Commissioner Kash Srinivasan said.

The Pennsylvania landfill, located in the town of Kersey, will charge \$60 a ton, which Srinivasan said was a reasonable price based on industry standards across the country. Wilmington's plant produced about 140 tons of sludge a day.

But that's about twice what the city was paying to dump the sludge at Pigeon Point, Srinivasan said.

It will cost \$750,000 to dispose of the sludge for the rest of the fiscal year, which is about half over and ends in June, Baker's Chief of Staff William S. Montgomery said. Council will vote on whether to take that amount of money from the Water-Sewer Fund to pay for the disposal.

It will cost \$1.5 million for the fiscal year that starts in July. That money will probably come from higher water-sewer bills, Montgomery said.

"We're in the midst of a multiyear plan to improve the health of the Water-Sewer Fund, which will include rate increases for a few years," he said. "This new expense will be added to the equation when the budget process starts early next year."

About 156,000 customers that use Wilmington's sewage-treatment plant on Hay Road between I-495 and the Delaware River are from suburban New Castle County. About 29,000 customers are within city limits.

Council President Norman D. Griffiths, who plans to vote for the city's request Thursday, expects the county government to pay its fair share of the additional \$750,000 in disposal costs.

"But we've been in negotiations with the county for a few years about other sewage issues and we haven't always seen eye to eye, so I'm not all that optimistic about that," he said.

Griffiths was referring to two years of contentious talks that are still ongoing about how much the county should pay to dispose of raw sewage at the city's wastewater-treatment plant. New Castle County's government has no wastewater-treatment plant of its own in the most northern part of the county.

At issue is the method each side uses to calculate the amount owed. The county wanted to base the costs on the number of gallons going into the treatment plant, while the city depends on engineering estimates to figure the bill.

County Executive Chris Coons' spokesman, C.R. McLeod, said Monday the county had no comment on the new expense.

Earlier this year, the city increased water-sewer fees by 18 percent, which resulted in an additional \$60 to the average customer's bill. Calculations on how much bills will go up now that the sludge can no longer be dumped at Pigeon Point have not been done yet, Montgomery said.

Officials conceded earlier this year that deciding not to raise fees in 2008 -- because it was an election year -- set back the timeline to return the Water-Sewer Fund to financial solvency.

Taking the sludge to Pigeon Point has long been controversial. The state government has said that Wilmington's contractors who run the sewage plant illegally deposited more than 100,000 tons of mixed sludge, ash and other materials.

Those issues are still the subject of intergovernmental disputes and legal appeals over cleanup, monitoring and removal issues.

High Costs May Be Hindering Hybrids (WILNJ)

By Andrew Eder, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

High battery costs are likely to delay the widespread adoption of plug-in hybrid electric vehicles for decades, according to a new government-sponsored report.

The analysis by the National Research Council found that the cost of building a plug-in hybrid -- such as the cars Fisker Automotive wants to build in Delaware -- is as much as \$18,000 more than a conventional car, largely because of the cost of rechargeable lithium-ion batteries.

"Costs will decline with technology improvements and economies of scale, but Li-ion batteries are already being produced in great numbers and are well along their learning curves," according to the committee of experts that authored the report. "The steep early drop in cost often experienced with new technologies is not likely."

The high cost of the batteries will make the cars harder for automakers like Fisker to sell, even though operating costs are lower than for gasoline-powered cars and that gap will get larger as gas costs rise.

The study concludes that tens or hundreds of billions of dollars in government subsidies will be needed over many years to make plug-in hybrids cost-effective for consumers.

The council suggested that policymakers need to hedge their bets and support a variety of alternative fuels.

Officials at Fisker, which plans to make a plug-in hybrid family sedan in Delaware beginning in 2012, defended their business plan, noting that they believe the cost of lithium-ion batteries will drop much more rapidly than the council's study suggests.

The report was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy, which has been investing billions of dollars in auto and battery makers to speed the development of electric-car technologies. President Barack Obama has set a goal of having as many as 1 million plug-in electric vehicles on U.S. roads by 2015, and major automakers and startups alike are working to develop vehicles that run either partially or completely on electricity.

Among the Energy Department's beneficiaries is Fisker, an Irvine, Calif.-based startup that received a \$528.7 million loan earlier this year and subsequently announced plans to build a plug-in hybrid vehicle at the Boxwood Road assembly plant near Newport. Fisker's Delaware venture also will be backed by \$21.5 million in loans and grants from the state.

Fisker spokesman Russell Datz said the forecasts used by the company to develop its business model contradict the National Research Council's report.

"Lithium-ion battery technology will come down rapidly in price relatively quickly, and PHEVs [Plug-In Hybrid Electric Vehicles] will make up the vast majority of sales of advanced-technology vehicles over the next 10 years or so," Datz said.

The council's report said the type of plug-in hybrids being developed by Fisker would cost about \$18,100 more to build than a conventional car, including \$14,000 for the battery pack.

The Energy Department hopes its investments in battery technologies will drive costs down as much as 50 percent in the next three years, but the council's report said the department's goals "are extremely aggressive and are unlikely to be reached by the target date or even for a significant time beyond."

Gov. Jack Markell and Alan Levin, director of the Delaware Economic Development Office, led a concerted effort to bring Fisker to Delaware in the summer and fall. The deal was announced in late October.

The plant is expected to employ 2,500 workers by 2014, with 650 on the job in 2011.

From the consumer's perspective, the higher cost of plug-in hybrids would be offset somewhat by lower operating costs, since a mile driven on electricity is less expensive than a mile on gasoline. But the council's report said it would likely take several decades before the fuel savings offset the higher initial costs.

And many consumers would need to upgrade their home's electrical service to charge their cars, at a cost of \$1,000 to \$2,000.

Fisker's first car, the Karma luxury sedan, is set to hit the market next year at a price of \$87,900. The company hopes to sell its planned next vehicle, a family-oriented sedan being developed under the name Project Nina, at a starting price of \$39,900, including a \$7,500 federal tax credit.

Datz said the Karma will actually be less expensive than many of the luxury sedans with which it will compete. When Fisker begins producing the Nina, it is targeting an annual production of about 115,000 vehicles.

"We think that's a pretty conservative number," Datz said.

In the most optimistic scenario, about 40 million plug-in hybrids could be on the road by 2030, the council's report says. A more realistic projection is for 13 million plug-in hybrids by 2030, about 4 percent of the U.S. fleet of 300 million vehicles -- and that assumes that the current level of government support continues, the report says.

Even with such support, plug-in hybrids are expected to have little impact on oil consumption before 2030 because of their limited adoption, according to the report.

But Datz said Fisker's argument is, "You've got to start somewhere."

"There's no magic bullet to reducing reliance on foreign oil or cleaning up the environment," he said. "It's not going to happen overnight."

AstraZeneca Defending Crestor Patents (WILNJ)

By Staff And Wire Reports

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

AstraZeneca Plc will "vigorously defend" patents covering its best-selling cholesterol-lowering drug Crestor after a U.S. magistrate rejected a request to throw out some claims, spokesman Neil McCrae said.

AstraZeneca and Shionogi & Co., which developed Crestor, sued generic drug makers, including Apotex Inc. and Novartis AG's Sandoz, in December 2007 in federal court in Wilmington to block generic copies of Crestor. The generic drug makers then claimed AstraZeneca and Shionogi misled the patent office when they sought rights to the inventions.

Magistrate Judge Leonard Stark, in a Dec. 12 ruling, rejected the request from AstraZeneca and Shionogi to throw out those allegations. The case will go to trial in February before U.S. District Judge Joseph Farnan.

The British pharmaceutical giant has its U.S. headquarters in Fairfax and employs about 5,000 people in Delaware. The stakes for AstraZeneca are high -- the future of one of its biggest products, a drug that generates billions of dollars in global sales. In 2006, Crestor posted worldwide sales of \$2.03 billion.

The fight against Crestor generics is one of three AstraZeneca is waging to protect the final years of unimpeded sales for three of its major drugs.

Crestor is AstraZeneca's third-best selling product after its acid-reflux drug, Nexium, and its drug for schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, Seroquel. Crestor's patent expires in 2016.

Nexium's U.S. patents expire between 2014 and 2019, and the core U.S. patent for Seroquel expires in 2011.

Analysts do not see the local court's decision as a major setback.

"Judge Stark did not indicate which way the court is leaning in this matter," wrote Seamus Fernandez, an analyst with Leerink Swann & Co. in Boston, in a Dec. 12 note to clients. "We still believe the odds favor AstraZeneca given the high hurdle involved in proving inequitable conduct, but the hearing and subsequent recommendation have raised our risk threshold regarding the outcome."

McCrae said AstraZeneca was not surprised by the decision, as it can be difficult to get summary judgment on allegations of inequitable conduct.

"We remain confident that we will prevail on the issues at trial," McCrae said in a telephone interview. "AstraZeneca has confidence in its intellectual property covering Crestor and we'll continue to vigorously defend the patents protecting the product."

On Other Side Of Police Tape, Students See EMS In Action (WILNJ)

By Edward L. Kenney, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

Nothing in the dry, lifeless pages of a textbook could quite prepare emergency medical services high school students for the rush of riding in the back of a paramedic vehicle.

"Your heart starts pumping and your blood starts flowing. You don't know what to expect," said Jake Carrow, one of two seniors in the EMS program at St. Georges Technical High School near Middletown taking part in a weekly ride-along program with New Castle County paramedic units.

"It's just really exciting to go out and actually be there and help someone," fellow participant Elizabeth Gliniak said. "Everything just clicks when you're out there. It all comes together. All the nervousness goes away when you're in the ambulance truck."

Lt. Dan Seador, in charge of recruitment and continuing education for the county's EMS, said the arrangement with St. Georges is the first time the paramedics have worked formally with a school.

"I think it's a great opportunity for them to test the water a little further," Seador said of the EMS students. "I don't think they very often get a chance to do that at that level."

"It's a dose of reality, because emergency medicine is raw; it's not a nice, tidy package," added school EMS instructor Cookie Immediato, who approached the county about starting the program.

"I can teach the book all day long," she said, "but I can't teach the emotions and everything else. This is a really quick way of knowing if this job is a job that is really for you or not."

Immediato, who served as a nationally registered paramedic from 1991 to 2008 before coming to the school, also reached out to several fire companies -- Aetna Hose Hook & Ladder of Newark, Mill Creek and Delaware City -- to allow some of her EMS students to ride along regularly on emergency runs this year.

Both Carrow and Gliniak also have participated in emergencies with the fire companies, but they said those calls often deal with basic life support, as opposed to the more intense advanced life support that the county so often handles.

Working different shifts and at rotating stations for the county, both students said they have been on more than a dozen emergency responses with its units -- most of them calls reporting subjects with chest pains, respiratory distress and the like -- since joining the program last month.

"No accident yet," said Gliniak, 17, who wants to be a pediatric nurse. "I'm hoping. I want to see one. It's kind of exciting. I'm not wishing one on someone, but ... "

Gliniak said she likes making a difference in people's lives, although the work is tough sometimes.

"Some things you see -- and you just want to cry," she said. "But you've got to hold it in. You're there to help someone. You have to put all your feelings behind you."

Carrow, 18, who wants to join the police or military, said the county's paramedics have allowed him to do some basic tasks at emergency scenes, such as taking a victim's blood pressure or placing an oxygen mask over someone's face.

"It depends who you ride with and how comfortable they are with you," he said of his involvement. "They'll let you do some things. And they'll answer questions and stuff."

The two students said they have both learned a lot.

"It gives you an idea of what happens before the Band-Aids go on," Carrow said.

"It's preparing me for what I'm about to see if I'm going to be a nurse," said Gliniak, who was recently accepted into the Beebe School of Nursing in Lewes.

Immediato, who also has gotten her EMS seniors working co-op jobs this year at Christiana Hospital and the Veterans Affairs Medical Center near Elsmere, breaks new ground with each step she takes, she said. There is not much else in Delaware like St. Georges Technical's EMS program. The school itself opened only three years ago, and she is just this year beginning to roll her students out into the community for real-life experiences.

"I truly wanted them to see what it was all about," she said. "I've already had a student we had to talk through some situation because he was at his first CPR. He was a little shaken up by it. They think when you do CPR, someone will miraculously wake up, because that's what you see on TV. But it doesn't always happen that way."

Captain, Passenger Escape Burning Boat (WILNJ)

By Staff And Wire Reports

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

Two people were rescued Monday from a burning powerboat off Ocean City, Md., officials said.

The 40-foot Viking sport-fishing boat My Col Col was heading north in the Atlantic Ocean when it caught fire about 200 yards off of 118th Street about 7:50 a.m., Maryland Natural Resources Police said.

The boat was being operated by David Lee Catrino, 41, of Ocean City, and he had one passenger, Ollie Charles Powell, 38, of Berlin, Md. While two Coast Guard rescue boats and a commercial towing service were en route to the scene, another nearby boat, the Get Some, arrived and took Catrino and Powell aboard. They were then transferred to the tow boat. By 9:30 a.m., the boat had burned close to the water line, said Petty Officer John Miller, a spokesman with the Coast Guard in Portsmouth, Va.

The boat was towed to the shoreline, where firefighters from Ocean City extinguished the blaze. No one was hurt.

Holiday Blues (WILNJ)

By Kelly Bothum, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

This time of year is never easy for Jean King. Six years ago today, she lost her husband, Bob, to cancer after 43 years of marriage. His death in 2003 came four years after one of the couple's daughters also died from cancer.

King stays close to her children and grandchildren, reveling in their successes like any proud mother and grandmother. But sometimes she struggles with the loss of two people she loved so dearly. Once-beloved holiday traditions, like baking Christmas cookies, just seem too difficult anymore. So is being home, surrounded by all the memories.

But rather than drown in her sadness, King has found a way to channel her emotions into something productive. For the last three years, she's been a volunteer through RSVP, a national program that matches willing volunteers over age 55 with nonprofit organizations looking for help.

These days she volunteers weekly with the Salvation Army, making sure the people who come seeking food, toys and other holiday assistance have the proper paperwork to qualify them for services. She also helps out at the Delaware Agricultural Museum and the Modern Maturity Center, which sponsors RSVP in Kent County.

Volunteering keeps her spirits high, but it also helps her to feel like she's honoring the lives of her late husband and daughter.

"Helping other people, it's just wonderful," King said. "You feel like you are doing something to make their lives better. You see these families and you want to help them all."

It's supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year, but the holiday hoopla and excitement can be alienating for people who have suffered the loss of a loved one. The memories come flooding back, along with a sense of longing and loss. The feelings remain no matter how long the loved one has been gone, said Judy Pierson, a licensed clinical psychologist with Delaware Hospice.

"This time of the year is very much associated with memories," Pierson said. "People think grieving is this linear process and you cross the finish line at some point. There are some good days and some bad days. Some times of the years are so potent. They can be a trigger."

Other types of loss can be just as debilitating. Parents whose grown children have moved out may feel the sting of an empty nest this holiday season. Millions of Americans have lost jobs during the country's economic downturn, forcing sharp cutbacks in gift-giving and other holiday traditions. Still other folks are combatting emotional, physical and mental illnesses year-round that keep them feeling isolated from those around them.

But there are ways to fight the holiday blues so you can still find something to celebrate this season. In keeping with the season of giving, we offer the following tips to help those struggling through a difficult time. They're worth remembering for all of us -- whatever the situation -- because taking care of yourself is perhaps the best gift to give your loved ones.

Acknowledge your loss or struggle

It's important to admit to yourself -- and to others -- that this holiday is going to be a struggle. That doesn't mean you're going to spend the last weeks of the year hiding under the blankets in your bed, but it may mean you don't want to celebrate like everyone else.

Talk to friends and family ahead of time about what's going on, Pierson said. If a job loss has you cutting back on the holidays this year, be honest about it instead of making excuses or avoiding a gift-giving situation.

If you're headed to a holiday gathering and missing a loved one, think about bringing along a small token that can symbolize that person. Carry in your jacket or purse a pair of earrings, cuff links or other

memento that belonged to your loved one. It's an inconspicuous reminder that can help you feel stronger, particularly in a social situation.

"They can reach in and touch it and make them feel like they still have that bond," Pierson said. "It gives them that intimacy even if the person is in spirit."

And don't be afraid to talk about your deceased loved one -- chances are, other people you know want to talk about them, too, but they may be worried about upsetting you.

Take time

When people suffer a loss, they rarely give themselves enough time to actually deal with how they're feeling. They try to hurry up the process in the hopes that at the end they will feel better. That is rarely the case, Pierson said.

Most people believe it takes about two months to recover from the loss of a loved one. But therapists who work with grieving people say it takes at least two years, and even then issues still emerge over time.

"Grief lasts as long as it lasts," said Marianne Biddle, a registered nurse and psychotherapist. "It's unique to us."

One of the keys to making it through a rough time is giving yourself permission to feel however you are feeling. That means it's OK to have fun and laugh at a party even if you just lost your job and don't have something lined up in the future. You don't have to feel guilty about enjoying yourself just because your circumstances have changed.

In the same way, if you don't feel like going to the neighborhood New Year's Eve party this year because you previously attended it with your late husband, politely decline the invitation. Don't feel like you have to accept every invitation just because it is offered. Instead, pick one or two that are the most meaningful to you. But don't be surprised if you don't feel the same about celebrating as other guests.

"It's normal for people who have lost someone to feel annoyed by all the chit-chat they hear at the holidays," Pierson said. "Hearing everyone else's problems may feel a little petty if you're grieving."

Put yourself first

Yes, be selfish. Eat well, get plenty of sleep and avoid temptations to overindulge in alcohol. Prune needy friends and family or people who put too many demands on you when you're not feeling up to it.

It can be difficult for people to think about their own needs ahead of others, but if you won't do it for yourself, then do it for the ones you love, Pierson said. Focusing on you during this time helps you to be in a better place mentally and physically, and that benefits the people around you.

Staying physically active boosts your mood and gets you thinking about something other than your current situation, said Biddle, who has been a therapist for more than 35 years. "Doing whatever it is that you enjoy -- walking, gardening, going to that place you're fond of -- allows you to invest yourself outside of yourself," said Biddle, who has led support groups for people coping with loss. "If we're just on the sofa sitting, then we're thinking just about ourselves, and our body, mind and spirit all become consumed with the grief."

During this time, it may help to lower your own expectations of how you should be doing, Pierson said. Perhaps this isn't the year to host the whole family for Christmas dinner because you don't have the money or energy to cook. Maybe this is the year you opt for gift cards instead of extravagant gifts.

"This is a time when you may need to disappoint others in order to not disappoint yourself," she said. "Give yourself permission to do less."

Help someone else

Scott Beck has always felt passionate about making sure other people have enough to eat. In the past, he gave money to the Food Bank of Delaware and Feed the Children, a national organization dedicated to providing food, medicine and other necessities to children around the world.

Recently, the 56-year-old Lebanon man hasn't had much extra money to share. So he's donating his time instead to help others. For the last six weeks, he has been spending about 20 hours a week volunteering at the Food Bank's Milford location. Beck, who has issues related to anxiety and seasonal affective disorder, said volunteering has helped him to see beyond his own problems. The job has given him a purpose in his life he was previously lacking.

"I believe if you can marry a personal passion with a volunteer effort, it makes it special," Beck said. "It feels natural. It doesn't feel like work. This whole experience has been a beautiful thing for me."

Carol Lettieri, volunteer coordinator for RSVP at the Modern Maturity Center, said that's a common reaction. About 1,000 people in Kent County volunteer through RSVP.

"When you see people less fortunate and it hits home that you are a catalyst in helping them to have something better, it just makes you feel really good," she said. "I've seen a lot of people who are going to be alone on Christmas or not going to be going with their family for that big Christmas, but they'll volunteer and it jump-starts them for the rest of the year."

Don't go it alone

If you're hurting, this isn't the time to pull the tough-guy routine. Ask for help. Seek out a friend or family member who will listen. Join a support group. Find people who care, Biddle said. "Sometimes you don't need words, just someone to be there with you or just that reinforcement of being cared about," she said.

A community center can be a great resource because there's almost always something going on, Biddle said. It's a place where people naturally congregate and form easy connections. There are usually different groups and activities, all with a fluid, relaxed feel.

Sometimes people are hesitant about going somewhere new but, once they finally get up the nerve, they wish they had gone sooner. At least that's what Kathy Samworth hears from the participants in the GEM program offered by Jewish Family Services in Talleyville. GEM, which stands for Growth, Education and Mental Fitness, was created to help people deal with the loneliness that can develop as people get older.

GEM offers yoga, computer classes, knitting and other programs on a weekly basis. Referrals from friends are how most people find out about GEM, although the program is open to anyone over age 55.

One of the greatest benefits of GEM is the friendships that have developed among members, Samworth said. Many arrange lunch dates and other outings outside the program.

"I've had people come and say, 'Well I've been wanting to come for a year.' They just hadn't worked up the courage," Samworth said. "I think once they come, they realize how much there is here."

Additional Facts

About RSVP

RSVP is the country's largest volunteer network for people 55 and older. The program, part of the Corporation for National and Community Service, helps connect older people who want to volunteer with organizations who need help.

In Delaware, more than 3,000 senior citizens participate in RSVP, which stands for Retired Senior and Volunteer Program. It is sponsored by the state in New Castle and Sussex counties, and through the Modern Maturity Center in Kent County.

For more information, call 255-9882 in New Castle County; 734-1200, ext. 129, in Kent County; and 856-5815 in Sussex County.

Choose Toys Not Only For Fun Value, But Safety Value (WILNJ)

By Hiran Ratnayake, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

Zhu Zhu Pets may be the hottest holiday gifts for kids right now, but an investigation into whether the toy is dangerous was enough to deter Lilian Latan from buying one.

Latan, who lives in Middletown, has two daughters, ages 6 and 4. She reads safety labels before buying toys and games and pays attention to investigations and recalls.

"Especially with the 4-year-old, I still have to be very careful" about her putting things in her mouth, Latan said. "I read everything about a toy, and if it's small and if it's something that looks like candy, I won't buy it."

More than 3 billion toys and games are sold in the U.S. each year -- most between Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. As if battling long lines and high demand for certain toys during the holiday season isn't enough, parents also must make sure gifts are safe.

Consumer confidence has waned in recent years, prompted by recalls of toys deemed unsafe. In 2008, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission recalled 162 toys. That same year, there were 19 toy-related deaths and about 172,700 toy-related injuries to children younger than 15 that required urgent care.

So far this year, there have been 38 toy recalls. The commission attributes the drop to increased enforcement at the nation's ports, cooperation with other countries, industry compliance with federal safety rules and consumer awareness and education.

Still, there have been some high-profile recalls and investigations. The commission recently opened an investigation into the popular Zhu Zhu Pets after the consumer watchdog group GoodGuide reported that the toy hamsters contain higher-than-allowed levels of antimony. If ingested, the heavy metal can sicken children. Cepia, the maker of Zhu Zhu Pets, has disputed the findings.

YoYo Joe's Toys & Fun, an independent toy store in Talleyville, sells Plan Toys, which are made from rubberwood and are painted with soy-based ink.

"When people are looking for things that are safe, that's where we point them," owner Joe Mitchell said. "They tend to be a little more expensive, but they are very popular."

Many recalled toys were manufactured in China. But Mitchell said parents shouldn't dismiss every China-made toy, since most toys bought in the U.S. are made in China. "If you go by looking for things not made in China, you'll have a very small selection," he said.

Mitchell also recommends that parents stick with well-known brands. "Big manufacturers have gone to very big lengths to make sure their toys are safe," he said.

Whether Zhu Zhu Pets, Plan Toys or Barbie dolls are on your children's wish lists, here are 10 safety tips to help guide you through the rest of the holiday shopping season.

1. Buy age-appropriate toys.

Just like you consider your child's age, interest and skill level when determining if they'd enjoy a gift, you also want to consider those same characteristics for safety purposes. Follow the age recommendations on the toy package to ensure that you are getting a safe gift for your child.

"Various toys are geared for certain ages, not only for the cognitive level but also with the pieces and parts that come with them," said Sean M. Elwell, injury prevention coordinator of the trauma program at Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children in Rockland. "Toys for the older age group may have some smaller pieces that could be a choking hazard."

2. Inspect all toys.

Young children can choke on small toys, so keep them out of reach. They also shouldn't play with balloons, magnets or toys with small parts that easily come off or could break off. Older toys should be inspected and, if necessary, repaired or discarded.

Magnets can cause serious damage if swallowed, said Dr. Stephen Murphy, medical director of the trauma program at the duPont Hospital.

"We had a case of a toddler who swallowed a couple magnets with opposite poles (that magnetized), and a piece of tissue was caught between them," he said. The toddler survived but needed surgery.

"Our point is that if you prevent something at step 1, 2 or 3, you never have to get to step 15 or 16," Murphy said.

3. Read all instructions and heed warnings of proper use.

A product that isn't assembled correctly could break during use and injure a child, Elwell said. In addition, toys that seem safe can be hazardous when used in unintended ways, so read all enclosed instructions and warnings.

Popular items such as the electronic Easy-Bake Oven can be particularly hazardous when not used properly, but even basic items like yo-yos can be dangerous if children aren't careful when using them.

4. Fill out registration forms.

By filling out and mailing the registration form contained in the toy packaging, you can be quickly alerted if there's a recall on the product. Many toy manufacturers allow people to register their products online.

5. Buy the proper safety accessories.

If you're buying a riding toy as a gift, you should also buy a helmet and any other safety gear. Wearing a bike helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission. You should also buy a helmet with skateboards, in-line skates, scooters, snowboards and any other riding toys.

"A lot of times a parent will think, 'I want to get them that big red shiny bike,' but those little items are just as important," Elwell said.

6. Separate toys by age.

Children should be taught to put away their toys when they are finished playing with them. And older siblings should be instructed to keep their toys away from younger siblings. Safe storage not only keeps the home clean, it helps prevent injuries such as tripping over toys.

7. Avoid buying used toys.

You may get a discount at a garage sale, but you may unknowingly be buying a recalled product.

It's also less safe to buy toys that aren't new. Used items may become damaged -- and subsequently, unsafe -- over time. For example, the plastic material in a tricycle could become degraded after years of storage in a garage. "We've seen some plastics that weather has taken a toll on," Elwell said.

8. Keep batteries and chargers away from children.

Young children should be kept away from all batteries, chargers and adapters, since those products can pose thermal burn hazards. Read all instructions and warnings that come with these products -- especially chargers, since they often lack a device to prevent them from overcharging. Batteries, like magnets, also can cause serious problems if a young child swallows one, Murphy said.

"If you swallow a battery, it's leaking while in your digestive tract, and it can erode part of the wall of your intestines," Murphy said. "You have to be prudent and you've got to keep an eye on the kid or keep it away."

9. Keep toy packaging away from children.

"Plastic packaging can potentially be a choking hazard as well as a poisonous hazard," said Elwell, who works at the Nemours Safety Store in the main lobby of the duPont Hospital. "The packaging -- the Styrofoam and the plastic -- some of those things can be more appealing than the actual toy, and it will be ingested and they can choke on it."

10. Stay updated.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission keeps a comprehensive list of all recalled toys at www.cpsc.gov. The list includes the manufacturer, picture of the item and description of the recall.

Food Bank Makes Plea For More Donations (WILNJ)

By Robin Brown, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

With donations down in the hard economy, the Food Bank of Delaware on Monday issued a plea for help.

President and Chief Executive Officer Patricia Beebe said donations to this year's holiday food drive are 24,313 pounds less than last year -- and need continues to grow.

"It's up dramatically," Beebe said, adding that the nonprofit, which for years has distributed food to more than 90,000 needy residents a year through member agencies and feeding sites, plans to release new Delaware hunger statistics next month.

Many Delawareans "continue to be generous with their volunteer time, money and food," she said, but the significant shortfall in donations is raising concerns.

"More Delawareans are out of work and more families and individuals are lining up for emergency food assistance," she said. "Whether you can donate just a few cans or several bags full, every little bit helps to feed hungry Delawareans."

Community Relations Manager Kim Kostas said the impact of the shortfall can be seen easily when the pound-shortage is translated into aid to the needy.

"With 24,313 pounds of food," Kostas said, "we could provide 810 thirty-pound food packages." Each package is enough to feed a family of four for three to four days, she added.

To help bridge the gap, the food bank issued a plea for businesses, schools, faith- and community-based groups to hold benefit donation drives.

The food bank offers tips, posters and other help for organizing donation drives at fbd.org. Financial donations also are accepted at the Web site.

The most-needed foods include tuna and other canned meats, peanut butter, hearty soups, dried beans, canned fruit and vegetables, hot and cold boxed cereals, pasta and macaroni and cheese, long-grain rice, turkey gravy, instant mashed potatoes, pancake mix, cranberry sauce, pasta sauce and seasoned stuffing mix.

Beebe said anyone can drop off tax-deductible donations of nonperishable foods in unbreakable containers, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays at Food Bank of Delaware sites near Newark at 14 Garfield Way in Delaware Industrial Park off Del. 72 between Chestnut Hill Road and Old Baltimore Pike or its Milford Facility at 1041 Mattlind Way.

Tax-deductible donations also may be sent to Food Bank of Delaware, 14 Garfield Way, Newark, DE 19713 or made online at www.fbd.org.

For more information, including volunteer opportunities, call 292-1305.

Brandywine Park Sugar Bowl Soon Will Be Back -- Sweeter Than Before (WILNJ)

By Robin Brown

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

A long-lost landmark is being reincarnated in Wilmington.

A picturesque pavilion called The Sugar Bowl for its dome lid was lost in Brandywine Park more than a half-century ago after use as a bandshell, an observatory overlooking the Brandywine and a setting for picnics and wedding photos.

Details of its demise are unclear. The Hagley Museum & Library says the 27-foot tall, 110-foot diameter pavilion was razed around 1940. Others say it disintegrated over years or may have sustained irreparable damage in 1954's Hurricane Hazel.

Its image endures on old pastel postcards but just its granite base and concrete foundation were left by the north end of Washington Street Bridge. Its remains inspired civic activist David Hudson, twice Delaware poet laureate, to dream of its revival. Before his 2003 death, Hudson rallied support for a new Sugar Bowl to boost park use and public appreciation.

Meanwhile, Delaware State Parks Director Chaz Salkin and architect Don Homsey spotted the long-gone Sugar Bowl as a landmark worth replacing.

They went to Friends of Wilmington Parks and said, "This might be a project you can sink your teeth into," said Executive Director Mike Porro.

The nonprofit group (www.FriendsOfWilmingtonParks.org) finished restoring Jasper Crane Rose Garden in 2004 and adopted the Sugar Bowl in 2006. Supporters include foundations, park users, elected officials, community leaders, engineers, architects, planners, the city and the state parks division - some backers giving time and help for years.

Architects and planners used the old postcards for reference "because they are really the only images we have of what it looked like," said Friends' President Ed Weirauch.

The goal was to replicate the original Sugar Bowl, but the new one will have strengths it lacked -- a 10-ton steel skeleton, just erected, that won't disintegrate and concrete reinforced with glass fiber, Porro said.

With about \$350,000 raised and \$250,000 more needed, the friends plan a public campaign to raise the rest next year, Porro said. Tax-deductible donations may be sent to Friends of Wilmington Parks, Box 435, Montchanin DE 19710.

The new Sugar Bowl, due to be done in 2010-11, will serve all of the original's functions plus public art and historic interpretation -- including how and when the landmark became a memory, if more research finds answers, Porro said. It also will honor the Delaware National Guard, which has no monument in the state, he said.

When it's done, as dreamer Hudson used to say, The Sugar Bowl again will stop park guests as they give it a good look and say, "How sweet it is."

What To Do When Mom And Dad Are Sick, Too (WILNJ)

By Carolyn Butler, The Washington Post

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

I recently had one of those moments that only other parents or full-time caregivers of young children are likely to understand: I was holding my miserably sick baby, who was sneezing, coughing and drooling all over me, when my 3-year-old stumbled in and said, "My belly hurts," just before throwing up all over the lot of us. As I cleaned up and tried to comfort both kids, I couldn't help but wonder which I'd start doing first: hacking or vomiting.

One of the many things I took for granted before I had kids -- besides the bliss of a good night's sleep and keeping my clothes clean for a full day -- was relative good health, particularly during cold and flu season. Since having my boys, I have suffered through a dazzling array of ailments right along with them, from multiple bouts of bronchitis to pinkeye and every 24-hour stomach virus imaginable. Among the four of us in the house, I don't think there's been a moment without a runny nose since the end of summer.

While there has been little research on the topic, experts agree that the caregivers of young children are far more likely to fall ill than adults without kids.

"We see it in practice all the time, pretty consistently: Parents get sick more often," says Thomas Campbell, chair of the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry and co-author of "Families and Health." "Young kids are a reservoir of germs, and if they're at day care, preschool or any place else where they're around other children, they're in a super-virus environment and the perfect vectors for illness and for passing viruses around. Kids hug and touch and share toys and saliva and cough all over each other, and then parents hug and kiss their kids. Nothing else compares, contact-wise -- we don't go to work and hug and kiss our colleagues."

Lack of sleep and increased stress can also hamper immune response, Campbell notes.

Sociology professor Debra Umberson, co-author of a forthcoming review on parenthood's effect on well-being in the Journal of Marriage and Family, agrees that children are "disease vectors," but they also can be helpful to adult health in the long term.

"Once you have children," she says, "you tend to take better care of your health, in terms of behavior like drinking, smoking and other risk-taking, which offers benefits and protects you from mortality. But on the other hand, [parents] also exercise less and gain more weight than folks who do not have children, which is not good."

Another byproduct of raising these smiling, sneezing petri dishes is that a stomach bug that affects a child for all of an afternoon can fella an adult for days. "You would think that you've had 30 or 40 years of exposure to these types of viruses and so you'd be protected, but very often it doesn't turn out that way," says Campbell, citing hepatitis A and chicken pox as classic examples of illnesses that are typically mild for children and much more serious for adults.

And Umberson adds: "Once you get sick when you have little kids, you can't take care of yourself -- you have to take care of everyone else -- and so it's harder to recover. It takes longer and is more unpleasant."

I've wondered if it's futile even to try to stop the spread of infection in our house. But Benard Dreyer, a pediatrics professor at the New York University School of Medicine, says it can be done. He suggests proper (read: almost obsessive) hand washing and the liberal use of hand sanitizers. He also recommends staying out of waiting rooms in doctor's offices and the emergency room -- "major reservoirs for disease" -- if possible.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently released recommendations for preventing the spread of H1N1, but presumably for any other virus, too, in the home that include such optimistically impractical tips as constantly wearing a mask, isolating sick people in their rooms and staying at least six feet away from them.

The CDC is "adapting what is recommended to health-care facilities for the home, but nobody runs their home like a hospital -- it's not doable," Dreyer says. "What you really need to do is use your judgment about your own situation -- like if you're pregnant or have a newborn, you may actually want to use masks -- and then take the basic principles and apply them to your home in a realistic way."

Still, don't despair if you catch that cold. All this shared illness has an upside.

"Once a child starts to develop a functioning immune system, at about 6 months, then the exposure to general viruses and germs that you find at day care, school, the supermarkets, the playground or parties, which is hard to avoid, isn't particularly a bad thing, because it helps build and stimulate the immune system," says Robert Shearin, a pediatrician in Bethesda, Md. "If you're getting that kind of exposure year after year, we hope it will be able to help kids fight other infections and stay healthier later on."

So if you're a parent or full-time caregiver of small children, stock up on Kleenex, wash your hands as often as possible, pray for some luck and know that someday this, too, shall pass.

4 Accused Of Invading Wrong Home In Stickup (WILNJ)

By Robin Brown, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

Four suspects have been arrested in a home-invasion robbery that police said they committed at a mistaken address.

Six University of Delaware students -- four male residents and two female guests -- were left bound with duct tape over their mouths in the 1:20 a.m. break-in Nov. 30 in the 500 building of University Courtyard Apartments on Scholar Drive.

The suspects are Dustin J. Hults, 20, of the 100 block of Roosevelt Ave., Newport; Michael A. Ortiz, 20, and Joel M. Ortiz, 21, of the 1500 block of Dilworth Road in Willow Run near Elsmere; and Vincent J. Baiocco, 21, of the 2300 block of N. Washington St. in Wilmington, said Lt. Brian Henry, Newark Police Department public information officer.

Investigators "confirmed that the defendants were actually targeting another apartment where they believed they would find drugs and/or drug money, but mistakenly entered the victims' apartment," Henry said. He did not reveal which unit the four meant to hit, but said an investigation of that site is continuing.

Arrested Saturday at their homes, each is charged with six counts of first-degree robbery, first-degree burglary, weapons offenses and other crimes, Henry said.

Failing to post bail, all were committed to Young Correctional Institution in Wilmington, he said.

According to police, the robbers -- three with guns, one with a knife -- made noise in a hall until a resident opened the door a bit, then shoved their way into the living room. A guest suffered a bruised eye when the door hit her; no one else was hurt.

The intruders searched the place and stole a safe along with other undisclosed belongings but found no drugs, according to police, who said the men -- one using a bandanna to cover his face -- had brought along three backpacks and a pillow case.

After they left, reportedly in a silver four-door car parked south of the complex, a resident got loose and called police.

When police searched Hults' home, they found some of the stolen property, Henry said. More was found in a search of Michael Ortiz's car, which was used in the getaway, he said.

An air gun used in the robbery also was found in Ortiz's car, and investigators determined that the intruders' other guns were air guns or BB guns, Henry said.

The same apartment was burglarized when residents were gone for UD's Thanksgiving break, but nothing valuable was taken and items usually stolen in burglaries were left there, Henry said. Detectives are investigating whether the incidents are linked.

Amid Burst Of Security, Accused Smuggler Sentenced (WILNJ)

By Sean O'Sullivan, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

The J. Caleb Boggs Federal Building in downtown Wilmington was surrounded by dozens of police vehicles during the morning rush hour Monday as police officers, some in body armor, paced back and forth behind traffic barricades.

Nearby, blue command-post tents blocked Ninth and French streets. A Delaware State Police helicopter patrolled overhead amid whispers about police snipers on rooftops.

Attorney Joe Green thought Vice President Joe **Biden** was making a surprise visit. Ryan Rios, who works in a nearby law office, was unsettled by the largely unannounced and unexplained high-profile police presence.

Some who asked were informed that it was a "traffic survey;" others were told it was unspecified "police activity."

"It" was the sentencing for Amir Hossein Ardebili, the 36-year-old Iranian national whose case was unsealed by federal prosecutors a week and a half ago.

He was sentenced to five years in federal prison by Chief District Judge Gregory M. Sleet for smuggling, conspiracy, money laundering and multiple violations of the Arms Export Control Act. Authorities say he purchased prohibited electronics and other equipment with military applications from the United States, for the government of Iran.

U.S. Marshal for Delaware David W. Thomas said Monday's security precautions were put in place because of threats on Ardebili's life. Thomas declined to offer specifics. "In our business, we have to be right 100 percent of the time," he said.

Thomas said it was the highest level of security he'd ever overseen at the courthouse in his eight years and it may have been the heaviest level of protection ever thrown around the J. Caleb Boggs Building.

According to prosecutors, Ardebili attempted to buy gyroscopes that could be used in fighter aircraft and missile guidance systems, phase shifter chips that could operate complicated radar systems to allow

weapons systems to lock onto multiple targets, and computers needed to upgrade Iran's fleet of aging F-4 warplanes.

His arrest in the Republic of Georgia in October 2007 was the culmination of a years-long international sting operation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. He was extradited to Delaware under top-secret security in January 2008, pleading guilty several months later behind closed doors. The case was prosecuted in Delaware because as part of a bogus business deal, Ardebili sent a \$3,000 down payment to a bank account in Delaware.

In court Monday, Ardebili's attorney, Edmund "Dan" Lyons Jr. said his client was a small-time operator who was just trying to make a living in his native country when he was busted by U.S. agents.

The police presence outside the courthouse stood in stark contrast to that description.

State employees in the Carvel State Building across the street were not told what was going on. One said she was told by a police official only that "someone important" was going to be at the courthouse.

However, prosecutors had announced two weeks ago, in unsealing the case, that Monday would be Ardebili's sentencing date, and Rios and a co-worker, Sylla Slawski, said they had figured out what was going on after hunting for information online. "It makes us feel safe," Slawski said.

In court, Ardebili was an unassuming presence, dressed in a gray T-shirt and khaki pants.

His comments to the court, in sometimes broken English, were briefly interrupted so Ardebili could compose himself after choking up.

He told Sleet that he was no international arms merchant and was not a political or religious zealot. "I never wanted to harm anyone," he said, saying that many of the prohibited items he purchased on behalf of Iran had civilian uses. He said he never dealt in guns or ammunition.

Conflicting information

Assistant U.S. Attorney David Hall said that, although many of the items had other uses, the digital air computers he tried to buy had no other use but in the F-4. Hall also said that in undercover videos, Ardebili admitted he knew the items were to be used by the Iranian military for a missile defense system.

Hall also pointed out that in those recordings, Ardebili stated that Iran was seeking to improve and upgrade weapons because its leaders "believe war is coming" with the United States.

Ardebili said some of his comments to undercover agents were a bluff, an exaggeration, "to show myself as a big man," who could make deals happen. "It is the nature of the business," he said.

Lyons asked for a sentence of time served, or about two years, stating that Ardebili was one of hundreds of such independent procurement agents used by Iran to try to get around U.S. embargoes. He is "a little guy ... a cog," Lyons said. The lawyer said Ardebili had trouble coming up with a \$6,000 down payment for the deal that led to his arrest.

More than just a cog?

Ardebili was not an international arms merchant, making deals from a yacht in the Mediterranean and selling weapons to the highest bidder, Lyons said, but a man who lives in the house he grew up in with his parents. The trip to the Republic of Georgia was Ardebili's first outside Iran, he said.

Hall responded that Ardebili was far from unsophisticated in his business -- which involved money laundering to hide the source of payments and complicated shipping practices, involving front companies in other nations, to mask the destination of contraband goods.

And though Hall conceded that Ardebili was not living "on a yacht," he said Ardebili was nonetheless involved in more than \$1 million in purchases annually for the Iranian government.

Lyons said his client, who has a degree in electrical engineering, made about \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year and operated out of a small office with one employee and one partner.

Sleet, in handing down his sentence, agreed with prosecutors that Ardebili's actions presented a threat to U.S. security. But the judge said Ardebili's remorse appeared genuine and that combined with "additional information that has been brought to my attention," a sentence of five years was appropriate.

Each of the nine charges against Ardebili carried a maximum punishment of up to 20 years in prison but the federal sentencing guideline range in the case was between 12 and 14 years.

Hall and U.S. Attorney David Weiss said they were satisfied with Sleet's ruling. Lyons said it was reasonable.

An uncertain future

About 60 minutes after the hearing, three sport utility vehicles emerged from a garage at the federal courthouse, with Ardebili riding in one, and sped away. Shortly after, traffic barriers were taken down and the police presence faded from around the court building. Normal order slowly returned.

Many, including Sleet, said the real question for Ardebili will come when he has completed his incarceration. "In effect, you are a man without a country," Sleet said, adding it appears Ardebili will not be able to return to Iran.

No one would comment about whether Ardebili cooperated with U.S. authorities, but Lyons said no matter what the reality is, Iranian officials will conclude that his client did, making it difficult, if not impossible, for him to return home.

Ardebili's wife is now in the United States, Lyons said, though she did not attend Monday's proceeding. The rest of his family remains in Iran.

Generally, foreign nationals who are convicted of felonies are automatically deported, but Lyons said it is possible for such a person to remain in the U.S. after they have served their sentence.

Delaware Police: Millsboro Citizen's Academy Restarting (WILNJ)

By Alex Ruoff, The (salisbury, Md.) Daily Times

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 14, 2009

MILLSBORO -- The <http://www.millsboropd.com/>>Millsboro Police Department is restarting its Citizen's Police Academy to give residents an inside look at local crime fighting.

"It's an in-depth look at how we do business," Chief John Murphy said.

The academy is scheduled for Tuesday nights starting in January, with two-hour classes on leadership in law enforcement, courtroom procedures, the process of becoming a police officer and other topics.

This marks the fourth annual Citizen's Police Academy since 2004. The classes were not held last year because of scheduling conflicts with the department's Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies accreditation process.

Murphy said the classes aim to show Millsboro residents just where their tax money is going and the methods implemented to keep their city streets safe.

"We hope to pass information on that will help them better see why we do what we do," he said. "A good example is the Taser. A lot of people don't know the amount of training an officer goes through before he can carry one and why we have them."

Murphy said the classes will tour the department's headquarters, display their current police procedures, and explain the methods implemented by police to enforce law in Millsboro.

Millsboro resident Lucas Hurwenkil said he participated in the classes in 2006 and enjoyed the experience of seeing the police department behind the scenes.

"It was cool," he said. "I didn't know what to expect, but I think I got a lot out of it."

According to Murphy, his department gets feedback from the classes as well.

"Everyone who comes tells us about their experiences and I think we get something out of it, too," he said. "It's not just us telling them."

Pot-Nets resident Herman Duvall said he'd be interested in the tour of the Sussex Correctional Institution.

"I'd take my son to show him where he's not supposed to end up," he said.

The class is free, but applicants must register and pass a background check beforehand. Those interested are asked to apply early to ensure registration because of limited seating. Additional Facts

IF YOU GO

WHAT: Millsboro Police Department's Citizen's Police Academy

WHERE: Millsboro Police Department, 307 Main St. in Millsboro

WHEN: Registration begins now. Classes are scheduled for Tuesdays, Jan. 12 to 23.

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL EDITORIALS

It Is Americans' Responsibility To Help Curb Teens' Drug Abuse (WILNJ)

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

The war on teen drug use is stymied by a softening of young people's perceptions about the harm done by smoking marijuana, using Ecstasy, drinking alcohol and using smokeless tobacco.

The annual Monitoring the Future study of eighth-, 10th-, and 12th-graders shows decreases in some grades in the use of cocaine, methamphetamine and hallucinogens.

However, there are disturbing trends of teens abusing both prescription and over-the-counter drugs. Seven of the 10 drugs most abused by high school seniors are prescription or over-the-counter drugs acquired primarily from teens' friends or relatives. The rate for use of inhalants in the last 30 days among 10th-graders increased.

Marijuana, considered by some as a "gateway" drug to more dangerous addictive substances, and binge drinking get a favorable assessment by teens.

Among eighth- and 10th-graders, the perception of "great risk" associated with marijuana use declined; perceived harmfulness of marijuana deteriorated among eighth-graders; and peer disapproval of marijuana use has declined.

Although use of alcohol among teens has declined, it remains the most commonly abused substance. Fewer 10th-graders viewed weekend binge drinking as harmful and fewer high school seniors disapproved of having one or two drinks daily.

In calling these findings to the attention of policymakers, it's incumbent on the rest of Americans to consider their ability and responsibility to trend this research in a more positive direction.

For some, leading by example will be difficult. Drug-using baby boomers -- ages 50 to 59 -- increased their illegal substance use since 2002, from 2.7 percent to 4.6 percent in 2008.

This was the generation at the peak of drug use among youth in the United States in the late 1970s.

End Confusing Budget Process By Restoring Fiscal Discipline (WILNJ)

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

The U.S. budget process was probably designed to befuddle the average citizen. That may keep the public fat and happy in good times, but lately that confusing process is scaring the public.

The latest appropriation passed by Congress -- a \$447 billion omnibus spending bill -- is as befuddling as can be and more.

The bill, which is going to President Obama to sign, contains thousands of earmarks and double-digit increases for many federal departments. No doubt some of these increases are needed, at least in the short run, to combat the loss of jobs to the recession.

But many of the earmarks and the special favors are still hidden in the bill. They will slowly emerge, over the next few weeks. And each revelation will infuriate the public more.

The bill includes another \$650 billion for Medicare and Medicaid expenditures, for a total of \$1.1 trillion. Worse, the bill combines six of the 12 annual spending bills that the House and Senate haven't been able to pass so far this year. So more budget bills are coming.

Many economists argue that now is not the time to worry about the growing deficit. They say that job creation is more important in the next few months. Granted. But Congress has a habit of authorizing spending and avoiding cutbacks. Considering the rising deficit, the size of the stimulus package and whatever a health care measure ends up costing, the time has come for Congress to get serious about the nation's finances.

A bipartisan commission should be charged with finding ways to cut this spending and restore fiscal discipline. The commission should be formed now so that no time is lost in correcting the current policy. Sen. Kent Conrad, a Democrat, and Sen. Judd Gregg, a Republican, proposed such a panel. Congress should follow their advice.

BIDEN IN THE NEWS

Obama Touting Home Energy Efficiency Program (AP)

[AP](#), December 15, 2009

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Hoping to jump-start his plans for job growth, President Barack Obama is pushing Congress to pass incentives for homeowners who retrofit their homes to make them more energy-efficient.

The president planned to visit a Home Depot store in Northern Virginia on Tuesday to make the case that outfitting houses to be more energy-efficient will create jobs and save families money on their energy bills. It's the fourth time in less than two weeks that the president will preside over a high-profile jobs event, as he calls attention to his efforts to bring down the nation's double-digit unemployment rate.

Last week, the president proposed a new spending plan that would provide tax breaks for energy-efficient retrofits in homes. The plan also calls for small business tax cuts and new spending on highway and bridge construction. The administration hasn't put a price tag on the plan, but it could cost more than \$150 billion.

The White House hopes the appeal of the retrofitting program -- which some administration officials have dubbed Cash for Caulkers -- will be similar to the now-expired Cash for Clunkers program, which offered rebates for trading in used vehicles for more fuel-efficient ones. At a White House jobs summit earlier in the month, Obama told Home Depot chairman Frank Blake that home improvement companies would be key partners in this program.

Obama has also proposed expanding stimulus initiatives that promote energy efficiency and clean energy jobs. Currently, about \$8 billion of the \$787 billion stimulus package goes toward energy-saving investments in homes. The White House has said investments like installing insulation, sealing leaks and modernizing heating and air conditioning equipment will pay for themselves many times over.

In a memo for the president, Vice President Joe **Biden** said stimulus spending and other initiatives will lead to 1 million home energy-efficiency retrofits by 2012. The report also said the U.S. is on track to double renewable energy generation, including solar, wind and geothermal, in three years.

Obama Clean-Energy Investments Creating Jobs, Biden Report Says (BLOOM)

By Catherine Dodge

[Bloomberg News](#), December 15, 2009

Dec. 15 (Bloomberg) -- President Barack Obama's clean-energy initiatives will help create more than 700,000 jobs and allow the U.S. to double its renewable-power generation in three years, according to a report by Vice President Joe **Biden**.

Biden, in a memo on administration efforts to shift to a clean-energy economy, said projects in the \$787 billion economic stimulus package are contributing to "unprecedented growth" in renewable energy, such as wind and solar, and improving manufacturing for new clean-energy technology.

"The recovery act is not only about rescue and relief, it's about reinvestment," Jared Bernstein, **Biden's** chief economic adviser, said on a conference call with reporters. He called **Biden's** report a "comprehensive assessment" of the administration's clean-energy efforts.

Government investments in transportation will help spur the development of plug-in hybrid and electric vehicles, including three new electric-vehicle plants, the first in the U.S., the report said.

The memo said the administration also will provide loan guarantees to two companies for construction of three to four new nuclear reactors "by the end of our first two years in office."

Investments of \$23 billion in renewable generation and advanced energy manufacturing included in the recovery plan will likely create 253,000 jobs and leverage more than \$43 billion in additional investment that may support another 469,000 jobs, the **Biden** report said.

The administration is "solidly on track" to meet its goal of saving or creating 3.5 million jobs under the stimulus plan, Bernstein said. The U.S. has lost about 7.2 million jobs since the recession began in December 2007.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said last month the stimulus package had generated between 600,000 and 1.6 million jobs so far.

The stimulus package approved by Congress and signed by Obama in February included about \$80 billion for clean-energy programs designed in part to spur the growth of so-called green jobs. Republicans say the U.S. jobs data are evidence Obama's stimulus plan is failing to create jobs.

The unemployment rate last month was 10 percent, down from a 26-year high of 10.2 percent in October.

To contact the reporter on this story: Catherine Dodge in Washington at cdodge1@bloomberg.net

Biden Updates Obama On Recovery Act Investments In Clean Energy Projects (ABC News)

By Karen Travers

[ABC News](#), December 15, 2009

President Obama will be in Copenhagen on Friday for climate change talks and Vice President **Biden** has given him some reading material for the flight over.

The White House has released a memo that **Biden** presented to the president outlining ways that funding from the administration's \$787 billion Recovery Act funding is making progress for toward a cleaner, more energy efficient economy. The report details ways that stimulus funds have been used toward advances in renewable energy, energy grid modernization, home energy efficiency projects and green automobiles.

"I'm pleased to report that the administration is laying the foundation for a clean energy economy that will create a new generation of jobs, reduce dependence on oil and enhance national security," **Biden** begins his memo to Obama. "Through the Recovery Act and more effective use of programs already in existence, the administration is taking the critical steps to transform the United States into a global clean energy leader."

Over \$80 billion from the Recovery Act has been invested in clean energy technology, which the Obama Administration says is "the largest single investment in clean energy in U.S. history." The administration says that investment will produce \$150 billion in clean energy projects

Obama heads to a Home Depot store in Northern Virginia on Tuesday to discuss how energy saving home projects help the economy with labor, manufacturing, and small business leaders. On Wednesday, **Biden** will talk about clean energy and the manufacturing industry at a Middle Class Task Force event on Wednesday.

Below are examples from **Biden's** report, where the administration says it has made progress on clean energy projects as a result of Recovery Act investments:

- . Renewable Energy: The U.S. is on-track to double renewable energy generation, including solar, wind and geothermal, and double renewable manufacturing capacity in just three years because of Recovery Act investments.

- . Vehicles and Fuels of the Future: Over the next six years, three new electric vehicles plants-the first ever in the U.S.-and 30 new battery plants will be fully operational because of the Administration's \$16 billion investment in plug-in hybrids, all-electric vehicles and the infrastructure needed to power them, as well as new clean fuels. When President Obama took office there were just 2 advanced battery and electric drive component factories in the U.S.

- . Grid Modernization: Twenty-six million smart meters will be installed in U.S. homes by 2013 - more than triple the number currently in service - as a result of the Administration's \$4 billion Recovery Act investment in a smart energy grid and the one-to-one match in private sector funding. This technology allows consumers to monitor and regulate their own energy usage and costs.

- . Energy Efficiency: Because the Administration is making the largest single investment in home energy efficiency in U.S history through the Recovery Act and other initiatives, nearly one million home energy efficiency retrofits will have happened by 2012.

- . Carbon Capture: Because of Recovery Act funding and existing loan guarantee authority, there will be 5 commercial scale power plants operating with large carbon capture sequestration facilities by 2015. When President Obama took office, there were zero.

- . Science and Innovation: Through the Recovery Act, the Administration is investing \$400 million in some of the most advanced research in wind, solar, and geothermal technologies through the ARPA-E program to make these clean sources of energy more affordable and easier to store and transport. A year ago, this critical program was unfunded.

Tracking The Stimulus: Vice President Provides Update On Clean Energy (HILL)

By Jim Snyder

[The Hill](#), December 15, 2009

The vice president's office has released an update on the green revolution.

There's not much new there. But the memo from VP Joe **Biden**, whose duties include overseeing the stimulus, gives a run-down of the administration's efforts on clean energy specifically as President Barack Obama prepares to join the climate change talks in Copenhagen later this week.

In total, the Recovery Act invests \$80 billion in clean energy, according to the memo. That includes \$23 billion to renewable generation and advanced energy manufacturing; \$16 billion on the "vehicles and fuels of the future"; \$4 billion to upgrade the electric power grid; \$5 billion for a weatherization program designed to make low-income homes more energy efficient; \$10 billion for carbon capture and sequestration; and \$12.6 billion for advanced research and development.

Carol Browner, director of the new White House Office of Energy and Climate Change Policy, said the money for renewable energy would support more than 15 gigawatts of new wind, solar, geothermal and other renewable energy sources that would power four to five million homes a year.

The public money could "leverage" another \$43 billion in private investment. In total, the public and private investment in renewable energy could support nearly 470,000 jobs, the administration contends.

Jared Bernstein, the vice president's chief economic policy advisor, said the stimulus bill was a "twofer" - that is, a way to help the economy and improve the environment.

Biden, Industry Big Shots To Discuss Piracy Fight (LAT)

By Joe Flint

[Los Angeles Times](#), December 15, 2009

Vice President Joe **Biden**, Atty. Gen. Eric H. Holder Jr. and FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III are among the top government officials meeting with entertainment industry leaders Tuesday afternoon at the White House to discuss how best to fight piracy of intellectual property.

In its release detailing the meeting, the White House said the round-table discussion that **Biden** will lead is aimed at showcasing the Obama administration's "commitment to enforcing laws against the piracy of intellectual property."

Industry chiefs who are expected to be participating in the meeting are Viacom CEO Philippe Dauman, Warner Bros. Entertainment CEO Barry Meyer, NBC Universal CEO Jeff Zucker and Sony Pictures CEO Michael Lynton. Directors Guild President Taylor Hackford will also participate. Other government bigwigs scheduled to be at the table include Commerce Secretary Gary Locke, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and Secret Service Director Mark Sullivan.

No word if Michael and Tareq Salahi will also be dropping by.

White House To Hold Anti-piracy Roundtable (HILL)

By Kim Hart

[The Hill](#), December 15, 2009

Vice President Joe **Biden** will hold a roundtable discussion tomorrow afternoon about enforcing anti-piracy laws. A notice from the White House calls the meeting "the first of its kind, and will bring together all the stakeholders to discuss ways to combat piracy in this rapidly changing technological age."

Attorney General Eric Holder, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and Commerce Secretary Gary Locke will be in attendance.

So will CEOs from some of the biggest media companies that have been most effected by the piracy of music, movies and other copyrighted material.

The list includes, Sony Pictures CEO Michael Lynton, Warner Music Group CEO Edgar Bronfman, and Harper Collins CEO Brian Murray.

And there may be a few questions directed toward NBC CEO Jeffery Zucker about the company's proposed mega-merger with Comcast.

Victoria Espinel, the newly confirmed Intellectual Property Enforcement Coordinator in the White House, will also be there.

Hollywood Meets D.C. White House Confab To Discuss Enforcing Piracy Laws (VARIETY)

By Paul Harris

[Variety](#), December 15, 2009

Studio chiefs and showbiz CEOs will gather at the White House today for a roundtable discussion on piracy hosted by Vice President Joseph **Biden**. Called Operation Holiday Hoax, the enforcement action was conducted Dec. 8-13 and involved federal agents and officers in 41 states. It resulted in the seizure of 708,000 products in the U.S., ranging from Christmas ornaments to footwear, according to ICE chieftain John Morton. Parallel operations in Mexico netted some 255 tons of counterfeited goods, he said. The operation resulted in seven initial arrests, along with machines used to produce counterfeit goods.

Morton said the joint operation was purposely timed to hit purveyors of counterfeit products as they ramped up for the busy holiday season. He said it targeted a variety of counterfeiters and trademark pirates, distributors, associates, shippers, warehouses, salespeople and vendors. Besides putting a dent in the criminals' holiday profits, we are getting out the word to consumers that counterfeits are everywhere," he said.

"Buying them harms the economy and the industries that create the real thing."The MPAA and the RIAA assisted in the operation, and Glickman and Bainwol participated in a news conference to announce the results of the action.

Morton said the principal focus was to hit distribution points at the peak of their holiday inventories, seize a maximum number of goods and develop investigative leads for future arrests. He predicted future joint operations involving other countries as part of increased enforcement of counterfeit merchandise.

The Obama administration is calling the meeting a first-of-its-kind event to highlight ways to combat piracy in the face of fast-changing technology.

Biden will be joined by an array of administration officials including Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano, Attorney General Eric Holder and Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke, as well as FBI director Robert Mueller and Secret Service director Mark Sullivan.

Among the CEOs scheduled to attend are Sony Pictures Entertainment's Michael Lynton, Warner Bros. Entertainment's Barry Meyer, Viacom's Philippe Dauman, NBC Universal's Jeff Zucker and Warner Music Group's Edgar Bronfman, as well as News Corp.'s Michael Regan, the Walt Disney Co.'s Richard Bates, MPAA chairman Dan Glickman and Recording Industry Assn. of America chairman Mitch Bainwol. Universal Music Group president Zachary Horowitz, AFTRA national executive director Kim Roberts Hedgpeth, IATSE international president Matthew Loeb, DGA president Taylor Hackford, DGA national exec director Jay Roth, National Music Publishers Assn. CEO David Israelite and SAG national exec director David White are also scheduled to be there. The industry has been on a lobbying push for greater

enforcement of piracy laws and has praised Obama's choice for its "copyright czar," Victoria Espinel, who fills a position mandated by a law that passed last year and was signed by President Bush. But there has been concern about the ability of the industry to fight piracy as the FCC considers "Net neutrality" rules, which would prohibit Internet service providers from favoring one site over another in the speed of the delivery of Web content.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced Monday that a coordinated anti-counterfeit sweep by the U.S. and Mexican governments has netted more than \$26 million worth of bogus products, including more than 29,000 DVDs and CDs.

Joe Biden's Secret Mission (DB)

By Richard Wolffe

[Daily Beast](#), December 15, 2009

Far from a rebuke of **Biden's** wishes on Afghanistan, Obama's decision was close to the vice president's true position, Richard Wolffe reports. But now **Biden** is left with a familiar challenge: sell the war strategy without gaffes.

According to the newspaper accounts, Joe **Biden** should be an unhappy man. He just lost the internal debate about the new Afghanistan strategy and is now required to sell the policy to anxious Democrats and the skeptical media.

So it came as something of a shock to congressional Democrats to hear the vice president declare his true position in a meeting at the White House late last month, as the Afghan policy meetings were drawing to a close.

"Just so everyone knows," **Biden** corrected his questioner, "I'm not for drawing down the troops."

"Why can't we just withdraw the troops?" asked one member, appealing to the war skeptic in the office of the vice president.

"Just so everyone knows," **Biden** corrected his questioner, "I'm not for drawing down the troops."

In fact, **Biden**-for all his pressure to limit the scale and scope of the new Afghan mission-ended up as an advocate for another 10,000 to 15,000 troops to be deployed to the war zone. Instead of backing a pure counterterrorism strategy, **Biden** himself was a compromiser with those wanting to beef up the counterinsurgency approach beloved by the generals.

Biden's main job through the internal debate was to open up the space for his boss to pick a hybrid strategy between withdrawal and escalation: a limited mission with no lofty goals of establishing democracy, and with a clear end-date for the start of the drawdown.

White House officials say the vice president is now playing the role of character witness to his former friends in Congress, telling them that the president is committed to the narrower strategy and the beginning of the withdrawal in July 2011-no matter what the public comments of Defense Secretary Robert Gates.

"There's a lot of speculation as to how sincere that date is. It's very sincere," said one senior White House official. "As commander in chief and secretary of defense, you cannot draw categorical lines in the sand about what are the right troop movements 18 months in advance. But it's as firm a commitment as you can make in this environment."

Biden's role as a vocal questioner of the top brass revolved around a simple concern: that the internal debate needed to focus on strategy more than the raw number of troops. Was it worth committing

more money and lives to Afghanistan if the core leadership of Al Qaeda was hiding across the border in Pakistan, a nuclear-armed neighbor with a far greater strategic interest to the United States?

For **Biden**, stabilizing the Afghan government was only a means to an end-to maintain intense pressure on Al Qaeda. He had no interest in the old liberal, and now neoconservative, goal of nation-building.

As a supporter of an extra 15,000 troops, compared to Obama's final decision of twice that number, **Biden** ended up closer to the final result than his media image as an opponent of any buildup.

But he was still some way off, and that leaves the vice president with his trickiest-yet familiar-challenge: to sell the strategy in a way that helps the president and yet remains truthful to his own concerns.

If history is any guide, **Biden** can stumble badly when speaking for himself rather than sticking to his talking points. Then again, if Obama really wanted someone to stick to his talking points, he could have chosen Evan Bayh as his No. 2.

What's Plan B If Biden Doesn't Run In Delaware? (RC)

By Greg Giroux, Roll Call Staff

[Roll Call](#), December 15, 2009

In the nearly 12 months since Vice President Joseph **Biden** moved to the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, it has been a foregone conclusion in national and Delaware political circles that his eldest son, state Attorney General Beau **Biden** (D), would run in the special election in November for his father's former Senate seat.

Appointed Sen. Ted Kaufman (D), a longtime friend and political aide to Joseph **Biden**, was viewed as a seat-warmer for Beau **Biden**, and officials in both parties have been gearing up for a generational showdown between the 40-year-old **Biden** and 70-year-old Rep. Mike Castle, the likely Republican nominee.

But what happens if **Biden** doesn't run?

Few have asked the question because of the perceived inevitability of a **Biden** Senate campaign. But at this stage, it appears that Democrats don't have a Plan B - it's **Biden** or bust.

Delaware Democrats have been deferring to **Biden** as he nears a final decision. He's expected to make an announcement sometime next month, after the holiday season.

"We still fully hope and expect Beau **Biden** to run," said Eric Schultz, a spokesman for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. "It's critical that we hold on to the vice president's seat, so we're going to make sure that state has the resources that it needs in order to win."

John Daniello, chairman of the Delaware Democratic Party, said he speaks to Beau **Biden** once or twice per month but declined comment when asked if he thought **Biden** would run for the Senate.

Daniello said there is plenty of time to wage a Senate campaign.

"This urgency for people to announce before we're even into the year of the election doesn't make sense to me," Daniello said.

If **Biden** does decide to run, the Delaware race would become among the most competitive of the 2010 cycle. But in his absence, Democrats would have to scramble to field a serious candidate and prevent Republicans from winning the seat for the first time since 1960.

Though the state has been trending Democratic, the party doesn't have a replacement candidate of **Biden**'s political stature. Former Lt. Gov. John Carney, who was passed over for the Senate appointment

that went to Kaufman, is running to replace Castle in the House and wouldn't challenge Castle for the Senate seat. Chris Coons, the New Castle County executive, might be interested in running if **Biden** doesn't, though he's not well-known statewide.

Kaufman has said he won't run in 2010, though there's been some speculation that the **Biden** family might try to persuade Kaufman to reconsider if Beau **Biden** chooses not to run.

Biden, meanwhile, has avoided much public comment about his political future since returning in late September from a year in Iraq as a captain in the Delaware Army National Guard.

"Am I considering it? Absolutely. Absolutely," **Biden** said in mid-October on "Good Morning America." "But I'll be making a decision in due course."

Political analysts cautioned against interpreting **Biden's** reticence as a sign that he may not run. Delaware is a sparsely populated state, and **Biden** has the near-universal name recognition that other prospective candidates lack. **Biden's** familial tie to the White House would enable him to raise the funds needed to wage a top-flight campaign.

And by delaying an announcement until January, **Biden** would not have to file a campaign finance report until mid-April, keeping political opponents in the dark about the strength of his fundraising.

Even as **Biden** has been mum about the Senate race, his office has been actively promoting its accomplishments - including beefing up penalties for child predators and a lawsuit Delaware is pursuing to block the Army Corps of Engineers from deepening the Delaware River.

There are political risks for **Biden** in a Senate campaign. Not least is that the Republicans have fielded their strongest possible opponent in Castle, the state's at-large Representative since 1993 and a former governor who has crossover appeal to independents and Democrats. Castle led **Biden** 45 percent to 39 percent in a poll conducted Nov. 30-Dec. 2 by the Democratic firm Public Policy Polling Inc.

And at just 40 years old, **Biden** will have other opportunities to run for Senate. If Castle is elected next year, he would be up for re-election in 2014, when he will turn 75. The state's other Senator, Tom Carper (D), will be 65 when his seat comes up next in 2012.

Democratic strategists think they could win a Castle-**Biden** race in part by running a campaign on a theme of generational change between **Biden** and Castle. They think it could parallel the state's 2000 Senate race, in which the 53-year-old Carper unseated 79-year-old Sen. Bill Roth (R) even though Roth was a well-regarded veteran officeholder.

With no candidate to promote just yet, Democratic officials are training their fire on Castle in an effort to erode his standing in the state. They claim his voting record has moved to the right.

After Castle voted last week against a Democratic-written overhaul of financial regulations, the DSCC said Castle "gave a big wet kiss to Wall Street."

After the House last month narrowly passed a bill to overhaul health care policy, Democratic strategists speculated that Castle's "no" vote would be a political liability in the Senate race. But the PPP survey found that voters, by 46 percent to 43 percent, oppose rather than support the health care measure.

Castle is "an independent, experienced statesman, and he's earned respect from both Republicans and Democrats," said Brian Walsh, a spokesman for the National Republican Senatorial Committee. "Whether it's Beau **Biden** or anyone else, they're going to have a very uphill climb against someone like Mike Castle."

'Difficult Cycle' In 2010 For Dems' Seats In Play (USAT)

By Kathy Kiely, Usa Today

[USA Today](#), December 15, 2009

WASHINGTON - Veteran Tennessee Rep. Bart Gordon on Monday became the fourth centrist Democrat in three weeks to announce his retirement, leaving his party with another tough-to-defend seat in next year's elections.

"It's going to be a difficult cycle for Democrats," said Stuart Rothenberg, publisher of the non-partisan Rothenberg Political Report.

Gordon is one of 11 Democrats who have announced they will not run for re-election. On the Republican side, 12 House members are retiring or running for another office, such as Delaware's Mike Castle, who has announced his bid for the Senate seat long held by Vice President **Biden**. Rothenberg rates seven of the Democratic open seats as potentially changing parties, compared with three Republican open seats.

"We have more swing districts overall," said Rep. Chris Van Hollen, a Maryland Democrat who heads his party's congressional campaign committee. "We've said from Day One that this is going to be a very challenging cycle."

Both parties work hard to keep retirements to a minimum, because incumbents generally have an advantage in winning elections. In 1994, the retirement of 28 Democrats proved the harbinger of a Republican takeover of the House.

Democrats who have announced retirement plans so far have all done so for personal reasons, Van Hollen said, but he acknowledged he's talking to others who are worried about next year's election. "We are ... assuring them they are going to have strong support," he said.

Campaign-finance reports filed last month with the Federal Election Commission showed Van Hollen's Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee with \$14.5 million in the bank. The National Republican Congressional Committee had \$4.2 million.

Gordon is the third member of the Blue Dog Coalition, a group of centrist Democrats, to announce plans to retire since Nov. 23. The others are Reps. John Tanner of Tennessee and Dennis Moore of Kansas. Another deficit hawk, Rep. Brian Baird of Washington, announced his retirement last week.

Rep. Jim Matheson of Utah, a co-chair of the Blue Dog Coalition, said Democrats need centrists to maintain their 81-seat edge in the House.

"Blue Dogs have a proven track record of winning in moderate-to-conservative districts," he said. "The next election cycle will be no different."

Republicans say it's no accident that moderate Democrats are opting not to face the voters next year. "Blue Dog Democrats would rather roll over and retire than face the political headwind that is barreling toward them," said Ken Spain, a spokesman for the Republican congressional committee.

Former congressman Charles Stenholm, a Texas Democrat who helped found the Blue Dog Coalition, said he thinks that some of his former colleagues are feeling frustrated and under siege.

"It's better to go out on your own terms than to be forced out," said Stenholm, who served 26 years in the House before losing his seat in 2004.

Disney Lobbyist Preston Padden To Exit (LAT)

Padden, who has represented media firms in Washington for more than three decades, will join the University of Colorado Law School as a senior fellow and adjunct professor.

By Joe Flint

[Los Angeles Times](#), December 15, 2009

Walt Disney Co.'s Preston Padden, who has been one of the entertainment industry's biggest lobbyists in Washington for more than three decades, is retiring as executive vice president of worldwide government relations at the media giant.

Padden, 62, will leave his post in January to later become a senior fellow and adjunct professor at the University of Colorado Law School. He will continue to advise Disney on strategic issues in the interim.

Disney didn't name a replacement and said it was hiring a search firm to identify candidates. Richard Bates, Padden's No. 2 in Disney's Washington office, has been mentioned as a potential successor to Motion Picture Assn. of America Chief Executive Dan Glickman, who is stepping down next year.

As part of Padden's departure, Disney said it was putting Alan Braverman, its general counsel, over the company's Washington operations. Padden had reported directly to Disney Chief Executive Robert Iger.

Among the key issues facing Disney in Washington are piracy and media regulation. Theft of intellectual property has become such a problem for the industry that Vice President Joe **Biden** is holding a meeting Tuesday with entertainment industry leaders and key government officials at the White House to discuss how to stop piracy. As one of the biggest content producers and owner of ESPN and other cable networks, Disney uses its Washington office to engage in battles over cable programming costs. Disney also owns many big-city television stations that are subject to government oversight.

While many Washington insiders prefer to keep a low profile and work behind the scenes, Padden cut a wide swath in the media world. A brash executive, Padden relished his reputation as an in-your-face lobbyist willing to take on lawmakers and industry rivals over issues including cable regulation and the merger of America Online and Time Warner.

Padden first rose to prominence at News Corp., where he oversaw its Washington operation when the Fox network was just getting off the ground and needed help from regulators to grow. Fox had a strong run of FCC wins on his watch.

But at Disney, Padden had to be reined in and adjust his style to the company's less confrontational approach.

Although Padden was a practiced Washington insider, his efforts to move beyond the Beltway were less successful. News Corp. Chairman Rupert Murdoch tapped him to lead the company's short-lived satellite venture, America Sky Broadcasting, which never got off the ground. Disney named him president of the ABC network, but that stint also didn't last long.

Padden is the second senior Disney executive to leave the company in the last three months. Earlier this fall, former Disney Studios Chairman Dick Cook was forced out by Iger, who was unhappy with the performance of the movie division.

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VICE PRESIDENTIAL NEWS CLIPS

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WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL STORIES

Newark Raises Tax To Plug Budget Hole (WILNJ)

By Rachel Kipp, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](http://www.bulletinnews.com), December 15, 2009

NEWARK -- Homeowners in Newark will see their property-tax bills rise by an average of \$90 next year as part of the 2010 operating budget passed by City Council Monday night.

Council voted 5-2 to adopt the \$38.6 million budget, which includes a tax hike of 9 cents per \$100 of assessed value. The increase is four times larger than the 2.25 cents per \$100 of assessed value bump from 2009.

The tax hike and other increases come as Newark officials try to bridge the financial gap created by a slumping economy and the annual loss of \$380,000 from Chrysler, the city's largest taxpayer. The site of the closed Chrysler plant was recently bought by the University of Delaware, which is tax-exempt.

Newark also has depleted its cash reserves by about half in the past half dozen years, from \$25 million to \$30 million in 2002 to about \$12 million today. The cash reserve and revenue challenges prompted Moody's Investors Service to lower Newark's bond rating from double to single A on a scale used to determine how cheaply a government can borrow money by selling bonds. Triple A is the top rating.

"If we're looking for a better time, as in now is not a good time to add fees and increase taxes, I would say I don't think there is a good time to raise fees and increase taxes," said councilman Jerry Clifton, who estimated that the city faces a seven- to 10-year window before efforts begin to pay off. "But there are serious issues we need to address now [including] our reserves and our pension funds. These aren't things that are going to wait."

Sparking the most debate was a plan proposed in the budget to create a new revenue stream by enacting a new utility fee for property owners to help pay stormwater costs.

While most council members were supportive of creating the stormwater utility, they were concerned about passing a budget that included a line item for an expected revenue source that doesn't yet exist.

Council ultimately voted to remove the stormwater utility line item from the budget and asked the city staff to find a way to account for the \$350,000 it was expected to raise. For now, the money is targeted to come out of the city's already depleted cash reserves, although council charged the staff with coming up with an alternative.

"I suggest that we just bite the bullet, raise the tax rate to what we need to operate, develop a fully embellished stormwater utility proposal that we can react to and hope that, next year, implementing that might eliminate need for a subsequent property-tax increase," Councilman Doug Tuttle said.

Finance Director Dennis McFarland said it would be difficult to find \$350,000 in trims to the budget. "If there were an easy \$350,000 to cut, it would have been in the budget," he said.

But other council members worried that the city cannot continue to rely on property taxes to balance the budget without losing the advantage Newark has by having a lower tax rate than other area municipalities.

"The moment we come close to the county [tax rate], that is when we know we've lost," Councilman Paul Pomeroy said. "If we have another year of 7- or 8-cent tax (per \$100 of assessed value) increases, we're at that point."

The budget also tries to account for lost revenue from property and real estate transfer taxes by implementing trash-bin collection fees at apartment complexes. Eight city staff positions will be eliminated, most by not filling jobs.

"Last year, we recognized that the economy was not good and that people were struggling and we tried to do our part by lessening the blow," Councilman Ezra Temko said. "In doing that, we ended up tabling a lot of hard questions and ended up with a deficit. It would be irresponsible for us to do that this year."

Markell, Sebelius Urge Vaccinations Against Swine Flu (WILNJ)

By The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

Swine flu cases may be down but with the traditional flu season just starting, health officials are warning the public "it isn't over yet."

That was the message Monday from Gov. Jack Markell and U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, who announced a public service campaign urging that people, particularly children, be vaccinated against the virus. The 30-second spot features Markell and PBS' Sid the Science Kid and is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=jl-qdJ1ypl8. A link to the video is on www.delaware-online.com.

About 41 million Americans already have been infected by the swine flu virus this year with 200,000 of them hospitalized. As of mid-November, about 10,000 people had died from the virus.

In Delaware, there have been 1,960 confirmed cases, including five deaths, since the fall flu season began. The total number of cases since swine flu first surfaced in the spring is 2,607.

So far, the state has distributed about 190,000 doses of the vaccine, including 42,000 to children in public and private schools. Vaccination teams have visited every school in the state at least once and now are returning to elementary schools for the second doses required for young children, Markell said.

But many more people still need to be vaccinated, officials said.

"We have a window of opportunity to make sure people get vaccinated and get protected," Sebelius said. "Flu usually lasts until May ... so we still have time to get ahead of the virus."

Markell said state officials are trying to keep the public's attention on the virus.

"We've got to keep the momentum going," he said. "This could still take off in any direction because this [virus] is so unpredictable." Additional Facts

Watch video

>

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Trash Wars Take High-tech Turn (WILNJ)

By Esteban Parra And J.I. Miller, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

On a Saturday in late November, Kennard Ringgold Sr. steered a huge dump truck into a state-run green landfill near Red Lion.

Passing by signs clearly marked yard waste only, Ringgold parked his rig and dumped a pile of paper, plastic and treated lumber measuring four feet deep, 20 feet long and eight feet wide. It was the sort of chemical-laden heap that requires state workers to clear by hand before tree branches and leaves can be composted and recycled.

If he had legally dumped his trash at a landfill, Ringgold would have paid about \$60, a fraction of the \$600 he ended up paying after he was caught in the act by a surveillance camera.

In a sting entering its 19th month, the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control has charged 15 people with illegal dumping in New Castle County.

Accused dumpers often deny guilt until they are confronted with the photos, said Chief William "Chip" McDaniel, DNREC enforcement director.

"A picture is worth a thousand words," McDaniel said. "I have literally seen a picture of the person with a [dump truck] lever in their hand, dumping the load out. That's pretty powerful when you take that to the judge and show it to him."

A dozen cameras, about the size of an old house phone, are mounted on private farmland in Sussex County, beside streams in Kent County and along isolated New Castle County roads where residents have complained about trash scofflaws.

McDaniel did not know the number of people caught by cameras in Kent and Sussex counties.

In Ringgold's case, DNREC officers were called about a person dumping large amounts of waste at DART's Mid-County yard waste site off a stretch of Du Pont Highway near Delaware City and the Valero refinery.

The 58-year-old Wilmington trucker was gone by the time DNREC officers arrived, but the images were unmistakable. Ringgold said he was helping remove material from a relative's church and took it to a place suggested by a man he remembers only as Art.

"The guy told me to dump it here," Ringgold said. "He said it was all right because he dumped there a couple of years ago."

Ringgold would not have used the site had he known it was illegal, he said. "No way. No way. I'm sorry I did it because ... I don't do stuff like that.

"I'll never dump there again."

Economical choice

Because they don't have the same funding as police agencies, DNREC's enforcement officers came up with the idea of placing the trail cameras, which are commonly used by hunters while tracking wild game.

"The normal surveillance camera that transmits to a laptop, they start at \$10,000," said Sgt. James H. Faedtke, DNREC's enforcement investigator. "We were able to put out 12 cameras for less than \$5,000."

DNREC's cameras are triggered by movement or heat and are able to take pictures day and night.

The photos are stored on memory cards, which are collected by a DNREC officer who downloads the images onto a computer. The images are sharp enough to enlarge a person's face with little distortion.

Among the images captured so far are two women who seem to be smiling as they unload a sofa frame off their pickup; a pair of men removing trash from the back of a vehicle on a rainy summer evening; and the driver and passenger in a yellow dump truck holding a conversation while unloading trash along a New Castle County road.

DNREC released the images to The News Journal for this story, and McDaniel said DNREC may regularly release photographs of wanted dumpers on its Web site, which would be available to citizens and other news media.

To legally dispose of waste at a Delaware facility, the state charges \$61.50 a ton for loads over 120 pounds. Waste weighing less than 120 pounds costs a flat rate of \$4.35.

Illegal dumping is a misdemeanor, and arrest warrants are issued for suspects. The fine for illegally dumping starts at \$500 and goes up to \$1,500 for each subsequent violation. A judge can order the violator to remove the waste, pay for its removal or perform community service.

Crime-fighting tool

The state's cameras are, in some ways, similar to surveillance equipment used by cities and property owners to deter crime.

Comprehensive data on the number of surveillance cameras nationwide is not available, because they are employed by federal, state and local agencies -- and some of that information is confidential. But there's no question their use is becoming more common.

Private businesses and even homeowners use them inside and outside their buildings. Traffic cameras monitor the flow of vehicles on public roads, while red-light cameras catch scofflaws in the act. Wildlife agencies in several states also have used them to catch poachers and others who violate hunting and fishing laws.

Lancaster, Pa., known for its Amish farmers and tourist attractions, has been building one of the nation's largest camera surveillance systems -- 165 for a town of roughly 50,000 people. The cameras are monitored by employees of a nonprofit group called the Lancaster Community Safety Coalition, who notify police when they see something suspicious.

In Wilmington, the nonprofit Downtown Visions is contracted to operate more than 20 cameras downtown. Other cameras cover about 70 blocks and are operated by banks, stores and corporate offices.

Just how much help the cameras provide in deterring crime is questionable. A New York University study published this year found that cameras at two housing complexes in New York City had little or no effect on crime rates. A University of California study showed that surveillance cameras in San Francisco had no impact on violent crime, although property crimes dropped by 24 percent.

DNREC, though, is convinced the cameras are discouraging illegal dumping. While statewide reports show illegal dumping is up by 10 percent for the year -- from 411 cases to 456 -- environmental protection officers said they have noticed a decrease in illegal dumping where cameras have been deployed.

Apart from DNREC's surveillance, The News Journal has spent months exposing illegal dump sites around the state. The series of stories have focused on the trash heaps and rivers of litter that mar the state's off-road woodlands, corn and soybean fields, and state highways.

"People are talking," said Officer Casey W. Fountain, who handles the camera program in New Castle County.

"We got to keep moving," Fountain said, comparing trash surveillance to other police activity. "You can't run radar on Route 1 in the same spot every day, all day."

"You got to move it around." Additional Facts

WHOM TO CALL

While surveillance cameras help capture those who illegally dump waste, Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control's Environmental Crimes Unit asks the public to report any illegal dumping by calling its 24-hour hotline at (800) 662-8802 or by calling #367 for Verizon Wireless customers.

This number also can be used to suggest locations where a camera may help catch illegal dumpers.

Rehoboth Beach To Dump Treated Waste Into Ocean (WILNJ)

By Molly Murray, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

Rehoboth Beach commissioners voted Monday to dispose of the city's treated sewerage water through a pipe that discharges to the ocean, saying that it is the least-costly option and can be operated without damaging the coastal environment.

Details of the proposal had prompted more than 500 people to send e-mails to the city in November urging a different solution. Members of the Delaware Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation suggested the town look at land disposal of the waste.

But commissioners unanimously chose the ocean plan over one that would have sprayed the treated waste on open land.

Russ Merritt said his Surfrider group is concerned about ocean discharge for several reasons, not the least of which is the worry of an ocean spill or mishap.

Rehoboth's peak sewer discharge need is in summer -- the same time the most people are swimming in the ocean.

"Are we going to be able to notify people fast enough?" Merritt asked when the alert was sent out last month.

Local real estate agent Pat Campbell-White, who lives outside the city limits, said she was disappointed by the city's decision.

White, a longtime activist for the Inland Bays, once joked that she would be willing to stuff her body into Rehoboth's discharge pipe on the banks of Lewes & Rehoboth Canal to get the city out of the environmentally sensitive Inland Bays.

The ocean outfall, while accomplishing one goal, is short-sighted, she said.

"It's linear thinking," she said. "They are just diluting" the wastewater "and they are not doing anything to recharge the groundwater."

Campbell-White said she believes city officials had their minds made up before the discussion started and they never gave the land application option proper study or consideration.

Cost benefits, local control

The ocean just off Rehoboth Beach is an essential fish habitat. And that raises concerns about the impact wastewater -- even clean wastewater -- could have on an important ecosystem, Merritt, of the Surfrider group, said.

The debate over land application versus ocean discharge, for many city residents, came down to a financial one. At a hearing last month, several residents said they favored the cost benefits and local control of an ocean outfall.

Hen and Chicken Shoals, an important fish habitat, lies northeast of Rehoboth Beach. It is considered a key nursery area for sharks. In addition, bottlenose dolphins routinely move along Rehoboth's shoreline. Smiley the dolphin is the symbol of the Rehoboth Beach-Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce.

The city began studying options in 2005. Rehoboth is under a court order to stop discharging treated wastewater into the Lewes & Rehoboth Canal by Dec. 21, 2014.

The deadline came after city officials challenged limits for discharging treated sewage into the Inland Bays. Rehoboth's discharges into the canal ultimately flows into Rehoboth Bay.

State officials ruled that municipal and industrial treatment plants must stop discharging into the bays or their tributaries to meet federal requirements. Rehoboth, with a treatment discharge of up to 3 million gallons a day, is identified as a key polluter of Rehoboth Bay -- even with a state-of-the-art treatment plant.

City officials, who protested the ruling, received additional time to study options. In 2005, Rehoboth's consulting engineer outlined a series of disposal options, recommending a proposal to build an ocean outfall that would discharge treated wastewater well off the beach as the most viable and cost-effective option. The estimated price tag was more than \$100 million.

Yet considering the cost of resort-area land, the price was good compared with the more expensive option of buying land to spray the treated water.

Other ocean outfalls in area

Such a plan is not new for Delaware. Sussex County's South Coastal Ocean Outfall has been in operation for more than two decades. Serving a large area from Selbyville to the coast, the outfall is just south of Bethany Beach with the discharge point 1.25 miles off the beach.

Rehoboth officials considered land application but had difficulty finding large enough tracts of undeveloped land or owners who were willing to sell. The city also considered partnering with a private wastewater utility, but some officials and residents worried about losing direct control over future rates.

The average city homeowner pays \$325 a year in sewage fees. Under any of the proposed alternatives that city officials considered Monday, sewage bills would go up. The range of price for the ocean outfall options is \$550 to \$630 annually per property owner. The land application price range was \$1,010 to \$1,420.

City Commissioner Stanley Mills said he voted for the ocean outfall proposal because of the cost, the city's ability to control future operation, maintenance costs and customer rates and the fact that technologies are available to safely build and operate an ocean outfall.

During the permitting process and environmental impact work, state regulators will ensure the outfall doesn't do environmental harm to water quality or marine life, Mills said.

Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control Secretary Collin O'Mara said last month that he wanted a scientific review of the options with an eye to long-term environmental impacts, particularly the potential effects of sea level rise in eastern Sussex County. Among the concerns, he said, is whether saltwater intrusion would be an issue.

Deputy Secretary David Small said Monday that the department has a policy of promoting beneficial reuse of wastewater, such as the spray plan, but this was a local decision. The department will do a rigorous environmental review, he said.

The water quality off Delaware's beaches generally is considered good, and the state is graded well by environmental watchdog groups that monitor recreational water quality.

The current program involves detailed sampling three times a week and a Web site where state officials post results.

Rehoboth's existing treatment plant opened in 1987. Back then, city officials were under a court order to build a new plant. The existing plant will be used, with some modifications, with this latest proposal.

The next step for city officials is to file a notice of intent with the state's Clean Water Advisory Council. That group approves funding for water and wastewater construction. The city must file its notice of intent by late January.

Wilmington Looks To Pay For Sludge (WILNJ)

By Adam Taylor, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

WILMINGTON -- Now that the city can no longer dump treated sludge from its sewage plant at a nearby landfill, it has to truck the material to a western Pennsylvania facility, officials said Monday.

On Thursday, Mayor James M. Baker's administration will ask City Council to reopen the city's \$145 million operating budget to pay for the shipping and disposal, Public Works Commissioner Kash Srinivasan said.

The Pennsylvania landfill, located in the town of Kersey, will charge \$60 a ton, which Srinivasan said was a reasonable price based on industry standards across the country. Wilmington's plant produced about 140 tons of sludge a day.

But that's about twice what the city was paying to dump the sludge at Pigeon Point, Srinivasan said.

It will cost \$750,000 to dispose of the sludge for the rest of the fiscal year, which is about half over and ends in June, Baker's Chief of Staff William S. Montgomery said. Council will vote on whether to take that amount of money from the Water-Sewer Fund to pay for the disposal.

It will cost \$1.5 million for the fiscal year that starts in July. That money will probably come from higher water-sewer bills, Montgomery said.

"We're in the midst of a multiyear plan to improve the health of the Water-Sewer Fund, which will include rate increases for a few years," he said. "This new expense will be added to the equation when the budget process starts early next year."

About 156,000 customers that use Wilmington's sewage-treatment plant on Hay Road between I-495 and the Delaware River are from suburban New Castle County. About 29,000 customers are within city limits.

Council President Norman D. Griffiths, who plans to vote for the city's request Thursday, expects the county government to pay its fair share of the additional \$750,000 in disposal costs.

"But we've been in negotiations with the county for a few years about other sewage issues and we haven't always seen eye to eye, so I'm not all that optimistic about that," he said.

Griffiths was referring to two years of contentious talks that are still ongoing about how much the county should pay to dispose of raw sewage at the city's wastewater-treatment plant. New Castle County's government has no wastewater-treatment plant of its own in the most northern part of the county.

At issue is the method each side uses to calculate the amount owed. The county wanted to base the costs on the number of gallons going into the treatment plant, while the city depends on engineering estimates to figure the bill.

County Executive Chris Coons' spokesman, C.R. McLeod, said Monday the county had no comment on the new expense.

Earlier this year, the city increased water-sewer fees by 18 percent, which resulted in an additional \$60 to the average customer's bill. Calculations on how much bills will go up now that the sludge can no longer be dumped at Pigeon Point have not been done yet, Montgomery said.

Officials conceded earlier this year that deciding not to raise fees in 2008 -- because it was an election year -- set back the timeline to return the Water-Sewer Fund to financial solvency.

Taking the sludge to Pigeon Point has long been controversial. The state government has said that Wilmington's contractors who run the sewage plant illegally deposited more than 100,000 tons of mixed sludge, ash and other materials.

Those issues are still the subject of intergovernmental disputes and legal appeals over cleanup, monitoring and removal issues.

High Costs May Be Hindering Hybrids (WILNJ)

By Andrew Eder, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

High battery costs are likely to delay the widespread adoption of plug-in hybrid electric vehicles for decades, according to a new government-sponsored report.

The analysis by the National Research Council found that the cost of building a plug-in hybrid -- such as the cars Fisker Automotive wants to build in Delaware -- is as much as \$18,000 more than a conventional car, largely because of the cost of rechargeable lithium-ion batteries.

"Costs will decline with technology improvements and economies of scale, but Li-ion batteries are already being produced in great numbers and are well along their learning curves," according to the committee of experts that authored the report. "The steep early drop in cost often experienced with new technologies is not likely."

The high cost of the batteries will make the cars harder for automakers like Fisker to sell, even though operating costs are lower than for gasoline-powered cars and that gap will get larger as gas costs rise.

The study concludes that tens or hundreds of billions of dollars in government subsidies will be needed over many years to make plug-in hybrids cost-effective for consumers.

The council suggested that policymakers need to hedge their bets and support a variety of alternative fuels.

Officials at Fisker, which plans to make a plug-in hybrid family sedan in Delaware beginning in 2012, defended their business plan, noting that they believe the cost of lithium-ion batteries will drop much more rapidly than the council's study suggests.

The report was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy, which has been investing billions of dollars in auto and battery makers to speed the development of electric-car technologies. President Barack Obama has set a goal of having as many as 1 million plug-in electric vehicles on U.S. roads by 2015, and major automakers and startups alike are working to develop vehicles that run either partially or completely on electricity.

Among the Energy Department's beneficiaries is Fisker, an Irvine, Calif.-based startup that received a \$528.7 million loan earlier this year and subsequently announced plans to build a plug-in hybrid vehicle at the Boxwood Road assembly plant near Newport. Fisker's Delaware venture also will be backed by \$21.5 million in loans and grants from the state.

Fisker spokesman Russell Datz said the forecasts used by the company to develop its business model contradict the National Research Council's report.

"Lithium-ion battery technology will come down rapidly in price relatively quickly, and PHEVs [Plug-In Hybrid Electric Vehicles] will make up the vast majority of sales of advanced-technology vehicles over the next 10 years or so," Datz said.

The council's report said the type of plug-in hybrids being developed by Fisker would cost about \$18,100 more to build than a conventional car, including \$14,000 for the battery pack.

The Energy Department hopes its investments in battery technologies will drive costs down as much as 50 percent in the next three years, but the council's report said the department's goals "are extremely aggressive and are unlikely to be reached by the target date or even for a significant time beyond."

Gov. Jack Markell and Alan Levin, director of the Delaware Economic Development Office, led a concerted effort to bring Fisker to Delaware in the summer and fall. The deal was announced in late October.

The plant is expected to employ 2,500 workers by 2014, with 650 on the job in 2011.

From the consumer's perspective, the higher cost of plug-in hybrids would be offset somewhat by lower operating costs, since a mile driven on electricity is less expensive than a mile on gasoline. But the council's report said it would likely take several decades before the fuel savings offset the higher initial costs.

And many consumers would need to upgrade their home's electrical service to charge their cars, at a cost of \$1,000 to \$2,000.

Fisker's first car, the Karma luxury sedan, is set to hit the market next year at a price of \$87,900. The company hopes to sell its planned next vehicle, a family-oriented sedan being developed under the name Project Nina, at a starting price of \$39,900, including a \$7,500 federal tax credit.

Datz said the Karma will actually be less expensive than many of the luxury sedans with which it will compete. When Fisker begins producing the Nina, it is targeting an annual production of about 115,000 vehicles.

"We think that's a pretty conservative number," Datz said.

In the most optimistic scenario, about 40 million plug-in hybrids could be on the road by 2030, the council's report says. A more realistic projection is for 13 million plug-in hybrids by 2030, about 4 percent of the U.S. fleet of 300 million vehicles -- and that assumes that the current level of government support continues, the report says.

Even with such support, plug-in hybrids are expected to have little impact on oil consumption before 2030 because of their limited adoption, according to the report.

But Datz said Fisker's argument is, "You've got to start somewhere."

"There's no magic bullet to reducing reliance on foreign oil or cleaning up the environment," he said. "It's not going to happen overnight."

AstraZeneca Defending Crestor Patents (WILNJ)

By Staff And Wire Reports

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

AstraZeneca Plc will "vigorously defend" patents covering its best-selling cholesterol-lowering drug Crestor after a U.S. magistrate rejected a request to throw out some claims, spokesman Neil McCrae said.

AstraZeneca and Shionogi & Co., which developed Crestor, sued generic drug makers, including Apotex Inc. and Novartis AG's Sandoz, in December 2007 in federal court in Wilmington to block generic copies of Crestor. The generic drug makers then claimed AstraZeneca and Shionogi misled the patent office when they sought rights to the inventions.

Magistrate Judge Leonard Stark, in a Dec. 12 ruling, rejected the request from AstraZeneca and Shionogi to throw out those allegations. The case will go to trial in February before U.S. District Judge Joseph Farnan.

The British pharmaceutical giant has its U.S. headquarters in Fairfax and employs about 5,000 people in Delaware. The stakes for AstraZeneca are high -- the future of one of its biggest products, a drug that generates billions of dollars in global sales. In 2006, Crestor posted worldwide sales of \$2.03 billion.

The fight against Crestor generics is one of three AstraZeneca is waging to protect the final years of unimpeded sales for three of its major drugs.

Crestor is AstraZeneca's third-best selling product after its acid-reflux drug, Nexium, and its drug for schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, Seroquel. Crestor's patent expires in 2016.

Nexium's U.S. patents expire between 2014 and 2019, and the core U.S. patent for Seroquel expires in 2011.

Analysts do not see the local court's decision as a major setback.

"Judge Stark did not indicate which way the court is leaning in this matter," wrote Seamus Fernandez, an analyst with Leerink Swann & Co. in Boston, in a Dec. 12 note to clients. "We still believe the odds favor AstraZeneca given the high hurdle involved in proving inequitable conduct, but the hearing and subsequent recommendation have raised our risk threshold regarding the outcome."

McCrae said AstraZeneca was not surprised by the decision, as it can be difficult to get summary judgment on allegations of inequitable conduct.

"We remain confident that we will prevail on the issues at trial," McCrae said in a telephone interview. "AstraZeneca has confidence in its intellectual property covering Crestor and we'll continue to vigorously defend the patents protecting the product."

On Other Side Of Police Tape, Students See EMS In Action (WILNJ)

By Edward L. Kenney, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

Nothing in the dry, lifeless pages of a textbook could quite prepare emergency medical services high school students for the rush of riding in the back of a paramedic vehicle.

"Your heart starts pumping and your blood starts flowing. You don't know what to expect," said Jake Carrow, one of two seniors in the EMS program at St. Georges Technical High School near Middletown taking part in a weekly ride-along program with New Castle County paramedic units.

"It's just really exciting to go out and actually be there and help someone," fellow participant Elizabeth Gliniak said. "Everything just clicks when you're out there. It all comes together. All the nervousness goes away when you're in the ambulance truck."

Lt. Dan Seador, in charge of recruitment and continuing education for the county's EMS, said the arrangement with St. Georges is the first time the paramedics have worked formally with a school.

"I think it's a great opportunity for them to test the water a little further," Seador said of the EMS students. "I don't think they very often get a chance to do that at that level."

"It's a dose of reality, because emergency medicine is raw; it's not a nice, tidy package," added school EMS instructor Cookie Immediato, who approached the county about starting the program.

"I can teach the book all day long," she said, "but I can't teach the emotions and everything else. This is a really quick way of knowing if this job is a job that is really for you or not."

Immediato, who served as a nationally registered paramedic from 1991 to 2008 before coming to the school, also reached out to several fire companies -- Aetna Hose Hook & Ladder of Newark, Mill Creek and Delaware City -- to allow some of her EMS students to ride along regularly on emergency runs this year.

Both Carrow and Gliniak also have participated in emergencies with the fire companies, but they said those calls often deal with basic life support, as opposed to the more intense advanced life support that the county so often handles.

Working different shifts and at rotating stations for the county, both students said they have been on more than a dozen emergency responses with its units -- most of them calls reporting subjects with chest pains, respiratory distress and the like -- since joining the program last month.

"No accident yet," said Gliniak, 17, who wants to be a pediatric nurse. "I'm hoping. I want to see one. It's kind of exciting. I'm not wishing one on someone, but ... "

Gliniak said she likes making a difference in people's lives, although the work is tough sometimes.

"Some things you see -- and you just want to cry," she said. "But you've got to hold it in. You're there to help someone. You have to put all your feelings behind you."

Carrow, 18, who wants to join the police or military, said the county's paramedics have allowed him to do some basic tasks at emergency scenes, such as taking a victim's blood pressure or placing an oxygen mask over someone's face.

"It depends who you ride with and how comfortable they are with you," he said of his involvement. "They'll let you do some things. And they'll answer questions and stuff."

The two students said they have both learned a lot.

"It gives you an idea of what happens before the Band-Aids go on," Carrow said.

"It's preparing me for what I'm about to see if I'm going to be a nurse," said Gliniak, who was recently accepted into the Beebe School of Nursing in Lewes.

Immediato, who also has gotten her EMS seniors working co-op jobs this year at Christiana Hospital and the Veterans Affairs Medical Center near Elsmere, breaks new ground with each step she takes, she said. There is not much else in Delaware like St. Georges Technical's EMS program. The school itself opened only three years ago, and she is just this year beginning to roll her students out into the community for real-life experiences.

"I truly wanted them to see what it was all about," she said. "I've already had a student we had to talk through some situation because he was at his first CPR. He was a little shaken up by it. They think when you do CPR, someone will miraculously wake up, because that's what you see on TV. But it doesn't always happen that way."

Captain, Passenger Escape Burning Boat (WILNJ)

By Staff And Wire Reports

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

Two people were rescued Monday from a burning powerboat off Ocean City, Md., officials said.

The 40-foot Viking sport-fishing boat My Col Col was heading north in the Atlantic Ocean when it caught fire about 200 yards off of 118th Street about 7:50 a.m., Maryland Natural Resources Police said.

The boat was being operated by David Lee Catrino, 41, of Ocean City, and he had one passenger, Ollie Charles Powell, 38, of Berlin, Md. While two Coast Guard rescue boats and a commercial towing service were en route to the scene, another nearby boat, the Get Some, arrived and took Catrino and Powell aboard. They were then transferred to the tow boat. By 9:30 a.m., the boat had burned close to the water line, said Petty Officer John Miller, a spokesman with the Coast Guard in Portsmouth, Va.

The boat was towed to the shoreline, where firefighters from Ocean City extinguished the blaze. No one was hurt.

Holiday Blues (WILNJ)

By Kelly Bothum, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

This time of year is never easy for Jean King. Six years ago today, she lost her husband, Bob, to cancer after 43 years of marriage. His death in 2003 came four years after one of the couple's daughters also died from cancer.

King stays close to her children and grandchildren, reveling in their successes like any proud mother and grandmother. But sometimes she struggles with the loss of two people she loved so dearly. Once-beloved holiday traditions, like baking Christmas cookies, just seem too difficult anymore. So is being home, surrounded by all the memories.

But rather than drown in her sadness, King has found a way to channel her emotions into something productive. For the last three years, she's been a volunteer through RSVP, a national program that matches willing volunteers over age 55 with nonprofit organizations looking for help.

These days she volunteers weekly with the Salvation Army, making sure the people who come seeking food, toys and other holiday assistance have the proper paperwork to qualify them for services. She also helps out at the Delaware Agricultural Museum and the Modern Maturity Center, which sponsors RSVP in Kent County.

Volunteering keeps her spirits high, but it also helps her to feel like she's honoring the lives of her late husband and daughter.

"Helping other people, it's just wonderful," King said. "You feel like you are doing something to make their lives better. You see these families and you want to help them all."

It's supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year, but the holiday hoopla and excitement can be alienating for people who have suffered the loss of a loved one. The memories come flooding back, along with a sense of longing and loss. The feelings remain no matter how long the loved one has been gone, said Judy Pierson, a licensed clinical psychologist with Delaware Hospice.

"This time of the year is very much associated with memories," Pierson said. "People think grieving is this linear process and you cross the finish line at some point. There are some good days and some bad days. Some times of the years are so potent. They can be a trigger."

Other types of loss can be just as debilitating. Parents whose grown children have moved out may feel the sting of an empty nest this holiday season. Millions of Americans have lost jobs during the country's economic downturn, forcing sharp cutbacks in gift-giving and other holiday traditions. Still other folks are combatting emotional, physical and mental illnesses year-round that keep them feeling isolated from those around them.

But there are ways to fight the holiday blues so you can still find something to celebrate this season. In keeping with the season of giving, we offer the following tips to help those struggling through a difficult time. They're worth remembering for all of us -- whatever the situation -- because taking care of yourself is perhaps the best gift to give your loved ones.

Acknowledge your loss or struggle

It's important to admit to yourself -- and to others -- that this holiday is going to be a struggle. That doesn't mean you're going to spend the last weeks of the year hiding under the blankets in your bed, but it may mean you don't want to celebrate like everyone else.

Talk to friends and family ahead of time about what's going on, Pierson said. If a job loss has you cutting back on the holidays this year, be honest about it instead of making excuses or avoiding a gift-giving situation.

If you're headed to a holiday gathering and missing a loved one, think about bringing along a small token that can symbolize that person. Carry in your jacket or purse a pair of earrings, cuff links or other

memento that belonged to your loved one. It's an inconspicuous reminder that can help you feel stronger, particularly in a social situation.

"They can reach in and touch it and make them feel like they still have that bond," Pierson said. "It gives them that intimacy even if the person is in spirit."

And don't be afraid to talk about your deceased loved one -- chances are, other people you know want to talk about them, too, but they may be worried about upsetting you.

Take time

When people suffer a loss, they rarely give themselves enough time to actually deal with how they're feeling. They try to hurry up the process in the hopes that at the end they will feel better. That is rarely the case, Pierson said.

Most people believe it takes about two months to recover from the loss of a loved one. But therapists who work with grieving people say it takes at least two years, and even then issues still emerge over time.

"Grief lasts as long as it lasts," said Marianne Biddle, a registered nurse and psychotherapist. "It's unique to us."

One of the keys to making it through a rough time is giving yourself permission to feel however you are feeling. That means it's OK to have fun and laugh at a party even if you just lost your job and don't have something lined up in the future. You don't have to feel guilty about enjoying yourself just because your circumstances have changed.

In the same way, if you don't feel like going to the neighborhood New Year's Eve party this year because you previously attended it with your late husband, politely decline the invitation. Don't feel like you have to accept every invitation just because it is offered. Instead, pick one or two that are the most meaningful to you. But don't be surprised if you don't feel the same about celebrating as other guests.

"It's normal for people who have lost someone to feel annoyed by all the chit-chat they hear at the holidays," Pierson said. "Hearing everyone else's problems may feel a little petty if you're grieving."

Put yourself first

Yes, be selfish. Eat well, get plenty of sleep and avoid temptations to overindulge in alcohol. Prune needy friends and family or people who put too many demands on you when you're not feeling up to it.

It can be difficult for people to think about their own needs ahead of others, but if you won't do it for yourself, then do it for the ones you love, Pierson said. Focusing on you during this time helps you to be in a better place mentally and physically, and that benefits the people around you.

Staying physically active boosts your mood and gets you thinking about something other than your current situation, said Biddle, who has been a therapist for more than 35 years. "Doing whatever it is that you enjoy -- walking, gardening, going to that place you're fond of -- allows you to invest yourself outside of yourself," said Biddle, who has led support groups for people coping with loss. "If we're just on the sofa sitting, then we're thinking just about ourselves, and our body, mind and spirit all become consumed with the grief."

During this time, it may help to lower your own expectations of how you should be doing, Pierson said. Perhaps this isn't the year to host the whole family for Christmas dinner because you don't have the money or energy to cook. Maybe this is the year you opt for gift cards instead of extravagant gifts.

"This is a time when you may need to disappoint others in order to not disappoint yourself," she said. "Give yourself permission to do less."

Help someone else

Scott Beck has always felt passionate about making sure other people have enough to eat. In the past, he gave money to the Food Bank of Delaware and Feed the Children, a national organization dedicated to providing food, medicine and other necessities to children around the world.

Recently, the 56-year-old Lebanon man hasn't had much extra money to share. So he's donating his time instead to help others. For the last six weeks, he has been spending about 20 hours a week volunteering at the Food Bank's Milford location. Beck, who has issues related to anxiety and seasonal affective disorder, said volunteering has helped him to see beyond his own problems. The job has given him a purpose in his life he was previously lacking.

"I believe if you can marry a personal passion with a volunteer effort, it makes it special," Beck said. "It feels natural. It doesn't feel like work. This whole experience has been a beautiful thing for me."

Carol Lettieri, volunteer coordinator for RSVP at the Modern Maturity Center, said that's a common reaction. About 1,000 people in Kent County volunteer through RSVP.

"When you see people less fortunate and it hits home that you are a catalyst in helping them to have something better, it just makes you feel really good," she said. "I've seen a lot of people who are going to be alone on Christmas or not going to be going with their family for that big Christmas, but they'll volunteer and it jump-starts them for the rest of the year."

Don't go it alone

If you're hurting, this isn't the time to pull the tough-guy routine. Ask for help. Seek out a friend or family member who will listen. Join a support group. Find people who care, Biddle said. "Sometimes you don't need words, just someone to be there with you or just that reinforcement of being cared about," she said.

A community center can be a great resource because there's almost always something going on, Biddle said. It's a place where people naturally congregate and form easy connections. There are usually different groups and activities, all with a fluid, relaxed feel.

Sometimes people are hesitant about going somewhere new but, once they finally get up the nerve, they wish they had gone sooner. At least that's what Kathy Samworth hears from the participants in the GEM program offered by Jewish Family Services in Talleyville. GEM, which stands for Growth, Education and Mental Fitness, was created to help people deal with the loneliness that can develop as people get older.

GEM offers yoga, computer classes, knitting and other programs on a weekly basis. Referrals from friends are how most people find out about GEM, although the program is open to anyone over age 55.

One of the greatest benefits of GEM is the friendships that have developed among members, Samworth said. Many arrange lunch dates and other outings outside the program.

"I've had people come and say, 'Well I've been wanting to come for a year.' They just hadn't worked up the courage," Samworth said. "I think once they come, they realize how much there is here." Additional Facts

About RSVP

RSVP is the country's largest volunteer network for people 55 and older. The program, part of the Corporation for National and Community Service, helps connect older people who want to volunteer with organizations who need help.

In Delaware, more than 3,000 senior citizens participate in RSVP, which stands for Retired Senior and Volunteer Program. It is sponsored by the state in New Castle and Sussex counties, and through the Modern Maturity Center in Kent County.

For more information, call 255-9882 in New Castle County; 734-1200, ext. 129, in Kent County; and 856-5815 in Sussex County.

Choose Toys Not Only For Fun Value, But Safety Value (WILNJ)

By Hiran Ratnayake, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

Zhu Zhu Pets may be the hottest holiday gifts for kids right now, but an investigation into whether the toy is dangerous was enough to deter Lilian Latan from buying one.

Latan, who lives in Middletown, has two daughters, ages 6 and 4. She reads safety labels before buying toys and games and pays attention to investigations and recalls.

"Especially with the 4-year-old, I still have to be very careful" about her putting things in her mouth, Latan said. "I read everything about a toy, and if it's small and if it's something that looks like candy, I won't buy it."

More than 3 billion toys and games are sold in the U.S. each year -- most between Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. As if battling long lines and high demand for certain toys during the holiday season isn't enough, parents also must make sure gifts are safe.

Consumer confidence has waned in recent years, prompted by recalls of toys deemed unsafe. In 2008, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission recalled 162 toys. That same year, there were 19 toy-related deaths and about 172,700 toy-related injuries to children younger than 15 that required urgent care.

So far this year, there have been 38 toy recalls. The commission attributes the drop to increased enforcement at the nation's ports, cooperation with other countries, industry compliance with federal safety rules and consumer awareness and education.

Still, there have been some high-profile recalls and investigations. The commission recently opened an investigation into the popular Zhu Zhu Pets after the consumer watchdog group GoodGuide reported that the toy hamsters contain higher-than-allowed levels of antimony. If ingested, the heavy metal can sicken children. Cepia, the maker of Zhu Zhu Pets, has disputed the findings.

YoYo Joe's Toys & Fun, an independent toy store in Talleyville, sells Plan Toys, which are made from rubberwood and are painted with soy-based ink.

"When people are looking for things that are safe, that's where we point them," owner Joe Mitchell said. "They tend to be a little more expensive, but they are very popular."

Many recalled toys were manufactured in China. But Mitchell said parents shouldn't dismiss every China-made toy, since most toys bought in the U.S. are made in China. "If you go by looking for things not made in China, you'll have a very small selection," he said.

Mitchell also recommends that parents stick with well-known brands. "Big manufacturers have gone to very big lengths to make sure their toys are safe," he said.

Whether Zhu Zhu Pets, Plan Toys or Barbie dolls are on your children's wish lists, here are 10 safety tips to help guide you through the rest of the holiday shopping season.

1. Buy age-appropriate toys.

Just like you consider your child's age, interest and skill level when determining if they'd enjoy a gift, you also want to consider those same characteristics for safety purposes. Follow the age recommendations on the toy package to ensure that you are getting a safe gift for your child.

"Various toys are geared for certain ages, not only for the cognitive level but also with the pieces and parts that come with them," said Sean M. Elwell, injury prevention coordinator of the trauma program at Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children in Rockland. "Toys for the older age group may have some smaller pieces that could be a choking hazard."

2. Inspect all toys.

Young children can choke on small toys, so keep them out of reach. They also shouldn't play with balloons, magnets or toys with small parts that easily come off or could break off. Older toys should be inspected and, if necessary, repaired or discarded.

Magnets can cause serious damage if swallowed, said Dr. Stephen Murphy, medical director of the trauma program at the duPont Hospital.

"We had a case of a toddler who swallowed a couple magnets with opposite poles (that magnetized), and a piece of tissue was caught between them," he said. The toddler survived but needed surgery.

"Our point is that if you prevent something at step 1, 2 or 3, you never have to get to step 15 or 16," Murphy said.

3. Read all instructions and heed warnings of proper use.

A product that isn't assembled correctly could break during use and injure a child, Elwell said. In addition, toys that seem safe can be hazardous when used in unintended ways, so read all enclosed instructions and warnings.

Popular items such as the electronic Easy-Bake Oven can be particularly hazardous when not used properly, but even basic items like yo-yos can be dangerous if children aren't careful when using them.

4. Fill out registration forms.

By filling out and mailing the registration form contained in the toy packaging, you can be quickly alerted if there's a recall on the product. Many toy manufacturers allow people to register their products online.

5. Buy the proper safety accessories.

If you're buying a riding toy as a gift, you should also buy a helmet and any other safety gear. Wearing a bike helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission. You should also buy a helmet with skateboards, in-line skates, scooters, snowboards and any other riding toys.

"A lot of times a parent will think, 'I want to get them that big red shiny bike,' but those little items are just as important," Elwell said.

6. Separate toys by age.

Children should be taught to put away their toys when they are finished playing with them. And older siblings should be instructed to keep their toys away from younger siblings. Safe storage not only keeps the home clean, it helps prevent injuries such as tripping over toys.

7. Avoid buying used toys.

You may get a discount at a garage sale, but you may unknowingly be buying a recalled product.

It's also less safe to buy toys that aren't new. Used items may become damaged -- and subsequently, unsafe -- over time. For example, the plastic material in a tricycle could become degraded after years of storage in a garage. "We've seen some plastics that weather has taken a toll on," Elwell said.

8. Keep batteries and chargers away from children.

Young children should be kept away from all batteries, chargers and adapters, since those products can pose thermal burn hazards. Read all instructions and warnings that come with these products -- especially chargers, since they often lack a device to prevent them from overcharging. Batteries, like magnets, also can cause serious problems if a young child swallows one, Murphy said.

"If you swallow a battery, it's leaking while in your digestive tract, and it can erode part of the wall of your intestines," Murphy said. "You have to be prudent and you've got to keep an eye on the kid or keep it away."

9. Keep toy packaging away from children.

"Plastic packaging can potentially be a choking hazard as well as a poisonous hazard," said Elwell, who works at the Nemours Safety Store in the main lobby of the duPont Hospital. "The packaging -- the Styrofoam and the plastic -- some of those things can be more appealing than the actual toy, and it will be ingested and they can choke on it."

10. Stay updated.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission keeps a comprehensive list of all recalled toys at www.cpsc.gov. The list includes the manufacturer, picture of the item and description of the recall.

Food Bank Makes Plea For More Donations (WILNJ)

By Robin Brown, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

With donations down in the hard economy, the Food Bank of Delaware on Monday issued a plea for help.

President and Chief Executive Officer Patricia Beebe said donations to this year's holiday food drive are 24,313 pounds less than last year -- and need continues to grow.

"It's up dramatically," Beebe said, adding that the nonprofit, which for years has distributed food to more than 90,000 needy residents a year through member agencies and feeding sites, plans to release new Delaware hunger statistics next month.

Many Delawareans "continue to be generous with their volunteer time, money and food," she said, but the significant shortfall in donations is raising concerns.

"More Delawareans are out of work and more families and individuals are lining up for emergency food assistance," she said. "Whether you can donate just a few cans or several bags full, every little bit helps to feed hungry Delawareans."

Community Relations Manager Kim Kostas said the impact of the shortfall can be seen easily when the pound-shortage is translated into aid to the needy.

"With 24,313 pounds of food," Kostas said, "we could provide 810 thirty-pound food packages." Each package is enough to feed a family of four for three to four days, she added.

To help bridge the gap, the food bank issued a plea for businesses, schools, faith- and community-based groups to hold benefit donation drives.

The food bank offers tips, posters and other help for organizing donation drives at fbd.org. Financial donations also are accepted at the Web site.

The most-needed foods include tuna and other canned meats, peanut butter, hearty soups, dried beans, canned fruit and vegetables, hot and cold boxed cereals, pasta and macaroni and cheese, long-grain rice, turkey gravy, instant mashed potatoes, pancake mix, cranberry sauce, pasta sauce and seasoned stuffing mix.

Beebe said anyone can drop off tax-deductible donations of nonperishable foods in unbreakable containers, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays at Food Bank of Delaware sites near Newark at 14 Garfield Way in Delaware Industrial Park off Del. 72 between Chestnut Hill Road and Old Baltimore Pike or its Milford Facility at 1041 Matlind Way.

Tax-deductible donations also may be sent to Food Bank of Delaware, 14 Garfield Way, Newark, DE 19713 or made online at www.fbd.org.

For more information, including volunteer opportunities, call 292-1305.

Brandywine Park Sugar Bowl Soon Will Be Back -- Sweeter Than Before (WILNJ)

By Robin Brown

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

A long-lost landmark is being reincarnated in Wilmington.

A picturesque pavilion called The Sugar Bowl for its dome lid was lost in Brandywine Park more than a half-century ago after use as a bandshell, an observatory overlooking the Brandywine and a setting for picnics and wedding photos.

Details of its demise are unclear. The Hagley Museum & Library says the 27-foot tall, 110-foot diameter pavilion was razed around 1940. Others say it disintegrated over years or may have sustained irreparable damage in 1954's Hurricane Hazel.

Its image endures on old pastel postcards but just its granite base and concrete foundation were left by the north end of Washington Street Bridge. Its remains inspired civic activist David Hudson, twice Delaware poet laureate, to dream of its revival. Before his 2003 death, Hudson rallied support for a new Sugar Bowl to boost park use and public appreciation.

Meanwhile, Delaware State Parks Director Chaz Salkin and architect Don Homsey spotted the long-gone Sugar Bowl as a landmark worth replacing.

They went to Friends of Wilmington Parks and said, "This might be a project you can sink your teeth into," said Executive Director Mike Porro.

The nonprofit group (www.FriendsOfWilmingtonParks.org) finished restoring Jasper Crane Rose Garden in 2004 and adopted the Sugar Bowl in 2006. Supporters include foundations, park users, elected officials, community leaders, engineers, architects, planners, the city and the state parks division -- some backers giving time and help for years.

Architects and planners used the old postcards for reference "because they are really the only images we have of what it looked like," said Friends' President Ed Weirauch.

The goal was to replicate the original Sugar Bowl, but the new one will have strengths it lacked -- a 10-ton steel skeleton, just erected, that won't disintegrate and concrete reinforced with glass fiber, Porro said.

With about \$350,000 raised and \$250,000 more needed, the friends plan a public campaign to raise the rest next year, Porro said. Tax-deductible donations may be sent to Friends of Wilmington Parks, Box 435, Montchanin DE 19710.

The new Sugar Bowl, due to be done in 2010-11, will serve all of the original's functions plus public art and historic interpretation -- including how and when the landmark became a memory, if more research finds answers, Porro said. It also will honor the Delaware National Guard, which has no monument in the state, he said.

When it's done, as dreamer Hudson used to say, The Sugar Bowl again will stop park guests as they give it a good look and say, "How sweet it is."

What To Do When Mom And Dad Are Sick, Too (WILNJ)

By Carolyn Butler, The Washington Post

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

I recently had one of those moments that only other parents or full-time caregivers of young children are likely to understand: I was holding my miserably sick baby, who was sneezing, coughing and drooling all over me, when my 3-year-old stumbled in and said, "My belly hurts," just before throwing up all over the lot of us. As I cleaned up and tried to comfort both kids, I couldn't help but wonder which I'd start doing first: hacking or vomiting.

One of the many things I took for granted before I had kids -- besides the bliss of a good night's sleep and keeping my clothes clean for a full day -- was relative good health, particularly during cold and flu season. Since having my boys, I have suffered through a dazzling array of ailments right along with them, from multiple bouts of bronchitis to pinkeye and every 24-hour stomach virus imaginable. Among the four of us in the house, I don't think there's been a moment without a runny nose since the end of summer.

While there has been little research on the topic, experts agree that the caregivers of young children are far more likely to fall ill than adults without kids.

"We see it in practice all the time, pretty consistently: Parents get sick more often," says Thomas Campbell, chair of the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry and co-author of "Families and Health." "Young kids are a reservoir of germs, and if they're at day care, preschool or any place else where they're around other children, they're in a super-virus environment and the perfect vectors for illness and for passing viruses around. Kids hug and touch and share toys and saliva and cough all over each other, and then parents hug and kiss their kids. Nothing else compares, contact-wise -- we don't go to work and hug and kiss our colleagues."

Lack of sleep and increased stress can also hamper immune response, Campbell notes.

Sociology professor Debra Umberson, co-author of a forthcoming review on parenthood's effect on well-being in the Journal of Marriage and Family, agrees that children are "disease vectors," but they also can be helpful to adult health in the long term.

"Once you have children," she says, "you tend to take better care of your health, in terms of behavior like drinking, smoking and other risk-taking, which offers benefits and protects you from mortality. But on the other hand, [parents] also exercise less and gain more weight than folks who do not have children, which is not good."

Another byproduct of raising these smiling, sneezing petri dishes is that a stomach bug that affects a child for all of an afternoon can fell an adult for days. "You would think that you've had 30 or 40 years of exposure to these types of viruses and so you'd be protected, but very often it doesn't turn out that way," says Campbell, citing hepatitis A and chicken pox as classic examples of illnesses that are typically mild for children and much more serious for adults.

And Umberson adds: "Once you get sick when you have little kids, you can't take care of yourself -- you have to take care of everyone else -- and so it's harder to recover. It takes longer and is more unpleasant."

I've wondered if it's futile even to try to stop the spread of infection in our house. But Benard Dreyer, a pediatrics professor at the New York University School of Medicine, says it can be done. He suggests

proper (read: almost obsessive) hand washing and the liberal use of hand sanitizers. He also recommends staying out of waiting rooms in doctor's offices and the emergency room -- "major reservoirs for disease" -- if possible.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently released recommendations for preventing the spread of H1N1, but presumably for any other virus, too, in the home that include such optimistically impractical tips as constantly wearing a mask, isolating sick people in their rooms and staying at least six feet away from them.

The CDC is "adapting what is recommended to health-care facilities for the home, but nobody runs their home like a hospital -- it's not doable," Dreyer says. "What you really need to do is use your judgment about your own situation -- like if you're pregnant or have a newborn, you may actually want to use masks -- and then take the basic principles and apply them to your home in a realistic way."

Still, don't despair if you catch that cold. All this shared illness has an upside.

"Once a child starts to develop a functioning immune system, at about 6 months, then the exposure to general viruses and germs that you find at day care, school, the supermarkets, the playground or parties, which is hard to avoid, isn't particularly a bad thing, because it helps build and stimulate the immune system," says Robert Shearin, a pediatrician in Bethesda, Md. "If you're getting that kind of exposure year after year, we hope it will be able to help kids fight other infections and stay healthier later on."

So if you're a parent or full-time caregiver of small children, stock up on Kleenex, wash your hands as often as possible, pray for some luck and know that someday this, too, shall pass.

4 Accused Of Invading Wrong Home In Stickup (WILNJ)

By Robin Brown, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

Four suspects have been arrested in a home-invasion robbery that police said they committed at a mistaken address.

Six University of Delaware students -- four male residents and two female guests -- were left bound with duct tape over their mouths in the 1:20 a.m. break-in Nov. 30 in the 500 building of University Courtyard Apartments on Scholar Drive.

The suspects are Dustin J. Hults, 20, of the 100 block of Roosevelt Ave., Newport; Michael A. Ortiz, 20, and Joel M. Ortiz, 21, of the 1500 block of Dilworth Road in Willow Run near Elsmere; and Vincent J. Baiocco, 21, of the 2300 block of N. Washington St. in Wilmington, said Lt. Brian Henry, Newark Police Department public information officer.

Investigators "confirmed that the defendants were actually targeting another apartment where they believed they would find drugs and/or drug money, but mistakenly entered the victims' apartment," Henry said. He did not reveal which unit the four meant to hit, but said an investigation of that site is continuing.

Arrested Saturday at their homes, each is charged with six counts of first-degree robbery, first-degree burglary, weapons offenses and other crimes, Henry said.

Failing to post bail, all were committed to Young Correctional Institution in Wilmington, he said.

According to police, the robbers -- three with guns, one with a knife -- made noise in a hall until a resident opened the door a bit, then shoved their way into the living room. A guest suffered a bruised eye when the door hit her; no one else was hurt.

The intruders searched the place and stole a safe along with other undisclosed belongings but found no drugs, according to police, who said the men -- one using a bandanna to cover his face -- had brought along three backpacks and a pillow case.

After they left, reportedly in a silver four-door car parked south of the complex, a resident got loose and called police.

When police searched Hults' home, they found some of the stolen property, Henry said. More was found in a search of Michael Ortiz's car, which was used in the getaway, he said.

An air gun used in the robbery also was found in Ortiz's car, and investigators determined that the intruders' other guns were air guns or BB guns, Henry said.

The same apartment was burglarized when residents were gone for UD's Thanksgiving break, but nothing valuable was taken and items usually stolen in burglaries were left there, Henry said. Detectives are investigating whether the incidents are linked.

Amid Burst Of Security, Accused Smuggler Sentenced (WILNJ)

By Sean O'Sullivan, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

The J. Caleb Boggs Federal Building in downtown Wilmington was surrounded by dozens of police vehicles during the morning rush hour Monday as police officers, some in body armor, paced back and forth behind traffic barricades.

Nearby, blue command-post tents blocked Ninth and French streets. A Delaware State Police helicopter patrolled overhead amid whispers about police snipers on rooftops.

Attorney Joe Green thought Vice President **Joe Biden** was making a surprise visit. Ryan Rios, who works in a nearby law office, was unsettled by the largely unannounced and unexplained high-profile police presence.

Some who asked were informed that it was a "traffic survey;" others were told it was unspecified "police activity."

"It" was the sentencing for Amir Hossein Ardebili, the 36-year-old Iranian national whose case was unsealed by federal prosecutors a week and a half ago.

He was sentenced to five years in federal prison by Chief District Judge Gregory M. Sleet for smuggling, conspiracy, money laundering and multiple violations of the Arms Export Control Act. Authorities say he purchased prohibited electronics and other equipment with military applications from the United States, for the government of Iran.

U.S. Marshal for Delaware David W. Thomas said Monday's security precautions were put in place because of threats on Ardebili's life. Thomas declined to offer specifics. "In our business, we have to be right 100 percent of the time," he said.

Thomas said it was the highest level of security he'd ever overseen at the courthouse in his eight years and it may have been the heaviest level of protection ever thrown around the J. Caleb Boggs Building.

According to prosecutors, Ardebili attempted to buy gyroscopes that could be used in fighter aircraft and missile guidance systems, phase shifter chips that could operate complicated radar systems to allow weapons systems to lock onto multiple targets, and computers needed to upgrade Iran's fleet of aging F-4 warplanes.

His arrest in the Republic of Georgia in October 2007 was the culmination of a years-long international sting operation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. He was extradited to Delaware under top-secret security in January 2008, pleading guilty several months later behind closed doors. The case was prosecuted in Delaware because as part of a bogus business deal, Ardebili sent a \$3,000 down payment to a bank account in Delaware.

In court Monday, Ardebili's attorney, Edmund "Dan" Lyons Jr. said his client was a small-time operator who was just trying to make a living in his native country when he was busted by U.S. agents.

The police presence outside the courthouse stood in stark contrast to that description.

State employees in the Carvel State Building across the street were not told what was going on. One said she was told by a police official only that "someone important" was going to be at the courthouse.

However, prosecutors had announced two weeks ago, in unsealing the case, that Monday would be Ardebili's sentencing date, and Rios and a co-worker, Sylla Slawski, said they had figured out what was going on after hunting for information online. "It makes us feel safe," Slawski said.

In court, Ardebili was an unassuming presence, dressed in a gray T-shirt and khaki pants.

His comments to the court, in sometimes broken English, were briefly interrupted so Ardebili could compose himself after choking up.

He told Sleet that he was no international arms merchant and was not a political or religious zealot. "I never wanted to harm anyone," he said, saying that many of the prohibited items he purchased on behalf of Iran had civilian uses. He said he never dealt in guns or ammunition.

Conflicting information

Assistant U.S. Attorney David Hall said that, although many of the items had other uses, the digital air computers he tried to buy had no other use but in the F-4. Hall also said that in undercover videos, Ardebili admitted he knew the items were to be used by the Iranian military for a missile defense system.

Hall also pointed out that in those recordings, Ardebili stated that Iran was seeking to improve and upgrade weapons because its leaders "believe war is coming" with the United States.

Ardebili said some of his comments to undercover agents were a bluff, an exaggeration, "to show myself as a big man," who could make deals happen. "It is the nature of the business," he said.

Lyons asked for a sentence of time served, or about two years, stating that Ardebili was one of hundreds of such independent procurement agents used by Iran to try to get around U.S. embargoes. He is "a little guy ... a cog," Lyons said. The lawyer said Ardebili had trouble coming up with a \$6,000 down payment for the deal that led to his arrest.

More than just a cog?

Ardebili was not an international arms merchant, making deals from a yacht in the Mediterranean and selling weapons to the highest bidder, Lyons said, but a man who lives in the house he grew up in with his parents. The trip to the Republic of Georgia was Ardebili's first outside Iran, he said.

Hall responded that Ardebili was far from unsophisticated in his business -- which involved money laundering to hide the source of payments and complicated shipping practices, involving front companies in other nations, to mask the destination of contraband goods.

And though Hall conceded that Ardebili was not living "on a yacht," he said Ardebili was nonetheless involved in more than \$1 million in purchases annually for the Iranian government.

Lyons said his client, who has a degree in electrical engineering, made about \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year and operated out of a small office with one employee and one partner.

Sleet, in handing down his sentence, agreed with prosecutors that Ardebili's actions presented a threat to U.S. security. But the judge said Ardebili's remorse appeared genuine and that combined with "additional information that has been brought to my attention," a sentence of five years was appropriate.

Each of the nine charges against Ardebili carried a maximum punishment of up to 20 years in prison but the federal sentencing guideline range in the case was between 12 and 14 years.

Hall and U.S. Attorney David Weiss said they were satisfied with Sleet's ruling. Lyons said it was reasonable.

An uncertain future

About 60 minutes after the hearing, three sport utility vehicles emerged from a garage at the federal courthouse, with Ardebili riding in one, and sped away. Shortly after, traffic barriers were taken down and the police presence faded from around the court building. Normal order slowly returned.

Many, including Sleet, said the real question for Ardebili will come when he has completed his incarceration. "In effect, you are a man without a country," Sleet said, adding it appears Ardebili will not be able to return to Iran.

No one would comment about whether Ardebili cooperated with U.S. authorities, but Lyons said no matter what the reality is, Iranian officials will conclude that his client did, making it difficult, if not impossible, for him to return home.

Ardebili's wife is now in the United States, Lyons said, though she did not attend Monday's proceeding. The rest of his family remains in Iran.

Generally, foreign nationals who are convicted of felonies are automatically deported, but Lyons said it is possible for such a person to remain in the U.S. after they have served their sentence.

Delaware Police: Millsboro Citizen's Academy Restarting (WILNJ)

By Alex Ruoff, The (salisbury, Md.) Daily Times

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 14, 2009

MILLSBORO -- The <http://www.millsboropd.com/>>Millsboro Police Department is restarting its Citizen's Police Academy to give residents an inside look at local crime fighting.

"It's an in-depth look at how we do business," Chief John Murphy said.

The academy is scheduled for Tuesday nights starting in January, with two-hour classes on leadership in law enforcement, courtroom procedures, the process of becoming a police officer and other topics.

This marks the fourth annual Citizen's Police Academy since 2004. The classes were not held last year because of scheduling conflicts with the department's Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies accreditation process.

Murphy said the classes aim to show Millsboro residents just where their tax money is going and the methods implemented to keep their city streets safe.

"We hope to pass information on that will help them better see why we do what we do," he said. "A good example is the Taser. A lot of people don't know the amount of training an officer goes through before he can carry one and why we have them."

Murphy said the classes will tour the department's headquarters, display their current police procedures, and explain the methods implemented by police to enforce law in Millsboro.

Millsboro resident Lucas Hurwenkil said he participated in the classes in 2006 and enjoyed the experience of seeing the police department behind the scenes.

"It was cool," he said. "I didn't know what to expect, but I think I got a lot out of it."

According to Murphy, his department gets feedback from the classes as well.

"Everyone who comes tells us about their experiences and I think we get something out of it, too," he said. "It's not just us telling them."

Pot-Nets resident Herman Duvall said he'd be interested in the tour of the Sussex Correctional Institution.

"I'd take my son to show him where he's not supposed to end up," he said.

The class is free, but applicants must register and pass a background check beforehand. Those interested are asked to apply early to ensure registration because of limited seating. Additional Facts

IF YOU GO

WHAT: Millsboro Police Department's Citizen's Police Academy

WHERE: Millsboro Police Department, 307 Main St. in Millsboro

WHEN: Registration begins now. Classes are scheduled for Tuesdays, Jan. 12 to 23.

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL EDITORIALS

It Is Americans' Responsibility To Help Curb Teens' Drug Abuse (WILNJ)

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

The war on teen drug use is stymied by a softening of young people's perceptions about the harm done by smoking marijuana, using Ecstasy, drinking alcohol and using smokeless tobacco.

The annual Monitoring the Future study of eighth-, 10th-, and 12th-graders shows decreases in some grades in the use of cocaine, methamphetamine and hallucinogens.

However, there are disturbing trends of teens abusing both prescription and over-the-counter drugs. Seven of the 10 drugs most abused by high school seniors are prescription or over-the-counter drugs acquired primarily from teens' friends or relatives. The rate for use of inhalants in the last 30 days among 10th-graders increased.

Marijuana, considered by some as a "gateway" drug to more dangerous addictive substances, and binge drinking get a favorable assessment by teens.

Among eighth- and 10th-graders, the perception of "great risk" associated with marijuana use declined; perceived harmfulness of marijuana deteriorated among eighth-graders; and peer disapproval of marijuana use has declined.

Although use of alcohol among teens has declined, it remains the most commonly abused substance. Fewer 10th-graders viewed weekend binge drinking as harmful and fewer high school seniors disapproved of having one or two drinks daily.

In calling these findings to the attention of policymakers, it's incumbent on the rest of Americans to consider their ability and responsibility to trend this research in a more positive direction.

For some, leading by example will be difficult. Drug-using baby boomers -- ages 50 to 59 -- increased their illegal substance use since 2002, from 2.7 percent to 4.6 percent in 2008.

This was the generation at the peak of drug use among youth in the United States in the late 1970s.

End Confusing Budget Process By Restoring Fiscal Discipline (WILNJ)

[Wilmington News Journal](#), December 15, 2009

The U.S. budget process was probably designed to befuddle the average citizen. That may keep the public fat and happy in good times, but lately that confusing process is scaring the public.

The latest appropriation passed by Congress -- a \$447 billion omnibus spending bill -- is as befuddling as can be and more.

The bill, which is going to President Obama to sign, contains thousands of earmarks and double-digit increases for many federal departments. No doubt some of these increases are needed, at least in the short run, to combat the loss of jobs to the recession.

But many of the earmarks and the special favors are still hidden in the bill. They will slowly emerge, over the next few weeks. And each revelation will infuriate the public more.

The bill includes another \$650 billion for Medicare and Medicaid expenditures, for a total of \$1.1 trillion. Worse, the bill combines six of the 12 annual spending bills that the House and Senate haven't been able to pass so far this year. So more budget bills are coming.

Many economists argue that now is not the time to worry about the growing deficit. They say that job creation is more important in the next few months. Granted. But Congress has a habit of authorizing spending and avoiding cutbacks. Considering the rising deficit, the size of the stimulus package and whatever a health care measure ends up costing, the time has come for Congress to get serious about the nation's finances.

A bipartisan commission should be charged with finding ways to cut this spending and restore fiscal discipline. The commission should be formed now so that no time is lost in correcting the current policy. Sen. Kent Conrad, a Democrat, and Sen. Judd Gregg, a Republican, proposed such a panel. Congress should follow their advice.

BIDEN IN THE NEWS

Obama Touting Home Energy Efficiency Program (AP)

[AP](#), December 15, 2009

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Hoping to jump-start his plans for job growth, President Barack Obama is pushing Congress to pass incentives for homeowners who retrofit their homes to make them more energy-efficient.

The president planned to visit a Home Depot store in Northern Virginia on Tuesday to make the case that outfitting houses to be more energy-efficient will create jobs and save families money on their energy bills. It's the fourth time in less than two weeks that the president will preside over a high-profile jobs event, as he calls attention to his efforts to bring down the nation's double-digit unemployment rate.

Last week, the president proposed a new spending plan that would provide tax breaks for energy-efficient retrofits in homes. The plan also calls for small business tax cuts and new spending on highway and bridge construction. The administration hasn't put a price tag on the plan, but it could cost more than \$150 billion.

The White House hopes the appeal of the retrofitting program -- which some administration officials have dubbed Cash for Caulkers -- will be similar to the now-expired Cash for Clunkers program, which offered rebates for trading in used vehicles for more fuel-efficient ones. At a White House jobs summit earlier in the month, Obama told Home Depot chairman Frank Blake that home improvement companies would be key partners in this program.

Obama has also proposed expanding stimulus initiatives that promote energy efficiency and clean energy jobs. Currently, about \$8 billion of the \$787 billion stimulus package goes toward energy-saving investments in homes. The White House has said investments like installing insulation, sealing leaks and modernizing heating and air conditioning equipment will pay for themselves many times over.

In a memo for the president, Vice President Joe **Biden** said stimulus spending and other initiatives will lead to 1 million home energy-efficiency retrofits by 2012. The report also said the U.S. is on track to double renewable energy generation, including solar, wind and geothermal, in three years.

Obama Clean-Energy Investments Creating Jobs, Biden Report Says (BLOOM)

By Catherine Dodge

[Bloomberg News](#), December 15, 2009

Dec. 15 (Bloomberg) -- President Barack Obama's clean-energy initiatives will help create more than 700,000 jobs and allow the U.S. to double its renewable-power generation in three years, according to a report by Vice President Joe **Biden**.

Biden, in a memo on administration efforts to shift to a clean-energy economy, said projects in the \$787 billion economic stimulus package are contributing to "unprecedented growth" in renewable energy, such as wind and solar, and improving manufacturing for new clean-energy technology.

"The recovery act is not only about rescue and relief, it's about reinvestment," Jared Bernstein, **Biden's** chief economic adviser, said on a conference call with reporters. He called **Biden's** report a "comprehensive assessment" of the administration's clean-energy efforts.

Government investments in transportation will help spur the development of plug-in hybrid and electric vehicles, including three new electric-vehicle plants, the first in the U.S., the report said.

The memo said the administration also will provide loan guarantees to two companies for construction of three to four new nuclear reactors "by the end of our first two years in office."

Investments of \$23 billion in renewable generation and advanced energy manufacturing included in the recovery plan will likely create 253,000 jobs and leverage more than \$43 billion in additional investment that may support another 469,000 jobs, the **Biden** report said.

The administration is "solidly on track" to met its goal of saving or creating 3.5 million jobs under the stimulus plan, Bernstein said. The U.S. has lost about 7.2 million jobs since the recession began in December 2007.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said last month the stimulus package had generated between 600,000 and 1.6 million jobs so far.

The stimulus package approved by Congress and signed by Obama in February included about \$80 billion for clean-energy programs designed in part to spur the growth of so-called green jobs. Republicans say the U.S. jobs data are evidence Obama's stimulus plan is failing to create jobs.

The unemployment rate last month was 10 percent, down from a 26-year high of 10.2 percent in October.

To contact the reporter on this story: Catherine Dodge in Washington at cdodge1@bloomberg.net

Biden Updates Obama On Recovery Act Investments In Clean Energy Projects (ABC News)

By Karen Travers

[ABC News](#), December 15, 2009

President Obama will be in Copenhagen on Friday for climate change talks and Vice President **Biden** has given him some reading material for the flight over.

The White House has released a memo that **Biden** presented to the president outlining ways that funding from the administration's \$787 billion Recovery Act funding is making progress for toward a cleaner, more energy efficient economy. The report details ways that stimulus funds have been used toward advances in renewable energy, energy grid modernization, home energy efficiency projects and green automobiles.

"I'm pleased to report that the administration is laying the foundation for a clean energy economy that will create a new generation of jobs, reduce dependence on oil and enhance national security," **Biden** begins his memo to Obama. "Through the Recovery Act and more effective use of programs already in existence, the administration is taking the critical steps to transform the United States into a global clean energy leader."

Over \$80 billion from the Recovery Act has been invested in clean energy technology, which the Obama Administration says is "the largest single investment in clean energy in U.S. history." The administration says that investment will produce \$150 billion in clean energy projects

Obama heads to a Home Depot store in Northern Virginia on Tuesday to discuss how energy saving home projects help the economy with labor, manufacturing, and small business leaders. On Wednesday, **Biden** will talk about clean energy and the manufacturing industry at a Middle Class Task Force event on Wednesday.

Below are examples from **Biden's** report, where the administration says it has made progress on clean energy projects as a result of Recovery Act investments:

- . Renewable Energy: The U.S. is on-track to double renewable energy generation, including solar, wind and geothermal, and double renewable manufacturing capacity in just three years because of Recovery Act investments.

- . Vehicles and Fuels of the Future: Over the next six years, three new electric vehicles plants-the first ever in the U.S.-and 30 new battery plants will be fully operational because of the Administration's \$16 billion investment in plug-in hybrids, all-electric vehicles and the infrastructure needed to power them, as well as new clean fuels. When President Obama took office there were just 2 advanced battery and electric drive component factories in the U.S.

- . Grid Modernization: Twenty-six million smart meters will be installed in U.S. homes by 2013 - more than triple the number currently in service - as a result of the Administration's \$4 billion Recovery Act investment in a smart energy grid and the one-to-one match in private sector funding. This technology allows consumers to monitor and regulate their own energy usage and costs.

- . Energy Efficiency: Because the Administration is making the largest single investment in home energy efficiency in U.S history through the Recovery Act and other initiatives, nearly one million home energy efficiency retrofits will have happened by 2012.

- . Carbon Capture: Because of Recovery Act funding and existing loan guarantee authority, there will be 5 commercial scale power plants operating with large carbon capture sequestration facilities by 2015. When President Obama took office, there were zero.

- . Science and Innovation: Through the Recovery Act, the Administration is investing \$400 million in some of the most advanced research in wind, solar, and geothermal technologies through the ARPA-E program to make these clean sources of energy more affordable and easier to store and transport. A year ago, this critical program was unfunded.

Tracking The Stimulus: Vice President Provides Update On Clean Energy (HILL)

By Jim Snyder

[The Hill](#), December 15, 2009

The vice president's office has released an update on the green revolution.

There's not much new there. But the memo from VP Joe **Biden**, whose duties include overseeing the stimulus, gives a run-down of the administration's efforts on clean energy specifically as President Barack Obama prepares to join the climate change talks in Copenhagen later this week.

In total, the Recovery Act invests \$80 billion in clean energy, according to the memo. That includes \$23 billion to renewable generation and advanced energy manufacturing; \$16 billion on the "vehicles and fuels of the future"; \$4 billion to upgrade the electric power grid; \$5 billion for a weatherization program designed to make low-income homes more energy efficient; \$10 billion for carbon capture and sequestration; and \$12.6 billion for advanced research and development.

Carol Browner, director of the new White House Office of Energy and Climate Change Policy, said the money for renewable energy would support more than 15 gigawatts of new wind, solar, geothermal and other renewable energy sources that would power four to five million homes a year.

The public money could "leverage" another \$43 billion in private investment. In total, the public and private investment in renewable energy could support nearly 470,000 jobs, the administration contends.

Jared Bernstein, the vice president's chief economic policy advisor, said the stimulus bill was a "twofer" - that is, a way to help the economy and improve the environment.

Biden, Industry Big Shots To Discuss Piracy Fight (LAT)

By Joe Flint

[Los Angeles Times](#), December 15, 2009

Vice President Joe **Biden**, Atty. Gen. Eric H. Holder Jr. and FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III are among the top government officials meeting with entertainment industry leaders Tuesday afternoon at the White House to discuss how best to fight piracy of intellectual property.

In its release detailing the meeting, the White House said the round-table discussion that **Biden** will lead is aimed at showcasing the Obama administration's "commitment to enforcing laws against the piracy of intellectual property."

Industry chiefs who are expected to be participating in the meeting are Viacom CEO Philippe Dauman, Warner Bros. Entertainment CEO Barry Meyer, NBC Universal CEO Jeff Zucker and Sony Pictures CEO Michael Lynton. Directors Guild President Taylor Hackford will also participate. Other government bigwigs scheduled to be at the table include Commerce Secretary Gary Locke, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and Secret Service Director Mark Sullivan.

No word if Michael and Tareq Salahi will also be dropping by.

White House To Hold Anti-piracy Roundtable (HILL)

By Kim Hart

[The Hill](#), December 15, 2009

Vice President Joe **Biden** will hold a roundtable discussion tomorrow afternoon about enforcing anti-piracy laws. A notice from the White House calls the meeting "the first of its kind, and will bring together all the stakeholders to discuss ways to combat piracy in this rapidly changing technological age."

Attorney General Eric Holder, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and Commerce Secretary Gary Locke will be in attendance.

So will CEOs from some of the biggest media companies that have been most effected by the piracy of music, movies and other copyrighted material.

The list includes, Sony Pictures CEO Michael Lynton, Warner Music Group CEO Edgar Bronfman, and Harper Collins CEO Brian Murray.

And there may be a few questions directed toward NBC CEO Jeffery Zucker about the company's proposed mega-merger with Comcast.

Victoria Espinel, the newly confirmed Intellectual Property Enforcement Coordinator in the White House, will also be there.

Hollywood Meets D.C. White House Confab To Discuss Enforcing Piracy Laws (VARIETY)

By Paul Harris

[Variety](#), December 15, 2009

Studio chiefs and showbiz CEOs will gather at the White House today for a roundtable discussion on piracy hosted by Vice President Joseph **Biden**. Called Operation Holiday Hoax, the enforcement action was conducted Dec. 8-13 and involved federal agents and officers in 41 states. It resulted in the seizure of 708,000 products in the U.S., ranging from Christmas ornaments to footwear, according to ICE chieftain John Morton. Parallel operations in Mexico netted some 255 tons of counterfeited goods, he said. The operation resulted in seven initial arrests, along with machines used to produce counterfeit goods.

Morton said the joint operation was purposely timed to hit purveyors of counterfeit products as they ramped up for the busy holiday season. He said it targeted a variety of counterfeiters and trademark pirates, distributors, associates, shippers, warehouses, salespeople and vendors. Besides putting a dent in the criminals' holiday profits, we are getting out the word to consumers that counterfeits are everywhere," he said.

"Buying them harms the economy and the industries that create the real thing."The MPAA and the RIAA assisted in the operation, and Glickman and Bainwol participated in a news conference to announce the results of the action.

Morton said the principal focus was to hit distribution points at the peak of their holiday inventories, seize a maximum number of goods and develop investigative leads for future arrests. He predicted future joint operations involving other countries as part of increased enforcement of counterfeit merchandise.

The Obama administration is calling the meeting a first-of-its-kind event to highlight ways to combat piracy in the face of fast-changing technology.

Biden will be joined by an array of administration officials including Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano, Attorney General Eric Holder and Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke, as well as FBI director Robert Mueller and Secret Service director Mark Sullivan.

Among the CEOs scheduled to attend are Sony Pictures Entertainment's Michael Lynton, Warner Bros. Entertainment's Barry Meyer, Viacom's Philippe Dauman, NBC Universal's Jeff Zucker and Warner Music Group's Edgar Bronfman, as well as News Corp.'s Michael Regan, the Walt Disney Co.'s Richard Bates, MPAA chairman Dan Glickman and Recording Industry Assn. of America chairman Mitch Bainwol. Universal Music Group president Zachary Horowitz, AFTRA national executive director Kim Roberts Hedgpeth, IATSE international president Matthew Loeb, DGA president Taylor Hackford, DGA national exec director Jay Roth, National Music Publishers Assn. CEO David Israelite and SAG national exec director David White are also scheduled to be there. The industry has been on a lobbying push for greater

enforcement of piracy laws and has praised Obama's choice for its "copyright czar," Victoria Espinel, who fills a position mandated by a law that passed last year and was signed by President Bush. But there has been concern about the ability of the industry to fight piracy as the FCC considers "Net neutrality" rules, which would prohibit Internet service providers from favoring one site over another in the speed of the delivery of Web content.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced Monday that a coordinated anti-counterfeit sweep by the U.S. and Mexican governments has netted more than \$26 million worth of bogus products, including more than 29,000 DVDs and CDs.

Joe Biden's Secret Mission (DB)

By Richard Wolffe

[Daily Beast](#), December 15, 2009

Far from a rebuke of **Biden's** wishes on Afghanistan, Obama's decision was close to the vice president's true position, Richard Wolffe reports. But now **Biden** is left with a familiar challenge: sell the war strategy without gaffes.

According to the newspaper accounts, Joe **Biden** should be an unhappy man. He just lost the internal debate about the new Afghanistan strategy and is now required to sell the policy to anxious Democrats and the skeptical media.

So it came as something of a shock to congressional Democrats to hear the vice president declare his true position in a meeting at the White House late last month, as the Afghan policy meetings were drawing to a close.

"Just so everyone knows," **Biden** corrected his questioner, "I'm not for drawing down the troops."

"Why can't we just withdraw the troops?" asked one member, appealing to the war skeptic in the office of the vice president.

"Just so everyone knows," **Biden** corrected his questioner, "I'm not for drawing down the troops."

In fact, **Biden**-for all his pressure to limit the scale and scope of the new Afghan mission-ended up as an advocate for another 10,000 to 15,000 troops to be deployed to the war zone. Instead of backing a pure counterterrorism strategy, **Biden** himself was a compromiser with those wanting to beef up the counterinsurgency approach beloved by the generals.

Biden's main job through the internal debate was to open up the space for his boss to pick a hybrid strategy between withdrawal and escalation: a limited mission with no lofty goals of establishing democracy, and with a clear end-date for the start of the drawdown.

White House officials say the vice president is now playing the role of character witness to his former friends in Congress, telling them that the president is committed to the narrower strategy and the beginning of the withdrawal in July 2011-no matter what the public comments of Defense Secretary Robert Gates.

"There's a lot of speculation as to how sincere that date is. It's very sincere," said one senior White House official. "As commander in chief and secretary of defense, you cannot draw categorical lines in the sand about what are the right troop movements 18 months in advance. But it's as firm a commitment as you can make in this environment."

Biden's role as a vocal questioner of the top brass revolved around a simple concern: that the internal debate needed to focus on strategy more than the raw number of troops. Was it worth committing

more money and lives to Afghanistan if the core leadership of Al Qaeda was hiding across the border in Pakistan, a nuclear-armed neighbor with a far greater strategic interest to the United States?

For **Biden**, stabilizing the Afghan government was only a means to an end-to maintain intense pressure on Al Qaeda. He had no interest in the old liberal, and now neoconservative, goal of nation-building.

As a supporter of an extra 15,000 troops, compared to Obama's final decision of twice that number, **Biden** ended up closer to the final result than his media image as an opponent of any buildup.

But he was still some way off, and that leaves the vice president with his trickiest-yet familiar-challenge: to sell the strategy in a way that helps the president and yet remains truthful to his own concerns.

If history is any guide, **Biden** can stumble badly when speaking for himself rather than sticking to his talking points. Then again, if Obama really wanted someone to stick to his talking points, he could have chosen Evan Bayh as his No. 2.

What's Plan B If Biden Doesn't Run In Delaware? (RC)

By Greg Giroux, Roll Call Staff

[Roll Call](#), December 15, 2009

In the nearly 12 months since Vice President Joseph **Biden** moved to the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, it has been a foregone conclusion in national and Delaware political circles that his eldest son, state Attorney General Beau **Biden** (D), would run in the special election in November for his father's former Senate seat.

Appointed Sen. Ted Kaufman (D), a longtime friend and political aide to Joseph **Biden**, was viewed as a seat-warmer for Beau **Biden**, and officials in both parties have been gearing up for a generational showdown between the 40-year-old **Biden** and 70-year-old Rep. Mike Castle, the likely Republican nominee.

But what happens if **Biden** doesn't run?

Few have asked the question because of the perceived inevitability of a **Biden** Senate campaign. But at this stage, it appears that Democrats don't have a Plan B - it's **Biden** or bust.

Delaware Democrats have been deferring to **Biden** as he nears a final decision. He's expected to make an announcement sometime next month, after the holiday season.

"We still fully hope and expect Beau **Biden** to run," said Eric Schultz, a spokesman for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. "It's critical that we hold on to the vice president's seat, so we're going to make sure that state has the resources that it needs in order to win."

John Daniello, chairman of the Delaware Democratic Party, said he speaks to Beau **Biden** once or twice per month but declined comment when asked if he thought **Biden** would run for the Senate.

Daniello said there is plenty of time to wage a Senate campaign.

"This urgency for people to announce before we're even into the year of the election doesn't make sense to me," Daniello said.

If **Biden** does decide to run, the Delaware race would become among the most competitive of the 2010 cycle. But in his absence, Democrats would have to scramble to field a serious candidate and prevent Republicans from winning the seat for the first time since 1960.

Though the state has been trending Democratic, the party doesn't have a replacement candidate of **Biden's** political stature. Former Lt. Gov. John Carney, who was passed over for the Senate appointment

that went to Kaufman, is running to replace Castle in the House and wouldn't challenge Castle for the Senate seat. Chris Coons, the New Castle County executive, might be interested in running if **Biden** doesn't, though he's not well-known statewide.

Kaufman has said he won't run in 2010, though there's been some speculation that the **Biden** family might try to persuade Kaufman to reconsider if Beau **Biden** chooses not to run.

Biden, meanwhile, has avoided much public comment about his political future since returning in late September from a year in Iraq as a captain in the Delaware Army National Guard.

"Am I considering it? Absolutely. Absolutely," **Biden** said in mid-October on "Good Morning America." "But I'll be making a decision in due course."

Political analysts cautioned against interpreting **Biden's** reticence as a sign that he may not run. Delaware is a sparsely populated state, and **Biden** has the near-universal name recognition that other prospective candidates lack. **Biden's** familial tie to the White House would enable him to raise the funds needed to wage a top-flight campaign.

And by delaying an announcement until January, **Biden** would not have to file a campaign finance report until mid-April, keeping political opponents in the dark about the strength of his fundraising.

Even as **Biden** has been mum about the Senate race, his office has been actively promoting its accomplishments - including beefing up penalties for child predators and a lawsuit Delaware is pursuing to block the Army Corps of Engineers from deepening the Delaware River.

There are political risks for **Biden** in a Senate campaign. Not least is that the Republicans have fielded their strongest possible opponent in Castle, the state's at-large Representative since 1993 and a former governor who has crossover appeal to independents and Democrats. Castle led **Biden** 45 percent to 39 percent in a poll conducted Nov. 30-Dec. 2 by the Democratic firm Public Policy Polling Inc.

And at just 40 years old, **Biden** will have other opportunities to run for Senate. If Castle is elected next year, he would be up for re-election in 2014, when he will turn 75. The state's other Senator, Tom Carper (D), will be 65 when his seat comes up next in 2012.

Democratic strategists think they could win a Castle-**Biden** race in part by running a campaign on a theme of generational change between **Biden** and Castle. They think it could parallel the state's 2000 Senate race, in which the 53-year-old Carper unseated 79-year-old Sen. Bill Roth (R) even though Roth was a well-regarded veteran officeholder.

With no candidate to promote just yet, Democratic officials are training their fire on Castle in an effort to erode his standing in the state. They claim his voting record has moved to the right.

After Castle voted last week against a Democratic-written overhaul of financial regulations, the DSCC said Castle "gave a big wet kiss to Wall Street."

After the House last month narrowly passed a bill to overhaul health care policy, Democratic strategists speculated that Castle's "no" vote would be a political liability in the Senate race. But the PPP survey found that voters, by 46 percent to 43 percent, oppose rather than support the health care measure.

Castle is "an independent, experienced statesman, and he's earned respect from both Republicans and Democrats," said Brian Walsh, a spokesman for the National Republican Senatorial Committee. "Whether it's Beau **Biden** or anyone else, they're going to have a very uphill climb against someone like Mike Castle."

'Difficult Cycle' In 2010 For Dems' Seats In Play (USAT)

By Kathy Kiely, Usa Today

[USA Today](#), December 15, 2009

WASHINGTON - Veteran Tennessee Rep. Bart Gordon on Monday became the fourth centrist Democrat in three weeks to announce his retirement, leaving his party with another tough-to-defend seat in next year's elections.

"It's going to be a difficult cycle for Democrats," said Stuart Rothenberg, publisher of the non-partisan Rothenberg Political Report.

Gordon is one of 11 Democrats who have announced they will not run for re-election. On the Republican side, 12 House members are retiring or running for another office, such as Delaware's Mike Castle, who has announced his bid for the Senate seat long held by Vice President **Biden**. Rothenberg rates seven of the Democratic open seats as potentially changing parties, compared with three Republican open seats.

"We have more swing districts overall," said Rep. Chris Van Hollen, a Maryland Democrat who heads his party's congressional campaign committee. "We've said from Day One that this is going to be a very challenging cycle."

Both parties work hard to keep retirements to a minimum, because incumbents generally have an advantage in winning elections. In 1994, the retirement of 28 Democrats proved the harbinger of a Republican takeover of the House.

Democrats who have announced retirement plans so far have all done so for personal reasons, Van Hollen said, but he acknowledged he's talking to others who are worried about next year's election. "We are ... assuring them they are going to have strong support," he said.

Campaign-finance reports filed last month with the Federal Election Commission showed Van Hollen's Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee with \$14.5 million in the bank. The National Republican Congressional Committee had \$4.2 million.

Gordon is the third member of the Blue Dog Coalition, a group of centrist Democrats, to announce plans to retire since Nov. 23. The others are Reps. John Tanner of Tennessee and Dennis Moore of Kansas. Another deficit hawk, Rep. Brian Baird of Washington, announced his retirement last week.

Rep. Jim Matheson of Utah, a co-chair of the Blue Dog Coalition, said Democrats need centrists to maintain their 81-seat edge in the House.

"Blue Dogs have a proven track record of winning in moderate-to-conservative districts," he said. "The next election cycle will be no different."

Republicans say it's no accident that moderate Democrats are opting not to face the voters next year. "Blue Dog Democrats would rather roll over and retire than face the political headwind that is barreling toward them," said Ken Spain, a spokesman for the Republican congressional committee.

Former congressman Charles Stenholm, a Texas Democrat who helped found the Blue Dog Coalition, said he thinks that some of his former colleagues are feeling frustrated and under siege.

"It's better to go out on your own terms than to be forced out," said Stenholm, who served 26 years in the House before losing his seat in 2004.

Disney Lobbyist Preston Padden To Exit (LAT)

Padden, who has represented media firms in Washington for more than three decades, will join the University of Colorado Law School as a senior fellow and adjunct professor.

By Joe Flint

[Los Angeles Times](#), December 15, 2009

Walt Disney Co.'s Preston Padden, who has been one of the entertainment industry's biggest lobbyists in Washington for more than three decades, is retiring as executive vice president of worldwide government relations at the media giant.

Padden, 62, will leave his post in January to later become a senior fellow and adjunct professor at the University of Colorado Law School. He will continue to advise Disney on strategic issues in the interim.

Disney didn't name a replacement and said it was hiring a search firm to identify candidates. Richard Bates, Padden's No. 2 in Disney's Washington office, has been mentioned as a potential successor to Motion Picture Assn. of America Chief Executive Dan Glickman, who is stepping down next year.

As part of Padden's departure, Disney said it was putting Alan Braverman, its general counsel, over the company's Washington operations. Padden had reported directly to Disney Chief Executive Robert Iger.

Among the key issues facing Disney in Washington are piracy and media regulation. Theft of intellectual property has become such a problem for the industry that Vice President Joe **Biden** is holding a meeting Tuesday with entertainment industry leaders and key government officials at the White House to discuss how to stop piracy. As one of the biggest content producers and owner of ESPN and other cable networks, Disney uses its Washington office to engage in battles over cable programming costs. Disney also owns many big-city television stations that are subject to government oversight.

While many Washington insiders prefer to keep a low profile and work behind the scenes, Padden cut a wide swath in the media world. A brash executive, Padden relished his reputation as an in-your-face lobbyist willing to take on lawmakers and industry rivals over issues including cable regulation and the merger of America Online and Time Warner.

Padden first rose to prominence at News Corp., where he oversaw its Washington operation when the Fox network was just getting off the ground and needed help from regulators to grow. Fox had a strong run of FCC wins on his watch.

But at Disney, Padden had to be reined in and adjust his style to the company's less confrontational approach.

Although Padden was a practiced Washington insider, his efforts to move beyond the Beltway were less successful. News Corp. Chairman Rupert Murdoch tapped him to lead the company's short-lived satellite venture, America Sky Broadcasting, which never got off the ground. Disney named him president of the ABC network, but that stint also didn't last long.

Padden is the second senior Disney executive to leave the company in the last three months. Earlier this fall, former Disney Studios Chairman Dick Cook was forced out by Iger, who was unhappy with the performance of the movie division.

joe.flint@latimes.com

Chung, Kathy S. EOP

07 Jun 2015 18:10:25

To: hbiden@rosemontseneca.com", "Mackler, Alexander, Mackler, Alexander

Cc: rhb@rspdc.com

Bcc:

Re: These are all cell numbers.

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Fri Jul 26 11:58:40 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

b(6),P6

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Chung, Kathy

22 Nov 2013 17:02:51

To: hbiden@rosemontseneca.com, [P6/b(6)]

Cc: Suber, Kellen, Williams, Ashley, Williams, Ashley, >, "Suber, Kellen C.

Bcc:

FW: For Hunt's DE reception email

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 09:43:19 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

b(6),P6,P5

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Mackler, Alexander S. EOP/OVP

27 May 2016 17:51:30

To: Anthony Bernal [personal email address], "Hunter Biden, Jill Tracy, Flynn, John, Chung, Kathy, Beau and Hallie Biden [personal email address], "Chung, Kathy, >", "Flynn, John

Cc: Ethan Rosensweig, Bernal, Anthony, Bernal, Anthony R.

Bcc:

RE: [personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 10:40:01 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

"Molly Magarik" [personal email address]

05 Feb 2013 21:58:29

To: Hallie Biden' [personal email address], "Hunter Biden, Kathleen Biden [personal email address], [personal email address], [personal email address], "Valerie Owens, jack owens [personal email address], "Casey Owens [personal email address], "Cuffe Owens [personal email address], "Missy Owens [personal email address], "Ron Olivere [personal email address], "Mike Donilon [personal email address], "Alexander Snyder-Mackler [personal email address], "josh, Chung, Kathy, Chung, Kathy

Co:

Bcc:

[personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 09:03:38 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Barkoff, Kendra

Tue, 13 May 2014 10:04:35 -0400

To: Hunter Biden (hbiden@rosemontseneca.com)

FW: Joe Biden's son joining the board of a Ukrainian natural gas company

-----Original Message-----

From: Max Seddon [<mailto:max.seddon@buzzfeed.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, May 13, 2014 9:10 AM

To: Lucas Magnuson, Laura

Subject: Joe Biden's son joining the board of a Ukrainian natural gas company

Dear Laura,

Hope this finds you well. Russian state media is loving this press release, supposedly from a Cypriot-held Ukrainian natural gas company, claiming that the Vice President's son has joined its board of directors. The news seems rather odd on its face and, if true, would present a fairly glaring conflict of interest given the VP's role on Ukraine policy - particularly since the company is controlled by Nikolai Zlochevsky, who was energy minister and deputy NSC chief under Yanukovich.

Is this true? What exactly is going on here?

Thanks and best

Max

Max Seddon

Foreign affairs reporter, BuzzFeed

+380 68 558 6856 (Kiev)

twitter.com/maxseddon

--

Max Seddon

Foreign affairs reporter, BuzzFeed

+380 68 558 6856 (Kiev)

twitter.com/maxseddon

Chung, Kathy S. EOP/OVP

17 Mar 2016 13:12:32

To: Jill Biden, hbiden@rosemontseneca.com", "abiden@dcjustice.org", [personal email address], "Gitenstein, Mark H., [personal email address], "Ricchetti, Steven, Mackler, Alexander, hurricane5155@gmail.com", "Mel Monzack, Ricchetti, Steven, >", "Mackler, Alexander
Cc: Bernal, Anthony R., Muldoon, Anne Marie, Flynn, John, Goepfert, Stephen, Person, Anne, >", "Goepfert, Stephen, >", "Bernal, Anthony R., >", "Flynn, John
Bcc:
RE: [personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 10:18:58 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Sent: Sat, 12 Jan 2013 18:45:42 -0500
From: Molly Magarik [redacted]
To: "Hallie Biden" [redacted] Hunter Biden
<hbiden@rosemontseneca.com>, "Kathleen Biden"
[redacted] Valerie Owens
<hurricane5155@gmail.com>, jack owens
[redacted] FOIA-6 Missy Owens
Cuffe Owens Casey Owens
FOIA-6 Ron Olivere Mike Donilon
Ted Kaufman [redacted] Eric Schwerin
<eschwerin@rosemontseneca.com>, Alexander Snyder-Mackler
"Chung, Kathy" <kathy_s_chung@ovp.eop.gov>, Joshua Alcorn [redacted] "Chung, Kathy"
<"/o=eop/ou=exchange administrative group /cn=recipients/cn=chung, kathy s.3c7">
Subject: Beau on MSNBC between 10:05-10:30am

Hi everyone,

We did confirm Melissa Harris Perry for tomorrow morning. The hit time will be between 10:05 and 10:30, and the topics are gun violence and the Vice President's task force.

Thanks, and hope everyone is having a great weekend.

Molly

"Molly Magarik" [P6/b(6)]

12 Jan 2013 23:45:42

To: Hallie Biden' [P6/b(6)], "Hunter Biden, Kathleen Biden [P6/b(6)], [P6/b(6)], [P6/b(6)], "Valerie Owens, Jack Owens [P6/b(6)], "Missy Owens [P6/b(6)], "Cuffe Owens [P6/b(6)], "Casey Owens [P6/b(6)], "Ron Olivere [P6/b(6)], "Mike Donilon [P6/b(6)], "Ted Kaufman [P6/b(6)], "Eric Schwerin, Alexander Snyder-Mackler [P6/b(6)], "Chung, Kathy, Joshua Alcorn [P6/b(6)], "Chung, Kathy

Cc:

Bcc:

Beau on MSNBC between 10:05-10:30am

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Mon Apr 01 10:45:26 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Part

Reasons for Withholding:

P6,b(6)

Notes:

redaction of personal email addresses

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Sent: Sat, 27 Feb 2016 22:29:24 -0500
From: "Flynn, John S. EOP/OVP" <john_s_flynn@ovp.eop.gov>
To: Hunter Biden <hbiden@rosemontseneca.com>, Ashley Blazer Biden
[REDACTED] Jimmy Biden <jbiden@lionhallgp.com>, Frank Biden
[REDACTED] Valerie Biden Owens <hurricane5155@gmail.com>, JILL Tracy Biden
<jill.tracy2@gmail.com>
Subject: Fwd: Remarks by the Vice President at the California State Democratic Party Convention

VP wanted me to send you the transcript from today's speech. He knocked it out of the park!

John

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "McCormick, Mike"
<Michael_J_McCormick@who.eop.gov<mailto:Michael_J_McCormick@who.eop.gov>>
Date: February 27, 2016 at 6:49:04 PM PST
To: "Bakotic, Kristen"
<Kristen_D_Bakotic@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Kristen_D_Bakotic@ovp.eop.gov>>, "Bedingfield, Kate"
<Katherine_J_Bedingfield@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Katherine_J_Bedingfield@ovp.eop.gov>>,
"Chung, Kathy" <Kathy_S_Chung@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Kathy_S_Chung@ovp.eop.gov>>,
"Dansky Bari, Dominique"
<Dominique_A_DanskyBari@who.eop.gov<mailto:Dominique_A_DanskyBari@who.eop.gov>>,
"Delessa, Fasika (Intern)"
<Fasika_Z_Delessa@who.eop.gov<mailto:Fasika_Z_Delessa@who.eop.gov>>, DL-OVP-
Speechwriting <DL-OVP-Speechwriting@dsr.eop.gov<mailto:DL-OVP-
Speechwriting@dsr.eop.gov>>, "Dubyak, Meghan"
<Meghan_M_Dubyak@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Meghan_M_Dubyak@ovp.eop.gov>>, "Erikson,
Daniel" <Daniel_P_Erikson@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Daniel_P_Erikson@ovp.eop.gov>>, "Goepfert,
Stephen" <Stephen_Goepfert@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Stephen_Goepfert@ovp.eop.gov>>,
"Goodman, Meghan"
<Meghan_K_Goodman@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Meghan_K_Goodman@ovp.eop.gov>>, "Graves,
Don" <Donet_D_Graves@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Donet_D_Graves@ovp.eop.gov>>, "Harris, Ben"
<Benjamin_H_Harris@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Benjamin_H_Harris@ovp.eop.gov>>, "Hill, Matthew
(Intern)" <Matthew_D_Hill@who.eop.gov<mailto:Matthew_D_Hill@who.eop.gov>>, "Holst,
Lindsay" <Lindsay_L_Holst@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Lindsay_L_Holst@ovp.eop.gov>>, "Lance,
Kirsten" <Kirsten_E_Lance@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Kirsten_E_Lance@ovp.eop.gov>>, "Lurie,
Daniel" <Daniel_B_Lurie@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Daniel_B_Lurie@ovp.eop.gov>>, "Mackler,
Alexander" <Alexander_S_Mackler@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Alexander_S_Mackler@ovp.eop.gov>>,
"McCormick, Mike"
<Michael_J_McCormick@who.eop.gov<mailto:Michael_J_McCormick@who.eop.gov>>, Mike

[REDACTED] FOIA-6

"Muldoon, Anne Marie"

<Anne_M_Person@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Anne_M_Person@ovp.eop.gov>>, "Peggy Suntum

[REDACTED] FOIA-6

"Rangel, Antoinette N."

<Antoinette_N_Rangel@who.eop.gov<mailto:Antoinette_N_Rangel@who.eop.gov>>, "Rather,
Ely" <Ely_S_Ratner@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Ely_S_Ratner@ovp.eop.gov>>, "Rawlings, Nate"
<Jonathan_J_Rawlings@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Jonathan_J_Rawlings@ovp.eop.gov>>, "Reddy,
Vinay" <Vinay_C_Reddy@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Vinay_C_Reddy@ovp.eop.gov>>, "Reichel,
Carlyn" <Carlyn_A_Reichel@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Carlyn_A_Reichel@ovp.eop.gov>>, "Ricchetti,
Steven" <Steven_J_Ricchetti@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Steven_J_Ricchetti@ovp.eop.gov>>,
"Schrum, Michael" <Evan_M_Schrum@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Evan_M_Schrum@ovp.eop.gov>>,
"Schultz, Greg" <Gregory_C_Schultz@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Gregory_C_Schultz@ovp.eop.gov>>,"

"Sheth, Tushar" <Tushar_J_Sheth@ovp.eop.gov<mailto:Tushar_J_Sheth@ovp.eop.gov>>,
"Suntum, Peggy" <Margaret_M._Suntum@who.eop.gov<mailto:Suntum@who.eop.gov>>
Subject: Remarks by the Vice President at the California State Democratic Party Convention

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Vice President

For Immediate Release February 27, 2016

REMARKS BY VICE PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN
AT THE CALIFORNIA STATE DEMOCRATIC PARTY CONVENTION

San Jose Convention Center
San Jose, California

4:11 P.M. PST

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Hey, folks. How are you? (Applause.) Well, thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you. It's great to be back in California. (Applause.) I was telling the chairman he made me feel right at home as if I were back in my home state of Delaware. And he said, oh, shut up. (Laughter.) I tell you, usually they're hollering that at me. But any rate, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all so very much. What an extraordinary place and extraordinary leaders. I mean it sincerely, over the years I've gathered a lot of great personal friends here. And if you excuse -- we used to say in the Senate -- a point of personal privilege. So many of you were friends of my late son Beau Biden, so many worked with him when he was attorney general. A lot of great friends of us -- Eric and Kamala, Alex. So many more of you. And again, I'll only say this once, but -- that's all right. Let him go. Let him go. That's okay. It's all right. It's okay. It's okay. My son Beau would love that part. (Laughter.) No, really. Thank you. It's not a problem. I got it.

Hey, let's not act like Republicans. (Applause.) I ain't Donald Trump. I don't have that much hair. (Laughter.)

But any rate, I should have started off by saying my name is Joe Biden, I've been working for Governor Jerry Brown for 40 years. (Laughter.) What an amazing guy. I don't know whether the Gov is here. But I tell you what, I met Jerry first back in 1974. And I campaigned with him when he was running for governor in 2010. Go figure. (Laughter.) Gov, my grandchildren are looking forward to voting for you in 2030. (Laughter.)

By the way, of all the elected officials in the country in the past 40 years, no one has been able to look around the curb and corner better and more perceptively than Jerry Brown. And that's a fact. (Applause.)

And I don't know whether my buddy -- and she is my buddy -- Nancy Pelosi is here. (Applause.) Nancy -- I've been doing this a long time, Nancy is the single-most effective Democratic leader in -- Nancy, how are you, kiddo? Great to see you. And the whole family. (Applause.)

By the way, there's not a single important thing that Barack and I have done that would have been able to be done without Nancy's leadership. We owe you, Nancy. (Applause.)

And Alex Padilla. I got to see Alex and his wife and two beautiful children backstage a little earlier. I came and campaigned up and down the state for Alex in '14. He was winning by 40 percent before I came, and he still won in spite of it. (Laughter.) So I appreciate you letting me hang out with you, Alex. And one thing I love about Alex, he understands there's nothing more basic than

the right to vote and access to the polling place. (Applause.)

And Barbara Boxer -- I don't know whether Barbara is here. But, Barbara, the Senate is going to miss you. The country is going to miss you. I'm going to miss you, and California is going to miss you. We've worked together on everything from trying to save the dolphins to Violence Against Women, to ending the war in Iraq. You've been a great partner, Barbara. And thanks for everything. (Applause.)

And there's a special place in my heart, and I mean this sincerely, for Dianne Feinstein. There are few people in Washington who command more respect. Dianne is and remains a force to be reckoned with. When it comes to America's safety and security, whether it's taking on gun violence, or promoting national security in the United States, there's nobody who the Senate listens more closely to than Dianne. And she's someone who I not only respect, but I hope she doesn't mind my saying, someone I've come to truly love. And I appreciate everything she's done for me. (Applause.)

And all the other elected Democratic officials. You have more elected Democratic elected officials than I have people in the state of Delaware. And we're grateful for it. (Laughter.)

Look, I've been around long enough to know my dad was right when he said half the battle is showing up. And thank you always for showing up.

Let me start by giving our Republican friends -- not so much Republican Party friends and candidates a tip. You can't lead this great country without recognizing what made it great in the first place. (Applause.) And more importantly, you can't lead America unless you believe in the American people and their capacity to do virtually anything they set their mind to. I mean that sincerely. (Applause.)

America has led the world and continues to lead the world because not just the example of our power, but the power of our example. What these guys don't get is we are valued around the world, looked up to in the world because of our values. Not just our physical power. People know we mean it when we say e pluribus unum. Out of many, one. We cannot define America based on race, ethnicity, religious faith, country of origin. The only way you can define America is by the principles we all believe in. (Applause.) I mean that. We do believe all men and women are created equal. We do believe they're entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That includes Christians, Jews, Muslims, people of no faith at all. (Applause.) It includes straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender American. It means all America. That's who we are. That's what we believe. That's what has made us great. (Applause.)

And there's a very simple proposition -- and I mean this sincerely -- we Democrats know that our country works best when it works for everyone. But if you listen to the Republican candidates for President, and you look at the Republicans in Congress and their budget, they have a collective case of amnesia. They continue to double down on the politics that caused the Great Recession, the greatest recession short of a depression in American history. It's like they don't remember what they did. No, I really mean it. Listen to them.

We lost 9 million jobs during the Great Recession; 5 million foreclosures; teachers, firefighters, law enforcement laid off because of massive state deficits. An auto industry that was about to implode. A stock market headed below 6,000. We inherited a federal debt the day we raised our right hand of \$1.4 trillion, over \$16 trillion in wealth for Americans was wiped out.

Well, they may have forgotten. But I haven't forgotten. I remember. (Applause.) I remember. Oh, I remember well the mess the President and I inherited the moment we took our hands off the Bible on that cold January day. As a matter of fact, I'll tell you a little vignette. The President and I for the first time after being sworn in, we went back to the White House. And the first time the both of us walked into the Oval Office, just the two of us, and he sat down behind the desk. And I remember

looking at him, he kids me about it. I said, Mr. President, we bought in too early. (Laughter.) And he looked at me, and said, like, what in the hell do you mean, Joe?

And I said think how much better off -- and I mean this sincerely -- had the election -- the President been sworn in on March the 20th like he used to, then there would have been no doubt, no question, no misunderstanding of who brought us to where we were.

Although we ran in 2009 to lift up America, it was clear that our first job was to save America. That was the first job we had. (Applause.)

So we went to work doing what had to be done. And it wasn't popular -- even among some Democrats. The Recovery Act, the automobile rescue, the Affordable Care Act -- or what I prefer to call Obamacare. (Applause.) Wall Street Reform. Rescuing the housing sector. Pulling people back into their homes. At every single stage, virtually not a single Republican voted to help us. And what did they offer in place of what we were suggesting? More of the same that got us in trouble in the first place.

Remember the 2008 campaign and again in '12, more tax cuts for millionaires. Tax increases for the middle class. Cuts in education. Cuts in Medicare. Cuts in medical and science research. Voucherizing Medicare. End it as we know it. And famously saying let Detroit, meaning the auto industry, go bankrupt. Look at what their positions were, what they ran on.

Think about what they're elected officials are saying. All you got to do is go back to George Bush in 2000, 2004, McCain in 2008, Romney 2012 -- it's the same tired prescription. They haven't changed at all, folks. They've just gotten meaner. (Laughter and applause.)

Nancy can -- and I hope someday will -- write a book on the Republican budget, the Ryan budget. I happen to like and Nancy does to Paul Ryan. He's a decent guy. But look at his budget. I joke with him he's read too much Ayn Rand. (Laughter.) But look at the budget, it's essentially -- not a joke, folks. We're always playing defense it seems. The budget is essentially the platform George W. Bush ran on. Not a joke. Just imagine had they won. Just imagine -- does anyone believe we would have created 14 million private sector jobs with 71 straight months of job creation. Does anybody believe we would have cut the unemployment from 10 percent to less than 5 percent? The biggest and fastest decline in our budget deficit history. The slowest growth in health care cost in generations. Foreclosures at their lowest level. Does anybody believe that we'd be in the midst of clean energy revolution. Since 2009, solar jobs have grown more than 88 percent -- 174,000. That's more jobs than Apple, Google, and Twitter combined. (Applause.)

And by the end of this year, that will grow to 210,000 jobs. Good, decent, middle-class jobs. Let me define what I mean by middle class. Middle class means that you can own your home and not rent it. Middle class means you can send your kid to a park in the neighborhood, and know they'll come home safely. Middle class means that you can send your kid to a local high school, and if they do well, they can get to college. If they get to college, you can get them there. And in the meantime, you can take care of your mother or father when the other dies and hope your children never have to take care of you. That's middle class. That's who we are. (Applause.) These are good jobs.

The solar revolution -- we're powering 4.6 million homes. Wind power has tripled to 50,000 jobs -- supply wind power more than 16 million homes that could support over 600,000 jobs over the next several decades.

Look, and for the first time the cost per BTU of coal is no cheaper essentially than wind and/or solar. (Applause.) This is a big deal. And if you listen to the Republicans prescriptions then and now, does anybody believe that in 2015, we would have sold 17 million American automobiles. (Applause.)

Folks, we preserve the full faith and credit of the United States while the Republican leadership was telling Nancy and me, as we were negotiating these cliffs, you don't understand, Nancy. You don't understand, Joe. We've got seven or eight crazies in the Senate, 35 in the House. (Laughter.) Am I joking, Nancy? (Laughter.) This is what the leaders were telling us. You don't understand, Joe, they think we have to show the moral imperative of letting the country go bankrupt, not pay our debt. That's what they were saying.

The ultimate gold standards, and not in a literal sense, the standard -- the most valuable standards the American people have in their economy is America has never, never, never, never ever defaulted our debt. But there were elements in their parts who were trying to get us to default. They called it the moral hazard.

I sometimes wonder where did they come from. And oh, by the way, while Nancy, and Barack, and I were doing all these things, we cut the federal deficit by two-thirds. (Applause.)

Look at this young kid in front of me here -- by the way, your parents owe you big for being here -- but they're not going to hear the word outsourcing. We don't even hear it now. They're hearing the word insourcing. People are coming home. Not leaving.

Look, don't take my word for it. A.T. Kearney, one of the largest management outfits in the world, they do a survey every single year for the last I think 19. Don't hold me to the exact number. And they asked the 300 largest industrialists in the world the following question. Where is the best place in the world to invest? By a margin larger than any time in the history of that survey, they say the United States of America. (Applause.)

So much for our not being respected. There are plenty of reasons these companies are coming home. Number one, North America for the remainder of this century will be the epicenter of energy in the world. Not Saudi Arabia, not the Saudi peninsula, not Venezuela, not Nigeria. The United States of America. The cost of natural gas to run a company in the United States is seven times cheaper than it is in Asia and three to four times than it is in Europe.

We have the finest and the only country that has throughout the country -- the finest research universities in the world to support this. (Applause.) Right here in California. And although it may not be politically correct, the truth is we have the most agile venture capitalists in the world. We have a rule of law that fairly adjudicates contracts. It protects intellectual property and we have the most productive workers in the world. American workers are three times as productive as they are in China. That's why people are coming home -- because of all this, because of the grit and determination and resilience of the American people. We've gone from an economic crisis to recovery, and now we're on the cusp of genuine resurgence.

But we've got so much more work to do to meet the goal that Barack and I boldly stated when we ran in '08, and that was to restore the vitality and vigor of the middle class.

We said it was the defining issue of our time, and it still is. And now that we've taken the ship of state from off the bottom of the ocean, have it repaired, and it's now floating, now we can set sail. We have the opportunity, the capacity and the obligation to now finish that job and generate a genuine resurgence for the middle class here in America.

But let me tell you something it requires us -- and I know you read in the press, this is my implicit criticism of the Democratic candidates. I think we have two great candidates. And by the way, congratulations to Hillary on a great victory today in South Carolina. (Applause.)

I'm proud of both of them. But look, we have to remind ourselves why we're Democrats in the first place. We're Democrats because -- and I mean this sincerely now, cut everything else aside -- because we basically have faith in the possibilities that ordinary people, if given a chance, they have never, ever, ever, ever let their country down. And ordinary people can do -- like our parents

did -- extraordinary things.

I've had a lot of political leaders I've admired a great deal. But I've only had one political hero in my life, and that was Robert Kennedy. (Applause.) But I say that to remind you I think he best captured what defined our party for the last 200 years. And in his famous quote, there are those who look at things the way they are and ask why. I dream things that never were and ask why not. That's who we are as Democrats. (Applause.) That's what it means to be a Democrat, to understand the immense, immense possibilities that exist.

So it's time for us to start to ask why not. Why can't we meet the goal of 100 percent renewable energy by 2050? Why not be able to create a million more American affordable -- give them affordable health care? Why not position the American middle class to once again be the most prosperous, growing middle class in the world.

Look, in order to do that we have to take the next steps. And what Barack and I in our last two budgets are pushing -- and Nancy is trying like hell to get moving -- we have to remove the remaining impediments that the Republican Party has put in our path beginning 30 years, the same impediments that led to the cause of the Great Recession.

Today, the first thing we have to do is begin to change the corporate culture in America. (Applause.) Let me explain what I mean by that. Corporations are neither inherently bad or inherently good. But the corporate culture has changed. I come from the corporate state of America, Delaware. The corporate culture has changed around America, the following way: It now focuses almost extremely on short-termism; exceedingly narrow view of what their responsibility is.

Today you hear intelligence people say that the only fiduciary responsibility corporations have is to their shareholders. Nancy knows I have in my office a cartoon from The New Yorker. There's a picture. My staff keeps hiding it behind other pictures. I have it framed. I put it on the mantel. There's a picture of a big, rotund guy with a black mask on, a black beret, and he's sitting at a table being interrogated by the police. And there's a great big bag on the table with a dollar sign on it. And he's looking at the law enforcement office, he said, how was I to know it was that of a job creator? (Laughter.)

Since when are the only people who create jobs those people who invest in a corporation? My father was an automobile manager for years. He created jobs by selling automobiles. The guy on the assembly line created jobs by making the automobile. (Applause.) What happened in America? Since when -- I mean this sincerely -- since when is the only corporate responsibility to shareholders?

Since when it is appropriate for corporate America to no longer have responsibility to their employees, no responsibility to their community, no responsibility to their country? Since when is that the standard? That wasn't the standard that existed in the past.

There's a professor named Lazonick at the University of Massachusetts who published a study in the Harvard Business Review last year. He looked at the 449 Fortune 500 companies who had been on the Fortune 500 list from 2003 to 2013. And here's what he found. They made -- those companies -- \$2.4 trillion in profit. That's a good thing. But here's the difference than 30 years ago. They invested 54 percent of that profit in buying back their own stock, increasing the value of compensation for the CEOs who are mostly paid in stock. They spent 37 percent paying out dividends to shareholders, leaving -- now this is an important point -- leaving 9 percent for everything, for wages, for retraining employees, for research and development, for cash reserves. What happened? How did that happen?

When Ronald Reagan was President executive compensation averaged 22 times that of the average employee of the corporation. Today, it's 303 times the average worker. What happened? How can that possibly be justified? The concentration of wealth -- not since the early '20s, 1

percent of the population, and they're patriotic -- they're good people. But 1 percent of them make 22.5 percent of all the income in America.

Not only is that unfair, not only does it undermine the sense of equality and equity, but it also fundamentally damages growth. Don't take my word for it because I'm a progressive Democrat. Look at the study done by Standard & Poor's, the International Monetary Fund. They say the greatest threat to growth -- overall growth -- is the concentration of wealth. One of the greatest threats is the concentration of wealth. It's about economic growth.

Folks, it's within our power to rebalance the inequities and do so much more. As I said earlier, we know the economy only works when it works for everyone. We know that we've always done best when the rich -- and the rich have done extremely well, and the poor -- when the middle class does well. When the rich, the poor, the middle class, labor, business understands and acts as one America. I mean this sincerely. (Applause.) When we recognize mutual obligations and mutual responsibilities.

And, folks, I'm not just delivering this speech to a group of Democrats. I've gone to Wall Street and delivered this speech. I recently was the keynote speaker at the World Economic Forum with over 2,400 CEOs. And I laid it out. I told them you have responsibilities. You have responsibilities at your own home. You have responsibility to bring your profits home and invest them here. You have a responsibility to more than just your stockholders. (Applause.)

Folks, it's a simple proposition. There used to be a bipartisan -- for over 50 years a bipartisan basic bargain we all agreed to. We disagreed in degree but not in substance, and that basic bargain said if you contributed to the profitability, the enterprise with which you worked, you got to share in the benefits. (Applause.)

For the first time in modern history, that is not happening any longer. It's time to share the benefits with workers in the community and the country. And don't even get me started on so-called inversions. We'll be here all night. (Applause.)

Look, let me finish, and I'll jam you with some other stuff. (Applause.) Look, I know I'm always talking about the middle class, and I've been talking about it my whole career. But there's a simple reason for it well beyond equity. Think about it, folks, the distinguishing feature of the United States and our economy relative to every other Western economy has been the middle class has been the thing that's enabled us to hold together the political and social consensus in America. As long as average Americans believed that it was possible if they worked hard that they could get ahead, as long as that was the case, they were prepared to take on whatever confronted them.

But today, ladies and gentlemen, for the first time in modern history fewer than 50 percent of the American people fall into the middle class. I never thought I would stand before an audience in my lifetime and say that. The middle class has gotten clobbered. And now we're in a position after having righted the ship, now we're in a position to get them back in the saddle. And let's start by making the tax code more equitable and productive. (Applause.)

And the best way to do that -- that's the best way to benefit the middle class is make it fair. It may sound unusually self-serving, but I was able to get, as Nancy will recall, the Republicans for the first time in 20 years to vote to increase taxes on the top 2 percent of the wealthiest people in America. Now why did I say that? It just brought back the top bracket to what they paid in the Clinton tax era rates. But here's what it did. It generated \$660 billion that helped working-class folks put food on the table, stay out of poverty, helped families send their kids to college, led to significant investment in alternative energy.

But we were told at the time we couldn't afford any of those things. We keep getting told by the Republicans what we can't afford. Well, let me tell you -- I can tell you what we can't afford. We can't continue to afford a tax structure so riddle with multi-billion loopholes that it's eating up

everything else we should be doing. (Applause.)

Folks, when Ronald Reagan was President there were \$600 billion worth of so-called tax expenditures in the tax code, meaning that \$600 billion that would have been collected, but not collected because it was thought to be a greater social good -- whether it was interest on homeowner's mortgages or whatever it was. Well, today that has increased from \$600 billion to \$1.2 trillion in a year of taxes that otherwise would have been collected being given out, a so-called loophole.

Folks, find me a single credible economist, including conservative economists, that can give you an explanation for more than \$600 billion of those exemptions have any social redeeming value or increasing productivity at all.

That's why the President and I have proposed eliminating expenditures that have no overall social value any longer and invest in things that create pathways to the middle class -- education, job training, renewable energy, infrastructure, childcare, sick leave. (Applause.)

You all know this, but I want to quickly -- because we don't explain enough in my view exactly how we do it -- we hear not just from the Republican candidates, we hear from ordinary Americans, we can't afford it. Look, we can afford it all and still reduce the deficit.

Let me give you an example, just one. Free community college the President and I have been proposing. Forget the merits for just a minute. They say we can't afford it. I think we should have four years of public community college, but that's a different thing. (Applause.) But let's just take the proposal before the American -- I can hardly wait to engage my Republican friends in this debate. It gets down to a value judgment, okay? Free community college -- if it were free, it's estimate that 9 million people would be in community college, and it would cost \$6 billion a year. That's a lot money. They say we can't afford it.

But here's how we do it. We make a value judgment. We eliminate just one of the tax loopholes out there. It's called stepped-up basis. What it means is that if I go and buy stock for million dollars -- God love me, I wish I could. (Laughter.) For a million dollars. I still have the dubious distinction when I filed my financial disclosure, as Nancy will tell you, The Washington Post said, "It's probable no Vice President ever assumed the office with fewer assets than Joe Biden." (Laughter.) I assume they were talking financial assets. I don't know. (Laughter.)

But look -- but here's the deal, right now if somebody goes out and buys a million dollars of stock and sells it for \$2 million, they pay capital gains on a million dollars. But if I buy a million dollars' worth of stock, and I pass away and I leave it to my children, and they sell it for \$3 million -- but it's worth \$2 million when I die, they only pay a capital gains between \$2 million and \$3 million. We lose that capital gains that would have been paid had I lived and sold it.

You know how much that -- and by the way, that affects .2 of the population. Good people, so-called trust fund babies, who are already very, very wealthy, okay?

Now here's the value judgment. To put 9 million people in community college for free -- and by the way 12 years is no longer enough for a free education -- but to put them in school, it costs \$6 billion a year. You know how much that tax expenditure on stepped-up basis costs the Treasury every year? \$17 billion. You eliminate that one thing, you generate another \$17 billion in income. We can pay for all the community college and reduce the deficit by another \$11 billion. What is best in the interest of the country? Reward people who are already doing incredibly well to not have to pay something they'd otherwise have to pay? Or to increase the productivity and opportunity for millions of Americans? (Applause.)

Eliminating that tax break has no impact on their standard of living, no indication it would affect in any way the investments they make. But it would provide peace of mind for students and the

parents of 9 million individuals. Tell me which is better for the country.

Ladies and gentlemen, we're in a situation where we're proposing tripling -- with Nancy -- tripling the maximum childcare tax credit. (Applause.) Forty percent -- this is the only other example I'll give -- 40 percent of mothers are the breadwinners in their families. And over the last 15 years, women in the workplace -- the number going into the workplace have slowed. Totally qualified but they've slowed. And we need replacement workers. They slowed because of the rising cost of childcare. Too many women are dropping out of the workforce because of the rising cost of childcare.

In California it costs between \$9,000 to \$12,000 a year -- in some places even more -- for childcare. We call for tripling the maximum childcare tax credit as I like to do. That would increase the number of women in the workforce. Studies show that would increase our productivity. It would add another \$1.5 trillion to our economy. And our GDP would increase 9 percent over the next 10 years. It would pay back exponentially greater than it costs. But it costs \$80 billion over 10 years -- \$8 billion a year. And our friends say we can't afford it. We just can't afford it. We can't afford all of this they say.

But let me give you just one example and it's an illustration, and I'll get off this. If we were to limit deductions in the tax code to a maximum of 28 percent -- which would cover every middle and upper-middle income person out there, it would cause no pain for those who are paying the 30 percent rate not to be able to deduct at 39 percent. It would not impact on their willingness to give the charitable deduction. It would punish no one. But over 10 years, it would bring in to the United States Treasury another \$603 billion. Tell me what we can't afford. Tell me we can't afford to grow the middle class. Tell me we can't afford to increase education. Tell me we can't afford to take the burden off hardworking mothers and fathers. Tell me that that's what we can't do. (Applause.) We can afford that and so much and still cut the deficit. (Applause.) Investing in education, energy, childcare, sick leave, making the economy more equitable. Folks, it doesn't stop there. We need to restore the bargaining power of labor unions. (Applause.) Labor built the middle class.

I said 15 years ago and I got criticized for it at a national labor convention, I said, the Chamber of Commerce has declared war on labor's house. Does anybody doubt war has been declared on labor over the last decade?

AUDIENCE: No!

THE VICE PRESIDENT: And why do you think middle-class people have lost their bargaining power? Ladies and gentlemen, we got to deal unions back into the deal. That means protecting the right to collective bargaining. It means making sure that workers are paid fair wages. It means not allowing corporations to reclassify workers to deprive them overtime. It means providing sick leave for over 300,000 workers which we've done on federal contracts, but do it for all American workers. (Applause.)

And no one knows it better than California and New York. No one should work 40 hours a week and still live in poverty in America. (Applause.) It's wrong. It's counterproductive. It diminishes our power to grow the economy.

That's why I believe we should increase the minimum wage over the near term to \$15 an hour. (Applause.) The point is -- look, folks, the point is there's so much we can do that speaks to fairness and growth.

You know the expression, do good and do well. But here we have an opportunity to do right and to grow the American economy at the same time.

Look, folks, don't forget Republicans haven't changed their stripes. The budget in the House calls for increased -- further tax cuts for millionaires. They're still for eliminating -- they still believe that

the benefits, the way this works is trickle-down. They believe it. They haven't changed a bit. And now we're just getting back to basics, man.

We're on the cusp of America owning the 21st century. I mean that sincerely. I got elected when I was 29 years old to the United States Senate. I was viewed -- I was characterized always as the idealistic young guy, the optimist. If you read in the paper they still call me the White House Optimist, as if I'm the guy who just fell off the turnip truck yesterday. (Laughter.)

But, folks, there's so much more we can do. We got good candidates. (Applause.) There's so much more we can do. So I say to Democrats and Republicans and independents alike don't sell this country short, folks.

Look, folks, there's one thing I know if anything else, it's this, if you give the American people -- and I mean this from the bottom of my heart. I know it from my own family. If you give the American people just a fighting chance -- just a fighting chance, they have never, ever, ever, ever let their country down. (Applause.)

And by the way, I travel the world a lot. I do an awful lot of foreign policy, and the advantage I have is when I go, the leaders I meet with know I speak for the President. We don't have to check anything. Not a joke. Not a joke. I've traveled over 1.1 million miles so far just since being Vice President.

And, ladies and gentlemen, you know what amazes the rest of the world about us -- they don't use my term, but I'm going to use the term that I know they believe. There is no quit in America. There is no quit in America or the American people. (Applause.)

Which means -- to conclude, which means our people aren't the problem. Our politics is the problem. (Applause.)

It's grown so petty, so personal, so angry, so ugly. And it's far too influenced by big money and PACS and all this in American politics. (Applause.)

If you wanted to do one thing to right the ship of state here completely is pass what I introduced in 1974, a constitutional amendment to publicly fund all elections. (Applause.) It would end the influence, the disproportionate influence.

Look, the preamble of our Constitution says: We the people, not we the donors. It says, we the people. (Applause.)

And, folks, what I'm about to say -- I'm sure some of you will not agree with me. Instead of debating our opponents, we demonize them. Instead of questioning judgments, we question motives. Instead of listening we shout. Instead of looking for solutions, we look to score political points. We can't let this go on because our politics is pulling this country apart. Our politics is trafficking in division.

We all see with Trump and the Republicans, with their talk about building walls and banning Muslims. But if we're honest with ourselves, we've slipped into the blame game too.

Look, most important lesson I learned was when I was a young senator in 1973. When I got elected -- and I don't say this for empathy or sympathy, it's just a fact -- when I got elected on November the 7th, December 18th, my wife -- while I was in Washington -- my wife and daughter were killed, a tractor trailer broadsided them and killed my wife and daughter. And my two sons were very badly injured. And I wasn't going to go to Washington.

But because of great men like Hubert Humphrey and believe it or not Fritz Hollings and guy you don't even know named Pastore, a senior senator from Rhode Island, and Mike Mansfield and a

few others, they came to Delaware to convince me because we had talked to my governor about appointing someone in my place. And they came and they said, Joe, just come and stay six months. We need you. I was so stupid, Nancy, I didn't realize we had 58 Democratic senators. They didn't need me at all. (Laughter.) And they were going to get -- I really mean it. By the way, I'm the first senator I ever knew so I didn't know any better. (Laughter and applause.)

But true story, so once a week, Nancy, literally Senator Mansfield would have me come to his office at three o'clock on Tuesday, and he would give me an assignment. I really thought every freshman got an assignment. (Laughter.) No, I did. I swear to God. And I'll never forget. I was walking on the floor and I used to always walk through those double doors you see on C-SPAN, walk down to the well of the Senate, and look at the President of the Senate and ask, when is the last vote? Because I commuted every day for 36 years to go home with my kids at the time.

And so I went in on my way to Senator Mansfield's office at three o'clock to check when the last vote would be. And Jesse Helms was -- you don't remember him, but he was -- well, maybe you do. And Jesse Helms was on the floor of the Senate excoriating Ted Kennedy and Bob Dole for the precursor to the Americans with Disabilities Act. And I was outraged by it. But because I had my meeting with the Leader, I just kept walking in. And I sat down in front of him. And I later learned all he was doing was taking my pulse to see how I was doing, God love him. But it was a wonderful thing to do for me.

And I sat there, and I guess I looked angry. And he sat behind the desk all the time, and he had a corn cob pipe; 90 percent of the time it wasn't lighted. And he took it out of his mouth, and he said, Joe, what's the matter? He spoke in clipped tones. He said, what's the matter, Joe?

And I went on and ripped into Jesse Helms. I said, he has not social redeeming value. I went on and on. I was so angry. He doesn't care about the handicapped. Mansfield let me go on. And he looked at me, Nancy, my word as a Biden. He said, Joe, what would you say if I told you that in December of 1970 -- it may have been '71, 1970, Jesse and Dot Helms were sitting in their living room reading the Raleigh Observer, and there was an advertisement in the paper from an orphanage of a young man in braces up to his hips, two canes, saying, all I want for Christmas is someone to love me and take me home.

He said, Joe, what would you say if I told Jesse and Dot Helms went down and adopted that young boy?

I said, I'd feel like a jerk. He said, well, Joe, they did. And then he went on to say something that was the most important lesson I ever learned in the Senate. He said, Joe, it's always appropriate to question another man or woman's judgment. It's never appropriate to judge their motive because you don't know what it is. And today, 80 percent of what we do is we question motive. Not judgment.

When I question your motive, and I say it's because you're in the pocket of this or you don't have this value or that, it's awful hard ever to get to a consensus. But I can go after your position till hell won't have it. And we can still on the merits -- we can end up compromising.

Folks, America can't take this much longer. We can only survive by consensus. We're the most heterogeneous democracy in the history of the world. I understand why so many in America and our party talk about two Americas. But the way I see it, we're one America. We've always done best as a nation when we act as one America. And you see when we talk about one America, I mean that everyone has an equal chance -- gay, straight, black, white, Hispanic, men, women, children, immigrants, Native Americans. Everybody gets a fair shot.

It means we look at our opposition not as an enemy, but as the opposition. It means consensus is necessary. Compromise is not a dirty word. It means we're all bound together in this great experiment of equality, and opportunity, and democracy. And everyone -- and I mean everyone --

is in on the deal.

My dad used to have an expression. Joe, everyone is entitled to be treated with dignity. Everyone. (Applause.)

It may be a simple notion, but it's not new. It doesn't make it any less important because it's not new. Everyone knows we have to figure out how to come together.

So, folks, let me end with this, when world leaders -- as Nancy knows I have probably the most extensive relationship with President Xi of anyone just because when he was Vice President, the two Presidents decided we should get to know each other. I traveled 15,000-18,000 miles with him in China, three days with him here. I've had according to the State Department over 24-25 hours of private dinners, just he and I.

And we were in Chengdu, China, and he turned to me, and he said, can you define America for me? I said, yes, Mr. President -- he was then Vice President. It was two months before he became President. I said, I can define it in one word: possibilities. Literally possibilities. (Applause.)

As Americans, I believe we're built whether we are naturalized or native born -- we're built to dream big, to see no limits. That's who we are. That's who we've been. That's been stamped into our DNA. And yes, I believe it means something as big as ending cancer in our time. (Applause.)

It also means we got to change the tone so every child in this country gets to dream big, too. I've said it before and I'll say it again -- poor kids, middle-class kids, they have the same hopes, the same aspirations, the same dreams as everyone else.

In this country where a black child raised by a single white mom can become President of the United States, and a white kid from Scranton can become Vice President of the United States. I never felt for one moment growing up in I guess technically lower middle-class household, I never felt for one moment there was anything I couldn't do. Not a single thing. And Barack felt the same way.

Our job if you cut it to the quick in my view, our obligations as Democrats, as Americans is to make sure that every kid in this country growing up today thinks that's true; that parents can do what my dad did. We lived in Scranton. I moved to Wilmington when I was going into fourth grade. I remember my dad walking into my grandpop's home and my mom's four brothers and saying -- a proud man, saying, Ambrose, can you keep Jean and the kids for a year? I'm moving down to Delaware, Wilmington, where there are jobs. There are no jobs here in Scranton in '54. But I promise I'll come back and I'll make it up to you.

And I remember the longest walk any parent has to make is up a short flight of stairs to tell their kids they can't go to the same school. They can't be together anymore. Something has changed. And I honest to God remember my father sitting on the end of the bed telling me where he was moving, and saying, it will take about a year, and I'll bring and you and Jimmy and Val and Mom down. And it will be all right when I get a place. I'll try to come home every weekend. It's only 157 miles. I remember thinking that was like going to the moon.

But I remember what he did. He looked at me and he said, and I knew he believed it, Honey, everything is going to be all right.

Go back to your old neighborhoods. Go back to the people you grew up with who didn't do as well as you and ask them, do they feel confident they can look their kid in the eye and say, Honey, it's going to be okay?

Ladies and gentlemen, that's the single, overarching obligation we have. We can do that. And don't tell me what even some Democrats tell me -- don't tell me that we have to downsize our

dreams for the middle class. Don't tell me that there's anything we can't do. (Applause.)

I don't buy it. I really don't. And I never will. I don't think the American people buy it. Just give them a chance, folks. Just give them a chance. That's what we're all about as Democrats. Give them a chance.

Thank you very much. May God protect our troops and God bless America. (Applause.)

END 5:07 P.M. PST

Flynn, John S. EOP/OVP

28 Feb 2016 03:29:24

To: Hunter Biden, Ashley Blazer Biden [P6/b(6)], Jimmy Biden, Frank Biden [P6/b(6)], Valerie Biden Owens, JILL Tracy Biden

Cc:

Bcc:

Fwd: Remarks by the Vice President at the California State Democratic Party Convention

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Date created: Thu Mar 21 10:36:27 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Part

Reasons for Withholding:

P6,b(6)

Notes:

redaction of personal email addresses

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Chung, Kathy S. EOP/OVP

13 Apr 2016 18:27:35

To: Ricchetti, Steven, J.T. Godfrey (jill.tracy2@gmail.com),

hbiden@rosemontseneca.com" (jill.tracy2@gmail.com), [personal email address], "Ted Kauffman [personal email address], "Mackler, Alexander, [personal email address], "Ricchetti, Steven, >", "Mackler, Alexander

Cc: Muldoon, Anne Marie, Suber, Kellen, Elizondo, Carlos E., Person, Anne, >, "Suber, Kellen C., >", "Elizondo, Carlos E.

Bcc:

[personal information]

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PRM

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Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Mail Delivery System

21 May 2015 13:44:49
To: hbiden@sneecaga.com", "Kaufman, Edward
Cc:
Bcc:
Undeliverable: [personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET
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Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

postmaster@seneca.com

21 May 2015 13:46:03

To: hbiden@seneca.com, prvs=576e24ebc=edward_e_kaufman@ovp.eop.gov

Cc:

Bcc:

Undeliverable: [personal information]

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Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

"Molly Magarik" [personal email address]

08 May 2013 19:28:49

To: Hallie Biden [personal email address], "Hunter Biden, Kathleen Biden [personal email address], [personal email address], [personal email address], "Valerie Owens, jack owens [personal email address], "Ron Olivere [personal email address], "Missy Owens [personal email address], "Cuffe Owens [personal email address], "Casey Owens [personal email address], "Ted Kaufman [person Joshua Alcorn [personal email address], "Alexander Snyder-Mackler [personal email address], "Chung, Kathy, Chung, Kathy

Cc:

Bcc:

[personal information]

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PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Mackler, Alexander S. EOP/OVP

27 May 2016 18:18:47

To: hbiden@rosemontseneca.com

Cc: Anthony Bernal [personal email address], "Jill Tracy, Flynn, John, Chung, Kathy, Beau and Hallie Biden [personal email address], "Ethan Rosensweig, Bernal, Anthony, Bernal, Anthony R., >", "Chung, Kathy, >", "Flynn, John

Bcc:

RE: [personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 10:51:38 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Chung, Kathy S. EOP/OVP

06 Nov 2015 18:16:28

To: hbiden@rosemontseneca.com, jbiden@lionhallgp.com, [personal email address], [personal email address], [personal email address], [personal email address], [personal email address], [personal email address], hurrican
Cc: Muldoon, Anne Marie, Person, Anne
Bcc:
FW: [personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 09:46:02 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

"Molly Magarik" [personal email address]

18 Apr 2014 16:07:55

To: Jim Smith, Hallie [personal email address], "Hunter Biden, Ashley Biden [personal email address], [personal email address], "Valerie Biden Owens, James Biden, jack owens [personal email address], "Sara Biden, Frank Biden [personal email address], "Ron Olivere [personal email address], "Missy Owens [personal email address], "Kaufman Ted [personal email address], "Mike Donilon [personal email address], "Eric Schwerin, Alexander S. Mackler [personal email address], "Josh Alcorn, Chung, Kathy, Bernal, Anthony R., Bernal, Anthony R., >", "Chung, Kathy

Cc:

Bcc:

[personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Wed Apr 03 11:03:03 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Anne Marie Person

Fri, 04 Dec 2009 08:39:51 -0500

To: Person, Fran, Person, Frances

Bcc: Person, Fran

RE: Vice Presidential News Clips for Friday, December 4, 2009

Thanks Fran! Hope you have a good Friday :)

-----Original Message-----

From: Person, Fran [mailto:Fran_Person@ovp.eop.gov]

Sent: Friday, December 04, 2009 8:08 AM

To: amperson@rosemontseneca.com

Subject: Fw: Vice Presidential News Clips for Friday, December 4, 2009

----- Original Message -----

From: Bulletin News <VP-Editors@BulletinNews.com>

To: Alexander, Elizabeth

Cc: Escudero, Adrian V.; Hoffman, Alan L.; Tomasini, AnnMarie; Bernal, Anthony R.; Blinken, Antony J.; Woyak, Brian J.; McKeon, Brian P.; Russell, Catherine M.; O'Donnell, Courtney; Hogan, Cynthia C.; Martens, Donald R.; Hire, Elisabeth; Oxhorn, Elizabeth A.; Allen, Elizabeth M.; Ryan, Evan M.; Person, Fran; Ziskend, Herbert M.; Carney, James F.; Bernstein, Jared; DeGraaf, Jason P.; O'Connor, Kevin C; White, Kirsten B.; membersOVPVPMILAIDE@whmo.mil <membersOVPVPMILAIDE@whmo.mil>; Donilon, Michael C.; Smith, Michele; Vela, Moises V.; Orloff, Nancy; Isaac, Nicole M.; Selfridge, Peter A.; Bleshman, Rachel; Klain, Ronald A.; Swan, Ryan S.; Fletcher, Sarah; Rosenthal, Sarah L.; Hawkins, Stacey T.; Henry, Sudafi; McSweeney, Terrell P.; McNulty, Thomas P.; Dirksen, Ward F.

Sent: Fri Dec 04 05:44:29 2009

Subject: Vice Presidential News Clips for Friday, December 4, 2009

TO: THE VICE PRESIDENT AND STAFF

DATE: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2009 -- 6:15 AM EST

-----TODAY'S EDITION-----

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL STORIES:

- + Political Expert To Beau Biden: Stay Put For Now (WILNJ)
- + Mike Castle Regains Lead Over Beau Biden In Latest Senate Poll (WILNJ)
- + Joblessness Plagues Delaware Economy (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Energy: Markell Asks Feds To Back Wind Permits (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Environment: Law Promotes A Plan To A Plastic Problem (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Business: Economy Slows Middletown's Westtown (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Business: Promenade Site Up For Sale Again (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Businesses Now Able To File Withholding Taxes Online (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Crime: Man Gets Counterfeit Bills From Teller (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Crime: Iranian Arms Dealer Is Harmless, His Attorney Says (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Health: Access To Swine Flu Vaccine Expanded (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Health: Celebrity Hoops Game To Follow HIV Forum For Kids (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Researchers Find A Treasure: A Letter From Thomas Jefferson (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Schools: Wide-eyed And Hands-on, Teens Get A Special Lesson (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Crime: Two Arrested In Connection With Bank Heist (WILNJ)

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL EDITORIALS:

- + Wilmington Council Should Try Again On Anti-loitering Proposal (WILNJ)
- + Jobs Are Too Important To Be Left To The Posturing Of Politicians (WILNJ)

BIDEN IN THE NEWS:

- + Obama: Will Take Every Responsible Step To Create Jobs (DJ)
 - + Tony Fratto: Job Creation Honesty Is Job One (CNBC)
 - + Obama Bemoans Desperation Of People Out Of Work (AP)
 - + CBS: Obama-Jobs Summit.
 - + NBC: Obama-Jobs Summit.
 - + Afghanistan: Can Obama Sell America On This War? (TIME)
 - + Obama Homed In On An Afghanistan Pullout Date (LAT)
 - + Biden Appeals To Left On Afghan Policy: 'Clean Break' From Bush (WSJ)
 - + Obama's Anti-MacArthur Moment (CBS)
 - + Obama's Afghan War Decision: A Team Of Rivals (NPR)
 - + Did The Stimulus Stimulate? (FORBES)
 - + Administration Goes After Noncompliant Recovery Act Recipients (GOVEXEC)
 - + Wheeling Officials Part Of Conference Call With Vice President Biden (WTOV)
 - + 3 Secret Service Officers Put On Leave In White House Gate-Crashing (NYT)
 - + Secret Service Takes Blame For White House Party Crashers (MCT)
 - + Secret Service Officers In Gate-Crash Put On Leave (Update3) (BLOOM)
 - + Republican And Democratic Not The Parties They Had In Mind (WP)
 - + Lawmaker: People Questioned Salahis' Presence At State Dinner (HILL)
 - + The Real Washington Of 2009 (USAT)
 - + Political Analyst: Beau Biden Should Bide His Time (USAT)
 - + Poll Shows Health Care Vote Didn't Hurt Castle (HILL)
 - + Republican Revival (WT)
 - + Centrists' Day Bayh, Graham, Lugar To W.H. (POL)
 - + Obama Family Lights National Christmas Tree (AP)
 - + Democrat Drops Out Of Illinois Treasurer's Race (CHIT)
-

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL STORIES:

POLITICAL EXPERT TO BEAU BIDEN: STAY PUT FOR NOW (WILNJ)

By Nicole Gaudiano, News Journal Washington Bureau
Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

WASHINGTON - One of the nation's top political analysts says Beau Biden should take a pass on the 2010 special election to fill the remaining four years of his father's Senate term.

Instead, he should wait until he's a shoo-in for a Senate seat representing Delaware, said Charlie Cook, editor and publisher of The Cook Political Report.

Beau Biden, 40, Delaware's attorney general, has said he is considering a run for the seat his father Joe Biden, gave up to become vice president. His opponent next year would be GOP Rep. Mike Castle, 70, who is serving his ninth term in the House.

Cook said there's a 95 percent chance Castle wouldn't run for re-election to the Senate seat in 2014, if he wins it next year. In addition, he said, Democratic Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del., may retire in 2012 (Carper has said he will run for re-election).

"Beau Biden can walk into a Senate seat, absolutely without a scratch, within the next two or four years," Cook said at a briefing today. "Why does he want to run the risk of running against somebody who's got experience all over him in a Republican year? Why does he want to do this?"

The Cook Political Report says next year's election is one of six Senate "toss-up" races that either party has a good chance of winning.

Cook said he's never met Beau Biden and isn't predicting he won't run.

"If he's anything like his father, he will definitely run," he said.

"But if I were him I would not run."

If Biden does run, his race against Castle will be "an epic battle," said Jennifer Duffy said.

Castle, a well-known moderate, has "no learning curve" and will run a good campaign, she said. And Biden would have "every resource he could ever

hope for and more," Duffy said

"It's tied," she said of the hypothetical race. "It's going to stay tied."

MIKE CASTLE REGAINS LEAD OVER BEAU BIDEN IN LATEST SENATE POLL (WILNJ)

By Cris Barrish, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 3, 2009

Another week brings another poll in the presumed U.S. Senate race, and this time Mike Castle is back on top.

The latest in what will likely become a merry-go-round of polls pit U.S. Rep. Castle, who has announced his candidacy, against Attorney General Beau Biden -- who has only said he is seriously considering a run -- for the post Biden's father surrendered in January to become vice president.

This survey, conducted from Monday through Wednesday, found Castle on top by 6 percentage points - 45 percent to 39 percent - with 16 percent undecided.

Castle, a former two-term governor and nine-term U.S. representative, has been the favored candidate in four other independent polls made public since March. The only exception was a two-question survey released in November that showed Biden ahead by 5 points.

The newest, more-thorough poll was conducted by the Raleigh, N.C.-based Public Policy Polling. That firm routinely works for Democratic candidates across the nation but did this survey for neither Democrat Biden nor Republican Castle - nor for either of their parties or any partisan special interest group.

Pollsters surveyed 571 registered Delaware voters who voted in at least one of the last three general elections. Castle's favorable-unfavorable rating was 55 percent-28 percent, much stronger than Biden's 43 percent-35 percent rating.

Tom Jensen, the pollster's spokesman, said Castle's no vote on President Barack Obama's health care plan didn't seem to hurt him, as was speculated after the November poll. That's because 46 percent of the Delaware voters surveyed opposed the House bill, while only 43 percent approved. In addition, the voters weren't anti-Obama -- they supported him 55 percent to 37 percent over John McCain in the 2008 president election.

Stay tuned. While it's not a done deal that Biden will enter the race, one thing is certain: If he does, the polls will keep coming and coming and coming.

JOBLESSNESS PLAGUES DELAWARE ECONOMY (WILNJ)

By Jeff Montgomery, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

One year into his search for a job, New Castle resident Terrance Dendy says state and federal governments need to do something -- anything -- to get people back to work.

"I took an electrician class and tried to get an apprenticeship with a union, but it hasn't been working out," said Dendy, who had previously worked as a construction flagger. "They should give some of these companies help, so they can get back up operating and start hiring people."

Although many economists see signs of a weak recovery, unemployment remains stubbornly high nationwide and in Delaware, which has lost two big car plants and Valero's Delaware City Refinery in the past year.

President Obama and top administration officials spent much of the day Thursday huddled with some of the nation's top employers and business and political leaders, groping for solutions. Options now under consideration around the country range from a second stimulus program to temporary tax cuts -- even direct jobs programs.

Delaware's unemployment rate continues upward from an 8.7 percent rate set in October. Counting under-employed and discouraged job-seekers, unemployment in Delaware was 13.5 percent for the year ending Sept. 30, according to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Gov. Jack Markell says creating jobs is his top priority, also.

"I think, most importantly, people in my shoes have to put ourselves in the shoes of people who create jobs and prosperity in the first place,"

Markell said after a speech before the American Wind Energy Association in Boston. "One thing I've heard in Delaware and one of the things I've heard from other governors is, people are having difficulty getting access to credit."

Delaware officials have sunk some of their hopes in the state's "Limited Investment for Financial Traction" (LIFT) loan program for the small businesses that account for much of the state's employment. The program offers 7-year, no-interest loans with complete payment deferrals for the first two years.

Markell said the state also is working to attract new businesses, reduce time-consuming and costly paperwork burdens for companies, and to improve the educational system and community resources that attract both employers and new workers alike.

Progress has been slow, however, despite the recent announcement that Fisker Automotive will begin making electric cars at the former General Motors Boxwood Road plant, potentially creating thousands of jobs.

And there are no obvious solutions.

"In general, for the overall economy, it's easier said than done," said James L. Butkiewicz, a professor with the University of Delaware's Alfred Lerner College of Business & Economics. "Getting businesses confident that there will be a market for things they do is not easy. Everyone right now seems reluctant to spend."

Butkiewicz said he was worried by seemingly permanent losses and shrinkage in the state's mainstay industries, including financial services and manufacturing.

"I don't see anything picking up the slack," Butkiewicz said.

Carl Warren, one of the owners of Bluchill, a maker of custom industrial process chillers in New Castle, said officials should consider easing taxes for employers.

Business has been tight, Warren added, but the relatively new company actually hired another person this year, pushing company employment to five full-time and two part-time workers.

"I think it's turning around," Warren said. "Everyone we talk to out there is seeing some kind of turnaround. I think a tax holiday would be a good idea. They need to ease some of the financial burdens on business. That would be a kick start, it would free up enough money for me to possibly put another employee out there to take more orders."

John Stapleford, an economist with Moody's Economy.com, said Delaware's Economic Development Office appears to be on the right track with its focus on small business, and said that the White House effort Thursday was weakened by its big business emphasis.

"The comings and goings, births and deaths, expansions and contractions of small business is where an awful lot of the action in an economy comes from," Stapleford said. "It's the way an economy restructures itself in response to changing conditions in supply and demand."

Yet Delaware's economy faces a long, slow crawl back, Stapleford said, with recovery to pre-recession employment levels expected to take more than three years, until the first quarter of 2013.

It was a gloomy forecast for Nick Biordi of Wilmington, now looking for work as an electrician or graphics designer after losing a job with a cousin's company nearly a year ago.

"Everything they're talking about to create jobs totally makes sense," Biordi said, "but it's totally dry out there right now. I just need to get working again now. It seems like the renovations are starting to come back in the construction industry, but not the new construction yet."

Brian Selander, Markell's spokesman, said the governor spends several hours a week talking with business owners and managers about ways the state can help. About a third of the state's revenues are tied to taxes and fees paid by corporations with work forces in other states, however, making the success of national stimulus efforts crucial.

"The health of the national economy impacts Delaware's budget, and Delaware's budget impacts our ability to provide the kinds of services that businesses like to see in order to create jobs," Selander said.

Stapleford said temporary tax holidays or short-term measures won't be

enough.

"This tinkering type of stuff, a one-year tax break or giving people credit for hiring, all it does is create a blip. It doesn't change the long-term path," Stapleford said. "You have to look at things that will have longer-term consequences."

In New Castle, Dendy worried Thursday about more immediate concerns. "I've had to struggle. My stepfather and I started landscaping, cutting grass in yards and lots and churches just to make ends meet. That was more like a summer thing and it's over," Dendy said. "Now we're looking at winter."

DELAWARE ENERGY: MARKELL ASKS FEDS TO BACK WIND PERMITS (WILNJ)

By Aaron Nathans, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

BOSTON -- Speaking to a wind industry trade group Thursday, <http://www.state.de.us/governor/>>Gov. Jack Markell urged federal agencies to speed the permitting of offshore wind farms so construction can begin on schedule.

But one federal official key to the permitting process said there's value to being more methodical.

Markell's address kicked off the second day of the <http://www.awea.org/>>American Wind Energy Association's offshore wind workshop. He spoke to more than 700 developers, interest groups, vendors, academics and others who gathered to discuss the future of the growing industry.

The interest in offshore wind is bolstered by the recent popularity of renewable energy as a tool to fight global warming. Developers like NRG-Bluewater Wind, which is planning a project east of Rehoboth Beach, are looking to build their wind farms close to eastern population centers.

But hurdles remain, and one of the primary ones is getting federal permits needed to build. The <http://www.mms.gov/>>Minerals Management Service, an arm of the Department of the Interior, recently released long-awaited federal rules for offshore wind farms.

Now it's a matter of the first offshore wind projects actually going through the permitting process. That includes securing a formal lease on an ocean tract, and performing an environmental assessment.

Markell noted that he met with Minerals Management officials in October to discuss coordination among developers, the state and the dozen federal agencies that have roles in permitting offshore wind projects.

Markell praised the Obama administration for getting the rules out so quickly after taking office, coming after years of delay.

Markell called those developments "promising, but we need to do much more. A two-year competitive lease process is too long." Markell said the process must be "streamlined and efficient."

"If we are to begin installation by 2012 or 2013, we need to expedite all regulatory processes," Markell said. "Time is of the essence."

NRG-Bluewater officials have said their target date for starting to generate electricity, 2013, could be pushed back if there are delays in obtaining federal permits. They have also said the longer it takes to begin construction, the harder it becomes for the project to qualify for federal assistance such as loan guarantees.

Maureen Bornholdt, Minerals Management Service program manager for the Office of Offshore Alternative Energy Programs, said she wasn't sure how long the permitting and leasing process will take. The agency has an obligation to complete all of the requirements set out in the rules, she said. That includes public comment periods, she said.

She said that the wind turbines would likely be in place for 25-30 years, and that warrants a "thoughtful, thorough" environmental analysis.

"How many times have we ever started from nothing? We have rules in place. Now we have to employ them and use them," Bornholdt said. "It's like getting on a bike. The first time it's a little wobbly."

During his address, Markell urged other states to create financial incentives to help build the offshore wind industry. The supporting manufacturing businesses won't show up until there's a critical mass, he

said.

"It's going to take much more than a quarter-gigawatt contract in Delaware and a few potential projects of a few hundred megawatts. We need to ensure a steady stream of projects, year after year, and we need to drive down prices through creative financial and policy mechanisms," Markell said.

DELAWARE ENVIRONMENT: LAW PROMOTES A PLAN TO A PLASTIC PROBLEM (WILNJ)

By J.I. Miller, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

Betty Ronston finally got tired of those plastic grocery bags that have a way of piling up in storage drawers or kitchen closets.

"I've thrown so many away, and I know they're in the landfill a long time, and that bothers me because I've got grandkids," Ronston said Thursday as she left the Dover Super Fresh store.

Ronston now totes her groceries in two colorful reusable bags, doing her bit to reduce her environmental footprint.

That's just what Bear Democrat Rep. Valerie Longhurst wanted to encourage when she sponsored legislation to require larger stores to set up recycling containers and sell reusable bags. The law took effect Tuesday.

"You see more and more people out there with canvas bags," Longhurst said.

And yet even Ronston still has a surplus of plastic bags, which have an ability to seemingly multiply on their own.

"I've got one of those storage things. [The bags] are handy -- but I've got too many," she said.

Dover resident June Butler said she reuses her bags by putting her trash in them.

"I've seen where you can deposit them [in store recycling bins] and I might start doing that," Butler said. "I don't really need that many of them for my trash."

The law affects stores with at least 7,000 square feet of retail sales space or chains of three or more stores with at least 3,000 square feet of retail space each. It applies not only to grocery stores but to other retailers as well.

Most bills that make it to the governor's desk are the result of compromise, and this one was no exception. If Longhurst had her way, plastic bags would be banned -- but she knew that wouldn't sail politically.

So Longhurst worked with the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce to craft legislation that could pass.

"They all were in agreement on it," she said.

It is uncertain, though, just how much of an impact the new law will have.

An informal check of a number of Delaware grocery stores this week showed that all were in compliance with the law the day it took effect -- and had been for some time.

Indeed, most grocery chains trumpet their environmental efforts. Acme Markets and its parent company, for example, report that the company has recycled 11.5 million pounds of plastic bags and wrap.

Whether shoppers will actually use the new state-mandated service also remains to be seen, particularly in communities with convenient recycling programs already in place.

"I didn't know they had a bin here," shopper Monica Edwards said as she loaded bags of groceries into the trunk of her car at the Super Fresh. The store's recycling barrel is in a prominent spot inside the entrance.

"I usually either use them for trash bags or I put them in the recycling bin thing," Edwards said, referring to Dover's curbside recycling system. She said she'd probably continue to recycle the bags at home rather than take them back to the store.

Frederica resident Jane Jones is another shopper who's unlikely to use the store bins. She takes her bags to the recycle bins near the Town Hall -- and she finds uses for the ones she doesn't immediately recycle.

"We use them to bring vegetables in from the garden," she said.

But some people obviously are returning their bags. On Tuesday the bag bin at the nearby Food Lion market was filled almost to overflowing.

Even if the law's impact is open to debate, Longhurst said she expects it to be as much about consciousness-raising as it is about recycling.

"I think it raises awareness about what plastic bags do to the environment," Longhurst said

There is no debate that plastic bags wind up as unsightly litter, scattered on roadsides or snagged in tree limbs.

But the extent of the problem -- and even the number of bags produced each year -- are in dispute.

Longhurst's legislation states that an estimated 500 billion to 1 trillion bags are used worldwide. But the International Trade Commission reported in 2003 that Americans used just 87.5 billion bags.

The bill also states that the bags cause "the deaths of thousands of marine and land animals through ingestion and entanglement." But the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has debunked a commonly quoted statistic that 100,000 marine mammals or sea turtles die yearly due to plastic bags and plastic debris.

"We were able to find no information to support this statement," the agency stated.

Environment Australia, that nation's counterpart to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, said the erroneous statistic was published in a 2002 study. The report was corrected in 2006.

Supermarkets haven't really needed a state mandate to recycle plastic bags. Stores sell the bags to recyclers who, depending on the commodities market, pay up to \$500 a ton for them.

"It certainly helps to offset the costs," said Jennifer Killinger, spokeswoman for the American Chemistry Council.

The industry-funded council lobbies against plastic-bag bans and taxes, and helped bankroll the successful effort to defeat a Seattle ballot initiative this summer that would have slapped a 20-cent tax on plastic and paper bags. It supports legislation such as Longhurst's.

Supermarkets are experts in distribution of goods, Killinger said, so sending the recyclable material to a buyer is not an undue burden.

Most of the bags are recycled into composite lumber products such as Trex, while others are made back into bags. Some even become plastic shopping carts.

"What's getting left out of a lot of the [news] coverage from the consumer aspect, there are all sorts of materials that can be recycled every day. Dry cleaning bags, it's the exact same material. Newspaper bags, the wraps that come around bathroom tissue ... it's all polyethylene film," Killinger said.

In 2007, the most recent year for which figures are available, U.S. recycling efforts resulted in the recovery of an estimated 830 million pounds of post-consumer polyethylene film, including plastic bags.

Although Longhurst would like to see the bags banned, mandating recycling bins and encouraging the use of reusable bags is a good first step, she said.

"You have to crawl before you walk," she said.

DELAWARE BUSINESS: ECONOMY SLOWS MIDDLETOWN'S WESTOWN (WILNJ)

By Robin Brown And Ginger Gibson, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

Chasity Washington of Townsend had high hopes for the vast tract of farmland west of Middletown when developers three years ago unveiled their vision for Westown.

More than 2,000 acres straddling U.S. 301 would one day host 3 million square feet of retail and office space, more than 3,000 homes, two new schools and a large town park.

The vision was more tangible for Washington and other residents. Stores such as Walmart, Target, Home Depot and Kohl's and a movie theater meant no more long drives to Dover or Glasgow for shopping or entertainment.

It hasn't happened yet -- at least, most of it hasn't.

Walmart, Kohl's, Lowes and Home Depot are open today, but Target and a movie multiplex are still just concepts.

Unfinished developments and empty business lots are common sites along

Bunker Hill and Middletown Warwick roads. Wooden signs announce coming projects. They also advertise available space -- lots of available space.

Developers talked of a 10-year build-out back in 2005, but today, Rick Woodin acknowledges the recession has slowed the project, even as he affirms his commitment to Westown.

He said Woodin + Associates is running a few hundred housing units and about 100,000 square feet of retail space behind what they had hoped to have in place by now.

"We have to wait. We have to be patient," he said.

Washington and others say they understand. As she filled a cart at Walmart, she said she has been thrilled by Westown's progress, calling economy-related delays "understandable." She said she still looks forward to future additions.

"That will be wonderful when they open," she said. "We won't have to drive so far."

Kristen Krenzer, spokeswoman for Middletown, said the city has received notice of only one abandoned project during the recession -- the proposed Promenade on Main Street that would have included 273 condominiums above an assortment of retail shops and a movie multiplex.

"Everybody is kind of watching and waiting, and we just have to wait until they [Woodin] feel bold enough to take a step forward," Krenzer said.

Neither town officials nor Woodin would speculate about a possible completion date for the Westown project and related road improvements, once expected to be finished next year.

"Everyone feels the economy," said Woodin, whose other Middletown-area projects include the Parkside, Back Creek and Westside Hunt residential developments. "As every month goes by, the signs are getting better" for the economy.

Brian Arnold, who owns U.S. Male Modern Barbershop along U.S. 301, said business hasn't been hurt by the development slowdown.

"There's definitely a lot of room for growth," the 23-year-old said as he worked on a customer Thursday evening. "I definitely see a lot of improvement in the next couple of years."

An area hit hard

The economic slump hit the area south of the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal particularly hard.

Concerns about fuel prices started a slide in housing prices 18 months ago that accelerated as the market went bad.

The number of homes sold there dropped 37 percent between 2007 and 2008, compared with 29 percent in the rest of New Castle County, according to Prudential Fox & Roach's analysis.

Middletown-area houses spent an average 98 days on the market last year, a 56 percent increase from 2007 and a month longer than most of those in the rest of New Castle County. In the Smyrna area, sales volume dropped 24 percent and the median price dropped 10 percent.

Construction slowed markedly, contributing to a rapid deceleration in the growth that had swelled Middletown's population from 6,200 in 2000 to 14,500 today as town officials annexed open land and commuters flocked to the McMansions popping up on former corn and soybean fields.

Middletown's comprehensive plan projected the bedroom community's population could reach 30,000 by 2020 if growth continued -- and Westown was a big part of those projections.

But the project also offered something more -- a mix of retail stores and office space along with a mixture of new housing ranging from duplexes and condos along Bunker Hill Road, to luxury single-family homes at the Estates at St. Anne's along Levels Road.

Woodin planned a town center style community just north of Levels Road with a mix of houses and shopping.

Developers came together with city leaders and state transportation officials to construct a comprehensive master plan for the project's land use, road improvements and amenities.

Even residents who had opposed what they saw as runaway growth fed by annexation came to support a plan that would also bring commerce, jobs and infrastructure improvements.

Chuck Mulholland, president of the Southern New Castle County Alliance, said the new commercial retailers would be welcome for the tax base and provide some relief to the Appoquinimink School District, which had been flooded with new students by the housing boom.

"You really need a commercial tax base to offset the houses being dropped into the Appoquinimink School District," Mulholland said.

The Westown project contributed 200 acres at Bunker Hill and Choptank roads for construction of a new high school and elementary school, now both completed.

State Rep. S. Quinton Johnson, D-Middletown, sees the biggest advantage coming not from property taxes, but from jobs for area residents.

"Anything that is going to bring new jobs to the state I think is a welcome issue," Johnson said.

Woodin said the slowdown won't change that aspect, and the project still will deliver both short-term construction jobs and long-term retail jobs.

"While the state has surely taken a few large hits in the employment sector, there recently has been significant positive developments that should allow for the wounds to begin healing," Woodin said.

Looking to the future

Woodin said he is confident the economy will begin to heal in 2010 and thinks residents will see building pick up in Westown.

A new 14,000-square-foot Walgreen's store recently opened across U.S. 301 from Home Depot and Woodin said the firm is planning to start Phase 1 of the 150,000-square-foot Town Center retail project nearby as early as this winter.

"We are currently also in discussions with several tenants for approximately 60,000 square feet of retail space between the Kohl's and Walmart," he said.

Housing construction continues at the Parkway and Spring Arbor 55+ project off of Bunker Hill Road and Woodin said he expects the Westown residential community along Levels Road will break ground in the spring.

The attempt to bring a movie theater to Westown -- Middletown has no first-run, multiscreen cinema -- remains part of the plan, although it still is just a concept.

"We don't have the movie theater deal in place yet," but an agreement "is only a matter of time," Woodin said.

A Target deal also remains a goal.

"We have agreed with Target to sit tight until the overall economy improves and becomes predictably stable," Woodin said. "I would suggest that our discussion with them will renew in mid-2010. At that time we will be able to better assess whether Target is coming."

Other high-profile parts of the Westown Master Plan are on shakier ground, including several planned hotels and what was to be an "auto mall" featuring several car dealerships on a large parcel on the east side of U.S. 301 across from Kohl's.

That project was planned by the Silicato Development Group and officials and observers say it may not come to fruition because of the deep auto industry slump. Silicato officials did not return phone calls this week.

Krenzer said the Walmart has been well-received, a sign Woodin reads as an affirmation of the strategy behind the master plan.

"We wouldn't trade our Middletown location for any other location in the state for a project like Westown," he said. "The area is ideally located to support a large growth area and the retail needs are currently undeserved."

The construction slowdown has had one beneficial effect -- the roads needed to support traffic from development now will be in place before the project is fully built.

DelDOT last summer began work on two miles of U.S. 301 directly related to Westown from Levels Road north to Doc Levinson Drive. The dualization of U.S. 301 is nearly finished, Bunker Hill Road has been rebuilt, the Merrimac Avenue connector road has been constructed and reconstruction of Levels Road, with a new railroad bridge, is expected to be finished by the end of 2010.

Many of the project's interior roads also are finished and residential areas' infrastructure construction have kept pace with development, Woodin

said.

Mullholland said the road improvements are a step toward alleviating traffic congestion in the area.

"Traffic out there is onerous at best," Mullholland said. "But they are making an effort."

Westown business owners said they remain optimistic.

"Honestly, the original plan was probably a little too fast with everything coming in," said 55-year-old Steve Ridenour, who owns the Play N Trade video game shop off Middletown Warwick Road. "So I honestly didn't expect it to be that fast."

DELAWARE BUSINESS: PROMENADE SITE UP FOR SALE AGAIN (WILNJ)

By Robin Brown, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

One clear casualty of the economic downturn in the Middletown area is the much-promoted Promenade project -- a mixed-use complex planned on 18 acres bounded by Main and Catherine streets.

The project's developer, Carl Chetty, planned 55 upscale boutiques and restaurants on the ground floor with 282 luxury condominiums above.

When the developer broke ground on what was to have been a \$100 million project in February 2008, real estate agents said 85 of 141 residential units on the Promenade's western side were under contract.

The first phase of construction was to include the western portion and a stadium-style movie multiplex operated by Dallas-based Starplex Cinemas, with eight screens and seating for 1,350.

But work at the site faded after the ceremonial ground-breaking and most preliminary site preparations. The owner notified the town earlier this year that it had lost its financing as the money markets collapsed.

Kristen Krenzer, spokeswoman for Middletown, now is offering the property for sale. She said "a new owner would have to come to the town with a new plan."

The town code in Middletown gives big projects such as Promenade 18 months to move dirt and get going before town leaders would require submission of a new plan, Krenzer said.

DELAWARE BUSINESSES NOW ABLE TO FILE WITHHOLDING TAXES ONLINE (WILNJ)

By The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

Delaware businesses can now file their monthly, quarterly and eighth-monthly withholding taxes online.

Division of Revenue Director Patrick Carter said Thursday that the free online service will save money for businesses as well as for taxpayers.

"Paying taxes online is a great convenience because there is no longer the need to first find a remittance coupon or mail a payment, both of which cost businesses time and money," Carter said in a statement.

Because online tax filings are processed electronically, that decreases costs to the state, and it also reduces the potential for paperwork errors.

Businesses wishing to file withholding taxes online can do so by visiting the <http://www.revenue.delaware.gov/> Division of Revenue Web site and selecting "File and Pay Withholding/Corporate Tax" under Online Services. Users must create an online account. Withholding taxes can be paid electronically via ACH debits to a bank account.

Taxpayers without Internet access or who need filing assistance can obtain access to the online withholding tax filing system at any Delaware library.

DELAWARE CRIME: MAN GETS COUNTERFEIT BILLS FROM TELLER (WILNJ)

By Terri Sanginiti, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

Fred Hofstetter walked into Wachovia Bank in Governors Square on Monday to cash his paycheck during a half-hour lunch break.

He walked out of the Bear branch with a stack of crisp new notes -- and two counterfeit \$100 bills.

"I saw that the two were older looking bills and had the yellow pen mark

on them," the 46-year-old Crystal Beach, Md., man said. "The ... other bills were the newer ones."

The two fraudulent notes also had identical serial numbers, he said.

The problem was discovered later in the day when Hofstetter went to a TD Bank, also in Bear, to deposit the money into his account.

The teller there made a copy of the bogus bills for Hofstetter and had him fill out a report asking the U.S. Secret Service to verify that they were bogus.

Hofstetter believed he was out \$200 just in time for the Christmas season.

"The tellers are usually very good," said A. Jeffrey Gavin, resident agent in charge of the Secret Service in Delaware. "I don't hear of many occasions where the teller gives out counterfeit money."

But it does happen occasionally.

In December 2006, a similar incident took place when a customer was given what was believed to be a bogus bill at the same Wachovia Bank branch. It also was flagged as possibly counterfeit when he tried to deposit it at a branch of what was then Commerce Bank.

In that case, the Secret Service confirmed that the bill was genuine and the Bear man received his \$100 back in three weeks.

It looks like Hofstetter may be getting his money back, too. He said a Wachovia manager told him Wednesday that the bank will investigate and possibly reimburse the lost money.

"If we are confident the money came from us and he was not anywhere else, we would reimburse the customer," said Barbara Nate, a Wachovia spokeswoman.

When bank tellers are newly hired, they are trained to detect counterfeit bills, Nate said. That training is reinforced throughout the year with a variety of other fraud prevention measures, she added.

Wachovia also operates a program called Fraud Busters that offers a financial reward for employees who catch fraud or counterfeit transactions.

"In this situation, we are the ones who detect the counterfeit currency," Nate said.

Between January and November, \$119,750 in counterfeit bills was passed in Delaware. Last year, about \$128,100 in counterfeit bills was collected in the state.

Some of that could be because counterfeit detection pens used by some businesses are not reliable for detecting bills reprinted as \$100 Federal Reserve Notes from bleached out \$5 denominations, Gavin said.

The detection pens work by leaving a dark mark on a fake bill. But it will not react positively on a genuine bill.

Genuine bills have color shifting ink in the number on the lower right hand corner. They bear a watermark portrait, security thread, microprinting, serial numbers and tiny red and blue fibers.

Bank officials say the best way to avoid becoming a victim is to check money before leaving a bank so it can be corrected at the time of the transaction.

"Consumers should visually inspect their money before walking away from a sales terminal or bank tellers," Gavin said.

Hofstetter, meanwhile, is looking forward to being reimbursed. "Any time of the year would be great, but for a bank to step up like that, I'm grateful," he said.

For information on how to detect counterfeit money, go to:

<http://www.secretservice.gov/>>United States Secret Service or

<http://www.moneyfactory.gov/>>U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

DELAWARE CRIME: IRANIAN ARMS DEALER IS HARMLESS, HIS ATTORNEY SAYS (WILNJ)

By Sean O'Sullivan, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

WILMINGTON -- The same day that federal prosecutors unsealed their case against an Iranian who admitted to illegally trying to buy sensitive military equipment, his Delaware attorney filed court papers painting a very different picture.

Instead of a being a danger to the United States, 36-year-old Amir

Hossein Ardebili is a small-time operator who was trying to do right for his nation and is now nearly broken by two years of solitary confinement, said Edmund "Dan" Lyons, his Wilmington attorney.

"He's hardly the Iranian version of James Bond," Lyons said.

Under federal guidelines, Ardebili is facing a sentence of 12 to 14 years on charges including smuggling, conspiracy and money laundering.

The motion by Lyons asks Chief District Judge Gregory M. Sleet for a "variance," or a sentence below 12 years, perhaps as low as time served when Ardebili is sentenced Dec. 14.

In a high-profile press conference Wednesday, U.S. Attorney for Delaware David Weiss and other federal officials repeatedly described Ardebili as a threat to national security because of his attempts to illegally secure high-tech equipment that would have vastly improved Iranian weapons systems, missiles and fighter aircraft.

Court papers also indicate Ardebili knew he was violating U.S. laws -- and appeared adept at finding ways around export rules -- and that the technology he was obtaining from the United States would very likely be used against the U.S. military.

In an undercover video, Ardebili talks about how the Iranian government -- his sole customer -- believes "war is coming" with the U.S.

In his five-page memo, Lyons does not dispute Ardebili broke the law -- as his client already has pleaded guilty. "I'm not going to minimize this case," he said.

But he notes Ardebili was not operating in the United States, but in Iran where he broke no laws.

"In short, before this court is a young man with no prior criminal record who acted on behalf of his government but violated the laws of the United States -- a place he had never been before being arrested," Lyons wrote.

Ardebili's October 2007 trip to meet with undercover Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents in the Republic of Georgia -- where he was arrested -- was his first trip outside the Republic of Iran, according to his attorney.

And while prosecutors state that Ardebili was involved in thousands of purchases for Iran valued at about \$1 million annually, Lyons said he had his doubts about the portrayal of his client as a major arms player. He said Ardebili appeared to have difficulty coming up with a \$10,000 down payment for the deal that would lead to his arrest.

"He lives in the house he grew up in," Lyons said, adding that a man who appears next to Ardebili on the undercover surveillance tape where the deal was concluded is his father. "Does that sound like an international arms dealer?" asked Lyons, or a small-time guy who takes his Dad with him on his first trip outside the country?

Lyons said Ardebili was perhaps one of "hundreds" of similar small independent contractors in Iran, seeking to purchase equipment the Iranian government was seeking through these small operators to maintain deniability on the illicit deals.

Lyons also charged in court papers that more than two years of incarceration -- most of it in solitary confinement -- has been harsh on his client.

"While in custody ... due to pre-existing dental problems, defendant has lost five to six of his teeth. Several other teeth are at risk at present. Because the Bureau of Prisons does not provide restorative dentistry to inmates, nothing really could be done to halt [the problem]," wrote Lyons.

Ardebili has refused additional dental treatment and has been diagnosed with clinical depression, according to court papers. "He's really a broken man," Lyons said. "I'm not saying the government is bad for doing that. I'm just saying it is what it is."

Part of the depression may be because Ardebili was arrested just 18 months after he had been married and he has had "limited" contact with his family while in U.S. custody, according to court papers.

"The conditions of his confinement in [the maximum security Special Housing Unit of the Federal Detention Center in Philadelphia], as set forth above, have imposed a far greater burden than usual on defendant compared to

one who has been detained in [the general] population," wrote Lyons, adding that a judge may consider this in deciding on the appropriate sentence.

While Iranian officials had mentioned Ardebili's arrest and extradition to the United States in the past as a possibly illegal act, a person who answered the phone in the Iranian "interests section" in the Pakistan embassy in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday had no comment on the criminal case against the Iranian national, stating he had never heard of Ardebili.

DELAWARE HEALTH: ACCESS TO SWINE FLU VACCINE EXPANDED (WILNJ)

By Hiran Ratnayake, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

The number of people in priority groups for getting the swine flu vaccine is being broadened, public health officials announced Thursday.

As more vaccine comes into the state -- and with the number of cases dropping each week -- the shots will be more readily available for adults with chronic underlying conditions as well as for employees of hospitals and other health care organizations who don't work directly with patients.

"As you know we've largely been focusing on the pediatric population," said Dr. Karyl Rattay, director of <http://www.flu.delaware.gov/> Delaware's Division of Public Health. "We wanted to make sure that those who care for high-risk patients were covered first. It was very targeted but now it's available for the folks who would fall under the larger target group."

Delaware had 44 reports of influenza-like illness reported by designated health care providers during the last full week of November. That represents the fifth consecutive week the state has seen a drop in illness reports. A peak of 603 occurred during the week of Oct. 18. Only two lab-confirmed swine flu cases were reported last week.

But health officials will continue listing swine flu activity in Delaware as "widespread." That level has remained unchanged since mid-September when it was raised from "sporadic." Other states have downgraded their activity level as their swine flu numbers declined. Seasonal flu cases in Delaware have been rare.

"Even though the [influenza-like illness] reports have gone down to 44, it's still much higher than zero," Rattay said about why the level remains at widespread. "We are also seeing the flu throughout the state."

About 117,000 people in Delaware have been vaccinated for swine flu so far this season and there are an estimated 400,000 people here who fall into the priority groups recommended by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to receive the vaccine.

Rattay said that flu activity still could peak again in the upcoming months.

"It's a new virus and many people still are not protected from the virus," she said. "Until you have a significant percentage of your population vaccinated with the virus, we can't predict with certainty that there won't be [another peak]."

Only one person was hospitalized as a result of swine flu last week, and that person has been released. The last of the five deaths in Delaware from swine flu occurred on Nov. 16.

Delaware expects to receive about 24,300 doses of swine flu injectable and nasal spray vaccine next week. Most of those doses will be for the state's school-based vaccination campaign. Some schools began vaccinating their elementary-age students with the second dose of swine flu vaccine this week. Studies have found that children under 9 will need two doses to be fully protected.

Newark resident Ahmed Sharkawy said he hasn't seen much swine flu lately. His pregnant wife and two sons have received the vaccine and he too hopes to get it eventually.

"I've seen a couple rare instances where people got the flu," he said. "But mostly, the people I know are OK."

DELAWARE HEALTH: CELEBRITY HOOPS GAME TO FOLLOW HIV FORUM FOR KIDS (WILNJ)

By The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

A forum for kids about HIV will be held in Wilmington on Saturday.

The forum will begin at 1 p.m. at Howard High School, 401 E. 12th St. Doors open at noon. The event is free and open to the public.

The theme of this year's forum is "Ignoring HIV doesn't make it go away." A panel of HIV-positive youth will be telling their stories. Special guests include Barry Floyd from BET's "The Game" and BET's Alesha Renee.

The forum is sponsored by AIDS Delaware, Duffy's Hope and YESS, Inc. For information, call AIDS Delaware's Frank Hawkins at 652-6776.

After the event, Duffy's Hope, a social service agency for at-risk youth, will hold a celebrity basketball game at 5 p.m. at Glasgow High School, 1901 S. College Ave., Newark. Participants will include Tequan Richmond from "Everybody Hates Chris," R&B artist Sammie and professional skateboarder Jereme Rogers.

Admission is \$20 and will help pay for Duffy's Hope mentoring and youth intervention programs.

DELAWARE RESEARCHERS FIND A TREASURE: A LETTER FROM THOMAS JEFFERSON (WILNJ)

By Ryan Cormier, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

If Thomas Jefferson held a grudge against fellow Founding Father John Dickinson of Delaware for refusing to sign his freshly written Declaration of Independence, you could never tell based on a surprising new find in the Rockwood Museum archives: a glowing letter written by Jefferson about Dickinson, albeit after Dickinson's death.

While serving as president, Jefferson learned about Dickinson's passing through a letter written by Wilmington doctor Joseph Brighthurst, who tended to Dickinson on his deathbed.

Jefferson responded with a letter of his own, which was recently discovered by a pair of University of Delaware graduate students who were processing hundreds of boxes of archival materials from Rockwood that had been donated to the university by New Castle County.

In the letter, he called Dickinson -- a delegate to the U.S. Constitutional Convention in 1787, a militia officer during the American Revolution and also a president (aka governor) of Delaware -- a patriot.

"They didn't always agree on everything," said Delaware historian Carol Hoffeecker, who has seen the letter. "Dickinson thought the Declaration of Independence was premature, but on the other hand he freed his slaves. Thomas Jefferson, who wrote the Declaration of Independence, kept his slaves.

"[In the letter], you can see different elements of moving forward into a more democratic world in both of these men. And in spite of the differences they occasionally had, they had enormous mutual respect. And I'd like to see politicians of today behave similarly."

The original letter penned by Jefferson was discovered by Amanda Daddona, a Department of History graduate student from East Hartford, Conn., and Matt Davis, a doctoral student in political science and international relations from Bloomsburg, Pa.

While tediously sifting through the hundreds of boxes of archives, poring over a mountainous array of paperwork, letters and meeting minutes dating back to the 17th century, Daddona found an unlabeled folder. The final page in the folder was a letter with an instantly recognizable signature at the bottom: Th. Jefferson.

"It was a very exciting moment," said Daddona, 22, who found the 201-year-old letter among financial documents from the 1700s and minutes from a Quaker town meeting. "I had not expected to find that when I went in to work. It's an incredible moment for an aspiring historian."

The letter, dated Feb. 24, 1808, finds the third president of the United States responding to Brighthurst eight days after he wrote Jefferson to break the news of Dickinson's death. Brighthurst was a doctor in Wilmington and a close friend of Dickinson.

"A more estimable man, or truer patriot, could not have left us," Jefferson wrote. "Among the first of the advocates for the rights of his country when assailed by Great Britain, he continued to the last the orthodox advocate of the true principles of our new government: and his name

will be consecrated in history as one of the great worthies of the revolution.

"We ought to be grateful for having been permitted to retain the benefit of his counsel to so good an old age; still, the moment of losing it, whenever it arrives, must be a moment of deep felt regret."

At the time he wrote the letter, which will be kept in a vault in the Special Collections Department of Morris Library and is available to the public, Jefferson was in the seventh year of his presidency. It was also 32 years after Dickinson turned away from one of Jefferson's greatest works.

"You wonder about the tension between someone like Jefferson, who was much more pro-independence, and Dickinson, who wasn't. But clearly, by this point, he was willing to let bygones be bygones," Davis said.

In September, the UD library was given the Rockwood Museum archives, which includes several hundred boxes of letters, photographs and diaries from the 17th century through the 1970s. The archives are full of materials from the Shipley, Bringham, Hargrave and Sellers families, all of whom lived in the Victorian home near Penny Hill that is now the Rockwood Museum.

"The whole collection is extremely important in terms of Delaware history and national history, given how important the whole Philadelphia region was in terms of what was going on at the time," Davis said. "But to see this letter ... it's a showcase piece."

L. Rebecca Johnson Melvin, a librarian in the Special Collections Department for 21 years, oversaw the work of Daddona and Davis and was "absolutely floored" by what they found.

"It's an incredible experience to read a letter that was written by Thomas Jefferson and the power of his words. He is so eloquent and it's so perfectly composed," Melvin said. "It's a tribute to John Dickinson and it's so important for everyone in Delaware to appreciate the richness of our local history. This letter really connects us with that period." Additional Facts

THE LETTER

The following is the unedited text of President Thomas Jefferson's 1808 letter to Wilmington's Dr. Joseph Bringham after Bringham wrote to inform the president of John Dickinson's death.

"I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 16th. It gave me the first information of the death of our distinguished fellow-citizen, John Dickinson. A more estimable man, or truer patriot, could not have left us. Among the first of the advocates for the rights of his country when assailed by Great Britain, he continued to the last the orthodox advocate of the true principles of our new government: and his name will be consecrated in history as one of the great worthies of the revolution. We ought to be grateful for having been permitted to retain the benefit of his counsel to so good an old age; still, the moment of losing it, whenever it arrives, must be a moment of deep felt regret. For himself perhaps a longer period of life was less important, alloyed as the feeble enjoyments of that age are with so much pain: but to his country every addition to his moments was interesting. A junior companion of his labors in the early part of our revolution, it has been a great comfort to me to have retained his friendship to the last moments of his life. Sincerely condoling with his friends on this affecting loss, I beg leave to tender my salutations to yourself & assurances of my friendly respects."

DELAWARE SCHOOLS: WIDE-EYED AND HANDS-ON, TEENS GET A SPECIAL LESSON (WILNJ)

By April Abel, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 3, 2009

MIDDLETOWN -- Eighth-grade students at Waters Middle School got an unusual science lesson Wednesday from optometrist William Velardi.

It was not for the faint of heart, however. The 13- and 14-year-olds worked in pairs in the school's science lab dissecting cow eyeballs.

"I'm slightly grossed out, but I'm going to do it," Joey Bursler, 13, said as the lab began.

Velardi designed the lesson to build understanding of how light energy reflected or emitted by an object into the eye produces vision.

"What organ do we see with?" Velardi asked.

"The eye?" someone at the back of the room ventured.

"The brain," Velardi said.

The dissection and examination of real tissue allowed the students to learn more about how human eyes form images and send them to the brain.

Cow eyes are similar to human eyes in function and anatomy.

"Having a recognized expert lead us through a hands-on experiment is an invaluable learning tool," teacher Jennie Heckscher said.

Each pair of students was issued one preserved bovine eyeball, scissors, cutting board and supplies for cleaning up afterward.

The students quickly moved from words like "gross" to "wow" as the lab began.

As Velardi guided them, the students carefully cut and examined the structure and function of the eye.

"Take your scissors," Velardi said. "I want you to cut it in half. The sclera [the white, outer covering of the eyeball] is harder to cut than you might think."

As the contents of the eyeball were revealed, students' reactions varied.

"It's not as gross as I thought," Joey Bursler said. "It's kind of cool."

The jellylike vitreous humor brought curiosity and revulsion at the same time.

The vitreous humor is the part of the eye that gives the organ its shape, but sitting on the dissection tray it was a clear blob that invited a few jiggles and giggles.

"You need to be careful to not cut too quick, or you will ruin what you have," Velardi said.

Lester Smith III removed the lens of the eye and placed it on the paper in front of him, saying, "It looks like a pearl."

Velardi explained that the lens appeared cloudy because the eye Lester was working with had a cataract.

Velardi, who practices at the Bear and Smyrna offices of the Delaware Eye Care Center, is also an adjunct professor at Raritan Valley Community College's Ophthalmics program in New Jersey.

Velardi's wife, Lisa, teaches language arts at Waters. She suggested he come in and teach the class on Wednesday.

Exploring the inner aspects of a preserved cow eyeball under the supervision of an eye doctor in an eighth-grade science lab is a rare opportunity, educators said.

It was the first time that middle school students at this Appoquinimink School District middle school have studied with a practicing medical professional in their science lab and the first time students had done a dissection.

Heckscher hopes Velardi's lesson will inspire her students.

"It satisfies our teens' natural curiosity about how the eye operates and provides unparalleled exposure to career and vocational opportunities in the field," she said.

DELAWARE CRIME: TWO ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH BANK HEIST (WILNJ)

By Terri Sanginiti, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

Two men have been arrested in connection with a bank heist last month in Fairfax.

One of the men also is accused of robbing a Wilmington bank on the same day.

About noon Nov. 2, David Elswick, 34, robbed Delaware National Bank at 600 S. Harrison St. in Wilmington and escaped with an undisclosed sum, police said.

Then, about 2:25 p.m., the WSFS Bank at 2005 Concord Pike was robbed by a man who handed a demand note to the teller, state police Senior Cpl. Jeff Whitmarsh said.

The teller handed over money and the bandit walked out with an undisclosed amount.

Following the heist, state police followed up several leads and arrested

Elswick, of the 200 block of S. Dillwyn Road near Newark.

Elswick, who was arrested three days after the crime, was committed to Young Correctional Institution in lieu of \$12,000 bail on charges of felony robbery and conspiracy.

Wilmington police also charged him with second-degree robbery and conspiracy and he was issued a \$24,535 bail.

Detectives continued searching for a second suspect believed to be the getaway driver.

On Wednesday, Joseph Donahue, 34, of S. Elizabeth Street in Wilmington, was charged with felony robbery and conspiracy, Whitmarsh said.

Donahue had used his wife's Volvo to drive Elswick to and from the bank, Whitmarsh said.

Detectives arrested Donahue in the parking lot of Cosmos Diner on Maryland Avenue near Newport.

He was being held in Young Correctional Institution after failing to post \$8,000 bail.

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL EDITORIALS:

WILMINGTON COUNCIL SHOULD TRY AGAIN ON ANTI-LOITERING PROPOSAL (WILNJ)

By The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

We won't quibble with the civil liberty objections raised about Wilmington City Councilman Mike Brown's anti-loitering proposal. He wants property owners in high-crime neighborhoods to display anti-loitering signs, giving police a legal right to question law-breaking laws on private property.

Police first will have to give warnings to suspects. If the warning to move along or provide proof -- such as identification or keys -- is ignored, then that along with the signs gives police "probable cause to run a check on them," the councilman said.

Mr. Brown is right to worry that without the signs, police would be forced to knock on the doors -- potentially spooking already nervous, and in many cases, elderly residents -- to establish such probable cause to run a background check.

Legal experts worry that police could use the private porches and stoops to skirt requirements that suspects have the right to identify themselves, explain why they are on the premises and whether they know the people whose house they are standing in front of.

The courts, should such a law be imposed, will have to settle issues involving questioning suspects on someone else's private property.

But Mr. Brown's novel idea seems doomed to be ineffective on a larger basis. It fails to take into account a more persuasive criminal threat in crime-ridden communities -- anti-snitch codes.

Those who are up to no good and who jump on strangers' stoops to avoid being questioned by police are savvy enough to know that those signs automatically finger them to authorities.

Without question, posting the signs is an admirable example of civic pride and duty. But they will double as a "bulls-eye" for possible retribution for cooperating with police.

Mr. Brown's effort is well-intentioned, but he needs to return to the drawing board.

JOBS ARE TOO IMPORTANT TO BE LEFT TO THE POSTURING OF POLITICIANS (WILNJ)

By The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

Thursday's White House jobs summit will likely produce a limited number of worthwhile ideas and a great deal more posturing by Democratic politicians.

The same holds true for the counter-summit that Republicans held at the same time.

Jobs -- the desire to find one or to keep the one you have -- are the top of America's worries. Politicians know this and are running scared because no one quite knows how to produce them without selling the country

to China's bankers outright.

Even the president's Economic Council Director Larry Summers was skeptical that the summit would do much good in creating jobs quickly.

"It is not something that is going to be fixed in a week or a month or a year," Mr. Summers said earlier this week.

Still, the politicians will try to make us think they are doing some good. For example, the White House summit was timed to produce noble-sounding headlines in today's newspapers, which coincidentally is the same morning even higher unemployment figures are expected to be announced.

Democrats are pushing a variety of ideas that could add \$300 billion to the deficit. That's too much and probably the ideas are too broad.

Some money will have to be spent. But that's too much.

However, President Obama said he was open to all ideas.

Well, why not experiment?

On Thursday, he heard from unions and local government officials who want the federal government to spend more on infrastructure.

At the same time a number of businessmen pushed for passage of trade treaties that could raise exports. Unions tend to oppose them. Why not compromise and liberalize the agreements and, at the same time, authorize some infrastructure spending?

BIDEN IN THE NEWS:

OBAMA: WILL TAKE EVERY RESPONSIBLE STEP TO CREATE JOBS (DJ)

By Maya Jackson Randall

Dow Jones, December 4, 2009

WASHINGTON -(Dow Jones)- The Obama administration Thursday kicked off a major jobs summit at the White House, with the president promising to take "every responsible step to accelerate job creation."

Still, President Barack Obama stressed that the federal government's capacity to overcome the nation's jobs challenges is limited, and he charged the private sector with developing strategies that could spur hiring and boost economic growth.

"True economic recovery is only going to come from the private sector,"

Obama said in opening remarks at the summit Thursday afternoon.

With the unemployment rate at its highest level in 26 years, the forum is a way for the president and his economic team to hear from chief executives, small-business owners, labor leaders and nonprofit groups about ideas for economic growth and job creation.

About 130 attendees were expected, including Google Inc. (GOOG) Chief Executive Eric Schmidt, AT&T Inc. (T) CEO Randall Stephenson and FedEx Corp. (FDX) Chief Executive Fred Smith.

When it comes to creating more jobs and propping up the economy, "our capacity - government's capacity - is still somewhat limited," Vice President Joe Biden added.

The Obama administration will help create the conditions that help make for a stronger economy "but it's you ... who are in the position to make it in a reality," he told attendees. "Without you, it will not become a reality."

TONY FRATTO: JOB CREATION HONESTY IS JOB ONE (CNBC)

By Tony Fratto

CNBC, December 4, 2009

The U.S. unemployment rate today is estimated at 10.2%, and considerably higher if underemployed and discouraged workers are counted. Tomorrow, that rate is almost certain to be higher when the Bureau of Labor Statistics releases its estimates for November payrolls.

Economically, these are distressing numbers. The economy can't sustain growth until the labor market recovers. Final demand still matters, and a successful economy still needs people willing to buy stuff, and people don't buy stuff when they don't have jobs or fear for their jobs.

Politically, the jobs data are disastrous for the Obama Administration and Democrats in Congress, and it's the reason the White House organized today's Jobsapaloozafest in Washington.

For a White House that has shown itself this year to be myopically focused on rhetoric to get through the daily news cycle, the stubborn, steady increase in the unemployment rate -- reported in scheduled monthly increments -- is bedeviling. The panicked frenzy of jobs talk today is an effort to keep the jobs conundrum from continuing to impact the Administration's current legislative efforts -- on health care, energy, and regulatory reform, and later, on deficit reduction.

The White House would have a better chance of making its case had it not over-promised on job creation earlier this year when it passed its mammoth spending bill.

Back then, trying to secure votes for the \$787 billion bill, White House economists not only estimated a much lower unemployment rate, they ignored all history, all academic work on labor markets, and predicted a hiring turnaround this year. Now they're left dealing with the consequences of their hopeful predictions: a dispirited American public, and members of Congress scrambling to save their careers.

If the Obama Administration's economic team -- Larry Summers, Tim Geithner, Christine Romer and Jared Bernstein, had been honest in their job growth predictions earlier this year, they would have more credibility today in explaining the state of the economy.

An honest assessment of the U.S. economic outlook in February would have predicted that job growth was going to lag -- and because of the unique nature of this recession, job growth would certainly lag longer.

What the Obama economic team had to know was that job creation large enough to bring down the unemployment rate could not occur this year, even with the rosy estimates of GDP growth, since discredited, they peddled to pass the stimulus bill in February.

When an economy emerges from recession, job growth is last to recover -- after corporate profits, and after increases in business investment. Business investment only comes when businesses are confident that the recovery can be sustained. And businesses are not yet confident of a sustained economic outlook.

The outlook of the business community -- the people who create jobs and hire Americans -- remains uncertain. They see stimulus spending running out of steam, and a continued lack of access to credit. And across a broad array of policy areas -- everything from health care, energy, regulation, trade, investment, and tax policy -- the business community sees risks to their business models.

Job creation will eventually return, but it's going to be a long road to work through these uncertainties before we get there.

Nothing the Administration says today will change the likelihood that the unemployment rate will remain high for a long time. The best the Obama Administration can do today is throw out its past predictions and give Americans an honest outlook.

OBAMA BEMOANS DESPERATION OF PEOPLE OUT OF WORK (AP)

By Philip Elliott

Associated Press, December 4, 2009

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Barack Obama says a jobs forum he hosted at the White House generated many useful ideas for jump-starting job creation, some of which can be put into action "immediately" by his administration.

The president said Thursday at the close of the jobs summit that other ideas will become part of legislation for Congress to consider. He said he was most struck by the overlap between the sessions on specific topics, leading him to conclude that job creation needs to be better coordinated.

Obama spoke to a gathering of academics, business executives and labor leaders on the eve of the government's report, due Friday, on November unemployment. The jobless rate in October shot up to 10.2 percent.

THIS IS A BREAKING NEWS UPDATE. Check back soon for further information. AP's earlier story is below.

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Barack Obama challenged an assortment of leading business and union leaders and academics on Thursday to help him come up with innovative ideas for putting millions of Americans back to work, saying he wants the "biggest bang for the buck."

"We cannot hang back and hope for the best," Obama told a White House forum on jobs. "What I'm interested in is taking action right now."

Obama said the leading question of the day is "how do we get businesses to start hiring again" and asked his audience of about 130 guests to "bring their A-game."

But, mindful of growing anxiety about federal deficits, Obama also tempered his upbeat talk with an acknowledgment that government resources could only go so far and that it is primarily up to the private sector to create large numbers of new jobs.

He said while he's "open to every demonstrably good idea ... we also though have to face the fact that our resources are limited."

With unemployment levels above 10 percent, Obama said "We cannot hang back and hope for the best."

After opening remarks, the guests broke into different working groups to brainstorm with administration officials.

Dropping in on a session named "Innovative Agenda and Green Jobs of the Future," Obama said, "Not to tip our hand too much, but one of the things I would be surprised if we don't end up moving forward on is an aggressive agenda for energy efficiency and weatherization. Because that is an area where we can get it up and running relatively quickly. You don't need new technologies."

Sitting at the head of a large table, Obama told the smaller group that clean energy was the nation's best candidate "if we are to shift from the bubble and bust model that we have. ... We want to make a push in this area."

At one point, Obama lobbied business leaders in the group to speak out during the upcoming Senate energy debate. He urged them to help make the case that the energy bill "is not a job killer but a job grower." He said members of two prominent business groups - the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Business Round-table - who support clean energy need to speak out. "We're going to need you there," he said.

The forum was kicked off by Labor Secretary Hilda Solis, who called the present unemployment rate of 10.2 percent "a stark reminder of how much we have to do." She said the administration "will not rest" until it had been successful at job creation.

White House officials then showed a video about small businesses in hard-hit Allentown, Pa., where Obama was to speak on Friday in an effort to reinforce his message.

Vice President Joe Biden also addressed an audience that included the CEOs of Google, Xerox, Boeing and General Electric, labor leaders and prominent economists. "Your presence is welcome, but quite frankly it's not as important as your input," Biden said. "Without you, it will not become a reality," he said.

"Our task together is obviously not an easy one," Biden said. And while the \$787 billion stimulus package had helped kick-start the process, "the government's capacity is still somewhat limited."

Obama spoke a day ahead of the government's release of unemployment figures for November.

The October jobless rate was 10.2 percent. A broader index that includes those who have given up looking for work and those forced to accept part-time jobs puts the rate at 17.5 percent. Economic forecasters expect the November figures to be at about the same levels, perhaps higher.

Republicans staged their own counterforum across town, inviting a team of mostly conservative economists to a round-table discussion on jobs.

"I think we have to move aggressively toward policies that actually promote jobs. And so far what's been tried hasn't worked very well," said Lawrence Lindsey, a top economic adviser early in the first term of President George W. Bush.

Douglas Holtz-Eakin, a former head of the Congressional Budget Office and a top economic adviser to 2008 GOP Republican nominee Sen. John McCain, suggested the single best thing Obama could do to create jobs was "to reverse course on a dangerous agenda of debt-financed spending, crippling regulation, expensive mandates and intrusive government expansion."

Earlier, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., suggested that one way to

create jobs is to use leftover money from the Wall Street bailout to pay for new spending on roads and bridges and save the jobs of firefighters, teachers and other public employees.

Perhaps unwittingly, Biden took the event a bit off-message at the start, painting a more dire picture of the nation's economy than typically heard out of the administration.

He recalled an old Ronald Reagan line that people see the problem as merely a downturn when a stranger is out of work and a recession if it's a relative who is unemployed - but a full-blown depression when they themselves lose a job.

"And it is a depression" for the nation's more than 10 million unemployed, Biden added. 2009-12-03 21:16:57 GMT

CBS: OBAMA-JOBS SUMMIT. The CBS Evening News (12/3, lead story, 3:00, Couric) reported, "Good evening, everyone. First thing tomorrow, the government will put out the latest unemployment numbers, and they're expected to show the country lost another 130,000 jobs last month. Since the recession began two years ago, more than seven million jobs have vanished. That's more than seven every minute. Today, President Obama called business and labor leaders to the White House to ask for their help. Our Chip Reid is there tonight. And, Chip, did any good or new ideas come out of this summit?" CBS (Reid) added, "Well, yes, they did, Katie. The President for example said he liked the idea of using public schools to teach students during the day and to train workers on new technologies at night. And he's also looking at some ideas - a variety of ideas on tax breaks for small businesses to help them expand. Critics, though, say this job summit was really about public relations, a way for the President to get out ahead of bad unemployment numbers coming out tomorrow. The Democrats' word of the day." Rep. Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House: "Jobs, jobs, jobs, jobs." Reid: "Was hard to miss." Joe Biden, Vice President of the United States: "It's jobs, jobs, jobs." Reid: "But what they plan to do about 10.2% unemployment is far less clear. At his jobs summit, the President lowered expectations right from the start, citing limited resources." Barack Obama, President of the United States: "We'll need to look beyond the old standbys and the fallbacks and come up with the best ideas that give us the biggest bang for the buck." Reid: "With a \$1.5 trillion deficit, the President says the nation can't afford another major stimulus package, so he invited 130 executives, small business owners, union leaders, and economists to brainstorm over creative and inexpensive ideas to stimulate private-sector job growth. The President said there were some good ideas. Republicans, though, say the summit was little more than a political stunt. House Republican leader John Boehner taunted the President with his own 'where are the jobs' summit, claiming that 3.5 million jobs have been lost since the President took office." Rep. John Boehner: "It's all but job killing policies that are being offered by this Administration and this Congress." Reid: "Republican Party Chair Michael Steele called it 'another example of President Obama's PR presidency, where he stages photo-ops and events to distract citizens and the media from his Administration's failures.' Unions and liberal activists are also unhappy with the President, demanding hundreds of billions more on infrastructure projects. Speaker Nancy Pelosi wants to use money left over from the bank bailout." Pelosi: "And the more jobs we create, the more money comes into the public till, and, therefore, reduces the deficit." Reid: "Tomorrow, the President heads for Allentown, Pennsylvania, for what the White House calls the first stop on a jobs listening tour, and he'll probably get an earful because the unemployment rate in Allentown is about 12.5%. Katie." Couric: "Chip Reid reporting from the White House as usual. Chip, thank you."

NBC: OBAMA-JOBS SUMMIT. NBC Nightly News (12/3, story 3, 2:55, Williams) reported, "And at the White House today, the official topic on the docket: jobs as the President reached out to business and labor leaders, looking for ideas, he says, on how to get the sky-high unemployment rate under control in this country. Chief White House Correspondent, Political Director Chuck Todd with us from the White House Lawn tonight. Chuck, good evening." NBC

(Todd) added, "Good evening, Brian. Well, fresh off trying to clear his plate of one difficult issue to tackle, Afghanistan, the President turned his attention to something that's easily more politically potent, jobs." Joe Biden, Vice President of the United States: "It's jobs, jobs, jobs, jobs." Todd: "It's the issue Vice President Biden said dominates most of the President's time, and to demonstrate that focus publicly, President Obama hosted what he billed as a job summit today." Barack Obama, President of the United States: "I'm looking for specific recommendations that can be implemented that will spur on job growth as quickly as possible." Todd: "The President offered a response for skeptics about its usefulness." Obama: "I assure you there is extraordinary skepticism that any discussions like this could actually produce results. I'm well aware of that. I don't mind skepticism. If I listened to the skeptics, I wouldn't be here." Todd: "The President is spending most of his public time over the next several days highlighting jobs. Tomorrow, he heads to Allentown, Pennsylvania, a city hit hard in the manufacturing sector. Next Tuesday he will lay out a series of new proposals to jump-start job creation, which could include tax credits for large companies and more incentives to unfreeze credit for small businesses. Mr. Obama held a post-summit Q&A with participants which included CEOs, labor leaders, and elected officials. One business leader complained the President's expansive legislative agenda has made it difficult for him to plan for the future." Obama: "I actually think this is a legitimate concern. This has been a tough year with a lot of uncertainty." Todd: "The President said passing his healthcare plan this year and financial regulatory reform by early next year should help." Obama: "To the extent that the uncertainty is derived from these major legislative initiatives, I think will be solved in the next few months." Todd: "Today's job event comes the day before the government releases the new unemployment rate, which currently stands at a 25-year-high 10.2%. The White House is nervous about an even higher number. Meanwhile, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke faced tough questioning about his policies during confirmation hearings for a second term." Sen. Richard Shelby: "The Fed has done a horrible job as a regulator and now yet you're wanting to continue as a regulator." Ben Bernanke, Federal Reserve Chairman: "You know, I think we did not - certainly not a perfect job by any means but I don't think we stand out as having done a worse job than other regulators." Todd: "Now Brian, despite that Senatorial bluster that Bernanke faced on the Hill today, nobody expects his confirmation to be in any serious jeopardy. Senators are just simply trying to channel the anger that's out there in the American public." Williams: "Alright, Chuck Todd from the White House north lawn tonight. Chuck, thanks."

AFGHANISTAN: CAN OBAMA SELL AMERICA ON THIS WAR? (TIME)

By Joe Klein

Time, December 4, 2009

"If I did not think that the security of the United States and the safety of the American people were at stake in Afghanistan," Barack Obama said, announcing his decision to send 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan, "I would gladly order every single one of our troops home tomorrow." It was the most emotional moment of his address - but it was a curious sentence, and an unsatisfying speech, defensive and slightly convoluted. Certainly, it was not a classic call to arms: nothing remotely like Shakespeare's Henry V at Agincourt or Winston Churchill during the Blitz, as conservative columnist Charles Krauthammer pointed out later.

The President made the best possible argument for a rather iffy proposition: the expansion of a war that is 51% necessary and 49% futile (or vice versa). But you can't argue a people into war, especially one that seems so indistinct and perplexing. Once you have made the decision to go, or to redouble your efforts, you must lead the charge - passionately and, yes, with a touch of anger. Obama's attempt to do that, his peroration about the ideals that cause us to fight, was lovely but abstract: "It is easy to forget that when this war began, we were united - bound together by the fresh memory of a horrific attack ... I refuse to accept the notion that we cannot summon that unity again." Absent the reference to Sept. 11, the

closing paragraphs could just as easily have climaxed a speech announcing a campaign against global warming.

Ronald Reagan would have done it differently. He would have told a story. It might not have been a true story, but it would have had resonance. He might have found, or created, a grieving spouse - a young investment banker whose wife had died in the World Trade Center - who enlisted immediately after the attacks ... and then gave his life, heroically, defending a school for girls in Kandahar. Reagan would have inspired tears, outrage, passion, a rush to recruiting centers across the nation.

Of course, it is possible that purple prose in the service of patriotic gore has become an anachronism in an era when it is possible to witness the insane carnage caused by crudely constructed roadside bombs each night on the evening news. There are those, especially in the Democratic Party, who find such romanticism delusional and obscene; it rankles particularly when applied to a questionable war. But the romance of the fight, the band-of-brothers bond, the ethos of ultimate sacrifice is at the heart of military culture. If a President wants to send young people off to war, he must buy into that culture. It is not enough to construct the best argument - or the best policy - in a bad situation, as this President has done. (See pictures of life in the Afghan National Army.)

And that is the high drama that has been unfolding this autumn: the struggles of a highly intelligent, dispassionate man to find a rationale for a mission that is crucial but slightly crazy, a decision that will define his presidency.

"I am painfully aware that this is politically unpopular," the President said earlier that day over lunch with a group of columnists in the White House library, an elegant little room in the basement of the mansion. "It's least popular in my own party. But that's not how I make decisions." There was little apparent anguish as the President said that. He was calm, as always; a compelling presence, but resolutely normal, as always. (The combination of charisma and lack of pretense is his most attractive, if inexplicable, personal attribute.) His defense of the policy he had constructed after months of deliberation - a complex, slightly contradictory contraption of a policy - was solid but not entirely convincing.

He dealt fluently with the toughest of questions: the push-me, pull-you issue of sending in 30,000 more troops only to start withdrawing them in July 2011, less than a year after they all arrive. The troops - as many as were involved in the Iraq surge, though in a much smaller war - are being sent to stun the enemy, to turn back recent Taliban advances, especially in Kandahar province, the heartland of the insurgency. But why limit the force of the blow by announcing the date you will begin the withdrawal? "Why wouldn't they wait you out?" asked David Ignatius of the Washington Post.

It was a question the President was expecting. He said he rejected that argument "because if you follow the logic ... then you would never leave. Right? Essentially you'd be signing on to have Afghanistan as a protectorate of the United States indefinitely." And the time limit, he suggested, might give him leverage over Hamid Karzai, the recalcitrant Afghan leader: "In my discussion with President Karzai yesterday," Obama said, "I was able to articulate to him exactly what he's going to need to do over the next two years to be prepared for this transition."

I asked him what instructions he had given the military to make the next 30,000 troops more effective than the 21,000 troops he sent last March, whose presence didn't seem to improve the situation on the ground at all. "Look, the fact that there were increased casualties this year I think is to be expected from increased engagement by our forces." True enough, but the NATO coalition lost ground to the Taliban this year, by Obama's own admission. And the President could only come up with speed of deployment and a clearer sense of mission as strategic game changers. Later, when I asked him about what changes he had ordered for the training of the Afghan army and police - a frustrating proposition, so far - he deferred to his commanders in the field but said the new order of battle would include "a partnering situation, a one-to-one match between Afghan troops and U.S. troops" in combat, which "produces much stronger results."

Then he stopped, abruptly. "None of this is easy," he said. "I mean, we

are choosing from a menu of options that is less than ideal." Indeed, over the past few months, I've heard members of the Administration make cases for and against each of the decisions the President has made. There is no completely convincing argument that 30,000 - or 40,000 - more troops will turn the tide in Afghanistan; you can make an argument, nearly as plausible, that they will make a bad situation worse - Afghans have, historically, not reacted well to tens of thousands of armed foreigners on their turf. (Which leads in turn to a counter-counterargument: we're not conquerors; we come bearing schools and wells, with the intention of leaving as soon as possible.)

You can make the case that a timeline for transition to Afghan control will have absolutely no leverage in getting Karzai to clean up his act. After all, on the day of Obama's speech, close aides to the Afghan President told the Wall Street Journal that Karzai opposes the surge; why won't he just wait us out? (But there's a counter-counter here as well: Isn't this just posturing? Doesn't Karzai know that without American protection, he could be swinging from a lamppost in Kabul like several of his predecessors?) And as for the argument, made passionately by some in the military, that a specific date for starting the withdrawal is an invitation for the Taliban to lie low until we leave: "They simply won't do that," says Leslie H. Gelb, former president of the Council on Foreign Relations. "If you stand down, you allow the enemy - even this inept Afghan government - to create a bow-wave effect, to create the impression of authority and security. The Taliban aren't stupid."

Discussions about tactics and strategy in Afghanistan do have a tendency to go on, and on, swirling ad infinitum. One thing the President has guaranteed by his deliberations of the past few months is that he has sampled all the dishes on the menu of unappetizing options. Every decision he has made can be meticulously defended. So can every decision he didn't make. (See pictures of Fort Irwin's Theater of War.)

But, you might reasonably ask, did the strategy review really have to take so long and be so public? Obama had no choice about the public part of the program; he is privately furious about the leaks, especially those from the military. "We will deal with that situation in time," an Obama adviser told me. The criticism of the President for dithering is also unfair. This second Afghan strategy review in less than a year was made necessary by an assortment of dramatic new developments on the ground. Each had to be analyzed individually and then correlated with the others. There was the fraudulent election, which stripped the remaining clothes from the Emperor Karzai. There was a big mistake made by the U.S. military, sending troops to remote opium-laden Helmand province rather than to the heart of the insurgency in Kandahar. There was the vastly improved human intelligence collection on al-Qaeda, which has resulted in Predator strikes that have killed at least a dozen top terrorist leaders in recent months, according to the military. There was Pakistan's new willingness to go after its indigenous branch of the Taliban, and the continued unwillingness to go after the Afghan Taliban, led by Mullah Omar - an organization created, and still supported, by the Pakistani intelligence services.

Obama's leadership of this process was the source of some amazement by those who participated in it. He was all business. Unlike Bill Clinton, he didn't allow the conversations to ramble; unlike George W. Bush, he ran the meetings himself. He asked sharp, Socratic questions of everyone in the Situation Room. He would notice when an adviser wasn't participating, even in an area that wasn't his or her expertise, and ask, What do you think about this, Hillary? Or Bob, or Jim. He encouraged argument among those who disagreed - most notably General David Petraeus and Vice President Joe Biden. He was undaunted by the military. Indeed, the greatest cause of delay was Obama's constant pressure on his commanders to justify every unit and find some way to speed the troops' arrival. The final deployment includes only three combat brigades and one training brigade - about 20,000 troops - augmented by 10,000 enablers: medics, mechanics, intelligence analysts, strategic-communications (that is, propaganda) experts.

The real haggle was over speed of deployment. The military plans carefully, in five- to 10-year increments, and moves with the speed of a

supertanker. A good part of the reason the troops were sent to Helmand instead of Kandahar, even though it violated the prevailing counterinsurgency strategy, was that the fortifications already had been built in Helmand; it seemed too late to turn the supertanker around. Obama kept sending plans back to the Pentagon, seeking a faster launch for his "extended surge." The military still isn't entirely sure that it'll be able to move 30,000 troops to Afghanistan by August. "We'll push in every way possible to get the forces on the ground ASAP," a senior military official told me. But the President clearly believes that the speed and vehemence of the new offensive will be its greatest assets.

At lunch and later in the speech, the President seemed most engaged when he addressed the public's mixed feelings about the war. "The American people are having a really tough time right now in their own lives," he told us, in closing, at lunch. Then he diluted the power of the speech by detouring into a recitation of his concerns about the recession, even linking them to the time limit he has placed on the war: "That is why our troop commitment in Afghanistan cannot be open-ended - because the nation that I am most interested in building is our own."

This is a dangerous mixing of apples and Predators, and it is a reflection of political calculation: the President knows his numbers are sagging because of the oxymoronic perception that he is spending too much and doing too little to ease the economic crisis. It is a real problem he faces - and, to some extent, has brought upon himself by focusing so much attention on health care reform - but its proper place is in another speech. Given the feeling of abandonment that many of the soldiers I've spoken with during the past few years have, a more appropriate message to the American people might have been: I know you're hurting, but we're at war. We're trying to stabilize the most dangerous part of the world. We're trying to prevent the collapse of a nuclear state, Pakistan. We're trying to capture and kill the people who massacred our friends and neighbors on Sept. 11, people who represent the purest manifestation of evil in the world. You have to be part of this effort, and no, merely mouthing platitudes in support of the troops is not enough. We all need to sacrifice.

He might have asked the public to pay a tax to support the war, as Congressman David Obey has suggested. Or he might have listed some charities that people could contribute to - Greg Mortenson's brilliant effort to build schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan comes to mind - or he might have asked Americans to send clothing, or seeds, to the second poorest country in the world. This is a message, a resolute and passionate evocation of national purpose, that the Taliban need to hear as well.

The bracing sense of unity that Obama cited in his peroration was achieved reflexively - it was the obvious human reaction after the Sept. 11 attacks. But such unity is difficult to sustain. And it cannot be reignited by mere words or argument, even when the argument and the policy is, I believe, the correct one. The exquisite rationality that attends almost everything this President does is essential, but not enough, when sending young men and women into battle. There needs to be inspiration as well. There is no such thing as a no-drama war.

OBAMA HOMED IN ON AN AFGHANISTAN PULLOUT DATE (LAT)

In President Obama's Afghan war sessions, a mantra arose: to make the biggest military impact in the shortest time.

By Christi Parsons And Julian E. Barnes
Los Angeles Times, December 4, 2009

It started out as a projection from the military, intended only for the ears of the president and his top advisors. But in a war council meeting at the White House less than a month ago, Obama proposed making it public.

"Let's name that date," he said, according to participants.

And then on Tuesday, he did.

The date, July 2011, is when the Afghan troop buildup is supposed to be working well enough against the Taliban-led insurgency that some troops can start to come home.

Revealing that key marker on the U.S. military timeline has emerged as the most controversial component of the president's plan. It has attracted

criticism from Capitol Hill and sown anxiety among allies, some unsure whether the timeline meant that the United States was planning to leave quickly or stay indefinitely.

It was also a contentious idea within the Pentagon. The date was first discussed as part of internal planning. The idea of sending a public signal to enemies and allies alike that the U.S. was already planning a pullout was of particular concern to Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, a key member of the war council.

Gates backed the plan once he felt he had adequate assurances that the pace of the U.S. military withdrawal would be determined by commanders, based on the situation in Afghanistan.

Obama opted to take the highly unusual step, senior aides said, because, in the end, administration officials believed the need to put tangible pressure on the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan outweighed any potential cost.

As Obama's aides coalesced around the plan, they gave it a name -- "max leverage" -- that captured in brief what it was supposed to accomplish: getting the greatest possible impact from 30,000 additional troops in the shortest amount of time.

The plan grew out of meetings chaired by Obama -- they began in September and lasted until the final one, before Thanksgiving -- aimed at forging a new U.S. strategy in Afghanistan. The situation was deteriorating under the previous U.S. approach approved early this year, shortly after Obama issued a deployment order for 21,000 troops.

Despite that addition, the top U.S. commander sounded grim warnings and in early fall requested up to 40,000 additional troops.

For September and most of October, Obama conducted weekly sessions on the situation, demanding new reports every few days and drilling his war council with questions. Key moments of the meetings were described by administration officials who attended them and who spoke on condition of anonymity. In addition, other officials described the thinking of some who participated in the sessions.

Aides say Obama kept his own cards close to his vest, listening to discussions among aides, including Gates, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Vice President Joe Biden, Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel and other civilian and military advisors.

After two months of sessions, Obama began to zero in during a meeting in late October on the timing of a troop buildup, signaling that he wanted more troops moving into the region faster than military brass had proposed.

One succinct exchange would prove portentous. The president wanted to know when the effects of the new strategy would become apparent, based on an ongoing Pentagon analysis of its own plans.

"When will we know that our concept is working?" Obama asked, recalled one official who was present.

"Our best sense," replied Gates, "will be in late 2010 and into mid-2011."

According to accounts by senior officials in the administration, that day's discussion formed the basis of the decisions that would follow, including a time frame for the troop buildup of 18 to 24 months, a pace developed amid growing public opposition to the war and concern about its cost.

Two weeks later, Obama delayed his scheduled departure for Asia in part so that he could drive home those points with his team of advisors.

On Veterans Day, after laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns in a cold drizzle, Obama convened his war council for the eighth time.

By this time, the staff was ready to present timelines. In a slide presentation in the Situation Room, the group looked at a bell-curve graph projecting a troop buildup over time -- a few at first, then an increasing flow that would crest and trickle off.

To emphasize his desire to speed up the deployment, the president held up a printout copy of the bell curve and pointed to its apex, indicating the peak of the flow.

"He says, 'I want to move this to the left,' " as one official recounted it, speaking on condition of anonymity. " 'We need more troops in sooner.' "

For months, said a senior officer, the military's U.S. Command had been examining ways to insert forces faster. Logistics specialists held drills in Afghanistan, Kuwait and other locations to see how fast they could move people and equipment into the war zone.

Meanwhile, engineers in Afghanistan had begun preliminary work to see how quickly they could build austere infrastructure to house thousands of additional troops.

Armed with that work, Army Gen. David H. Petraeus, head of Central Command and chief of U.S. forces in the Middle East and Central Asia, told the president that, yes, the military could pull off the buildup he was requesting.

"We did so in Iraq," said Petraeus, who designed and oversaw the Iraq troop buildup. "We can do so again."

On the question of taking troops out, the president had grown more adamant about sending a clear signal to Afghan leaders that they would have to prepare to take over responsibility for their country's security.

"Gates has given him the date" by which results could be measured, said a second senior administration official, referring to the late 2010, mid-2011 time frame. "The president says: 'Let's name that date.' "

The logic was simple, as Obama made the case: He wanted to send a clear signal that the United States was not writing a "blank check" guaranteeing military support for an indefinite period of time. This, he believed, was the most effective way to ensure that the Afghans took him seriously.

Aides too knew he was serious. Not long after Obama took off for Asia, he called Gates from Air Force One.

Obama specifically asked him to work on the plan: more troops in faster, and a date certain for drawdown to begin. It would maximize U.S. leverage, he said.

Key White House players -- Emanuel among them -- didn't go on the president's weeklong trip so they could work on the strategy.

Gates had doubts about announcing the date for starting withdrawals. In the past, he had been opposed to such public deadlines.

Several times during the strategy review, Gates had spoken with administration officials about the 1989 decision to halt U.S. aid to Afghanistan after the Soviets withdrew, and about the long-term damage it did to American standing in the region. He did not want the Afghans or Pakistanis to feel that they were being abandoned for a second time.

But Gates agreed that the original Obama administration strategy review in March had produced a plan that seemed open-ended. The new plan, Gates said, needed to show both Afghans and Americans that the U.S. military was not on a nation-building mission, a task that rightfully belonged to the Afghans.

Gates was also persuaded by Petraeus and others that announcing the date would help create an incentive for the Afghans to act, he said this week.

The proposed date also would make it such that the withdrawal of troops would begin just as the campaign for the 2012 presidential election was heating up.

Still, it was crucial to Gates and other military officials that Obama not announce a specific drawdown plan. Doing so could embolden militants, Defense officials said. Gates and others wanted to make sure that the pace of the drawdown would be based on the security situation -- not a set timetable.

"Ultimately," said a senior Defense official, Gates "wanted conditionality, and got it."

By the time Obama summoned the war council for its ninth and final meeting, the Monday before Thanksgiving, he had almost all the information he wanted. All that was left was a final poll of his top advisors.

"I want you to tell me how you feel about this 'max leverage,' " he said. If people had any objections, he said, he wanted to know.

One by one, team members weighed in on the tenets of the plan, a "conditions-based transfer of authority to the Afghans," as one witness described it.

No one voiced objection, the two senior administration officials said.

Let him know before Thanksgiving if they had second thoughts, Obama told

his team. Otherwise, they could expect his decision within the week.

Eight days later, in his speech to the nation, Obama appeared before cadets at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point to declare:

"As commander in chief, I have determined that it is in our vital national interest to send an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan. After 18 months, our troops will begin to come home.

"These are the resources that we need to seize the initiative, while building the Afghan capacity that can allow for a responsible transition of our forces out of Afghanistan."

BIDEN APPEALS TO LEFT ON AFGHAN POLICY: 'CLEAN BREAK' FROM BUSH (WSJ)

By Peter Wallsten

Wall Street Journal, December 4, 2009

Liberals are angry over President Barack Obama's new Afghanistan strategy. But the White House apparently feels it can soften the blow of its 30,000-troop surge with the one sentiment that can still unite the left: dislike of George W. Bush.

That is the defense of Obama's policy offered in an email distributed to the estimated 13 million members of Organizing for America, the network of volunteers and full-time organizers who campaigned for Obama's election and are now being built into a machine to advocate for his policy agenda.

The group and its left-leaning membership have thus far avoided foreign policy matters that could be perceived as inappropriate terrain for a political organization. But in the email sent late Wednesday, Vice President Joe Biden made the best case possible for why liberals should support the surge.

"It's a clean break from the failed Afghanistan policy of the Bush administration, and a new, focused strategy that can succeed," Biden wrote.

The email also highlighted the element of the plan designed to mollify the left - a "firm commitment to begin bringing our troops home in 2011." It contained links to the video of Obama's Tuesday night speech. (For more on the divide between Obama and the liberal base that swept him into office, read this WSJ story.)

But Biden, respected by many liberals for his apparent efforts internally to oppose a troop surge, did not mention in the email the congressional testimony Wednesday from some of his administration colleagues that the "firm" timetable can actually be shifted as events warrant.

The liberal group MoveOn.org has sent emails asking its members to lobby Congress to impose a strict timeline on the White House, and some liberals have warned that Obama will pay a political price if the timeline is delayed.

An official at the Democratic National Committee, which operates Organizing for America, said the group decided to take the unusual step of inserting itself into foreign affairs because of the "seriousness of the issue."

"We wanted to connect with our supporters and provide them with an opportunity to hear the president's address laying out the new strategy in case they missed it," said the official.

The email appears to be designed to avoid accusations of politicking. The links to donate money, for example, that are typical in some of the group's communications do not appear this time. In fact, it takes two clicks - to the video and then to the Organizing for America home page - before viewers are asked to join or give money.

OBAMA'S ANTI-MACARTHUR MOMENT (CBS)

By Tom Engelhardt

CBS News, December 4, 2009

Let others deal with the details of President Obama's Afghan speech, with the on-ramps and off-ramps, those 30,000 U.S. troops going in and just where they will be deployed, the benchmarks for what's called "good governance" in Afghanistan, the corruption of the Karzai regime, the viability of counterinsurgency warfare, the reliability of NATO allies, and so on. Let's just skip to the most essential point which, in a nutshell, is this: Victory at Last!

It's been a long time coming, but finally American war commanders have effectively marshaled their forces, netcentrically outmaneuvering and outflanking the enemy. They have shocked-and-awed their opponents, won the necessary hearts-and-minds, and so, for the first time in at least two decades, stand at the heights of success, triumphant at last.

And no, I'm not talking about post-surge Iraq and certainly not about devolving Afghanistan. I'm talking about what's happening in Washington.

A Symbolic Surrender of Civilian Authority

You may not think so, but on Tuesday night from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, in his first prime-time presidential address to the nation, Barack Obama surrendered. It may not have looked like that: there were no surrender documents; he wasn't on the deck of the USS Missouri; he never bowed his head. Still, from today on, think of him not as the commander-in-chief, but as the commanded-in-chief.

And give credit to the victors. Their campaign was nothing short of brilliant. Like the policy brigands they were, they ambushed the president, held him up with their threats, brought to bear key media players and Republican honchos, and in the end made off with the loot. The campaign began in late September with a strategic leak of Afghan War commander General Stanley McChrystal's grim review of the situation in that country, including demands for sizeable troop escalations and a commitment to a counterinsurgency war. It came to include rumors of potential retirements in protest if the president didn't deliver, as well as clearly insubordinate policy remarks by General McChrystal, not to speak of an impressive citizen-mobilization of inside-the-Beltway former neocon or fighting liberal think-tank experts, and a helping hand from an admiring media. In the process, the U.S. military succeeded in boxing in a president who had already locked himself into a conflict he had termed both "the right war" and a "necessary" one. After more than two months of painfully over-reported deliberations, President Obama has now ended up essentially where General McChrystal began.

Counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine was dusted off from the moldy Vietnam archives and made spanking new by General David Petraeus in 2006, applied in Iraq (and Washington) in 2007, and put forward for Afghanistan in late 2008. It has now been largely endorsed, and a major escalation of the war -- a new kind of military-led nation building (or, as they like to say, "good governance") is to be cranked up and set in motion. COIN is being billed as a "population-centric," not "enemy-centric" approach in which U.S. troops are distinctly to be "nation-builders as well as warriors."

And as for those 30,000 troops, most expected to arrive in the Afghan combat zone within the next six months, the numbers are even more impressive when you realize that, as late as the summer of 2008, the U.S. only had about 28,000 troops in Afghanistan. In other words, in less than two years, U.S. troop strength in that country will have more than tripled to approximately 100,000 troops. So we're talking near-Vietnam-level escalation rates. If you include the 38,000 NATO forces also there (and a possible 5,000 more to come), total allied troop strength will be significantly above what the Soviets deployed during their devastating Afghan War of the 1980s in which they fought some of the same insurgents now arrayed against us.

Think of this as Barack Obama's anti-MacArthur moment. In April 1951, in the midst of the Korean War, President Harry Truman relieved Douglas MacArthur of command of American forces. He did so because the general, a far grander public figure than either McChrystal or Centcom commander Petraeus (and with dreams of his own about a possible presidential run), had publicly disagreed with, and interfered with, Truman's plans to "limit" the war after the Chinese intervened.

Obama, too, has faced what Robert Dreyfuss in Rolling Stone calls a "generals' revolt" -- amid fears that his Republican opposition would line up behind the insubordinate field commanders and make hay in the 2010 and 2012 election campaigns. Obama, too, has faced a general, Petraeus, who might well have presidential ambitions, and who has played a far subtler game than MacArthur ever did. After more than two months of what right-wing critics termed "dithering" and supporters called "thorough deliberations," Obama dealt with the problem quite differently. He essentially agreed to

subordinate himself to the publicly stated wishes of his field commanders. (Not that his Republican critics will give him much credit for doing so, of course.) This is called "politics" in our country and, for a Democratic president in our era, Tuesday night's end result was remarkably predictable.

When Obama bowed to the Japanese emperor on his recent Asian tour, there was a media uproar in this country. Even though the speech Tuesday night should be thought of as bowing to the American military, there is likely to be little complaint on that score. Similarly, despite the significance of symbolism in Washington, there has been surprisingly little discussion about the president's decision to address the American people not from the Oval Office, but from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

It was there that, in 2002, George W. Bush gave a speech before the assembled cadets in which he laid out his aggressive strategy of preventive war, which would become the cornerstone of "the Bush Doctrine." ("If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long -- Our security will require transforming the military you will lead -- a military that must be ready to strike at a moment's notice in any dark corner of the world. And our security will require all Americans to be forward-looking and resolute, to be ready for preemptive action when necessary to defend our liberty and to defend our lives.") But keep in mind that this was still a graduation speech and presidents have traditionally addressed one of the military academies at graduation time.

Obama is not a man who appears in pop military jackets with "commander-in-chief" hand-stitched across his heart before hoo-aahing crowds of soldiers, as our last president loved to do, and yet in his first months in office he has increasingly appeared at military events and associated himself with things military. This speech represents another step in that direction. Has a president ever, in fact, given a non-graduation speech at West Point, no less a major address to the American people? Certainly, the choice of venue, and so the decision to address a military audience first and other Americans second, not only emphasized the escalatory military path chosen in Afghanistan, but represented a kind of symbolic surrender of civilian authority.

For his American audience, and undoubtedly his skittish NATO allies as well, the president did put a significant emphasis on an exit strategy from the war. That off-ramp strategy was, however, placed in the context of the training of the woeful Afghan security forces to take control of the struggle themselves and the woeful government of Afghan President Hamid Karzai to turn over a new nation-building leaf. Like the choice of West Point, this, too, seemed to resonate with eerie echoes of the years in which George W. Bush regularly intoned the mantra: "As Iraqis stand-up, we will stand down."

In his address, Obama offered July 2011 as the date to begin a withdrawing the first U.S. troops from Afghanistan. ("After 18 months, our troops will begin to come home.") However, according to the Washington-insider Nelson Report, a White House "on background" press briefing Tuesday afternoon made it far clearer that the president was talking about a "conditions based withdrawal." It would, in other words, depend "on objective conditions on the ground," on whether the Afghans had met the necessary "benchmarks." When asked about the "scaling back" of the American war effort, General McChrystal recently suggested a more conservative timeline -- "sometime before 2013" -- seconded hazily by Said Jawad, the Afghan ambassador to Washington. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates refers to this as a "thinning out" of U.S. forces.

In fact, there's no reason to put faith in any of these hazy deadlines. After all, this is the administration that came into office announcing a firm one-year closing date for the U.S. prison in Guantanamo (now officially missed), a firm sunshine policy for an end-of-2009 release of millions of pages of historical documents from the archives of the CIA and other intelligence and military services (now officially delayed, possibly for years), and of course a firm date for the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops, followed by all U.S. forces from Iraq (now possibly slipping).

Finish the job in Afghanistan? Based on the plans of the field commanders to whom the president has bowed, on the administration's record

of escalation in the war so far, and on the quiet reassurances to the Pakistanis that we aren't leaving Afghanistan in any imaginable future, this war looks to be all job and no finish. Whatever the flourishes, that was the essence of Tuesday night's surrender speech.

Monty Python in Afghanistan

Honestly, if it weren't so grim, despite all the upbeat benchmarks and encouraging words in the president's speech, this would certainly qualify as Monty Python in Afghanistan. After all, three cabinet ministers and 12 former ministers are under investigation in Afghanistan itself on corruption charges. And that barely scratches the surface of the problems in a country that one Russian expert recently referred to as an "international drug firm," where at least one-third of the gross national product comes from the drug trade. In addition, as Juan Cole wrote at his Informed Comment blog:

"Months after the controversial presidential election that many Afghans consider stolen, there is no cabinet, and parliament is threatening to go on recess before confirming a new one because the president is unconstitutionally late in presenting the names. There are grave suspicions that some past and present cabinet members have engaged in the embezzlement of substantial sums of money. There is little parliamentary oversight. Almost no one bothers to attend the parliamentary sessions. The cabinet ministries are unable to spend the money allocated to them on things like education and rural development, and actually spent less in absolute terms last year than they did in the previous two years."

In addition, the Taliban now reportedly take a cut of the billions of dollars in U.S. development aid flowing into the country, much of which is otherwise squandered, and of the American money that goes into "protecting" the convoys that bring supplies to U.S. troops throughout the country. One out of every four Afghan soldiers has quit or deserted the Afghan National Army in the last year, while the ill-paid, largely illiterate, hapless Afghan police with their "well-deserved reputation for stealing and extorting bribes," not to speak of a drug abuse rate estimated at 15%, are, as its politely put, "years away from functioning independently"; and the insurgency is spreading to new areas of the country and reviving in others.

Good governance? Good grief!

Not that Washington, which obviously feels that it has much to impart to the Afghan people about good governance and how to deal with corruption, has particularly firm ground to stand on. After all, the United States has just completed its first billion-dollar presidential election in a \$5 billion election season, and two administrations just propped up some of the worst financial scofflaws in the history of the world and got nothing back in return.

Meanwhile, the money flowing into Washington political coffers from Wall Street, the military-industrial complex, the pharmaceutical and health care industries, real estate, legal firms, and the like might be thought of as a kind of drug in itself. At the same time, according to USA Today, at least 158 retired generals and admirals, many already pulling in military pensions in the range of \$100,000-\$200,000, have been hired as "senior mentors" by the Pentagon "to offer advice under an unusual arrangement": they also work for companies seeking Defense Department contracts.

In Congress, a Senate maneuver which only a few years ago was so rare that the response to it was nicknamed "the nuclear option" -- needing a 60-vote majority to pass anything of significance -- has, almost without comment, become a commonplace for the passage of just about anything. This means Congress is eternally in a state of gridlock. And that's just for starters when it comes to ways in which the U.S. government, so ready to surge its military and its civilian employees into Afghanistan in the name of good governance, is in need of repair, if not nation-building itself.

Airless in Washington

It's nonetheless the wisdom of this Washington and of this military that Obama has not found wanting, at least when it comes to Afghanistan.

So here's a question: Why did he listen to them? And under such circumstances, why should we take the results seriously?

Stop for a moment and consider the cast of characters who offered the president the full range of advice available in Washington -- all of which,

as far as we can tell, from Joe Biden's "counterterrorism-plus" strategy to McChrystal's COIN and beyond, was escalatory in nature. These are, of course, the wise men (and woman) of our era. But just a cursory glance at their collective record should at least make you wonder:

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is now said to be the official with the best ties to Afghan President Hamid Karzai and so the one in charge of "coaxing" him into a round of reasonable nation-building, of making "a new compact" with the Afghan people by "improving governance and cracking down on corruption"; and yet, in the early 1990s, in her single significant nation-building experience at home, she botched the possibility of getting a universal health-care bill through Congress. She also had the "wisdom" to vote in 2003 to authorize the invasion of Iraq.

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, reputedly deeply trusted by the president and in charge of planning out our military future in Afghanistan, was in the 1980s a supposed expert on the Soviet Union as well as deputy CIA director and later deputy to National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft. Yet, in those years, he couldn't bring himself to believe that the Soviets were done for even as that empire was disappearing from the face of the Earth. In the words of former National Security Council official Roger Morris, Gates "waged a final battle against the Soviets, denying at every turn that the old enemy was actually dying." As former CIA official Melvin Goodman has put the matter: "Gates was wrong about every key intelligence question of the 1980s... A Kremlinologist by training, Gates was one of the last American hardliners to comprehend the changes taking place in the Soviet Union. He was wrong about Mikhail Gorbachev, wrong about the importance of reform, wrong about Moscow's pursuit of arms control and détente with the United States. He was wrong about the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan..."

Vice-President Joe Biden, recently described as potentially "the second-most-powerful vice president in history" as well as "the president's all-purpose adviser and sage" on foreign policy, was during the Bush years a believer in nation-building in Afghanistan, voted to authorize the invasion of Iraq, and later promoted the idea -- like Caesar re: Gaul -- of dividing that country into three parts (without, of course, bothering to ask the Iraqis), while leaving 25,000-30,000 American troops based there in perpetuity, while "these regions build up their state police forces."

General Stanley McChrystal, our war commander in Afghanistan and now the poster boy for counterinsurgency warfare, had his skills honed purely in the field of counterterrorism. He was a Special Ops guy. The man who is now to "protect" the Afghan people previously won his spurs as the head of the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) in Iraq and Afghanistan. He ran the "manhunters" - essentially, that is, he was the leader of a team of assassins and evidently part of what reporter Seymour Hersh has termed an "executive assassination wing" of that command, possibly taking orders directly from Vice President Dick Cheney. His skills involved guns to the head, not protective boots on the ground.

General David Petraeus, the general leading everything, who has been practically deified in the U.S. media, is perhaps the savviest and most accomplished of this crew. He surged into Iraq in 2007 and, with the help of fortuitous indigenous developments, staunched the worst of the bleeding, leaving behind a big question mark. His greatest skill, however, has been in fostering the career of David Petraeus. He is undoubtedly an advisor with an agenda and in his wake come a whole crew of military and think-tank experts, with almost unblemished records of being wrong in the Bush years, whom the surge in Iraq recredencialized.

Karl Eikenberry, our ambassador to Kabul, in his previous career in the U.S. military served two tours of duty in Afghanistan, and as the commander of Combined Forces Command Afghanistan was the general responsible for building up the Afghan army and "reforming" that country's police force. On both counts, we know how effective that attempt proved.

And when it comes to key figures with well-padded Washington CVs like Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or James Jones, present national security advisor and former commandant of the Marine Corps, as well as the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, a close friend of Senator John McCain, and a former revolving-door board member of Chevron and Boeing,

remind me just what sticks in your mind about their accomplishments?

So, when you think about Barack Obama's Afghan decisions, imagine first that the man considered the smartest, most thoughtful president of our era chose to surround himself with these people. He chose, that is, not fresh air, or fresh thought in the field of foreign and war policy, but the airless precincts where the combined wisdom of Washington and the Pentagon now exists, and the remarkable lack of accomplishment that goes with it. In short, these are people whose credentials largely consist of not having been right about much over the years.

Admittedly, this administration has called in practically every Afghan expert in sight. Everyone involved could now undoubtedly expound on relatively abstruse questions of Afghan tribal politics, locate Paktia Province on a map in a flash, and tell you just which of Hamid Karzai's ministers are under investigation for corruption.

Unfortunately, the most essential problem isn't in Afghanistan; it's here in the United States, in Washington, where knowledge is slim, egos large, and national security wisdom is deeply imprinted on a system bleeding money and breaking down. The president campaigned on the slogan, "Change we can believe in." He then chose as advisors -- in the economic sphere as well, where a similar record of gross error, narrow and unimaginative thinking, and over-identification with the powerful could easily be compiled -- a crew who had never seen a significant change, or an out-of-the-ordinary thought it could live with -- and still can't.

As a result, the Iraq War has yet to begin to go away, the Afghan War is being escalated in a major way, the Middle East is in some turmoil, Guantanamo remains open, black sites are still operating in Afghanistan, the Pentagon's budget has grown yet larger, and supplemental demands on Congress for yet more money to pay for George W. Bush's wars will, despite promises otherwise, soon enough be made.

A stale crew breathing stale air has ensured that Afghanistan, the first of Bush's disastrous wars, is now truly Obama's War; and the news came directly from West Point where the president surrendered to his militarized fate.

OBAMA'S AFGHAN WAR DECISION: A TEAM OF RIVALS (NPR)

By Tom Bowman And Mara Liasson

NPR, December 4, 2009

President Obama has ordered 30,000 more troops into battle in Afghanistan. The escalation is meant to be as rapid as possible, but the process that brought the president to this point wasn't rapid at all.

It was lengthy and deliberate - and it had many twists and turns.

Obama's willingness to escalate the war in Afghanistan was no secret. In fact, it was his policy and his preference since before he took office. During the campaign, he was one of many Democrats who saw Afghanistan as the "good war," while the war in Iraq was seen as a waste of blood and treasure. On the campaign trail, Obama went even further, excoriating President Bush for taking his eye off the ball.

"And that is why, as president, I will make the fight against al-Qaida and the Taliban the top priority that it should be. This is a war we have to win," Obama said as a candidate.

For some Democrats, supporting the fight in Afghanistan was a way to deflect the old soft-on-national-security charge often leveled against their party. But unlike other Democrats, Obama never abandoned his belief that Afghanistan was the necessary war. Two months after he took office, the president announced a comprehensive new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. The goal: to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaida.

"That is a cause that could not be more just. And to the terrorists who oppose us, my message is the same: We will defeat you," Obama said in March.

In that speech, the president also said he was sending 21,000 more troops to Afghanistan. But even then his general wanted more.

On a visit to Afghanistan in June, National Security Adviser James Jones warned the commanders not to ask for more troops so soon. If they did, Jones said, using a salty abbreviation, the president would have a "whiskey tango foxtrot" moment - as in WTF.

But by then, Obama had already asked his new commanding general in Afghanistan, Stanley McChrystal, to assess the war effort.

A New General For A Long War

Defense Secretary Robert Gates picked McChrystal because he was unhappy with the way things were going in Afghanistan. Security was deteriorating. The commander there had asked for more troops but had given little sense of how they would be used.

So Gates, together with the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Mike Mullen, handed the mission to McChrystal and Lt. Gen. David Rodriguez.

Gates said McChrystal and Rodriguez "will provide the kind of new leadership and fresh thinking" that is necessary.

McChrystal provided that fresh thinking in late summer. His review came in a classified assessment to the White House. The document, leaked to the news media, warned that the war could be lost without more U.S. forces.

McChrystal asked for those forces - as many as 80,000 more troops, and as few as 12,000. After his plans and troop request landed at the White House, McChrystal heard nothing for weeks.

That's because there was turmoil in Washington. Democrats balked. The Obama administration seriously considered sending no new troops at all. It also looked at an idea pushed by Vice President Joe Biden: Limit American troops in Afghanistan and use drone aircraft to kill al-Qaida in Pakistan.

In early October, McChrystal was asked in London whether that plan made sense.

"The short glib answer is no, you have to navigate from where you are, not from where you wish you were," he said. "A strategy that does not leave Afghanistan in a stable position is probably a short-sighted strategy."

That comment got McChrystal into trouble inside the White House.

A day later, McChrystal was summoned while Obama was on a European trip. They met aboard Air Force One in Copenhagen. Some thought it was a dressing-down. But the president backed his general and later told lawmakers, "He's my hand-picked guy."

McChrystal stopped speaking publicly. But his boss didn't. Mullen told Congress that he endorsed McChrystal's recommendations.

"I do believe that having heard his views and having great confidence in his leadership, a properly resourced counterinsurgency probably means more forces," Mullen said.

The military brass was lining up in favor of more forces. Some in the White House were feeling boxed in. The debate was on.

Deliberation And Debate At The White House

At the White House, the decision-making process was lengthy and deliberate. The president's war council met 10 times over three months. There were leaks, which infuriated Gates, particularly when it was publicly revealed that Karl Eikenberry, the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan and a former Army general, opposed the troop buildup.

The president was not pleased either, as he told CBS News.

"I think I'm probably angrier than Bob Gates about it. Partly, partly because, you know, we have these deliberations in the Situation Room for a reason. Because we are making decisions that are life and death," Obama said.

In some cases, White House officials publicly questioned the assumptions behind McChrystal's recommendation. In doing so, they were giving voice to the views of many Democrats in Congress who opposed any escalation. And they were sending an important political message that the president wouldn't just rubber-stamp the general's request.

Meanwhile, White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel expressed doubts - doubts that the president shared - about the legitimacy of Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

"The question is, do you have a credible partner that could then fill that space that we're asking the American troops to create?" Emanuel said.

In the end, the president decided he had no choice but to work with Karzai, despite marred presidential elections in August and charges of corruption inside Karzai's administration.

In the end, by settling on the number of troops Gates had recommended in October, Obama was siding with the Pentagon and rejecting the view of his

vice president, who had favored a more targeted strategy.

"I was skeptical of taking our eye off the ball. The ball is al-Qaida. That's the reason we're there," Biden told NBC. "They are in Pakistan. The Taliban leadership is in Pakistan. And I wanted to make sure that the focus stayed on those two elements of our concern and didn't sort of morph into a nation-building exercise that would tie us down for 10 years."

But in the end, the president's team of rivals was on board. His strategy was an Obama-style balance - a bigger footprint than the vice president and others wanted, the Taliban would be degraded not destroyed, there would be no nation-building, and there would be a date to begin a drawdown of troops.

Throughout it all, Republicans complained about how long it took the president to decide. Former Vice President Dick Cheney accused Obama of "dithering."

In his speech Tuesday night at West Point, Obama defended the process.

"Now, let me be clear: There has never been an option before me that called for troop deployments before 2010, so there has been no delay or denial of resources necessary for the conduct of the war during this review period. Instead, the review has allowed me to ask the hard questions and to explore all the different options," Obama said.

After all the hard questions were asked and all the premises were challenged, the president called his team into the Oval Office at 5 p.m. Sunday and told them what he had decided: a swifter ramp-up of troop strength - what the president called moving the bell curve to the left - in hopes of quickly improving the Afghans' ability to take over security responsibilities. He had put his own stamp on McChrystal's request. In the Oval Office, the president issued the order to implement his strategy immediately.

Obama's War

So now the mission was back in the hands of the generals. Even as the president spoke to the nation from West Point, the Marines had begun moving equipment by sea to Afghanistan.

McChrystal and Gen. David Petraeus, the commander of all U.S. forces in the region, had made the case in those White House meetings: The U.S. must hit the Taliban hard, and hit them fast.

At West Point, it was clear the president had been persuaded.

"We must reverse the Taliban's momentum and deny it the ability to overthrow the government. And we must strengthen the capacity of Afghanistan's security forces and government, so that they can take lead responsibility for Afghanistan's future," Obama said.

That's the only way U.S. troops can leave.

McChrystal said it would take 400,000 Afghan troops to secure their country. The White House and Pentagon doubt it's possible to train and field that many.

So having conducted a disciplined debate for months, the president now finds that his strategy depends on forces he cannot control: Afghanistan's government and its military.

DID THE STIMULUS STIMULATE? (FORBES)

By Bruce Bartlett

Forbes, December 4, 2009

Yes, but tax cuts had the smallest bang for the buck.

Lately, Republicans have had a field day attacking the Obama administration for rising unemployment. The first Friday of every month, when the Bureau of Labor Statistics releases the previous month's unemployment rate, has become a day Republicans eagerly look forward to and Democrats dread.

In part, Democrats have themselves to blame. In promoting a big fiscal stimulus earlier this year, two of the administration's top economists, Christina Romer and Jared Bernstein, estimated that the unemployment rate would not go above 8% if stimulus were enacted. It has been well above that rate since February and is now above 10%.

In their defense, Romer and Bernstein also estimated that unemployment would peak at 9% in the absence of stimulus. In other words, the depth of

the recession was much greater than anticipated. It's still reasonable to say that the unemployment rate would be even higher if no stimulus had been enacted.

In retrospect, it would have been better if the administration had said nothing about the unemployment rate. That's a number that is inherently hard to predict because it is a function of two different things that don't necessarily move together: the number of people working and the number of people in the labor force (working or actively looking for work). Also, the unemployment rate is calculated from a survey of households and thus has the same limitations as public opinion polling. That's why economists tend to focus on payroll employment as a better measure of labor market conditions, because that figure comes directly from employers.

What Romer and Bernstein basically did was to estimate the effect of stimulus on the gross domestic product based on well-established linkages called multipliers. Certain policies have long been known to give a large bang for the buck in terms of how much GDP is increased per \$1 of spending or tax cuts, while others have a very low multiplier effect. Romer and Bernstein estimated that the peak impact of stimulus would come after eight quarters, and that increased government purchases would add \$1.57 to GDP for every \$1 spent, while \$1 of tax cuts would add only 99 cents.

From this, Romer and Bernstein estimated that the \$775 billion stimulus package then being proposed by the administration would ultimately raise GDP by \$433 billion or 3.7%. Since we know from experience that each one percentage point rise in real GDP creates approximately 1 million jobs, they concluded that the stimulus would create 3.7 million jobs.

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It should be emphasized that stimulus takes time to work, and that these economic effects are relative to what would have been the case in the absence of action; that is, a do-nothing baseline. Most importantly, the ultimate impact of the stimulus will not come until the end of 2010.

Therefore, we are less than halfway through the forecast period and, consequently, have necessarily seen only limited impact from the stimulus.

In this context, the administration's estimate that 640,329 jobs have been saved or created by the stimulus is not unreasonable. Unfortunately, the administration chose a method of calculating this figure that was deeply flawed, thus opening it to Republican ridicule.

From the beginning, the Obama administration was determined to prove beyond a shadow of doubt that the stimulus would create jobs. To this end, it set up an elaborate system of reporting in which every government agency, business or entity that created or saved a job because of stimulus spending documented the fact. The results are tabulated on a running basis at www.recovery.gov.

Numerous press reports have shown the dubious nature of many of the jobs said to have been created. My favorite is the Kentucky shoe store owner who supposedly saved nine jobs with \$889.60 in stimulus funds. To make a long story short, since he sold nine pairs of work boots to the Army he just assumed that nine jobs had been saved somehow or other.

A Government Accountability Office study found many similar examples; virtually all are the result of confusion and misunderstanding. Those asked to fill out the stimulus reports were asked to report data based on unclear instructions and with no guidance or training. Sadly, a lot of government data is just as poor in quality. Data collection and sausage-making have a lot in common.

It would have been better if the administration had stuck to estimating jobs based on the growth in GDP. One particularly important reason for doing so is that the White House's 640,329 jobs estimate was based on only a fraction of the total stimulus package, those elements involving direct spending. But a considerable portion of the package involved tax cuts and transfer payments such as the extension of unemployment compensation. These programs also increased GDP and thus created or saved jobs, but were not counted because no specific jobs can be identified.

In a recent report, the Congressional Budget Office took into account the impact of the entire stimulus package. According to its calculations, GDP was 1.2% to 3.2% higher in the third quarter than it would have been in

the absence of stimulus. (According to the latest Commerce Department data, real GDP grew 2.8% in the third quarter vs. a decrease of 0.7% in the second and a decrease of 6.4% in the first.) The CBO estimates that between 600,000 and 1.6 million additional people were employed as a consequence.

The CBO also looked at the stimulative effect of various parts of the stimulus package. It found that purchases of goods and services by the federal government--such as for public works--had the largest bang for the buck, raising GDP by \$2.50 for each \$1 spent. Transfer payments had a lesser impact, but were still significantly more stimulative than tax cuts.

Moreover, tax cuts of the sort favored by Republicans have the least impact. According to the CBO, tax cuts for low-income individuals raise GDP by as much as \$1.70 for every \$1 of revenue loss, while those for the rich and for corporations raised GDP by at most 50 cents for every \$1 of revenue loss.

Lest one suspect the CBO of bias, private economists have also found that tax cuts are far less stimulative than spending under current economic conditions. Mark Zandi of Moody's (MCO - news - people) Economy.com, an advisor to John McCain last year, recently testified before the Joint Economic Committee of Congress that the Republicans' favorite tax proposals--making all the Bush tax cuts permanent and cutting the corporate tax rate--would raise GDP by at most 37 cents for each \$1 of revenue loss. By contrast, increased outlays for infrastructure, aid to state and local governments and extended unemployment benefits increase GDP by between \$1.41 and \$1.57 for every \$1 spent.

Indeed, one can argue that the failure of the stimulus to create or save more jobs occurred largely because Obama included too many non-stimulative tax cuts in the stimulus package. These tax cuts, such as the Making Work Pay Credit, accounted for more than 40% of the cost of the \$787 billion stimulus package. Based on the CBO analysis, I don't think there is any question that the economy would be much worse off today if Republicans had gotten their wish and 100% of the stimulus had been in the form of tax cuts.

Those who disagree should keep in mind that in fiscal year 2009, which ended on Sept. 30, federal revenues came to just 14.9% of GDP, compared to 17.7% in 2008 and 18.8% in 2007, according to the CBO. In effect, we've had a tax cut equal to 4% of GDP over the last two years. By comparison, the Kennedy-Johnson tax cut of 1964 was only 1.6% of GDP and the Reagan tax cut of 1981 was 1.9% of GDP in its first two years. (See this Treasury Department study.)

Nevertheless, Republicans continue to trumpet tax cuts as the one and only cure for whatever ails the economy, as House Republican Whip Eric Cantor, R-Va., did in a Dec. 2 speech. Nowhere in it, however, is there any statement of the theory by which more tax cuts will stimulate growth when taxes are already at their lowest level in three generations, and when there is no evidence that the tax cuts enacted in February or last year's tax rebate--which the Bush administration promised would stop the recession in its tracks--have had any meaningful stimulative effect. (On failure of the Republican rebate, see this CBO analysis.)

I think there is still adequate stimulus in the pipeline--only a quarter of the \$787 billion stimulus package had been dispensed as of September (in the form of both spending and tax cuts) according to the CBO. This should give the U.S. 2.7% real GDP growth next year vs. negative 2.4% this year, according to the latest consensus forecast--a turnaround of better than 5%. Given that that the federal budget deficit is already worrisome, it would be unwise to pump more fiscal stimulus into the economy. We should let the medicine we've already taken have a chance to work before taking more.

ADMINISTRATION GOES AFTER NONCOMPLIANT RECOVERY ACT RECIPIENTS (GOVEXEC)

By Robert Brodsky

Government Executive, December 4, 2009

Recovery Act recipients that failed to submit spending reports could face stiff punishments, including the loss of stimulus funds, the Obama administration announced on Wednesday evening.

In a memorandum to agency heads, Office of Management and Budget Director Peter R. Orszag directed officials to develop a master list of all noncompliant recipients and to determine the reason they did not file

reports. If recipients encountered technical challenges, then agencies are to help them file correctly in the future. But, in cases where the reason for not reporting was more nefarious, the penalty will be harsher, the memo said.

"Noncompliant recipients, including those who are persistently late or negligent in their reporting obligations, are subject to federal action, up to and including the termination of federal funding or the ability to receive federal funds in the future," Orszag wrote.

If the noncompliance appears to be fraudulent, agencies must refer the matter for criminal investigation, he added.

The administration has estimated that about 10 percent of entities that received stimulus contracts, grants or loans failed to file a spending report during the first round of submissions. An additional 15 percent of recipients were tardy, officials said.

"More than 90 percent of all Recovery Act funding recipients reported on the use of their funding," Vice President Joe Biden said in a statement.

"While this level is remarkably high for a first-of-its-kind nationwide effort, missing information is unacceptable. We will work to make sure that recipients fully meet their legal obligation to report."

The Recovery Act does not impose specific penalties on entities that fail to report, although members of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee are considering such a legislative change. But, the chief stimulus watchdog said he plans to make sure noncompliant recipients are identified on Recovery.gov.

"I intend to try and embarrass them by putting them up on my Web site when we get the list and drive accountability that way," said Earl Devaney, chairman of the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, during a Thursday morning panel discussion at the National Press Club hosted by Government Executive.

While the stimulus bill does not authorize sanctions for failure to meet reporting requirements, the terms and conditions of certain funding streams and contracts could allow for punishments, said Ed DeSeve, special adviser to the president for the Recovery Act.

Devaney said the noncompliant entities must note their late spending when the next batch of recipient reports is due in January. He does not anticipate creating an interim reporting period.

The addition of those late reports is likely to increase the administration's frequently debated totals of jobs saved or created by the stimulus. Recipients reported in October that they had saved or created more than 640,000 direct jobs through \$160 billion in stimulus spending, but media reports have shown instances where jobs were miscounted.

The debate over the 640,000 jobs number appears to have worn on Devaney. "I wish that number would be on page 95 of our Web site," he said.

The former Interior Department inspector general said, "A lot of inaccurate data was in that first round of data and, quite frankly, mistakes were made." Among those mistakes were some reports that attributed spending to nonexistent congressional districts, creating a cause célèbre in Washington and in the media, he said.

Moving forward, the Recovery Act board plans to use a software program that will prevent recipients from typing in a congressional district that does not exist.

But, Devaney noted data always will be subject to human error and, ultimately, the reports are only as "good as people try to make them." Despite the hiccups, he expects that the level of real-time reporting and transparency developed through the Recovery Act will become a model on the government stage for years to come.

WHEELING OFFICIALS PART OF CONFERENCE CALL WITH VICE PRESIDENT BIDEN (WTOV)
WTOV-TV, December 4, 2009

Wheeling Mayor Andy McKenzie was one of five mayors from across the country on a conference call with Vice President Joe Biden Thursday morning.

McKenzie and Wheeling City Manager Robert Herron listened in to Biden's expectations for stimulus funding and the reporting processes during the hour-long call.

"It was an excellent opportunity to kind of hear from the administration through the vice president -- kind of how things are going with stimulus funds, what the future may be with stimulus funding, what opportunities may exist in the future regarding additional funding," Herron said.

McKenzie also had the chance to ask Biden questions and express any concerns over stimulus funding.

Herron said Biden's intergovernmental relations director called the city's offices on Wednesday to set up the call.

3 SECRET SERVICE OFFICERS PUT ON LEAVE IN WHITE HOUSE GATE-CRASHING (NYT)

By Ginger Thompson And Janie Lorber

New York Times, December 4, 2009

WASHINGTON - Three Secret Service officers have been placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of an investigation into how two uninvited guests managed to crash President Obama's first state dinner last week, the director of the service said Thursday.

The director, Mark Sullivan, revealed the suspensions under heavy questioning from members of a Congressional panel looking into the incident.

Mr. Sullivan told the House Homeland Security Committee that an initial investigation had shown it was "human error" that allowed two aspiring reality television contestants, Tareq and Michaela Salahi, to penetrate security around the White House.

"I've asked myself these questions a thousand times over the last week," a beleaguered Mr. Sullivan said to legislators. "And what I keep coming back to is that we didn't follow procedures."

"Do I like to see this? Do any of our people like to see this?" he added. "No, we don't. We've been beating ourselves up over this."

Legislators at the packed hearing seemed unsatisfied. They expressed outrage at the potential risk posed by the security breach at the nation's most important address on such an exclusive occasion. They brought up security problems that arose during Mr. Obama's inauguration, and asked whether there were systemic problems at the Secret Service.

Many pointed fingers at the White House, criticizing Mr. Obama's social secretary, Desiree Rogers, for failing to post members of her staff at checkpoints alongside Secret Service agents, as has been standard procedure at most such events in the past.

"The Secret Service is expected to take a bullet for the president," said Representative Charlie Dent, Republican of Pennsylvania. "But they're not expected to take one for the president's staff."

Legislators aimed their most scathing remarks at the Salahis, the Virginia couple whose escapade has riveted the world. The Salahis declined to appear at the hearing.

Representative Bennie Thompson, Democrat of Mississippi and chairman of the committee, said he would move to issue subpoenas for the Salahis if they refused to appear next week.

Several other legislators described the Salahis as criminals who should be brought to justice.

Representative Sheila Jackson Lee, Democrat of Texas, held up posters showing the Salahis shaking Mr. Obama's hand and posing with Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. She read e-mail messages indicating the Salahis knew they did not have invitations to the state dinner, but decided to try to talk their way into the event anyway.

"This is a law enforcement issue that could have ended in a horrific incident," Ms. Lee said, pointing at the posters. "The threat was severe."

Mr. Sullivan, a career Secret Service agent who was appointed director in 2006, tried unsuccessfully to assuage the legislators' concerns, saying Mr. Obama was never in danger the night of the state dinner on Nov. 24.

And he said Mr. Obama had not received more death threats than any of his recent predecessors.

Still, Mr. Sullivan acknowledged that the potential for harm was great. He said the Salahis had managed to get past three Secret Service checkpoints on their way into the dinner because uniformed officers did not follow procedures.

He said agents had been instructed to contact their supervisors if anyone came to a checkpoint who was not on a list, but that did not happen.

And Mr. Sullivan said he did not learn that uninvited guests had made it into the dinner until the next morning through newspaper reports and photographs that the Salahis had posted on their Facebook page.

Mr. Sullivan would not identify the three agents who allowed the Salahis into the dinner. But he told legislators they had been put on paid administrative leave until the end of the investigation.

"Beyond that, I would prefer not to go further," Mr. Sullivan said. "But I will tell you that we are going to look at this, we're going to find out what the culpability was, and we'll take appropriate action."

The White House responded to the criticism of the past several days by acknowledging Thursday that more could have been done to prevent the Salahis from getting into the dinner, and by announcing that from now on, there would be someone from the White House posted at checkpoints with Secret Service agents.

Still, the ranking Republican on the committee, Representative Peter T. King of New York, argued that the White House should share more of the blame. The Salahis, Mr. King argued, might never have gotten into the dinner if someone from the social secretary's office - which created the guest list - had been working alongside Secret Service agents.

That kind of "layered security," lawmakers said, was customary at most White House events.

Mr. King accused the White House of "stonewalling" for failing to send Ms. Rogers to answer questions at the hearing. But Mr. Thompson refused a request to subpoena her, saying: "The social office plans parties. They are not responsible for security."

SECRET SERVICE TAKES BLAME FOR WHITE HOUSE PARTY CRASHERS (MCT)

McClatchy, December 4, 2009

WASHINGTON - The head of the Secret Service accepted full responsibility Thursday for last week's security breach at President Barack Obama's first state dinner, but he said that the president and Vice President Joe Biden were never in danger from a party-crashing couple who shook hands and posed for pictures with them.

Secret Service Director Mark Sullivan told the House Homeland Security Committee that his agents were at fault for allowing uninvited Washington socialites Tareq and Michaela Salahi into a lavish state dinner for Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. He said the Salahis had shown their passports when asked for identification, then were allowed in.

Sullivan told the committee that three uniformed agents had been put on administrative leave in the wake of the incident.

"In our judgment, a mistake was made," he told the committee. "In our line of work, we cannot afford even one mistake. I fully acknowledge that the proper procedures were not followed. ... This flaw has not changed our agency's standard, which is to be right 100 percent of the time."

He added: "This is our fault, and our fault alone."

However, several committee members said it was unfair for the Secret Service to take full blame for the party-crashers, and that they thought that Sullivan was falling on his sword for the White House.

"We always expect the Secret Service to take a bullet for the president, but we don't expect Secret Service to take a bullet for the president's staff," said Rep. Charlie Dent, R-Pa.

Sullivan was the lone witness at Thursday's hearing, in a room packed with onlookers, reporters and photographers from mainstream media outlets to television's "Inside Edition."

The Salahis, who've been angling to become contestants on the Bravo cable network's upcoming "Real Housewives of D.C." reality TV series, and White House social secretary Desiree Rogers, who oversaw logistics for the dinner, were invited to testify, but declined. White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs said Wednesday that White House staff members didn't answer to Congress.

Committee Chairman Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., ordered staffers to prepare

the committee's first-ever subpoenas for the Salahis and have them ready to be issued next week. He warned that the couple could face charges of contempt of Congress if they fail to respond.

Rep. Peter King of New York, the committee's top-ranking Republican, said that Rogers also should be subpoenaed. King squarely blamed Rogers, saying that her office didn't sufficiently staff the dinner or carefully monitor the guest list. He said that usually at White House social events, a representative of the social secretary's office was at checkpoints alongside Secret Service agents to monitor the guest list.

"The reality is, social events at the White House is a shared responsibility. ... The social secretary's office was not standing there with the Secret Service," King said. "Not one person from the social secretary's office was standing there. Not one."

Thompson and other committee members shrugged off King's accusations.

"Social secretaries don't plan security, they plan parties," Thompson said.

Sullivan, however, did tell the committee that the Secret Service had a planning meeting with the White House before the dinner and it was decided there that Secret Service agents would have the sole responsibility of staffing the checkpoint that the Salahis entered.

Pressed by King on whether the couple would have gotten into the dinner if someone from the social secretary's office had been at the checkpoint with the agents, Sullivan said, "It would have helped."

Thompson rebuffed King's request to subpoena Rogers, saying that the Salahis, not Rogers, are the central figures in the breach.

"We cannot forget that amidst all the hullabaloo and uproar, the most important and indisputable fact is that a couple gained unauthorized access to the White House grounds because no one from the Secret Service prevented them from entering," Thompson said in his opening remarks. "There were undeniable planning and execution failures of the entire Secret Service apparatus."

Perhaps the most pointed questions to Sullivan came from African-American members of the committee. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton, D-D.C., pressed him on whether the Secret Service has enough resources to protect Obama, the nation's first African-American president.

She cited claims by Ronald Kessler, the author of "In the President's Secret Service," that since Obama took office last January, death threats against the president had risen 400 percent from a rate of around 3,000 per year during George W. Bush's presidency.

Sullivan said the threat rate was now at the same level that it was for Bush and former President Bill Clinton.

Rep. Yvette Clarke, D-N.Y., suggested that race might have played a role in the breach. She noted that the Salahis easily entered the White House, while she had difficulty with a Secret Service agent as she tried to enter Denver's Invesco Field at Mile High stadium in August 2008 to watch Obama accept the Democratic presidential nomination despite having a congressional pin and identification.

"I find it ironic that the Salahis were able to get in to the White House with such ease when I was basically detained by Secret Service just trying to get into Invesco Stadium to nominate my president," she said. "So there seems to be some standards about who is credible in their description of whom they are and where they belong and who does not."

SECRET SERVICE OFFICERS IN GATE-CRASH PUT ON LEAVE (UPDATE3) (BLOOM)

By Jeff Bliss

Bloomberg News, December 4, 2009

Dec. 3 (Bloomberg) -- Three Secret Service officers involved in a security breach that allowed an uninvited couple to slip into a Nov. 24 state dinner at the White House have been put on administrative leave, the agency's director said.

The officers didn't follow "a simple procedure, a simple protocol" in checking Tareq and Michaela Salahi, Secret Service Director Mark Sullivan told a House panel today. "It was just poor judgment."

President Barack Obama said he felt safe with his Secret Service

protection. "I could not have more confidence in the Secret Service," he said in an interview with USA Today. Still, "the system didn't work the way it was supposed to" in the gate-crashing incident, he said.

Sullivan was the sole witness before the House Homeland Security Committee. The other witnesses invited - the Salahis and White House Social Secretary Desiree Rogers - didn't appear. Representative Bennie Thompson, the Mississippi Democrat who heads the panel, said subpoenas will be prepared for the Salahis so the committee can vote next week on whether to force them to testify.

A phone call to the Virginia couple's attorney this morning wasn't immediately returned.

Subpoena Dispute

Thompson said he wouldn't support a subpoena for Rogers because she was "not a central figure" in planning security for the dinner for Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Representative Peter King of New York, the panel's ranking Republican, urged the committee to subpoena Rogers as well because White House staffers traditionally have been posted at checkpoints to help the Secret Service during events.

Rogers's failure to appear before the committee was "stonewalling," King said in an interview ahead of today's hearing.

White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said that Rogers, who oversaw the state dinner, wouldn't testify because of the constitutional separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches of government.

The Obama administration did say it shares blame for the security breach and now is posting a staff member at the White House gate for events.

"The White House did not do everything we could have done to assist the United States Secret Service ensure that only invited guests enter the complex," Jim Messina, the president's deputy chief of staff, wrote in a memo released yesterday.

Checkpoint Staffing

Lawmakers wanted to ask Rogers why no one from her staff was posted at the White House gate to vet guests at Secret Service checkpoints.

Representative Loretta Sanchez, a California Democrat, said every White House event she attended had an administration staffer at the checkpoint.

"Why would you all agree that no person from the White House would be standing there," she asked Sullivan.

The director said it was unusual not to have a White House staffer there. "I haven't seen that happen all that often," he said.

Sullivan said the Secret Service officers under scrutiny for the security breach will receive pay while on leave.

"But I will tell you that we are going to look at this," he told the committee. "We're going to find out what the culpability was and we'll take the appropriate action."

Facebook Photos

Sullivan said the Secret Service first learned of the security breach the day after the dinner from Facebook Inc., which hosts a page on its social-networking service for Michaela Salahi that included pictures taken at the dinner.

Under the tightened screening detailed in Messina's memo, all guests for future state dinners and other events will be checked off by White House staff as well as the Secret Service.

Those procedures were used Dec. 1 for a White House holiday party, Gibbs said.

Once the Salahis got past the White House gate, they posed for photos with Vice President Joe Biden and Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel and other guests. In a Dec. 1 interview on NBC's "Today" program, the couple denied crashing the party.

King, after a conversation with the Salahis' lawyer yesterday, said the couple knew an invitation they had sought to get hadn't been secured when they left for the White House.

"They thought they almost had an invitation," he said. When security guards allowed them in, they thought the invitation had come through, King said.

Scrutiny of Salahis

The Salahis are receiving scrutiny about their other activities, according to the Washington Post. The paper reported today that the state of Virginia is investigating America's Polo Cup, a business entity run by the Salahis, that the couple says raises funds for their charitable organization.

Sullivan said the Secret Service has the staff and funding it needs to do its job and that the number of threats to Obama isn't higher than with Presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton.

"The threats right now and the inappropriate interest that we are seeing is the same level as it has been for the previous two presidents at this point" in their terms, he said.

To contact the reporter on this story: Jeff Bliss in Washington at jbliss@bloomberg.net

REPUBLICAN AND DEMOCRATIC NOT THE PARTIES THEY HAD IN MIND (WP)

By Dana Milbank

Washington Post, December 4, 2009

Among party crashers, it must be considered gauche to attend a party to which you were actually invited.

We can infer this, because when Tareq and Michaela Salahis were asked to come before a House panel on Thursday to explain how they crashed President Obama's state dinner, they didn't accept the invitation. They didn't even give the courtesy of an RSVP to the Homeland Security Committee, which had gone to the trouble of printing up name cards and setting places for them at the witness table. As Emily Post says, "Being a 'no show' is unacceptable."

And the Salahis weren't the only ones with bad manners. White House social secretary Desiree Rogers, also invited, sent her regrets to the host, Chairman Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.), but neglected to RSVP to the committee co-host, ranking Republican Peter King (N.Y.), who was offended. "Maybe you received an official notice from the White House; we certainly didn't," King told Thompson, calling Rogers's faux pas "an affront."

With all three of the guests of honor demonstrating such poor form, the seating chart for the event was limited to the one person who accepted the committee's invitation, Secret Service Director Mark Sullivan. As holiday parties go, Thompson's was decidedly B-list.

Instead of the Thibaut-Janisson Brut Obama served at the state dinner, the committee served Deer Park. Instead of Isaac Mizrahi, the fashions in the committee room had more of a T.J. Maxx look. The ranking GOP member's jacket was worn and pilling.

Still, there was a red-carpet arrival, although this one technically occurred on the white stone floor of the Cannon House Office Building. Dozens of cameramen and photographers trained their lenses on Sullivan as soon as he emerged from the elevator. Shutters clicked and questions were shouted. Sullivan did not pause to strike a pose. He hurried to the witness table, then sat with eyes fixed on his statement. Stage lights beamed down on him from four directions, and six TV cameras tracked his every grimace. Dena Graziano, a committee spokeswoman, played social secretary. "Did you RSVP?" she asked reporters as they arrived.

Before the hearing, King maintained that he didn't want to "make it a circus." But when you invite two aspiring reality television stars and the White House social secretary to testify at a congressional hearing on party crashing, you might as well call in the Ringling Bros. When Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Tex.) shows up with a poster of the female party crasher pawing Vice President Biden's chest, you might as well rename yourselves the Committee on Barnum & Bailey.

"What bothers me," declared Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-N.J.), "is that many people are looking at this hearing and thinking it's about some sensational incident."

Now where would they get that idea? Maybe from Chairman Thompson, who, after Sullivan's testimony, ordered aides to place the "Mr. Salahi" and "Mrs. Salahi" placards in front of two empty chairs. As photographers took shots of the seats, Thompson announced his intention to issue subpoenas to compel the crashers' attendance at his next party.

Certainly, Emily Post would say that subpoenas are impolite.

It's hard to say whose behavior constituted the greatest breach of etiquette. The party crashers? Rogers, for declining to testify on grounds that answering questions about party guests would violate the Constitution? Or Thompson, for insisting on "full accountability" but then blocking a subpoena of Rogers, a central player in the drama?

"This hearing is not about crashing a party at the White House," the chairman said as he kicked off the party-crasher hearing. "Neither is it about wannabe celebrities or reality television." Growing more dramatic with each sentence, Thompson asserted that "we are all fortunate that this diplomatic celebration did not become a night of horror."

Night of horror? To be sure, the Secret Service and/or Rogers goofed in admitting the uninvited socialites, but lapses occur all the time; the author of this column, an obvious security risk, was once cleared to join a presidential motorcade and fly on Air Force One with no screening of person or luggage. The party crashers, though, "went through every layer of security," as Sullivan pointed out, and didn't pose "a risk to the president."

But lawmakers refused to accept this. Rep. Yvette Clarke (D-N.Y.) spoke about the Ukrainian president's dioxin poisoning and suggested the Salahis might have done the same to Obama, saying "we need to be reassured that we closed every possible loop of harm or danger to our president." Clarke then complained that "the Salahis were able to get into the White House with such ease, when I was basically detained by Secret Service just trying to get into Invesco Stadium" for the Democratic convention. (Maybe she was talking about dioxin then, too?)

After the requisite denunciation of the Secret Service's lapse, many members followed up with fond reminiscences of White House parties past. "I think I've been to over 40 of them," said King, "whether it's Christmas parties or barbecues, an occasional state dinner."

"It's been under three presidents that I've been going to the White House," announced Rep. Loretta Sanchez (D-Calif.).

"We're all going Monday night with guests," added Rep. Jane Harman (D-Calif.).

Assuming Desiree Rogers puts their names on the list.

LAWMAKER: PEOPLE QUESTIONED SALAHIS' PRESENCE AT STATE DINNER (HILL)

By Jordan Fabian

The Hill, December 4, 2009

Guests at the White House state dinner last Tuesday questioned if crashers Michael and Tareq Salahi should have been there, according to a Democratic lawmaker.

In an MSNBC interview on Thursday, Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) said that Michael Salahi's boisterous behavior at the event brought the attention of attendees of the dinner in honor of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

"She was moving around and everybody said, you know, asking the question, who was that?," he said.

Cummings said he saw the Virginia socialites before and during the dinner.

"Oh yeah. Oh, I saw them, talked to them," he said. "No she didn't hug me but she was the life of the party."

Asked to elaborate on the meaning of "life of the party," Cummings said "She acted as if she had 10 invitations."

House Homeland Security Committee chairman Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.) has threatened to compel the Salahis to testify before the panel via subpoena after they turned down his invitation on Wednesday. The committee is holding a hearing on the security breach today.

President Barack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden and other dignitaries snapped photos with the couple, some of which were posted to their Facebook site.

THE REAL WASHINGTON OF 2009 (USAT)

By Chuck Raasch, Gannett National Writer

USA Today, December 4, 2009

The couple that crashed a White House state dinner purportedly in search of "reality" show fame is the perfect symbol of modern Washington.

Fame trumps integrity and legacy. Spend like it's someone else's money. Let others suffer the consequences.

This is Washington in 2009, a city obsessed with personality and finger-pointing while piling trillions in debt on ensuing generations. That moral bankruptcy makes a mockery of two poseurs at the White House gates.

In the case of Tareq and Michaela Salahi, who allegedly talked their way through security at a recent state dinner, those suffering the consequences are the people they owe money to and the Secret Service agents who let them in.

Widespread media reports show that the Salahis have left a trail of unpaid or disputed bills. They include everything from vendors for a polo cup he helped found to a \$4,000 hairdresser's bill for her 2007 hair extensions. Tareq Salahi is in a bankruptcy battle with his parents over the family's Oasis Vineyards, according to media reports, leaving more unpaid debts.

Given all the problems facing this country, this couple's saga has already sucked up disproportionate attention, with congressional hearings and Secret Service investigations and the predictable media loop. All over a handshake with Barack Obama and a snapshot with smiling Joe Biden, neither who knew the couple. In this town, a picture can open a thousand doors.

On Thursday, the head of the Secret Service told a congressional committee that three agency employees were put on administrative leave with further punishment possible.

It is suspect that this problem begins and ends with the Secret Service. Anyone who has ever been at a White House function in this post-9/11 age knows that if you are not on The List you are not getting in. If the Salahis got inside help, that's a far more serious breach than frazzled security checkers on a rainy night, and more sad testament to the "reality" culture.

For weeks, it's been reported that the Salahis were among those vying to be cast on Bravo's "Real Housewives of D.C." Camera crews followed them to the gates of the White House before last month's state dinner with the Indian prime minister, and the Salahis later posted pictures from their visit on Facebook.

(Writer's privilege: "Reality" is in quotes because anyone who has ever seen one of these shows knows they are contrived, hyped and dramatized. Reality is a 20-year-old soldier sitting on an Afghanistan mountain or a 40-year-old, laid-off single mom wondering how she'll pay the bills.)

The Salahis denied they were gate-crashers.

"We were invited, not crashers, and there isn't anyone who would have the audacity or the poor behavior to do that," Michaela told NBC's Matt Lauer. "No one would do that, and certainly not us."

(NBC's parent company, NBC Universal, owns Bravo, which is producing the "reality" series.)

Our Thanksgiving table this year was graced by four young adults from 20-24, all full of life and possibility. Their government just committed 30,000 more soldiers from their generation to fight in Afghanistan on money their parents are borrowing to add to debt we are already piling on them.

That breach of inter-generational security should be the source of real outrage and shame.

Chuck Raasch writes from Washington for Gannett. Contact him at [craasch\(AT\)gannett.com](mailto:craasch(AT)gannett.com), follow him at <http://twitter.com/craasch> or join in the conversation at <http://www.facebook.com/raaschcolumn>.

POLITICAL ANALYST: BEAU BIDEN SHOULD BIDE HIS TIME (USAT)

By Eugene Kiely

USA Today, December 4, 2009

Political analyst Charlie Cook says Beau Biden -- the vice president's son -- should stay put as Delaware's attorney general rather than risk an embarrassing loss to Rep. Mike Castle in next year's Senate race.

Nicole Gaudiano, our colleague at Gannett Washington Bureau, reports that Cook's logic goes like this: Biden would face a tough race against

Castle and it would make more sense for the 40-year-old Democrat to wait. Castle, if he wins, may not run for reelection to the Senate in 2014 and Sen. Tom Carper may retire in 2012, Cook said.

"Beau Biden can walk into a Senate seat, absolutely without a scratch, within the next two or four years," Cook said. "Why does he want to run the risk of running against somebody who's got experience all over him in a Republican year? Why does he want to do this?"

The Wilmington News Journal reports today that Castle is leading Biden by 6 points in the latest poll, although the two have exchanged leads in previous polls. Castle has said he will run. Biden has not made a decision, but has said he is seriously considering running.

POLL SHOWS HEALTH CARE VOTE DIDN'T HURT CASTLE (HILL)

By Aaron Blake

The Hill, December 4, 2009

A new poll throws some water on the idea that Rep. Mike Castle (R-Del.) hurt his Senate prospects with his vote against the health care bill.

While Susquehanna showed Castle dropping behind Beau Biden (D) by five points after the vote, Public Policy Polling (PPP) today shows Castle holding steady with a 45-39 lead.

What's more, while Susquehanna speculated about the health care vote hurting Castle, the Democratic-leaning firm PPP actually tested the question. Turns out, more Delaware voters say they are opposed to the health care plan (46 percent) than support it (43 percent).

The poll, combined with Delaware Gov. Jack Markell's (D) comments this week, will give the GOP plenty of ammo to suggest that health care isn't even a winner in a 62 percent Obama state.

Castle remains popular among independents, carrying a 52-23 lead with that group, and he also takes 20 percent of Democrats.

Obama remains over 50 percent in the state, but he is down to 53 percent after polling in the 60s earlier this year. Nearly one-fifth of those who said they voted for Obama (18 percent) said they will back Castle in the Senate race.

Castle's favorability-unfavorability numbers (55-28) are also a good deal better than Biden's (43-35).

"Mike Castle has more appeal to Democrats and independents than any other Republican Senate candidate in the country, and that's allowing him to hold the early lead in this race," PPP President Dean Debnam said.

It's going to be very hard for any other Democrat to beat Castle, but Biden is taking his time in deciding on the race. There's been a lot of talk in recent days about Democrats retiring and dropping out of certain races, but if Biden opts not to run, that might be the biggest sign of trouble ahead for Democrats.

REPUBLICAN REVIVAL (WT)

By Donald Lambro

Washington Times, December 4, 2009

American politics passed the midpoint mark this week between the Republicans' 2008 losses and the 2010 midterm elections, when polls point to Republican Party gains in Congress and the governorships.

The Republican Party clearly has gotten its act together, mounting a united front in Congress against President Obama's fiscal and economic agenda, and gradually is winning back its rank-and-file base and winning support from the large bloc of independent swing voters who have been fleeing Mr. Obama in droves.

Republicans in both the House and Senate have come together to fight Mr. Obama's economic stimulus plan, his health care takeover, his energy tax proposals in the name of a fictitious climate change, and the rest of his big spending plans.

For anyone who came in late to this story, voters seem to be siding more with the Republicans on the big points than with Mr. Obama and the Democrats.

As the Senate began taking up the Democrats' health care bill this week, the Gallup Poll reported Monday that 49 percent of American voters said they

would urge their members of Congress to vote against the bill, while 44 percent said they would advise them to support it.

On the administration's irresponsible decision to bring Sept. 11, 2001, mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and four others to New York for a civilian criminal trial, Americans, by a lopsided 59 percent to 36 percent, say they should be tried in a military court for swift and certain justice.

Democratic leaders and rank-and-file lawmakers, who have been widely critical of Mr. Obama's decision to send more troops to Afghanistan, appear to be significantly out of sync with Americans on this score, too. Gallup found that nearly half of Americans polled (47 percent) support increasing the number of U.S. troops in the war against the Taliban. Thirty-nine percent want to reduce troop levels there.

Some big political movements are going against the Democrats on a number of fronts, as I've detailed in this column over the past several months.

But here in the nation's capital, the liberal Washington Post is finding it hard to recognize that. In a front-page story Monday, the Post ran another of its sweeping polling stories focusing on the irrelevant questions and avoiding the harder ones.

Under the headline "A party both united and divided," the story said the Republican Party's "opposition to Obama is strong" (no kidding), "but Republicans are split on GOP's direction and leaders."

Its analytical spin on the poll's findings, the Post reported, "reveals deep dissatisfaction among GOP voters with the party's leadership as well as ideological and generational differences that may prove big obstacles to the party's plans for reclaiming power."

The story was based in part on a key polling question that asked, "In your view, is the leadership of the Republican party currently taking the party in the right direction or in the wrong direction?" Well, nearly half, 49 percent, said "right direction," while 42 percent said "wrong direction."

Had it asked more specifically whether the party's leadership against the stimulus spending bill was the right or wrong direction, or opposition to the health care bill or to the energy bill, the answers would have been lopsided in favor of the Republican leadership.

In an attempt to prove that Republican voters were divided, the Post asked which Republican leader best reflected the Republican Party's "core values." The results were predictably divided, with a large "no opinion" - as one would expect them to be nearly three years before the 2012 elections, and as they were for the Democrats in 2005.

You would search in vain in this story to find any polling evidence that Americans are almost evenly divided over which party they would support in next year's congressional midterms (as Gallup and other polls have reported).

The Post poll notwithstanding, voters are telling other pollsters that they are not happy with their Democratic leadership. Connecticut Sen. Christopher J. Dodd is in deep trouble in his re-election bid. Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid, if the election were held today, would be sent home. Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s former Senate seat in Delaware is a possible Republican pickup.

The political climate has changed dramatically in a number of Democratic-trending states as voters have turned sour on the majority party's handling of the economy, spending and a monstrous debt that threatens to sandbag the nation's fiscal stability and global credit.

For example: The Columbus Dispatch reported last month that Ohio is turning a "reddish tinge," and it wasn't talking about its autumn colors.

Polls were showing that Republicans were threatening to take back the state's governorship and hold an open Senate seat. A Quinnipiac poll of 1,123 voters found that half said they disapproved of the job Mr. Obama was doing, up from 42 percent in September.

The Nov. 11 poll found that a stunning 64 percent of Ohioans are either somewhat or very dissatisfied with the way Democrats are handling things in the Buckeye State.

"The Democratic lead in the governors' and Senate races has evaporated, and for the first time, President Barack Obama is under water in the most important swing state in the country," said Quinnipiac polling analyst Peter

Brown.

The run-up to next year's midterm elections is a work in progress, but it's increasingly clear that the Republican Party is slowly gaining political strength and the Democrats are losing it.

Donald Lambro is chief political correspondent for The Washington Times.

CENTRISTS' DAY BAYH, GRAHAM, LUGAR TO W.H. (POL)

By Alexander Burns

Politico, December 4, 2009

Following one of the most anticipated speeches of his presidency Tuesday night, President Barack Obama is sequestered Wednesday in meetings with aides and lawmakers, including two of the Senate's most prominent centrists. At 3:25 p.m., he meets with Sen. Evan Bayh (D-Ind.), before sitting down with Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) 45 minutes later.

Graham's office pointed to a Nov. 13 statement in which Graham said about the decision to try the Sept. 11 suspects in New York, "I have been asked by the White House to withhold comment about today's Guantanamo decision until I can meet face to face with the president after he returns from Asia. As our commander in chief, I will honor his request. I look forward to discussing this issue further." Vice President Joe Biden, meanwhile, meets with Senate Foreign Relations Committee ranking member Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) at 3 p.m. to discuss arms control. The talk is not about Afghanistan but is a rescheduled meeting from a couple of weeks ago, a Lugar spokesman said.

OBAMA FAMILY LIGHTS NATIONAL CHRISTMAS TREE (AP)

By Christine Simmons, The Associated Press

AP, December 4, 2009

WASHINGTON -- Surrounded by celebrity performers and characters from the North Pole, the Obama family on Thursday led a countdown and lighted the National Christmas Tree.

First lady Michelle Obama and daughters Malia and Sasha helped President Barack Obama press a button to light the tree, an annual tradition since the 1920s. "I'm technologically challenged and I might not get this right," the president joked. "Everybody has got to help me out here."

The Obamas and the spectators counted down from five, and the red and yellow lights came alive on the 40-foot Colorado blue spruce growing on the Ellipse, just south of the White House. "It worked," Obama shouted.

After the lighting, Sheryl Crow, who performed at some of Obama's inaugural festivities, sang "Jingle Bell Rock." Hip hop artist Common rapped as a children's group sang. "American Idol" winner Jordin Sparks dazzled onlookers bundled in coats and scarves.

"I told Sasha we're not on 'American Idol,'" the president said about his 8-year-old daughter, who sat on his lap during part of the event. The Obama family and Vice President Joe Biden and his grandchildren watched from seats beside the stage, behind a clear protective shielding.

Mrs. Obama sat on stage and read "The Night Before Christmas" as children in knit hats and mittens surrounded her.

The characters Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus also joined the celebration, saying it was their "date night."

"You two know what we're talking about," Mrs. Claus told the Obamas, referring to the couple's nights out on the town together. The president later met Santa Claus on stage and briefly danced with him.

Before the tree was lit, Obama said the Christmas story is a Christian one but its lesson is universal.

"It represents a tradition that we celebrate as a country - a tradition that has come to represent more than any one holiday or religion, but a season of brotherhood and generosity to our fellow citizens," he said.

He said it's important to remember those who have lost their jobs and homes in this season as well as military service members and their families who are apart during the holidays. "We will be thinking of you and praying for you during this holiday season," he said.

Every president has presided over the tree lighting since Calvin Coolidge in 1923. The current National Christmas Tree was planted on the

Ellipse in 1978.

The tree lighting begins several weeks of holiday celebration in the nation's capital. Musical entertainment such as choirs, bands and dancers will be held nightly on the Ellipse stage during December, according to the National Park Service.

DEMOCRAT DROPS OUT OF ILLINOIS TREASURER'S RACE (CHIT)

By Rick Pearson

Chicago Tribune, December 4, 2009

Mark Doyle, a longtime veteran of the Illinois political scene, gave up his bid today to stay on the Feb. 2 Democratic ballot for state treasurer after concluding too little time remained to fight a petition challenge that left him with too few valid signatures.

Doyle's withdrawal leaves the Democratic primary fight to Robin Kelly, a former state lawmaker and current chief of staff in the state treasurer's office, and Justin Oberman, son of former Chicago Ald. Martin Oberman.

Doyle, a Chicagoan, previously worked in the Clinton White House and also was part of the 2008 presidential campaign team of then-Sen. Joseph Biden and later helped Biden's transition to the vice presidency.

Chung, Kathy S. EOP/OVP

07 Mar 2016 16:30:03

To: Jill Biden, hbiden@rosemontseneca.com", "abiden@dcjustice.org", [personal email address], "Gitenstein, Mark H., [personal email address], "Ricchetti, Steven, Mackler, Alexander, hurricane5155@gmail.com", "Mel Monzack, Ricchetti, Steven, >", "Mackler, Alexander
Cc: Bernal, Anthony R., Muldoon, Anne Marie, Person, Anne, >", "Bernal, Anthony R.
Bcc:
[personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 09:51:23 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

"Molly Magarik" [personal email address]

13 May 2014 13:55:56

To: Jim Smith, Valerie Biden Owens, Hunter Biden,
Kaufman Ted [personal email address]", "Mike Donilon [personal email address]", "Hoffman, Alan {PEP}, Ricchetti, Steven,
Ricchetti, Steven

Cc:

Bcc:

Fwd: [personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Mon Apr 01 10:23:56 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Mackler, Alexander S. EOP/OVP

27 May 2016 18:18:47

To: hbiden@rosemontseneca.com

Cc: Anthony Bernal [personal email address], "Jill Tracy, Flynn, John, Chung, Kathy, Beau and Hallie Biden [personal email address], "Ethan Rosensweig, Bernal, Anthony, Bernal, Anthony R., >", "Chung, Kathy, >", "Flynn, John

Bcc:

RE: [personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 10:52:37 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Mackler, Alexander S. EOP/OVP

27 May 2016 18:13:50

To: hbiden@rosemontseneca.com

Cc: Anthony Bernal [personal email address], "Jill Tracy, Flynn, John, Chung, Kathy, Beau and Hallie Biden [personal email address], "Ethan Rosensweig, Bernal, Anthony, Bernal, Anthony R., >", "Chung, Kathy, >", "Flynn, John

Bcc:

RE: [personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 10:42:51 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Mackler, Alexander

07 Jun 2015 16:52:01

To: rhb@rspdc.com

Cc:

Bcc:

These are all cell numbers.

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Fri Jul 26 11:16:13 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

P6,b(6)

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Person, Fran

Fri, 04 Dec 2009 08:41:31 -0500

To: amperson@rosemontseneca.com

Bcc: amperson@rosemontseneca.com

Re: Vice Presidential News Clips for Friday, December 4, 2009

You too, rie! I love you.

December 10th at 6:30pm is the WH open house

----- Original Message -----

From: Anne Marie Person <amperson@rosemontseneca.com>

To: Person, Fran

Sent: Fri Dec 04 08:39:51 2009

Subject: RE: Vice Presidential News Clips for Friday, December 4, 2009

Thanks Fran! Hope you have a good Friday :)

-----Original Message-----

From: Person, Fran [mailto:Fran_Person@ovp.eop.gov]

Sent: Friday, December 04, 2009 8:08 AM

To: amperson@rosemontseneca.com

Subject: Fw: Vice Presidential News Clips for Friday, December 4, 2009

----- Original Message -----

From: Bulletin News <VP-Editors@BulletinNews.com>

To: Alexander, Elizabeth

Cc: Escudero, Adrian V.; Hoffman, Alan L.; Tomasini, AnnMarie; Bernal, Anthony R.; Blinken, Antony J.; Woyak, Brian J.; McKeon, Brian P.; Russell, Catherine M.; O'Donnell, Courtney; Hogan, Cynthia C.; Martens, Donald R.; Hire, Elisabeth; Oxhorn, Elizabeth A.; Allen, Elizabeth M.; Ryan, Evan M.; Person, Fran; Ziskend, Herbert M.; Carney, James F.; Bernstein, Jared; DeGraaf, Jason P.; O'Connor, Kevin C; White, Kirsten B.; membersOVPVPMILAIDE@whmo.mil <membersOVPVPMILAIDE@whmo.mil>; Donilon, Michael C.; Smith, Michele; Vela, Moises V.; Orloff, Nancy; Isaac, Nicole M.; Selfridge, Peter A.; Bleshman, Rachel; Klain, Ronald A.; Swan, Ryan S.; Fletcher, Sarah; Rosenthal, Sarah L.; Hawkins, Stacey T.; Henry, Sudafi; McSweeney, Terrell P.; McNulty, Thomas P.; Dirksen, Ward F.

Sent: Fri Dec 04 05:44:29 2009

Subject: Vice Presidential News Clips for Friday, December 4, 2009

TO: THE VICE PRESIDENT AND STAFF

DATE: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2009 -- 6:15 AM EST

-----TODAY'S EDITION-----

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL STORIES:

- + Political Expert To Beau Biden: Stay Put For Now (WILNJ)
- + Mike Castle Regains Lead Over Beau Biden In Latest Senate Poll (WILNJ)
- + Joblessness Plagues Delaware Economy (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Energy: Markell Asks Feds To Back Wind Permits (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Environment: Law Promotes A Plan To A Plastic Problem (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Business: Economy Slows Middletown's Westtown (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Business: Promenade Site Up For Sale Again (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Businesses Now Able To File Withholding Taxes Online (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Crime: Man Gets Counterfeit Bills From Teller (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Crime: Iranian Arms Dealer Is Harmless, His Attorney Says (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Health: Access To Swine Flu Vaccine Expanded (WILNJ)

- + Delaware Health: Celebrity Hoops Game To Follow HIV Forum For Kids (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Researchers Find A Treasure: A Letter From Thomas Jefferson (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Schools: Wide-eyed And Hands-on, Teens Get A Special Lesson (WILNJ)
- + Delaware Crime: Two Arrested In Connection With Bank Heist (WILNJ)

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL EDITORIALS:

- + Wilmington Council Should Try Again On Anti-loitering Proposal (WILNJ)
- + Jobs Are Too Important To Be Left To The Posturing Of Politicians (WILNJ)

BIDEN IN THE NEWS:

- + Obama: Will Take Every Responsible Step To Create Jobs (DJ)
- + Tony Fratto: Job Creation Honesty Is Job One (CNBC)
- + Obama Bemoans Desperation Of People Out Of Work (AP)
- + CBS: Obama-Jobs Summit.
- + NBC: Obama-Jobs Summit.
- + Afghanistan: Can Obama Sell America On This War? (TIME)
- + Obama Homed In On An Afghanistan Pullout Date (LAT)
- + Biden Appeals To Left On Afghan Policy: 'Clean Break' From Bush (WSJ)
- + Obama's Anti-MacArthur Moment (CBS)
- + Obama's Afghan War Decision: A Team Of Rivals (NPR)
- + Did The Stimulus Stimulate? (FORBES)
- + Administration Goes After Noncompliant Recovery Act Recipients (GOVEXEC)
- + Wheeling Officials Part Of Conference Call With Vice President Biden (WTOV)
- + 3 Secret Service Officers Put On Leave In White House Gate-Crashing (NYT)
- + Secret Service Takes Blame For White House Party Crashers (MCT)
- + Secret Service Officers In Gate-Crash Put On Leave (Update3) (BLOOM)
- + Republican And Democratic Not The Parties They Had In Mind (WP)
- + Lawmaker: People Questioned Salahis' Presence At State Dinner (HILL)
- + The Real Washington Of 2009 (USAT)
- + Political Analyst: Beau Biden Should Bide His Time (USAT)
- + Poll Shows Health Care Vote Didn't Hurt Castle (HILL)
- + Republican Revival (WT)
- + Centrists' Day Bayh, Graham, Lugar To W.H. (POL)
- + Obama Family Lights National Christmas Tree (AP)
- + Democrat Drops Out Of Illinois Treasurer's Race (CHIT)

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL STORIES:

POLITICAL EXPERT TO BEAU BIDEN: STAY PUT FOR NOW (WILNJ)

By Nicole Gaudiano, News Journal Washington Bureau
Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

WASHINGTON - One of the nation's top political analysts says Beau Biden should take a pass on the 2010 special election to fill the remaining four years of his father's Senate term.

Instead, he should wait until he's a shoo-in for a Senate seat representing Delaware, said Charlie Cook, editor and publisher of The Cook Political Report.

Beau Biden, 40, Delaware's attorney general, has said he is considering a run for the seat his father Joe Biden, gave up to become vice president. His opponent next year would be GOP Rep. Mike Castle, 70, who is serving his ninth term in the House.

Cook said there's a 95 percent chance Castle wouldn't run for re-election to the Senate seat in 2014, if he wins it next year. In addition, he said, Democratic Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del., may retire in 2012 (Carper has said he will run for re-election).

"Beau Biden can walk into a Senate seat, absolutely without a scratch, within the next two or four years," Cook said at a briefing today. "Why does he want to run the risk of running against somebody who's got experience all

over him in a Republican year? Why does he want to do this?"

The Cook Political Report says next year's election is one of six Senate "toss-up" races that either party has a good chance of winning.

Cook said he's never met Beau Biden and isn't predicting he won't run.

"If he's anything like his father, he will definitely run," he said.

"But if I were him I would not run."

If Biden does run, his race against Castle will be "an epic battle," said Jennifer Duffy said.

Castle, a well-known moderate, has "no learning curve" and will run a good campaign, she said. And Biden would have "every resource he could ever hope for and more," Duffy said

"It's tied," she said of the hypothetical race. "It's going to stay tied."

MIKE CASTLE REGAINS LEAD OVER BEAU BIDEN IN LATEST SENATE POLL (WILNJ)

By Cris Barrish, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 3, 2009

Another week brings another poll in the presumed U.S. Senate race, and this time Mike Castle is back on top.

The latest in what will likely become a merry-go-round of polls pit U.S. Rep. Castle, who has announced his candidacy, against Attorney General Beau Biden -- who has only said he is seriously considering a run -- for the post Biden's father surrendered in January to become vice president.

This survey, conducted from Monday through Wednesday, found Castle on top by 6 percentage points - 45 percent to 39 percent - with 16 percent undecided.

Castle, a former two-term governor and nine-term U.S. representative, has been the favored candidate in four other independent polls made public since March. The only exception was a two-question survey released in November that showed Biden ahead by 5 points.

The newest, more-thorough poll was conducted by the Raleigh, N.C.-based Public Policy Polling. That firm routinely works for Democratic candidates across the nation but did this survey for neither Democrat Biden nor Republican Castle - nor for either of their parties or any partisan special interest group.

Pollsters surveyed 571 registered Delaware voters who voted in at least one of the last three general elections. Castle's favorable-unfavorable rating was 55 percent-28 percent, much stronger than Biden's 43 percent-35 percent rating.

Tom Jensen, the pollster's spokesman, said Castle's no vote on President Barack Obama's health care plan didn't seem to hurt him, as was speculated after the November poll. That's because 46 percent of the Delaware voters surveyed opposed the House bill, while only 43 percent approved. In addition, the voters weren't anti-Obama -- they supported him 55 percent to 37 percent over John McCain in the 2008 president election.

Stay tuned. While it's not a done deal that Biden will enter the race, one thing is certain: If he does, the polls will keep coming and coming and coming.

JOBLESSNESS PLAGUES DELAWARE ECONOMY (WILNJ)

By Jeff Montgomery, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

One year into his search for a job, New Castle resident Terrance Dendy says state and federal governments need to do something -- anything -- to get people back to work.

"I took an electrician class and tried to get an apprenticeship with a union, but it hasn't been working out," said Dendy, who had previously worked as a construction flagger. "They should give some of these companies help, so they can get back up operating and start hiring people."

Although many economists see signs of a weak recovery, unemployment remains stubbornly high nationwide and in Delaware, which has lost two big car plants and Valero's Delaware City Refinery in the past year

President Obama and top administration officials spent much of the day Thursday huddled with some of the nation's top employers and business and

political leaders, groping for solutions. Options now under consideration around the country range from a second stimulus program to temporary tax cuts -- even direct jobs programs.

Delaware's unemployment rate continues upward from an 8.7 percent rate set in October. Counting under-employed and discouraged job-seekers, unemployment in Delaware was 13.5 percent for the year ending Sept. 30, according to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Gov. Jack Markell says creating jobs is his top priority, also.

"I think, most importantly, people in my shoes have to put ourselves in the shoes of people who create jobs and prosperity in the first place," Markell said after a speech before the American Wind Energy Association in Boston. "One thing I've heard in Delaware and one of the things I've heard from other governors is, people are having difficulty getting access to credit."

Delaware officials have sunk some of their hopes in the state's "Limited Investment for Financial Traction" (LIFT) loan program for the small businesses that account for much of the state's employment. The program offers 7-year, no-interest loans with complete payment deferrals for the first two years.

Markell said the state also is working to attract new businesses, reduce time-consuming and costly paperwork burdens for companies, and to improve the educational system and community resources that attract both employers and new workers alike.

Progress has been slow, however, despite the recent announcement that Fisker Automotive will begin making electric cars at the former General Motors Boxwood Road plant, potentially creating thousands of jobs.

And there are no obvious solutions.

"In general, for the overall economy, it's easier said than done," said James L. Butkiewicz, a professor with the University of Delaware's Alfred Lerner College of Business & Economics. "Getting businesses confident that there will be a market for things they do is not easy. Everyone right now seems reluctant to spend."

Butkiewicz said he was worried by seemingly permanent losses and shrinkage in the state's mainstay industries, including financial services and manufacturing.

"I don't see anything picking up the slack," Butkiewicz said.

Carl Warren, one of the owners of Bluchill, a maker of custom industrial process chillers in New Castle, said officials should consider easing taxes for employers.

Business has been tight, Warren added, but the relatively new company actually hired another person this year, pushing company employment to five full-time and two part-time workers.

"I think it's turning around," Warren said. "Everyone we talk to out there is seeing some kind of turnaround. I think a tax holiday would be a good idea. They need to ease some of the financial burdens on business. That would be a kick start, it would free up enough money for me to possibly put another employee out there to take more orders."

John Stapleford, an economist with Moody's Economy.com, said Delaware's Economic Development Office appears to be on the right track with its focus on small business, and said that the White House effort Thursday was weakened by its big business emphasis.

"The comings and goings, births and deaths, expansions and contractions of small business is where an awful lot of the action in an economy comes from," Stapleford said. "It's the way an economy restructures itself in response to changing conditions in supply and demand."

Yet Delaware's economy faces a long, slow crawl back, Stapleford said, with recovery to pre-recession employment levels expected to take more than three years, until the first quarter of 2013.

It was a gloomy forecast for Nick Biordi of Wilmington, now looking for work as an electrician or graphics designer after losing a job with a cousin's company nearly a year ago.

"Everything they're talking about to create jobs totally makes sense," Biordi said, "but it's totally dry out there right now. I just need to get working again now. It seems like the renovations are starting to come back

in the construction industry, but not the new construction yet."

Brian Selander, Markell's spokesman, said the governor spends several hours a week talking with business owners and managers about ways the state can help. About a third of the state's revenues are tied to taxes and fees paid by corporations with work forces in other states, however, making the success of national stimulus efforts crucial.

"The health of the national economy impacts Delaware's budget, and Delaware's budget impacts our ability to provide the kinds of services that businesses like to see in order to create jobs," Selander said.

Stapleford said temporary tax holidays or short-term measures won't be enough.

"This tinkering type of stuff, a one-year tax break or giving people credit for hiring, all it does is create a blip. It doesn't change the long-term path," Stapleford said. "You have to look at things that will have longer-term consequences."

In New Castle, Dendy worried Thursday about more immediate concerns.

"I've had to struggle. My stepfather and I started landscaping, cutting grass in yards and lots and churches just to make ends meet. That was more like a summer thing and it's over," Dendy said. "Now we're looking at winter."

DELAWARE ENERGY: MARKELL ASKS FEDS TO BACK WIND PERMITS (WILNJ)

By Aaron Nathans, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

BOSTON -- Speaking to a wind industry trade group Thursday, <http://www.state.de.us/governor/>>Gov. Jack Markell urged federal agencies to speed the permitting of offshore wind farms so construction can begin on schedule.

But one federal official key to the permitting process said there's value to being more methodical.

Markell's address kicked off the second day of the <http://www.awea.org/>>American Wind Energy Association's offshore wind workshop. He spoke to more than 700 developers, interest groups, vendors, academics and others who gathered to discuss the future of the growing industry.

The interest in offshore wind is bolstered by the recent popularity of renewable energy as a tool to fight global warming. Developers like NRG-Bluewater Wind, which is planning a project east of Rehoboth Beach, are looking to build their wind farms close to eastern population centers.

But hurdles remain, and one of the primary ones is getting federal permits needed to build. The <http://www.mms.gov/>>Minerals Management Service, an arm of the Department of the Interior, recently released long-awaited federal rules for offshore wind farms.

Now it's a matter of the first offshore wind projects actually going through the permitting process. That includes securing a formal lease on an ocean tract, and performing an environmental assessment.

Markell noted that he met with Minerals Management officials in October to discuss coordination among developers, the state and the dozen federal agencies that have roles in permitting offshore wind projects.

Markell praised the Obama administration for getting the rules out so quickly after taking office, coming after years of delay.

Markell called those developments "promising, but we need to do much more. A two-year competitive lease process is too long." Markell said the process must be "streamlined and efficient."

"If we are to begin installation by 2012 or 2013, we need to expedite all regulatory processes," Markell said. "Time is of the essence."

NRG-Bluewater officials have said their target date for starting to generate electricity, 2013, could be pushed back if there are delays in obtaining federal permits. They have also said the longer it takes to begin construction, the harder it becomes for the project to qualify for federal assistance such as loan guarantees.

Maureen Bornholdt, Minerals Management Service program manager for the Office of Offshore Alternative Energy Programs, said she wasn't sure how long the permitting and leasing process will take. The agency has an

obligation to complete all of the requirements set out in the rules, she said. That includes public comment periods, she said.

She said that the wind turbines would likely be in place for 25-30 years, and that warrants a "thoughtful, thorough" environmental analysis.

"How many times have we ever started from nothing? We have rules in place. Now we have to employ them and use them," Bornholdt said. "It's like getting on a bike. The first time it's a little wobbly."

During his address, Markell urged other states to create financial incentives to help build the offshore wind industry. The supporting manufacturing businesses won't show up until there's a critical mass, he said.

"It's going to take much more than a quarter-gigawatt contract in Delaware and a few potential projects of a few hundred megawatts. We need to ensure a steady stream of projects, year after year, and we need to drive down prices through creative financial and policy mechanisms," Markell said.

DELAWARE ENVIRONMENT: LAW PROMOTES A PLAN TO A PLASTIC PROBLEM (WILNJ)

By J.I. Miller, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

Betty Ronston finally got tired of those plastic grocery bags that have a way of piling up in storage drawers or kitchen closets.

"I've thrown so many away, and I know they're in the landfill a long time, and that bothers me because I've got grandkids," Ronston said Thursday as she left the Dover Super Fresh store.

Ronston now totes her groceries in two colorful reusable bags, doing her bit to reduce her environmental footprint.

That's just what Bear Democrat Rep. Valerie Longhurst wanted to encourage when she sponsored legislation to require larger stores to set up recycling containers and sell reusable bags. The law took effect Tuesday.

"You see more and more people out there with canvas bags," Longhurst said.

And yet even Ronston still has a surplus of plastic bags, which have an ability to seemingly multiply on their own.

"I've got one of those storage things. [The bags] are handy -- but I've got too many," she said.

Dover resident June Butler said she reuses her bags by putting her trash in them.

"I've seen where you can deposit them [in store recycling bins] and I might start doing that," Butler said. "I don't really need that many of them for my trash."

The law affects stores with at least 7,000 square feet of retail sales space or chains of three or more stores with at least 3,000 square feet of retail space each. It applies not only to grocery stores but to other retailers as well.

Most bills that make it to the governor's desk are the result of compromise, and this one was no exception. If Longhurst had her way, plastic bags would be banned -- but she knew that wouldn't sail politically.

So Longhurst worked with the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce to craft legislation that could pass.

"They all were in agreement on it," she said.

It is uncertain, though, just how much of an impact the new law will have.

An informal check of a number of Delaware grocery stores this week showed that all were in compliance with the law the day it took effect -- and had been for some time.

Indeed, most grocery chains trumpet their environmental efforts. Acme Markets and its parent company, for example, report that the company has recycled 11.5 million pounds of plastic bags and wrap.

Whether shoppers will actually use the new state-mandated service also remains to be seen, particularly in communities with convenient recycling programs already in place.

"I didn't know they had a bin here," shopper Monica Edwards said as she loaded bags of groceries into the trunk of her car at the Super Fresh. The store's recycling barrel is in a prominent spot inside the entrance.

"I usually either use them for trash bags or I put them in the recycling bin thing," Edwards said, referring to Dover's curbside recycling system. She said she'd probably continue to recycle the bags at home rather than take them back to the store.

Frederica resident Jane Jones is another shopper who's unlikely to use the store bins. She takes her bags to the recycle bins near the Town Hall -- and she finds uses for the ones she doesn't immediately recycle.

"We use them to bring vegetables in from the garden," she said.

But some people obviously are returning their bags. On Tuesday the bag bin at the nearby Food Lion market was filled almost to overflowing.

Even if the law's impact is open to debate, Longhurst said she expects it to be as much about consciousness-raising as it is about recycling.

"I think it raises awareness about what plastic bags do to the environment," Longhurst said

There is no debate that plastic bags wind up as unsightly litter, scattered on roadsides or snagged in tree limbs.

But the extent of the problem -- and even the number of bags produced each year -- are in dispute.

Longhurst's legislation states that an estimated 500 billion to 1 trillion bags are used worldwide. But the International Trade Commission reported in 2003 that Americans used just 87.5 billion bags.

The bill also states that the bags cause "the deaths of thousands of marine and land animals through ingestion and entanglement." But the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has debunked a commonly quoted statistic that 100,000 marine mammals or sea turtles die yearly due to plastic bags and plastic debris.

"We were able to find no information to support this statement," the agency stated.

Environment Australia, that nation's counterpart to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, said the erroneous statistic was published in a 2002 study. The report was corrected in 2006.

Supermarkets haven't really needed a state mandate to recycle plastic bags. Stores sell the bags to recyclers who, depending on the commodities market, pay up to \$500 a ton for them.

"It certainly helps to offset the costs," said Jennifer Killinger, spokeswoman for the American Chemistry Council.

The industry-funded council lobbies against plastic-bag bans and taxes, and helped bankroll the successful effort to defeat a Seattle ballot initiative this summer that would have slapped a 20-cent tax on plastic and paper bags. It supports legislation such as Longhurst's.

Supermarkets are experts in distribution of goods, Killinger said, so sending the recyclable material to a buyer is not an undue burden.

Most of the bags are recycled into composite lumber products such as Trex, while others are made back into bags. Some even become plastic shopping carts.

"What's getting left out of a lot of the [news] coverage from the consumer aspect, there are all sorts of materials that can be recycled every day. Dry cleaning bags, it's the exact same material. Newspaper bags, the wraps that come around bathroom tissue ... it's all polyethylene film," Killinger said.

In 2007, the most recent year for which figures are available, U.S. recycling efforts resulted in the recovery of an estimated 830 million pounds of post-consumer polyethylene film, including plastic bags.

Although Longhurst would like to see the bags banned, mandating recycling bins and encouraging the use of reusable bags is a good first step, she said.

"You have to crawl before you walk," she said.

DELAWARE BUSINESS: ECONOMY SLOWS MIDDLETOWN'S WESTOWN (WILNJ)

By Robin Brown And Ginger Gibson, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

Chasity Washington of Townsend had high hopes for the vast tract of farmland west of Middletown when developers three years ago unveiled their vision for Westown.

More than 2,000 acres straddling U.S. 301 would one day host 3 million square feet of retail and office space, more than 3,000 homes, two new schools and a large town park.

The vision was more tangible for Washington and other residents. Stores such as Walmart, Target, Home Depot and Kohl's and a movie theater meant no more long drives to Dover or Glasgow for shopping or entertainment.

It hasn't happened yet -- at least, most of it hasn't.

Walmart, Kohl's, Lowes and Home Depot are open today, but Target and a movie multiplex are still just concepts.

Unfinished developments and empty business lots are common sites along Bunker Hill and Middletown Warwick roads. Wooden signs announce coming projects. They also advertise available space -- lots of available space.

Developers talked of a 10-year build-out back in 2005, but today, Rick Woodin acknowledges the recession has slowed the project, even as he affirms his commitment to Westown.

He said Woodin + Associates is running a few hundred housing units and about 100,000 square feet of retail space behind what they had hoped to have in place by now.

"We have to wait. We have to be patient," he said.

Washington and others say they understand. As she filled a cart at Walmart, she said she has been thrilled by Westown's progress, calling economy-related delays "understandable." She said she still looks forward to future additions.

"That will be wonderful when they open," she said. "We won't have to drive so far."

Kristen Krenzer, spokeswoman for Middletown, said the city has received notice of only one abandoned project during the recession -- the proposed Promenade on Main Street that would have included 273 condominiums above an assortment of retail shops and a movie multiplex.

"Everybody is kind of watching and waiting, and we just have to wait until they [Woodin] feel bold enough to take a step forward," Krenzer said.

Neither town officials nor Woodin would speculate about a possible completion date for the Westown project and related road improvements, once expected to be finished next year.

"Everyone feels the economy," said Woodin, whose other Middletown-area projects include the Parkside, Back Creek and Westside Hunt residential developments. "As every month goes by, the signs are getting better" for the economy.

Brian Arnold, who owns U.S. Male Modern Barbershop along U.S. 301, said business hasn't been hurt by the development slowdown.

"There's definitely a lot of room for growth," the 23-year-old said as he worked on a customer Thursday evening. "I definitely see a lot of improvement in the next couple of years."

An area hit hard

The economic slump hit the area south of the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal particularly hard.

Concerns about fuel prices started a slide in housing prices 18 months ago that accelerated as the market went bad.

The number of homes sold there dropped 37 percent between 2007 and 2008, compared with 29 percent in the rest of New Castle County, according to Prudential Fox & Roach's analysis.

Middletown-area houses spent an average 98 days on the market last year, a 56 percent increase from 2007 and a month longer than most of those in the rest of New Castle County. In the Smyrna area, sales volume dropped 24 percent and the median price dropped 10 percent.

Construction slowed markedly, contributing to a rapid deceleration in the growth that had swelled Middletown's population from 6,200 in 2000 to 14,500 today as town officials annexed open land and commuters flocked to the McMansions popping up on former corn and soybean fields.

Middletown's comprehensive plan projected the bedroom community's population could reach 30,000 by 2020 if growth continued -- and Westown was a big part of those projections.

But the project also offered something more -- a mix of retail stores and office space along with a mixture of new housing ranging from duplexes

and condos along Bunker Hill Road, to luxury single-family homes at the Estates at St. Anne's along Levels Road.

Woodin planned a town center style community just north of Levels Road with a mix of houses and shopping.

Developers came together with city leaders and state transportation officials to construct a comprehensive master plan for the project's land use, road improvements and amenities.

Even residents who had opposed what they saw as runaway growth fed by annexation came to support a plan that would also bring commerce, jobs and infrastructure improvements.

Chuck Mulholland, president of the Southern New Castle County Alliance, said the new commercial retailers would be welcome for the tax base and provide some relief to the Appoquinimink School District, which had been flooded with new students by the housing boom.

"You really need a commercial tax base to offset the houses being dropped into the Appoquinimink School District," Mulholland said.

The Westown project contributed 200 acres at Bunker Hill and Choptank roads for construction of a new high school and elementary school, now both completed.

State Rep. S. Quinton Johnson, D-Middletown, sees the biggest advantage coming not from property taxes, but from jobs for area residents.

"Anything that is going to bring new jobs to the state I think is a welcome issue," Johnson said.

Woodin said the slowdown won't change that aspect, and the project still will deliver both short-term construction jobs and long-term retail jobs.

"While the state has surely taken a few large hits in the employment sector, there recently has been significant positive developments that should allow for the wounds to begin healing," Woodin said.

Looking to the future

Woodin said he is confident the economy will begin to heal in 2010 and thinks residents will see building pick up in Westown.

A new 14,000-square-foot Walgreen's store recently opened across U.S. 301 from Home Depot and Woodin said the firm is planning to start Phase 1 of the 150,000-square-foot Town Center retail project nearby as early as this winter.

"We are currently also in discussions with several tenants for approximately 60,000 square feet of retail space between the Kohl's and Walmart," he said.

Housing construction continues at the Parkway and Spring Arbor 55+ project off of Bunker Hill Road and Woodin said he expects the Westown residential community along Levels Road will break ground in the spring.

The attempt to bring a movie theater to Westown -- Middletown has no first-run, multiscreen cinema -- remains part of the plan, although it still is just a concept.

"We don't have the movie theater deal in place yet," but an agreement "is only a matter of time," Woodin said.

A Target deal also remains a goal.

"We have agreed with Target to sit tight until the overall economy improves and becomes predictably stable," Woodin said. "I would suggest that our discussion with them will renew in mid-2010. At that time we will be able to better assess whether Target is coming."

Other high-profile parts of the Westown Master Plan are on shakier ground, including several planned hotels and what was to be an "auto mall" featuring several car dealerships on a large parcel on the east side of U.S. 301 across from Kohl's.

That project was planned by the Silicato Development Group and officials and observers say it may not come to fruition because of the deep auto industry slump. Silicato officials did not return phone calls this week.

Krenzer said the Walmart has been well-received, a sign Woodin reads as an affirmation of the strategy behind the master plan.

"We wouldn't trade our Middletown location for any other location in the state for a project like Westown," he said. "The area is ideally located to support a large growth area and the retail needs are currently undeserved."

The construction slowdown has had one beneficial effect -- the roads

needed to support traffic from development now will be in place before the project is fully built.

DelDOT last summer began work on two miles of U.S. 301 directly related to Westown from Levels Road north to Doc Levinson Drive. The dualization of U.S. 301 is nearly finished, Bunker Hill Road has been rebuilt, the Merrimac Avenue connector road has been constructed and reconstruction of Levels Road, with a new railroad bridge, is expected to be finished by the end of 2010.

Many of the project's interior roads also are finished and residential areas' infrastructure construction have kept pace with development, Woodin said.

Mullholland said the road improvements are a step toward alleviating traffic congestion in the area.

"Traffic out there is onerous at best," Mullholland said. "But they are making an effort."

Westown business owners said they remain optimistic.

"Honestly, the original plan was probably a little too fast with everything coming in," said 55-year-old Steve Ridenour, who owns the Play N Trade video game shop off Middletown Warwick Road. "So I honestly didn't expect it to be that fast."

DELAWARE BUSINESS: PROMENADE SITE UP FOR SALE AGAIN (WILNJ)

By Robin Brown, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

One clear casualty of the economic downturn in the Middletown area is the much-promoted Promenade project -- a mixed-use complex planned on 18 acres bounded by Main and Catherine streets.

The project's developer, Carl Chetty, planned 55 upscale boutiques and restaurants on the ground floor with 282 luxury condominiums above.

When the developer broke ground on what was to have been a \$100 million project in February 2008, real estate agents said 85 of 141 residential units on the Promenade's western side were under contract.

The first phase of construction was to include the western portion and a stadium-style movie multiplex operated by Dallas-based Starplex Cinemas, with eight screens and seating for 1,350.

But work at the site faded after the ceremonial ground-breaking and most preliminary site preparations. The owner notified the town earlier this year that it had lost its financing as the money markets collapsed.

Kristen Krenzer, spokeswoman for Middletown, now is offering the property for sale. She said "a new owner would have to come to the town with a new plan."

The town code in Middletown gives big projects such as Promenade 18 months to move dirt and get going before town leaders would require submission of a new plan, Krenzer said.

DELAWARE BUSINESSES NOW ABLE TO FILE WITHHOLDING TAXES ONLINE (WILNJ)

By The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

Delaware businesses can now file their monthly, quarterly and eighth-monthly withholding taxes online.

Division of Revenue Director Patrick Carter said Thursday that the free online service will save money for businesses as well as for taxpayers.

"Paying taxes online is a great convenience because there is no longer the need to first find a remittance coupon or mail a payment, both of which cost businesses time and money," Carter said in a statement.

Because online tax filings are processed electronically, that decreases costs to the state, and it also reduces the potential for paperwork errors.

Businesses wishing to file withholding taxes online can do so by visiting the <http://www.revenue.delaware.gov/> Division of Revenue Web site and selecting "File and Pay Withholding/Corporate Tax" under Online Services. Users must create an online account. Withholding taxes can be paid electronically via ACH debits to a bank account.

Taxpayers without Internet access or who need filing assistance can obtain access to the online withholding tax filing system at any Delaware

library.

DELAWARE CRIME: MAN GETS COUNTERFEIT BILLS FROM TELLER (WILNJ)

By Terri Sanginiti, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

Fred Hofstetter walked into Wachovia Bank in Governors Square on Monday to cash his paycheck during a half-hour lunch break.

He walked out of the Bear branch with a stack of crisp new notes -- and two counterfeit \$100 bills.

"I saw that the two were older looking bills and had the yellow pen mark on them," the 46-year-old Crystal Beach, Md., man said. "The ... other bills were the newer ones."

The two fraudulent notes also had identical serial numbers, he said.

The problem was discovered later in the day when Hofstetter went to a TD Bank, also in Bear, to deposit the money into his account.

The teller there made a copy of the bogus bills for Hofstetter and had him fill out a report asking the U.S. Secret Service to verify that they were bogus.

Hofstetter believed he was out \$200 just in time for the Christmas season.

"The tellers are usually very good," said A. Jeffrey Gavin, resident agent in charge of the Secret Service in Delaware. "I don't hear of many occasions where the teller gives out counterfeit money."

But it does happen occasionally.

In December 2006, a similar incident took place when a customer was given what was believed to be a bogus bill at the same Wachovia Bank branch. It also was flagged as possibly counterfeit when he tried to deposit it at a branch of what was then Commerce Bank.

In that case, the Secret Service confirmed that the bill was genuine and the Bear man received his \$100 back in three weeks.

It looks like Hofstetter may be getting his money back, too. He said a Wachovia manager told him Wednesday that the bank will investigate and possibly reimburse the lost money.

"If we are confident the money came from us and he was not anywhere else, we would reimburse the customer," said Barbara Nate, a Wachovia spokeswoman.

When bank tellers are newly hired, they are trained to detect counterfeit bills, Nate said. That training is reinforced throughout the year with a variety of other fraud prevention measures, she added.

Wachovia also operates a program called Fraud Busters that offers a financial reward for employees who catch fraud or counterfeit transactions.

"In this situation, we are the ones who detect the counterfeit currency," Nate said.

Between January and November, \$119,750 in counterfeit bills was passed in Delaware. Last year, about \$128,100 in counterfeit bills was collected in the state.

Some of that could be because counterfeit detection pens used by some businesses are not reliable for detecting bills reprinted as \$100 Federal Reserve Notes from bleached out \$5 denominations, Gavin said.

The detection pens work by leaving a dark mark on a fake bill. But it will not react positively on a genuine bill.

Genuine bills have color shifting ink in the number on the lower right hand corner. They bear a watermark portrait, security thread, microprinting, serial numbers and tiny red and blue fibers.

Bank officials say the best way to avoid becoming a victim is to check money before leaving a bank so it can be corrected at the time of the transaction.

"Consumers should visually inspect their money before walking away from a sales terminal or bank tellers," Gavin said.

Hofstetter, meanwhile, is looking forward to being reimbursed. "Any time of the year would be great, but for a bank to step up like that, I'm grateful," he said.

For information on how to detect counterfeit money, go to:
<http://www.secretservice.gov/>>United States Secret Service or

DELAWARE CRIME: IRANIAN ARMS DEALER IS HARMLESS, HIS ATTORNEY SAYS (WILNJ)

By Sean O'Sullivan, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

WILMINGTON -- The same day that federal prosecutors unsealed their case against an Iranian who admitted to illegally trying to buy sensitive military equipment, his Delaware attorney filed court papers painting a very different picture.

Instead of a being a danger to the United States, 36-year-old Amir Hossein Ardebili is a small-time operator who was trying to do right for his nation and is now nearly broken by two years of solitary confinement, said Edmund "Dan" Lyons, his Wilmington attorney.

"He's hardly the Iranian version of James Bond," Lyons said.

Under federal guidelines, Ardebili is facing a sentence of 12 to 14 years on charges including smuggling, conspiracy and money laundering .

The motion by Lyons asks Chief District Judge Gregory M. Sleet for a "variance," or a sentence below 12 years, perhaps as low as time served when Ardebili is sentenced Dec. 14.

In a high-profile press conference Wednesday, U.S. Attorney for Delaware David Weiss and other federal officials repeatedly described Ardebili as a threat to national security because of his attempts to illegally secure high-tech equipment that would have vastly improved Iranian weapons systems, missiles and fighter aircraft.

Court papers also indicate Ardebili knew he was violating U.S. laws -- and appeared adept at finding ways around export rules -- and that the technology he was obtaining from the United States would very likely be used against the U.S. military.

In an undercover video, Ardebili talks about how the Iranian government -- his sole customer -- believes "war is coming" with the U.S.

In his five-page memo, Lyons does not dispute Ardebili broke the law -- as his client already has pleaded guilty. "I'm not going to minimize this case," he said.

But he notes Ardebili was not operating in the United States, but in Iran where he broke no laws.

"In short, before this court is a young man with no prior criminal record who acted on behalf of his government but violated the laws of the United States -- a place he had never been before being arrested," Lyons wrote.

Ardebili's October 2007 trip to meet with undercover Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents in the Republic of Georgia -- where he was arrested -- was his first trip outside the Republic of Iran, according to his attorney.

And while prosecutors state that Ardebili was involved in thousands of purchases for Iran valued at about \$1 million annually, Lyons said he had his doubts about the portrayal of his client as a major arms player. He said Ardebili appeared to have difficulty coming up with a \$10,000 down payment for the deal that would lead to his arrest.

"He lives in the house he grew up in," Lyons said, adding that a man who appears next to Ardebili on the undercover surveillance tape where the deal was concluded is his father. "Does that sound like an international arms dealer?" asked Lyons, or a small-time guy who takes his Dad with him on his first trip outside the country?

Lyons said Ardebili was perhaps one of "hundreds" of similar small independent contractors in Iran, seeking to purchase equipment the Iranian government was seeking through these small operators to maintain deniability on the illicit deals.

Lyons also charged in court papers that more than two years of incarceration -- most of it in solitary confinement -- has been harsh on his client.

"While in custody ... due to pre-existing dental problems, defendant has lost five to six of his teeth. Several other teeth are at risk at present. Because the Bureau of Prisons does not provide restorative dentistry to inmates, nothing really could be done to halt [the problem]," wrote Lyons.

Ardebili has refused additional dental treatment and has been diagnosed with clinical depression, according to court papers. "He's really a broken man," Lyons said. "I'm not saying the government is bad for doing that. I'm just saying it is what it is."

Part of the depression may be because Ardebili was arrested just 18 months after he had been married and he has had "limited" contact with his family while in U.S. custody, according to court papers.

"The conditions of his confinement in [the maximum security Special Housing Unit of the Federal Detention Center in Philadelphia], as set forth above, have imposed a far greater burden than usual on defendant compared to one who has been detained in [the general] population," wrote Lyons, adding that a judge may consider this in deciding on the appropriate sentence.

While Iranian officials had mentioned Ardebili's arrest and extradition to the United States in the past as a possibly illegal act, a person who answered the phone in the Iranian "interests section" in the Pakistan embassy in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday had no comment on the criminal case against the Iranian national, stating he had never heard of Ardebili.

DELAWARE HEALTH: ACCESS TO SWINE FLU VACCINE EXPANDED (WILNJ)

By Hiran Ratnayake, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

The number of people in priority groups for getting the swine flu vaccine is being broadened, public health officials announced Thursday.

As more vaccine comes into the state -- and with the number of cases dropping each week -- the shots will be more readily available for adults with chronic underlying conditions as well as for employees of hospitals and other health care organizations who don't work directly with patients.

"As you know we've largely been focusing on the pediatric population," said Dr. Karyl Rattay, director of <http://www.flu.delaware.gov/> Delaware's Division of Public Health. "We wanted to make sure that those who care for high-risk patients were covered first. It was very targeted but now it's available for the folks who would fall under the larger target group."

Delaware had 44 reports of influenza-like illness reported by designated health care providers during the last full week of November. That represents the fifth consecutive week the state has seen a drop in illness reports. A peak of 603 occurred during the week of Oct. 18. Only two lab-confirmed swine flu cases were reported last week.

But health officials will continue listing swine flu activity in Delaware as "widespread." That level has remained unchanged since mid-September when it was raised from "sporadic." Other states have downgraded their activity level as their swine flu numbers declined. Seasonal flu cases in Delaware have been rare.

"Even though the [influenza-like illness] reports have gone down to 44, it's still much higher than zero," Rattay said about why the level remains at widespread. "We are also seeing the flu throughout the state."

About 117,000 people in Delaware have been vaccinated for swine flu so far this season and there are an estimated 400,000 people here who fall into the priority groups recommended by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to receive the vaccine.

Rattay said that flu activity still could peak again in the upcoming months.

"It's a new virus and many people still are not protected from the virus," she said. "Until you have a significant percentage of your population vaccinated with the virus, we can't predict with certainty that there won't be [another peak]."

Only one person was hospitalized as a result of swine flu last week, and that person has been released. The last of the five deaths in Delaware from swine flu occurred on Nov. 16.

Delaware expects to receive about 24,300 doses of swine flu injectable and nasal spray vaccine next week. Most of those doses will be for the state's school-based vaccination campaign. Some schools began vaccinating their elementary-age students with the second dose of swine flu vaccine this week. Studies have found that children under 9 will need two doses to be fully protected.

Newark resident Ahmed Sharkawy said he hasn't seen much swine flu lately. His pregnant wife and two sons have received the vaccine and he too hopes to get it eventually.

"I've seen a couple rare instances where people got the flu," he said.

"But mostly, the people I know are OK."

DELAWARE HEALTH: CELEBRITY HOOPS GAME TO FOLLOW HIV FORUM FOR KIDS (WILNJ)

By The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

A forum for kids about HIV will be held in Wilmington on Saturday.

The forum will begin at 1 p.m. at Howard High School, 401 E. 12th St.

Doors open at noon. The event is free and open to the public.

The theme of this year's forum is "Ignoring HIV doesn't make it go away." A panel of HIV-positive youth will be telling their stories. Special guests include Barry Floyd from BET's "The Game" and BET's Alesha Renee.

The forum is sponsored by AIDS Delaware, Duffy's Hope and YESS, Inc. For information, call AIDS Delaware's Frank Hawkins at 652-6776.

After the event, Duffy's Hope, a social service agency for at-risk youth, will hold a celebrity basketball game at 5 p.m. at Glasgow High School, 1901 S. College Ave., Newark. Participants will include Tequan Richmond from "Everybody Hates Chris," R&B artist Sammie and professional skateboarder Jereme Rogers.

Admission is \$20 and will help pay for Duffy's Hope mentoring and youth intervention programs.

DELAWARE RESEARCHERS FIND A TREASURE: A LETTER FROM THOMAS JEFFERSON (WILNJ)

By Ryan Cormier, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

If Thomas Jefferson held a grudge against fellow Founding Father John Dickinson of Delaware for refusing to sign his freshly written Declaration of Independence, you could never tell based on a surprising new find in the Rockwood Museum archives: a glowing letter written by Jefferson about Dickinson, albeit after Dickinson's death.

While serving as president, Jefferson learned about Dickinson's passing through a letter written by Wilmington doctor Joseph Bringhurst, who tended to Dickinson on his deathbed.

Jefferson responded with a letter of his own, which was recently discovered by a pair of University of Delaware graduate students who were processing hundreds of boxes of archival materials from Rockwood that had been donated to the university by New Castle County.

In the letter, he called Dickinson -- a delegate to the U.S. Constitutional Convention in 1787, a militia officer during the American Revolution and also a president (aka governor) of Delaware -- a patriot.

"They didn't always agree on everything," said Delaware historian Carol Hoffeecker, who has seen the letter. "Dickinson thought the Declaration of Independence was premature, but on the other hand he freed his slaves. Thomas Jefferson, who wrote the Declaration of Independence, kept his slaves.

"[In the letter], you can see different elements of moving forward into a more democratic world in both of these men. And in spite of the differences they occasionally had, they had enormous mutual respect. And I'd like to see politicians of today behave similarly."

The original letter penned by Jefferson was discovered by Amanda Daddona, a Department of History graduate student from East Hartford, Conn., and Matt Davis, a doctoral student in political science and international relations from Bloomsburg, Pa.

While tediously sifting through the hundreds of boxes of archives, poring over a mountainous array of paperwork, letters and meeting minutes dating back to the 17th century, Daddona found an unlabeled folder. The final page in the folder was a letter with an instantly recognizable signature at the bottom: Th. Jefferson.

"It was a very exciting moment," said Daddona, 22, who found the 201-year-old letter among financial documents from the 1700s and minutes from a Quaker town meeting. "I had not expected to find that when I went in

to work. It's an incredible moment for an aspiring historian."

The letter, dated Feb. 24, 1808, finds the third president of the United States responding to Bringham eight days after he wrote Jefferson to break the news of Dickinson's death. Bringham was a doctor in Wilmington and a close friend of Dickinson.

"A more estimable man, or truer patriot, could not have left us," Jefferson wrote. "Among the first of the advocates for the rights of his country when assailed by Great Britain, he continued to the last the orthodox advocate of the true principles of our new government: and his name will be consecrated in history as one of the great worthies of the revolution.

"We ought to be grateful for having been permitted to retain the benefit of his counsel to so good an old age; still, the moment of losing it, whenever it arrives, must be a moment of deep felt regret."

At the time he wrote the letter, which will be kept in a vault in the Special Collections Department of Morris Library and is available to the public, Jefferson was in the seventh year of his presidency. It was also 32 years after Dickinson turned away from one of Jefferson's greatest works.

"You wonder about the tension between someone like Jefferson, who was much more pro-independence, and Dickinson, who wasn't. But clearly, by this point, he was willing to let bygones be bygones," Davis said.

In September, the UD library was given the Rockwood Museum archives, which includes several hundred boxes of letters, photographs and diaries from the 17th century through the 1970s. The archives are full of materials from the Shipley, Bringham, Hargrave and Sellers families, all of whom lived in the Victorian home near Penny Hill that is now the Rockwood Museum.

"The whole collection is extremely important in terms of Delaware history and national history, given how important the whole Philadelphia region was in terms of what was going on at the time," Davis said. "But to see this letter ... it's a showcase piece."

L. Rebecca Johnson Melvin, a librarian in the Special Collections Department for 21 years, oversaw the work of Daddona and Davis and was "absolutely floored" by what they found.

"It's an incredible experience to read a letter that was written by Thomas Jefferson and the power of his words. He is so eloquent and it's so perfectly composed," Melvin said. "It's a tribute to John Dickinson and it's so important for everyone in Delaware to appreciate the richness of our local history. This letter really connects us with that period." Additional

Facts

THE LETTER

The following is the unedited text of President Thomas Jefferson's 1808 letter to Wilmington's Dr. Joseph Bringham after Bringham wrote to inform the president of John Dickinson's death.

"I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 16th. It gave me the first information of the death of our distinguished fellow-citizen, John Dickinson. A more estimable man, or truer patriot, could not have left us. Among the first of the advocates for the rights of his country when assailed by Great Britain, he continued to the last the orthodox advocate of the true principles of our new government: and his name will be consecrated in history as one of the great worthies of the revolution. We ought to be grateful for having been permitted to retain the benefit of his counsel to so good an old age; still, the moment of losing it, whenever it arrives, must be a moment of deep felt regret. For himself perhaps a longer period of life was less important, alloyed as the feeble enjoyments of that age are with so much pain: but to his country every addition to his moments was interesting. A junior companion of his labors in the early part of our revolution, it has been a great comfort to me to have retained his friendship to the last moments of his life. Sincerely condoling with his friends on this affecting loss, I beg leave to tender my salutations to yourself & assurances of my friendly respects."

Wilmington News Journal, December 3, 2009

MIDDLETOWN -- Eighth-grade students at Waters Middle School got an unusual science lesson Wednesday from optometrist William Velardi.

It was not for the faint of heart, however. The 13- and 14-year-olds worked in pairs in the school's science lab dissecting cow eyeballs.

"I'm slightly grossed out, but I'm going to do it," Joey Bursler, 13, said as the lab began.

Velardi designed the lesson to build understanding of how light energy reflected or emitted by an object into the eye produces vision.

"What organ do we see with?" Velardi asked.

"The eye?" someone at the back of the room ventured.

"The brain," Velardi said.

The dissection and examination of real tissue allowed the students to learn more about how human eyes form images and send them to the brain.

Cow eyes are similar to human eyes in function and anatomy.

"Having a recognized expert lead us through a hands-on experiment is an invaluable learning tool," teacher Jennie Heckscher said.

Each pair of students was issued one preserved bovine eyeball, scissors, cutting board and supplies for cleaning up afterward.

The students quickly moved from words like "gross" to "wow" as the lab began.

As Velardi guided them, the students carefully cut and examined the structure and function of the eye.

"Take your scissors," Velardi said. "I want you to cut it in half. The sclera [the white, outer covering of the eyeball] is harder to cut than you might think."

As the contents of the eyeball were revealed, students' reactions varied.

"It's not as gross as I thought," Joey Bursler said. "It's kind of cool."

The jellylike vitreous humor brought curiosity and revulsion at the same time.

The vitreous humor is the part of the eye that gives the organ its shape, but sitting on the dissection tray it was a clear blob that invited a few jiggles and giggles.

"You need to be careful to not cut too quick, or you will ruin what you have," Velardi said.

Lester Smith III removed the lens of the eye and placed it on the paper in front of him, saying, "It looks like a pearl."

Velardi explained that the lens appeared cloudy because the eye Lester was working with had a cataract.

Velardi, who practices at the Bear and Smyrna offices of the Delaware Eye Care Center, is also an adjunct professor at Raritan Valley Community College's Ophthalmics program in New Jersey.

Velardi's wife, Lisa, teaches language arts at Waters. She suggested he come in and teach the class on Wednesday.

Exploring the inner aspects of a preserved cow eyeball under the supervision of an eye doctor in an eighth-grade science lab is a rare opportunity, educators said.

It was the first time that middle school students at this Appoquinimink School District middle school have studied with a practicing medical professional in their science lab and the first time students had done a dissection.

Heckscher hopes Velardi's lesson will inspire her students.

"It satisfies our teens' natural curiosity about how the eye operates and provides unparalleled exposure to career and vocational opportunities in the field," she said.

DELAWARE CRIME: TWO ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH BANK HEIST (WILNJ)

By Terri Sanginiti, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

Two men have been arrested in connection with a bank heist last month in Fairfax.

One of the men also is accused of robbing a Wilmington bank on the same

day.

About noon Nov. 2, David Elswick, 34, robbed Delaware National Bank at 600 S. Harrison St. in Wilmington and escaped with an undisclosed sum, police said.

Then, about 2:25 p.m., the WSFS Bank at 2005 Concord Pike was robbed by a man who handed a demand note to the teller, state police Senior Cpl. Jeff Whitmarsh said.

The teller handed over money and the bandit walked out with an undisclosed amount.

Following the heist, state police followed up several leads and arrested Elswick, of the 200 block of S. Dillwyn Road near Newark.

Elswick, who was arrested three days after the crime, was committed to Young Correctional Institution in lieu of \$12,000 bail on charges of felony robbery and conspiracy.

Wilmington police also charged him with second-degree robbery and conspiracy and he was issued a \$24,535 bail.

Detectives continued searching for a second suspect believed to be the getaway driver.

On Wednesday, Joseph Donahue, 34, of S. Elizabeth Street in Wilmington, was charged with felony robbery and conspiracy, Whitmarsh said.

Donahue had used his wife's Volvo to drive Elswick to and from the bank, Whitmarsh said.

Detectives arrested Donahue in the parking lot of Cosmos Diner on Maryland Avenue near Newport.

He was being held in Young Correctional Institution after failing to post \$8,000 bail.

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL EDITORIALS:

WILMINGTON COUNCIL SHOULD TRY AGAIN ON ANTI-LOITERING PROPOSAL (WILNJ)

By The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

We won't quibble with the civil liberty objections raised about Wilmington City Councilman Mike Brown's anti-loitering proposal. He wants property owners in high-crime neighborhoods to display anti-loitering signs, giving police a legal right to question law-breaking laws on private property.

Police first will have to give warnings to suspects. If the warning to move along or provide proof -- such as identification or keys -- is ignored, then that along with the signs gives police "probable cause to run a check on them," the councilman said.

Mr. Brown is right to worry that without the signs, police would be forced to knock on the doors -- potentially spooking already nervous, and in many cases, elderly residents -- to establish such probable cause to run a background check.

Legal experts worry that police could use the private porches and stoops to skirt requirements that suspects have the right to identify themselves, explain why they are on the premises and whether they know the people whose house they are standing in front of.

The courts, should such a law be imposed, will have to settle issues involving questioning suspects on someone else's private property.

But Mr. Brown's novel idea seems doomed to be ineffective on a larger basis. It fails to take into account a more persuasive criminal threat in crime-ridden communities -- anti-snitch codes.

Those who are up to no good and who jump on strangers' stoops to avoid being questioned by police are savvy enough to know that those signs automatically finger them to authorities.

Without question, posting the signs is an admirable example of civic pride and duty. But they will double as a "bulls-eye" for possible retribution for cooperating with police.

Mr. Brown's effort is well-intentioned, but he needs to return to the drawing board.

JOBS ARE TOO IMPORTANT TO BE LEFT TO THE POSTURING OF POLITICIANS (WILNJ)

By The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, December 4, 2009

Thursday's White House jobs summit will likely produce a limited number of worthwhile ideas and a great deal more posturing by Democratic politicians.

The same holds true for the counter-summit that Republicans held at the same time.

Jobs -- the desire to find one or to keep the one you have -- are the top of America's worries. Politicians know this and are running scared because no one quite knows how to produce them without selling the country to China's bankers outright.

Even the president's Economic Council Director Larry Summers was skeptical that the summit would do much good in creating jobs quickly.

"It is not something that is going to be fixed in a week or a month or a year," Mr. Summers said earlier this week.

Still, the politicians will try to make us think they are doing some good. For example, the White House summit was timed to produce noble-sounding headlines in today's newspapers, which coincidentally is the same morning even higher unemployment figures are expected to be announced.

Democrats are pushing a variety of ideas that could add \$300 billion to the deficit. That's too much and probably the ideas are too broad.

Some money will have to be spent. But that's too much.

However, President Obama said he was open to all ideas.

Well, why not experiment?

On Thursday, he heard from unions and local government officials who want the federal government to spend more on infrastructure.

At the same time a number of businessmen pushed for passage of trade treaties that could raise exports. Unions tend to oppose them. Why not compromise and liberalize the agreements and, at the same time, authorize some infrastructure spending?

BIDEN IN THE NEWS:

OBAMA: WILL TAKE EVERY RESPONSIBLE STEP TO CREATE JOBS (DJ)

By Maya Jackson Randall

Dow Jones, December 4, 2009

WASHINGTON -(Dow Jones)- The Obama administration Thursday kicked off a major jobs summit at the White House, with the president promising to take "every responsible step to accelerate job creation."

Still, President Barack Obama stressed that the federal government's capacity to overcome the nation's jobs challenges is limited, and he charged the private sector with developing strategies that could spur hiring and boost economic growth.

"True economic recovery is only going to come from the private sector," Obama said in opening remarks at the summit Thursday afternoon.

With the unemployment rate at its highest level in 26 years, the forum is a way for the president and his economic team to hear from chief executives, small-business owners, labor leaders and nonprofit groups about ideas for economic growth and job creation.

About 130 attendees were expected, including Google Inc. (GOOG) Chief Executive Eric Schmidt, AT&T Inc. (T) CEO Randall Stephenson and FedEx Corp. (FDX) Chief Executive Fred Smith.

When it comes to creating more jobs and propping up the economy, "our capacity - government's capacity - is still somewhat limited," Vice President Joe Biden added.

The Obama administration will help create the conditions that help make for a stronger economy "but it's you ... who are in the position to make it in a reality," he told attendees. "Without you, it will not become a reality."

TONY FRATTO: JOB CREATION HONESTY IS JOB ONE (CNBC)

By Tony Fratto

CNBC, December 4, 2009

The U.S. unemployment rate today is estimated at 10.2%, and considerably

higher if underemployed and discouraged workers are counted. Tomorrow, that rate is almost certain to be higher when the Bureau of Labor Statistics releases its estimates for November payrolls.

Economically, these are distressing numbers. The economy can't sustain growth until the labor market recovers. Final demand still matters, and a successful economy still needs people willing to buy stuff, and people don't buy stuff when they don't have jobs or fear for their jobs.

Politically, the jobs data are disastrous for the Obama Administration and Democrats in Congress, and it's the reason the White House organized today's Jobsapaloozafest in Washington.

For a White House that has shown itself this year to be myopically focused on rhetoric to get through the daily news cycle, the stubborn, steady increase in the unemployment rate -- reported in scheduled monthly increments -- is bedeviling. The panicked frenzy of jobs talk today is an effort to keep the jobs conundrum from continuing to impact the Administration's current legislative efforts -- on health care, energy, and regulatory reform, and later, on deficit reduction.

The White House would have a better chance of making its case had it not over-promised on job creation earlier this year when it passed its mammoth spending bill.

Back then, trying to secure votes for the \$787 billion bill, White House economists not only estimated a much lower unemployment rate, they ignored all history, all academic work on labor markets, and predicted a hiring turnaround this year. Now they're left dealing with the consequences of their hopeful predictions: a dispirited American public, and members of Congress scrambling to save their careers.

If the Obama Administration's economic team -- Larry Summers, Tim Geithner, Christine Romer and Jared Bernstein, had been honest in their job growth predictions earlier this year, they would have more credibility today in explaining the state of the economy.

An honest assessment of the U.S. economic outlook in February would have predicted that job growth was going to lag -- and because of the unique nature of this recession, job growth would certainly lag longer.

What the Obama economic team had to know was that job creation large enough to bring down the unemployment rate could not occur this year, even with the rosy estimates of GDP growth, since discredited, they peddled to pass the stimulus bill in February.

When an economy emerges from recession, job growth is last to recover -- after corporate profits, and after increases in business investment. Business investment only comes when businesses are confident that the recovery can be sustained. And businesses are not yet confident of a sustained economic outlook.

The outlook of the business community -- the people who create jobs and hire Americans -- remains uncertain. They see stimulus spending running out of steam, and a continued lack of access to credit. And across a broad array of policy areas -- everything from health care, energy, regulation, trade, investment, and tax policy -- the business community sees risks to their business models.

Job creation will eventually return, but it's going to be a long road to work through these uncertainties before we get there.

Nothing the Administration says today will change the likelihood that the unemployment rate will remain high for a long time. The best the Obama Administration can do today is throw out its past predictions and give Americans an honest outlook.

OBAMA BEMOANS DESPERATION OF PEOPLE OUT OF WORK (AP)

By Philip Elliott

Associated Press, December 4, 2009

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Barack Obama says a jobs forum he hosted at the White House generated many useful ideas for jump-starting job creation, some of which can be put into action "immediately" by his administration.

The president said Thursday at the close of the jobs summit that other ideas will become part of legislation for Congress to consider. He said he was most struck by the overlap between the sessions on specific topics,

leading him to conclude that job creation needs to be better coordinated.

Obama spoke to a gathering of academics, business executives and labor leaders on the eve of the government's report, due Friday, on November unemployment. The jobless rate in October shot up to 10.2 percent.

THIS IS A BREAKING NEWS UPDATE. Check back soon for further information. AP's earlier story is below.

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Barack Obama challenged an assortment of leading business and union leaders and academics on Thursday to help him come up with innovative ideas for putting millions of Americans back to work, saying he wants the "biggest bang for the buck."

"We cannot hang back and hope for the best," Obama told a White House forum on jobs. "What I'm interested in is taking action right now."

Obama said the leading question of the day is "how do we get businesses to start hiring again" and asked his audience of about 130 guests to "bring their A-game."

But, mindful of growing anxiety about federal deficits, Obama also tempered his upbeat talk with an acknowledgment that government resources could only go so far and that it is primarily up to the private sector to create large numbers of new jobs.

He said while he's "open to every demonstrably good idea ... we also though have to face the fact that our resources are limited."

With unemployment levels above 10 percent, Obama said "We cannot hang back and hope for the best."

After opening remarks, the guests broke into different working groups to brainstorm with administration officials.

Dropping in on a session named "Innovative Agenda and Green Jobs of the Future," Obama said, "Not to tip our hand too much, but one of the things I would be surprised if we don't end up moving forward on is an aggressive agenda for energy efficiency and weatherization. Because that is an area where we can get it up and running relatively quickly. You don't need new technologies."

Sitting at the head of a large table, Obama told the smaller group that clean energy was the nation's best candidate "if we are to shift from the bubble and bust model that we have. ... We want to make a push in this area."

At one point, Obama lobbied business leaders in the group to speak out during the upcoming Senate energy debate. He urged them to help make the case that the energy bill "is not a job killer but a job grower." He said members of two prominent business groups - the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Business Round-table - who support clean energy need to speak out. "We're going to need you there," he said.

The forum was kicked off by Labor Secretary Hilda Solis, who called the present unemployment rate of 10.2 percent "a stark reminder of how much we have to do." She said the administration "will not rest" until it had been successful at job creation.

White House officials then showed a video about small businesses in hard-hit Allentown, Pa., where Obama was to speak on Friday in an effort to reinforce his message.

Vice President Joe Biden also addressed an audience that included the CEOs of Google, Xerox, Boeing and General Electric, labor leaders and prominent economists. "Your presence is welcome, but quite frankly it's not as important as your input," Biden said. "Without you, it will not become a reality," he said.

"Our task together is obviously not an easy one," Biden said. And while the \$787 billion stimulus package had helped kick-start the process, "the government's capacity is still somewhat limited."

Obama spoke a day ahead of the government's release of unemployment figures for November.

The October jobless rate was 10.2 percent. A broader index that includes those who have given up looking for work and those forced to accept part-time jobs puts the rate at 17.5 percent. Economic forecasters expect the November figures to be at about the same levels, perhaps higher.

Republicans staged their own counterforum across town, inviting a team of mostly conservative economists to a round-table discussion on jobs.

"I think we have to move aggressively toward policies that actually promote jobs. And so far what's been tried hasn't worked very well," said Lawrence Lindsey, a top economic adviser early in the first term of President George W. Bush.

Douglas Holtz-Eakin, a former head of the Congressional Budget Office and a top economic adviser to 2008 GOP Republican nominee Sen. John McCain, suggested the single best thing Obama could do to create jobs was "to reverse course on a dangerous agenda of debt-financed spending, crippling regulation, expensive mandates and intrusive government expansion."

Earlier, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., suggested that one way to create jobs is to use leftover money from the Wall Street bailout to pay for new spending on roads and bridges and save the jobs of firefighters, teachers and other public employees.

Perhaps unwittingly, Biden took the event a bit off-message at the start, painting a more dire picture of the nation's economy than typically heard out of the administration.

He recalled an old Ronald Reagan line that people see the problem as merely a downturn when a stranger is out of work and a recession if it's a relative who is unemployed - but a full-blown depression when they themselves lose a job.

"And it is a depression" for the nation's more than 10 million unemployed, Biden added. 2009-12-03 21:16:57 GMT

CBS: OBAMA-JOBS SUMMIT. The CBS Evening News (12/3, lead story, 3:00, Couric) reported, "Good evening, everyone. First thing tomorrow, the government will put out the latest unemployment numbers, and they're expected to show the country lost another 130,000 jobs last month. Since the recession began two years ago, more than seven million jobs have vanished. That's more than seven every minute. Today, President Obama called business and labor leaders to the White House to ask for their help. Our Chip Reid is there tonight. And, Chip, did any good or new ideas come out of this summit?" CBS (Reid) added, "Well, yes, they did, Katie. The President for example said he liked the idea of using public schools to teach students during the day and to train workers on new technologies at night. And he's also looking at some ideas - a variety of ideas on tax breaks for small businesses to help them expand. Critics, though, say this job summit was really about public relations, a way for the President to get out ahead of bad unemployment numbers coming out tomorrow. The Democrats' word of the day." Rep. Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House: "Jobs, jobs, jobs, jobs." Reid: "Was hard to miss." Joe Biden, Vice President of the United States: "It's jobs, jobs, jobs." Reid: "But what they plan to do about 10.2% unemployment is far less clear. At his jobs summit, the President lowered expectations right from the start, citing limited resources." Barack Obama, President of the United States: "We'll need to look beyond the old standbys and the fallbacks and come up with the best ideas that give us the biggest bang for the buck." Reid: "With a \$1.5 trillion deficit, the President says the nation can't afford another major stimulus package, so he invited 130 executives, small business owners, union leaders, and economists to brainstorm over creative and inexpensive ideas to stimulate private-sector job growth. The President said there were some good ideas. Republicans, though, say the summit was little more than a political stunt. House Republican leader John Boehner taunted the President with his own 'where are the jobs' summit, claiming that 3.5 million jobs have been lost since the President took office." Rep. John Boehner: "It's all but job killing policies that are being offered by this Administration and this Congress." Reid: "Republican Party Chair Michael Steele called it 'another example of President Obama's PR presidency, where he stages photo-ops and events to distract citizens and the media from his Administration's failures.' Unions and liberal activists are also unhappy with the President, demanding hundreds of billions more on infrastructure projects. Speaker Nancy Pelosi wants to use money left over from the bank bailout." Pelosi: "And the more jobs we create, the more money comes into the public till, and, therefore, reduces the deficit." Reid: "Tomorrow, the President heads for Allentown, Pennsylvania, for what the White House calls

the first stop on a jobs listening tour, and he'll probably get an earful because the unemployment rate in Allentown is about 12.5%. Katie." Couric: "Chip Reid reporting from the White House as usual. Chip, thank you."

NBC: OBAMA-JOBS SUMMIT. NBC Nightly News (12/3, story 3, 2:55, Williams) reported, "And at the White House today, the official topic on the docket: jobs as the President reached out to business and labor leaders, looking for ideas, he says, on how to get the sky-high unemployment rate under control in this country. Chief White House Correspondent, Political Director Chuck Todd with us from the White House Lawn tonight. Chuck, good evening." NBC (Todd) added, "Good evening, Brian. Well, fresh off trying to clear his plate of one difficult issue to tackle, Afghanistan, the President turned his attention to something that's easily more politically potent, jobs." Joe Biden, Vice President of the United States: "It's jobs, jobs, jobs, jobs." Todd: "It's the issue Vice President Biden said dominates most of the President's time, and to demonstrate that focus publicly, President Obama hosted what he billed as a job summit today." Barack Obama, President of the United States: "I'm looking for specific recommendations that can be implemented that will spur on job growth as quickly as possible." Todd: "The President offered a response for skeptics about its usefulness." Obama: "I assure you there is extraordinary skepticism that any discussions like this could actually produce results. I'm well aware of that. I don't mind skepticism. If I listened to the skeptics, I wouldn't be here." Todd: "The President is spending most of his public time over the next several days highlighting jobs. Tomorrow, he heads to Allentown, Pennsylvania, a city hit hard in the manufacturing sector. Next Tuesday he will lay out a series of new proposals to jump-start job creation, which could include tax credits for large companies and more incentives to unfreeze credit for small businesses. Mr. Obama held a post-summit Q&A with participants which included CEOs, labor leaders, and elected officials. One business leader complained the President's expansive legislative agenda has made it difficult for him to plan for the future." Obama: "I actually think this is a legitimate concern. This has been a tough year with a lot of uncertainty." Todd: "The President said passing his healthcare plan this year and financial regulatory reform by early next year should help." Obama: "To the extent that the uncertainty is derived from these major legislative initiatives, I think will be solved in the next few months." Todd: "Today's job event comes the day before the government releases the new unemployment rate, which currently stands at a 25-year-high 10.2%. The White House is nervous about an even higher number. Meanwhile, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke faced tough questioning about his policies during confirmation hearings for a second term." Sen. Richard Shelby: "The Fed has done a horrible job as a regulator and now yet you're wanting to continue as a regulator." Ben Bernanke, Federal Reserve Chairman: "You know, I think we did not - certainly not a perfect job by any means but I don't think we stand out as having done a worse job than other regulators." Todd: "Now Brian, despite that Senatorial bluster that Bernanke faced on the Hill today, nobody expects his confirmation to be in any serious jeopardy. Senators are just simply trying to channel the anger that's out there in the American public." Williams: "Alright, Chuck Todd from the White House north lawn tonight. Chuck, thanks."

AFGHANISTAN: CAN OBAMA SELL AMERICA ON THIS WAR? (TIME)

By Joe Klein

Time, December 4, 2009

"If I did not think that the security of the United States and the safety of the American people were at stake in Afghanistan," Barack Obama said, announcing his decision to send 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan, "I would gladly order every single one of our troops home tomorrow." It was the most emotional moment of his address - but it was a curious sentence, and an unsatisfying speech, defensive and slightly convoluted. Certainly, it was not a classic call to arms: nothing remotely like Shakespeare's Henry V at Agincourt or Winston Churchill during the Blitz, as conservative columnist Charles Krauthammer pointed out later.

The President made the best possible argument for a rather iffy proposition: the expansion of a war that is 51% necessary and 49% futile (or vice versa). But you can't argue a people into war, especially one that seems so indistinct and perplexing. Once you have made the decision to go, or to redouble your efforts, you must lead the charge - passionately and, yes, with a touch of anger. Obama's attempt to do that, his peroration about the ideals that cause us to fight, was lovely but abstract: "It is easy to forget that when this war began, we were united - bound together by the fresh memory of a horrific attack ... I refuse to accept the notion that we cannot summon that unity again." Absent the reference to Sept. 11, the closing paragraphs could just as easily have climaxed a speech announcing a campaign against global warming.

Ronald Reagan would have done it differently. He would have told a story. It might not have been a true story, but it would have had resonance. He might have found, or created, a grieving spouse - a young investment banker whose wife had died in the World Trade Center - who enlisted immediately after the attacks ... and then gave his life, heroically, defending a school for girls in Kandahar. Reagan would have inspired tears, outrage, passion, a rush to recruiting centers across the nation.

Of course, it is possible that purple prose in the service of patriotic gore has become an anachronism in an era when it is possible to witness the insane carnage caused by crudely constructed roadside bombs each night on the evening news. There are those, especially in the Democratic Party, who find such romanticism delusional and obscene; it rankles particularly when applied to a questionable war. But the romance of the fight, the band-of-brothers bond, the ethos of ultimate sacrifice is at the heart of military culture. If a President wants to send young people off to war, he must buy into that culture. It is not enough to construct the best argument - or the best policy - in a bad situation, as this President has done. (See pictures of life in the Afghan National Army.)

And that is the high drama that has been unfolding this autumn: the struggles of a highly intelligent, dispassionate man to find a rationale for a mission that is crucial but slightly crazy, a decision that will define his presidency.

"I am painfully aware that this is politically unpopular," the President said earlier that day over lunch with a group of columnists in the White House library, an elegant little room in the basement of the mansion. "It's least popular in my own party. But that's not how I make decisions." There was little apparent anguish as the President said that. He was calm, as always; a compelling presence, but resolutely normal, as always. (The combination of charisma and lack of pretense is his most attractive, if inexplicable, personal attribute.) His defense of the policy he had constructed after months of deliberation - a complex, slightly contradictory contraption of a policy - was solid but not entirely convincing.

He dealt fluently with the toughest of questions: the push-me, pull-you issue of sending in 30,000 more troops only to start withdrawing them in July 2011, less than a year after they all arrive. The troops - as many as were involved in the Iraq surge, though in a much smaller war - are being sent to stun the enemy, to turn back recent Taliban advances, especially in Kandahar province, the heartland of the insurgency. But why limit the force of the blow by announcing the date you will begin the withdrawal? "Why wouldn't they wait you out?" asked David Ignatius of the Washington Post.

It was a question the President was expecting. He said he rejected that argument "because if you follow the logic ... then you would never leave. Right? Essentially you'd be signing on to have Afghanistan as a protectorate of the United States indefinitely." And the time limit, he suggested, might give him leverage over Hamid Karzai, the recalcitrant Afghan leader: "In my discussion with President Karzai yesterday," Obama said, "I was able to articulate to him exactly what he's going to need to do over the next two years to be prepared for this transition."

I asked him what instructions he had given the military to make the next 30,000 troops more effective than the 21,000 troops he sent last March, whose presence didn't seem to improve the situation on the ground at all. "Look, the fact that there were increased casualties this year I think is to

be expected from increased engagement by our forces." True enough, but the NATO coalition lost ground to the Taliban this year, by Obama's own admission. And the President could only come up with speed of deployment and a clearer sense of mission as strategic game changers. Later, when I asked him about what changes he had ordered for the training of the Afghan army and police - a frustrating proposition, so far - he deferred to his commanders in the field but said the new order of battle would include "a partnering situation, a one-to-one match between Afghan troops and U.S. troops" in combat, which "produces much stronger results."

Then he stopped, abruptly. "None of this is easy," he said. "I mean, we are choosing from a menu of options that is less than ideal." Indeed, over the past few months, I've heard members of the Administration make cases for and against each of the decisions the President has made. There is no completely convincing argument that 30,000 - or 40,000 - more troops will turn the tide in Afghanistan; you can make an argument, nearly as plausible, that they will make a bad situation worse - Afghans have, historically, not reacted well to tens of thousands of armed foreigners on their turf. (Which leads in turn to a counter-counterargument: we're not conquerors; we come bearing schools and wells, with the intention of leaving as soon as possible.)

You can make the case that a timeline for transition to Afghan control will have absolutely no leverage in getting Karzai to clean up his act. After all, on the day of Obama's speech, close aides to the Afghan President told the Wall Street Journal that Karzai opposes the surge; why won't he just wait us out? (But there's a counter-counter here as well: Isn't this just posturing? Doesn't Karzai know that without American protection, he could be swinging from a lamppost in Kabul like several of his predecessors?) And as for the argument, made passionately by some in the military, that a specific date for starting the withdrawal is an invitation for the Taliban to lie low until we leave: "They simply won't do that," says Leslie H. Gelb, former president of the Council on Foreign Relations. "If you stand down, you allow the enemy - even this inept Afghan government - to create a bow-wave effect, to create the impression of authority and security. The Taliban aren't stupid."

Discussions about tactics and strategy in Afghanistan do have a tendency to go on, and on, swirling ad infinitum. One thing the President has guaranteed by his deliberations of the past few months is that he has sampled all the dishes on the menu of unappetizing options. Every decision he has made can be meticulously defended. So can every decision he didn't make. (See pictures of Fort Irwin's Theater of War.)

But, you might reasonably ask, did the strategy review really have to take so long and be so public? Obama had no choice about the public part of the program; he is privately furious about the leaks, especially those from the military. "We will deal with that situation in time," an Obama adviser told me. The criticism of the President for dithering is also unfair. This second Afghan strategy review in less than a year was made necessary by an assortment of dramatic new developments on the ground. Each had to be analyzed individually and then correlated with the others. There was the fraudulent election, which stripped the remaining clothes from the Emperor Karzai. There was a big mistake made by the U.S. military, sending troops to remote opium-laden Helmand province rather than to the heart of the insurgency in Kandahar. There was the vastly improved human intelligence collection on al-Qaeda, which has resulted in Predator strikes that have killed at least a dozen top terrorist leaders in recent months, according to the military. There was Pakistan's new willingness to go after its indigenous branch of the Taliban, and the continued unwillingness to go after the Afghan Taliban, led by Mullah Omar - an organization created, and still supported, by the Pakistani intelligence services.

Obama's leadership of this process was the source of some amazement by those who participated in it. He was all business. Unlike Bill Clinton, he didn't allow the conversations to ramble; unlike George W. Bush, he ran the meetings himself. He asked sharp, Socratic questions of everyone in the Situation Room. He would notice when an adviser wasn't participating, even in an area that wasn't his or her expertise, and ask, What do you think

about this, Hillary? Or Bob, or Jim. He encouraged argument among those who disagreed - most notably General David Petraeus and Vice President Joe Biden. He was undaunted by the military. Indeed, the greatest cause of delay was Obama's constant pressure on his commanders to justify every unit and find some way to speed the troops' arrival. The final deployment includes only three combat brigades and one training brigade - about 20,000 troops - augmented by 10,000 enablers: medics, mechanics, intelligence analysts, strategic-communications (that is, propaganda) experts.

The real hassle was over speed of deployment. The military plans carefully, in five- to 10-year increments, and moves with the speed of a supertanker. A good part of the reason the troops were sent to Helmand instead of Kandahar, even though it violated the prevailing counterinsurgency strategy, was that the fortifications already had been built in Helmand; it seemed too late to turn the supertanker around. Obama kept sending plans back to the Pentagon, seeking a faster launch for his "extended surge." The military still isn't entirely sure that it'll be able to move 30,000 troops to Afghanistan by August. "We'll push in every way possible to get the forces on the ground ASAP," a senior military official told me. But the President clearly believes that the speed and vehemence of the new offensive will be its greatest assets.

At lunch and later in the speech, the President seemed most engaged when he addressed the public's mixed feelings about the war. "The American people are having a really tough time right now in their own lives," he told us, in closing, at lunch. Then he diluted the power of the speech by detouring into a recitation of his concerns about the recession, even linking them to the time limit he has placed on the war: "That is why our troop commitment in Afghanistan cannot be open-ended - because the nation that I am most interested in building is our own."

This is a dangerous mixing of apples and Predators, and it is a reflection of political calculation: the President knows his numbers are sagging because of the oxymoronic perception that he is spending too much and doing too little to ease the economic crisis. It is a real problem he faces - and, to some extent, has brought upon himself by focusing so much attention on health care reform - but its proper place is in another speech. Given the feeling of abandonment that many of the soldiers I've spoken with during the past few years have, a more appropriate message to the American people might have been: I know you're hurting, but we're at war. We're trying to stabilize the most dangerous part of the world. We're trying to prevent the collapse of a nuclear state, Pakistan. We're trying to capture and kill the people who massacred our friends and neighbors on Sept. 11, people who represent the purest manifestation of evil in the world. You have to be part of this effort, and no, merely mouthing platitudes in support of the troops is not enough. We all need to sacrifice.

He might have asked the public to pay a tax to support the war, as Congressman David Obey has suggested. Or he might have listed some charities that people could contribute to - Greg Mortenson's brilliant effort to build schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan comes to mind - or he might have asked Americans to send clothing, or seeds, to the second poorest country in the world. This is a message, a resolute and passionate evocation of national purpose, that the Taliban need to hear as well.

The bracing sense of unity that Obama cited in his peroration was achieved reflexively - it was the obvious human reaction after the Sept. 11 attacks. But such unity is difficult to sustain. And it cannot be reignited by mere words or argument, even when the argument and the policy is, I believe, the correct one. The exquisite rationality that attends almost everything this President does is essential, but not enough, when sending young men and women into battle. There needs to be inspiration as well. There is no such thing as a no-drama war.

OBAMA HOMED IN ON AN AFGHANISTAN PULLOUT DATE (LAT)

In President Obama's Afghan war sessions, a mantra arose: to make the biggest military impact in the shortest time.

By Christi Parsons And Julian E. Barnes
Los Angeles Times, December 4, 2009

It started out as a projection from the military, intended only for the ears of the president and his top advisors. But in a war council meeting at the White House less than a month ago, Obama proposed making it public.

"Let's name that date," he said, according to participants.

And then on Tuesday, he did.

The date, July 2011, is when the Afghan troop buildup is supposed to be working well enough against the Taliban-led insurgency that some troops can start to come home.

Revealing that key marker on the U.S. military timeline has emerged as the most controversial component of the president's plan. It has attracted criticism from Capitol Hill and sown anxiety among allies, some unsure whether the timeline meant that the United States was planning to leave quickly or stay indefinitely.

It was also a contentious idea within the Pentagon. The date was first discussed as part of internal planning. The idea of sending a public signal to enemies and allies alike that the U.S. was already planning a pullout was of particular concern to Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, a key member of the war council.

Gates backed the plan once he felt he had adequate assurances that the pace of the U.S. military withdrawal would be determined by commanders, based on the situation in Afghanistan.

Obama opted to take the highly unusual step, senior aides said, because, in the end, administration officials believed the need to put tangible pressure on the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan outweighed any potential cost.

As Obama's aides coalesced around the plan, they gave it a name -- "max leverage" -- that captured in brief what it was supposed to accomplish: getting the greatest possible impact from 30,000 additional troops in the shortest amount of time.

The plan grew out of meetings chaired by Obama -- they began in September and lasted until the final one, before Thanksgiving -- aimed at forging a new U.S. strategy in Afghanistan. The situation was deteriorating under the previous U.S. approach approved early this year, shortly after Obama issued a deployment order for 21,000 troops.

Despite that addition, the top U.S. commander sounded grim warnings and in early fall requested up to 40,000 additional troops.

For September and most of October, Obama conducted weekly sessions on the situation, demanding new reports every few days and drilling his war council with questions. Key moments of the meetings were described by administration officials who attended them and who spoke on condition of anonymity. In addition, other officials described the thinking of some who participated in the sessions.

Aides say Obama kept his own cards close to his vest, listening to discussions among aides, including Gates, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Vice President Joe Biden, Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel and other civilian and military advisors.

After two months of sessions, Obama began to zero in during a meeting in late October on the timing of a troop buildup, signaling that he wanted more troops moving into the region faster than military brass had proposed.

One succinct exchange would prove portentous. The president wanted to know when the effects of the new strategy would become apparent, based on an ongoing Pentagon analysis of its own plans.

"When will we know that our concept is working?" Obama asked, recalled one official who was present.

"Our best sense," replied Gates, "will be in late 2010 and into mid-2011."

According to accounts by senior officials in the administration, that day's discussion formed the basis of the decisions that would follow, including a time frame for the troop buildup of 18 to 24 months, a pace developed amid growing public opposition to the war and concern about its cost.

Two weeks later, Obama delayed his scheduled departure for Asia in part so that he could drive home those points with his team of advisors.

On Veterans Day, after laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns in a

cold drizzle, Obama convened his war council for the eighth time.

By this time, the staff was ready to present timelines. In a slide presentation in the Situation Room, the group looked at a bell-curve graph projecting a troop buildup over time -- a few at first, then an increasing flow that would crest and trickle off.

To emphasize his desire to speed up the deployment, the president held up a printout copy of the bell curve and pointed to its apex, indicating the peak of the flow.

"He says, 'I want to move this to the left,' " as one official recounted it, speaking on condition of anonymity. " 'We need more troops in sooner.' "

For months, said a senior officer, the military's U.S. Command had been examining ways to insert forces faster. Logistics specialists held drills in Afghanistan, Kuwait and other locations to see how fast they could move people and equipment into the war zone.

Meanwhile, engineers in Afghanistan had begun preliminary work to see how quickly they could build austere infrastructure to house thousands of additional troops.

Armed with that work, Army Gen. David H. Petraeus, head of Central Command and chief of U.S. forces in the Middle East and Central Asia, told the president that, yes, the military could pull off the buildup he was requesting.

"We did so in Iraq," said Petraeus, who designed and oversaw the Iraq troop buildup. "We can do so again."

On the question of taking troops out, the president had grown more adamant about sending a clear signal to Afghan leaders that they would have to prepare to take over responsibility for their country's security.

"Gates has given him the date" by which results could be measured, said a second senior administration official, referring to the late 2010, mid-2011 time frame. "The president says: 'Let's name that date.' "

The logic was simple, as Obama made the case: He wanted to send a clear signal that the United States was not writing a "blank check" guaranteeing military support for an indefinite period of time. This, he believed, was the most effective way to ensure that the Afghans took him seriously.

Aides too knew he was serious. Not long after Obama took off for Asia, he called Gates from Air Force One.

Obama specifically asked him to work on the plan: more troops in faster, and a date certain for drawdown to begin. It would maximize U.S. leverage, he said.

Key White House players -- Emanuel among them -- didn't go on the president's weeklong trip so they could work on the strategy.

Gates had doubts about announcing the date for starting withdrawals. In the past, he had been opposed to such public deadlines.

Several times during the strategy review, Gates had spoken with administration officials about the 1989 decision to halt U.S. aid to Afghanistan after the Soviets withdrew, and about the long-term damage it did to American standing in the region. He did not want the Afghans or Pakistanis to feel that they were being abandoned for a second time.

But Gates agreed that the original Obama administration strategy review in March had produced a plan that seemed open-ended. The new plan, Gates said, needed to show both Afghans and Americans that the U.S. military was not on a nation-building mission, a task that rightfully belonged to the Afghans.

Gates was also persuaded by Petraeus and others that announcing the date would help create an incentive for the Afghans to act, he said this week.

The proposed date also would make it such that the withdrawal of troops would begin just as the campaign for the 2012 presidential election was heating up.

Still, it was crucial to Gates and other military officials that Obama not announce a specific drawdown plan. Doing so could embolden militants, Defense officials said. Gates and others wanted to make sure that the pace of the drawdown would be based on the security situation -- not a set timetable.

"Ultimately," said a senior Defense official, Gates "wanted conditionality, and got it."

By the time Obama summoned the war council for its ninth and final meeting, the Monday before Thanksgiving, he had almost all the information he wanted. All that was left was a final poll of his top advisors.

"I want you to tell me how you feel about this 'max leverage,' " he said. If people had any objections, he said, he wanted to know.

One by one, team members weighed in on the tenets of the plan, a "conditions-based transfer of authority to the Afghans," as one witness described it.

No one voiced objection, the two senior administration officials said.

Let him know before Thanksgiving if they had second thoughts, Obama told his team. Otherwise, they could expect his decision within the week.

Eight days later, in his speech to the nation, Obama appeared before cadets at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point to declare:

"As commander in chief, I have determined that it is in our vital national interest to send an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan. After 18 months, our troops will begin to come home.

"These are the resources that we need to seize the initiative, while building the Afghan capacity that can allow for a responsible transition of our forces out of Afghanistan."

BIDEN APPEALS TO LEFT ON AFGHAN POLICY: 'CLEAN BREAK' FROM BUSH (WSJ)

By Peter Wallsten

Wall Street Journal, December 4, 2009

Liberals are angry over President Barack Obama's new Afghanistan strategy. But the White House apparently feels it can soften the blow of its 30,000-troop surge with the one sentiment that can still unite the left: dislike of George W. Bush.

That is the defense of Obama's policy offered in an email distributed to the estimated 13 million members of Organizing for America, the network of volunteers and full-time organizers who campaigned for Obama's election and are now being built into a machine to advocate for his policy agenda.

The group and its left-leaning membership have thus far avoided foreign policy matters that could be perceived as inappropriate terrain for a political organization. But in the email sent late Wednesday, Vice President Joe Biden made the best case possible for why liberals should support the surge.

"It's a clean break from the failed Afghanistan policy of the Bush administration, and a new, focused strategy that can succeed," Biden wrote.

The email also highlighted the element of the plan designed to mollify the left - a "firm commitment to begin bringing our troops home in 2011." It contained links to the video of Obama's Tuesday night speech. (For more on the divide between Obama and the liberal base that swept him into office, read this WSJ story.)

But Biden, respected by many liberals for his apparent efforts internally to oppose a troop surge, did not mention in the email the congressional testimony Wednesday from some of his administration colleagues that the "firm" timetable can actually be shifted as events warrant.

The liberal group MoveOn.org has sent emails asking its members to lobby Congress to impose a strict timeline on the White House, and some liberals have warned that Obama will pay a political price if the timeline is delayed.

An official at the Democratic National Committee, which operates Organizing for America, said the group decided to take the unusual step of inserting itself into foreign affairs because of the "seriousness of the issue."

"We wanted to connect with our supporters and provide them with an opportunity to hear the president's address laying out the new strategy in case they missed it," said the official.

The email appears to be designed to avoid accusations of politicking. The links to donate money, for example, that are typical in some of the group's communications do not appear this time. In fact, it takes two clicks - to the video and then to the Organizing for America home page - before viewers are asked to join or give money.

OBAMA'S ANTI-MACARTHUR MOMENT (CBS)

By Tom Engelhardt

CBS News, December 4, 2009

Let others deal with the details of President Obama's Afghan speech, with the on-ramps and off-ramps, those 30,000 U.S. troops going in and just where they will be deployed, the benchmarks for what's called "good governance" in Afghanistan, the corruption of the Karzai regime, the viability of counterinsurgency warfare, the reliability of NATO allies, and so on. Let's just skip to the most essential point which, in a nutshell, is this: Victory at Last!

It's been a long time coming, but finally American war commanders have effectively marshaled their forces, netcentrically outmaneuvering and outflanking the enemy. They have shocked-and-awed their opponents, won the necessary hearts-and-minds, and so, for the first time in at least two decades, stand at the heights of success, triumphant at last.

And no, I'm not talking about post-surge Iraq and certainly not about devolving Afghanistan. I'm talking about what's happening in Washington.

A Symbolic Surrender of Civilian Authority

You may not think so, but on Tuesday night from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, in his first prime-time presidential address to the nation, Barack Obama surrendered. It may not have looked like that: there were no surrender documents; he wasn't on the deck of the USS Missouri; he never bowed his head. Still, from today on, think of him not as the commander-in-chief, but as the commanded-in-chief.

And give credit to the victors. Their campaign was nothing short of brilliant. Like the policy brigands they were, they ambushed the president, held him up with their threats, brought to bear key media players and Republican honchos, and in the end made off with the loot. The campaign began in late September with a strategic leak of Afghan War commander General Stanley McChrystal's grim review of the situation in that country, including demands for sizeable troop escalations and a commitment to a counterinsurgency war. It came to include rumors of potential retirements in protest if the president didn't deliver, as well as clearly insubordinate policy remarks by General McChrystal, not to speak of an impressive citizen-mobilization of inside-the-Beltway former neocon or fighting liberal think-tank experts, and a helping hand from an admiring media. In the process, the U.S. military succeeded in boxing in a president who had already locked himself into a conflict he had termed both "the right war" and a "necessary" one. After more than two months of painfully over-reported deliberations, President Obama has now ended up essentially where General McChrystal began.

Counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine was dusted off from the moldy Vietnam archives and made spanking new by General David Petraeus in 2006, applied in Iraq (and Washington) in 2007, and put forward for Afghanistan in late 2008. It has now been largely endorsed, and a major escalation of the war -- a new kind of military-led nation building (or, as they like to say, "good governance") is to be cranked up and set in motion. COIN is being billed as a "population-centric," not "enemy-centric" approach in which U.S. troops are distinctly to be "nation-builders as well as warriors."

And as for those 30,000 troops, most expected to arrive in the Afghan combat zone within the next six months, the numbers are even more impressive when you realize that, as late as the summer of 2008, the U.S. only had about 28,000 troops in Afghanistan. In other words, in less than two years, U.S. troop strength in that country will have more than tripled to approximately 100,000 troops. So we're talking near-Vietnam-level escalation rates. If you include the 38,000 NATO forces also there (and a possible 5,000 more to come), total allied troop strength will be significantly above what the Soviets deployed during their devastating Afghan War of the 1980s in which they fought some of the same insurgents now arrayed against us.

Think of this as Barack Obama's anti-MacArthur moment. In April 1951, in the midst of the Korean War, President Harry Truman relieved Douglas MacArthur of command of American forces. He did so because the general, a far grander public figure than either McChrystal or Centcom commander Petraeus (and with dreams of his own about a possible presidential run), had

publicly disagreed with, and interfered with, Truman's plans to "limit" the war after the Chinese intervened.

Obama, too, has faced what Robert Dreyfuss in Rolling Stone calls a "generals' revolt" -- amid fears that his Republican opposition would line up behind the insubordinate field commanders and make hay in the 2010 and 2012 election campaigns. Obama, too, has faced a general, Petraeus, who might well have presidential ambitions, and who has played a far subtler game than MacArthur ever did. After more than two months of what right-wing critics termed "dithering" and supporters called "thorough deliberations," Obama dealt with the problem quite differently. He essentially agreed to subordinate himself to the publicly stated wishes of his field commanders. (Not that his Republican critics will give him much credit for doing so, of course.) This is called "politics" in our country and, for a Democratic president in our era, Tuesday night's end result was remarkably predictable.

When Obama bowed to the Japanese emperor on his recent Asian tour, there was a media uproar in this country. Even though the speech Tuesday night should be thought of as bowing to the American military, there is likely to be little complaint on that score. Similarly, despite the significance of symbolism in Washington, there has been surprisingly little discussion about the president's decision to address the American people not from the Oval Office, but from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

It was there that, in 2002, George W. Bush gave a speech before the assembled cadets in which he laid out his aggressive strategy of preventive war, which would become the cornerstone of "the Bush Doctrine." ("If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long -- Our security will require transforming the military you will lead -- a military that must be ready to strike at a moment's notice in any dark corner of the world. And our security will require all Americans to be forward-looking and resolute, to be ready for preemptive action when necessary to defend our liberty and to defend our lives.") But keep in mind that this was still a graduation speech and presidents have traditionally addressed one of the military academies at graduation time.

Obama is not a man who appears in prop military jackets with "commander-in-chief" hand-stitched across his heart before hoo-ahing crowds of soldiers, as our last president loved to do, and yet in his first months in office he has increasingly appeared at military events and associated himself with things military. This speech represents another step in that direction. Has a president ever, in fact, given a non-graduation speech at West Point, no less a major address to the American people? Certainly, the choice of venue, and so the decision to address a military audience first and other Americans second, not only emphasized the escalatory military path chosen in Afghanistan, but represented a kind of symbolic surrender of civilian authority.

For his American audience, and undoubtedly his skittish NATO allies as well, the president did put a significant emphasis on an exit strategy from the war. That off-ramp strategy was, however, placed in the context of the training of the woeful Afghan security forces to take control of the struggle themselves and the woeful government of Afghan President Hamid Karzai to turn over a new nation-building leaf. Like the choice of West Point, this, too, seemed to resonate with eerie echoes of the years in which George W. Bush regularly intoned the mantra: "As Iraqis stand-up, we will stand down."

In his address, Obama offered July 2011 as the date to begin a withdrawing the first U.S. troops from Afghanistan. ("After 18 months, our troops will begin to come home.") However, according to the Washington-insider Nelson Report, a White House "on background" press briefing Tuesday afternoon made it far clearer that the president was talking about a "conditions based withdrawal." It would, in other words, depend "on objective conditions on the ground," on whether the Afghans had met the necessary "benchmarks." When asked about the "scaling back" of the American war effort, General McChrystal recently suggested a more conservative timeline -- "sometime before 2013" -- seconded hazily by Said Jawad, the Afghan ambassador to Washington. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates refers to this as a "thinning out" of U.S. forces.

In fact, there's no reason to put faith in any of these hazy deadlines. After all, this is the administration that came into office announcing a firm one-year closing date for the U.S. prison in Guantanamo (now officially missed), a firm sunshine policy for an end-of-2009 release of millions of pages of historical documents from the archives of the CIA and other intelligence and military services (now officially delayed, possibly for years), and of course a firm date for the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops, followed by all U.S. forces from Iraq (now possibly slipping).

Finish the job in Afghanistan? Based on the plans of the field commanders to whom the president has bowed, on the administration's record of escalation in the war so far, and on the quiet reassurances to the Pakistanis that we aren't leaving Afghanistan in any imaginable future, this war looks to be all job and no finish. Whatever the flourishes, that was the essence of Tuesday night's surrender speech.

Monty Python in Afghanistan

Honestly, if it weren't so grim, despite all the upbeat benchmarks and encouraging words in the president's speech, this would certainly qualify as Monty Python in Afghanistan. After all, three cabinet ministers and 12 former ministers are under investigation in Afghanistan itself on corruption charges. And that barely scratches the surface of the problems in a country that one Russian expert recently referred to as an "international drug firm," where at least one-third of the gross national product comes from the drug trade. In addition, as Juan Cole wrote at his Informed Comment blog:

"Months after the controversial presidential election that many Afghans consider stolen, there is no cabinet, and parliament is threatening to go on recess before confirming a new one because the president is unconstitutionally late in presenting the names. There are grave suspicions that some past and present cabinet members have engaged in the embezzlement of substantial sums of money. There is little parliamentary oversight. Almost no one bothers to attend the parliamentary sessions. The cabinet ministries are unable to spend the money allocated to them on things like education and rural development, and actually spent less in absolute terms last year than they did in the previous two years."

In addition, the Taliban now reportedly take a cut of the billions of dollars in U.S. development aid flowing into the country, much of which is otherwise squandered, and of the American money that goes into "protecting" the convoys that bring supplies to U.S. troops throughout the country. One out of every four Afghan soldiers has quit or deserted the Afghan National Army in the last year, while the ill-paid, largely illiterate, hapless Afghan police with their "well-deserved reputation for stealing and extorting bribes," not to speak of a drug abuse rate estimated at 15%, are, as its politely put, "years away from functioning independently"; and the insurgency is spreading to new areas of the country and reviving in others.

Good governance? Good grief!

Not that Washington, which obviously feels that it has much to impart to the Afghan people about good governance and how to deal with corruption, has particularly firm ground to stand on. After all, the United States has just completed its first billion-dollar presidential election in a \$5 billion election season, and two administrations just propped up some of the worst financial scofflaws in the history of the world and got nothing back in return.

Meanwhile, the money flowing into Washington political coffers from Wall Street, the military-industrial complex, the pharmaceutical and health care industries, real estate, legal firms, and the like might be thought of as a kind of drug in itself. At the same time, according to USA Today, at least 158 retired generals and admirals, many already pulling in military pensions in the range of \$100,000-\$200,000, have been hired as "senior mentors" by the Pentagon "to offer advice under an unusual arrangement": they also work for companies seeking Defense Department contracts.

In Congress, a Senate maneuver which only a few years ago was so rare that the response to it was nicknamed "the nuclear option" -- needing a 60-vote majority to pass anything of significance -- has, almost without comment, become a commonplace for the passage of just about anything. This means Congress is eternally in a state of gridlock. And that's just for

starters when it comes to ways in which the U.S. government, so ready to surge its military and its civilian employees into Afghanistan in the name of good governance, is in need of repair, if not nation-building itself.

Airless in Washington

It's nonetheless the wisdom of this Washington and of this military that Obama has not found wanting, at least when it comes to Afghanistan.

So here's a question: Why did he listen to them? And under such circumstances, why should we take the results seriously?

Stop for a moment and consider the cast of characters who offered the president the full range of advice available in Washington -- all of which, as far as we can tell, from Joe Biden's "counterterrorism-plus" strategy to McChrystal's COIN and beyond, was escalatory in nature. These are, of course, the wise men (and woman) of our era. But just a cursory glance at their collective record should at least make you wonder:

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is now said to be the official with the best ties to Afghan President Hamid Karzai and so the one in charge of "coaxing" him into a round of reasonable nation-building, of making "a new compact" with the Afghan people by "improving governance and cracking down on corruption"; and yet, in the early 1990s, in her single significant nation-building experience at home, she botched the possibility of getting a universal health-care bill through Congress. She also had the "wisdom" to vote in 2003 to authorize the invasion of Iraq.

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, reputedly deeply trusted by the president and in charge of planning out our military future in Afghanistan, was in the 1980s a supposed expert on the Soviet Union as well as deputy CIA director and later deputy to National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft. Yet, in those years, he couldn't bring himself to believe that the Soviets were done for even as that empire was disappearing from the face of the Earth. In the words of former National Security Council official Roger Morris, Gates "waged a final battle against the Soviets, denying at every turn that the old enemy was actually dying." As former CIA official Melvin Goodman has put the matter: "Gates was wrong about every key intelligence question of the 1980s... A Kremlinologist by training, Gates was one of the last American hardliners to comprehend the changes taking place in the Soviet Union. He was wrong about Mikhail Gorbachev, wrong about the importance of reform, wrong about Moscow's pursuit of arms control and détente with the United States. He was wrong about the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan..."

Vice-President Joe Biden, recently described as potentially "the second-most-powerful vice president in history" as well as "the president's all-purpose adviser and sage" on foreign policy, was during the Bush years a believer in nation-building in Afghanistan, voted to authorize the invasion of Iraq, and later promoted the idea -- like Caesar re: Gaul -- of dividing that country into three parts (without, of course, bothering to ask the Iraqis), while leaving 25,000-30,000 American troops based there in perpetuity, while "these regions build up their state police forces."

General Stanley McChrystal, our war commander in Afghanistan and now the poster boy for counterinsurgency warfare, had his skills honed purely in the field of counterterrorism. He was a Special Ops guy. The man who is now to "protect" the Afghan people previously won his spurs as the head of the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) in Iraq and Afghanistan. He ran the "manhunters" - essentially, that is, he was the leader of a team of assassins and evidently part of what reporter Seymour Hersh has termed an "executive assassination wing" of that command, possibly taking orders directly from Vice President Dick Cheney. His skills involved guns to the head, not protective boots on the ground.

General David Petraeus, the general leading everything, who has been practically deified in the U.S. media, is perhaps the savviest and most accomplished of this crew. He surged into Iraq in 2007 and, with the help of fortuitous indigenous developments, staunched the worst of the bleeding, leaving behind a big question mark. His greatest skill, however, has been in fostering the career of David Petraeus. He is undoubtedly an advisor with an agenda and in his wake come a whole crew of military and think-tank experts, with almost unblemished records of being wrong in the Bush years, whom the surge in Iraq recredentialed.

Karl Eikenberry, our ambassador to Kabul, in his previous career in the U.S. military served two tours of duty in Afghanistan, and as the commander of Combined Forces Command Afghanistan was the general responsible for building up the Afghan army and "reforming" that country's police force. On both counts, we know how effective that attempt proved.

And when it comes to key figures with well-padded Washington CVs like Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or James Jones, present national security advisor and former commandant of the Marine Corps, as well as the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, a close friend of Senator John McCain, and a former revolving-door board member of Chevron and Boeing, remind me just what sticks in your mind about their accomplishments?

So, when you think about Barack Obama's Afghan decisions, imagine first that the man considered the smartest, most thoughtful president of our era chose to surround himself with these people. He chose, that is, not fresh air, or fresh thought in the field of foreign and war policy, but the airless precincts where the combined wisdom of Washington and the Pentagon now exists, and the remarkable lack of accomplishment that goes with it. In short, these are people whose credentials largely consist of not having been right about much over the years.

Admittedly, this administration has called in practically every Afghan expert in sight. Everyone involved could now undoubtedly expound on relatively abstruse questions of Afghan tribal politics, locate Paktia Province on a map in a flash, and tell you just which of Hamid Karzai's ministers are under investigation for corruption.

Unfortunately, the most essential problem isn't in Afghanistan; it's here in the United States, in Washington, where knowledge is slim, egos large, and national security wisdom is deeply imprinted on a system bleeding money and breaking down. The president campaigned on the slogan, "Change we can believe in." He then chose as advisors -- in the economic sphere as well, where a similar record of gross error, narrow and unimaginative thinking, and over-identification with the powerful could easily be compiled -- a crew who had never seen a significant change, or an out-of-the-ordinary thought it could live with -- and still can't.

As a result, the Iraq War has yet to begin to go away, the Afghan War is being escalated in a major way, the Middle East is in some turmoil, Guantanamo remains open, black sites are still operating in Afghanistan, the Pentagon's budget has grown yet larger, and supplemental demands on Congress for yet more money to pay for George W. Bush's wars will, despite promises otherwise, soon enough be made.

A stale crew breathing stale air has ensured that Afghanistan, the first of Bush's disastrous wars, is now truly Obama's War; and the news came directly from West Point where the president surrendered to his militarized fate.

OBAMA'S AFGHAN WAR DECISION: A TEAM OF RIVALS (NPR)

By Tom Bowman And Mara Liasson

NPR, December 4, 2009

President Obama has ordered 30,000 more troops into battle in Afghanistan. The escalation is meant to be as rapid as possible, but the process that brought the president to this point wasn't rapid at all.

It was lengthy and deliberate - and it had many twists and turns.

Obama's willingness to escalate the war in Afghanistan was no secret. In fact, it was his policy and his preference since before he took office. During the campaign, he was one of many Democrats who saw Afghanistan as the "good war," while the war in Iraq was seen as a waste of blood and treasure. On the campaign trail, Obama went even further, excoriating President Bush for taking his eye off the ball.

"And that is why, as president, I will make the fight against al-Qaida and the Taliban the top priority that it should be. This is a war we have to win," Obama said as a candidate.

For some Democrats, supporting the fight in Afghanistan was a way to deflect the old soft-on-national-security charge often leveled against their party. But unlike other Democrats, Obama never abandoned his belief that Afghanistan was the necessary war. Two months after he took office, the

president announced a comprehensive new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. The goal: to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaida.

"That is a cause that could not be more just. And to the terrorists who oppose us, my message is the same: We will defeat you," Obama said in March.

In that speech, the president also said he was sending 21,000 more troops to Afghanistan. But even then his general wanted more.

On a visit to Afghanistan in June, National Security Adviser James Jones warned the commanders not to ask for more troops so soon. If they did, Jones said, using a salty abbreviation, the president would have a "whiskey tango foxtrot" moment - as in WTF.

But by then, Obama had already asked his new commanding general in Afghanistan, Stanley McChrystal, to assess the war effort.

A New General For A Long War

Defense Secretary Robert Gates picked McChrystal because he was unhappy with the way things were going in Afghanistan. Security was deteriorating. The commander there had asked for more troops but had given little sense of how they would be used.

So Gates, together with the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Mike Mullen, handed the mission to McChrystal and Lt. Gen. David Rodriguez.

Gates said McChrystal and Rodriguez "will provide the kind of new leadership and fresh thinking" that is necessary.

McChrystal provided that fresh thinking in late summer. His review came in a classified assessment to the White House. The document, leaked to the news media, warned that the war could be lost without more U.S. forces.

McChrystal asked for those forces - as many as 80,000 more troops, and as few as 12,000. After his plans and troop request landed at the White House, McChrystal heard nothing for weeks.

That's because there was turmoil in Washington. Democrats balked. The Obama administration seriously considered sending no new troops at all. It also looked at an idea pushed by Vice President Joe Biden: Limit American troops in Afghanistan and use drone aircraft to kill al-Qaida in Pakistan.

In early October, McChrystal was asked in London whether that plan made sense.

"The short glib answer is no, you have to navigate from where you are, not from where you wish you were," he said. "A strategy that does not leave Afghanistan in a stable position is probably a short-sighted strategy."

That comment got McChrystal into trouble inside the White House.

A day later, McChrystal was summoned while Obama was on a European trip. They met aboard Air Force One in Copenhagen. Some thought it was a dressing-down. But the president backed his general and later told lawmakers, "He's my hand-picked guy."

McChrystal stopped speaking publicly. But his boss didn't. Mullen told Congress that he endorsed McChrystal's recommendations.

"I do believe that having heard his views and having great confidence in his leadership, a properly resourced counterinsurgency probably means more forces," Mullen said.

The military brass was lining up in favor of more forces. Some in the White House were feeling boxed in. The debate was on.

Deliberation And Debate At The White House

At the White House, the decision-making process was lengthy and deliberate. The president's war council met 10 times over three months. There were leaks, which infuriated Gates, particularly when it was publicly revealed that Karl Eikenberry, the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan and a former Army general, opposed the troop buildup.

The president was not pleased either, as he told CBS News.

"I think I'm probably angrier than Bob Gates about it. Partly, partly because, you know, we have these deliberations in the Situation Room for a reason. Because we are making decisions that are life and death," Obama said.

In some cases, White House officials publicly questioned the assumptions behind McChrystal's recommendation. In doing so, they were giving voice to the views of many Democrats in Congress who opposed any escalation. And they were sending an important political message that the president wouldn't just rubber-stamp the general's request.

Meanwhile, White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel expressed doubts - doubts that the president shared - about the legitimacy of Afghan President Hamid Karzai .

"The question is, do you have a credible partner that could then fill that space that we're asking the American troops to create?" Emanuel said.

In the end, the president decided he had no choice but to work with Karzai, despite marred presidential elections in August and charges of corruption inside Karzai's administration.

In the end, by settling on the number of troops Gates had recommended in October, Obama was siding with the Pentagon and rejecting the view of his vice president, who had favored a more targeted strategy.

"I was skeptical of taking our eye off the ball. The ball is al-Qaida. That's the reason we're there," Biden told NBC. "They are in Pakistan. The Taliban leadership is in Pakistan. And I wanted to make sure that the focus stayed on those two elements of our concern and didn't sort of morph into a nation-building exercise that would tie us down for 10 years."

But in the end, the president's team of rivals was on board. His strategy was an Obama-style balance - a bigger footprint than the vice president and others wanted, the Taliban would be degraded not destroyed, there would be no nation-building, and there would be a date to begin a drawdown of troops.

Throughout it all, Republicans complained about how long it took the president to decide. Former Vice President Dick Cheney accused Obama of "dithering."

In his speech Tuesday night at West Point, Obama defended the process.

"Now, let me be clear: There has never been an option before me that called for troop deployments before 2010, so there has been no delay or denial of resources necessary for the conduct of the war during this review period. Instead, the review has allowed me to ask the hard questions and to explore all the different options," Obama said.

After all the hard questions were asked and all the premises were challenged, the president called his team into the Oval Office at 5 p.m. Sunday and told them what he had decided: a swifter ramp-up of troop strength - what the president called moving the bell curve to the left - in hopes of quickly improving the Afghans' ability to take over security responsibilities. He had put his own stamp on McChrystal's request. In the Oval Office, the president issued the order to implement his strategy immediately.

Obama's War

So now the mission was back in the hands of the generals. Even as the president spoke to the nation from West Point, the Marines had begun moving equipment by sea to Afghanistan.

McChrystal and Gen. David Petraeus, the commander of all U.S. forces in the region, had made the case in those White House meetings: The U.S. must hit the Taliban hard, and hit them fast.

At West Point, it was clear the president had been persuaded.

"We must reverse the Taliban's momentum and deny it the ability to overthrow the government. And we must strengthen the capacity of Afghanistan's security forces and government, so that they can take lead responsibility for Afghanistan's future," Obama said.

That's the only way U.S. troops can leave.

McChrystal said it would take 400,000 Afghan troops to secure their country. The White House and Pentagon doubt it's possible to train and field that many.

So having conducted a disciplined debate for months, the president now finds that his strategy depends on forces he cannot control: Afghanistan's government and its military.

DID THE STIMULUS STIMULATE? (FORBES)

By Bruce Bartlett

Forbes, December 4, 2009

Yes, but tax cuts had the smallest bang for the buck.

Lately, Republicans have had a field day attacking the Obama administration for rising unemployment. The first Friday of every month,

when the Bureau of Labor Statistics releases the previous month's unemployment rate, has become a day Republicans eagerly look forward to and Democrats dread.

In part, Democrats have themselves to blame. In promoting a big fiscal stimulus earlier this year, two of the administration's top economists, Christina Romer and Jared Bernstein, estimated that the unemployment rate would not go above 8% if stimulus were enacted. It has been well above that rate since February and is now above 10%.

In their defense, Romer and Bernstein also estimated that unemployment would peak at 9% in the absence of stimulus. In other words, the depth of the recession was much greater than anticipated. It's still reasonable to say that the unemployment rate would be even higher if no stimulus had been enacted.

In retrospect, it would have been better if the administration had said nothing about the unemployment rate. That's a number that is inherently hard to predict because it is a function of two different things that don't necessarily move together: the number of people working and the number of people in the labor force (working or actively looking for work). Also, the unemployment rate is calculated from a survey of households and thus has the same limitations as public opinion polling. That's why economists tend to focus on payroll employment as a better measure of labor market conditions, because that figure comes directly from employers.

What Romer and Bernstein basically did was to estimate the effect of stimulus on the gross domestic product based on well-established linkages called multipliers. Certain policies have long been known to give a large bang for the buck in terms of how much GDP is increased per \$1 of spending or tax cuts, while others have a very low multiplier effect. Romer and Bernstein estimated that the peak impact of stimulus would come after eight quarters, and that increased government purchases would add \$1.57 to GDP for every \$1 spent, while \$1 of tax cuts would add only 99 cents.

From this, Romer and Bernstein estimated that the \$775 billion stimulus package then being proposed by the administration would ultimately raise GDP by \$433 billion or 3.7%. Since we know from experience that each one percentage point rise in real GDP creates approximately 1 million jobs, they concluded that the stimulus would create 3.7 million jobs.

[Read All Comments](#)

It should be emphasized that stimulus takes time to work, and that these economic effects are relative to what would have been the case in the absence of action; that is, a do-nothing baseline. Most importantly, the ultimate impact of the stimulus will not come until the end of 2010. Therefore, we are less than halfway through the forecast period and, consequently, have necessarily seen only limited impact from the stimulus.

In this context, the administration's estimate that 640,329 jobs have been saved or created by the stimulus is not unreasonable. Unfortunately, the administration chose a method of calculating this figure that was deeply flawed, thus opening it to Republican ridicule.

From the beginning, the Obama administration was determined to prove beyond a shadow of doubt that the stimulus would create jobs. To this end, it set up an elaborate system of reporting in which every government agency, business or entity that created or saved a job because of stimulus spending documented the fact. The results are tabulated on a running basis at www.recovery.gov.

Numerous press reports have shown the dubious nature of many of the jobs said to have been created. My favorite is the Kentucky shoe store owner who supposedly saved nine jobs with \$889.60 in stimulus funds. To make a long story short, since he sold nine pairs of work boots to the Army he just assumed that nine jobs had been saved somehow or other.

A Government Accountability Office study found many similar examples; virtually all are the result of confusion and misunderstanding. Those asked to fill out the stimulus reports were asked to report data based on unclear instructions and with no guidance or training. Sadly, a lot of government data is just as poor in quality. Data collection and sausage-making have a lot in common.

It would have been better if the administration had stuck to estimating

jobs based on the growth in GDP. One particularly important reason for doing so is that the White House's 640,329 jobs estimate was based on only a fraction of the total stimulus package, those elements involving direct spending. But a considerable portion of the package involved tax cuts and transfer payments such as the extension of unemployment compensation. These programs also increased GDP and thus created or saved jobs, but were not counted because no specific jobs can be identified.

In a recent report, the Congressional Budget Office took into account the impact of the entire stimulus package. According to its calculations, GDP was 1.2% to 3.2% higher in the third quarter than it would have been in the absence of stimulus. (According to the latest Commerce Department data, real GDP grew 2.8% in the third quarter vs. a decrease of 0.7% in the second and a decrease of 6.4% in the first.) The CBO estimates that between 600,000 and 1.6 million additional people were employed as a consequence.

The CBO also looked at the stimulative effect of various parts of the stimulus package. It found that purchases of goods and services by the federal government--such as for public works--had the largest bang for the buck, raising GDP by \$2.50 for each \$1 spent. Transfer payments had a lesser impact, but were still significantly more stimulative than tax cuts. Moreover, tax cuts of the sort favored by Republicans have the least impact. According to the CBO, tax cuts for low-income individuals raise GDP by as much as \$1.70 for every \$1 of revenue loss, while those for the rich and for corporations raised GDP by at most 50 cents for every \$1 of revenue loss.

Lest one suspect the CBO of bias, private economists have also found that tax cuts are far less stimulative than spending under current economic conditions. Mark Zandi of Moody's (MCO - news - people) Economy.com, an advisor to John McCain last year, recently testified before the Joint Economic Committee of Congress that the Republicans' favorite tax proposals--making all the Bush tax cuts permanent and cutting the corporate tax rate--would raise GDP by at most 37 cents for each \$1 of revenue loss. By contrast, increased outlays for infrastructure, aid to state and local governments and extended unemployment benefits increase GDP by between \$1.41 and \$1.57 for every \$1 spent.

Indeed, one can argue that the failure of the stimulus to create or save more jobs occurred largely because Obama included too many non-stimulative tax cuts in the stimulus package. These tax cuts, such as the Making Work Pay Credit, accounted for more than 40% of the cost of the \$787 billion stimulus package. Based on the CBO analysis, I don't think there is any question that the economy would be much worse off today if Republicans had gotten their wish and 100% of the stimulus had been in the form of tax cuts.

Those who disagree should keep in mind that in fiscal year 2009, which ended on Sept. 30, federal revenues came to just 14.9% of GDP, compared to 17.7% in 2008 and 18.8% in 2007, according to the CBO. In effect, we've had a tax cut equal to 4% of GDP over the last two years. By comparison, the Kennedy-Johnson tax cut of 1964 was only 1.6% of GDP and the Reagan tax cut of 1981 was 1.9% of GDP in its first two years. (See this Treasury Department study.)

Nevertheless, Republicans continue to trumpet tax cuts as the one and only cure for whatever ails the economy, as House Republican Whip Eric Cantor, R-Va., did in a Dec. 2 speech. Nowhere in it, however, is there any statement of the theory by which more tax cuts will stimulate growth when taxes are already at their lowest level in three generations, and when there is no evidence that the tax cuts enacted in February or last year's tax rebate--which the Bush administration promised would stop the recession in its tracks--have had any meaningful stimulative effect. (On failure of the Republican rebate, see this CBO analysis.)

I think there is still adequate stimulus in the pipeline--only a quarter of the \$787 billion stimulus package had been dispensed as of September (in the form of both spending and tax cuts) according to the CBO. This should give the U.S. 2.7% real GDP growth next year vs. negative 2.4% this year, according to the latest consensus forecast--a turnaround of better than 5%. Given that that the federal budget deficit is already worrisome, it would be unwise to pump more fiscal stimulus into the economy. We should let the medicine we've already taken have a chance to work before taking more.

ADMINISTRATION GOES AFTER NONCOMPLIANT RECOVERY ACT RECIPIENTS (GOVEXEC)

By Robert Brodsky

Government Executive, December 4, 2009

Recovery Act recipients that failed to submit spending reports could face stiff punishments, including the loss of stimulus funds, the Obama administration announced on Wednesday evening.

In a memorandum to agency heads, Office of Management and Budget Director Peter R. Orszag directed officials to develop a master list of all noncompliant recipients and to determine the reason they did not file reports. If recipients encountered technical challenges, then agencies are to help them file correctly in the future. But, in cases where the reason for not reporting was more nefarious, the penalty will be harsher, the memo said.

"Noncompliant recipients, including those who are persistently late or negligent in their reporting obligations, are subject to federal action, up to and including the termination of federal funding or the ability to receive federal funds in the future," Orszag wrote.

If the noncompliance appears to be fraudulent, agencies must refer the matter for criminal investigation, he added.

The administration has estimated that about 10 percent of entities that received stimulus contracts, grants or loans failed to file a spending report during the first round of submissions. An additional 15 percent of recipients were tardy, officials said.

"More than 90 percent of all Recovery Act funding recipients reported on the use of their funding," Vice President Joe Biden said in a statement. "While this level is remarkably high for a first-of-its-kind nationwide effort, missing information is unacceptable. We will work to make sure that recipients fully meet their legal obligation to report."

The Recovery Act does not impose specific penalties on entities that fail to report, although members of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee are considering such a legislative change. But, the chief stimulus watchdog said he plans to make sure noncompliant recipients are identified on Recovery.gov.

"I intend to try and embarrass them by putting them up on my Web site when we get the list and drive accountability that way," said Earl Devaney, chairman of the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, during a Thursday morning panel discussion at the National Press Club hosted by Government Executive.

While the stimulus bill does not authorize sanctions for failure to meet reporting requirements, the terms and conditions of certain funding streams and contracts could allow for punishments, said Ed DeSeve, special adviser to the president for the Recovery Act.

Devaney said the noncompliant entities must note their late spending when the next batch of recipient reports is due in January. He does not anticipate creating an interim reporting period.

The addition of those late reports is likely to increase the administration's frequently debated totals of jobs saved or created by the stimulus. Recipients reported in October that they had saved or created more than 640,000 direct jobs through \$160 billion in stimulus spending, but media reports have shown instances where jobs were miscounted.

The debate over the 640,000 jobs number appears to have worn on Devaney. "I wish that number would be on page 95 of our Web site," he said.

The former Interior Department inspector general said, "A lot of inaccurate data was in that first round of data and, quite frankly, mistakes were made." Among those mistakes were some reports that attributed spending to nonexistent congressional districts, creating a cause célèbre in Washington and in the media, he said.

Moving forward, the Recovery Act board plans to use a software program that will prevent recipients from typing in a congressional district that does not exist.

But, Devaney noted data always will be subject to human error and, ultimately, the reports are only as "good as people try to make them." Despite the hiccups, he expects that the level of real-time reporting and

transparency developed through the Recovery Act will become a model on the government stage for years to come.

WHEELING OFFICIALS PART OF CONFERENCE CALL WITH VICE PRESIDENT BIDEN (WTOV)

WTOV-TV, December 4, 2009

Wheeling Mayor Andy McKenzie was one of five mayors from across the country on a conference call with Vice President Joe Biden Thursday morning.

McKenzie and Wheeling City Manager Robert Herron listened in to Biden's expectations for stimulus funding and the reporting processes during the hour-long call.

"It was an excellent opportunity to kind of hear from the administration through the vice president -- kind of how things are going with stimulus funds, what the future may be with stimulus funding, what opportunities may exist in the future regarding additional funding," Herron said.

McKenzie also had the chance to ask Biden questions and express any concerns over stimulus funding.

Herron said Biden's intergovernmental relations director called the city's offices on Wednesday to set up the call.

3 SECRET SERVICE OFFICERS PUT ON LEAVE IN WHITE HOUSE GATE-CRASHING (NYT)

By Ginger Thompson And Janie Lorber

New York Times, December 4, 2009

WASHINGTON - Three Secret Service officers have been placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of an investigation into how two uninvited guests managed to crash President Obama's first state dinner last week, the director of the service said Thursday.

The director, Mark Sullivan, revealed the suspensions under heavy questioning from members of a Congressional panel looking into the incident.

Mr. Sullivan told the House Homeland Security Committee that an initial investigation had shown it was "human error" that allowed two aspiring reality television contestants, Tareq and Michaela Salahis, to penetrate security around the White House.

"I've asked myself these questions a thousand times over the last week," a beleaguered Mr. Sullivan said to legislators. "And what I keep coming back to is that we didn't follow procedures."

"Do I like to see this? Do any of our people like to see this?" he added. "No, we don't. We've been beating ourselves up over this."

Legislators at the packed hearing seemed unsatisfied. They expressed outrage at the potential risk posed by the security breach at the nation's most important address on such an exclusive occasion. They brought up security problems that arose during Mr. Obama's inauguration, and asked whether there were systemic problems at the Secret Service.

Many pointed fingers at the White House, criticizing Mr. Obama's social secretary, Desiree Rogers, for failing to post members of her staff at checkpoints alongside Secret Service agents, as has been standard procedure at most such events in the past.

"The Secret Service is expected to take a bullet for the president," said Representative Charlie Dent, Republican of Pennsylvania. "But they're not expected to take one for the president's staff."

Legislators aimed their most scathing remarks at the Salahis, the Virginia couple whose escapade has riveted the world. The Salahis declined to appear at the hearing.

Representative Bennie Thompson, Democrat of Mississippi and chairman of the committee, said he would move to issue subpoenas for the Salahis if they refused to appear next week.

Several other legislators described the Salahis as criminals who should be brought to justice.

Representative Sheila Jackson Lee, Democrat of Texas, held up posters showing the Salahis shaking Mr. Obama's hand and posing with Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. She read e-mail messages indicating the Salahis knew they did not have invitations to the state dinner, but decided to try to talk their way into the event anyway.

"This is a law enforcement issue that could have ended in a horrific

incident," Ms. Lee said, pointing at the posters. "The threat was severe."

Mr. Sullivan, a career Secret Service agent who was appointed director in 2006, tried unsuccessfully to assuage the legislators' concerns, saying Mr. Obama was never in danger the night of the state dinner on Nov. 24.

And he said Mr. Obama had not received more death threats than any of his recent predecessors.

Still, Mr. Sullivan acknowledged that the potential for harm was great. He said the Salahis had managed to get past three Secret Service checkpoints on their way into the dinner because uniformed officers did not follow procedures.

He said agents had been instructed to contact their supervisors if anyone came to a checkpoint who was not on a list, but that did not happen.

And Mr. Sullivan said he did not learn that uninvited guests had made it into the dinner until the next morning through newspaper reports and photographs that the Salahis had posted on their Facebook page.

Mr. Sullivan would not identify the three agents who allowed the Salahis into the dinner. But he told legislators they had been put on paid administrative leave until the end of the investigation.

"Beyond that, I would prefer not to go further," Mr. Sullivan said. "But I will tell you that we are going to look at this, we're going to find out what the culpability was, and we'll take appropriate action."

The White House responded to the criticism of the past several days by acknowledging Thursday that more could have been done to prevent the Salahis from getting into the dinner, and by announcing that from now on, there would be someone from the White House posted at checkpoints with Secret Service agents.

Still, the ranking Republican on the committee, Representative Peter T. King of New York, argued that the White House should share more of the blame. The Salahis, Mr. King argued, might never have gotten into the dinner if someone from the social secretary's office - which created the guest list - had been working alongside Secret Service agents.

That kind of "layered security," lawmakers said, was customary at most White House events.

Mr. King accused the White House of "stonewalling" for failing to send Ms. Rogers to answer questions at the hearing. But Mr. Thompson refused a request to subpoena her, saying: "The social office plans parties. They are not responsible for security."

SECRET SERVICE TAKES BLAME FOR WHITE HOUSE PARTY CRASHERS (MCT)

McClatchy, December 4, 2009

WASHINGTON - The head of the Secret Service accepted full responsibility Thursday for last week's security breach at President Barack Obama's first state dinner, but he said that the president and Vice President Joe Biden were never in danger from a party-crashing couple who shook hands and posed for pictures with them.

Secret Service Director Mark Sullivan told the House Homeland Security Committee that his agents were at fault for allowing uninvited Washington socialites Tareq and Michaela Salahi into a lavish state dinner for Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. He said the Salahis had shown their passports when asked for identification, then were allowed in.

Sullivan told the committee that three uniformed agents had been put on administrative leave in the wake of the incident.

"In our judgment, a mistake was made," he told the committee. "In our line of work, we cannot afford even one mistake. I fully acknowledge that the proper procedures were not followed. ... This flaw has not changed our agency's standard, which is to be right 100 percent of the time."

He added: "This is our fault, and our fault alone."

However, several committee members said it was unfair for the Secret Service to take full blame for the party-crashers, and that they thought that Sullivan was falling on his sword for the White House.

"We always expect the Secret Service to take a bullet for the president, but we don't expect Secret Service to take a bullet for the president's staff," said Rep. Charlie Dent, R-Pa.

Sullivan was the lone witness at Thursday's hearing, in a room packed with onlookers, reporters and photographers from mainstream media outlets to television's "Inside Edition."

The Salahis, who've been angling to become contestants on the Bravo cable network's upcoming "Real Housewives of D.C." reality TV series, and White House social secretary Desiree Rogers, who oversaw logistics for the dinner, were invited to testify, but declined. White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs said Wednesday that White House staff members didn't answer to Congress.

Committee Chairman Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., ordered staffers to prepare the committee's first-ever subpoenas for the Salahis and have them ready to be issued next week. He warned that the couple could face charges of contempt of Congress if they fail to respond.

Rep. Peter King of New York, the committee's top-ranking Republican, said that Rogers also should be subpoenaed. King squarely blamed Rogers, saying that her office didn't sufficiently staff the dinner or carefully monitor the guest list. He said that usually at White House social events, a representative of the social secretary's office was at checkpoints alongside Secret Service agents to monitor the guest list.

"The reality is, social events at the White House is a shared responsibility. ... The social secretary's office was not standing there with the Secret Service," King said. "Not one person from the social secretary's office was standing there. Not one."

Thompson and other committee members shrugged off King's accusations.

"Social secretaries don't plan security, they plan parties," Thompson said.

Sullivan, however, did tell the committee that the Secret Service had a planning meeting with the White House before the dinner and it was decided there that Secret Service agents would have the sole responsibility of staffing the checkpoint that the Salahis entered.

Pressed by King on whether the couple would have gotten into the dinner if someone from the social secretary's office had been at the checkpoint with the agents, Sullivan said, "It would have helped."

Thompson rebuffed King's request to subpoena Rogers, saying that the Salahis, not Rogers, are the central figures in the breach.

"We cannot forget that amidst all the hullabaloo and uproar, the most important and indisputable fact is that a couple gained unauthorized access to the White House grounds because no one from the Secret Service prevented them from entering," Thompson said in his opening remarks. "There were undeniable planning and execution failures of the entire Secret Service apparatus."

Perhaps the most pointed questions to Sullivan came from African-American members of the committee. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton, D-D.C., pressed him on whether the Secret Service has enough resources to protect Obama, the nation's first African-American president.

She cited claims by Ronald Kessler, the author of "In the President's Secret Service," that since Obama took office last January, death threats against the president had risen 400 percent from a rate of around 3,000 per year during George W. Bush's presidency.

Sullivan said the threat rate was now at the same level that it was for Bush and former President Bill Clinton.

Rep. Yvette Clarke, D-N.Y., suggested that race might have played a role in the breach. She noted that the Salahis easily entered the White House, while she had difficulty with a Secret Service agent as she tried to enter Denver's Invesco Field at Mile High stadium in August 2008 to watch Obama accept the Democratic presidential nomination despite having a congressional pin and identification.

"I find it ironic that the Salahis were able to get in to the White House with such ease when I was basically detained by Secret Service just trying to get into Invesco Stadium to nominate my president," she said. "So there seems to be some standards about who is credible in their description of whom they are and where they belong and who does not."

By Jeff Bliss

Bloomberg News, December 4, 2009

Dec. 3 (Bloomberg) -- Three Secret Service officers involved in a security breach that allowed an uninvited couple to slip into a Nov. 24 state dinner at the White House have been put on administrative leave, the agency's director said.

The officers didn't follow "a simple procedure, a simple protocol" in checking Tareq and Michaela Salahi, Secret Service Director Mark Sullivan told a House panel today. "It was just poor judgment."

President Barack Obama said he felt safe with his Secret Service protection. "I could not have more confidence in the Secret Service," he said in an interview with USA Today. Still, "the system didn't work the way it was supposed to" in the gate-crashing incident, he said.

Sullivan was the sole witness before the House Homeland Security Committee. The other witnesses invited - the Salahis and White House Social Secretary Desiree Rogers - didn't appear. Representative Bennie Thompson, the Mississippi Democrat who heads the panel, said subpoenas will be prepared for the Salahis so the committee can vote next week on whether to force them to testify.

A phone call to the Virginia couple's attorney this morning wasn't immediately returned.

Subpoena Dispute

Thompson said he wouldn't support a subpoena for Rogers because she was "not a central figure" in planning security for the dinner for Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Representative Peter King of New York, the panel's ranking Republican, urged the committee to subpoena Rogers as well because White House staffers traditionally have been posted at checkpoints to help the Secret Service during events.

Rogers's failure to appear before the committee was "stonewalling," King said in an interview ahead of today's hearing.

White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said that Rogers, who oversaw the state dinner, wouldn't testify because of the constitutional separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches of government.

The Obama administration did say it shares blame for the security breach and now is posting a staff member at the White House gate for events.

"The White House did not do everything we could have done to assist the United States Secret Service ensure that only invited guests enter the complex," Jim Messina, the president's deputy chief of staff, wrote in a memo released yesterday.

Checkpoint Staffing

Lawmakers wanted to ask Rogers why no one from her staff was posted at the White House gate to vet guests at Secret Service checkpoints.

Representative Loretta Sanchez, a California Democrat, said every White House event she attended had an administration staffer at the checkpoint.

"Why would you all agree that no person from the White House would be standing there," she asked Sullivan.

The director said it was unusual not to have a White House staffer there. "I haven't seen that happen all that often," he said.

Sullivan said the Secret Service officers under scrutiny for the security breach will receive pay while on leave.

"But I will tell you that we are going to look at this," he told the committee. "We're going to find out what the culpability was and we'll take the appropriate action."

Facebook Photos

Sullivan said the Secret Service first learned of the security breach the day after the dinner from Facebook Inc., which hosts a page on its social-networking service for Michaela Salahi that included pictures taken at the dinner.

Under the tightened screening detailed in Messina's memo, all guests for future state dinners and other events will be checked off by White House staff as well as the Secret Service.

Those procedures were used Dec. 1 for a White House holiday party, Gibbs said.

Once the Salahis got past the White House gate, they posed for photos with Vice President Joe Biden and Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel and other guests. In a Dec. 1 interview on NBC's "Today" program, the couple denied crashing the party.

King, after a conversation with the Salahis' lawyer yesterday, said the couple knew an invitation they had sought to get hadn't been secured when they left for the White House.

"They thought they almost had an invitation," he said. When security guards allowed them in, they thought the invitation had come through, King said.

Scrutiny of Salahis

The Salahis are receiving scrutiny about their other activities, according to the Washington Post. The paper reported today that the state of Virginia is investigating America's Polo Cup, a business entity run by the Salahis, that the couple says raises funds for their charitable organization.

Sullivan said the Secret Service has the staff and funding it needs to do its job and that the number of threats to Obama isn't higher than with Presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton.

"The threats right now and the inappropriate interest that we are seeing is the same level as it has been for the previous two presidents at this point" in their terms, he said.

To contact the reporter on this story: Jeff Bliss in Washington at jbliss@bloomberg.net

REPUBLICAN AND DEMOCRATIC NOT THE PARTIES THEY HAD IN MIND (WP)

By Dana Milbank

Washington Post, December 4, 2009

Among party crashers, it must be considered gauche to attend a party to which you were actually invited.

We can infer this, because when Tareq and Michaela Salahi were asked to come before a House panel on Thursday to explain how they crashed President Obama's state dinner, they didn't accept the invitation. They didn't even give the courtesy of an RSVP to the Homeland Security Committee, which had gone to the trouble of printing up name cards and setting places for them at the witness table. As Emily Post says, "Being a 'no show' is unacceptable."

And the Salahis weren't the only ones with bad manners. White House social secretary Desiree Rogers, also invited, sent her regrets to the host, Chairman Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.), but neglected to RSVP to the committee co-host, ranking Republican Peter King (N.Y.), who was offended. "Maybe you received an official notice from the White House; we certainly didn't," King told Thompson, calling Rogers's faux pas "an affront."

With all three of the guests of honor demonstrating such poor form, the seating chart for the event was limited to the one person who accepted the committee's invitation, Secret Service Director Mark Sullivan. As holiday parties go, Thompson's was decidedly B-list.

Instead of the Thibaut-Janisson Brut Obama served at the state dinner, the committee served Deer Park. Instead of Isaac Mizrahi, the fashions in the committee room had more of a T.J. Maxx look. The ranking GOP member's jacket was worn and pilling.

Still, there was a red-carpet arrival, although this one technically occurred on the white stone floor of the Cannon House Office Building. Dozens of cameramen and photographers trained their lenses on Sullivan as soon as he emerged from the elevator. Shutters clicked and questions were shouted. Sullivan did not pause to strike a pose. He hurried to the witness table, then sat with eyes fixed on his statement. Stage lights beamed down on him from four directions, and six TV cameras tracked his every grimace. Dena Graziano, a committee spokeswoman, played social secretary. "Did you RSVP?" she asked reporters as they arrived.

Before the hearing, King maintained that he didn't want to "make it a circus." But when you invite two aspiring reality television stars and the White House social secretary to testify at a congressional hearing on party crashing, you might as well call in the Ringling Bros. When Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Tex.) shows up with a poster of the female party crasher

pawing Vice President Biden's chest, you might as well rename yourselves the Committee on Barnum & Bailey.

"What bothers me," declared Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-N.J.), "is that many people are looking at this hearing and thinking it's about some sensational incident."

Now where would they get that idea? Maybe from Chairman Thompson, who, after Sullivan's testimony, ordered aides to place the "Mr. Salahi" and "Mrs. Salahi" placards in front of two empty chairs. As photographers took shots of the seats, Thompson announced his intention to issue subpoenas to compel the crashers' attendance at his next party.

Certainly, Emily Post would say that subpoenas are impolite.

It's hard to say whose behavior constituted the greatest breach of etiquette. The party crashers? Rogers, for declining to testify on grounds that answering questions about party guests would violate the Constitution? Or Thompson, for insisting on "full accountability" but then blocking a subpoena of Rogers, a central player in the drama?

"This hearing is not about crashing a party at the White House," the chairman said as he kicked off the party-crasher hearing. "Neither is it about wannabe celebrities or reality television." Growing more dramatic with each sentence, Thompson asserted that "we are all fortunate that this diplomatic celebration did not become a night of horror."

Night of horror? To be sure, the Secret Service and/or Rogers goofed in admitting the uninvited socialites, but lapses occur all the time; the author of this column, an obvious security risk, was once cleared to join a presidential motorcade and fly on Air Force One with no screening of person or luggage. The party crashers, though, "went through every layer of security," as Sullivan pointed out, and didn't pose "a risk to the president."

But lawmakers refused to accept this. Rep. Yvette Clarke (D-N.Y.) spoke about the Ukrainian president's dioxin poisoning and suggested the Salahis might have done the same to Obama, saying "we need to be reassured that we closed every possible loop of harm or danger to our president." Clarke then complained that "the Salahis were able to get into the White House with such ease, when I was basically detained by Secret Service just trying to get into Invesco Stadium" for the Democratic convention. (Maybe she was talking about dioxin then, too?)

After the requisite denunciation of the Secret Service's lapse, many members followed up with fond reminiscences of White House parties past. "I think I've been to over 40 of them," said King, "whether it's Christmas parties or barbecues, an occasional state dinner."

"It's been under three presidents that I've been going to the White House," announced Rep. Loretta Sanchez (D-Calif.).

"We're all going Monday night with guests," added Rep. Jane Harman (D-Calif.).

Assuming Desiree Rogers puts their names on the list.

LAWMAKER: PEOPLE QUESTIONED SALAHIS' PRESENCE AT STATE DINNER (HILL)

By Jordan Fabian

The Hill, December 4, 2009

Guests at the White House state dinner last Tuesday questioned if crashers Michael and Tareq Salahi should have been there, according to a Democratic lawmaker.

In an MSNBC interview on Thursday, Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) said that Michael Salahi's boisterous behavior at the event brought the attention of attendees of the dinner in honor of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

"She was moving around and everybody said, you know, asking the question, who was that?," he said.

Cummings said he saw the Virginia socialites before and during the dinner.

"Oh yeah. Oh, I saw them, talked to them," he said. "No she didn't hug me but she was the life of the party."

Asked to elaborate on the meaning of "life of the party," Cummings said "She acted as if she had 10 invitations."

House Homeland Security Committee chairman Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.) has threatened to compel the Salahis to testify before the panel via subpoena after they turned down his invitation on Wednesday. The committee is holding a hearing on the security breach today.

President Barack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden and other dignitaries snapped photos with the couple, some of which were posted to their Facebook site.

THE REAL WASHINGTON OF 2009 (USAT)

By Chuck Raasch, Gannett National Writer

USA Today, December 4, 2009

The couple that crashed a White House state dinner purportedly in search of "reality" show fame is the perfect symbol of modern Washington.

Fame trumps integrity and legacy. Spend like it's someone else's money. Let others suffer the consequences.

This is Washington in 2009, a city obsessed with personality and finger-pointing while piling trillions in debt on ensuing generations. That moral bankruptcy makes a mockery of two poseurs at the White House gates.

In the case of Tareq and Michaela Salah, who allegedly talked their way through security at a recent state dinner, those suffering the consequences are the people they owe money to and the Secret Service agents who let them in.

Widespread media reports show that the Salahis have left a trail of unpaid or disputed bills. They include everything from vendors for a polo cup he helped found to a \$4,000 hairdresser's bill for her 2007 hair extensions. Tareq Salah is in a bankruptcy battle with his parents over the family's Oasis Vineyards, according to media reports, leaving more unpaid debts.

Given all the problems facing this country, this couple's saga has already sucked up disproportionate attention, with congressional hearings and Secret Service investigations and the predictable media loop. All over a handshake with Barack Obama and a snapshot with smiling Joe Biden, neither who knew the couple. In this town, a picture can open a thousand doors.

On Thursday, the head of the Secret Service told a congressional committee that three agency employees were put on administrative leave with further punishment possible.

It is suspected that this problem begins and ends with the Secret Service. Anyone who has ever been at a White House function in this post-9/11 age knows that if you are not on The List you are not getting in. If the Salahis got inside help, that's a far more serious breach than frazzled security checkers on a rainy night, and more sad testament to the "reality" culture.

For weeks, it's been reported that the Salahis were among those vying to be cast on Bravo's "Real Housewives of D.C." Camera crews followed them to the gates of the White House before last month's state dinner with the Indian prime minister, and the Salahis later posted pictures from their visit on Facebook.

(Writer's privilege: "Reality" is in quotes because anyone who has ever seen one of these shows knows they are contrived, hyped and dramatized. Reality is a 20-year-old soldier sitting on an Afghanistan mountain or a 40-year-old, laid-off single mom wondering how she'll pay the bills.)

The Salahis denied they were gate-crashers.

"We were invited, not crashers, and there isn't anyone who would have the audacity or the poor behavior to do that," Michaela told NBC's Matt Lauer. "No one would do that, and certainly not us."

(NBC's parent company, NBC Universal, owns Bravo, which is producing the "reality" series.)

Our Thanksgiving table this year was graced by four young adults from 20-24, all full of life and possibility. Their government just committed 30,000 more soldiers from their generation to fight in Afghanistan on money their parents are borrowing to add to debt we are already piling on them.

That breach of inter-generational security should be the source of real outrage and shame.

Chuck Raasch writes from Washington for Gannett. Contact him at [craasch\(AT\)gannett.com](mailto:craasch(AT)gannett.com), follow him at <http://twitter.com/craasch> or join in

POLITICAL ANALYST: BEAU BIDEN SHOULD BIDE HIS TIME (USAT)

By Eugene Kiely

USA Today, December 4, 2009

Political analyst Charlie Cook says Beau Biden -- the vice president's son -- should stay put as Delaware's attorney general rather than risk an embarrassing loss to Rep. Mike Castle in next year's Senate race.

Nicole Gaudiano, our colleague at Gannett Washington Bureau, reports that Cook's logic goes like this: Biden would face a tough race against Castle and it would make more sense for the 40-year-old Democrat to wait. Castle, if he wins, may not run for reelection to the Senate in 2014 and Sen. Tom Carper may retire in 2012, Cook said.

"Beau Biden can walk into a Senate seat, absolutely without a scratch, within the next two or four years," Cook said. "Why does he want to run the risk of running against somebody who's got experience all over him in a Republican year? Why does he want to do this?"

The Wilmington News Journal reports today that Castle is leading Biden by 6 points in the latest poll, although the two have exchanged leads in previous polls. Castle has said he will run. Biden has not made a decision, but has said he is seriously considering running.

POLL SHOWS HEALTH CARE VOTE DIDN'T HURT CASTLE (HILL)

By Aaron Blake

The Hill, December 4, 2009

A new poll throws some water on the idea that Rep. Mike Castle (R-Del.) hurt his Senate prospects with his vote against the health care bill.

While Susquehanna showed Castle dropping behind Beau Biden (D) by five points after the vote, Public Policy Polling (PPP) today shows Castle holding steady with a 45-39 lead.

What's more, while Susquehanna speculated about the health care vote hurting Castle, the Democratic-leaning firm PPP actually tested the question. Turns out, more Delaware voters say they are opposed to the health care plan (46 percent) than support it (43 percent).

The poll, combined with Delaware Gov. Jack Markell's (D) comments this week, will give the GOP plenty of ammo to suggest that health care isn't even a winner in a 62 percent Obama state.

Castle remains popular among independents, carrying a 52-23 lead with that group, and he also takes 20 percent of Democrats.

Obama remains over 50 percent in the state, but he is down to 53 percent after polling in the 60s earlier this year. Nearly one-fifth of those who said they voted for Obama (18 percent) said they will back Castle in the Senate race.

Castle's favorability-unfavorability numbers (55-28) are also a good deal better than Biden's (43-35).

"Mike Castle has more appeal to Democrats and independents than any other Republican Senate candidate in the country, and that's allowing him to hold the early lead in this race," PPP President Dean Debnam said.

It's going to be very hard for any other Democrat to beat Castle, but Biden is taking his time in deciding on the race. There's been a lot of talk in recent days about Democrats retiring and dropping out of certain races, but if Biden opts not to run, that might be the biggest sign of trouble ahead for Democrats.

REPUBLICAN REVIVAL (WT)

By Donald Lambro

Washington Times, December 4, 2009

American politics passed the midpoint mark this week between the Republicans' 2008 losses and the 2010 midterm elections, when polls point to Republican Party gains in Congress and the governorships.

The Republican Party clearly has gotten its act together, mounting a united front in Congress against President Obama's fiscal and economic agenda, and gradually is winning back its rank-and-file base and winning support from the large bloc of independent swing voters who have been

fleeing Mr. Obama in droves.

Republicans in both the House and Senate have come together to fight Mr. Obama's economic stimulus plan, his health care takeover, his energy tax proposals in the name of a fictitious climate change, and the rest of his big spending plans.

For anyone who came in late to this story, voters seem to be siding more with the Republicans on the big points than with Mr. Obama and the Democrats.

As the Senate began taking up the Democrats' health care bill this week, the Gallup Poll reported Monday that 49 percent of American voters said they would urge their members of Congress to vote against the bill, while 44 percent said they would advise them to support it.

On the administration's irresponsible decision to bring Sept. 11, 2001, mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and four others to New York for a civilian criminal trial, Americans, by a lopsided 59 percent to 36 percent, say they should be tried in a military court for swift and certain justice.

Democratic leaders and rank-and-file lawmakers, who have been widely critical of Mr. Obama's decision to send more troops to Afghanistan, appear to be significantly out of sync with Americans on this score, too. Gallup found that nearly half of Americans polled (47 percent) support increasing the number of U.S. troops in the war against the Taliban. Thirty-nine percent want to reduce troop levels there.

Some big political movements are going against the Democrats on a number of fronts, as I've detailed in this column over the past several months.

But here in the nation's capital, the liberal Washington Post is finding it hard to recognize that. In a front-page story Monday, the Post ran another of its sweeping polling stories focusing on the irrelevant questions and avoiding the harder ones.

Under the headline "A party both united and divided," the story said the Republican Party's "opposition to Obama is strong" (no kidding), "but Republicans are split on GOP's direction and leaders."

Its analytical spin on the poll's findings, the Post reported, "reveals deep dissatisfaction among GOP voters with the party's leadership as well as ideological and generational differences that may prove big obstacles to the party's plans for reclaiming power."

The story was based in part on a key polling question that asked, "In your view, is the leadership of the Republican party currently taking the party in the right direction or in the wrong direction?" Well, nearly half, 49 percent, said "right direction," while 42 percent said "wrong direction."

Had it asked more specifically whether the party's leadership against the stimulus spending bill was the right or wrong direction, or opposition to the health care bill or to the energy bill, the answers would have been lopsided in favor of the Republican leadership.

In an attempt to prove that Republican voters were divided, the Post asked which Republican leader best reflected the Republican Party's "core values." The results were predictably divided, with a large "no opinion" - as one would expect them to be nearly three years before the 2012 elections, and as they were for the Democrats in 2005.

You would search in vain in this story to find any polling evidence that Americans are almost evenly divided over which party they would support in next year's congressional midterms (as Gallup and other polls have reported).

The Post poll notwithstanding, voters are telling other pollsters that they are not happy with their Democratic leadership. Connecticut Sen. Christopher J. Dodd is in deep trouble in his re-election bid. Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid, if the election were held today, would be sent home. Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s former Senate seat in Delaware is a possible Republican pickup.

The political climate has changed dramatically in a number of Democratic-trending states as voters have turned sour on the majority party's handling of the economy, spending and a monstrous debt that threatens to sandbag the nation's fiscal stability and global credit.

For example: The Columbus Dispatch reported last month that Ohio is turning a "reddish tinge," and it wasn't talking about its autumn colors.

Polls were showing that Republicans were threatening to take back the state's governorship and hold an open Senate seat. A Quinnipiac poll of 1,123 voters found that half said they disapproved of the job Mr. Obama was doing, up from 42 percent in September.

The Nov. 11 poll found that a stunning 64 percent of Ohioans are either somewhat or very dissatisfied with the way Democrats are handling things in the Buckeye State.

"The Democratic lead in the governors' and Senate races has evaporated, and for the first time, President Barack Obama is under water in the most important swing state in the country," said Quinnipiac polling analyst Peter Brown.

The run-up to next year's midterm elections is a work in progress, but it's increasingly clear that the Republican Party is slowly gaining political strength and the Democrats are losing it.

Donald Lambro is chief political correspondent for The Washington Times.

CENTRISTS' DAY BAYH, GRAHAM, LUGAR TO W.H. (POL)

By Alexander Burns

Politico, December 4, 2009

Following one of the most anticipated speeches of his presidency Tuesday night, President Barack Obama is sequestered Wednesday in meetings with aides and lawmakers, including two of the Senate's most prominent centrists. At 3:25 p.m., he meets with Sen. Evan Bayh (D-Ind.), before sitting down with Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) 45 minutes later.

Graham's office pointed to a Nov. 13 statement in which Graham said about the decision to try the Sept. 11 suspects in New York, "I have been asked by the White House to withhold comment about today's Guantanamo decision until I can meet face to face with the president after he returns from Asia. As our commander in chief, I will honor his request. I look forward to discussing this issue further." Vice President Joe Biden, meanwhile, meets with Senate Foreign Relations Committee ranking member Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) at 3 p.m. to discuss arms control. The talk is not about Afghanistan but is a rescheduled meeting from a couple of weeks ago, a Lugar spokesman said.

OBAMA FAMILY LIGHTS NATIONAL CHRISTMAS TREE (AP)

By Christine Simmons, The Associated Press

AP, December 4, 2009

WASHINGTON -- Surrounded by celebrity performers and characters from the North Pole, the Obama family on Thursday led a countdown and lighted the National Christmas Tree.

First lady Michelle Obama and daughters Malia and Sasha helped President Barack Obama press a button to light the tree, an annual tradition since the 1920s. "I'm technologically challenged and I might not get this right," the president joked. "Everybody has got to help me out here."

The Obamas and the spectators counted down from five, and the red and yellow lights came alive on the 40-foot Colorado blue spruce growing on the Ellipse, just south of the White House. "It worked," Obama shouted.

After the lighting, Sheryl Crow, who performed at some of Obama's inaugural festivities, sang "Jingle Bell Rock." Hip hop artist Common rapped as a children's group sang. "American Idol" winner Jordin Sparks dazzled onlookers bundled in coats and scarves.

"I told Sasha we're not on 'American Idol,'" the president said about his 8-year-old daughter, who sat on his lap during part of the event. The Obama family and Vice President Joe Biden and his grandchildren watched from seats beside the stage, behind a clear protective shielding.

Mrs. Obama sat on stage and read "The Night Before Christmas" as children in knit hats and mittens surrounded her.

The characters Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus also joined the celebration, saying it was their "date night."

"You two know what we're talking about," Mrs. Claus told the Obamas, referring to the couple's nights out on the town together. The president later met Santa Claus on stage and briefly danced with him.

Before the tree was lit, Obama said the Christmas story is a Christian

one but its lesson is universal.

"It represents a tradition that we celebrate as a country - a tradition that has come to represent more than any one holiday or religion, but a season of brotherhood and generosity to our fellow citizens," he said.

He said it's important to remember those who have lost their jobs and homes in this season as well as military service members and their families who are apart during the holidays. "We will be thinking of you and praying for you during this holiday season," he said.

Every president has presided over the tree lighting since Calvin Coolidge in 1923. The current National Christmas Tree was planted on the Ellipse in 1978.

The tree lighting begins several weeks of holiday celebration in the nation's capital. Musical entertainment such as choirs, bands and dancers will be held nightly on the Ellipse stage during December, according to the National Park Service.

DEMOCRAT DROPS OUT OF ILLINOIS TREASURER'S RACE (CHIT)

By Rick Pearson

Chicago Tribune, December 4, 2009

Mark Doyle, a longtime veteran of the Illinois political scene, gave up his bid today to stay on the Feb. 2 Democratic ballot for state treasurer after concluding too little time remained to fight a petition challenge that left him with too few valid signatures.

Doyle's withdrawal leaves the Democratic primary fight to Robin Kelly, a former state lawmaker and current chief of staff in the state treasurer's office, and Justin Oberman, son of former Chicago Ald. Martin Oberman.

Doyle, a Chicagoan, previously worked in the Clinton White House and also was part of the 2008 presidential campaign team of then-Sen. Joseph Biden and later helped Biden's transition to the vice presidency.

Mackler, Alexander

07 Jan 2016 02:37:49

To: Reddy, Vinay, Reddy, Vinay

Cc: rhb@rspdc.com

Bcc:

RE: VP's Eulogy for Evelyn Lieberman

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Thu Mar 21 10:34:40 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

P5

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

[personal email address]

02 Jan 2016 18:53:12

To: Ricchetti, Steven, Hunter Biden, Ricchetti, Steven

Cc: Dennis Toner [personal email address], Alex Snyder-Mackler [personal email address]

Bcc:

[personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Thu Mar 21 10:33:01 EDT 2024

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PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Melvyn I. Monzack

17 Mar 2016 20:54:28

To: Chung, Kathy, Jill Biden, hbiden@rosemontseneca.com", "abiden@dcjustice.org", [personal email address], "Gitenstein, Mark H., [personal email address], "Ricchetti, Steven, Mackler, Alexander, hurricane5155@gmail.com", "Ricchetti, Steven,

>", "Mackler, Alexander, >", "Chung, Kathy

Cc: Bernal, Anthony R., Muldoon, Anne Marie, Flynn, John, Goepfert, Stephen, Person, Anne, >", "Goepfert, Stephen,

>", "Bernal, Anthony R., >", "Flynn, John

Bcc:

RE: [personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 10:26:14 EDT 2024

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Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

"Molly Magarik" [personal email address]

26 Apr 2013 15:47:29

To: Ashleybiden [personal email address]

Cc: Hallie Biden [personal email address], "Hunter Biden, [personal email address], "Kathleen Biden [personal email address], "Valerie Owens, Jack Owens [personal email address], "Casey Owens [personal email address], "Cuffe Owens [personal email address], "Missy Owens [personal email address], "Ron Olivere [personal email address], "Ted Kaufman [personal email address], "Joshua Alcorn [personal email address], "Alexander Snyder-Mackler [personal email address], "Chung, Kathy, Chung, Kathy

Bcc:

Re: [personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 09:16:55 EDT 2024

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Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Bernal, Anthony

27 May 2016 18:18:00

To: Mackler, Alexander, hbiden@rosemontseneca.com", "Mackler, Alexander
Cc: Anthony Bernal [personal email address], "Jill Tracy, Flynn, John, Chung, Kathy,
Beau and Hallie Biden [personal email address], "Ethan Rosensweig, Chung, Kathy, >", "Flynn, John
Bcc:
Re: [personal information]

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Date created: Tue Apr 02 10:50:15 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Flynn, John S. EOP/OVP

17 Jun 2016 19:50:14

To: Jimmy Biden (jbiden@lionhallgp.com), (jbiden@lionhallgp.com), "Valerie Biden Owens (hurricane5155@gmail.com),
(hurricane5155@gmail.com), "Ashley Biden [personal email address], "Hunter Biden (hbiden@rosemontseneca.com)

Cc:

Bcc:

[personal information]

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Date created: Mon Apr 01 09:28:29 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

"Molly Magarik" [personal email address]

14 Jan 2013 19:02:50

To: Hallie Biden' [personal email address], "Hunter Biden, Kathleen Biden [personal email address], [personal email address], [personal email address], "Ron Olivere [personal email address], "Valerie Owens, jack owens [personal email address], "Cuffe Owens [personal email address], "Missy Owens [personal email address], "Casey Owens [personal email address], "Ted Kaufman [personal email address], "Mike Donilon [perso Alexander Snyder-Mackler [personal email address], "Chung, Kathy, Joshua Alcorn [personal email address], "Chung, Kathy

Co:

Bcc:

[personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 08:48:56 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Elizondo, Carlos E.

22 Jun 2015 15:57:05

To: Hunter Biden (hbiden@rosemontseneca.com), (hbiden@rosemontseneca.com), "Kathleen Biden [personal email address]", "DL-OVP-Office of Dr. Biden, DL-OVP-West Wing, Mackler, Alexander, [personal email address]", "Baker, Sarah, McGrail, John, Eric Schwerin (eschwerin@rosemontseneca.com), Mackler, Alexander, >", "john_s_flynn_target@ovp.eop.gov" (eschwerin@rosemontseneca.com), "kellen_c_suber@ovp.eop.gov", "richard_b_ruffner@ovp.eop.gov", "james_m_gleeson@ovp.eop.gov", "kathy_s_chung_target@ovp.eop.gov", "t >", "carlos_e_elizondo@ovp.eop.gov", "anthony_r_bernal@ovp.eop.gov", "anne_m_person_target@ovp.eop.gov", "DL-OVP-Office of Dr. Biden, >", "shella_m_nix@ovp.eop.gov", "jamie_e_lyons@ovp.eop.gov", "DL-OVP-West Wing, >", "McGrail, John
Cc: Lance, Ginna, Lance, Ginna
Bcc:
[personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Mon Apr 01 10:40:38 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Hunter Biden

13 Feb 2014 20:34:59

To: Chung, Kathy, Robin Ware, Ashley Biden, Beau Biden, Mom, Chung, Kathy

Cc:

Bcc:

[personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Thu Sep 21 16:51:08 EDT 2023

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2023-0098-F, LA 2023-0042-F-3, LA 2022-0119-F-2, PA 2022-0113-F-8

Additional Information:

Orloff, Nancy

Wed, 18 Nov 2009 13:22:34 -0500

To: Eric Schwerin

Bcc: Eric Schwerin

FW: ARTS Reception Guest List

Attachments: 111909 ARTS Reception Response Report.xlsx (19.9 KB)

For tomorrow's reception at NAVOBs Also sent a list to Kathleen, fyi

From: Clark-Bauserman, Deborah E.

Sent: Wednesday, November 18, 2009 1:19 PM

To: Orloff, Nancy

Cc: Elizondo, Carlos E.; Russell, Catherine M.; Borrin, Danielle

Subject: ARTS Reception Guest List

Here is the final version.

Deborah Clark-Bauserman, CMP

Deputy Residence Manager

The Vice President's Residence

202.456.3113 (office)

202.503.5333 (cell)

202.456.3115 (fax)

<u>LAST NAME</u>	<u>FIRST NAME</u>
Adams	Lisa
Addison	Chrisopher
Addison	Sylvia Ripley
Baker	Keith
Bell	Ford
Broun	Elizabeth
Burgess	Dana Tai-Soon
Burnough	Erinn (Ebs)
Cafritz	Jane
Cafritz	Peggy
Cole	Johnetta
DeLeon	Sylvia
Dodd	Chris
Duncan	Jennifer
Evans	Mary
Evans	Tom
Farrell	Suzanne
Gold	Lisa
Goslins	Rachel
Greenberg	Judy
Greenhalgh	Paul
Jennings	Christopher
Jones	Terrence
Koshalek	Richard
Kurin	Richard
Lerman	Elizabeth
Lion	Margo
MacDougall	Lisa
McGrath	Patrick
McMillan	Laura
Nauden	Gloria
Page	Darienne

<u>LAST NAME</u>	<u>FIRST NAME</u>
Perl	Neale
Quinn	Anne
Raby	Julian
Rafshoon	Eden
Reed	Jack
Reinstein	Joseph
Rogers	Desiree
Schiff	Richard
Shakow	Thomas
Southern	Kathy
Stein	James
Stevens	George
Stevens	Liz
Stock	Ann
Thomas	Alicia
Vanneman	Brad
Welford	Harrison
Whitehouse	Sheldon
Zinoman	Joy

POSITION/ORGANIZATION
Adams Designs
NAVOBS move-in/ Addison/Ripley Gallery
NAVOBS move-in/ Addison/Ripley Gallery
Managing and Artistic Director/ The Studio Theatre
President/ American Association of Museums
Director/ Smithsonian American Art Museum
Dana Tai-Soon Burgess Dance Company
Deputy Director and Deputy Social Secretary
Chair/ Washington National Opera
Founder/ Duke Ellington Schools of Arts
Director/ Smithsonian Museum of African Art
Chair/ The Washington Ballet
Senator, Connecticut
Director/ Foundation for Art & Preservation in Embassies
Spouse of Mary Evans
Director/ Suzanne Farrell Ballet at the Kennedy Center
Washington Project for the Arts
Executive Director/ President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities
Director/ The Kreeger Museum
President/ Corcoran Gallery of Art
Managing Director/ Shakespeare Theatre Company
Wolf Trap Foundation of the Performing Arts
Director/ Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Gar
Under Secretary/ Office of the Under Secretary for History, Art, and Culture, Smithsonian Institution
Founder/Artistic Director/ Liz Lerman Dance Exchange
Co Chair/ PCAH
NAVOBS move-in/ National Gallery of Art
DE Artist
Executive Director/ DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities
West Wing Receptionist

POSITION/ORGANIZATION
President/ Washington Performing Arts Society
Director/ Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (& Freer)
FAPE
Senator
Deputy Director and Deputy Social Secretary
Special Assistant to the President and White House Social Secretary
Director/ National Children's Museum
Wyeth Family Representative
Co-Chair/ PCAH
Assistant Secretary/ The Kennedy Center
NAVOBS move-in/ National Gallery of Art
FAPE
Senator
Founding Artistic Director/ The Studio Theatre

<u>LAST NAME</u>	<u>FIRST NAME</u>
Acra	Reem
Adams	Lisa
Addison	Chrisopher
Addison	Sylvia Ripley
Baker	Keith
Balick	Carol
Balick	Sidney
Bell	Ford
Bennett	Joyce
Bennett	Robert
Bercaw	Nancy
Boland	Maggie
Broun	Elizabeth
Brown	Bobbi
Brummel	Beth
Bunch	Lonnie
Burgess	Dana Tai-Soon
Burnough	Erinn (Ebs)
Cafritz	Jane
Cafritz	Peggy
Christenberry	William
Cole	Johnetta
Copeland	Tatiana
Crayton	Alice
Currie	Betty
DeGioia	Theresa
DeLeon	Sylvia
Diaz	Eduardo
Dicks	Norman
Dicks	Suzanne
Duncan	Jennifer
Evans	Tom
Fakhir	George
Farrell	Suzanne
Fenty	Adrian
Fenty	Michelle
Fortune	Brandon
Gawlak	Annie
Gilliam	Sam
Glass	Brent
Gold	Lisa
Goslins	Rachel
Greenberg	Judy
Greenhalgh	Paul

<u>LAST NAME</u>	<u>FIRST NAME</u>
Hardart	Thomas
Hatch	Denison
Hatch	Wendy
Herrmann	Jeffrey
Hickman	Laura
Hogan	Cynthia
Hoyer	Steny
Jennings	Christopher
Jodie-Black	Kevin
Jones	Terrence
Kahn	Michael
Kennedy	Victoria
Koshalek	Richard
Kurin	Richard
Lamberson	Nicole
Larkin	Spencer
Lerman	Elizabeth
Lieberman	Evelyn
Lion	Margo
MacDougall	Lisa
McGrath	Patrick
McMillan	Laura
McSweeney	Dorothy
McSweeney	William
Medina	Monica
Mendelsohn	Michael
Mendelsohn	Richard
Miller	George
Nauden	Gloria
Nelson	Ben
Holmes Norton	Eleanor
Oyama	Katie
Page	Darienne
Perl	Neale
Pfanstiehl	Eliot
Platts	Todd
Plofker	Steven
Powell Harris	Tia
Price	David
Pullens	Juanita
Pullens	Rory
Quinn	Anne
Raby	Julian

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME
Rafshoon	Eden
Raub	Marianne
Reed	Jack
Reinstein	Joseph
Robinson	Marian
Rogers	Desiree
Ruesch	Jeanne
Sanford	Harriet
Schaeffer	Eric
Schiff	Richard
Shakow	Thomas
Sheinwald	Julia Dunne
Shelton	Laurie
Shore	Virginia
Slaughter	Louise
Southern	Kathy
Stabenow	Debbie
Stein	James
Sterling	Susan
Stevens	George
Stevens	Liz
Stock	Ann
Thomas	Alicia
Trefny	Frank
Udall	Jill
Vanneman	Brad
Webre	Septime
Welford	Harrison
Whitehouse	Sheldon
Williams	Clifton
Yarborough	Davey
Zinoman	Joy
Zynda	James
INVITATION	
STATISTICS:	
INVITES	219
ACCEPTS	123
REGRETS	67
NO	
RESPONSES	28
ATTENDS	0
TOTAL	
POSSIBLE	152

POSITION/ORGANIZATION
Fashion Designer
Adams Designs
NAVOBS move-in/ Addison/Ripley Gallery
NAVOBS move-in/ Addison/Ripley Gallery
Managing and Artistic Director/ The Studio Theatre
DE Artist
Spouse, Carol Balick
President/ American Association of Museums
Spouse, Senator Bennett
Senator, UT
Co-Owner/ The Station Gallery, Wilmington, DE
Managing Director/ Signature Theatre
Director/ Smithsonian American Art Museum
CEO/ Bobbi Brown Cosmetics
Director/ Wolf Trap Foundation of the Performing Arts
Director/ National Museum of African American History
Dana Tai-Soon Burgess Dance Company
Deputy Director and Deputy Social Secretary
Chair/ Washington National Opera
Founder/ Duke Ellington Schools of Arts
Photographer, Painter, Sculptor
Director/ Smithsonian Museum of African Art
Chairman/ DE Art Museum
Co-Owner/ The Station Gallery, Wilmington, DE
Former Personal Secretary for President Clinton
Spouse, Dr. Jack DeGioia, President of Georgetown University
Chair/ The Washington Ballet
Executive Director/ Smithsonian Latino Culture
Representative, WA, 6th District
General Secretary / U.S. Capitol Historical Society
Director/ Foundation for Art & Preservation in Embassies
Spouse of Mary Evans
Guest, Reem Acra
Director/ Suzanne Farrell Ballet at the Kennedy Center
Mayor, District of Columbia
Spouse of DC Mayor Adrian Fenty
Acting Director, National Portrait Gallery / Smithsonian Institute
Guest, Sam Gilliam
DC Artist
Director/ National Museum of American History
Washington Project for the Arts
Executive Director/ President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities
Director/ The Kreeger Museum
President/ Corcoran Gallery of Art

POSITION/ORGANIZATION
Spouse, Virginia Shore
Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company
DE Artist
Counsel to the Vice President
Representative, MD, 5th District/House Majority Leader
Managing Director/ Shakespeare Theatre Company
Student, Duke Ellington School of the Arts/ Duke Ellington Jazz Duet
Wolf Trap Foundation of the Performing Arts
Artistic Director/ Shakespeare Theatre Company
President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities
Director/ Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Gar
Under Secretary/ Office of the Under Secretary for History, Art, and Culture, Smithsonian Institution
OVP Staff, WH Pass
Student, Duke Ellington School of the Arts/ Duke Ellington Jazz Duet
Founder/Artistic Director/ Liz Lerman Dance Exchange
Director of Communications and Public Affairs/ Smithsonian Institution
Co Chair/ PCAH
NAVOBS move-in/ National Gallery of Art
Art Collector
DE Artist
Spouse of Bill McSweeney
Wife of The Honorable Ron Klain/ The Washington Ballet
Art Collector/ Owner, Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address by NC Wyeth
Guest, Michael Mendelsohn
Representative, CA, 7th District
Executive Director/ DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities
Senator, NE/ U.S. Senate
Representative, District of Columbia
Associate Counsel to the Vice President
West Wing Receptionist
President/ Washington Performing Arts Society
President/CEO/ Strathmore
Representative, PA, 19th District
Spouse, Bobbi Brown
Dean of Arts/ The Duke Ellington School of the Arts
Representative, NC, 4th District
Spouse, Rory Pullens
Head of School/ Duke Ellington Schools of Arts
Spouse, Brad Vanneman
Director/ Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (& Freer)

POSITION/ORGANIZATION
FAPE
Owner/ Helen Olivia Florist
Senator, RI
Deputy Director and Deputy Social Secretary
Mother, FLOTUS
Special Assistant to the President and White House Social Secretary
President/ The NEA Foundation
Artistic Director/ Signature Theatre
Actor
Aegis Law Group
British Ambassador's Wife
Guest, Laura Hickman
Representative, NY, 28th District
Director/ National Children's Museum
Senator, MI
Wyeth Family Representative
Director/ National Museum of Woman in the Arts
Co-Chair/ PCAH
Assistant Secretary/ The Kennedy Center
NAVOBS move-in/ National Gallery of Art
DE Artist
President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities
Sculptor and Representative of Charles Parks
Artistic Director/ The Washington Ballet
FAPE
Senator, RI
Student, Duke Ellington School of the Arts/ Duke Ellington Jazz Duet
Director, Duke Ellington Jazz Duet/ Duke Ellington School of the Arts
Founding Artistic Director/ The Studio Theatre
Guest, Frank Trefny
Delaware Artist
Congressional Member
DC Elected
WH/OVP

Kaufman, Edward

21 May 2015 13:44:47

To: Mackler, Alexander, Ricchetti, Steven,
[personal email address], "josh@beaubiden.com", "hbiden@snecaga.com", "Ricchetti, Steven, >", "Mackler, Alexander
Cc: [personal email address]
Bcc:
[personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Mon Apr 01 10:30:11 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

"Molly Magarik" [personal email address]

14 Jan 2013 22:23:40

To: [personal email address]

Cc: Hunter Biden, Kathleen Biden [personal email address], [personal email address], [personal email address], "Ron Olivere [personal email address], "Valerie Owens, Jack Owens [personal email address], "Cuffe Owens [personal email address], "Missy Owens [personal email address], "Casey Owens [personal email address], "Ted Kaufman [personal email address], "Mike Donilon [perso Alexander Snyder-Mackler [personal email address], "Chung, Kathy, Joshua Alcorn [personal email address], "Chung, Kathy

Bcc:

Re: [personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 08:57:00 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Valerie Owens

17 Mar 2016 13:30:53

To: Chung, Kathy, Chung, Kathy

Cc: Jill Biden, hbiden@rosemontseneca.com", "abiden@dcjustice.org", [personal email address], "Gitenstein, Mark H., [personal email address], "Ricchetti, Steven, Mackler, Alexander, Mel Monzack, Bernal, Anthony R., Muldoon, Anne Marie, Flynn, John, Goepfert, Stephen, Ricchetti, Steven, >", "Mackler, Alexander, >", "Person, Anne, >", "Goepfert, Stephen, >", "Bernal, Anthony R., >", "Flynn, John

Bcc:

Re: [personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 10:20:31 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Chung, Kathy S. EOP

07 Jun 2015 21:15:50

To: hbiden@rosemontseneca.com

Cc: Mackler, Alexander, rhb@rspdc.com", "Mackler, Alexander

Bcc:

Re: Phone numbers

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Fri Jul 26 11:53:57 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

P6,b(6)

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Chung, Kathy S. EOP/OVP

14 Apr 2016 17:12:47

To: J.T. Godfrey (jill.tracy2@gmail.com), (jill.tracy2@gmail.com), "Ricchetti, Steven, hbsiden@rosemontseneca.com", [personal email address], "Ted Kauffman [personal email address], "Mackler, Alexander, [personal email address], "Ricchetti, Steven, >", "Mackler, Alexander
Cc: Muldoon, Anne Marie, Elizondo, Carlos E., Suber, Kellen, Flynn, John, Person, Anne, >", "Suber, Kellen C., >", "Elizondo, Carlos E., >", "Flynn, John
Bcc:
[personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 10:32:23 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Mackler, Alexander S. EOP

08 Jun 2015 00:20:02

To: Chung, Kathy, rhb@rspdc.com", "Chung, Kathy

Cc:

Bcc:

Fw: These are all cell numbers.

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Fri Jul 26 11:55:57 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

b(6),P6

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Mackler, Alexander

07 Jun 2015 18:44:19

To: hbiden@rosemontseneca.com

Cc: rhb@rspdc.com", "Chung, Kathy, Chung, Kathy

Bcc:

Re: Phone numbers

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Fri Jul 26 11:51:27 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

P6,b(6)

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

[personal email address]

14 Mar 2016 19:32:22

To: Chung, Kathy, Gitenstein, Mark H., Jill Biden,

hbiden@rosemontseneca.com", "abiden@dcjustice.org", [personal email address], [personal email address], "Ricchetti, Steven, Mackler, Alexander, hurricane5155@gmail.com", "Mel Monzack, Ricchetti, Steven, >", "Mackler, Alexander, >", "Chung, Kathy

Cc: Muldoon, Anne Marie, Bernal, Anthony R., Person, Anne, >", "Bernal, Anthony R.

Bcc:

RE: [personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 09:57:30 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Gitenstein, Mark H.

17 Mar 2016 19:48:24

To: Chung, Kathy, Chung, Kathy

Cc: Jill Biden,

hbiden@rosemontseneca.com", "abiden@dcjustice.org", [personal email address], [personal email address], "Ricchetti, Steven, Mackler, Alexander, hurricane5155@gmail.com", "Mel Monzack, Bernal, Anthony R., Muldoon, Anne Marie, Flynn, John, Goepfert, Stephen, Ricchetti, Steven, >", "Mackler, Alexander, >", "Person, Anne, >", "Goepfert, Stephen, >", "Bernal, Anthony R., >", "Flynn, John

Bcc:

Re: [personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 10:24:36 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Chung, Kathy S. EOP/OVP

14 Mar 2016 18:23:53

To: Gitenstein, Mark H., Jill Biden,

hbiden@rosemontseneca.com", "abiden@dcjustice.org", [personal email address], [personal email address], "Ricchetti, Steven,

[personal email address], "Mackler, Alexander, hurricane5155@gmail.com", "Mel Monzack, Ricchetti, Steven, >", "Mackler, Alexander

Cc: Muldoon, Anne Marie, Bernal, Anthony R., Person, Anne, >", "Bernal, Anthony R.

Bcc:

RE: [personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 09:56:44 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

"Molly Magarik" [personal email address]

17 Jun 2013 14:10:53

To: Hallie Biden [personal email address], "Hunter Biden, [personal email address], "Kathleen Biden [personal email address], [personal email address], "Valerie Owens, jack owens [personal email address], "Casey Owens [personal email address], "Missy Owens [personal email address], "Cuffe Owens [personal email address], "Ron Olivere [personal email address], "Ted Kaufman [personal email address], "Joshua Alcorn [personal email address], "Alexander Snyder-Mackler [personal email address], "Chung, Kathy, Chung, Kathy

Co:

Bcc:

[personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 09:31:56 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Ashley Biden

14 Mar 2016 20:01:02

To: Chung, Kathy, Jill Biden, hbiden@rosemontseneca.com", [personal email address], "Gitenstein, Mark H.,
[personal email address], "Ricchetti, Steven, Mackler, Alexander, hurricane5155@gmail.com", "Mel Monzack, Ricchetti, Steven,
>", "Mackler, Alexander, >", "Chung, Kathy

Cc: Muldoon, Anne Marie, Bernal, Anthony R., Person, Anne, >", "Bernal, Anthony R.

Bcc:

RE: [personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 10:16:03 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Sent: Fri, 29 Mar 2013 14:00:35 -0400
From: Joshua Alcorn <josh@beaubiden.com>
To: Olivere Hallie [REDACTED] Hunter Biden <hbiden@rosemontseneca.com>, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] hurricane5155@gmail.com, [REDACTED] Missy Owens
[REDACTED] Cuffe Owens [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], acdonilon Donilon
[REDACTED] Eric Schwerin <eschwerin@rosemontseneca.com>, Alexander Snyder-Mackler
[REDACTED] "Chung, Kathy" <kathy_s_chung@ovp.eop.gov>, Beau Biden
<261penn@gmail.com>, Dennis Toner [REDACTED] Alan Hoffman
[REDACTED] "Chung, Kathy" <"/o=eop/ou=exchange administrative group
/cn=recipients/cn=chung, kathy s.3c7">
Subject: Beau's April Travel

Hi folks -

Just wanted to update everyone on Beau's travel for April. If you have any questions about specific events in these cities, let me know.

The overnights are April 2 (St Louis), 3 (Chicago), 18 (New York) and 29 (Dallas).

April 2 - 4 - St. Louis, Chicago, Nashville
April 9 - New York
April 10 - Washington, DC
April 11 - Philly
April 17 - Washington, DC
April 18 - 19 - New York
April 25 - New York
April 29 - 30 - Austin, Dallas, Washington (Event with VP in DC)

Have a great weekend.
/ja

Joshua Alcorn

[REDACTED]
josh@beaubiden.com

Joshua Alcorn

29 Mar 2013 18:00:35

To: Olivere Hallie [P6/b(6)], "Hunter Biden, [P6/b(6)], [P6/b(6)], [P6/b(6)], "hurricane5155@gmail.com", [P6/b(6)], "Missy Owens [P6/b(6)], "Cuffe Owens [P6/b(6)], [P6/b(6)], [P6/b(6)], "Ted Kaufman [P6/b(6)], "acdonilon Donilon [P6/b(6)], "Eric Schwerin, Alexander Snyder-Mackler [P6/b(6)], "Chung, Kathy, Beau Biden, Dennis Toner [P6/b(6)], "Alan Hoffman [P6/b(6)], "Chung, Kathy

Cc:

Bcc:

Beau's April Travel

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET
Date created: Tue Apr 02 09:26:11 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Part

Reasons for Withholding:

P6,b(6)

Notes:

redaction of personal email addresses and cell phone number

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Chung, Kathy S. EOP/OVP

13 Apr 2016 18:27:35

To: Ricchetti, Steven, J.T. Godfrey (jill.tracy2@gmail.com),

hbiden@rosemontseneca.com" (jill.tracy2@gmail.com), [personal email address], "Ted Kauffman [personal email address], "Mackler, Alexander, [personal email address], "Ricchetti, Steven, >", "Mackler, Alexander

Cc: Muldoon, Anne Marie, Suber, Kellen, Elizondo, Carlos E., Person, Anne, >, "Suber, Kellen C., >", "Elizondo, Carlos E.

Bcc:

[personal information]

THIS RECORD IS A WITHDRAWAL SHEET

Date created: Tue Apr 02 10:27:12 EDT 2024

Releasability: Withheld In Full

Reasons for Withholding:

PRM

Notes:

Case ID: LA 2022-0119-F-2

Additional Information:

Sent: Thu, 19 Nov 2009 08:11:13 -0500
From: "Person, Fran" <fran_person@ovp.eop.gov>
To: amperson@rosemontseneca.com
Bcc: amperson@rosemontseneca.com
Subject: Fw: Vice Presidential News Clips for Thursday, November 19, 2009
[VPNewsClips091119.doc](#)
[VPNewsClips091119.pdf](#)

----- Original Message -----

From: Bulletin News <VP-Editors@BulletinNews.com>

To: Alexander, Elizabeth; FOIA-6

Cc: Escudero, Adrian V.; Hoffman, Alan L.; Tomasini, AnnMarie; Bernal, Anthony R.; Blinken, Antony J.; Woyak, Brian J.; McKeon, Brian P.; Russell, Catherine M.; O'Donnell, Courtney; Hogan, Cynthia C.; Martens, Donald R.; Hire, Elisabeth; Oxhorn, Elizabeth A.; Allen, Elizabeth M.; Ryan, Evan M.; Person, Fran; Ziskend, Herbert M.; Carney, James F.; Bernstein, Jared; DeGraaf, Jason P.; O'Connor, Kevin C.; White, Kirsten B.; membersOVPVPMILAIDE@whmo.mil
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Sent: Thu Nov 19 05:42:34 2009

Subject: Vice Presidential News Clips for Thursday, November 19, 2009

TO: THE VICE PRESIDENT AND STAFF

DATE: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2009 -- 6:15 AM EST

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WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL STORIES:

PLOUFFE: CASTLE'S 'INDEPENDENT PROFILE' WILL BE CHALLENGED (WILNJ)

By Nicole Gaudiano, News Journal Washington Bureau
Wilmington News Journal, November 18, 2009

WASHINGTON -- President Barack Obama's campaign manager said Rep. Mike Castle's votes against health care reform and the economic stimulus package will hurt his bid for election to the U.S. Senate in 2010.

David Plouffe, a Delaware native, said he hasn't been following the race that closely. But he hit on themes voiced by other Democrats when asked on Tuesday how Democrats would mount a winning campaign against Castle.

"This was someone who had developed somewhat of an independent profile," said Plouffe, who is on tour with his new book chronicling the Obama campaign, "The Audacity to Win." "I think that's going to be challenged now given his recent behavior."

The Democratic National Committee began running a radio ad on WXCY in Wilmington this week, targeting Castle's vote against health care reform. Castle objected to the cost and various other elements of the bill.

The DNC also circulated poll results from the Susquehanna Polling & Research, showing Delaware Attorney General Beau Biden beating Castle by five points in a hypothetical race. Biden is expected to run for the remainder of his father Vice President Joe Biden's term, but has not declared his candidacy.

"I don't buy that Mike Castle can't be beat," said Plouffe.

Though Plouffe will be helping the DNC and administration "broadly" on political issues, he said he

will be doing very little political consulting next year.

Would he advise Beau Biden to jump into the race?

"It's rightly more of a personal decision," Plouffe said.

Plouffe said he and his former campaign rival Steve Schmidt will return occasionally to their shared alma mater, the University of Delaware, as they develop a center for political communication at the school. Schmidt served as campaign manager for Republican Presidential nominee, Sen. John McCain of Arizona.

"It's exciting," he said. "We disagree about many things, but we agree on the need to continue to produce young men and women who want to get involved in politics of both parties and this will be a good way to do it."

PRISONS TO DIVIDE HEALTH CONTRACTS INTO PARTS (WILNJ)

By Esteban Parra, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, November 19, 2009

Details on how the state will divide its inmate health-care contract -- which has been under federal scrutiny for three years -- were released Wednesday by the Department of Correction.

Rather than having a single health care provider, prison officials are breaking the contract into 10 smaller agreements focusing on specific services. The change comes a month after Corrections Commissioner Carl C. Danberg announced he was ending a contract next year with St. Louis-based Correction Medical Services (CMS), which has been criticized for providing inadequate health care despite being paid more than \$130 million over three years.

"We expect this flexibility, and the increased competition it is expected to provide, will foster improved medical care and cost savings," Danberg said. "The Department spent significant time exploring alternative solutions to the way we contract for medical services. We believe this alternative will allow for large and small service providers to bid on the areas that fall within their specialization."

Delaware entered an agreement with the federal government to improve prison health care in 2006 following stories by The News Journal that uncovered problems and high inmate death rates, especially from AIDS and suicides. The 2005 series of stories also pointed to poor medical treatment for cancer, meningitis, hepatitis and other communicable diseases and bacterial infections.

Joshua W. Martin III, who leads a team appointed by the state and federal governments to monitor progress, issued a report in September saying it is unlikely the department will be in full compliance when the agreement expires next month.

If the state does not meet the deadline, the federal government can sue to take over the prisons or extend the agreement.

The new contract is posted on the department's Web site and the winning bidders could take over by July 1, 2010 -- the day after CMS' current contract ends. CMS also can bid on all or parts of the new contract.

Interested companies can bid on one or more of these services or they can bid to manage the entire health care program.

The DOC is seeking bidders for medical, nursing, mental health, dental, female health care and pharmacy services. It also is seeking to contract "specialty consultation," which includes examining the use of off-site specialists and negotiating contracts for providers to go onsite, as well as "utilization review services," whose responsibilities include monitoring integrated information concerning care.

Also on the list are substance abuse treatment and inpatient hospital services, which include critical care, inpatient case management and discharge planning.

The new contract also will have a "shared risk," with the DOC to pay for certain costs to prevent medical providers from limiting inmate care to maximize their profits.

Danberg has said he is not sure if the new contract format would reduce costs, adding that results he's seen across the country are mixed. While more companies competing for more bids would likely be financially better for the state in the short run, managing a larger number of vendors could become a problem as it increases other costs, such as hiring more people to oversee vendors.

Prison experts have given the new process mixed reviews.

Jeff Eiser, a former prison administrator in Ohio who is now a private consultant, said bidding out

the prison medical contract in smaller parts would result in better care. But Dr. Robert Cohen, who was appointed by state and federal courts to monitor prisons in five states, said the best way for Delaware to save money and improve prisoner health care would be to reduce the number of inmates by about a third.

The Rev. Christopher Bullock, senior pastor of New Canaan Baptist Church and co-founder of the Delaware Coalition for Prison Reform and Justice, said he is glad to see the CMS contract ending, adding he hopes state officials reject any CMS bids based on the company's record.

In addition to lawmakers having a say in the selection process, Bullock said he would like to see the public have input too because it is paying for the services.

Though he is happy the CMS chapter is coming to an end, Bullock said he is concerned that too many vendors might be difficult to manage.

"There's a lot of questions if it's going to be done that way," Bullock said. "You know, sometimes when you have too many cooks in the kitchen the meal doesn't come out right.

"But if you have one chef who is in charge, then the meal always comes out better. I hope we're not putting too many cooks in the kitchen."

LEGISLATORS NOT READY TO COMMIT ON CASINOS (WILNJ)

By Ginger Gibson, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, November 19, 2009

Even as more developers come forward with hopes -- and funding -- to build a casino in Wilmington, many lawmakers are reserving judgment on whether they will support an expansion of gambling.

Senate Minority Whip Liane Sorenson said she doesn't have enough information to decide whether adding new casinos is a good idea. If an addition can provide new jobs, she might be willing to support it, she said.

"I think it will be helpful to have more information," Sorenson said.

Others, like Senate Majority Leader Patricia Blevins, D-Elsmere, say their mind is almost made up, but they'll wait for the results of a study of the impact of new gambling venues.

"It would take a lot of convincing for me to come to a point where I would think it's a good idea to have additional venues," Blevins said.

If the study finds that none of the existing casinos will be affected and new venues will only mean more jobs and higher state revenues, Blevins said, she could be persuaded to support an expansion.

House Majority Leader Pete Schwartzkopf, D-Rehoboth Beach, would like to see additional venues in Sussex County and possibly in Wilmington.

Schwartzkopf said expanded gambling will only bring more jobs to the area and he is confident the study will support his view.

Only if the study concludes that Delaware would lose jobs and tax revenues would Schwartzkopf be persuaded otherwise, he said.

The study everyone seems to be waiting for was part of an agreement among lawmakers, Gov. Jack Markell and the state's three established casinos when sports betting and table games were approved. Markell supported new venues last year but backed down, agreeing to a study of the possible impact.

The study, which is being conducted by TMG Consulting from New Orleans, is expected to be completed by the end of December.

When lawmakers return to session in January they will likely be asked to vote on whether additional venues should be permitted. Under Schwartzkopf's proposal, one additional venue -- DelPointe Resort and Racino -- would be allowed to add slot machines and table games.

Rep. Dennis P. Williams, D-Wilmington North, has co-sponsored an amendment to the bill that would also create a casino district in Wilmington, where city and state officials would be empowered to authorize another venue.

To complicate the issue, table games still need a final legislative vote from lawmakers, including signing off on regulations and the tax levels.

Schwartzkopf said he won't bring the table games legislation to the floor for a debate unless the House is also willing to consider the measure to approve new venues.

Williams, who is hoping to join forces with Schwartzkopf to get both measures approved, said he

doesn't think a newer proposal by Kevin Flynn, a Philadelphia real estate developer, and George Miller, a lawyer-entrepreneur in Atlantic City who worked with Donald Trump, to build a facility on the Christina River is feasible.

Williams said the Seventh Street site would require a large infrastructure overhaul including a new bridge that would cost at least \$9 million. Even if developers offer to pay for the bridge, Williams said he would be worried that the state would get stuck with the bill.

Williams said he suspects there are lots of developers ready to vie for the chance to open a casino in Wilmington, including many who already operate casinos in other areas.

"They just haven't flipped their cards yet," Williams said.

BEING FIRST LADY (WILNJ)

By Mary Alice Garrett, Special To The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, November 19, 2009

The role of first lady of Delaware has advantages and a few disadvantages.

This was the conclusion of the current governor's wife and two former governors' wives who spoke earlier this month at DuPont Country Club in Rockland. The occasion was "Campaigns, Canapes and Chicken Dinners: A Conversation with Delaware First Ladies," a fundraiser sponsored by Fresh Start, a charitable branch of Wilmington Women in Business.

The conversation was with Carla Markell, wife of Gov. Jack Markell; Martha Carper, wife of U.S. Sen. Tom Carper; and Jane Castle, wife of U.S. Rep. Mike Castle.

"What was the biggest surprise about being first lady?" asked moderator Nancy Karibjanian, former anchor for WHYY's "Delaware Tonight" and now an adjunct professor at the University of Delaware.

"The biggest surprise is I'm enjoying it more than I expected. It's really a lot of fun," said Markell.

Castle said being first lady of Delaware "is a lot more visible" than being a congressional wife.

Carper concurred, adding, "There's more of a defined role being first lady."

Both Markell and Carper said their children prefer their fathers not accompany them on their activities. However, "they do it all the time," noted Carper. "They say it's better without him."

Castle said "there are challenges" to having her husband shop with her in a supermarket. "I tell Mike 'Stay in the car.'"

Carper recalled her husband coming to a birthing class in a tuxedo and bringing a briefcase into the delivery room.

The women were asked how they maintain their own identities. "I refer to the first lady as not really me and in the third person," said Markell. Castle said maintaining separate identities is a priority for her and her husband.

Do their spouses ask them for advice? Markell said although they discuss issues, her husband usually goes fast asleep once his head hits the pillow. "If he really listened to me, I don't know that he would have run for governor," Markell said, smiling at the audience.

"I do manage to weigh-in on issues," Castle added. Carper said they "don't debate. We're sort of like real people. We don't have a lot of heavy conversations."

Does publicity about their husbands bother them?

"It's part of being in public life," said Castle. Markell and Carper agreed. "The children read the blogs. They think it's funny," added Markell. She reads the newspaper every day. "I don't internalize everything they [the media] say."

All three said they would never consider running for public office themselves. Markell said although "Jack loves what he's doing, I don't think I would really salivate to do it again." She added that the last governor's race was long, but "it was a very congenial race." She noted that contender John Carney was very considerate.

Castle closed by saying, "We're gearing up for a big race," referring to the 2010 U.S. Senate race.

"It's 363 days from today," she told the audience of 250.

Markell met her husband while both were students at Newark High School. They went on to graduate from the University of Delaware. They've been married for 19 years and have two children, Molly and Michael. Carla Markell has worked in corporate training and human resources. She's also been a mentor to several at-risk students, and she's an advocate for the arts.

A native of Brandywine Hundred, Castle is also a UD graduate. She married then-Gov. Mike Castle in 1992 and was a first lady only six months before he was elected congressman. Jane

Castle worked on Capitol Hill for 10 years and later for a Washington architectural/engineering firm. She's been active in the community, serving on the boards of United Way of Delaware, Mental Health Association in Delaware, Literacy Volunteers of America, Christiana Care and the Wilmington Senior Center.

Born in Boone, N.C., Carper is a graduate of Appalachian State University and the University of Tennessee. In 1986, she married Tom Carper. The couple has two sons, Christopher and Ben, both in college. She joined the DuPont Co. in 1975. She held a number of management positions, including global business manager for Lycra. Since retiring from DuPont, Carper has become a professor at UD. She's been active with Delaware Boys and Girls Clubs, Girls Inc. of Delaware and Boy Scouts of America.

Fresh Start awards college scholarships to Delaware women "who have faced personal and economic challenges," said president Mary Maloney. More than \$60,000 in scholarships was granted to 35 women this year, and 100 women have received more than \$300,000 since the nonprofit began in 1996. Details: www.wwb.org.

DEBATE HEATED ON PROPOSED APOLOGY FOR SLAVERY FROM STATE (WILNJ)

By James Merriweather, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, November 19, 2009

DOVER -- Amid sometimes frayed tempers, Dover residents offered a range of opinions on whether the Delaware General Assembly should issue an apology for slavery.

Many speakers said an apology would be too little, too late and questioned the sincerity of any such gesture that might be issued by a state that was among the last to formally repudiate slavery. Kathy Doyle, a Campus Community Charter School teacher who swelled the crowd by offering extra credit for attendance to one of her classes, said she was appalled to learn that the state did not ratify the 13th Amendment, which ostensibly ended slavery in 1865, until 1901.

"If Alabama could apologize for slavery," she said, drawing applause from many in the crowd of about 70 residents, "we think that Delaware surely could."

Others insisted, though, that an apology for the ongoing vestiges of slavery -- namely Jim Crow laws that institutionalized racism long after slavery was abolished -- was more appropriate than apologizing for slavery itself.

"I think the apology should be issued for discriminatory laws passed in the 20th century," said Della Sue Robinson, adding that she questioned the validity of an apology coming from people who had nothing to do with slavery.

The debate represented the beginning of the commission's second try to persuade the Dover City Council to pass a resolution -- adopted unanimously by the commission on April 25, 2007 -- calling on the state Legislature to apologize for slavery on behalf of the state. After hearing debate in May 2007, the council sent the proposal back to the commission with instructions to conduct a series of public forums on the issue.

Sam Hoff, the commission chairman and the primary author of the resolution, said Wednesday night's session was the first of two forums the commission will conduct before the matter is taken back to the council.

In serving notice of Wednesday night's forum, the commission sent a white paper of sorts to council members, noting that the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives and legislatures in six states -- Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, Alabama, Florida and New Jersey -- had adopted resolutions of apology for slavery. The letter included the text of all eight resolutions as well as the text of the commission's own proposal -- by which the council would call on the legislature to adopt a resolution "acknowledging and expressing its profound apology for the state's practice of slavery and for the historic wrongs committed against all persons who suffered discrimination and injustice under this dehumanizing system"

At one point, Sen. Margaret Rose Henry, D-Wilmington East, said she had considered introducing legislation to provide an opportunity for a vote on the issue, but reported that she found little support for an apology and didn't file a bill.

Hoff, a political science professor at Delaware State University, has described slavery as the most shameful crime against humanity ever committed in Delaware. He argued that an apology was the first step toward earning forgiveness from blacks and improving race relations in the First State.

At Wednesday night's hearing, several speakers agreed, saying an apology would represent a big

step toward reconciliation.

"I came to support the idea of an apology," said 62-year-old James Brooks, a 14-year Delaware resident who first visited the state as an enlisted man at Dover Air Force Base in 1966. "I think it's high time. I think we should have apologized decades ago, when we first knew it was wrong."

Lafayette Bell said that racism and discrimination are still rampant, however, and an apology for slavery would not count for much.

"Even if an apology is given," he said, "it's not going to help African Americans much. Most African Americans don't think it's genuine anyway."

Jahi Issa, a history professor at DSU, said history would not judge the state well if an apology was not issued.

"Slavery is not too far behind us," he said. "As the First State, I believe we should have been the first state to apologize for slavery. History is judging us. We don't want to be the last."

TOWN URGES BAN ON DRIVER TEXTING (WILNJ)

By Michael Short, The (Salisbury, Md.) Daily Times

Wilmington News Journal, November 19, 2009

OCEAN VIEW -- Town Council will send a letter to the state, urging officials to ban texting and e-mailing while driving.

In recent months, a number of Sussex County towns have taken similar measures.

Texting while driving has been called a "dangerous practice," and some say it's imperative that there be repercussions for those who drive distracted.

According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, text messaging is banned for all drivers in 11 states, including Maryland, Virginia and New Jersey. Delaware is one of 10 states that prohibit texting by novice drivers.

"AAA calls for passage of a texting-while-driving ban in Delaware," said Catherine Rossi, spokeswoman for AAA Mid-Atlantic. "AAA discourages motorists from engaging in any distraction while behind the wheel, and texting is the epitome of distracted driving."

In a AAA poll conducted this year, 96 percent of Delawareans supported a texting ban.

Legislation banning texting and e-mailing while driving overwhelmingly passed the House earlier this year and is currently on the Senate Ready List.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Joe Miro, R-Pike Creek Valley, initially sought to bar the use of handheld cell phones, but dropped that provision when it became clear the proposal lacked sufficient support.

"[The bill] is not everything I wanted," Miro said earlier this year. "But I am a guy who listens and compromises when I have to in order to achieve something that will improve the safety of all the people on our roads. I think it is a victory for all of us who want to make Delaware roads safer." While the proposed law would apply to all motorists, Miro believes it will have the greatest impact on young adults.

"This [bill] would prohibit [texting] and hopefully make sure that they are paying attention to what's in front of them," he said.

Ocean View plans to send its letter to Sen. George H. Bunting, D-Bethany Beach, for review.

While town officials considered enacting their own ban, some believe a state ban would be easier to enforce.

"I don't think we have any way at all of policing it," Councilman Bill Wichmann said. "By the time an officer finds out if they are texting, they'll be out of town."

If enacted, Delaware's legislation would carry a penalty of a \$50 fine.

PROGRAM TO RESTORE NATURAL HABITAT SHOWS SUCCESS (WILNJ)

By Alex Ruoff, The (Salisbury, Md.) Daily Times

Wilmington News Journal, November 19, 2009

SEAFORD -- For the past few years, Glenn Lovelace's dream has been to transform nearly all of his 50 acres of land into a natural bird habitat.

So, about three years ago, he let his fields go fallow and last year entered into the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control's Landowner Incentive Program to get some assistance.

The program has restored and enhanced more than 1,300 acres of natural habitat in Delaware by

providing economic incentives to private landowners. But the future of the program is unclear as the federal government has not been able to fund the project since 2006. Now, state environmental agents are hoping to use what's left in their coffers to support just a few, high-priority areas.

"The commission [which selects the projects] will most likely choose just one big project or some we consider high priority," said Shelley Tovell, an environmental specialist for DNREC's Department of Fish and Wildlife. "We're really looking at the last of the money."

Through the program, Lovelace was able to take about 40 acres of land and create a newly restored home for local birds that have been driven out of the area by a lack of suitable areas to nest.

Through the federally funded assistance program, the state pays private landowners to maintain natural habitat for species of great conservation need, DNREC officials said. Property owners receive technical and financial assistance for their efforts.

Lovelace said he's already seen results on his land.

"I've seen some different birds move in," he said. "I've seen high counts on several different species already."

Tovell said federal aid for the program, provided through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has ended, leaving her uncertain as to whether the program will live on past the barely \$200,000 left.

"One of the reasons we had such a great response is that [the program] was funded 75 [percent] through federal funds," she said. "Most programs are a 50/50 split, so this was fairly inexpensive for us."

Tovell said anyone who's already signed a contract is guaranteed their money, but expanding efforts will be impossible without extra funding. While the state has a number of alternative programs, Tovell said LIP's popularity was its economic incentives.

Byron Jefferson, of Lincoln, said he joined the program to preserve nearly 100 acres of his property because he could get a better price than renting it out for farming. He said he's pleased with the results and is glad to be providing natural habitat and renewed forest. When his contract ends, he may not continue to preserve the area if financial aid is unavailable.

Interested landowners may request an application by calling 735-3600. Proposals for 2010 funding will be accepted through Dec. 14.

MANY NUMBERS TO REACH DEL. GOVERNMENT (WILNJ)

By Ken Mammarella, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, November 19, 2009

Yes, so much information and so much contact between Delawareans and their state government are moving online.

But sometimes -- for people who aren't online, for people who aren't sure where to go or for people frustrated with what they encounter online -- a phone call may be more desirable.

A Wilmington phone book has six pages of state government listings. What follows are toll-free phone numbers that are promoted for connecting to Delaware state government.

The most important numbers

The most important number of them all is 911, for life-threatening medical and public safety.

Dispatchers are ready to direct medical and law enforcement personnel to the rescue. In response to a recent question in Spark about a mattress in the middle of the highway, Cpl. Jeff Whitmarsh said "Anytime there's a risk of serious physical injury or a traffic crash, it's absolutely appropriate to call 911." Calls are triaged and divided up among appropriate agencies, he said. Non-emergency number for Delaware State Police is (800) 837-3771.

The new 211 service -- from Delaware Helpline with support from the United Way and the state -- is a quick way to connect to thousands of health and human services programs, including rent assistance, food banks, affordable housing, health resources, mental health resources, child care, after-school programs, care for senior citizens, financial assistance, legal assistance and job training programs.

As helpful as that is, it's only answered during extended weekday business hours. (Delaware Helpline hopes to staff that number 24/7 in a few years). Ditto for the nonprofit's other number, (800) 464-4357.

Hotlines that reach people

The phone book and the state's own Web site list a number of hotlines. These numbers were tested from New Castle County and answered outside of regular business hours. Some numbers were answered by people in other states or by answering services.

Child abuse and emotional problems. (800) 292-9582 connects to the Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth & Their Families. For emergency help with children's emotional problems, (800) 722-7710 is also maintained.

Crime victims and survivors: (800) 842-8461 connects to a person at state police. (800) 870-1790 is the attorney general's office and goes to voice-mail at off-hours.

Delaware Crime Stoppers: (800) 847-3333.

Diseases and bioterrorism: (888) 295-5156.

Domestic abuse: (800) 743-5754.

Environment. (800) 662-8802. This is a general number for the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, including air and waste management and parks and recreation. Environmental concerns including open burning, chemical spills, pesticide spills, emissions from factories, illegal dumping on land (such as at the three yard-waste sites in New Castle County) and at sea.

Fishing violations, inland bays. (800) 523-3336 is a DNREC number for fishing violations and for pollution in the inland bays of Sussex County.

Mental health: (800) 652-2929. This leads to a mobile unit that handles crisis intervention, drug and alcohol crises, psychiatric emergencies and severe personal, family, or marital problems.

Poison: (800) 222-1222, which is routed to local poison centers no matter where you call from.

Roads: (800) 324-8379 is maintained by the Delaware Department of Transportation. The Transportation Management Center is the place to go to report problems (such as a traffic signal that's not working, debris or wild animals) or ask questions (when's that road repair scheduled to end?).

Sexual violence, suicide and parents thinking of surrendering a baby: Contact Delaware, 761-9100 in New Castle County, (800) 262-9800 downstate.

Smoking Quitline: (866) 409-1858.

Wildlife. (800) 292-3030 is DNREC's Wildlife Operation Game Theft Hotline Operation Game Theft. Tips that lead to the arrest and conviction of people violating state hunting and wildlife laws can lead to rewards of up to \$1,000.

Hotlines that reach interactive recordings

Access Delaware: (866) 276-2353, for the status of your state income tax refund or to find polling places or free public Web access.

School closings: (877) 831-7215

Other toll-free numbers

The following numbers are ones that Delaware residents (as contrasted to state employees or businesses) might use to reach state government. A state Web page (<http://delaware.gov/egov/portal.nsf/portal/tollfree>) lists dozens.

COMPLAINTS, TIPS

Alcohol violations: (800) 393-7327.

Consumer protection, debt management: (800) 220-5424

Fraud, waste, and abuse of state government resources: (800) 553-7283.

Governor's office: (800) 292-9570.

Home health care or hospice agencies: (800) 942-7373.

Housing law violations: 877-544-8626.

Indoor smoking ban violations: (800) 297-5926.

Insurance companies, agents: (800) 282-8611.

Insurance fraud: (800) 632-5154.

Long-term care facilities: (877) 453-0012.

Mosquito control: (800) 338-8181.

Pesticide misuse: (800) 282-8685.

EDUCATION

Delaware Educator Data System: 888-759-9133. For people obtaining teaching certification.

Groves Diploma at a Distance: (888) 321-4723. For adult learners obtaining high school diplomas.

Higher Education Commission: (800) 292-7935. Scholarships, grants and college-prep

information.

K-12 education: (877) 838-3787.

School-related crime, including bullying: (800) 220-5414.

Upward Bound: (866) 227-5566. Program to prepare students for college in partnership with the University of Delaware.

HEALTH, PUBLIC WELFARE

Aging, adults with physical disabilities: (800) 223-9074.

Child care licensing: (800) 822-2236.

Child Development Watch: (800) 671-0050. Program for children ages birth to 3 with disabilities or developmental delays.

Deaf-blind children: (800) 292-9590.

Elderinfo insurance counseling: (800) 336-9500. For people with Medicare.

HIV/AIDS: (800) 422-0429.

Immunizations: (800) 282-8672.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, food stamps, subsidized child care and Refugee Cash Assistance programs: (800) 372-2022.

Women, Infants and Children; nutrition and physical activity: (800) 222-2189.

LIBRARIES AND DATA

Delaware Division of Libraries: (800) 282-8696.

Legislative Council Research: (800) 282-8545. Legislative research and the Delaware Register of Regulations.

Library for the Blind/Handicapped: (800) 282-8676.

TAXES

Tax forms: (800) 292-7826.

Tax refund status: (866) 276-2353.

TRANSPORTATION

DART: (800) 355-8080 for customer relations, (800) 652-3278 for reservations.

DelDOT: (800) 652-5600.

Rideshare Delaware: (888) 743-3628.

OTHER CALLS

Agriculture emergencies: 877-831-7217.

Delaware Solid Waste Authority: (800) 404-7080.

Delaware Tourism Office: (800) 441-8846.

Housing: (888-363) 8808.

Juvenile fire setter intervention: (800) 432-8500.

Lottery numbers: (800) 338-6200. Remember, they're not official until they're verified.

Natural Resources and Environmental Control: (800) 922-9283.

State Fire School: (800) 282-8650.

Treasurer: (800) 675-8600. Personal finance tips.

Unemployment benefits: (800) 794-3032. Claim weekly unemployment insurance benefits by telephone.

Utilities: Public Advocate -- (888) 607-2427 -- advocates for consumers on utility rates. Public Service Commission -- (800) 282-8574 -- regulates utilities.

Veterans Affairs: (800) 344-9900. Assistance with veterans benefits and burial services.

Vital statistics: (877) 888-0248. Provides copies of birth, death, adoptee and marriage certificates.

Voting and elections: (877) 270-8300.

UD COMMUNITY PUMPED FOR BLOOD-DRIVE CHALLENGE (WILNJ)

By April Abel, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, November 19, 2009

NEWARK -- University of Delaware students and faculty were out for blood Wednesday.

Donating blood, that is.

About 500 people registered to donate blood for the 8th Annual Colonial Athletic Association Blood Challenge, which pits the school against 11 other schools in the athletic conference to collect the most blood donations in a one-day fall drive.

Last year, UD brought in 604 donations. Wednesday's goal: 900 donors.

"The competition is fierce among the schools. UD has won five times but was narrowly beaten by Drexel University for the last three years," said Carrie Aiken of the Blood Bank of Delmarva. Blood Bank of Delmarva closed its donor centers for the day to provide staff and equipment. "We can't announce the day's totals until the competition is over in early December," Aiken said. But the real winners, blood bank leaders said, are the patients who will benefit from the lifesaving blood.

Over the past seven years, the CAA Blood Challenge has raised 17,728 units of blood. The multipurpose rooms at the Trabant University Center in Newark were bustling Wednesday with a well-orchestrated scene of students and staff.

"We always get a lot of walk-ins," Aiken said.

Doors opened at 7:30 a.m. By 10 a.m., 30 beds were full and people were moving smoothly through the computer screening, donation and all-important snack break and brief monitoring afterwards.

UD nursing student Emily Wagner donates blood at least twice a year.

"I really do it for the cookies," she joked.

UD music faculty member Xiang Gao also said he donates blood regularly.

"As a musician, I give my best to help people. Giving blood is another way of giving my best," he said.

Gao was one of the many donors giving a traditional whole blood donation on a bed in the main donor area.

Along the wall, it got a little more high-tech.

The Blood Bank brought along all four of its ALYX anapheresis machines for this drive.

These fully automated machines allow qualified donors to give twice the amount of red blood cells in one donation.

Donors who meet height and weight criteria -- at least 5 feet 1 inches tall and weighing 130 pounds for men, or 5 feet 5 inches tall and weighing 150 pounds for women -- are offered the opportunity to donate blood via the ALYX machine.

The phlebotomist inserts the needle and line into the donor's arm, and ALYX draws the blood, separates red cells from plasma, and returns a mixture of sterile saline and plasma to the donor.

"The benefit of this is there is no net fluid loss for the donor, and the Blood Bank gets twice as many red blood cells from one donation," said Kathy Armstrong, of the Blood Bank.

Andrew Smith, 19, is a freshman at UD. He was donating via ALYX for the first time, and "felt no different" than when he gave a whole blood donation last year.

Armstrong offered Smith a choice of UD blue or gold elastic gauze to wrap the donation site, and sent him off to the snack table.

"I remember him from when he donated in high school," she said. "It was nice to see a familiar face."

NEW LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AT AIR MOBILITY MUSEUM (WILNJ)

By The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, November 19, 2009

Students from around the state visited the Air Mobility Command Museum in Dover on Wednesday to celebrate the 11th anniversary of GIS Day, an international even to promote awareness of geographic information systems.

TOP PHOTO: Seaira Williams (right), 10, a McVey Elementary student, lands her plane safely on a flight simulator, with a little help from volunteer David Doyle.

BELOW: With help from volunteer Maggie Legates (right), students put together a map of Europe on the floor using technology they are learning at the Air Mobility Command Museum at Dover Air Force Base.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR YOUNG ONES (WILNJ)

By Edward L. Kenney, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, November 18, 2009

With three early childhood centers -- and another on the way if the upcoming referendum passes -- the Appoquinimink School District has buttressed with action the belief that children should start learning well before grade school.

But it has not stopped there. Rather than wait for children ages 3 to 5 to enroll in the centers, district leaders have developed an outreach program that trains Middletown-area day care providers to give the children an even earlier head start.

"In the past, the school district and the community providers sort of passed [like ships] in the night, so to speak, yet we're all sharing the same kids," said Sandra Cohee, principal at the Cedar Lane Early Childhood Center. "We give them a more in-depth view of what we do at school. This has opened up a conduit of information."

Cohee, the leaders of the other two early childhood centers and an educational diagnostician make up the leadership in a newly formed Preschool Coalition Committee that plans training for the day care providers.

The district has worked with the providers informally for the past 10 years, beginning when the Appoquinimink Early Childhood Center opened its doors as the first such center in the district, she said.

But this year marks an effort to give the initiative better structure, a move necessitated both because of district growth and the growing number of day care centers in the Middletown area, now about 15.

"There are other districts that are doing similar things, but not as formalized as we are doing it," Cohee said. "It's a great idea. And it really has opened up communication, so we are on the same page as the providers."

"Developing this liaison helps to build a bridge," added committee member Lucia Weathers, assistant principal at the Townsend Early Childhood Center.

Licensed day care providers are required by state law to receive 18 hours of training a year in subjects such as classroom management, parental involvement, developing fine and gross motor skills, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

Providers usually have to pay for that training, but the district offers it free, holding sessions as part of evening dinner meetings that have drawn as many as 75 day care people.

Meetings are held every two to three months and are assigned a training theme, Cohee said. One scheduled for January will be about discipline.

Rene Nolen, the principal at the Appoquinimink Early Childhood Center and a member of the Preschool Coalition Committee, said the district also can teach things that will help the children with social skills such as sharing and teamwork, paving the way for the more academic lessons to come.

"Then when they get here, they're ready for reading and words and counting," she said.

"The kindergarten year is so critical," added fellow committee member Kathy Gertley, a district educational diagnostician who used to go out on her own to the day care centers before things got better organized. "It just sets them up for success in their educational career."

"We want them to instill in them the love of learning," she said of the day care providers.

As an owner of the Kiddie Academy childcare center in Middletown, Susan Tudor appreciates the training the district is giving her 20 teachers.

"It's a good opportunity to get those hours and not have to pay for it," she said. "In early childcare, it's definitely not a career you go into to make money. As a business owner, I wish I could say I will pay for all your training, but I can't afford it."

Tudor also likes what the teachers are taking away from the training, which cannot help but benefit the 115 children at her day care center.

"I think it helps educate my teachers, giving them different ideas," she said. "They can kind of feed off each other. I think it gives them a chance to grow together. It keeps my teachers fresh and aware of what's going on out there."

Said Weathers, "Those centers know that we value what they do, and just knowing that helps them to keep coming back."

DOCTORS REJECT NEW SCREENING GUIDELINES (WILNJ)

By Angie Basiouny, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, November 19, 2009

Some Delaware doctors are rejecting new recommendations from a federal panel advising women to wait until age 50 to get routine mammograms and abandon breast self-exams because they do no good.

The physicians said Wednesday they disagree with the reasoning behind the report and are telling patients, many of whom are confused about the news from the independent U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, to stick to conventional guidelines that call for self-exams and routine screenings at 40.

"It certainly was an easy one for me," Dr. Nick Petrelli, director of Christiana Care's Helen F. Graham Cancer Center, said of his decision to continue with current guidelines. "I've experienced this over the years with patients. I've seen it, I've seen the evidence, and we're not going to change."

Petrelli, a surgical oncologist, pointed to the significant reduction in mortality rates in the United States and around the world since women began screening in their 40s and even younger. He also does not see the logic in telling women to not perform self-exams, which often is a first step in early detection of tumors.

"Women know their bodies better than any physician or anybody else," he said. "I see no downside to self-examination. It certainly doesn't cost anything and it's not time consuming."

Cindy DelGiorno figures she would be dead by now if she had followed the new recommendations. DelGiorno, a teacher at A.I. duPont High School, found a lump in her breast during a self-exam in 2007, when she was 34. A subsequent mammogram revealed a tumor. During chemotherapy, she realized that older women were having a much tougher time battling the disease and the effects of treatment.

"It's absurd. I couldn't believe it," she said of the report. "I don't know who this research group is, but do they want to kill off women? It's disturbing."

In Delaware and across the country, there is a rising chorus of health professionals, politicians and advocacy groups questioning the wisdom of the findings, which contend women in their 40s are more likely to get false-positive tests that can lead to unnecessary biopsies and anxiety.

The recommendations don't apply to women who carry a high risk of breast cancer.

The American Cancer Society reacted swiftly to the report and posted a statement Monday on its Web site that the organization remains with its long-standing position advocating for yearly screenings starting at age 40. The American College of Radiology also was critical of the findings, saying it would result in countless unnecessary deaths each year.

Federal policy unchanged

To ease confusion, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius said Wednesday the task force does not set federal policy and the government's view on screenings at 40 remains unchanged.

"My message to women is simple," she said. "Mammograms have always been an important lifesaving tool in the fight against breast cancer and they still are today. Keep doing what you have been doing for years -- talk to your doctor about your individual history, ask questions and make the decision that is right for you."

That advice is echoed by the Delaware Breast Cancer Coalition, an awareness and support organization that runs the state mammography van, which is about to be retrofitted to use the latest in digital imaging.

Coalition Executive Director Vicky Cooke said the office phone has been ringing all week with women wanting to know what they should do. The report has been the topic of debate among staff members for days.

In the end, she said, the group opted to follow the current rules. It's a break from the position taken by the National Breast Cancer Coalition, which has endorsed the new recommendations.

"We're an organization that relies on responsible information, and right now there is a lot of confusion," Cooke said. "So we are going to step back and continue to do what we've always done and operate by the current guidelines."

Officials with the Delaware Division of Public Health declined to be interviewed and released a statement saying they are studying the recommendations and working with the state's Cancer Consortium to determine the implications for Delaware.

Dr. Tom Vaughan, director of women's health and chairman for diagnostic imaging for Bayhealth Medical Center, said he thinks the task force focused too much on the costs, time and other negatives associated with benign tumors and not enough on the benefits of early detection. He said mammograms aren't perfect, but they are powerful tools in helping save lives.

"My experience with an extensive number of biopsies is that most people, even if there is a 1

percent chance that they have cancer, are happy to have this done," he said.

Dr. Wendy Newell, a breast surgeon in private practice with Wolf Creek Surgeons in Dover, agreed with Vaughan and Petrelli from Christiana Care. She said the task force needs to rescind the guidelines and worries that the news will set back decades of work to educate women about early detection.

She's continuing to advise patients to screen at 40 and learn how to conduct self exams.

"They could end up having a more advanced breast cancer if they wait every other year, or they could end up dying," Newell said.

Breast-cancer survivor, Newark resident Terri Stuibier, also is upset with the report and pondered her fate had she followed the advice.

"I would probably not be here right now," she said.

Stuibier found her lump during a self-exam two years ago, when she was 47, and had a bilateral mastectomy. Like DelGiorno, she had no family history of breast cancer.

When she first heard about the report, she thought maybe it was a mistake.

"I went crazy, especially when they said don't even teach breast self-exams," Stuibier said. "I was floored that anybody would come out with that. I have two daughters. I would never want them to take that lightly. I tell them to get educated and have their checkups."

THANKSGIVING IS ALL ABOUT THE TURKEY (WILNJ)

By Molly Murray, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, November 19, 2009

With Thanksgiving a week away, it's crunch time at TA Farms in Wyoming. So many turkeys, so many platters to fill.

These birds -- raised on a mixture of corn, soybeans and minerals -- are organic, free-range turkeys.

"We grow our own feed, we make our own feed," Dan Palmer said. "It makes them taste juicier and have more flavor."

Then, there are the store-bought birds.

"Created," said Sherrie Rosenblatt, a spokeswoman for the National Turkey Federation, "to fulfill consumer desire for white meat."

These birds were selectively bred for large breasts, lots of white meat and a speedy growth process.

About 90 percent of households in the United States will eat an organic turkey like Palmer grows or the store-bought kind this Thanksgiving. In all, some 46 million turkeys will be sold for the holiday, Rosenblatt said.

But the real purist may want to hone the hunter-gatherer instinct, don the mossy oak camouflage and bag a wild turkey for the feast.

"They are very good eating," said Matt DiBona, a wildlife biologist with the state Division of Fish & Wildlife.

There's only one problem. Delaware doesn't have a fall hunting season for wild turkey, so unless a hunter planned ahead in spring, a Delaware wild turkey won't be on the Thanksgiving menu.

In some ways, it is a small conservation miracle the state has a season -- or wild turkeys -- at all.

The population in Delaware was wiped out by the mid-1800s and they were pretty much gone from throughout their native, East Coast range in the mid- to late 1800s, said Bob Eriksen, director of conservation operations and a regional wildlife biologist with the National Wild Turkey Federation.

The last wild turkey in New York was killed in 1846. The last wild bird in Connecticut died in 1813.

Extensive deforestation made a 19th century comeback next to impossible, Eriksen said.

Over time, marginal farmland that had been cleared began to revert back to forest. In the early 1960s and 1970s, efforts to bring back the birds began, Eriksen said.

By the end of the 1800s, an estimated 220,000 wild turkeys were left in the continental United States, compared to an estimated 10 million to 12 million when Colonists arrived from Europe, Eriksen said.

Today, there are an estimated 7 million to 7.5 million birds in 49 states. Eriksen said the only state without a population of wild turkeys is Alaska.

These days, the East Coast is terrific wild turkey habitat because of productive forests with lots of seeds, nuts and berries -- all foods that wild turkeys eat, he said.

Delaware officials began a reintroduction program in Sussex County in 1984. As those birds thrived and more were added, they began a trapping program to introduce birds to Kent County. In early 2002, more birds were brought in from South Carolina and Virginia and released in New Castle County, DiBona said.

There are an estimated 4,000 wild turkeys in the state, he said. "It is probably one of the greatest conservation success stories ever."

Still, the population isn't big enough yet to allow a fall hunting season. The spring season in 2010 is three weeks, starting April 10.

These wild birds are the cousins of the birds that Palmer raises and sells, and also are related to the ones shoppers find in the grocery store.

On that first Thanksgiving, back at Plymouth Rock, the wild turkey dished up by the Wampanoag wasn't something new for the Pilgrims.

Turkeys were first caged and domesticated in Central Mexico more than 2,000 years ago. And when the Spaniards arrived in the new world, they took the bird back to Europe.

Of course, the bird the Pilgrims ate in 1621 was way different than the broad-breasted birds of today's table, and was probably even different from the wild turkeys we see today.

The grocery store birds grow quickly.

Palmer's birds -- even with their all-natural diet -- put on pounds at a speedy rate, going from day-old pullets to dinner-table size in 16 to 20 weeks. A 20-week-old turkey at TA Farms dresses out to 24 pounds.

Wild birds don't have those snowy-white feathers, and they grow much slower. Their diet is different, and because they are foragers, they are much more muscled, Eriksen said.

A wild turkey that hatched back in June won't be nearly as big. The male will weigh 10 to 12 pounds and the female 6 or 7, Eriksen said. A domestic male of the same age would weigh 30 pounds, he said.

Selective breeding has allowed the bigger birds with the white feathers. There is even a farm-raised turkey that grows to 80 pounds, he said.

Imagine fitting that in your oven.

The wild birds aren't as meaty -- diet and a higher level of activity probably have something to do with that, Eriksen said.

But for people who want a wild bird, there is nothing quite like it in the world of hunting, DiBona said.

The birds have exceptional eyesight. Deer, on the other hand, have an exceptional sense of smell.

"We joke that if you could have an animal with the sense of smell of a deer and the eyesight of a turkey, you'd have an unhuntable animal," DiBona said.

It takes lots of preparation to figure out where turkeys are roosting, and a hunter can't talk or move around once the spot is selected. Turkey hunters typically call in the birds using a series of devices that mimic the sounds that turkeys make.

And when they do take a shot, it's at close range.

In hunting, "it's probably the most fun you can have," DiBona said.

AUTUMN'S FINAL GIFTS (WILNJ)

By Nature's Landscapes, By Rick J. Lewandowski

Wilmington News Journal, November 19, 2009

With a suddenness out of character with our typical autumnal explosion of foliage colors, this season came to an abrupt and dramatic close.

Somehow, I'd been lulled into taking for granted the late season floral displays and sumptuous colors of foliage that every year seemed to go on for weeks. So you can probably understand my surprise when, with frigid finality, the first killing frost of the season struck with temperatures hovering in the mid-20s.

And, as if to drive the point home, the region was then pummeled by one of the strongest nor'easters in recent memory. Over three days, its winds and driving rains wrenched from the trees most of the remaining leaves not damaged by frost, leaving branches exposed and forlorn. Frankly, I was left with a hollow feeling that I'd missed the opportunity to fully appreciate autumn. Even so, I was determined to find some consolation in the pre-winter landscape as nature took one last deep breath before plunging into winter. So, out for a walk I went.

Stark silhouettes of tree trunks with sharp shadows cast on the ground now replaced the deep shade of summer. Oddly attractive, I thought. Had I noticed before?

Shuffling along paths laden with newly fallen wind-blown leaves, I was also reminded of the simple pleasure of being immersed in this sea of brown that parted at the slightest movement of my feet. Perhaps all wasn't lost after all; in fact, I was starting to feel a little better already.

It was then that I discovered to my delight, and not so unexpectedly as it turns out, that the frost-laden air of early November and harsh treatment by the nor'easter hadn't completely obliterated the last glimmer of autumn's spectacle. In fact, the layered tree canopy had offered its last leaves as a sacrifice to the frigid air, wind, and rain in order to protect the shrubs and perennials lying at its feet.

Indeed, I realized that the garden was more than just the remnants of leaves and branches left behind by frost and storm; there was considerable life left in this late season landscape for us to appreciate.

A gaggle of goodies

Armed with this new perspective, I ran back to grab my camera and laptop so I could share some of the late-season garden joy I'd discovered. I realized there was surely a spot in gardens for these plants, in particular, to extend the season right up to the very precipice of autumn's end.

Honestly, November is probably not at the top of the list for season-ending flower highlights. Yet, in my stroll through the garden some plants really stood out.

Among the best perennials still flowering were the pale lavender-flowered Raydon's Favorite aromatic aster (*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*), the deep purple-flowered Georgia aster (*Symphyotrichum georgianum*), and the pale yellow-flowered Mellow Yellow sunflower (*Helianthus angustifolius*) as well as the delicate yellow-flowered, multi-stemmed tree, common witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*).

While colorful foliage is a reliable feature of autumn in our region, a few plants withstood killing frost and storms particularly well, retaining their leaves and color. These plants added an even greater allure to the late-season luster of the garden because of their durability.

The fine textured golden yellow autumn foliage of Arkansas blue star (*Amsonia hubrichtii*) represents one of only a handful of perennials with colorful autumn foliage and is a colorful companion to the golden autumn foliage of Carolina sweet-shrub (*Calycanthus floridus*).

Other shrubs such as Mt. Airy fothergilla with its yellowish to pale red foliage, sweet azalea (*Rhododendron arborescens*) with its fiery red foliage, and oakleaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*) with foliage colors ranging from green and yellow to purple and wine red, weathered the late autumn conditions admirably, proving their worth.

Even though it is an uncommon garden shrub, Alabama croton (*Croton alabamensis*) may have offered the most striking late autumn foliage, showcasing pumpkin-orange leaves with silvery undersides.

Each autumn we certainly expect showy fruit displays. Yet, the early departure of most fall foliage this year made fruit an even more important feature for late-season interest.

The dense clusters of lavender-purple berries on American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) provide some of the most unusual color to be found in the garden. Masses of brilliant red fruit on Winter King hawthorn (*Crataegus viridis*) and bright yellow fruit of Winter Gold winterberry holly (*Ilex verticillata*) highlighted their staying power that will insure continued beauty well into winter. Even American holly (*Ilex opaca*) with its red fruit displays, provided a special appeal with the early departure of deciduous leaves, reaffirming its important quality as an evergreen tree that keeps the garden interesting even in winter.

Certainly, there are other plants that proved their worth this autumn, but these plants highlight some of late autumn's best performers.

I would be remiss if I didn't at least mention that each year brings with it a unique set of seasonal conditions.

Some years can be quirky; others are not. You might not see all these plants performing well so late each autumn but, in my humble opinion, the pleasure of having them brighten the garden for their normal beauty as well as the off chance that you might even get a few extra days of interest make them well worth the effort.

As gardeners, our powers of observation are often the most important tools we have. Don't be shy. Get outside and study what is happening in the landscape. Keen observations and a curious mind

offer innumerable opportunities for us to enhance our gardens.

While autumn is now truly nearing an end, be sure to enjoy the changing light and the drama of contrast in the landscape.

Remember, too, as I've recently rediscovered that, when you least expect it, you're almost sure to learn something new!

LIQUOR STORE CLERK HAD 'NO CHOICE' (WILNJ)

By Adam Taylor, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, November 19, 2009

WILMINGTON -- Before the night clerk at Favors Liquor Store could react Tuesday night, one armed robber jumped through the take-out window and another ran behind the counter.

"One had a gun at his head and the other had a gun at his chest," said Ed Pensky, the store's owner.

Shortly after money was taken from the cash register, the clerk pulled his own gun and shots were fired, Pensky said. The clerk shot one of the men, who ran on North Walnut Street and collapsed about 30 feet away. He was pronounced dead at Christiana Hospital.

Pensky, 67, has owned Favors Liquor Store for more than two years.

Before that, he owned another liquor store for 10 years in northeast Wilmington.

Because both neighborhoods are among the poorest and most violent in the city, Pensky and his employees are well armed.

In addition to the .40-caliber Glock pistol the clerk used in the shooting, police confiscated two guns and a can of Mace in the tiny store that weren't involved in the robbery. One is a .380-caliber pistol kept under the counter in a cigar box and the other is a 12-gauge shotgun kept in a corner. The man who died was identified Wednesday as 20-year-old Kendel Miller of the 500 block of W. 39th St. in Wilmington. The other man escaped.

Pensky was at his Pike Creek home when the robbery took place around 9:30 p.m. He went to the store and then to the police station.

Pensky said his employee fired because Miller was turning toward him with a gun.

"He knew he was about to get shot," Pensky said. "There was no choice."

Though the investigation isn't complete, it appears the clerk was defending himself, said Wilmington police Master Sgt. Steven Barnes. He also said it's legal to carry nonconcealed weapons in a business and no permits are required.

The weapons are all tools of the trade when it comes to running a liquor store in Wilmington's toughest neighborhoods, Pensky said. When he opened the store Wednesday morning, it still had blood in the doorway. And Pensky had his .38 Sig Sauer pistol hanging from his belt.

"I don't do it to show off; I do it to say to people, 'Please, I don't want any trouble,'" Pensky said.

"I love the liquor business, but it comes with two very wanted, dangerous commodities -- booze and cash," he said.

Pensky only had to fire his gun once before when his High Spirit liquor store at 24th and Jessup streets was robbed several years ago, he said. He fired warning shots into the air and the robbers fled.

Favors was robbed once before since Pensky has owned it. It happened around closing, which Pensky thinks is the most dangerous time, because money from an entire day's work is there.

The store has a video surveillance system, but Pensky said a power surge rendered it inoperable about a month ago and he hasn't gotten it repaired yet, so there is no video of Tuesday's robbery.

Delaware State Police Senior Cpl. Jeff Whitmarsh said the department doesn't take a stand on whether it's a good idea for merchants to arm themselves.

"But we do advise that it's always better to comply with someone's demands than to put themselves into harm's way," he said.

Wilmington Councilman Steve Martelli, a former city police officer, said it's not uncommon for small business owners in Wilmington to be armed, especially if they run a business that deals with a lot of cash.

"When I was on the force, we always hoped that they would be responsible gun owners by taking marksmanship and gun safety courses," he said. "We didn't want people out there untrained, trying to be renegades or vigilantes."

Police Chief Michael Szczerba agreed.

"If business owners are going to arm themselves, they should do it in a safe and responsible manner," he said.

Pensky said he had to Mace a regular customer about three weeks ago when he lunged at him in a threatening way. Wednesday, the customer was back at the store and had a friendly conversation with Pensky. "All was forgiven a couple days after the Macing," Pensky said.

Pensky, who is white, said he enjoys interacting with his clientele, which he said is mostly poor and black.

"I go across the street to say hello," he said. "If anything bad happens to someone's family around here, I send them a case of beer and a half-gallon of gin."

But there are sad parts of his business as well.

A 47-year-old customer comes in each morning shaking from alcohol withdrawal before his first half-pint of vodka of the day. Pensky said the man looks older than he is, even though he is 30 years younger.

Mostly, though, Pensky said he has a grand time joking around with his customers.

"I love the liquor business because 99.9 percent of my customers are fantastic," he said. "My wife says I get an adrenaline rush when I'm living on the edge."

Another clerk, Shantae Hughes, 27, was in the back room when Tuesday's robbery took place.

She also was present last week when her brother was shot on West Fourth Street. Her brother thought he was about to get into a fistfight, but the other man pulled out a gun and shot him.

His wounds are not life-threatening, she said.

Hughes was back at work Wednesday.

"It's been rough, but I have strong people in my life, so I'm getting through it," she said.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHER GETS 30 YEARS (WILNJ)

By Esteban Parra, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, November 19, 2009

A 42-year-old New Castle man was sentenced Wednesday to 30 years in prison for producing child pornography, including at least one video and thousands of still images.

In addition to the prison term, District Judge Joseph J. Farnan Jr. sentenced William A. Phillips to 10 years probation. He also will have to register as a sex offender.

Farnan said he found the "criminal conduct to be horrendous" and that Phillips had "raped [his child victim] for the camera."

According to federal attorneys, investigators recovered more than 500 videos and 200,000 images of child pornography stored on some 20 CDs and a computer hard drive.

Most of the illicit videos and images were downloaded from the Internet but several hundred were pictures Phillips took of "Jane Doe 1" at the home that belonged to his family outside Llangollen Estates.

Prosecutors said Jane Doe 1 was located and is safe.

There also was at least one illicit video of Jane Doe 1, apparently created by Phillips, with another female child that was recovered by police. In that case, authorities also believe the child has been accounted for and is safe.

Phillips, who said he had been a pressman at the Cecil Whig newspaper in Elkton for more than 20 years, pleaded guilty in March to one count each of production of child pornography and possession of child pornography.

"While the volume and content of the images seized in this case was shocking in itself, the defendant's willingness to exploit very young children entrusted to his supervision and care is unconscionable," U.S. Attorney David Weiss said. "The sentence imposed ensures that this defendant will never again victimize a child and sends a clear message to others who would engage in similar conduct."

DRIVER ALIVE AFTER HIS PICKUP IS HIT BY TRAIN (WILNJ)

By Terri Sanginiti, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, November 19, 2009

A 30-year-old New Castle area man suffered minor injuries when he ignored flashing lights at a railroad crossing on Del. 9 and his vehicle was hit by a train, police said.

The 10:15 a.m. crash shut down Del. 9 south of Del. 141 in both directions for nearly two hours,

New Castle City police Lt. Adam Brams said.

Jarrold Penn, of the 100 block of Covington Place, was driving a Ford F-150 north on Del. 9 approaching the railroad tracks, when he drove over them and was hit by the train.

His truck was mangled and overturned, but Penn managed to get out, Brams said.

He was treated on the scene by county paramedics for abrasions to his head, and injuries to his chest and abdomen, county paramedic Assistant Chief Richard D. Krett said.

He was listed in stable condition.

Witnesses told police the Norfolk Southern train was blowing its whistle as it approached the road at 20-30 mph. The engineer told police the lights were flashing, but that has not been confirmed by witnesses.

Penn was cited for disregarding a traffic control device.

POLICE INVESTIGATE TWO NEWARK HEISTS (WILNJ)

By Ira Porter, The News Journal

Wilmington News Journal, November 19, 2009

Newark police are investigating two robberies that occurred within hours of each other.

The first took place Tuesday at 8:15 p.m. in the Cherry Hill Manor neighborhood, off Barksdale Road. An 18-year-old man and a 19-year-old woman were walking near Nathan Hale and Ethan Allen courts when a man ran up. He put a gun to the 18-year-old's head, forced him to the ground and took money from his pockets, police said. He briefly pointed the gun at the woman before running.

No description was provided except that the man wore a dark hooded jacket or sweat shirt and was 6 feet tall.

The second robbery involved a University of Delaware student on Prospect Avenue early Wednesday morning.

Shortly after 2:30 a.m., the 21-year-old victim parked his car and was walking to a friend's house when he noticed he was being followed. Police said he ran to the porch of his friend's home and while he was waiting to be let in, the thief approached him, stuck a sharp object in his back and demanded money. The student then hit the thief on the head and ran toward nearby Wilbur Street. The victim noticed a wrench in the assailant's hand as he ran off, police said.

The thief was described as in his mid-20s, 6 feet tall, with an average build and facial hair. He wore a white hooded sweat shirt, a tan zippered jacket with tan, brown and white stripes down the sleeves, blue polyester shorts and white sneakers.

Police do not think the robberies are related.

Anyone with information about either case is asked to contact Detective Michael Watson at 366-7110, ext. 133, or e-mail michael.watson@-cj.state.de.us. Anonymous tips can be sent to Crime Stoppers at (800) TIP-3333.

N.J. MAN SAYS HIS LIFE RUINED BY LINK TO PROSTITUTES' SLAYINGS (WILNJ/AP)

By Wayne Parry, Associated Press

Wilmington News Journal, November 19, 2009

EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP, N.J. -- "We know you did it."

That's what investigators told Terry Oleson, convinced he was the person who killed four prostitutes and left them face-down in a drainage ditch just outside Atlantic City.

Three years and three DNA samples later, Oleson hasn't been charged. Neither has anyone else in the case, which illuminated the seedy side of the nation's second-largest gambling market.

Friday is the third anniversary of the discovery of the bodies. As families of the victims grieve, Oleson also struggles. He hears whispers, gets strange looks and recently learned of the suspicion from the parents whose children play at his sister's house.

"It's ruined my life," the 37-year-old Salem County handyman said this week. "It's definitely there. I get people looking at me all the time: 'Oh, that's the guy from TV!'"

"They didn't charge anybody, but they sure the hell made it look like I was the one," he said.

Oleson denies having anything to do with the killings of Barbara Breidor, Molly Jean Dilts, Kim Raffo and Tracy Ann Roberts, a former resident of Delaware, and said he hopes the killer will be caught.

Prosecutors never publicly labeled Oleson a suspect in the case, but investigators did question

him extensively shortly after the bodies were found on Nov. 20, 2006, following a number of troubling leads.

He had been staying in the Golden Key Motel in Egg Harbor Township just before the bodies were discovered behind it. Authorities later discovered a network of hidden cameras in his Alloway Township home, and he admitted using them to secretly record his then-girlfriend's 15-year-old daughter in various states of undress.

After seven hours of questioning that began innocuously enough, Oleson said the tone abruptly changed. He says one of them told him, "We know you did it."

"I thought, 'Man, you guys are really friggin' stupid,'" Oleson said.

He was arrested four days later on an invasion-of-privacy charge, and came home to find that authorities had ransacked his house looking for evidence.

It didn't help that an acknowledged prostitute told police -- and any reporter who would listen -- that Oleson confessed to her that he had killed several women. She later recanted at a news conference and apologized to him.

A judge in the videotaping case commented that bail should be high, noting that "a suspect or person of interest in four homicides" is a flight risk. The same judge months later said in court that those circumstances no longer existed.

Oleson served six months in jail for the videotaping and apologized to the victim.

Before he was sentenced, Oleson gave authorities three DNA samples, hoping it would prove his innocence in the prostitute deaths case.

"The very first time I met this guy at the jail, he offered to take a lie-detector test, and give a DNA sample," said his attorney, James Leonard Jr. "I thought, 'Either this guy is the dumbest serial killer in history, or he's totally innocent.' I have no doubt it's the latter."

Atlantic County Prosecutor Ted Housel told the Associated Press last year that DNA evidence can degrade to the point of being unusable after being in the water for a prolonged period. The victims had all been in the water for several days or more before being discovered.

Housel said in a statement Wednesday that his office is still actively pursuing the case, and has recently assigned more investigators to look into the killings.

He would not answer specific questions about Oleson or any other aspect of the case.

Hugh Auslander, Raffo's husband, said he has not heard anything about the case from authorities in the past year.

"I don't think they have anything at all," he said. "This has caused nothing but misery for me, so I'm trying to just move on with my life at this point."

Auslander said he's not sure what to make of Oleson and doesn't know whether to suspect him any longer.

"After Terry Oleson, everything just fell apart," he said.

Relatives of the other three victims did not respond to interview requests.

Years-old documentaries on the case are still shown on cable TV, and Oleson says they still cause him problems.

His next-door neighbor works with his sister, and their children play together in each other's houses.

"Three weeks ago, that thing was back on TV, and the next day the kid comes over and says, 'Mom says the door has to be open while I'm over here playing,'" Oleson said. "The kid still has to check in every half-hour now."

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL EDITORIALS:

CHINA'S CLEAR, TOUGH MESSAGE: CLEAN UP YOUR FINANCIAL MESS (WILNJ)

Wilmington News Journal, November 19, 2009

Americans should take a closer look at what Chinese leaders signaled to President Barack Obama on his trip to Asia this week. In some friendly (and some not-so-friendly) ways, the United States was told to get its financial house in order. Despite the talk of friendship, the Chinese were letting the United States know they do not approve of our current economic policy.

We have to realize that the United States is at an enormous disadvantage when it comes to China. China is America's largest creditor. As one economist put it, "never before has the United States relied so heavily on another country's government for financing."

China holds about \$1.5 trillion in U.S. debt. That's up from less than \$100 billion at the beginning of 2001. Holding that much debt makes the Chinese worry about the debt's value and about the U.S. system as a whole. China has changed from buying long-term Treasury notes to short-term notes. That is seen as a sign that the Chinese fear U.S. inflation, a development that would help America pay its bills in inflated dollars.

In addition, China's financial officials are beginning to lecture Americans about the fall of the dollar and the rising deficit. China's chief banking regulator criticized the United States for its low interest rates, because the continued borrowing could drive down the debt's value, leading to more strain on trade. The Chinese have even used the president's trip to question the United States' ability to pay for its health care reform.

President Obama urged the Chinese government to allow the yuan to rise, a move that would help the U.S. debt. America and other countries believe the Chinese are manipulating their currency, holding down its buying power. But the Chinese, because they now can, ignored the president. We can expect worse in the future until we clean up our financial mess.

SUCH GALLING WASTE REQUIRES VIGILANCE IN TRACKING SPENDING (WILNJ)

Wilmington News Journal, November 19, 2009

At first read, it seems like such a paltry figure. In all, about 5 percent of federal spending this fiscal year was improper.

But percentages fail to depict the true cost of waste: The federal government spent more than \$98 billion improperly, much of it on questionable claims for tax credits and Medicare benefits. Even in non-recessionary times, that picture is absolutely intolerable. More unacceptable is the \$26 billion increase in improper payments the previous year.

Unfortunately, government waste has become a normal expenditure of the federal budget. The hair wringing, which heightens during election season, has done little to curb this disrespect of the taxpayer's trust.

Sen. Tom Carper thinks the numbers released Tuesday may be just the tip of the iceberg, because they are based on estimates for several programs, such as Medicare's prescription drug plan. He's right -- most of private industry would never tolerate such losses, with or without deficits. Nor should we.

Next week President Barack Obama plans to sign an executive order to eliminate the squandering, fraud and waste in government spending.

Federal agencies will have to maintain a Web site that tracks improper payments, error rates and outstanding payments. Directors of agencies who don't meet targets to reduce the error rates for two years in a row will have to begin reporting to the Office of Management and Budget. Penalties on government contractors who get payments they haven't earned will be used as incentives to get the money returned.

Here's hoping this new level of fiscal transparency meets a better end than similar promises by this administration to provide a government that is opened and accountable to taxpayers.

BIDEN IN THE NEWS:

SENATE HEALTH PLAN SEEKS TO ADD COVERAGE TO 31 MILLION (NYT)

By Robert Pear And David M. Herszenhorn

New York Times, November 19, 2009

WASHINGTON - Democratic leaders in the Senate unveiled their proposal on Wednesday for overhauling the health care system, outlining legislation that they said would cover most of the uninsured while reducing the federal budget deficit.

Mr. Reid walked into a meeting on the health care bill.

Senator Harry Reid of Nevada, the majority leader, said at an evening news conference that the legislation, which represents President Obama's signature domestic initiative and will be subject to lengthy and heated debate on the Senate floor, would impose new regulations on insurers, extend coverage to 31 million people who currently do not have any and add new benefits to Medicare.

And he said the bill, despite having a price tag of \$849 billion over 10 years, would still reduce projected budget deficits by \$127 billion over a decade because the costs would be more than offset by new taxes and reductions in government spending, particularly on Medicare.

Democrats expressed confidence that they would have the votes necessary to move forward when the legislation hits its first test in the Senate, probably on Saturday, in the form of a procedural hurdle that will require a united front from all 58 Democrats and the two independents aligned with them.

In one last touch on Wednesday, Mr. Reid and his aides finally named their 2,074-page bill: the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Mr. Reid wrote the legislation in the last several weeks, combining parts of two previous bills adopted by Senate committees. The House passed its version of the health care legislation earlier this month.

Calling the bill "impressive," the White House chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, said: "This legislation meets the president's objectives, provides protection from insurance companies, contains true cost controls and extends coverage to working families."

"We all know that this legislation is tremendously important," Mr. Reid said at the news conference. "Why? Because it saves lives, it saves money."

The measure includes a government-run insurance plan, or public option, with a provision allowing states to opt out.

Though broadly similar to the bill adopted by the House, Mr. Reid's bill differs in important ways. Democrats said that it would increase the Medicare payroll tax on high-income people and would impose a new excise tax on high-cost "Cadillac" health plans offered by employers to their employees.

The Medicare payroll tax would rise to 1.95 percent from 1.45 percent for couples earning more than \$250,000 a year, and individuals earning more than \$200,000, Democrats said. The increase would raise \$54 billion over 10 years.

The tax on so-called Cadillac plans, first proposed by the Senate Finance Committee, would apply to individual insurance policies costing more than \$8,500 and family plans costing more than \$23,000, raising \$149 billion toward the cost of the bill. Mr. Reid's proposal scales back the tax on Cadillac plans proposed by the Finance Committee.

Senator Richard J. Durbin of Illinois, the No. 2 Democrat, said an important procedural vote to begin debate on the legislation would most likely take place on Saturday, before senators leave town for a weeklong Thanksgiving break.

Mr. Durbin also challenged the Senate Republican leader, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, to post the Republican version of health care legislation on the Internet. Senate Republicans said they would fight the Democrats' bill at every turn, but they have also said they have no intention of offering a full alternative bill.

Republicans promised a fierce floor fight, including a raft of amendments.

"It's going to be a holy war," said Senator Orrin G. Hatch, Republican of Utah, who is one of his party's most respected voices on health policy but for the last several months has voiced nothing but fury over the Democrats' efforts.

Senate Democratic leaders spent much of Wednesday still trying frantically to nail down the final votes needed to begin debate on the legislation.

At least two potential Democratic holdouts, Senator Mary L. Landrieu of Louisiana and Senator Ben Nelson of Nebraska, signaled on Wednesday that they were open to supporting a motion to begin debate.

But Mr. Nelson emerged from the Democratic caucus meeting saying he still had not made up his mind. "I still don't have anything that I want to say because I have not had a chance to review the bill, and I only would be going on the basis of outline and that's not enough information," he said. Senator Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas is the third Democrat who has not made a commitment to moving the bill ahead.

If the Democrats succeed in pulling together the needed votes, the Senate intends to devote most of December to a rollicking, unpredictable debate that could determine the fate of legislation that Mr. Obama has declared to be his top domestic priority.

Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. and Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, both former senators, were on Capitol Hill on Wednesday, trying to help Mr. Reid round up votes.

Several Democratic senators emerged from the meeting saying that Mr. Reid had made substantial improvements in combining two versions of health care legislation, one passed by the health committee in July and another by the Finance Committee in October.

"He really did an exceptionally good job," said Senator Kent Conrad, Democrat of North Dakota, who is a lead author of the Finance Committee bill. Mr. Conrad, who is the chairman of the Budget Committee, noted that Mr. Reid's bill would reduce future federal deficits more than the House-passed bill or the earlier Senate measures.

"I would give Leader Reid very high marks," he said.

Mr. Reid's bill would not go as far as the House-passed bill in limiting insurance coverage for abortions. Democratic senators said that the bill seeks to extend current law by barring the use of federal money for abortions. But it would also require that at least one insurance plan that covers abortion and one that does not cover abortion be offered in every state.

In seeking to broadly expand health coverage, Mr. Reid's bill would require people to obtain health insurance. Senators said that the bill would impose a complicated set of penalties for people who fail to meet the requirement.

Mr. Reid's bill would create a voluntary federal program to provide long-term care insurance and cash benefits to people with severe disabilities. The program, known as Community Living Assistance Services and Supports, would be financed with premiums.

The premiums would be set to cover the full cost of the benefits, which, according to the Congressional Budget Office, would average \$75 a day. The House-passed bill includes similar provisions.

Carl Hulse contributed reporting.

REID SETS MARKERS FOR HISTORIC HEALTH CARE DEBATE (NYT/AP)

By The Associated Press

New York Times, November 19, 2009

Filed at 9:37 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Setting up a historic year-end health care debate, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid unveiled long-awaited legislation Wednesday night to extend coverage to all but 6 percent of eligible Americans and bar private industry from denying insurance because of pre-existing medical conditions.

The Democrat's \$849 billion measure is designed to remake the nation's health care system, relying on cuts in future Medicare spending to cover costs -- as well as on higher payroll taxes for the well-to-do and a new levy on patients undergoing elective cosmetic surgery.

Aides said the mammoth, 2,074-page bill would reduce deficits by \$127 billion over a decade and by as much as \$650 billion in the 10 years that follow, citing as-yet-unreleased estimates by the Congressional Budget Office.

"Tonight begins the last leg of this journey," said Nevada Sen. Reid, less than two weeks after the House approved its version of a sweeping remake of the health care system-- and nearly 10 months after President Barack Obama's Inauguration Day summons to action.

Obama welcomed Reid's action, saying, "Today, thanks to the Senate's hard work, we're closer than ever to enacting solutions to these problems. I look forward to working with the Senate and House to get a finished bill to my desk as soon as possible." There was no mention of Obama's longtime goal of signing legislation by year's end.

Republicans vowed a protracted struggle to block the legislation and deny the president a victory that would cap a tumultuous first year in office.

"This bill has been behind closed doors for weeks," said Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the Republican leader. "Now, it's America's turn, and this will not be a short debate. Higher premiums, tax increases and Medicare cuts to pay for more government. The American people know that is not reform."

An early showdown on the Senate floor is expected by week's end.

Reid's Senate measure would require most Americans to carry health insurance and would provide hundreds of billions of dollars in subsidies to help those at lower incomes afford it. It also would mandate that large companies to provide coverage to their workers.

Beginning in 2014, it would set up new insurance marketplaces -- called exchanges -- primarily for those who now have a hard time getting or keeping coverage. Consumers would have the choice of purchasing government sold insurance, an attempt to hold down prices charged by private insurers.

After weeks of secretive drafting, Reid outlined the legislation to rank-and-file Democratic senators

at a closed-door meeting. "Everyone was positive," said Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn. That didn't mean there weren't problems -- far from it. At his news conference, Reid pointedly refrained from saying he had the 60 votes necessary to propel the bill over its first hurdle. Reid met privately earlier in the day with Sens. Ben Nelson of Nebraska, Mary Landrieu of Louisiana and Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas, moderate Democrats who have expressed concerns about the measure.

Nelson later issued a statement strongly suggesting he would vote with fellow Democrats on an initial showdown expected within days. Aides have said privately that Reid decided to retain an existing antitrust exemption for the insurance industry as a way of satisfying the Nebraskan's concerns.

Landrieu said, "I'm not going to be for anything that doesn't drive down costs over time." Lincoln, the only one of the three who faces re-election next year, told reporters, "We'll wait and see."

With the support of two independents, Democrats have 60 seats, the precise number needed to choke off any delaying tactics by the 40 Republicans who appear united in opposition to the bill in its current form.

In general, Reid proposed an outline that is similar to the House-passed bill, but there were important differences.

He called for an increase of a half percentage point in the Medicare payroll tax for individuals with income over \$200,000 a year, \$250,000 for couples.

He also included a tax on high-value insurance policies, meant to curb the appetite for expensive care.

The House bill contains neither of those two provisions, relying on an income tax surcharge on the wealthy to finance an expansion of coverage.

Reid's measure also calls for hundreds of billions of dollars in cuts in future Medicare spending, an attempt to satisfy Obama's call to curtail the growth of health care spending that is fiercely opposed by Republicans.

On another controversial issue, Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., told reporters Reid had decided to require the side-by-side sale of insurance policies that cover abortion services and do not, an attempt to satisfy both sides. That is far less restrictive than a House-passed provision that left liberal Democrats angry.

Ahead lie weeks -- if not more -- of unpredictable maneuvering on the Senate floor, where Reid and his allies will seek to incorporate changes sought by Democrats and repel attempts by Republicans to defeat the legislation and inflict a significant political defeat on the president. Reid released his legislation more than a week after the House approved its version of the health care bill on a near party-line vote of 220-215.

According to estimates from the Congressional Budget Office, that House bill, with a price tag of about \$1.2 trillion, would result in coverage for tens of millions of uninsured, and provide 96 percent of the eligible population with insurance.

Two Senate committees approved different versions earlier in the year, and while Reid has said he would produce a blend of the two proposals, in fact he had a virtual free hand to come up with a plan that could command the 60 votes needed to pass.

Anticipating a major struggle, the White House deputized Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle to join Vice President Joe Biden in trying to clear the way for the bill's approval over the next several weeks.

Salazar, a former Colorado senator, is viewed as a bridge to moderate Democrats who are far outnumbered by liberals inside the Democratic caucus.

Daschle was Obama's first choice for secretary of health and human services, a position from which he was to try and oversee the administration's drive to enact health care legislation. He withdrew his nomination when it was disclosed he had not paid more than \$120,000 in federal taxes over several years.

Associated Press writers Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar and Erica Werner contributed to this report.

SENATE HEALTH BILL IS UNVEILED (WSJ)

Reid Outlines \$849 Billion Plan; Tradeoffs Include Stiffer Medicare Tax on High Incomes

By Greg Hitt And Janet Adamy

Wall Street Journal, November 19, 2009

WASHINGTON -- Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, propelling action on President Barack Obama's top domestic priority, unveiled Wednesday a ten-year \$849 billion bill that would overhaul the nation's health-care system and extend insurance to 31 million Americans without coverage. The 2,074-page legislation represents the Nevada Democrat's first attempt to build consensus among Senate Democratic liberals and centrists, as well as the two independents allied with the party.

One swing Democrat, Sen. Ben Nelson of Nebraska, said he still has a range of concerns but suggested he might at least be willing to begin debate. "If you don't like the bill, then why would you block your own opportunity to amend it?" he said. Two other Democrats on the fence, Sen. Mary Landrieu of Louisiana and Sen. Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas, remained noncommittal Wednesday evening.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget office estimated the bill would ensure that 94% of those living in the U.S., not counting unauthorized immigrants, have insurance coverage, several Senate Democratic aides said. CBO previously estimated about 83% of Americans now have insurance. The Senate measure would reduce the federal budget deficit by \$127 billion over the next decade, and by \$650 billion over the second ten years of the program. It achieves that in part through a new Medicare payroll tax and a tax on high-value insurance plans.

The \$849 billion price tag comes in below the \$1.05 trillion cost of the health overhaul passed by the House this month, and the prospect of additional deficit reduction may raise chances fiscally conservative Democrats will back the package. But the figures aren't likely to win over Republicans, who say the bill adds costly new benefits for some Americans when the federal debt is reaching new heights.

Other hurdles to passage in the full Senate include fractures between liberal and conservative Democrats over a government-run insurance plan and disputes over how the bill should treat abortion.

"This is yet another trillion-dollar experiment, but it is not what Americans bargained for," said Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.).

Among other things, the Senate legislation would create a new government-run health insurance plan to compete with private insurers. States would be allowed the option of not participating, and the plan would negotiate payment rates directly with health-care providers, rather than tying payments to Medicare's low rates. Those were concessions to centrists worried about government's footprint in the private sector.

The bill would also create government subsidies to help individuals and families comply with a mandate to buy insurance, and would sharply expand Medicaid, the federal-state health insurance program for the poor.

Journal Community
discuss

"OK, Mr. Reid. And the tooth fairy is going to leave a million dollars under my pillow tonight." -
Bruce D. Gulick

Mr. Obama said the legislation would help fix the problems of rising insurance premiums, increasing medical costs and the instability felt by those who lack insurance. "We're closer than ever to enacting solutions to these problems," he said.

Mr. Reid huddled with Democrats for weeks to hammer out details of the bill, and his decision to move forward Wednesday sets the stage for a pivotal vote, perhaps Friday or Saturday, that will determine whether the Senate can formally open debate on the bill.

"Tonight represents the last leg of this journey we've been on for a while now," Mr. Reid said. He met Wednesday with Vice President Joe Biden, and many Democrats voiced hope the majority leader will be able to secure the votes needed to overcome Republican opposition and move to the debate.

"We're going to clear the hurdles," said Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry, the Democratic standard-bearer in 2004. But the outcome remains uncertain. "I'm not going to assume a single vote," said Illinois Sen. Richard Durbin, the Democratic whip.

The coming showdown looms as the first of several votes over the next month that will test Mr. Reid's ability to hold together liberals and centrists. Republicans contend Democrats are trying to

rush action on the bill before the American public, already uneasy, turns completely against the White House-backed initiative.

On the floor, there could be at least a half-dozen points where Republicans-if they use every stalling tactic available-could force Mr. Reid to muster 60 votes to move the bill along, said congressional aides.

Mr. Reid decided to pare back a proposed tax on high-value insurance plans, bowing to liberal and union complaints that the measure would hit middle-class families. Under his proposal, the tax would fall on plans valued at more than \$23,000 for couples, up from \$21,000 in legislation written by the Senate Finance Committee. The tax was estimated to raise \$149 billion over ten years, far less than was envisioned earlier this year.

To help make up for the lost revenue, Mr. Reid inserted a provision that would raise Medicare payroll taxes on couples with income of more than \$250,000 a year. For those families, the levy would be raised to 1.95%, up from 1.45%. Overall, the proposal would bring in \$54 billion over ten years. Mr. Reid is also proposing a new tax on elective cosmetic surgery, generating \$5 billion. Both the House and Senate bills make hundreds of billions of dollars in cuts in spending on Medicare. But the two chambers differ on how to raise revenue. The House legislation relies largely on an income surtax on the wealthy. The Senate bill would raise money across a range of health care sources.

Insurers and drug companies, for example, would be hit with tens of billions in new fees. So would medical device makers, though the proposed levy on device makers was lowered to \$20 billion, down about half from the Senate Finance Committee bill.

Still to be fought out on the Senate floor is the issue of abortion.

The Senate bill provides wider insurance coverage for abortion than the House legislation. Among other things, the Senate's proposal would allow women who receive government subsidies to buy insurance to enroll in a plan that covers abortion, while the House bill would bar that. Sen. Orrin Hatch (R., Utah) said he wanted to force the Senate to vote on whether to adopt the House limits. "We'll have a major debate," he said.

Write to Greg Hitt at greg.hitt@wsj.com and Janet Adamy at janet.adamy@wsj.com

REID BILL WILL COST \$849 BILLION (POL)

By Carrie Budoff Brown And Manu Raju

Politico, November 19, 2009

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid scrambled Wednesday to pull together 60 votes for his health reform bill - and his effort got a boost from congressional scorekeepers, who said his plan would cost \$849 billion over 10 years, comfortably below the president's \$900 billion limit.

The Congressional Budget Office also gave Reid some good news on the deficit - saying his plan would reduce the deficit by \$127 billion in deficit reduction in the first 10 years and \$650 billion in the second decade. It would cover 94 percent of all Americans.

Reid was briefing the Democratic caucus on details of his bill at 5 p.m. and it's expected to include a public option, with a chance for states to opt-out of coverage; a mandate requiring individuals to own insurance; and subsidies to help low- and middle-income Americans buy coverage.

Now Reid must hope moderate Democrats who hold the key to reform will agree to go ahead with a key test vote on the bill as early as Saturday, and Reid spent the day Wednesday wooing these fence-sitters.

But he got some positive soundings from centrist Nebraska Sen. Ben Nelson, who put out a news release to remind voters that a vote to go ahead with debate on the bill Saturday doesn't equate to a vote in support of the bill. It seemed an indication that Nelson was willing to give Reid his vote on the motion to start debate.

Getting those 60 votes on what amounts to a procedural vote, however, has proven challenging for Reid, with two other key moderates, Mary Landrieu of Louisiana and Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas, still not on record committing to vote for proceeding to debate.

At around 2:15 p.m., the three moderate Democratic holdouts - Nelson, Landrieu and Lincoln - entered Reid's office for a briefing.

"He is walking through the particulars with them," said Reid's spokesman, Jim Manley. "We need 60 votes to get this bill to the floor."

Vice President Biden held court for more than three hours in a room off the Senate floor. Interior

Secretary Ken Salazar and former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle were also dispatched to the Capitol by President Barack Obama to lobby senators. As expected, moderates were the focal point. Salazar ate lunch with Sen. Mark Pryor (D-Ark.) in the Senate dining room. Lincoln (D-Ark.) hustled into the Senate reception room for a sitdown with Biden, but she emerged without making any public commitments. "We're still counting. Harry is still counting and working," Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-Ill.). Adding to the uncertainty Wednesday was the absence of Senate Finance Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.), who flew back to Montana to deal with a family emergency. With no margin for error, Reid needs Baucus present for the first vote. Durbin said he was hopeful Baucus would return for the vote. Reid said Tuesday that he is "cautiously optimistic" he can secure the 60 votes he needs to move forward on the bill by this weekend. Reid's bill is expected to include a national government insurance plan with a provision for states to opt out. Reid is also expected to adjust a 40 percent excise tax on high-value insurance plans by raising the threshold at which insurers would pay the fee. He's expected to make up for that lost revenue by proposing an expansion of the Medicare payroll tax.

REID PLAN UPS PRESSURE ON MODERATES (POL)

By Carrie Budoff Brown

Politico, November 19, 2009

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid unveiled his \$849 billion health reform bill Wednesday to broad support from fellow Democrats - and the move quickly turned up the pressure on the last few wavering moderates to support the plan, which includes a sizable chunk of deficit cutting. Reid's plan would expand coverage to 94 percent of Americans through a government-run health insurance option - allowing states to opt out - and other features, all while reducing future federal deficits by \$127 billion over the next 10 years, according to Senate aides briefed by the Congressional Budget Office.

"Tonight begins the last leg of this journey" to bring health reform to the nation, Reid said in announcing the bill.

But Reid's plan contains considerable differences from House legislation passed earlier this month - with a more limited public option and different ways to pay for the bill. Reid included an excise tax on insurers who offer "Cadillac" health plans, not the "millionaire's tax" that's in the House bill.

And one of the biggest differences between the bills - on language restricting federal funding for abortion - could prove problematic for Reid. His bill doesn't include as many limits as the House bill and already is drawing fire from anti-abortion activists.

Democrats on Wednesday were clearly hoping that the deficit figures - the biggest deficit reduction of any health bill to date, Reid's office noted - would knock down one of the last remaining obstacles to winning the votes of key centrists, at least to go ahead with debate on the bill as early as this weekend. Reid's office said the bill could reduce the deficit by \$650 billion in its second 10 years.

And, in fact, the strategy seemed to be working. Nebraska Sen. Ben Nelson and Louisiana Sen. Mary Landrieu both sounded more positive about voting to allow debate to proceed.

Nelson told reporters he still had problems with the public option plan - he prefers a plan that would allow states to opt in instead - but signaled he'd wage that fight on the floor. He also made clear the vote to allow debate wouldn't be the final fight on the bill.

"There will be opportunities to amend the legislation, and if it is amended to the satisfaction of several people, then it will have enough votes to pass on the back end," Nelson said. "If not, it won't. That is the risk."

Other centrists sounded positive toward the bill. "If the bottom line is what it appears to be, that's an encouraging thing. ... But you've got to trust but verify," said Sen. Evan Bayh (D-Ind.), who said he would vote to allow debate.

One holdout appeared to be Sen. Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas, who faces a tough reelection fight next fall. On her way in to the briefing with Reid, Lincoln was asked how she will vote on the motion to proceed: "We'll wait and see," she said.

Reid's hopes of calling a vote to proceed with debate as early as Friday seemed to fade, but a Saturday vote remained a possibility. But he has no margin for error, needing all 58 Democrats

and two independents to block any move toward a filibuster and bring the bill to the floor. And over the course of Wednesday, the announcement of the plan emerged as a key test of his leadership and vote-corralling abilities - with President Barack Obama dispatching Vice President Joe Biden back to his old Senate haunts to help.

Adding to the uncertainty Wednesday was the absence of Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus, who flew back to Montana to deal with a family emergency.

Beyond the moderates, Democrats praised Reid's effort to thread the needle with a bill that will keep costs lower than Obama's target of \$900 billion, reins in deficit spending and still expands coverage to more than 31 million Americans. The reimbursement rates for the public plan will not be tied to Medicare, and co-ops will still be offered.

As for the \$650 billion estimate, it grows out of a calculation by the CBO that the Senate Finance Committee bill would reduce the deficit by one-fourth to one-half percent of gross domestic product over its second 10 years. Finance Committee officials converted that to \$650 billion to \$1.3 trillion, and Reid's office believes his bill to be in the one-fourth range and maybe higher - leading to the claim of \$650 billion.

The Senate bill pushes back implementation of major parts of reform to 2014 -- a shift from both the House and the Senate Finance Committee bill, which created 2013 effective dates.

This is bad news for lawmakers who will need to explain to constituents why the elements that have attracted the most attention -- the public plan, the Medicaid expansion and the insurance exchanges -- won't be available for four years. Some reforms would kick in earlier, Senate aides explained, but the big pieces would still be a ways off.

Reid sought to sidestep hot-button issues that could cause trouble for the bill. Illegal immigrants will not get health benefits under the bill, and it would restrict taxpayer funding of abortion - an issue that almost derailed the House bill.

Abortion rights supporters were quick to praise the language Reid included in the bill, which was an early warning sign that it doesn't go far enough for some in the anti-abortion community who led the effort to amend the House bill.

The National Right to Life Committee slammed the language as "unacceptable."

"Reid seeks to cover elective abortions in two big new federal health programs, but tries to conceal that unpopular reality with layers of contrived definitions and hollow bookkeeping requirements," NRLC Legislative Director Douglas Johnson said in a statement.

Other Democrats praised Reid's efforts.

Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass), who was concerned about the tax on Cadillac benefits, praised Reid for raising the limits to policies costing \$23,000 for a family and \$8,500 for an individual. "They moved, and I like the new numbers. It is closer to where I first began. ... I think we are going pass this legislation."

Kerry also praised Reid's efforts to reduce the tax on medical device manufacturers to \$20 billion, down from \$40 billion, over 10 years.

The Reid bill would increase the Medicare payroll tax on couples who earn more than \$250,000 and individuals that earn \$200,000 from 1.45 percent to 1.95 percent.

The bill levies a 5 percent tax on elective cosmetic surgery. The provision raises \$5 billion and was needed to make the numbers work, a Democratic Senate aide said. The Finance Committee considered the tax but dismissed it, in part because it was a public relations battle that senators were not willing to wage.

The Senate bill includes a public insurance option that allows states to choose not to participate. In order to opt-out, states would have to pass a law, the aide said.

The Reid bill only slightly toughens the requirement that people carry insurance. It levies a \$95 fine in 2014 and scales up to \$750 by 2016. The Senate Finance bill had no penalty in the first year.

Critics worry that people will choose to pay the cheaper penalty rather than buying the more expensive insurance plans because the bill also requires insurers to offer coverage to people who are sick. That combination could lead to an older, sicker and more expensive risk pool.

In what can be viewed as an election-year sweetener for senior citizens, the coverage gap in the Medicare prescription drug program would shrink by \$500 in 2010 only under the Senate bill. The Senate aide described it as a "down-payment" that would move the Senate closer to the House bill, which eliminates the donut hole over the next decade.

Getting 60 votes on what amounts to a procedural vote has proved challenging for Reid. Biden

held court for more than three hours in a room off the Senate floor. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle were also dispatched to the Capitol by Obama to lobby senators.

As expected, moderates were the focal point. Salazar ate lunch with Sen. Mark Pryor (D-Ark.) in the Senate dining room. Lincoln hustled into the Senate reception room for a sit-down with Biden, but she emerged without making any public commitments.

"We're still counting. Harry is still counting and working," said Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-Ill.).

Manu Raju, Patrick O'Connor, Chris Frates and Jake Sherman contributed to this story.

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SENATE'S \$849 BILLION HEALTH BILL WIDENS COVERAGE, CUTS DEFICIT (BLOOM)

By Laura Litvan And Nicole Gaouette

Bloomberg News, November 19, 2009

Nov. 18 (Bloomberg) -- Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid released an \$849 billion health-care plan that calls for new government competition for private insurers, covers almost all Americans and raises Medicare taxes on the wealthiest people.

Reid's proposal, the most sweeping overhaul of the U.S. health system in four decades, cleared a major hurdle when the Congressional Budget Office said it would cut the federal budget deficit by \$127 billion in the first decade. That met a standard set by President Barack Obama and allows Reid to seek a vote as early as Saturday to open the way for Senate debate.

The 2,074-page Senate bill would extend coverage to 94 percent of Americans or some 31 million people, lawmakers said. The House already passed its version on a vote of 220-215 on Nov. 7.

"This legislation is a tremendous step forward," Reid told reporters at the Capitol. "Tonight begins the last leg of this journey."

The measure is intended to both reduce the ranks of the uninsured and curb rising medical costs. Both the House and Senate versions require that Americans get health coverage or pay a penalty, set up online insurance-purchasing exchanges and offer government aid to help lower-income people.

The Senate legislation would reduce the deficit by \$650 billion in the second decade, according to preliminary estimates from the nonpartisan CBO cited by lawmakers.

'Good Deal'

Reid is trying to jump-start legislation, which Obama has said he wants to sign into law this year.

Reid has cast doubt on that goal after months of setbacks and signs the Republicans want to prolong the debate by using delaying tactics.

"We're closer than ever to enacting solutions to these problems," Obama said in a statement released by the White House. "I look forward to working with the Senate and House to get a finished bill to my desk as soon as possible."

Reid included a so-called public option program to compete with private insurers such as Hartford, Connecticut-based Aetna Inc. even though it's opposed by all Senate Republicans and some Democrats. He's gambling he can get support to start debate on a bill that's likely to be rewritten by the full Senate.

While the House opted for an income surtax on the wealthiest Americans, much of the funding for the Senate bill will come from a tax on high-end, Cadillac insurance plans, said Senator Kent Conrad, a North Dakota Democrat.

New Taxes

The Cadillac tax would be placed on insurers that offer plans valued at \$8,500 for individuals or \$23,000 for families, Conrad told reporters. It would have higher thresholds for high-risk workers and people living in states with costlier premiums, Conrad said.

Reid did settle on a Medicare tax increase for some Americans, raising the rate to 1.95 percent from 1.45 percent for couples earning more than \$250,000, Conrad said. He also plans a new commission to help set rates paid by Medicare, the government program for the elderly, Conrad said.

The Senate's requirement for employers is also different. Under Reid's bill, companies with 50 or more workers would be subject to penalties if they don't provide coverage and have workers who

get taxpayer funded subsidies to buy policies.

'Class Act'

The Senate bill includes a federally run long-term care insurance plan dubbed the "Class Act" that would let workers pay premiums and then get a cash benefit later for adult day care or assisted living expenses, lawmakers said. It would also bar insurers from denying coverage based on pre-existing conditions, and would expand Medicare prescription-drug coverage.

Reid, a Nevada Democrat, has been melding plans passed by the Senate health and finance committees and still faces splits in his party over issues including how to pay for the bill, whether to set up a public option, and how to ensure that federal funds aren't used for abortions.

One of the top Democrats involved in the overhaul effort, Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus, may be missing the next few days. Baucus flew back to his home state of Montana to be with his ailing mother.

"We'll get him back here when we need him," Reid said.

New York Senator Chuck Schumer, one of the Democratic leaders, told reporters "everything looks good" for an initial vote to start debate. At least three Democrats -- Senators Ben Nelson of Nebraska, Mary Landrieu of Louisiana and Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas -- had refused to pledge their votes for that step until they could review the bill's text.

'Not Enough'

The bill "is better in some ways than in other ways," Nelson said tonight. "Until I have a chance to go through it, a brief explanation is not enough" to make a conclusion, he said.

Reid met with the three senators this afternoon and got some help from Vice President Joe Biden, who went to Capitol Hill to lobby other senators on the bill. Former senators Tom Daschle and Ken Salazar who now serves as President Barack Obama's Interior Secretary, also met with lawmakers.

To win passage, Reid has to keep all 60 votes controlled by Democrats together. Besides Nelson, Landrieu and Lincoln, Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman has been critical of the public option. Lieberman, an independent who caucuses with the Democrats, said he would support the vote to start debate and work with lawmakers to strip out the government program.

Maine Senator Olympia Snowe, the only Republican to vote for a health-care plan in the committee phase, said she can't support a public option. She's pushing for a trigger to put a government plan in effect only if there is evidence that policies offered by private insurers are unaffordable.

Time for Debate

Senator Orrin Hatch, a Utah Republican, today said it's doubtful any Republican will vote for Reid's plan. He also said Reid should allow enough time for debate.

"We're talking about one-sixth of the economy," Hatch said. "This should be a very deliberative process. And it should take more than a month and a half."

Reid has safeguards to keep federal dollars from funding abortion, though not the restrictions adopted in the House, lawmakers said. Abortion rights supporters have threatened to vote against a final bill if it contains the House language and have been working to keep it out of the Senate version.

If the Senate passes legislation, it would work with the House to come up with compromise legislation for a new round of votes in both chambers before a bill would go to Obama.

"We are now down to the week we have been waiting for," Massachusetts Senator John Kerry told reporters tonight. "This is not just a matter of months in the waiting, this has been decades in the waiting."

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REID PUSHES HOLDOUTS TO VOTE FOR HEALTH BILL DEBATE (UPDATE2) (BLOOM)

By Laura Litvan And Kristin Jensen

Bloomberg News, November 19, 2009

Nov. 18 (Bloomberg) -- Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid plans to give fellow Democrats details of his proposal to overhaul U.S. health care even as lawmakers raise concerns over issues from abortion to a government-run insurance program.

Reid will meet with Senate Democrats at 5 p.m. Washington time and deliver a summary, North

Dakota Senator Kent Conrad said. The next step is the push to begin debate on the bill, which would require several procedural steps and corraling 60 votes to overcome efforts to block action. "I feel cautiously optimistic that we can do that," Reid said yesterday.

To keep the 60 votes controlled by Democrats in line, Reid is enlisting the support of former senators including Vice President Joe Biden, who went to Capitol Hill today. Former Senators Tom Daschle and Ken Salazar, who now serves as President Barack Obama's interior secretary, also met with lawmakers.

The legislation, Obama's top domestic priority, is intended to cover tens of millions of uninsured Americans while curbing medical costs. The proposals for purchasing exchanges, subsidies and a requirement that all Americans have coverage would cost more than \$800 billion over 10 years and mark the biggest changes to U.S. health care in more than four decades.

'Still Counting'

The House passed its version on a 220-215 vote on Nov. 7. Reid has been waiting for Congressional Budget Office analyses on various proposals drawn up by the Senate health and finance committees before unveiling his plan.

Senator Tom Harkin, an Iowa Democrat and chairman of the health committee, said the CBO found the cost of "coverage" in the legislation is less than \$900 billion. He didn't elaborate. House leaders initially put the cost of their \$1.05 trillion bill at \$894 billion, a net figure that took into account new revenue such as penalties for not buying insurance.

Reid is "still counting" members and plans to hold a vote on the motion to proceed to debate before the Thanksgiving holiday recess planned for next week, said Illinois Senator Dick Durbin, the No. 2 Senate Democrat. The Senate might be in session on both days of the coming weekend, Durbin said.

Baucus Leaves

One of the top Democrats involved in the health-care overhaul, Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus, may be missing the next few days. Baucus flew back to his home state of Montana to be with his ailing mother, a congressional aide said. The aide said it wouldn't affect the timing of the bill.

A Senate aide familiar with Reid's proposal said the plan will likely include the creation of a federally run long-term care insurance plan dubbed the "Class Act" by its original sponsors, the late Senator Edward Kennedy, a Massachusetts Democrat, and former Senator Michael DeWine, an Ohio Republican.

Under the plan, participating employers would let workers pay premiums into the program, which would offer a cash benefit of between \$50 and \$75 per day that could be used to pay for adult day care or assisted living expenses. Workers would pay into the plan for five years before receiving benefits.

The idea has drawn critics, who say its success would depend on a growing roster of new premium contributors. Conrad, who is chairman of the budget committee, called the Class Act "a Ponzi scheme of the first order," in an Oct. 27 Washington Post article.

Letter From Economists

The White House weighed in on the legislation last night, releasing a letter sent by 23 economists that outlined four priorities the Senate bill should include.

The economists said the bill should impose an excise tax on high-cost insurance plans; not increase the deficit; set up an independent commission to make binding recommendations on Medicare cuts, and carry out "delivery-system reforms," which would reward health-care providers for "providing better care, not just more care."

Including those elements "will reduce long-term deficits, improve the quality of care, and put the nation on a firm fiscal footing," wrote the economists, who included Princeton University Professors Alan Blinder and Uwe Reinhardt and former Federal Reserve Vice Chairman Alice Rivlin.

While Democrats control 60 Senate votes, Reid can't yet count on them to clear the way for debate.

'Competition-Free Zone'

One Democrat, Oregon Senator Ron Wyden, said his support for proceeding is in doubt unless the government-run insurance program, or public option, is included in the plan.

"I'm not going to support a bill that's a competition-free zone," Wyden told reporters yesterday.

And at least three Democrats -- Senators Ben Nelson of Nebraska, Mary Landrieu of Louisiana and Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas -- have refused to pledge their votes until they have seen the bill's text.

Reid met with the three senators this afternoon to go over the details of what's in the bill before he introduces it, said Reid spokesman Jim Manley. The first big test vote for the measure may come as early as Nov. 21, Manley said. That would be a vote to end the delaying tactics of opponents who want to bar the measure from getting to the floor for consideration.

One of the most pressing issues for Reid is the public option. Wyden and Senator Jay Rockefeller of West Virginia insist the best way to reduce health costs is to set up the government program to compete with insurers like Hartford, Connecticut-based Aetna Inc.

Carper Compromise

Other Democrats are critical. Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman, an independent who caucuses with the Democrats, said he won't vote for a bill that includes the program, though he has said he will support a motion to start debate.

Delaware Senator Tom Carper is crafting a compromise for fellow Democrats that might be offered as a replacement for the public option during floor debate. The "hammer approach" would require states where insurance plans don't meet affordability standards to offer an alternative, national plan run by a nonprofit, Carper told reporters yesterday.

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REID SETS MARKERS FOR HISTORIC HEALTH CARE DEBATE (AP)

By David Espo, AP Special Correspondent

Associated Press, November 19, 2009

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Setting up a historic year-end health care debate, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid unveiled long-awaited legislation Wednesday night to extend coverage to all but 6 percent of eligible Americans and bar private industry from denying insurance because of pre-existing medical conditions.

The Democrat's \$849 billion measure is designed to remake the nation's health care system, relying on cuts in future Medicare spending to cover costs - as well as on higher payroll taxes for the well-to-do and a new levy on patients undergoing elective cosmetic surgery.

Aides said the mammoth, 2,074-page bill would reduce deficits by \$127 billion over a decade and by as much as \$650 billion in the 10 years that follow, citing as-yet-unreleased estimates by the Congressional Budget Office.

"Tonight begins the last leg of this journey," said Nevada Sen. Reid, less than two weeks after the House approved its version of a sweeping remake of the health care system- and nearly 10 months after President Barack Obama's Inauguration Day summons to action.

Obama welcomed Reid's action, saying, "Today, thanks to the Senate's hard work, we're closer than ever to enacting solutions to these problems. I look forward to working with the Senate and House to get a finished bill to my desk as soon as possible." There was no mention of Obama's longtime goal of signing legislation by year's end.

Republicans vowed a protracted struggle to block the legislation and deny the president a victory that would cap a tumultuous first year in office.

"This bill has been behind closed doors for weeks," said Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the Republican leader. "Now, it's America's turn, and this will not be a short debate. Higher premiums, tax increases and Medicare cuts to pay for more government. The American people know that is not reform."

An early showdown on the Senate floor is expected by week's end.

Reid's Senate measure would require most Americans to carry health insurance and would provide hundreds of billions of dollars in subsidies to help those at lower incomes afford it. Medium and large companies would not be required to offer coverage, but they would be forced to pay fees if the government ended up subsidizing their employees' insurance.

Beginning in 2014, the bill would set up new insurance marketplaces - called exchanges - primarily for those who now have a hard time getting or keeping coverage. Consumers would have the choice of purchasing government sold insurance, an attempt to hold down prices charged by private insurers.

After weeks of secretive drafting, Reid outlined the legislation to rank-and-file Democratic senators at a closed-door meeting. "Everyone was positive," said Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn.

That didn't mean there weren't problems - far from it. At his news conference, Reid pointedly refrained from saying he had the 60 votes necessary to propel the bill over its first hurdle.

Reid met privately earlier in the day with Sens. Ben Nelson of Nebraska, Mary Landrieu of Louisiana and Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas, moderate Democrats who have expressed concerns about the measure.

Nelson later issued a statement strongly suggesting he would vote with fellow Democrats on an initial showdown expected within days. Aides have said privately that Reid decided to retain an existing antitrust exemption for the insurance industry as a way of satisfying the Nebraskan's concerns.

Landrieu said, "I'm not going to be for anything that doesn't drive down costs over time."

Lincoln, the only one of the three who faces re-election next year, told reporters, "We'll wait and see."

With the support of two independents, Democrats have 60 seats, the precise number needed to choke off any delaying tactics by the 40 Republicans who appear united in opposition to the bill in its current form.

In general, Reid proposed an outline that is similar to the House-passed bill, but there were important differences.

He called for an increase of a half percentage point in the Medicare payroll tax for individuals with income over \$200,000 a year, \$250,000 for couples.

He also included a tax on high-value insurance policies, meant to curb the appetite for expensive care.

The House bill contains neither of those two provisions, relying on an income tax surcharge on the wealthy to finance an expansion of coverage.

Reid's measure also calls for hundreds of billions of dollars in cuts in future Medicare spending, an attempt to satisfy Obama's call to curtail the growth of health care spending that is fiercely opposed by Republicans.

On another controversial issue, Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., told reporters Reid had decided to require the side-by-side sale of insurance policies that cover abortion services and do not, an attempt to satisfy both sides. That is far less restrictive than a House-passed provision that left liberal Democrats angry.

Ahead lie weeks - if not more - of unpredictable maneuvering on the Senate floor, where Reid and his allies will seek to incorporate changes sought by Democrats and repel attempts by Republicans to defeat the legislation and inflict a significant political defeat on the president.

Reid released his legislation more than a week after the House approved its version of the health care bill on a near party-line vote of 220-215.

According to estimates from the Congressional Budget Office, that House bill, with a price tag of about \$1.2 trillion, would result in coverage for tens of millions of uninsured, and provide 96 percent of the eligible population with insurance.

Two Senate committees approved different versions earlier in the year, and while Reid has said he would produce a blend of the two proposals, in fact he had a virtual free hand to come up with a plan that could command the 60 votes needed to pass.

Anticipating a major struggle, the White House deputized Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle to join Vice President Joe Biden in trying to clear the way for the bill's approval over the next several weeks.

Salazar, a former Colorado senator, is viewed as a bridge to moderate Democrats who are far outnumbered by liberals inside the Democratic caucus.

Daschle was Obama's first choice for secretary of health and human services, a position from which he was to try and oversee the administration's drive to enact health care legislation. He withdrew his nomination when it was disclosed he had not paid more than \$120,000 in federal taxes over several years.

Associated Press writers Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar and Erica Werner contributed to this report.

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DASCHLE IS STILL GO-TO GUY ON HEALTHCARE (HILL)

By Alexander Bolton

The Hill, November 19, 2009

Tom Daschle on Wednesday huddled with Vice President Biden and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid to strategize on healthcare reform, nearly 10 months after his Cabinet nomination crashed and burned.

Reid (D-Nev.) invited Daschle to his office for a meeting with Biden as Democrats are scrambling to secure 60 votes to clear a procedural motion on healthcare reform.

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, who has strong friendships with Democratic centrists such as Sen. Mary Landrieu (La.) and Ben Nelson (Neb.), also attended the meeting.

The former Senate majority leader from South Dakota is unexpectedly at the heart of Washington's highest-level negotiations at a key moment in the movement to reform the nation's healthcare system.

When Daschle withdrew his name from consideration for secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services in February, it appeared that he would fade into the background. The withdrawal came after days of national headlines focusing on the ex-senator's unpaid taxes.

Daschle at the time acknowledged he had become a "distraction."

Obama said he "screwed up" in handling Daschle's nomination: "Ultimately, I campaigned on changing Washington and bottom-up politics."

The president added, "And I don't want to send a message to the American people that there are two sets of standards -- one for powerful people and one for ordinary folks who are working every day and paying their taxes."

Daschle announced this week he will be leaving one lobbying firm, Alston & Bird, for another, DLA Piper. The ex-senator has repeatedly stressed he did not lobby for Alston & Bird and will not lobby for DLA Piper, but government watchdogs have noted both firms have many healthcare clients.

Daschle's title at DLA Piper will be "senior policy adviser."

Sen. Chris Dodd (D-Conn.), who negotiated healthcare legislation with Reid over the last several weeks, told The Hill Wednesday that Daschle has been in frequent contact with members of the upper chamber.

Daschle declined through an assistant a request for an interview.

Daschle is the second major hire with Senate ties DLA Piper has made in recent months. The firm also picked up former Sen. Mel Martinez (R-Fla.) in September.

Francis Burch, the global chairman of DLA Piper, is clearly pleased to have landed Daschle, who is admired by his former colleagues on Capitol Hill.

"Sen. Daschle is a senior statesman and is justifiably regarded as one of the wisest and most effective problem solvers in Washington as well as in the nation and the world," said Burch.

REID ROLLING OUT BIG GUNS TO PUSH HEALTHCARE BILL TO 60 NEEDED VOTES (HILL)

By Alexander Bolton

The Hill, November 19, 2009

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid has recruited an all-star team of former senators - Vice President Joe Biden, Tom Daschle and Ken Salazar - to push healthcare reform over the finish line.

Reid (D-Nev.) plotted strategy with the vice president, Interior Secretary Salazar and former Majority Leader Daschle (D-S.D.) on Wednesday, days ahead of a crucial vote to begin debate on the bill that needs every Democrat.

Reid's all-star team indicates that the administration and Democratic leadership are now using all the persuading power and arm-twisting prowess available to them to carry President Barack Obama's signature agenda item to a successful conclusion.

A handful of Democratic centrists are holding out on the procedural vote, wanting time to read the legislation.

Reid got good news Wednesday when the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) reported the measure would spend \$849 billion over 10 years to cover 31 million of the uninsured and reduce the federal budget deficit by \$127 billion over that time. That's under Obama's spending limit of \$900 billion, a concern of many in the middle

Democratic leaders shared the legislation with the conference on Wednesday and then planned to

hold a news conference and make the bill public.

"There's not a lot of room for error here," said Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-La.), among those centrists targeted. "I think the administration is pulling out all the stops.

A Democratic aide said Biden met with Reid Wednesday morning to offer use of his extensive legislative experience and many friendships in the senate.

"He showed up to say, 'What can I do to help?' " said the aide.

Biden declined to say which senators he chatted with Wednesday.

"I met with a lot of people, anybody who will talk to me," Biden said while leaving the Capitol Wednesday afternoon, almost five hours after he arrived.

Biden served 36 years in the Senate and has strong relationships with nearly the entire Democratic Conference.

Salazar, a Democratic senator from Colorado until he joined the administration this year, has close friendships with Landrieu and Sen. Ben Nelson (D-Neb.).

Daschle, a three-term senator, has also served as a colleague with those centrists who are considered the least likely to vote for a healthcare reform bill that includes a government-run insurance program. That group includes Landrieu, Nelson, Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D-Ark.) and Sen. Joe Lieberman (Conn.), an Independent who caucuses with the Democrats.

"Relationships mean a lot around here and Sen. Biden has them and Sen. Daschle has them and Salazar has them," said Sen. Kent Conrad (D-N.D.), a member of the Senate Finance Committee who helped craft that panel's healthcare bill.

Landrieu suspected Obama may have even asked the three to make the final sales pitch to those on the fence.

"They know the senators well, they know the Senate well, they know our rules and the way this is going to have to be negotiated on the floor," said Landrieu, who was scheduled to meet with Salazar on Wednesday.

Landrieu, Nelson and Lincoln met with Reid Wednesday afternoon to discuss their concerns with the legislation.

Landrieu said she was inclined to vote against the motion to begin debate on the legislation but the meeting with Reid mollified some of her concerns.

"I'm in neutral right now," she said. "The meeting helped."

Nelson said his relationship with Biden has always been "very solid" and called Salazar "one of my very best friends in the Senate."

Salazar told The Hill: "I will help as needed" on healthcare reform.

"If needed, I'm available," said Salazar, adding he also spoke to lawmakers Wednesday about energy and climate change.

Lawmakers said that Biden has been active in healthcare negotiations over the past several weeks but they have not noticed much of a role for Salazar and Daschle. They expect all three ex-senators to become frequent visitors - in person and on the phone - in the coming weeks.

"Biden has already [played] a very constructive role as far as I'm concerned, reaching out to people, talking to people, he's come to my office and having me down there," Conrad added.

Conrad, however, said he was not aware of Daschle or Salazar playing as active a role to date.

Biden and Daschle may be needed to convince liberals to agree to concessions made to centrists. Republicans are united against the Democratic healthcare bill. Sen. Olympia Snowe (Maine), the only Senate Republican to support the Finance Committee bill, has indicated she will not back the motion to proceed. That means Reid needs every member of his conference to get the 60 votes to begin debate.

Nelson issued a statement Wednesday that a few Senate insiders interpreted as laying the groundwork for a yes vote.

Nelson defended his right to vote for the motion to begin debate, arguing that it did not equate to a vote for the healthcare reform bill.

"Let me say it again: It is a motion to start debate on a bill and to try to improve it," he said.

A senior Democratic aide said Reid will likely need two votes to overcome the Republican filibuster. One scenario would have a Saturday vote to end debate on the motion to proceed and then a Sunday vote on the motion to begin debate.

Jeffrey Young contributed to this article.

SENATE DEMS TAKE \$849B STEP TOWARD HEALTHCARE REFORM (HILL)

By Jeffrey Young

The Hill, November 19, 2009

Senate Democrats made a significant stride toward achieving President Barack Obama's goal of enacting a sweeping overhaul of the healthcare system with a bill that would spend \$849 billion over 10 years to reduce the number of uninsured by 31 million people.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) introduced the bill Wednesday even as he continued to scramble to win over a handful of centrist Democrats who remain uncommitted. But Reid and other Democratic senators declared they had reached a pivotal moment in the debate.

"We've traveled really a long ways to where we are. Tonight begins the last leg of this journey we've been on now for some time," Reid said.

With the House having passed its version of healthcare reform earlier this month, Obama is closer than any president has ever been to signing into law a major healthcare reform bill.

"Today we passed another critical milestone in the health reform effort," Obama said in a statement.

Democrats invoked the memory of the late Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), who called healthcare reform the cause of his life. "I intend to ensure that we do everything we can to fulfill Ted Kennedy's dream," said Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee Chairman Tom Harkin (D-Iowa).

But it will take more than inspiration to achieve success on an issue that has stymied presidents since Teddy Roosevelt.

The healthcare bill, and Reid's leadership of the effort, will face its biggest test yet Saturday, when the Senate will convene for a rare weekend session to hold a procedural motion on the legislation that stands as the first hurdle to advancing healthcare reform.

Even as Reid addressed the entire Senate Democratic caucus Wednesday evening and boasted about his bill, he could not say he had locked down the 60 votes he needs to ensure success on Saturday.

Centrist Democratic Sens. Mary Landrieu (La.), Blanche Lincoln (Ark.) and Ben Nelson (Neb.) continued to withhold promises to vote with Reid even after the trio sat down with the leader in his Capitol office. Reid received an assist Wednesday from Vice President Biden, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, a former senator from Colorado, and former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.), the man who would have been Obama's top healthcare adviser if he had not stepped aside amid controversy over unpaid taxes.

In a statement, Nelson hinted he might vote to advance the bill even if he did not support all of it but stopped short of declaring a position. "In reality, the meaning of the motion to proceed is very simple: It's a motion to commence debate and an opportunity to make changes," he said.

Over the course of more than a month, Reid worked through the challenge of melding separate healthcare reform bills passed by the HELP and Finance committees.

It was more than simply a legislative task. Though the two committee's bills, like the measure passed this month by the House, employ the same basic structure, they emerged from vastly different political contexts. The HELP Committee bill was considerably more liberal in its aims and more expensive in its costs compared to the Finance Committee.

Moreover, Reid had to settle vexing political questions that still threaten to divide his party. To the chagrin of some centrist Democrats, the bill includes a form of the public option prized by liberals and trouble still brewing on explosive issues such as abortion and immigration.

Republicans remain solidly opposed to the Democrats' bill, despite the majority's hope they may eventually win the support of Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-Maine).

"While Americans have been clear about their opposition to thousand-page bills for new government programs, it's now abundantly clear that Democrats haven't been listening," Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said. "This is yet another trillion-dollar experiment, but it is not what Americans bargained for."

The bill would bring the rate of legal U.S. residents younger than 65 with insurance to 94 percent by covering 31 million more people via health insurance exchange featuring private coverage and a new government-run public option plan and expanding Medicaid for the poor at a cost of \$849 billion.

The health insurance exchanges in the states would take effect in 2014 and states would be

permitted to opt out of the public option by passing a law to refuse it. People below 133 percent of the federal poverty level would be eligible for Medicaid. Those between 133 percent and 300 percent of poverty would receive subsidies and people between 133 percent and 400 percent of poverty would enjoy annual caps on premiums and out-of-pocket expenses as a percentage of income.

The bill also includes extensive new insurance regulations, including those that would limit companies' ability to deny coverage or care, cancel policies for the sick, vary premiums on age, health status, gender and other factors.

Individuals would be required to obtain coverage or face a penalty. Employers with more than 50 workers would have pay a fee if they do not offer affordable coverage and their employees receive federal subsidies to purchase insurance on the exchange.

In addition, the legislation would reduce to federal budget deficit by \$127 billion over 10 years, according to Congressional Budget Office (CBO) figures touted by Democrats. Moreover, in the second 20 years after the bill would take effect, deficit-reduction could reach a staggering \$650 billion.

To pay for their bill and achieve deficit reduction, Democrats cut Medicare spending on payments to medical providers by more than \$400 billion, in part by establish new payments systems designed to promote efficiency.

The bill also would raise \$371.9 billion in new taxes over 10 years, according to the Joint Committee on Taxation.

The bulk of those new revenues -- \$149.1 billion -- would come from a 40 percent excise tax on the value of health insurance plans above \$8,500 for individuals and \$23,000 for families. Reid scaled back this tax to allay concerns about Democrats and labor unions that it would ensare too many middle-class people.

Reid added a new proposal to the bill that would increase the Medicare payroll tax for high-income earners by 0.5 percent to 1.95 percent of adjusted gross income. This new tax would raise \$54 billion and affect individuals making more than \$200,000 or families earning more than \$250,000. Pharmaceutical, health insurance and medical device companies would be tapped for a combined \$101.9 billion in taxes. The medical device fee was more than halved from an earlier proposal to \$19.3 billion to respond to complaints from Democratic Sens. John Kerry (Mass.), Evan Bayh (Ind.) and others.

In addition, the bill includes a plethora of provisions designed to improve the quality and delivery of healthcare services by means such as promoting the use of preventive medicine.

LANDRIEU REAX (POL)

By Live Pulse

Politico, November 19, 2009

Swing vote Sen. Mary Landrieu said she she'll decide tomorrow if she will vote to move the bill forward, after she's had a chance to read the bill. But the cost estimates being bandied about "sounds like numbers I was expecting to hear," she said.

"They're going to pull out all the stops and they're going to do everything they can to work as closely with us and again, Democrats, we're trying to stay as united as we can be. We know this is an important issue for the country and it's important we get it right. And we're moving in the right direction, for the most part. At least we're getting bills that are less than a trillion dollars, that are paid for, that are lowering the cost to the taxpayer and to businesses, so we're moving in the right direction but there's still some improvements that could be made and I'm hoping to see that on the floor."

By Jake Sherman and Patrick O'Connor

Read the rest of Landrieu's interview as captured by Sherman, the fastest transcriber this side of the Mississippi, after the jump.

Enormous cooperation to get a bill through this process. The Democrats have to try to remain united and reach out to republicans like Senator Snowe, potentially others, maybe Senator Collins as we go forward. But as you know I've been concerned about three basic things from the very beginning. One to make sure that this bill's main focus is driving down costs to small business, to families, to individuals and the government. Not just driving down costs for the government, but driving down costs for small businesses that are the key job creators that'll move us out of the

recession we're in. If we can't give some relief to small business, then in my view it's almost not worth doing a bill. You know, if we can't provide a better path forward for businesses out there to be able to provide the kind of insurance at more reasonable costs, more choice more reasonable cost, it's almost worth not doing.

And then if we can't reduce the cost to the government, it's most certainly not worth doing because it's already 16 percent of our GDP. That's why until I see the CBO score and until I can review the bill, I'm just staying neutral.

And then the third piece is I understand proponents of a public option think it's a must have to keep the insurance industry honest. I want to reform the insurance industry, I do not want to eliminate them. And if we are not careful on this public option piece, you could eliminate private insurance. And that's not what we want to do. We want to reform it, we want to make sure we get rid of pre-existing conditions, if you get insurance you should keep it, we don't want to eliminate it and drive people into a government run, taxpayer subsidized public option. So those are the three things that I'm focused on. And if those issues are settled through the debate, then I'll be able to be supportive of a bill.

WHAT SHE TALKED ABOUT WITH INTERIOR SECRETARY KEN SALAZAR: We talked about the cap and trade, we talked about other options to get a carbon pricing outside the cap and trade method. We talked about off-shore oil and gas drilling, expanding domestic production, it was mostly an energy debate but we did also talk about health care. And as I said, I'm glad that the administration has asked Secretary Salazar and I think Vice President Biden to get more engaged. They are two members of the administration that obviously know a lot about the senate, they know all the senators, they know how the senate operates and they know we have, I mean sort of limited maneuvering room over here. We've gotta have all 60 of us and it's hard to get 60 people to agree on some of these major issues. But we're making progress. But again, I'm neutral, I haven't made a final decision. I'm going to review the bill, look at the CBO score which we should be getting anytime now. And then decide to go forward. But again, if I do, if, to move for the debate, those are the three things I'll be generally looking for. And if they don't materialize I will not be supportive at the end.

ON INITIAL REPORTS OF CBO SCORE: That sounds like numbers I was expecting to hear. They're going to pull out all the stops and they're going to do everything they can to work as closely with us and again, democrats, we're trying to stay as united as we can be. We know this is an important issue for the country and it's important we get it right. And we're moving in the right direction, for the most part. At least we're getting bills that are less than a trillion dollars, that are paid for, that are lowering the cost to the taxpayer and to businesses, so we're moving in the right direction but there's still some improvements that could be made and I'm hoping to see that on the floor.

AS 2010 LOOMS, GOP LAYS ITS BETS ON OPPOSING HEALTH-CARE REFORM (WP)

By Dan Balz

Washington Post, November 19, 2009

"All the anxiety's on the other side," Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said with a smile earlier this week, as the Senate prepared for a historic floor debate over health care. "The hand-wringing, the agonizing, the how-do-I-explain this-to-my-constituents is on the other side."

On the day he spoke, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and White House officials were still putting out fires in their effort to round up the 60 votes necessary to clear the procedural hurdle allowing the Senate to go ahead with the debate. Reid would say only that he was "cautiously optimistic" that he would have the votes when he needed them.

McConnell went out of his way to draw a contrast with the other side. "I've got a cheerful, upbeat, optimistic team ready to go to battle over what most of my members, if not all of them, believe may well be the most important issue they will ever deal with in their time in Congress -- this effort to transform the American health care system into a European type system," he said. "So we are anxious for the debate and are going to give it our best shot. And I don't know how it's going to turn out."

President Obama and Democratic congressional leaders ultimately may prevail in their year-long effort to overhaul the nation's health care system. They have the numbers, if they can keep everyone on board once the bills have been amended on the floor and changed again in a

conference committee. Still, McConnell and the Republicans now are betting that, no matter the outcome, their outright opposition to the plan advanced by the Democrats is both right on the merits and, as they look ahead to 2010, smart politics as well.

Republicans see two things that give them cause to believe their opposition will be rewarded, even if Obama eventually signs health care legislation later this year or early in 2010. The Republican base is overwhelmingly opposed to the measure being advanced by the Democrats. And there has been a bleeding off of support among independents for Obama's policies, particularly health care. The latest Washington Post-ABC News poll found that 85 percent of Republicans oppose the health-care measure -- 73 percent of them strongly. That kind of energy produced the protests during the August recess, the Tea Party demonstrations this fall and the united front that Republican congressional leaders have adopted almost from the beginning of this debate. Republicans also believe they are winning the battle for independents on health care. The Post-ABC News poll showed that only 45 percent support health care reform while 52 percent oppose it. Almost twice as many independents strongly oppose the measure as strongly support it. To Republican leaders, those numbers speak to potential anti-Democratic Party energy they hope to tap next year, even if the bill is enacted into law.

What White House and Democratic congressional leaders fear most now is a failure to reach the finish line. Failure to pass the bill would represent a huge disappointment to many of those who voted for Obama last year.

In the Post-ABC poll, 75 percent of Democrats support health care legislation, with 52 percent saying they strongly back the administration's efforts. A legislative defeat could significantly demoralize the Democratic base and lead to depressed turnout in next year's midterm elections. Which is a major reason why White House officials have preached that failure is not an option this time around.

White House officials read public opinion differently than do Republicans. They believe that Republicans in competitive races next year could pay a high price for opposing health care. They have seized on a new poll in Delaware that shows attorney general Beau Biden (the son of Vice President Biden) moving up dramatically against popular Republican Rep. Mike Castle, who has announced for the Senate and who voted against the health care in the House.

McConnell argued that Democrats have made a fateful decision to try to rally support with the argument that failure is not an option. "It's almost laughable," he said. "That's all they're left with. President Clinton was up here arguing that with the Senate Democrats about a week ago. And the reasoning was there's no other argument they can make. They've got no poll data they can show them. And so how do they get them to take a bullet for the team? They make this incredulous argument that somehow they'd have been better off if they'd passed it in the fall of '94. I don't think anybody buys that."

Democrats scoff at that assertion, believing McConnell is being disingenuous. If Republicans believe Democrats would be better off politically if the health care bill fails, they ask, why have members of the GOP worked so hard to defeat it?

White House officials believe that, if a bill passes, the political fever surrounding the legislative debate will break. Their hope is that most Americans (especially those independents who are skeptical about the bill) will find the sky hasn't fallen and, beyond that, will come to appreciate some of the insurance reforms that would prevent companies from dropping people or denying coverage because of pre-existing conditions.

McConnell notes that Obama won't face the voters until 2012. But Democrats in Congress have to worry about next year. That puts their political interests potentially at odds with those of the president. Will those Democrats in swing districts or red states ultimately buy White House arguments that a "yes" vote will be the right vote back home?

McConnell is not prepared to predict the future. But he said he believes that, "in every measurable way," Republicans are better off today than they were a year ago, with candidates "coming out of our ears" who think the climate is right. He won't say so but he also seems to believe Republicans are poised for a very good year in 2010.

The Democrats have much at stake in the health care debate. But so too do the Republicans.

ABC: STIMULUS WEBSITE. ABC World News (11/18, story 5, 2:55, Gibson) reported, "The Government Accountability Office today both praised and criticized the Obama Administration's

website, set up to track the number of jobs created or saved by the economic stimulus. The GAO says it's a step toward accountability. But the head of the agency that oversees the stimulus program has written Congress that they can't guarantee any of the jobs have actually been created. Jonathan Karl continues on this story tonight. Jon." ABC (Karl) added, "Charlie, the government's top watchdog says that the White House has made a solid first step towards transparency in stimulus spending but that those numbers of jobs saved and created have significant problems. More than 58,000 of the jobs the White House claims were created or retained by the stimulus come from projects where no money has been spent. Nearly 1 out of every 10 jobs claimed on the Administration's Recovery.gov website. That's according to a report by the Government Accountability Office. Republicans say the numbers don't add up." Rep. Darrell Issa, (R) Ranking Member, Oversight and Government Reform Committee: "The inaccuracy of the site also shows you just how inept the government is at getting the facts right and making them available to the public." Karl: "The White House says the problems are minimal and fixable." Ed DeSeve, senior adviser, Recovery Act Implementation: "I think the problems that we see out of 12 million data elements are probably less than 1%. They are errors that recipients made, by in large, in reporting that either they didn't have time to correct or didn't identify in time." Karl: "But the chairman of the board that oversees the stimulus tells Congress in a letter obtained by ABC News, that he 'can't certify any of the jobs data' now on the website, because the information has all been reported by the grant recipients themselves and not independently verified. A lot of the errors are simply sloppy mistakes. In Virginia, Kevin Knight's company reported his roughly \$700,000 stimulus project created ten jobs in the 36th congressional district. That district doesn't exist, but his project does, and so do the jobs. He blames the mistake on a computer glitch." Kevin Knight, president of Knight Solutions: "It actually appeared on the website where I was. It kind of popped up based on the address and zip code." Karl: "On 'The Daily Show' with Jon Stewart, Vice President Biden said the mistakes on Recovery.gov don't add up to much and that there's been no wasteful spending." Joe Biden, Vice President of the United States: "We've been in business seven, eight months. But one thing you haven't seen is that old thing about the dog that hadn't barked. You haven't seen these big wasteful - no one's come up with anything we would have gone out there and spent \$2 million on something that didn't exist." Karl: "The Vice President's spokesperson today told us that the stimulus is, quote, 'the most transparent and accountable government program in American history.' But that, Charlie, is not stopping the criticism here on Capitol Hill and demands for greater accuracy. As for those reports of fictional congressional districts, we are told that most of those were corrected today." Gibson: "Jonathan Karl on Capitol Hill, thank you."

NUMBER OF STIMULUS JOBS CREATED CALLED INTO QUESTION (WSJ)

By Louise Radnofsky

Wall Street Journal, November 19, 2009

The Government Accountability Office, the congressional watchdog, will testify at a House oversight committee hearing Thursday that there are "significant issues to be addressed" in the accuracy of reports about the number of jobs credited to the federal stimulus program because of errors in forms filed by recipients of the money.

Separately, the agency tasked with overseeing the program announced Wednesday evening that it had corrected reports by recipients who appeared to be in non-existent congressional districts, after being asked to do so by the White House.

Discrepancies in the administration's count of jobs "created or saved" by the \$787 billion stimulus program are causing headaches among Congressional Democrats who are trying to craft a new jobs program in the face of the highest unemployment rate in 26 years. Rep. David Obey (D., Wis.), who as chairman of the House Appropriations Committee will have a major role in any new jobs package, released a statement earlier this week calling inaccuracies in the stimulus recipient reports "outrageous."

The reports were used by the administration to claim that the plan had directly created or saved 640,329 jobs through September. But questions have been raised about the accuracy of the job counts and other details listed on the forms since their release by the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board on its website, recovery.gov, last month.

"Many entries merit further attention," acting comptroller general Gene Dodaro is expected to say,

according to a draft of his testimony received by the Wall Street Journal.

Republicans are seizing on reports of inaccuracies to question the impact and accountability of the stimulus package.

Earl Devaney, chairman of the recovery board, will also be at the House oversight committee hearing. Rep. Darrell Issa (R., Calif.), the ranking Republican on the panel, has called for recovery.gov to carry a disclaimer "warning visitors to the Web site that the information is not accurate and auditable."

Federal agencies were responsible for reviewing each report filed by a recipient of funds they were administering, and asking recipients to fix mistakes. The recovery board and White House officials also carried out spot checks. Still, many errors appear to have gone undetected in the 156,614 reports released last month.

Recipients of stimulus money ranging from small business contractors and community colleges to large companies and state governor's offices struggled to accurately fill in the forms. The Wall Street Journal reported two weeks ago that errors by hundreds of recipients appeared to have inflated the total number of jobs attributed to the stimulus by at least 20,000.

Some recipients also failed to correctly enter the number of their congressional district, which has led to a flurry of accusations this week from Republicans that non-existent places were claiming to have created or saved jobs. The National Republican Congressional Committee is encouraging its candidates to send out press releases highlighting the mistakes, with statements that they should undermine confidence in the government's ability to handle healthcare.

Vice President Joe Biden, appearing on the comedy news program "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart" Tuesday, played down the congressional district errors, joking about "bad civics classes." "The jobs actually exist," he said.

On Wednesday evening the recovery board said that it had corrected the mistakes, explaining that it is allowed to do so when there is a "significant risk that the public will be misled or confused."

Mr. Biden's assistant for implementing the stimulus plan, Ed DeSeve, told the Wall Street Journal Wednesday that the White House was still confident that it could use the reports to correctly assess "the order of magnitude of the jobs numbers that are out there." "We think it is sufficiently accurate that it provides a good snapshot of where we are," said Mr. DeSeve.

The reports come at a tough time for House leaders, who have been floating a new spending program this week, and the White House, which has announced a jobs summit for early December in the wake of a new unemployment figure of 10.2%.

Public confidence in the existing stimulus plan also remains shaky. Only 7% of respondents in a CBS News poll released Tuesday thought that the stimulus package had created jobs. Some 46% thought it would create jobs in future, but that percentage was down from 52% in September.

Write to Louise Radnofsky at louise.radnofsky@dowjones.com

GAO CALLS FOR CLEARER GUIDANCE FROM ADMINISTRATION FOR REPORTING USE OF STIMULUS FUNDS (WP)

By Ed O'Keefe, Washington Post Staff Writer

Washington Post, November 19, 2009

A government audit set for release Thursday urges the Obama administration to provide further guidance on how recipients of economic stimulus dollars should report jobs created with the funding.

The administration has struggled to clearly define how to report new or saved jobs since it's difficult to know what role the funding played. Further complicating efforts, state and local governments have used much of the money to pay for temporary, part-time or seasonal work, making it unclear when and how such jobs should be reported.

The Government Accountability Office found that almost 4,000 designated recipients who have not yet received stimulus funding reported creating or saving more than 58,000 jobs. Another 9,200 recipients reported no job creation, despite receiving a total of \$965 million. The findings demonstrate the difficulty of counting jobs created by the stimulus.

Some recipients may have misstated job numbers. Others may have decided to retain workers or hire new ones, knowing that they will receive stimulus funding in the near future. Other recipients that already spent money are reporting zero jobs created or saved because they are applying a narrow definition for what counts as a "saved" job or because they may not be taking into account

the jobs created by a subcontractor receiving funds from the recipient.

Auditors will present their findings at a House Oversight and Government Reform Committee hearing at which members of both parties are expected to grill administration officials about errors submitted by recipients in their quarterly reports. Government officials on Wednesday corrected or removed several incorrect Zip codes or congressional districts from the reports posted on Recovery.gov, the government's stimulus-tracking Web site.

The GAO audit also found that the government has failed to review about 25 percent of the quarterly reports submitted by stimulus recipients. Vice President Biden said earlier this week that the administration has yet to review every report. "The jobs actually exist," despite concerns about the validity of stimulus data, Biden said Tuesday on "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart."

Biden noted that there have been no reports of widespread misuse of stimulus funding, but the GAO is pursuing at least eight allegations of waste or abuse of stimulus funds from more than 100 reported. The audit agency has referred at least 33 other allegations to federal inspectors general, according to the report.

JOB-COUNTING HELP IS NEEDED (WP)

GAO calls for clearer guidance for reporting use of stimulus funds

By Ed O'Keefe, Washington Post Staff Writer

Washington Post, November 19, 2009

A government audit set for release Thursday urges the Obama administration to provide further guidance on how recipients of economic stimulus dollars should report jobs created with the funding.

The administration has struggled to clearly define how to report new or saved jobs since it's difficult to know what role the funding played. Further complicating efforts, state and local governments have used much of the money to pay for temporary, part-time or seasonal work, making it unclear when and how such jobs should be reported.

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BIDEN: JOBS WILL LAG BY 12 TO 18 MONTHS (NPR)

By Mark Memmott

NPR, November 19, 2009

For anyone who's out of work, "nothing matters until you have a job," Vice President Joe Biden conceded on last night's The Daily Show with Jon Stewart. And, unfortunately, "jobs are going to lag behind growth in this country by somewhere between 12 to 18 months," Biden added.

BIDEN SAYS ERRORS ON RECOVERY.GOV WILL BE FIXED (CNN)

By Alexander Mooney

CNN, November 19, 2009

Vice President Joe Biden is downplaying news the government Web site Recovery.gov reported hundreds of millions of stimulus dollars spent on projects in congressional districts that in fact do not actually exist.

(CNN) - Vice President Joe Biden is downplaying news the government Web site Recovery.gov reported hundreds of millions of stimulus dollars spent on projects in congressional districts that in fact do not actually exist.

The districts don't exist, but the projects do, Biden said Tuesday night.

And the administration isn't to blame - the fault lies with the nation's educational system.

In an appearance on The Daily Show, Biden said the errors - first reported by ABC News - do not indicate unaccounted-for spending but are rather the result of 70 people who are the product of "bad civics classes."

"Every single solitary penny that got sent out there to a state, a construction company, a nonprofit had to be accounted for," Biden told host Jon Stewart. "And it all got put on Recovery.gov. What happened was, out of 130,000 people reporting in what they did with the money, 70 did not know how to count."

"There was bad civics classes for those 70 people," Biden continued. "They had to fill out a form, what district are you in, and there was no such district."

Biden said checkers are now going through the reports to determine the actual districts where the money was spent.

FEDS: FALSE CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS REMOVED FROM STIMULUS SITE (CNN)

CNN, November 19, 2009

(CNN) -- The government Web site Recovery.gov is fixing errors that appeared to show hundreds of millions of stimulus dollars were spent in nonexistent congressional districts, the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board said Wednesday.

The errors, first reported by ABC News, were seen on Recovery.gov summary pages breaking down how many stimulus dollars were received in each state's congressional districts.

Arizona's page, for example, showed the state's 52nd, 15th and 86th congressional districts received hundreds of thousands of dollars in stimulus money, according to CNN affiliate KNXV.

However, no such districts exist in Arizona, which has only eight congressional districts.

A report released Wednesday by the Franklin Center for Government & Public Integrity said it found such errors on pages for all 50 states, four territories and Washington, D.C. More than \$6.4 billion in stimulus funds was shown as being spent -- and more than 28,420 jobs saved or created -- in 440 false districts, it said.

The districts didn't exist, but the the money and jobs did, Obama administration officials have said.

And the people who are to blame are recipients who apparently didn't know which congressional district they were in, the officials said.

"We report what the recipients submit to us. Some recipients clearly don't know what congressional district they live in, so they just throw in a number for their congressional district," Ed Pound, spokesman for the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, which operates Recovery.gov, said Monday.

In an appearance on Comedy Central's "The Daily Show" on Tuesday night, Vice President Joe Biden said the errors didn't indicate unaccounted-for spending but rather were the result of people who had "bad civics classes."

"There was bad civics classes for those" who reported the data, Biden said. "They had to fill out a form, what district are you in, and there was no such district."

By Wednesday evening, incorrect districts appeared to have been removed from the states' summary pages. Arizona's page, for example, listed only the state's eight real districts and a category called "unassigned congressional district," which appeared to contain all the money that had been attached to the nonexistent congressional districts.

Arizona's "unassigned congressional district" row had \$39,577,600, which is roughly the total that the Franklin Center said was previously linked to nonexistent districts.

Money that was reported as having been spent in a nonexistent district would be moved, in

databases on the site, to the correct one in cases where the recipient reported a ZIP code, the RATB said Wednesday evening. Recipients who didn't submit a ZIP code will need to make corrections "during the next reporting period, which begins on January 1, 2010," the board said in a news release.

The errors raised the ire of U.S. Rep. Dave Obey, D-Wisconsin, and chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. On Monday, he said the mistakes "are outrageous and the administration owes itself, the Congress and every American a commitment to work night and day to correct the ludicrous mistakes."

"Credibility counts in government, and stupid mistakes like this undermine it. We've got too many serious problems in this country to let that happen," Obey said.

CNN's Alexander Mooney, Kate Bolduan and Jason Hanna contributed to this story.

OOPS. FEDS ADD 45 CONGRESSMEN (OMAHA)

By Tom Shaw

Omaha World-Herald, November 19, 2009

If you believe the federal government's stimulus report, Nebraska's population has jumped quite a bit.

According to the report, the state has 48 congressional districts. Actually, Nebraska only has three. Several non-existent congressional districts also were included in the report for Iowa.

The errors are another example of the problems that have plagued the stimulus reports available on the federal Web site recovery.gov.

This week, Vice President Joe Biden ordered officials to fix errors in the reports.

The report for Nebraska lists several congressional districts that don't exist, such as 4, 14, 31, 44 and 48.

In some cases, the number listed likely refers to a state legislative district where the money was awarded. For example, the report lists \$47,897 being awarded to the 43rd Congressional District. However, the money is for housing assistance in Ainsworth, which is in the 43rd Legislative District.

In eight cases, the wrong district is listed because information for projects from other states was incorrectly included in the stimulus report for Nebraska. Projects for Minnesota, North Carolina, Georgia, Massachusetts, Missouri and California are in the Nebraska report.

For example, \$102,375 that went to the University of California-Santa Barbara ended up being listed in the stimulus report for Nebraska.

Of course, Nebraska may wish it had a 17th Congressional District. According to the report, 22.4 jobs were created or saved there.

WHERE DID THAT STIMULUS MONEY GO? (MINNST)

By Bob Von Sternberg, Star Tribune

Minneapolis Star Tribune, November 19, 2009

Minnesota's 27th Congressional District has snared just over \$3 million in federal stimulus money, five times as much as the 57th District has gotten.

One problem: Neither district exists -- except on Recovery.gov, the Obama administration's website that tracks the flow of stimulus cash.

Beyond Minnesota's eight actual congressional districts, which have gotten the lion's share of the money, the website lists 11 phantom districts that supposedly were awarded more than \$7 million in grants.

An official at the stimulus' oversight body told ABC News, which first reported the errors, that nonexistent districts were listed because some people receiving federal funds "don't know what congressional district they live in, so they appear to be just throwing in any number" on forms submitted to the government.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty took aim at the errors Tuesday, tweeting: "Fed spending out of control -- it appears to go places that don't exist. MN has 8 cong districts; Recovery.gov says we have a 57th."

The errors weren't just in Minnesota. According to ABC, administration officials say they found 700 mistakenly credited phantom districts for amounts that totaled \$6.4 billion, while supposedly creating or saving nearly 30,000 jobs.

Rep. Dave Obey, D-Wis., chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, wrote the \$787 billion

economic stimulus bill that Congress passed in February. He has been one of the recovery effort's most ardent supporters, but earlier this week blasted the errors.

"Credibility counts in government, and stupid mistakes like this undermine it," Obey said in a statement. "The inaccuracies on Recovery.gov that have come to light are outrageous, and the administration owes itself, the Congress and every American a commitment to work night and day to correct the ludicrous mistakes."

When Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Calif., questioned administration officials about the mistakes, Earl Devaney, chairman of the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, replied in a letter that he can't completely vouch for the numbers.

"Your letter specifically asks if I am able to certify that the number of jobs reported as created/saved on Recovery.gov is accurate and auditable. No, I am not able to make this certification," Devaney wrote, in a letter provided to ABC News.

Appearing on "The Daily Show" Tuesday, Vice President Joe Biden offered this defense: "Look, the bottom line is that we do check [data sent to the federal government]. But what happens is the initial report comes in cold. We don't -- of the 130,000 reports that come in, as to what they did with the money, we're now going through it."

Staff writer Eric Roper and the Washington Post contributed to this report. Bob Von Sternberg . 612-673-7184

FACT-CHECKING BIDEN'S STIMULUS FACT-CHECK (ABC NEWS)

ABC News Blogs, November 19, 2009

ABC News' Jonathan Karl reports: Last night on "The Daily Show," Vice President Joe Biden addressed the reports of stimulus jobs in non-existent Congressional districts -- but in the process, he made a mistake himself.

"Out of 140,000 people reporting in what they did with the money -- who they hired, how many jobs -- 70 didn't know how to count," Biden told Jon Stewart. "There were bad civics classes for 70 people and they put in districts -- what district are you in? No such district.

But later, Biden spokesman Jay Carney told ABC News that the vice President misspoke. In fact, 700 reports were listed with fictional congressional districts.

Carney said Administration has made an unprecedented amount information public about the stimulus program.

"Never before in history has a federal government program been this transparent and accountable. Never. Not even close."

Even so, 700 represents only about one-half of 1 percent of the stimulus projects listed. The overwhelming majority of the stimulus projects, the vice president's office points out, were listed with the correct congressional district. Meanwhile, the 700 mistakes are being corrected. Biden said that, in contrast with the Bush administration, there has been no wasteful spending under President Obama.

"We've been in business seven, eight months," Biden said. "You haven't seen wasteful spending. No one has said we spent \$2 million on things that didn't exist."

NO GAFFES, FEW LAUGHS FOR BIDEN'S SITDOWN WITH STEWART (NBC DFW)

By Greg Wilson

NBC Dallas-Fort Worth, November 19, 2009

The only gaffe came on the way to his appearance on "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart," and even his harshest critics couldn't blame that one on Vice President Joe Biden.

The loose-lipped veep played it straight with the uential funnyman, defending the Obama Administration's efforts to pass health care reform and turn around the economy. Stewart, who is known for holding the feet of politicians to the fire with his smart-alec wit, mostly went along with Biden, poking fun at Republicans.

When Biden claimed that "we're getting resistance" from Congress on reforms, Stewart gasped sarcastically, "Stop it!"

The vice president touted his party's big tent, noting there are "moderates, liberals and conservatives" within the Democrat caucus, Stewart interjected, "And communists," a poke at Republican efforts to marginalize Dems.

Before the show, an NYPD car clearing a path for Biden's motorcade T-boned a livery cab on the

West Side of Manhattan. Two detectives and the livery driver were treated and released from a nearby hospital.

MR. OBAMA'S TASK (NYT)

New York Times, November 19, 2009

There is no doubt that the prospects for success in Afghanistan are so bleak right now because former President George W. Bush failed for seven long years to invest the necessary troops, resources or attention to the war. But it is now President Obama's war, and the American people are waiting for him to explain his goals and his strategy.

Mr. Obama was right to conduct a sober, systematic review of his options. We all know what happens when a president sends tens of thousands of Americans to war based on flawed information, gut reactions and gauzy notions of success. But the political reality is that the longer Mr. Obama waits, the more indecisive he seems and the more constrained his options appear. It has been more than eight months since Mr. Obama first announced his strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, warning Americans that, for them, the border between the two - where Taliban and Qaeda forces have found safe haven - is "the most dangerous place in the world." And it has been more than a month since his top general in Afghanistan asked for 40,000 more troops, warning that "failure to gain the initiative" over the next year could make it impossible to defeat the Taliban.

Americans are deeply anxious about the war. As the debate among his advisers has dragged on, and became increasingly public, many are asking whether the conflict is necessary or already a lost cause. Democratic leaders are among the loudest questioners.

It has become a cliché in Washington that there are only bad choices in Afghanistan. But it seems clear that this is not the time for a precipitous withdrawal, nor can the United States cling to the status quo while the Taliban gains ever more territory and more power. To move forward, Mr. Obama needs to explain the stakes for this country, the extent of the military commitment, the likely cost in lives and treasure and his definition of success. Mr. Bush failed to do all of that in Afghanistan and Iraq.

America's allies, many of whom are looking for a way out, also need to hear why their troops should continue to risk their lives. There is no chance in Afghanistan unless President Hamid Karzai separates himself from his corrupt associates and Pakistan's leaders step up their fight against the Taliban and other extremists.

Mr. Obama said on Wednesday that he would soon provide "a lot of clarity" on his Afghanistan strategy. These are some of the things the world needs to hear.

WHAT ARE THE STAKES? We agreed with the president in August when he described Afghanistan as a war of necessity. In a speech, he warned that if the Taliban insurgency were left unchecked it "will mean an even larger safe haven from which Al Qaeda would plot to kill more Americans. So this is not only a war worth fighting. This is fundamental to the defense of our people."

Since then, some of his top advisers have raised doubts about the urgency and even the necessity of the war. The national security adviser, Gen. James Jones, said in October that there were "less than 100" Qaeda members operating in Afghanistan without bases or the "ability to launch attacks on either us or our allies." He said he didn't "foresee the return of the Taliban" and that the "next step in this is the sanctuaries" in Pakistan.

Vice President Joseph Biden has been even more insistent that the real front is across the border and that attacking extremists on both sides could be better accomplished with a lighter footprint in Afghanistan and Predator strikes and special operations raids. Other officials argue that the Taliban may have learned a lesson and might be open to a deal that barred Al Qaeda from its territory.

Mr. Obama needs to address these arguments - to say whether he still considers fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan to be central to American security and why. Does he still believe a Taliban victory in Afghanistan would mean a "larger safe haven" for Al Qaeda? And how does he see the relationship between the war in Afghanistan and efforts to hold off extremists in a nuclear-armed Pakistan? If the Taliban were to win in Afghanistan, would they be less or more likely to threaten Pakistan?

In March, Mr. Obama warned that, for Afghans, a "return to Taliban rule would condemn their

country to brutal governance, international isolation, a paralyzed economy and the denial of basic human rights," especially to women and girls. We need to hear whether he still believes Americans have a duty to stop that.

WHAT IS THE AIM OF THE WAR? In March, President Obama said his goal was to "disrupt, dismantle and defeat Al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future." He also argued that bullets and bombs would not be enough to drive the Taliban back. In Afghanistan, American forces and a surge of civilian advisers must "advance security, opportunity and justice" for the Afghan people, "not just in Kabul, but from the bottom up in the provinces."

Given that, no one in the White House should have been surprised when Mr. Obama's chosen commander, Gen. Stanley McChrystal, came back with an ambitious counterinsurgency plan, although his request for 40,000 more troops was clearly higher than Mr. Obama and his aides had wanted to hear.

If Mr. Obama no longer believes that a counterinsurgency is necessary or feasible, or if he wants to set less-ambitious goals (there has been talk of securing a smaller number of cities while speeding up training of the Afghan Army), then the American people need to hear why he changed his mind and how he intends to move forward.

Mr. Obama will also have to address his vice president's proposal. We share Mr. Biden's anxiety that a larger American military presence might alienate more Afghans than it wins over. But we are also skeptical that a war against Al Qaeda can be fought from a distance. Drones and commandos still need bases, and Pakistan is not likely to provide them. They need "actionable" intelligence, which could dry up with fewer American troops on the Afghan side of the border.

ARE THERE CREDIBLE PARTNERS? There is almost no chance of holding off the Taliban (or plotting an eventual American withdrawal) without a minimally credible Afghan government and security forces.

The Taliban's medieval ideas and brutality are anathema to most Afghans. We see that in the courage of the Afghan families who defy the Taliban by sending their daughters to school. But the corruption of the Karzai government, and its failure to provide the most basic services and security, have caused many of its citizens to decide that they have no choice but to submit to the Taliban.

Even after his supporters were caught trying to steal the election, Mr. Karzai remains shamelessly, insultingly undaunted. Mr. Obama must make clear to both Mr. Karzai and the American people the sweeping changes required to build a credible Afghan government. If there are other, better partners, competent cabinet members or provincial officials, then Americans need to hear how Mr. Obama plans to empower them.

Mr. Obama should be candid about his administration's halting progress. In March, he pledged to send "agricultural specialists and educators, engineers and lawyers" across Afghanistan to relieve the burden on American troops and help the government "serve its people." There are disturbing reports that the situation on the ground is so dangerous that many of these advisers cannot leave Kabul. It was chilling to read in The Times last week that when the ambassador in Kabul asked for additional civilian staff, the State Department turned down some of his requests because of budget constraints and a decision to cap the number at 1,000.

There will never be enough American troops on the ground to defeat the Taliban or provide security for Afghans. Mr. Obama must explain his plans for building a minimally functional Afghan Army and police force. More trainers are needed, but as The Times reported earlier this month, even that is no guarantee of success. According to reviews by American officials, the effort has been hobbled by a high dropout rate for recruits, "a lack of competent and professional" Afghan leadership "at all levels," widespread illiteracy and corruption.

WHAT WILL IT COST? Mr. Bush cynically tried to cover up the heavy costs of the Iraq and Afghan wars and cooked the financial books with repeated "supplemental" financing requests. Mr. Obama has done far better and needs to continue to tell the truth.

The human cost will continue to rise if the number of forces rises. Mr. Obama should also acknowledge the cost in military readiness and the stress of repeated deployments on troops and their families. On the financial side, the Pentagon has already spent more than \$150 billion on the war. While estimates are difficult, analysts say that for every 10,000 additional troops deployed,

the annual cost will rise by at least another \$10 billion. Americans need to hear how those costs will be met, even though the choices - raising taxes, cutting spending or more borrowing - are unappealing in a time of recession and high deficits.

IS THERE A WAY OUT? Finally, Mr. Obama promised on Wednesday to outline an "endgame." Given Afghanistan's desperate state, we are skeptical that he can lay out a firm timetable for withdrawal. But there are certainly benchmarks that he can offer. (Mr. Obama promised that in March, but the nation has yet to hear an accounting.)

There must be a way to measure progress or failure. Americans need to know the war will not go on forever.

THE FIRST LADY THANKS TRAILBLAZING SERVICE WOMEN (ABC)

By Whitney Ksiazek

ABC News, November 19, 2009

"It's never been an easy path; I can only imagine how challenging it has been and continues to be. I know that some of you have faced skepticism, ridicule, some of you had to contend not just with the challenge of doing your jobs but with others perception that you weren't up to the job strictly because of your gender," the First Lady said as she thanked over 130 veterans that attended the East room tea at the White House.

Dr. Jill Biden gave the opening remarks, reaffirming the administration's commitment to raising awareness about the special circumstances women face in the military. She also took the opportunity to reiterate her and the first lady's pledge to encourage all Americans to support the military through acts of service.

The First lady went off script to single out a few "firsts" that were in attendance, "along the way, you all broke one "brass ceiling" after another." She recognized the first female four star general, the first woman in the Navy to be promoted to Master Chief, the first woman in the Army Reserve to be promoted to the general officer rank, the first woman in the Army to receive the Expert Field Medical Badge and the first African American woman to serve as Chief Nurse at Walter Reed Hospital.

She accredited General Wilma Vaught for the event, who suggested to her that she should follow in the tradition of Eleanor Roosevelt and host a tea for service women earlier this year.

"We know that our servicemen and women's sacrifices are their families' sacrifices as well," the First Lady and Dr. Jill Biden said that they have learned over the course of the year that "service doesn't just end with the person wearing the uniform. "

Mrs. Obama reminded the distinguished guests that their legacy was more than just their own service, but that their legacy will be measured in the service of every woman who follows in the trails that they've blazed.

The First Lady announced that she was proud to sponsor a new Coast Guard cutter in honor of Coast Guard Commander Dorothy Stratton, who led the SPARS during World War II.

She summed up the spirit of the history of women in uniform in one phrase, "watch me."

"Watch me succeed. Watch me risk everything I have for the country I love. Watch me do my part to protect this nation and protect this union. Watch me."

Secretary Napolitano and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. James Cartwright also gave short remarks and thanked the attendees.

FLOTUS Fashion Watch: The First Lady wore a high-waisted periwinkle pencil skirt paired with a short sleeved patterned blouse with a purple bow.

VOLUNTEERS ASSEMBLE CARE PACKAGES FOR FEMALE TROOPS (WJLA)

WJLA, November 19, 2009

WASHINGTON - Dozens of helping hands spent hours assembling care packages for people they didn't even know.

The USO-sponsored Package Stuffing Party for Women attracted about 100 volunteers to the Rayburn House Office Building Wednesday. They filled care packages with mascara, razors, lipstick and hair bands for female soldiers serving overseas.

U.S. Marine Corps Major Justin Constantine was wounded in 2006 while serving in Iraq (web | news) . He knows how much these gifts from back home make a difference to those overseas.

"Getting something like this is going to help make their day a little easier," Maj. Constantine said.

"It's fantastic and that's what this is all about. A lot of the women don't get female specific items in the care packages, so this is huge for them."

ABC 7 Talkback:

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This is the first time the USO has tailor made its care packages for women in the military.

Volunteer Nancy Fiscus served in the Navy. Her husband is on his second tour of duty in Iraq.

"When we do the other care packages they don't specifically go to a woman," Fiscus said. "There's not the smelly stuff, there's not the special stuff that we need as a woman."

Jill Biden, the wife of the Vice President Joe Biden, volunteered her time to pack care packages. Her stepson Beau served in Iraq.

"As a military mom I have seen first hand how acts of kindness and service like today's effort can help improve the life of a serviceman," Jill Biden said.

The volunteers assembled 2,000 care packages, which should begin arriving overseas in about three weeks.

PALIN HITS THE (BOOK) TRAIL (POL)

By Ben Smith

Politico, November 19, 2009

If Sarah Palin were running for president, this is where she'd come: The outskirts of a second city in the conservative heartland of Western Michigan, where thousands gathered Wednesday to see her, shake her hand and have her sign their copies of "Going Rogue."

And if she were running for president, she'd be doing about what she did Wednesday, under the watchful eyes a half-dozen capable advance hands, veterans of the White House and the McCain campaign, who herded the press and the public into even lines. She had a VIP list for key local conservatives, shuttling them discreetly to the front of the line. She had a few talking points, tailored for the local area, to deliver after she stepped down with a big smile from her big bus, handing baby Trig off to an aide after her four-inch heels hit the sidewalk outside a shopping mall Barnes & Nobles, where she held her first book signing.

"They deserve more credit than they're getting for the level of early organization that they have," observed John Yob, a Grand Rapids political consultant who served for a time as political director of John McCain's 2008 presidential campaign.

The stop in Grand Rapids felt like a political campaign event, not a book tour. For a woman written off as a disorganized celebrity on a tour run by monomaniacal book publicists, Palin and her aides were clearly thinking politics.

Yob was ushered past the rope line with his father, Chuck, a former Republican National Committeeman and regional power broker. The elder Yob penned an open letter to Palin after McCain announced that he was abandoning Michigan, cheering her public dissent from the campaign strategy, telling her she'd "kicked Joe Biden's butt in the debate," and inviting her to "come to Michigan immediately."

Also there were the minority leader of the Michigan House, Kevin Elsenheimer, and Joanne Voorhees, the conservative Kent County Republican Party chairwoman who was briefly in the news for abruptly cancelling an event for former Utah Governor Jon Huntsman, on the grounds that hosting a moderate would be breaking with Republican "roots." Two local state Representatives, Bob Genetski and Dave Agema, both devout Christian conservatives, were also invited to meet Palin.

The logistics weren't perfect: The Kent County Republicans could be heard muttering that they'd been rushed past the former Alaska governor. But Chuck Yob said he was pleased after an advance man walked him and his son to the front of the line, and Palin reacted with pleased surprise to their presence.

"Oh my God, that's neat," she said.

Palin's roadshow travels in a campaign-style bus painted to match the cover of her book, with a giant picture of Palin and Facebook and Twitter logos. She emerged with a wave for the adoring crowd, which had begun massing 24 hours earlier, and a few words for the television cameras. Her staff was made up of volunteers: Jason Recher, a campaign advance man whom she describes in glowing terms in her book, and John Roberts, a former White House staffer, who steered her through the media scrum after she handed off her son. Also on the bus was an aide to

her Political Action Committee, former RNC Finance Director Tim Crawford.

Western Michigan - an "awesome area of this great land" - can be rescued "if we apply some good free enterprise principles in our federal government," she said in a brief interview with reporters, where she dismissed Newsweek's decision to put her on its cover in running shorts as "cheesy." "I would never have posed for Newsweek in shorts," she said of the picture, which was taken for an article in Runner's World that ran last August.

Grand Rapids was where Palin first "'went rogue' trying to reach out during the campaign," she writes in "Going Rogue," and it's the beginning of a tour that will retrace many of the stops on the Republican primary in Palin's demonstration of how the contest might have looked if she'd had her way.

Palin, meanwhile, ends "Going Rogue" with a tribute to the state.

"I'm thinking when I get back, I'll bake the kids a cake. And I'll pull out a road map - I want to show Piper the way to Michigan," she writes in the final line of her book.

The state seemed to be returning her affection Wednesday, as locals began lining up Tuesday evening outside the bookstore. By 5:00 a.m. Wednesday, hours before her appearance, the store had already handed out more than 500 wristbands entitling their bearers to a place on line. Aides said that in all, over 1,000 people had their books signed, and hundreds more came for a glimpse. "She's one of us. She doesn't seem like a Washington elite," said Denese Crouch, a homemaker who lives outside Grand Rapids, echoing the dominant theme in a canvass of the long line, which was the ease of identifying with Palin. "She seems to figure solutions to problems like I'd do with my own family," Crouch said.

Indeed, though the line was broadly Republican, Palin's persona and her outsider status seemed to trump any particular issues with most of her admirers.

"She stands for everything I believe. I wear a suit and nylons and pumps to work" while loving nature, said Kim VandeKoppel, who runs a printing business in Grand Rapids, and who also praised Palin's "Christian beliefs."

At the front of the line was Robin Case, 44, who'd driven the previous evening from Traverse City and who sat at the front of the line in sweatpants giving an endless series of interviews to local and national reporters. "What she represents is what I'm standing in line for," she said repeatedly.

"She's like you and me -- someone who represents me when we're sitting around the table like other normal folks."

Case said she stopped working to take care of her in-laws, who suffer from dementia and were driven into poverty and onto Medicaid when "they got into that donut hole with prescriptions" she said, referring to a much-criticized provision of 2003 Republican legislation.

Her criticism, a reporter noted, sounded a bit like President Barack Obama's. What did she think of his health care plan?

The politicians currently debating health care "just want to line their pockets" she responded.

"Sarah Palin's not like that."

The event also drew its share of more ideological conservatives. Bob Weinert, 56, a fencing salesman from Lansing, said he'd heard Rush Limbaugh say recently that Palin is "the most conservative candidate out there." She represents, he said, "limited government and traditional values," including "putting homos back in the closet."

"And putting Christmas in the stores," added his wife, Rexanna, who said she felt she could trust the "down-to-earth" Palin.

A few minutes later, a diffident young man wandered by with a handmade "Homos for Palin" t-shirt until he encountered a mall security guard.

"You've got to zip it up or leave," said the security guard and the young man, who said he was a college student but wouldn't give his name, complied.

Palin's tour will take her through the battleground states where, she writes, she felt the McCain campaign made her pull her punches. There are stops in Fort Wayne, Indiana and Fairfax, Virginia, Florida's The Villages, and the Missouri Ozarks.

Michigan, though, is a particular preoccupation of hers, despite its place as the ancestral state of the presumptive 2012 GOP front runner, Mitt Romney, whose father was governor.

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TO: THE VICE PRESIDENT AND STAFF

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WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL STORIES

Plouffe: Castle's 'Independent Profile' Will Be Challenged (WILNJ)

By Nicole Gaudiano, News Journal Washington Bureau

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 18, 2009

WASHINGTON -- President Barack Obama's campaign manager said Rep. Mike Castle's votes against health care reform and the economic stimulus package will hurt his bid for election to the U.S. Senate in 2010.

David Plouffe, a Delaware native, said he hasn't been following the race that closely. But he hit on themes voiced by other Democrats when asked on Tuesday how Democrats would mount a winning campaign against Castle.

"This was someone who had developed somewhat of an independent profile," said Plouffe, who is on tour with his new book chronicling the Obama campaign, "The Audacity to Win." "I think that's going to be challenged now given his recent behavior."

The Democratic National Committee began running a radio ad on WXCY in Wilmington this week, targeting Castle's vote against health care reform. Castle objected to the cost and various other elements of the bill.

The DNC also circulated poll results from the Susquehanna Polling & Research, showing Delaware Attorney General Beau **Biden** beating Castle by five points in a hypothetical race. **Biden** is expected to run for the remainder of his father Vice President Joe **Biden's** term, but has not declared his candidacy.

"I don't buy that Mike Castle can't be beat," said Plouffe.

Though Plouffe will be helping the DNC and administration "broadly" on political issues, he said he will be doing very little political consulting next year.

Would he advise Beau **Biden** to jump into the race?

"It's rightly more of a personal decision," Plouffe said.

Plouffe said he and his former campaign rival Steve Schmidt will return occasionally to their shared alma mater, the University of Delaware, as they develop a center for political communication at the school. Schmidt served as campaign manager for Republican Presidential nominee, Sen. John McCain of Arizona.

"It's exciting," he said. "We disagree about many things, but we agree on the need to continue to produce young men and women who want to get involved in politics of both parties and this will be a good way to do it."

Prisons To Divide Health Contracts Into Parts (WILNJ)

By Esteban Parra, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 19, 2009

Details on how the state will divide its inmate health-care contract -- which has been under federal scrutiny for three years -- were released Wednesday by the Department of Correction.

Rather than having a single health care provider, prison officials are breaking the contract into 10 smaller agreements focusing on specific services. The change comes a month after Corrections Commissioner Carl C. Danberg announced he was ending a contract next year with St. Louis-based Correction Medical Services (CMS), which has been criticized for providing inadequate health care despite being paid more than \$130 million over three years.

"We expect this flexibility, and the increased competition it is expected to provide, will foster improved medical care and cost savings," Danberg said. "The Department spent significant time

exploring alternative solutions to the way we contract for medical services. We believe this alternative will allow for large and small service providers to bid on the areas that fall within their specialization."

Delaware entered an agreement with the federal government to improve prison health care in 2006 following stories by The News Journal that uncovered problems and high inmate death rates, especially from AIDS and suicides. The 2005 series of stories also pointed to poor medical treatment for cancer, meningitis, hepatitis and other communicable diseases and bacterial infections.

Joshua W. Martin III, who leads a team appointed by the state and federal governments to monitor progress, issued a report in September saying it is unlikely the department will be in full compliance when the agreement expires next month.

If the state does not meet the deadline, the federal government can sue to take over the prisons or extend the agreement.

The new contract is posted on the department's Web site and the winning bidders could take over by July 1, 2010 -- the day after CMS' current contract ends. CMS also can bid on all or parts of the new contract.

Interested companies can bid on one or more of these services or they can bid to manage the entire health care program.

The DOC is seeking bidders for medical, nursing, mental health, dental, female health care and pharmacy services. It also is seeking to contract "specialty consultation," which includes examining the use of off-site specialists and negotiating contracts for providers to go onsite, as well as "utilization review services," whose responsibilities include monitoring integrated information concerning care.

Also on the list are substance abuse treatment and inpatient hospital services, which include critical care, inpatient case management and discharge planning.

The new contract also will have a "shared risk," with the DOC to pay for certain costs to prevent medical providers from limiting inmate care to maximize their profits.

Danberg has said he is not sure if the new contract format would reduce costs, adding that results he's seen across the country are mixed. While more companies competing for more bids would likely be financially better for the state in the short run, managing a larger number of vendors could become a problem as it increases other costs, such as hiring more people to oversee vendors.

Prison experts have given the new process mixed reviews.

Jeff Eiser, a former prison administrator in Ohio who is now a private consultant, said bidding out the prison medical contract in smaller parts would result in better care. But Dr. Robert Cohen, who was appointed by state and federal courts to monitor prisons in five states, said the best way for Delaware to save money and improve prisoner health care would be to reduce the number of inmates by about a third.

The Rev. Christopher Bullock, senior pastor of New Canaan Baptist Church and co-founder of the Delaware Coalition for Prison Reform and Justice, said he is glad to see the CMS contract ending, adding he hopes state officials reject any CMS bids based on the company's record.

In addition to lawmakers having a say in the selection process, Bullock said he would like to see the public have input too because it is paying for the services.

Though he is happy the CMS chapter is coming to an end, Bullock said he is concerned that too many vendors might be difficult to manage.

"There's a lot of questions if it's going to be done that way," Bullock said. "You know, sometimes when you have too many cooks in the kitchen the meal doesn't come out right."

"But if you have one chef who is in charge, then the meal always comes out better. I hope we're not putting too many cooks in the kitchen."

Legislators Not Ready To Commit On Casinos (WILNJ)

By Ginger Gibson, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 19, 2009

Even as more developers come forward with hopes -- and funding -- to build a casino in Wilmington, many lawmakers are reserving judgment on whether they will support an expansion of gambling.

Senate Minority Whip Liane Sorenson said she doesn't have enough information to decide whether adding new casinos is a good idea. If an addition can provide new jobs, she might be willing to support it, she said.

"I think it will be helpful to have more information," Sorenson said.

Others, like Senate Majority Leader Patricia Blevins, D-Elsmere, say their mind is almost made up, but they'll wait for the results of a study of the impact of new gambling venues.

"It would take a lot of convincing for me to come to a point where I would think it's a good idea to have additional venues," Blevins said.

If the study finds that none of the existing casinos will be affected and new venues will only mean more jobs and higher state revenues, Blevins said, she could be persuaded to support an expansion.

House Majority Leader Pete Schwartzkopf, D-Rehoboth Beach, would like to see additional venues in Sussex County and possibly in Wilmington.

Schwartzkopf said expanded gambling will only bring more jobs to the area and he is confident the study will support his view.

Only if the study concludes that Delaware would lose jobs and tax revenues would Schwartzkopf be persuaded otherwise, he said.

The study everyone seems to be waiting for was part of an agreement among lawmakers, Gov. Jack Markell and the state's three established casinos when sports betting and table games were approved. Markell supported new venues last year but backed down, agreeing to a study of the possible impact.

The study, which is being conducted by TMG Consulting from New Orleans, is expected to be completed by the end of December.

When lawmakers return to session in January they will likely be asked to vote on whether additional venues should be permitted. Under Schwartzkopf's proposal, one additional venue -- DelPointe Resort and Racino -- would be allowed to add slot machines and table games.

Rep. Dennis P. Williams, D-Wilmington North, has co-sponsored an amendment to the bill that would also create a casino district in Wilmington, where city and state officials would be empowered to authorize another venue.

To complicate the issue, table games still need a final legislative vote from lawmakers, including signing off on regulations and the tax levels.

Schwartzkopf said he won't bring the table games legislation to the floor for a debate unless the House is also willing to consider the measure to approve new venues.

Williams, who is hoping to join forces with Schwartzkopf to get both measures approved, said he doesn't think a newer proposal by Kevin Flynn, a Philadelphia real estate developer, and George Miller, a lawyer-entrepreneur in Atlantic City who worked with Donald Trump, to build a facility on the Christina River is feasible.

Williams said the Seventh Street site would require a large infrastructure overhaul including a new bridge that would cost at least \$9 million. Even if developers offer to pay for the bridge, Williams said he would be worried that the state would get stuck with the bill.

Williams said he suspects there are lots of developers ready to vie for the chance to open a casino in Wilmington, including many who already operate casinos in other areas.

"They just haven't flipped their cards yet," Williams said.

Being First Lady (WILNJ)

By Mary Alice Garrett, Special To The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 19, 2009

The role of first lady of Delaware has advantages and a few disadvantages.

This was the conclusion of the current governor's wife and two former governors' wives who spoke earlier this month at DuPont Country Club in Rockland. The occasion was "Campaigns, Canapes and Chicken Dinners: A Conversation with Delaware First Ladies," a fundraiser sponsored by Fresh Start, a charitable branch of Wilmington Women in Business.

The conversation was with Carla Markell, wife of Gov. Jack Markell; Martha Carper, wife of U.S. Sen. Tom Carper; and Jane Castle, wife of U.S. Rep. Mike Castle.

"What was the biggest surprise about being first lady?" asked moderator Nancy Karibjanian, former anchor for WHY?Y's "Delaware Tonight" and now an adjunct professor at the University of Delaware.

"The biggest surprise is I'm enjoying it more than I expected. It's really a lot of fun," said Markell. Castle said being first lady of Delaware "is a lot more visible" than being a congressional wife. Carper concurred, adding, "There's more of a defined role being first lady."

Both Markell and Carper said their children prefer their fathers not accompany them on their activities. However, "they do it all the time," noted Carper. "They say it's better without him."

Castle said "there are challenges" to having her husband shop with her in a supermarket. "I tell Mike 'Stay in the car.' "

Carper recalled her husband coming to a birthing class in a tuxedo and bringing a briefcase into the delivery room.

The women were asked how they maintain their own identities. "I refer to the first lady as not really me and in the third person," said Markell. Castle said maintaining separate identities is a priority for her and her husband.

Do their spouses ask them for advice? Markell said although they discuss issues, her husband usually goes fast asleep once his head hits the pillow. "If he really listened to me, I don't know that he would have run for governor," Markell said, smiling at the audience.

"I do manage to weigh-in on issues," Castle added. Carper said they "don't debate. We're sort of like real people. We don't have a lot of heavy conversations."

Does publicity about their husbands bother them?

"It's part of being in public life," said Castle. Markell and Carper agreed. "The children read the blogs. They think it's funny," added Markell. She reads the newspaper every day. "I don't internalize everything they [the media] say."

All three said they would never consider running for public office themselves. Markell said although "Jack loves what he's doing, I don't think I would really salivate to do it again." She added that the last governor's race was long, but "it was a very congenial race." She noted that contender John Carney was very considerate.

Castle closed by saying, "We're gearing up for a big race," referring to the 2010 U.S. Senate race. "It's 363 days from today," she told the audience of 250.

Markell met her husband while both were students at Newark High School. They went on to graduate from the University of Delaware. They've been married for 19 years and have two children, Molly and Michael. Carla Markell has worked in corporate training and human resources. She's also been a mentor to several at-risk students, and she's an advocate for the arts.

A native of Brandywine Hundred, Castle is also a UD graduate. She married then-Gov. Mike Castle in 1992 and was a first lady only six months before he was elected congressman. Jane Castle worked on Capitol Hill for 10 years and later for a Washington architectural/engineering firm. She's been active in the community, serving on the boards of United Way of Delaware, Mental Health Association in Delaware, Literacy Volunteers of America, Christiana Care and the Wilmington Senior Center.

Born in Boone, N.C., Carper is a graduate of Appalachian State University and the University of Tennessee. In 1986, she married Tom Carper. The couple has two sons, Christopher and Ben, both in college. She joined the DuPont Co. in 1975. She held a number of management positions, including global business manager for Lycra. Since retiring from DuPont, Carper has become a professor at UD. She's been active with Delaware Boys and Girls Clubs, Girls Inc. of Delaware and Boy Scouts of America.

Fresh Start awards college scholarships to Delaware women "who have faced personal and economic challenges," said president Mary Maloney. More than \$60,000 in scholarships was granted to 35 women this year, and 100 women have received more than \$300,000 since the nonprofit began in 1996. Details: www.wwb.org.

Debate Heated On Proposed Apology For Slavery From State (WILNJ)

By James Merriweather, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 19, 2009

DOVER -- Amid sometimes frayed tempers, Dover residents offered a range of opinions on whether the Delaware General Assembly should issue an apology for slavery.

Many speakers said an apology would be too little, too late and questioned the sincerity of any such gesture that might be issued by a state that was among the last to formally repudiate slavery. Kathy Doyle, a Campus Community Charter School teacher who swelled the crowd by offering extra credit for attendance to one of her classes, said she was appalled to learn that the state did not ratify the 13th Amendment, which ostensibly ended slavery in 1865, until 1901.

"If Alabama could apologize for slavery," she said, drawing applause from many in the crowd of about 70 residents, "we think that Delaware surely could."

Others insisted, though, that an apology for the ongoing vestiges of slavery -- namely Jim Crow laws that institutionalized racism long after slavery was abolished -- was more appropriate than apologizing for slavery itself.

"I think the apology should be issued for discriminatory laws passed in the 20th century," said Della Sue Robinson, adding that she questioned the validity of an apology coming from people who had nothing to do with slavery.

The debate represented the beginning of the commission's second try to persuade the Dover City Council to pass a resolution -- adopted unanimously by the commission on April 25, 2007 -- calling on the state Legislature to apologize for slavery on behalf of the state. After hearing debate in May 2007, the

council sent the proposal back to the commission with instructions to conduct a series of public forums on the issue.

Sam Hoff, the commission chairman and the primary author of the resolution, said Wednesday night's session was the first of two forums the commission will conduct before the matter is taken back to the council.

In serving notice of Wednesday night's forum, the commission sent a white paper of sorts to council members, noting that the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives and legislatures in six states -- Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, Alabama, Florida and New Jersey -- had adopted resolutions of apology for slavery. The letter included the text of all eight resolutions as well as the text of the commission's own proposal -- by which the council would call on the legislature to adopt a resolution "acknowledging and expressing its profound apology for the state's practice of slavery and for the historic wrongs committed against all persons who suffered discrimination and injustice under this dehumanizing system"

At one point, Sen. Margaret Rose Henry, D-Wilmington East, said she had considered introducing legislation to provide an opportunity for a vote on the issue, but reported that she found little support for an apology and didn't file a bill.

Hoff, a political science professor at Delaware State University, has described slavery as the most shameful crime against humanity ever committed in Delaware. He argued that an apology was the first step toward earning forgiveness from blacks and improving race relations in the First State.

At Wednesday night's hearing, several speakers agreed, saying an apology would represent a big step toward reconciliation.

"I came to support the idea of an apology," said 62-year-old James Brooks, a 14-year Delaware resident who first visited the state as an enlisted man at Dover Air Force Base in 1966. "I think it's high time. I think we should have apologized decades ago, when we first knew it was wrong."

Lafayette Bell said that racism and discrimination are still rampant, however, and an apology for slavery would not count for much.

"Even if an apology is given," he said, "it's not going to help African Americans much. Most African Americans don't think its genuine anyway."

Jahi Issa, a history professor at DSU, said history would not judge the state well if an apology was not issued.

"Slavery is not too far behind us," he said. "As the First State, I believe we should have been the first state to apologize for slavery. History is judging us. We don't want to be the last."

Town Urges Ban On Driver Texting (WILNJ)

By Michael Short, The (Salisbury, Md.) Daily Times

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 19, 2009

OCEAN VIEW -- Town Council will send a letter to the state, urging officials to ban texting and e-mailing while driving.

In recent months, a number of Sussex County towns have taken similar measures.

Texting while driving has been called a "dangerous practice," and some say it's imperative that there be repercussions for those who drive distracted.

According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, text messaging is banned for all drivers in 11 states, including Maryland, Virginia and New Jersey. Delaware is one of 10 states that prohibit texting by novice drivers.

"AAA calls for passage of a texting-while-driving ban in Delaware," said Catherine Rossi, spokeswoman for AAA Mid-Atlantic. "AAA discourages motorists from engaging in any distraction while behind the wheel, and texting is the epitome of distracted driving."

In a AAA poll conducted this year, 96 percent of Delawareans supported a texting ban.

Legislation banning texting and e-mailing while driving overwhelmingly passed the House earlier this year and is currently on the Senate Ready List.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Joe Miro, R-Pike Creek Valley, initially sought to bar the use of handheld cell phones, but dropped that provision when it became clear the proposal lacked sufficient support.

"[The bill] is not everything I wanted," Miro said earlier this year. "But I am a guy who listens and compromises when I have to in order to achieve something that will improve the safety of all the people on our roads. I think it is a victory for all of us who want to make Delaware roads safer."

While the proposed law would apply to all motorists, Miro believes it will have the greatest impact on young adults.

"This [bill] would prohibit [texting] and hopefully make sure that they are paying attention to what's in front of them," he said.

Ocean View plans to send its letter to Sen. George H. Bunting, D-Bethany Beach, for review.

While town officials considered enacting their own ban, some believe a state ban would be easier to enforce.

"I don't think we have any way at all of policing it," Councilman Bill Wichmann said. "By the time an officer finds out if they are texting, they'll be out of town."

If enacted, Delaware's legislation would carry a penalty of a \$50 fine.

Program To Restore Natural Habitat Shows Success (WILNJ)

By Alex Ruoff, The (salisbury, Md.) Daily Times

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 19, 2009

SEAFORD -- For the past few years, Glenn Lovelace's dream has been to transform nearly all of his 50 acres of land into a natural bird habitat.

So, about three years ago, he let his fields go fallow and last year entered into the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control's Landowner Incentive Program to get some assistance.

The program has restored and enhanced more than 1,300 acres of natural habitat in Delaware by providing economic incentives to private landowners. But the future of the program is unclear as the federal government has not been able to fund the project since 2006.

Now, state environmental agents are hoping to use what's left in their coffers to support just a few, high-priority areas.

"The commission [which selects the projects] will most likely choose just one big project or some we consider high priority," said Shelley Tovell, an environmental specialist for DNREC's Department of Fish and Wildlife. "We're really looking at the last of the money."

Through the program, Lovelace was able to take about 40 acres of land and create a newly restored home for local birds that have been driven out of the area by a lack of suitable areas to nest.

Through the federally funded assistance program, the state pays private landowners to maintain natural habitat for species of great conservation need, DNREC officials said. Property owners receive technical and financial assistance for their efforts.

Lovelace said he's already seen results on his land.

"I've seen some different birds move in," he said. "I've seen high counts on several different species already."

Tovell said federal aid for the program, provided through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has ended, leaving her uncertain as to whether the program will live on past the barely \$200,000 left.

"One of the reasons we had such a great response is that [the program] was funded 75 [percent] through federal funds," she said. "Most programs are a 50/50 split, so this was fairly inexpensive for us."

Tovell said anyone who's already signed a contract is guaranteed their money, but expanding efforts will be impossible without extra funding. While the state has a number of alternative programs, Tovell said LIP's popularity was its economic incentives.

Byron Jefferson, of Lincoln, said he joined the program to preserve nearly 100 acres of his property because he could get a better price than renting it out for farming. He said he's pleased with the results and is glad to be providing natural habitat and renewed forest. When his contract ends, he may not continue to preserve the area if financial aid is unavailable.

Interested landowners may request an application by calling 735-3600. Proposals for 2010 funding will be accepted through Dec. 14.

Many Numbers To Reach Del. Government (WILNJ)

By Ken Mammarella, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 19, 2009

Yes, so much information and so much contact between Delawareans and their state government are moving online.

But sometimes -- for people who aren't online, for people who aren't sure where to go or for people frustrated with what they encounter online -- a phone call may be more desirable.

A Wilmington phone book has six pages of state government listings. What follows are toll-free phone numbers that are promoted for connecting to Delaware state government.

The most important numbers

The most important number of them all is 911, for life-threatening medical and public safety.

Dispatchers are ready to direct medical and law enforcement personnel to the rescue. In response to a recent question in Spark about a mattress in the middle of the highway, Cpl. Jeff Whitmarsh said "Anytime there's a risk of serious physical injury or a traffic crash, it's absolutely appropriate to call 911." Calls are triaged and divided up among appropriate agencies, he said. Non-emergency number for Delaware State Police is (800) 837-3771.

The new 211 service -- from Delaware Helpline with support from the United Way and the state -- is a quick way to connect to thousands of health and human services programs, including rent assistance, food banks, affordable housing, health resources, mental health resources, child care, after-school programs, care for senior citizens, financial assistance, legal assistance and job training programs.

As helpful as that is, it's only answered during extended weekday business hours. (Delaware Helpline hopes to staff that number 24/7 in a few years). Ditto for the nonprofit's other number, (800) 464-4357.

Hotlines that reach people

The phone book and the state's own Web site list a number of hotlines. These numbers were tested from New Castle County and answered outside of regular business hours. Some numbers were answered by people in other states or by answering services.

Child abuse and emotional problems. (800) 292-9582 connects to the Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth & Their Families. For emergency help with children's emotional problems, (800) 722-7710 is also maintained.

Crime victims and survivors: (800) 842-8461 connects to a person at state police. (800) 870-1790 is the attorney general's office and goes to voice-mail at off-hours.

Delaware Crime Stoppers: (800) 847-3333.

Diseases and bioterrorism: (888) 295-5156.

Domestic abuse: (800) 743-5754.

Environment. (800) 662-8802. This is a general number for the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, including air and waste management and parks and recreation. Environmental concerns including open burning, chemical spills, pesticide spills, emissions from factories, illegal dumping on land (such as at the three yard-waste sites in New Castle County) and at sea.

Fishing violations, inland bays. (800) 523-3336 is a DNREC number for fishing violations and for pollution in the inland bays of Sussex County.

Mental health: (800) 652-2929. This leads to a mobile unit that handles crisis intervention, drug and alcohol crises, psychiatric emergencies and severe personal, family, or marital problems.

Poison: (800) 222-1222, which is routed to local poison centers no matter where you call from.

Roads: (800) 324-8379 is maintained by the Delaware Department of Transportation. The Transportation Management Center is the place to go to report problems (such as a traffic signal that's not working, debris or wild animals) or ask questions (when's that road repair scheduled to end?).

Sexual violence, suicide and parents thinking of surrendering a baby: Contact Delaware, 761-9100 in New Castle County, (800) 262-9800 downstate.

Smoking Quitline: (866) 409-1858.

Wildlife. (800) 292-3030 is DNREC's Wildlife Operation Game Theft Hotline Operation Game Theft. Tips that lead to the arrest and conviction of people violating state hunting and wildlife laws can lead to rewards of up to \$1,000.

Hotlines that reach interactive recordings

Access Delaware: (866) 276-2353, for the status of your state income tax refund or to find polling places or free public Web access.

School closings: (877) 831-7215

Other toll-free numbers

The following numbers are ones that Delaware residents (as contrasted to state employees or businesses) might use to reach state government. A state Web page (<http://delaware.gov/egov/portal.nsf/portal/tollfree>) lists dozens.

COMPLAINTS, TIPS

Alcohol violations: (800) 393-7327.

Consumer protection, debt management: (800) 220-5424

Fraud, waste, and abuse of state government resources: (800) 553-7283.

Governor's office: (800) 292-9570.

Home health care or hospice agencies: (800) 942-7373.

Housing law violations: 877-544-8626.

Indoor smoking ban violations: (800) 297-5926.

Insurance companies, agents: (800) 282-8611.

Insurance fraud: (800) 632-5154.

Long-term care facilities: (877) 453-0012.

Mosquito control: (800) 338-8181.

Pesticide misuse: (800) 282-8685.

EDUCATION

Delaware Educator Data System: 888-759-9133. For people obtaining teaching certification.

Groves Diploma at a Distance: (888) 321-4723. For adult learners obtaining high school diplomas.

Higher Education Commission: (800) 292-7935. Scholarships, grants and college-prep information.

K-12 education: (877) 838-3787.

School-related crime, including bullying: (800) 220-5414.

Upward Bound: (866) 227-5566. Program to prepare students for college in partnership with the University of Delaware.

HEALTH, PUBLIC WELFARE

Aging, adults with physical disabilities: (800) 223-9074.

Child care licensing: (800) 822-2236.

Child Development Watch: (800) 671-0050. Program for children ages birth to 3 with disabilities or developmental delays.

Deaf-blind children: (800) 292-9590.

Elderinfo insurance counseling: (800) 336-9500. For people with Medicare.

HIV/AIDS: (800) 422-0429.

Immunizations: (800) 282-8672.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, food stamps, subsidized child care and Refugee Cash Assistance programs: (800) 372-2022.

Women, Infants and Children; nutrition and physical activity: (800) 222-2189.

LIBRARIES AND DATA

Delaware Division of Libraries: (800) 282-8696.

Legislative Council Research: (800) 282-8545. Legislative research and the Delaware Register of Regulations.

Library for the Blind/Handicapped: (800) 282-8676.

TAXES

Tax forms: (800) 292-7826.

Tax refund status: (866) 276-2353.

TRANSPORTATION

DART: (800) 355-8080 for customer relations, (800) 652-3278 for reservations.

DelDOT: (800) 652-5600.

Rideshare Delaware: (888) 743-3628.

OTHER CALLS

Agriculture emergencies: 877-831-7217.

Delaware Solid Waste Authority: (800) 404-7080.

Delaware Tourism Office: (800) 441-8846.

Housing: (888-363) 8808.

Juvenile fire setter intervention: (800) 432-8500.

Lottery numbers: (800) 338-6200. Remember, they're not official until they're verified.

Natural Resources and Environmental Control: (800) 922-9283.

State Fire School: (800) 282-8650.

Treasurer: (800) 675-8600. Personal finance tips.

Unemployment benefits: (800) 794-3032. Claim weekly unemployment insurance benefits by telephone.

Utilities: Public Advocate -- (888) 607-2427 -- advocates for consumers on utility rates. Public Service Commission -- (800) 282-8574 -- regulates utilities.

Veterans Affairs: (800) 344-9900. Assistance with veterans benefits and burial services.

Vital statistics: (877) 888-0248. Provides copies of birth, death, adoptee and marriage certificates.

Voting and elections: (877) 270-8300.

UD Community Pumped For Blood-drive Challenge (WILNJ)

By April Abel, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 19, 2009

NEWARK -- University of Delaware students and faculty were out for blood Wednesday.

Donating blood, that is.

About 500 people registered to donate blood for the 8th Annual Colonial Athletic Association Blood Challenge, which pits the school against 11 other schools in the athletic conference to collect the most blood donations in a one-day fall drive.

Last year, UD brought in 604 donations. Wednesday's goal: 900 donors.

"The competition is fierce among the schools. UD has won five times but was narrowly beaten by Drexel University for the last three years," said Carrie Aiken of the Blood Bank of Delmarva.

Blood Bank of Delmarva closed its donor centers for the day to provide staff and equipment.

"We can't announce the day's totals until the competition is over in early December," Aiken said.

But the real winners, blood bank leaders said, are the patients who will benefit from the lifesaving blood.

Over the past seven years, the CAA Blood Challenge has raised 17,728 units of blood.

The multipurpose rooms at the Trabant University Center in Newark were bustling Wednesday with a well-orchestrated scene of students and staff.

"We always get a lot of walk-ins," Aiken said.

Doors opened at 7:30 a.m. By 10 a.m., 30 beds were full and people were moving smoothly through the computer screening, donation and all-important snack break and brief monitoring afterwards.

UD nursing student Emily Wagner donates blood at least twice a year.

"I really do it for the cookies," she joked.

UD music faculty member Xiang Gao also said he donates blood regularly.

"As a musician, I give my best to help people. Giving blood is another way of giving my best," he said.

Gao was one of the many donors giving a traditional whole blood donation on a bed in the main donor area.

Along the wall, it got a little more high-tech.

The Blood Bank brought along all four of its ALYX anapheresis machines for this drive.

These fully automated machines allow qualified donors to give twice the amount of red blood cells in one donation.

Donors who meet height and weight criteria -- at least 5 feet 1 inches tall and weighing 130 pounds for men, or 5 feet 5 inches tall and weighing 150 pounds for women -- are offered the opportunity to donate blood via the ALYX machine.

The phlebotomist inserts the needle and line into the donor's arm, and ALYX draws the blood, separates red cells from plasma, and returns a mixture of sterile saline and plasma to the donor.

"The benefit of this is there is no net fluid loss for the donor, and the Blood Bank gets twice as many red blood cells from one donation," said Kathy Armstrong, of the Blood Bank.

Andrew Smith, 19, is a freshman at UD. He was donating via ALYX for the first time, and "felt no different" than when he gave a whole blood donation last year.

Armstrong offered Smith a choice of UD blue or gold elastic gauze to wrap the donation site, and sent him off to the snack table.

"I remember him from when he donated in high school," she said. "It was nice to see a familiar face."

New Learning Environment At Air Mobility Museum (WILNJ)

By The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 19, 2009

Students from around the state visited the Air Mobility Command Museum in Dover on Wednesday to celebrate the 11th anniversary of GIS Day, an international even to promote awareness of geographic information systems.

TOP PHOTO: Seaira Williams (right), 10, a McVey Elementary student, lands her plane safely on a flight simulator, with a little help from volunteer David Doyle.

BELOW: With help from volunteer Maggie Legates (right), students put together a map of Europe on the floor using technology they are learning at the Air Mobility Command Museum at Dover Air Force Base.

Working Together For Young Ones (WILNJ)

By Edward L. Kenney, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 18, 2009

With three early childhood centers -- and another on the way if the upcoming referendum passes -- the Appoquinimink School District has buttressed with action the belief that children should start learning well before grade school.

But it has not stopped there. Rather than wait for children ages 3 to 5 to enroll in the centers, district leaders have developed an outreach program that trains Middletown-area day care providers to give the children an even earlier head start.

"In the past, the school district and the community providers sort of passed [like ships] in the night, so to speak, yet we're all sharing the same kids," said Sandra Cohee, principal at the Cedar Lane Early Childhood Center. "We give them a more in-depth view of what we do at school. This has opened up a conduit of information."

Cohee, the leaders of the other two early childhood centers and an educational diagnostician make up the leadership in a newly formed Preschool Coalition Committee that plans training for the day care providers.

The district has worked with the providers informally for the past 10 years, beginning when the Appoquinimink Early Childhood Center opened its doors as the first such center in the district, she said.

But this year marks an effort to give the initiative better structure, a move necessitated both because of district growth and the growing number of day care centers in the Middletown area, now about 15.

"There are other districts that are doing similar things, but not as formalized as we are doing it," Cohee said. "It's a great idea. And it really has opened up communication, so we are on the same page as the providers."

"Developing this liaison helps to build a bridge," added committee member Lucia Weathers, assistant principal at the Townsend Early Childhood Center.

Licensed day care providers are required by state law to receive 18 hours of training a year in subjects such as classroom management, parental involvement, developing fine and gross motor skills, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

Providers usually have to pay for that training, but the district offers it free, holding sessions as part of evening dinner meetings that have drawn as many as 75 day care people.

Meetings are held every two to three months and are assigned a training theme, Cohee said. One scheduled for January will be about discipline.

Rene Nolen, the principal at the Appoquinimink Early Childhood Center and a member of the Preschool Coalition Committee, said the district also can teach things that will help the children with social skills such as sharing and teamwork, paving the way for the more academic lessons to come.

"Then when they get here, they're ready for reading and words and counting," she said.

"The kindergarten year is so critical," added fellow committee member Kathy Gertley, a district educational diagnostician who used to go out on her own to the day care centers before things got better organized. "It just sets them up for success in their educational career."

"We want them to instill in them the love of learning," she said of the day care providers.

As an owner of the Kiddie Academy childcare center in Middletown, Susan Tudor appreciates the training the district is giving her 20 teachers.

"It's a good opportunity to get those hours and not have to pay for it," she said. "In early childcare, it's definitely not a career you go into to make money. As a business owner, I wish I could say I will pay for all your training, but I can't afford it."

Tudor also likes what the teachers are taking away from the training, which cannot help but benefit the 115 children at her day care center.

"I think it helps educate my teachers, giving them different ideas," she said. "They can kind of feed off each other. I think it gives them a chance to grow together. It keeps my teachers fresh and aware of what's going on out there."

Said Weathers, "Those centers know that we value what they do, and just knowing that helps them to keep coming back."

Doctors Reject New Screening Guidelines (WILNJ)

By Angie Basiouny, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 19, 2009

Some Delaware doctors are rejecting new recommendations from a federal panel advising women to wait until age 50 to get routine mammograms and abandon breast self-exams because they do no good.

The physicians said Wednesday they disagree with the reasoning behind the report and are telling patients, many of whom are confused about the news from the independent U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, to stick to conventional guidelines that call for self-exams and routine screenings at 40.

"It certainly was an easy one for me," Dr. Nick Petrelli, director of Christiana Care's Helen F. Graham Cancer Center, said of his decision to continue with current guidelines. "I've experienced this over the years with patients. I've seen it, I've seen the evidence, and we're not going to change."

Petrelli, a surgical oncologist, pointed to the significant reduction in mortality rates in the United States and around the world since women began screening in their 40s and even younger. He also does not see the logic in telling women to not perform self-exams, which often is a first step in early detection of tumors.

"Women know their bodies better than any physician or anybody else," he said. "I see no down side to self-examination. It certainly doesn't cost anything and it's not time consuming."

Cindy DelGiorno figures she would be dead by now if she had followed the new recommendations.

DelGiorno, a teacher at A.I. duPont High School, found a lump in her breast during a self-exam in 2007, when she was 34. A subsequent mammogram revealed a tumor. During chemotherapy, she realized that older women were having a much tougher time battling the disease and the effects of treatment.

"It's absurd. I couldn't believe it," she said of the report. "I don't know who this research group is, but do they want to kill off women? It's disturbing."

In Delaware and across the country, there is a rising chorus of health professionals, politicians and advocacy groups questioning the wisdom of the findings, which contend women in their 40s are more likely to get false-positive tests that can lead to unnecessary biopsies and anxiety.

The recommendations don't apply to women who carry a high risk of breast cancer.

The American Cancer Society reacted swiftly to the report and posted a statement Monday on its Web site that the organization remains with its long-standing position advocating for yearly screenings starting at age 40. The American College of Radiology also was critical of the findings, saying it would result in countless unnecessary deaths each year.

Federal policy unchanged

To ease confusion, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius said Wednesday the task force does not set federal policy and the government's view on screenings at 40 remains unchanged.

"My message to women is simple," she said. "Mammograms have always been an important lifesaving tool in the fight against breast cancer and they still are today. Keep doing what you have been doing for years -- talk to your doctor about your individual history, ask questions and make the decision that is right for you."

That advice is echoed by the Delaware Breast Cancer Coalition, an awareness and support organization that runs the state mammography van, which is about to be retrofitted to use the latest in digital imaging.

Coalition Executive Director Vicky Cooke said the office phone has been ringing all week with women wanting to know what they should do. The report has been the topic of debate among staff members for days.

In the end, she said, the group opted to follow the current rules. It's a break from the position taken by the National Breast Cancer Coalition, which has endorsed the new recommendations.

"We're an organization that relies on responsible information, and right now there is a lot of confusion," Cooke said. "So we are going to step back and continue to do what we've always done and operate by the current guidelines."

Officials with the Delaware Division of Public Health declined to be interviewed and released a statement saying they are studying the recommendations and working with the state's Cancer Consortium to determine the implications for Delaware.

Dr. Tom Vaughan, director of women's health and chairman for diagnostic imaging for Bayhealth Medical Center, said he thinks the task force focused too much on the costs, time and other negatives associated with benign tumors and not enough on the benefits of early detection. He said mammograms aren't perfect, but they are powerful tools in helping save lives.

"My experience with an extensive number of biopsies is that most people, even if there is a 1 percent chance that they have cancer, are happy to have this done," he said.

Dr. Wendy Newell, a breast surgeon in private practice with Wolf Creek Surgeons in Dover, agreed with Vaughan and Petrelli from Christiana Care. She said the task force needs to rescind the guidelines and worries that the news will set back decades of work to educate women about early detection.

She's continuing to advise patients to screen at 40 and learn how to conduct self exams.

"They could end up having a more advanced breast cancer if they wait every other year, or they could end up dying," Newell said.

Breast-cancer survivor, Newark resident Terri Stuiber, also is upset with the report and pondered her fate had she followed the advice.

"I would probably not be here right now," she said.

Stuiber found her lump during a self-exam two years ago, when she was 47, and had a bilateral mastectomy. Like DelGiorno, she had no family history of breast cancer.

When she first heard about the report, she thought maybe it was a mistake.

"I went crazy, especially when they said don't even teach breast self-exams," Stuiber said. "I was floored that anybody would come out with that. I have two daughters. I would never want them to take that lightly. I tell them to get educated and have their checkups."

Thanksgiving Is All About The Turkey (WILNJ)

By Molly Murray, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 19, 2009

With Thanksgiving a week away, it's crunch time at TA Farms in Wyoming. So many turkeys, so many platters to fill.

These birds -- raised on a mixture of corn, soybeans and minerals -- are organic, free-range turkeys.

"We grow our own feed, we make our own feed," Dan Palmer said. "It makes them taste juicier and have more flavor."

Then, there are the store-bought birds.

"Created," said Sherrie Rosenblatt, a spokeswoman for the National Turkey Federation, "to fulfill consumer desire for white meat."

These birds were selectively bred for large breasts, lots of white meat and a speedy growth process.

About 90 percent of households in the United States will eat an organic turkey like Palmer grows or the store-bought kind this Thanksgiving. In all, some 46 million turkeys will be sold for the holiday, Rosenblatt said.

But the real purist may want to hone the hunter-gatherer instinct, don the mossy oak camouflage and bag a wild turkey for the feast.

"They are very good eating," said Matt DiBona, a wildlife biologist with the state Division of Fish & Wildlife.

There's only one problem. Delaware doesn't have a fall hunting season for wild turkey, so unless a hunter planned ahead in spring, a Delaware wild turkey won't be on the Thanksgiving menu.

In some ways, it is a small conservation miracle the state has a season -- or wild turkeys -- at all.

The population in Delaware was wiped out by the mid-1800s and they were pretty much gone from throughout their native, East Coast range in the mid- to late 1800s, said Bob Eriksen, director of conservation operations and a regional wildlife biologist with the National Wild Turkey Federation.

The last wild turkey in New York was killed in 1846. The last wild bird in Connecticut died in 1813.

Extensive deforestation made a 19th century comeback next to impossible, Eriksen said.

Over time, marginal farmland that had been cleared began to revert back to forest. In the early 1960s and 1970s, efforts to bring back the birds began, Eriksen said.

By the end of the 1800s, an estimated 220,000 wild turkeys were left in the continental United States, compared to an estimated 10 million to 12 million when Colonists arrived from Europe, Eriksen said.

Today, there are an estimated 7 million to 7.5 million birds in 49 states. Eriksen said the only state without a population of wild turkeys is Alaska.

These days, the East Coast is terrific wild turkey habitat because of productive forests with lots of seeds, nuts and berries -- all foods that wild turkeys eat, he said.

Delaware officials began a reintroduction program in Sussex County in 1984. As those birds thrived and more were added, they began a trapping program to introduce birds to Kent County. In early 2002, more birds were brought in from South Carolina and Virginia and released in New Castle County, DiBona said.

There are an estimated 4,000 wild turkeys in the state, he said. "It is probably one of the greatest conservation success stories ever."

Still, the population isn't big enough yet to allow a fall hunting season. The spring season in 2010 is three weeks, starting April 10.

These wild birds are the cousins of the birds that Palmer raises and sells, and also are related to the ones shoppers find in the grocery store.

On that first Thanksgiving, back at Plymouth Rock, the wild turkey dished up by the Wampanoag wasn't something new for the Pilgrims.

Turkeys were first caged and domesticated in Central Mexico more than 2,000 years ago. And when the Spaniards arrived in the new world, they took the bird back to Europe.

Of course, the bird the Pilgrims ate in 1621 was way different than the broad-breasted birds of today's table, and was probably even different from the wild turkeys we see today.

The grocery store birds grow quickly.

Palmer's birds -- even with their all-natural diet -- put on pounds at a speedy rate, going from day-old pullets to dinner-table size in 16 to 20 weeks. A 20-week-old turkey at TA Farms dresses out to 24 pounds.

Wild birds don't have those snowy-white feathers, and they grow much slower. Their diet is different, and because they are foragers, they are much more muscled, Eriksen said.

A wild turkey that hatched back in June won't be nearly as big. The male will weigh 10 to 12 pounds and the female 6 or 7, Eriksen said. A domestic male of the same age would weigh 30 pounds, he said.

Selective breeding has allowed the bigger birds with the white feathers. There is even a farm-raised turkey that grows to 80 pounds, he said.

Imagine fitting that in your oven.

The wild birds aren't as meaty -- diet and a higher level of activity probably have something to do with that, Eriksen said.

But for people who want a wild bird, there is nothing quite like it in the world of hunting, DiBona said.

The birds have exceptional eyesight. Deer, on the other hand, have an exceptional sense of smell.

"We joke that if you could have an animal with the sense of smell of a deer and the eyesight of a turkey, you'd have an unhuntable animal," DiBona said.

It takes lots of preparation to figure out where turkeys are roosting, and a hunter can't talk or move around once the spot is selected. Turkey hunters typically call in the birds using a series of devices that mimic the sounds that turkeys make.

And when they do take a shot, it's at close range.

In hunting, "it's probably the most fun you can have," DiBona said.

Autumn's Final Gifts (WILNJ)

By Nature's Landscapes, By Rick J. Lewandowski

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 19, 2009

With a suddenness out of character with our typical autumnal explosion of foliage colors, this season came to an abrupt and dramatic close.

Somehow, I'd been lulled into taking for granted the late season floral displays and sumptuous colors of foliage that every year seemed to go on for weeks. So you can probably understand my surprise when, with frigid finality, the first killing frost of the season struck with temperatures hovering in the mid-20s.

And, as if to drive the point home, the region was then pummeled by one of the strongest nor'easters in recent memory. Over three days, its winds and driving rains wrenched from the trees most of the remaining leaves not damaged by frost, leaving branches exposed and forlorn.

Frankly, I was left with a hollow feeling that I'd missed the opportunity to fully appreciate autumn.

Even so, I was determined to find some consolation in the pre-winter landscape as nature took one last deep breath before plunging into winter. So, out for a walk I went.

Stark silhouettes of tree trunks with sharp shadows cast on the ground now replaced the deep shade of summer. Oddly attractive, I thought. Had I noticed before?

Shuffling along paths laden with newly fallen wind-blown leaves, I was also reminded of the simple pleasure of being immersed in this sea of brown that parted at the slightest movement of my feet.

Perhaps all wasn't lost after all; in fact, I was starting to feel a little better already.

It was then that I discovered to my delight, and not so unexpectedly as it turns out, that the frost-laden air of early November and harsh treatment by the nor'easter hadn't completely obliterated the last glimmer of autumn's spectacle. In fact, the layered tree canopy had offered its last leaves as a sacrifice to the frigid air, wind, and rain in order to protect the shrubs and perennials lying at its feet.

Indeed, I realized that the garden was more than just the remnants of leaves and branches left behind by frost and storm; there was considerable life left in this late season landscape for us to appreciate.

A gaggle of goodies

Armed with this new perspective, I ran back to grab my camera and laptop so I could share some of the late-season garden joy I'd discovered. I realized there was surely a spot in gardens for these plants, in particular, to extend the season right up to the very precipice of autumn's end.

Honestly, November is probably not at the top of the list for season-ending flower highlights. Yet, in my stroll through the garden some plants really stood out.

Among the best perennials still flowering were the pale lavender-flowered Raydon's Favorite aromatic aster (*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*), the deep purple-flowered Georgia aster (*Symphyotrichum georgianum*), and the pale yellow-flowered Mellow Yellow sunflower (*Helianthus angustifolius*) as well as the delicate yellow-flowered, multi-stemmed tree, common witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*).

While colorful foliage is a reliable feature of autumn in our region, a few plants withstood killing frost and storms particularly well, retaining their leaves and color. These plants added an even greater allure to the late-season luster of the garden because of their durability.

The fine textured golden yellow autumn foliage of Arkansas blue star (*Amsonia hubrichtii*) represents one of only a handful of perennials with colorful autumn foliage and is a colorful companion to the golden autumn foliage of Carolina sweet-shrub (*Calycanthus floridus*).

Other shrubs such as Mt. Airy fothergilla with its yellowish to pale red foliage, sweet azalea (*Rhododendron arborescens*) with its fiery red foliage, and oakleaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*) with foliage colors ranging from green and yellow to purple and wine red, weathered the late autumn conditions admirably, proving their worth.

Even though it is an uncommon garden shrub, Alabama croton (*Croton alabamensis*) may have offered the most striking late autumn foliage, showcasing pumpkin-orange leaves with silvery undersides.

Each autumn we certainly expect showy fruit displays. Yet, the early departure of most fall foliage this year made fruit an even more important feature for late-season interest.

The dense clusters of lavender-purple berries on American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) provide some of the most unusual color to be found in the garden. Masses of brilliant red fruit on Winter King hawthorn (*Crataegus viridis*) and bright yellow fruit of Winter Gold winterberry holly (*Ilex verticillata*) highlighted their staying power that will insure continued beauty well into winter.

Even American holly (*Ilex opaca*) with its red fruit displays, provided a special appeal with the early departure of deciduous leaves, reaffirming its important quality as an evergreen tree that keeps the garden interesting even in winter.

Certainly, there are other plants that proved their worth this autumn, but these plants highlight some of late autumn's best performers.

I would be remiss if I didn't at least mention that each year brings with it a unique set of seasonal conditions.

Some years can be quirky; others are not. You might not see all these plants performing well so late each autumn but, in my humble opinion, the pleasure of having them brighten the garden for their normal beauty as well as the off chance that you might even get a few extra days of interest make them well worth the effort.

As gardeners, our powers of observation are often the most important tools we have. Don't be shy. Get outside and study what is happening in the landscape. Keen observations and a curious mind offer innumerable opportunities for us to enhance our gardens.

While autumn is now truly nearing an end, be sure to enjoy the changing light and the drama of contrast in the landscape.

Remember, too, as I've recently rediscovered that, when you least expect it, you're almost sure to learn something new!

Liquor Store Clerk Had 'No Choice' (WILNJ)

By Adam Taylor, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 19, 2009

WILMINGTON -- Before the night clerk at Favors Liquor Store could react Tuesday night, one armed robber jumped through the take-out window and another ran behind the counter.

"One had a gun at his head and the other had a gun at his chest," said Ed Pensky, the store's owner.

Shortly after money was taken from the cash register, the clerk pulled his own gun and shots were fired, Pensky said. The clerk shot one of the men, who ran on North Walnut Street and collapsed about 30 feet away. He was pronounced dead at Christiana Hospital.

Pensky, 67, has owned Favors Liquor Store for more than two years.

Before that, he owned another liquor store for 10 years in northeast Wilmington.

Because both neighborhoods are among the poorest and most violent in the city, Pensky and his employees are well armed.

In addition to the .40-caliber Glock pistol the clerk used in the shooting, police confiscated two guns and a can of Mace in the tiny store that weren't involved in the robbery. One is a .380-caliber pistol kept under the counter in a cigar box and the other is a 12-gauge shotgun kept in a corner.

The man who died was identified Wednesday as 20-year-old Kendel Miller of the 500 block of W. 39th St. in Wilmington. The other man escaped.

Pensky was at his Pike Creek home when the robbery took place around 9:30 p.m. He went to the store and then to the police station.

Pensky said his employee fired because Miller was turning toward him with a gun.

"He knew he was about to get shot," Pensky said. "There was no choice."

Though the investigation isn't complete, it appears the clerk was defending himself, said Wilmington police Master Sgt. Steven Barnes. He also said it's legal to carry nonconcealed weapons in a business and no permits are required.

The weapons are all tools of the trade when it comes to running a liquor store in Wilmington's toughest neighborhoods, Pensky said. When he opened the store Wednesday morning, it still had blood in the doorway. And Pensky had his .38 Sig Sauer pistol hanging from his belt.

"I don't do it to show off; I do it to say to people, 'Please, I don't want any trouble,'" Pensky said.

"I love the liquor business, but it comes with two very wanted, dangerous commodities -- booze and cash," he said.

Pensky only had to fire his gun once before when his High Spirit liquor store at 24th and Jessup streets was robbed several years ago, he said. He fired warning shots into the air and the robbers fled.

Favors was robbed once before since Pensky has owned it. It happened around closing, which Pensky thinks is the most dangerous time, because money from an entire day's work is there.

The store has a video surveillance system, but Pensky said a power surge rendered it inoperable about a month ago and he hasn't gotten it repaired yet, so there is no video of Tuesday's robbery.

Delaware State Police Senior Cpl. Jeff Whitmarsh said the department doesn't take a stand on whether it's a good idea for merchants to arm themselves.

"But we do advise that it's always better to comply with someone's demands than to put themselves into harm's way," he said.

Wilmington Councilman Steve Martelli, a former city police officer, said it's not uncommon for small business owners in Wilmington to be armed, especially if they run a business that deals with a lot of cash.

"When I was on the force, we always hoped that they would be responsible gun owners by taking marksmanship and gun safety courses," he said. "We didn't want people out there untrained, trying to be renegades or vigilantes."

Police Chief Michael Szczerba agreed.

"If business owners are going to arm themselves, they should do it in a safe and responsible manner," he said.

Pensky said he had to Mace a regular customer about three weeks ago when he lunged at him in a threatening way. Wednesday, the customer was back at the store and had a friendly conversation with Pensky. "All was forgiven a couple days after the Macing," Pensky said.

Pensky, who is white, said he enjoys interacting with his clientele, which he said is mostly poor and black.

"I go across the street to say hello," he said. "If anything bad happens to someone's family around here, I send them a case of beer and a half-gallon of gin."

But there are sad parts of his business as well.

A 47-year-old customer comes in each morning shaking from alcohol withdrawal before his first half-pint of vodka of the day. Pensky said the man looks older than he is, even though he is 30 years younger.

Mostly, though, Pensky said he has a grand time joking around with his customers.

"I love the liquor business because 99.9 percent of my customers are fantastic," he said. "My wife says I get an adrenaline rush when I'm living on the edge."

Another clerk, Shantae Hughes, 27, was in the back room when Tuesday's robbery took place. She also was present last week when her brother was shot on West Fourth Street. Her brother thought he was about to get into a fistfight, but the other man pulled out a gun and shot him.

His wounds are not life-threatening, she said.

Hughes was back at work Wednesday.

"It's been rough, but I have strong people in my life, so I'm getting through it," she said.

Child Pornographer Gets 30 Years (WILNJ)

By Esteban Parra, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 19, 2009

A 42-year-old New Castle man was sentenced Wednesday to 30 years in prison for producing child pornography, including at least one video and thousands of still images.

In addition to the prison term, District Judge Joseph J. Farnan Jr. sentenced William A. Phillips to 10 years probation. He also will have to register as a sex offender.

Farnan said he found the "criminal conduct to be horrendous" and that Phillips had "raped [his child victim] for the camera."

According to federal attorneys, investigators recovered more than 500 videos and 200,000 images of child pornography stored on some 20 CDs and a computer hard drive.

Most of the illicit videos and images were downloaded from the Internet but several hundred were pictures Phillips took of "Jane Doe 1" at the home that belonged to his family outside Llangollen Estates.

Prosecutors said Jane Doe 1 was located and is safe.

There also was at least one illicit video of Jane Doe 1, apparently created by Phillips, with another female child that was recovered by police. In that case, authorities also believe the child has been accounted for and is safe.

Phillips, who said he had been a pressman at the Cecil Whig newspaper in Elkton for more than 20 years, pleaded guilty in March to one count each of production of child pornography and possession of child pornography.

"While the volume and content of the images seized in this case was shocking in itself, the defendant's willingness to exploit very young children entrusted to his supervision and care is unconscionable," U.S. Attorney David Weiss said. "The sentence imposed ensures that this defendant will never again victimize a child and sends a clear message to others who would engage in similar conduct."

Driver Alive After His Pickup Is Hit By Train (WILNJ)

By Terri Sanginiti, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 19, 2009

A 30-year-old New Castle area man suffered minor injuries when he ignored flashing lights at a railroad crossing on Del. 9 and his vehicle was hit by a train, police said.

The 10:15 a.m. crash shut down Del. 9 south of Del. 141 in both directions for nearly two hours, New Castle City police Lt. Adam Brams said.

Jarrod Penn, of the 100 block of Covington Place, was driving a Ford F-150 north on Del. 9 approaching the railroad tracks, when he drove over them and was hit by the train.

His truck was mangled and overturned, but Penn managed to get out, Brams said.

He was treated on the scene by county paramedics for abrasions to his head, and injuries to his chest and abdomen, county paramedic Assistant Chief Richard D. Krett said.

He was listed in stable condition.

Witnesses told police the Norfolk Southern train was blowing its whistle as it approached the road at 20-30 mph. The engineer told police the lights were flashing, but that has not been confirmed by witnesses.

Penn was cited for disregarding a traffic control device.

Police Investigate Two Newark Heists (WILNJ)

By Ira Porter, The News Journal

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 19, 2009

Newark police are investigating two robberies that occurred within hours of each other.

The first took place Tuesday at 8:15 p.m. in the Cherry Hill Manor neighborhood, off Barksdale Road. An 18-year-old man and a 19-year-old woman were walking near Nathan Hale and Ethan Allen courts when a man ran up. He put a gun to the 18-year-old's head, forced him to the ground and took money from his pockets, police said. He briefly pointed the gun at the woman before running.

No description was provided except that the man wore a dark hooded jacket or sweat shirt and was 6 feet tall.

The second robbery involved a University of Delaware student on Prospect Avenue early Wednesday morning.

Shortly after 2:30 a.m., the 21-year-old victim parked his car and was walking to a friend's house when he noticed he was being followed. Police said he ran to the porch of his friend's home and while he

was waiting to be let in, the thief approached him, stuck a sharp object in his back and demanded money. The student then hit the thief on the head and ran toward nearby Wilbur Street.

The victim noticed a wrench in the assailant's hand as he ran off, police said.

The thief was described as in his mid-20s, 6 feet tall, with an average build and facial hair. He wore a white hooded sweat shirt, a tan zippered jacket with tan, brown and white stripes down the sleeves, blue polyester shorts and white sneakers.

Police do not think the robberies are related.

Anyone with information about either case is asked to contact Detective Michael Watson at 366-7110, ext. 133, or e-mail michael.watson@-cj.state.de.us. Anonymous tips can be sent to Crime Stoppers at (800) TIP-3333.

N.J. Man Says His Life Ruined By Link To Prostitutes' Slayings (WILNJ/AP)

By Wayne Parry, Associated Press

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 19, 2009

EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP, N.J. -- "We know you did it."

That's what investigators told Terry Oleson, convinced he was the person who killed four prostitutes and left them face-down in a drainage ditch just outside Atlantic City.

Three years and three DNA samples later, Oleson hasn't been charged. Neither has anyone else in the case, which illuminated the seedy side of the nation's second-largest gambling market.

Friday is the third anniversary of the discovery of the bodies. As families of the victims grieve, Oleson also struggles. He hears whispers, gets strange looks and recently learned of the suspicion from the parents whose children play at his sister's house.

"It's ruined my life," the 37-year-old Salem County handyman said this week. "It's definitely there. I get people looking at me all the time: 'Oh, that's the guy from TV!'"

"They didn't charge anybody, but they sure the hell made it look like I was the one," he said.

Oleson denies having anything to do with the killings of Barbara Breidor, Molly Jean Dilts, Kim Raffo and Tracy Ann Roberts, a former resident of Delaware, and said he hopes the killer will be caught.

Prosecutors never publicly labeled Oleson a suspect in the case, but investigators did question him extensively shortly after the bodies were found on Nov. 20, 2006, following a number of troubling leads.

He had been staying in the Golden Key Motel in Egg Harbor Township just before the bodies were discovered behind it. Authorities later discovered a network of hidden cameras in his Alloway Township home, and he admitted using them to secretly record his then-girlfriend's 15-year-old daughter in various states of undress.

After seven hours of questioning that began innocuously enough, Oleson said the tone abruptly changed. He says one of them told him, "We know you did it."

"I thought, 'Man, you guys are really friggin' stupid,'" Oleson said.

He was arrested four days later on an invasion-of-privacy charge, and came home to find that authorities had ransacked his house looking for evidence.

It didn't help that an acknowledged prostitute told police -- and any reporter who would listen -- that Oleson confessed to her that he had killed several women. She later recanted at a news conference and apologized to him.

A judge in the videotaping case commented that bail should be high, noting that "a suspect or person of interest in four homicides" is a flight risk. The same judge months later said in court that those circumstances no longer existed.

Oleson served six months in jail for the videotaping and apologized to the victim.

Before he was sentenced, Oleson gave authorities three DNA samples, hoping it would prove his innocence in the prostitute deaths case.

"The very first time I met this guy at the jail, he offered to take a lie-detector test, and give a DNA sample," said his attorney, James Leonard Jr. "I thought, 'Either this guy is the dumbest serial killer in history, or he's totally innocent.' I have no doubt it's the latter."

Atlantic County Prosecutor Ted Housel told the Associated Press last year that DNA evidence can degrade to the point of being unusable after being in the water for a prolonged period. The victims had all been in the water for several days or more before being discovered.

Housel said in a statement Wednesday that his office is still actively pursuing the case, and has recently assigned more investigators to look into the killings.

He would not answer specific questions about Oleson or any other aspect of the case.

Hugh Auslander, Raffo's husband, said he has not heard anything about the case from authorities in the past year.

"I don't think they have anything at all," he said. "This has caused nothing but misery for me, so I'm trying to just move on with my life at this point."

Auslander said he's not sure what to make of Oleson and doesn't know whether to suspect him any longer.

"After Terry Oleson, everything just fell apart," he said.

Relatives of the other three victims did not respond to interview requests.

Years-old documentaries on the case are still shown on cable TV, and Oleson says they still cause him problems.

His next-door neighbor works with his sister, and their children play together in each other's houses.

"Three weeks ago, that thing was back on TV, and the next day the kid comes over and says, 'Mom says the door has to be open while I'm over here playing,'" Oleson said. "The kid still has to check in every half-hour now."

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL EDITORIALS

China's Clear, Tough Message: Clean Up Your Financial Mess (WILNJ)

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 19, 2009

Americans should take a closer look at what Chinese leaders signaled to President Barack Obama on his trip to Asia this week. In some friendly (and some not-so-friendly) ways, the United States was told to get its financial house in order. Despite the talk of friendship, the Chinese were letting the United States know they do not approve of our current economic policy.

We have to realize that the United States is at an enormous disadvantage when it comes to China. China is America's largest creditor. As one economist put it, "never before has the United States relied so heavily on another country's government for financing."

China holds about \$1.5 trillion in U.S. debt. That's up from less than \$100 billion at the beginning of 2001. Holding that much debt makes the Chinese worry about the debt's value and about the U.S. system as a whole. China has changed from buying long-term Treasury notes to short-term notes. That is seen as a sign that the Chinese fear U.S. inflation, a development that would help America pay its bills in inflated dollars.

In addition, China's financial officials are beginning to lecture Americans about the fall of the dollar and the rising deficit. China's chief banking regulator criticized the United States for its low interest rates, because the continued borrowing could drive down the debt's value, leading to more strain on trade. The Chinese have even used the president's trip to question the United States' ability to pay for its health care reform.

President Obama urged the Chinese government to allow the yuan to rise, a move that would help the U.S. debt. America and other countries believe the Chinese are manipulating their currency, holding down its buying power. But the Chinese, because they now can, ignored the president.

We can expect worse in the future until we clean up our financial mess.

Such Galling Waste Requires Vigilance In Tracking Spending (WILNJ)

[Wilmington News Journal](#), November 19, 2009

At first read, it seems like such a paltry figure. In all, about 5 percent of federal spending this fiscal year was improper.

But percentages fail to depict the true cost of waste: The federal government spent more than \$98 billion improperly, much of it on questionable claims for tax credits and Medicare benefits. Even in non-recessionary times, that picture is absolutely intolerable. More unacceptable is the \$26 billion increase in improper payments the previous year.

Unfortunately, government waste has become a normal expenditure of the federal budget. The hair wringing, which heightens during election season, has done little to curb this disrespect of the taxpayer's trust.

Sen. Tom Carper thinks the numbers released Tuesday may be just the tip of the iceberg, because they are based on estimates for several programs, such as Medicare's prescription drug plan. He's right -- most of private industry would never tolerate such losses, with or without deficits. Nor should we.

Next week President Barack Obama plans to sign an executive order to eliminate the squandering, fraud and waste in government spending.

Federal agencies will have to maintain a Web site that tracks improper payments, error rates and outstanding payments. Directors of agencies who don't meet targets to reduce the error rates for two years in a row will have to begin reporting to the Office of Management and Budget. Penalties on government contractors who get payments they haven't earned will be used as incentives to get the money returned.

Here's hoping this new level of fiscal transparency meets a better end than similar promises by this administration to provide a government that is opened and accountable to taxpayers.

BIDEN IN THE NEWS

Senate Health Plan Seeks To Add Coverage To 31 Million (NYT)

By Robert Pear And David M. Herszenhorn

[New York Times](#), November 19, 2009

WASHINGTON - Democratic leaders in the Senate unveiled their proposal on Wednesday for overhauling the health care system, outlining legislation that they said would cover most of the uninsured while reducing the federal budget deficit.

Mr. Reid walked into a meeting on the health care bill.

Senator Harry Reid of Nevada, the majority leader, said at an evening news conference that the legislation, which represents President Obama's signature domestic initiative and will be subject to lengthy and heated debate on the Senate floor, would impose new regulations on insurers, extend coverage to 31 million people who currently do not have any and add new benefits to Medicare.

And he said the bill, despite having a price tag of \$849 billion over 10 years, would still reduce projected budget deficits by \$127 billion over a decade because the costs would be more than offset by new taxes and reductions in government spending, particularly on Medicare.

Democrats expressed confidence that they would have the votes necessary to move forward when the legislation hits its first test in the Senate, probably on Saturday, in the form of a procedural hurdle that will require a united front from all 58 Democrats and the two independents aligned with them.

In one last touch on Wednesday, Mr. Reid and his aides finally named their 2,074-page bill: the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Mr. Reid wrote the legislation in the last several weeks, combining parts of two previous bills adopted by Senate committees. The House passed its version of the health care legislation earlier this month.

Calling the bill "impressive," the White House chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, said: "This legislation meets the president's objectives, provides protection from insurance companies, contains true cost controls and extends coverage to working families."

"We all know that this legislation is tremendously important," Mr. Reid said at the news conference. "Why? Because it saves lives, it saves money."

The measure includes a government-run insurance plan, or public option, with a provision allowing states to opt out.

Though broadly similar to the bill adopted by the House, Mr. Reid's bill differs in important ways.

Democrats said that it would increase the Medicare payroll tax on high-income people and would impose a new excise tax on high-cost "Cadillac" health plans offered by employers to their employees.

The Medicare payroll tax would rise to 1.95 percent from 1.45 percent for couples earning more than \$250,000 a year, and individuals earning more than \$200,000, Democrats said. The increase would raise \$54 billion over 10 years.

The tax on so-called Cadillac plans, first proposed by the Senate Finance Committee, would apply to individual insurance policies costing more than \$8,500 and family plans costing more than \$23,000, raising \$149 billion toward the cost of the bill. Mr. Reid's proposal scales back the tax on Cadillac plans proposed by the Finance Committee.

Senator Richard J. Durbin of Illinois, the No. 2 Democrat, said an important procedural vote to begin debate on the legislation would most likely take place on Saturday, before senators leave town for a weeklong Thanksgiving break.

Mr. Durbin also challenged the Senate Republican leader, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, to post the Republican version of health care legislation on the Internet. Senate Republicans said they would fight the Democrats' bill at every turn, but they have also said they have no intention of offering a full alternative bill.

Republicans promised a fierce floor fight, including a raft of amendments.

"It's going to be a holy war," said Senator Orrin G. Hatch, Republican of Utah, who is one of his party's most respected voices on health policy but for the last several months has voiced nothing but fury over the Democrats' efforts.

Senate Democratic leaders spent much of Wednesday still trying frantically to nail down the final votes needed to begin debate on the legislation.

At least two potential Democratic holdouts, Senator Mary L. Landrieu of Louisiana and Senator Ben Nelson of Nebraska, signaled on Wednesday that they were open to supporting a motion to begin debate.

But Mr. Nelson emerged from the Democratic caucus meeting saying he still had not made up his mind. "I still don't have anything that I want to say because I have not had a chance to review the bill, and I only would be going on the basis of outline and that's not enough information," he said.

Senator Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas is the third Democrat who has not made a commitment to moving the bill ahead.

If the Democrats succeed in pulling together the needed votes, the Senate intends to devote most of December to a rollicking, unpredictable debate that could determine the fate of legislation that Mr. Obama has declared to be his top domestic priority.

Vice President Joseph R. **Biden** Jr. and Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, both former senators, were on Capitol Hill on Wednesday, trying to help Mr. Reid round up votes.

Several Democratic senators emerged from the meeting saying that Mr. Reid had made substantial improvements in combining two versions of health care legislation, one passed by the health committee in July and another by the Finance Committee in October.

"He really did an exceptionally good job," said Senator Kent Conrad, Democrat of North Dakota, who is a lead author of the Finance Committee bill. Mr. Conrad, who is the chairman of the Budget Committee, noted that Mr. Reid's bill would reduce future federal deficits more than the House-passed bill or the earlier Senate measures.

"I would give Leader Reid very high marks," he said.

Mr. Reid's bill would not go as far as the House-passed bill in limiting insurance coverage for abortions. Democratic senators said that the bill seeks to extend current law by barring the use of federal money for abortions. But it would also require that at least one insurance plan that covers abortion and one that does not cover abortion be offered in every state.

In seeking to broadly expand health coverage, Mr. Reid's bill would require people to obtain health insurance. Senators said that the bill would impose a complicated set of penalties for people who fail to meet the requirement.

Mr. Reid's bill would create a voluntary federal program to provide long-term care insurance and cash benefits to people with severe disabilities. The program, known as Community Living Assistance Services and Supports, would be financed with premiums.

The premiums would be set to cover the full cost of the benefits, which, according to the Congressional Budget Office, would average \$75 a day. The House-passed bill includes similar provisions.

Carl Hulse contributed reporting.

Reid Sets Markers For Historic Health Care Debate (NYT/AP)

By The Associated Press

[New York Times](#), November 19, 2009

Filed at 9:37 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Setting up a historic year-end health care debate, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid unveiled long-awaited legislation Wednesday night to extend coverage to all but 6 percent of eligible Americans and bar private industry from denying insurance because of pre-existing medical conditions.

The Democrat's \$849 billion measure is designed to remake the nation's health care system, relying on cuts in future Medicare spending to cover costs -- as well as on higher payroll taxes for the well-to-do and a new levy on patients undergoing elective cosmetic surgery.

Aides said the mammoth, 2,074-page bill would reduce deficits by \$127 billion over a decade and by as much as \$650 billion in the 10 years that follow, citing as-yet-unreleased estimates by the Congressional Budget Office.

"Tonight begins the last leg of this journey," said Nevada Sen. Reid, less than two weeks after the House approved its version of a sweeping remake of the health care system-- and nearly 10 months after President Barack Obama's Inauguration Day summons to action.

Obama welcomed Reid's action, saying, "Today, thanks to the Senate's hard work, we're closer than ever to enacting solutions to these problems. I look forward to working with the Senate and House to get a finished bill to my desk as soon as possible." There was no mention of Obama's longtime goal of signing legislation by year's end.

Republicans vowed a protracted struggle to block the legislation and deny the president a victory that would cap a tumultuous first year in office.

"This bill has been behind closed doors for weeks," said Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the Republican leader. "Now, it's America's turn, and this will not be a short debate. Higher premiums, tax increases and Medicare cuts to pay for more government. The American people know that is not reform."

An early showdown on the Senate floor is expected by week's end.

Reid's Senate measure would require most Americans to carry health insurance and would provide hundreds of billions of dollars in subsidies to help those at lower incomes afford it. It also would mandate that large companies to provide coverage to their workers.

Beginning in 2014, it would set up new insurance marketplaces -- called exchanges -- primarily for those who now have a hard time getting or keeping coverage. Consumers would have the choice of purchasing government sold insurance, an attempt to hold down prices charged by private insurers.

After weeks of secretive drafting, Reid outlined the legislation to rank-and-file Democratic senators at a closed-door meeting. "Everyone was positive," said Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn.

That didn't mean there weren't problems -- far from it. At his news conference, Reid pointedly refrained from saying he had the 60 votes necessary to propel the bill over its first hurdle.

Reid met privately earlier in the day with Sens. Ben Nelson of Nebraska, Mary Landrieu of Louisiana and Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas, moderate Democrats who have expressed concerns about the measure.

Nelson later issued a statement strongly suggesting he would vote with fellow Democrats on an initial showdown expected within days. Aides have said privately that Reid decided to retain an existing antitrust exemption for the insurance industry as a way of satisfying the Nebraskan's concerns.

Landrieu said, "I'm not going to be for anything that doesn't drive down costs over time."

Lincoln, the only one of the three who faces re-election next year, told reporters, "We'll wait and see."

With the support of two independents, Democrats have 60 seats, the precise number needed to choke off any delaying tactics by the 40 Republicans who appear united in opposition to the bill in its current form.

In general, Reid proposed an outline that is similar to the House-passed bill, but there were important differences.

He called for an increase of a half percentage point in the Medicare payroll tax for individuals with income over \$200,000 a year, \$250,000 for couples.

He also included a tax on high-value insurance policies, meant to curb the appetite for expensive care.

The House bill contains neither of those two provisions, relying on an income tax surcharge on the wealthy to finance an expansion of coverage.

Reid's measure also calls for hundreds of billions of dollars in cuts in future Medicare spending, an attempt to satisfy Obama's call to curtail the growth of health care spending that is fiercely opposed by Republicans.

On another controversial issue, Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., told reporters Reid had decided to require the side-by-side sale of insurance policies that cover abortion services and do not, an attempt to satisfy both sides. That is far less restrictive than a House-passed provision that left liberal Democrats angry.

Ahead lie weeks -- if not more -- of unpredictable maneuvering on the Senate floor, where Reid and his allies will seek to incorporate changes sought by Democrats and repel attempts by Republicans to defeat the legislation and inflict a significant political defeat on the president.

Reid released his legislation more than a week after the House approved its version of the health care bill on a near party-line vote of 220-215.

According to estimates from the Congressional Budget Office, that House bill, with a price tag of about \$1.2 trillion, would result in coverage for tens of millions of uninsured, and provide 96 percent of the eligible population with insurance.

Two Senate committees approved different versions earlier in the year, and while Reid has said he would produce a blend of the two proposals, in fact he had a virtual free hand to come up with a plan that could command the 60 votes needed to pass.

Anticipating a major struggle, the White House deputized Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle to join Vice President Joe **Biden** in trying to clear the way for the bill's approval over the next several weeks.

Salazar, a former Colorado senator, is viewed as a bridge to moderate Democrats who are far outnumbered by liberals inside the Democratic caucus.

Daschle was Obama's first choice for secretary of health and human services, a position from which he was to try and oversee the administration's drive to enact health care legislation. He withdrew his nomination when it was disclosed he had not paid more than \$120,000 in federal taxes over several years.

Associated Press writers Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar and Erica Werner contributed to this report.

Senate Health Bill Is Unveiled (WSJ)

Reid Outlines \$849 Billion Plan; Tradeoffs Include Stiffer Medicare Tax on High Incomes

By Greg Hitt And Janet Adamy

[Wall Street Journal](#), November 19, 2009

WASHINGTON -- Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, propelling action on President Barack Obama's top domestic priority, unveiled Wednesday a ten-year \$849 billion bill that would overhaul the nation's health-care system and extend insurance to 31 million Americans without coverage.

The 2,074-page legislation represents the Nevada Democrat's first attempt to build consensus among Senate Democratic liberals and centrists, as well as the two independents allied with the party.

One swing Democrat, Sen. Ben Nelson of Nebraska, said he still has a range of concerns but suggested he might at least be willing to begin debate. "If you don't like the bill, then why would you block your own opportunity to amend it?" he said. Two other Democrats on the fence, Sen. Mary Landrieu of Louisiana and Sen. Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas, remained noncommittal Wednesday evening.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget office estimated the bill would ensure that 94% of those living in the U.S., not counting unauthorized immigrants, have insurance coverage, several Senate Democratic aides said. CBO previously estimated about 83% of Americans now have insurance.

The Senate measure would reduce the federal budget deficit by \$127 billion over the next decade, and by \$650 billion over the second ten years of the program. It achieves that in part through a new Medicare payroll tax and a tax on high-value insurance plans.

The \$849 billion price tag comes in below the \$1.05 trillion cost of the health overhaul passed by the House this month, and the prospect of additional deficit reduction may raise chances fiscally conservative Democrats will back the package. But the figures aren't likely to win over Republicans, who say the bill adds costly new benefits for some Americans when the federal debt is reaching new heights.

Other hurdles to passage in the full Senate include fractures between liberal and conservative Democrats over a government-run insurance plan and disputes over how the bill should treat abortion.

"This is yet another trillion-dollar experiment, but it is not what Americans bargained for," said Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.).

Among other things, the Senate legislation would create a new government-run health insurance plan to compete with private insurers. States would be allowed the option of not participating, and the plan would negotiate payment rates directly with health-care providers, rather than tying payments to Medicare's low rates. Those were concessions to centrists worried about government's footprint in the private sector.

The bill would also create government subsidies to help individuals and families comply with a mandate to buy insurance, and would sharply expand Medicaid, the federal-state health insurance program for the poor.

Journal Community

discuss

"OK, Mr. Reid. And the tooth fairy is going to leave a million dollars under my pillow tonight." -Bruce D. Gulick

Mr. Obama said the legislation would help fix the problems of rising insurance premiums, increasing medical costs and the instability felt by those who lack insurance. "We're closer than ever to enacting solutions to these problems," he said.

Mr. Reid huddled with Democrats for weeks to hammer out details of the bill, and his decision to move forward Wednesday sets the stage for a pivotal vote, perhaps Friday or Saturday, that will determine whether the Senate can formally open debate on the bill.

"Tonight represents the last leg of this journey we've been on for a while now," Mr. Reid said. He met Wednesday with Vice President Joe **Biden**, and many Democrats voiced hope the majority leader will be able to secure the votes needed to overcome Republican opposition and move to the debate.

"We're going to clear the hurdles," said Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry, the Democratic standard-bearer in 2004. But the outcome remains uncertain. "I'm not going to assume a single vote," said Illinois Sen. Richard Durbin, the Democratic whip.

The coming showdown looms as the first of several votes over the next month that will test Mr. Reid's ability to hold together liberals and centrists. Republicans contend Democrats are trying to rush action on the bill before the American public, already uneasy, turns completely against the White House-backed initiative.

On the floor, there could be at least a half-dozen points where Republicans-if they use every stalling tactic available-could force Mr. Reid to muster 60 votes to move the bill along, said congressional aides.

Mr. Reid decided to pare back a proposed tax on high-value insurance plans, bowing to liberal and union complaints that the measure would hit middle-class families. Under his proposal, the tax would fall on plans valued at more than \$23,000 for couples, up from \$21,000 in legislation written by the Senate Finance Committee. The tax was estimated to raise \$149 billion over ten years, far less than was envisioned earlier this year.

To help make up for the lost revenue, Mr. Reid inserted a provision that would raise Medicare payroll taxes on couples with income of more than \$250,000 a year. For those families, the levy would be raised to 1.95%, up from 1.45%. Overall, the proposal would bring in \$54 billion over ten years. Mr. Reid is also proposing a new tax on elective cosmetic surgery, generating \$5 billion.

Both the House and Senate bills make hundreds of billions of dollars in cuts in spending on Medicare. But the two chambers differ on how to raise revenue. The House legislation relies largely on an income surtax on the wealthy. The Senate bill would raise money across a range of health care sources.

Insurers and drug companies, for example, would be hit with tens of billions in new fees. So would medical device makers, though the proposed levy on device makers was lowered to \$20 billion, down about half from the Senate Finance Committee bill.

Still to be fought out on the Senate floor is the issue of abortion.

The Senate bill provides wider insurance coverage for abortion than the House legislation. Among other things, the Senate's proposal would allow women who receive government subsidies to buy insurance to enroll in a plan that covers abortion, while the House bill would bar that. Sen. Orrin Hatch (R., Utah) said he wanted to force the Senate to vote on whether to adopt the House limits. "We'll have a major debate," he said.

Write to Greg Hitt at greg.hitt@wsj.com and Janet Adamy at janet.adamy@wsj.com

Reid Bill Will Cost \$849 Billion (POL)

By Carrie Budoff Brown And Manu Raju

[Politico](#), November 19, 2009

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid scrambled Wednesday to pull together 60 votes for his health reform bill - and his effort got a boost from congressional scorekeepers, who said his plan would cost \$849 billion over 10 years, comfortably below the president's \$900 billion limit.

The Congressional Budget Office also gave Reid some good news on the deficit - saying his plan would reduce the deficit by \$127 billion in deficit reduction in the first 10 years and \$650 billion in the second decade. It would cover 94 percent of all Americans.

Reid was briefing the Democratic caucus on details of his bill at 5 p.m. and it's expected to include a public option, with a chance for states to opt-out of coverage; a mandate requiring individuals to own insurance; and subsidies to help low- and middle-income Americans buy coverage.

Now Reid must hope moderate Democrats who hold the key to reform will agree to go ahead with a key test vote on the bill as early as Saturday, and Reid spent the day Wednesday wooing these fence-sitters.

But he got some positive soundings from centrist Nebraska Sen. Ben Nelson, who put out a news release to remind voters that a vote to go ahead with debate on the bill Saturday doesn't equate to a vote in support of the bill. It seemed an indication that Nelson was willing to give Reid his vote on the motion to start debate.

Getting those 60 votes on what amounts to a procedural vote, however, has proven challenging for Reid, with two other key moderates, Mary Landrieu of Louisiana and Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas, still not on record committing to vote for proceeding to debate.

At around 2:15 p.m., the three moderate Democratic holdouts - Nelson, Landrieu and Lincoln - entered Reid's office for a briefing.

"He is walking through the particulars with them," said Reid's spokesman, Jim Manley. "We need 60 votes to get this bill to the floor."

Vice President **Biden** held court for more than three hours in a room off the Senate floor. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle were also dispatched to the Capitol by President Barack Obama to lobby senators.

As expected, moderates were the focal point. Salazar ate lunch with Sen. Mark Pryor (D-Ark.) in the Senate dining room. Lincoln (D-Ark.) hustled into the Senate reception room for a sitdown with **Biden**, but she emerged without making any public commitments.

"We're still counting. Harry is still counting and working," Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-Ill.).

Adding to the uncertainty Wednesday was the absence of Senate Finance Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.), who flew back to Montana to deal with a family emergency. With no margin for error, Reid needs Baucus present for the first vote.

Durbin said he was hopeful Baucus would return for the vote.

Reid said Tuesday that he is "cautiously optimistic" he can secure the 60 votes he needs to move forward on the bill by this weekend. Reid's bill is expected to include a national government insurance plan with a provision for states to opt out. Reid is also expected to adjust a 40 percent excise tax on high-value insurance plans by raising the threshold at which insurers would pay the fee. He's expected to make up for that lost revenue by proposing an expansion of the Medicare payroll tax.

Reid Plan Ups Pressure On Moderates (POL)

By Carrie Budoff Brown

[Politico](#), November 19, 2009

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid unveiled his \$849 billion health reform bill Wednesday to broad support from fellow Democrats - and the move quickly turned up the pressure on the last few wavering moderates to support the plan, which includes a sizable chunk of deficit cutting.

Reid's plan would expand coverage to 94 percent of Americans through a government-run health insurance option - allowing states to opt out - and other features, all while reducing future federal deficits by \$127 billion over the next 10 years, according to Senate aides briefed by the Congressional Budget Office.

"Tonight begins the last leg of this journey" to bring health reform to the nation, Reid said in announcing the bill.

But Reid's plan contains considerable differences from House legislation passed earlier this month - with a more limited public option and different ways to pay for the bill. Reid included an excise tax on insurers who offer "Cadillac" health plans, not the "millionaire's tax" that's in the House bill.

And one of the biggest differences between the bills - on language restricting federal funding for abortion - could prove problematic for Reid. His bill doesn't include as many limits as the House bill and already is drawing fire from anti-abortion activists.

Democrats on Wednesday were clearly hoping that the deficit figures - the biggest deficit reduction of any health bill to date, Reid's office noted - would knock down one of the last remaining obstacles to winning the votes of key centrists, at least to go ahead with debate on the bill as early as this weekend. Reid's office said the bill could reduce the deficit by \$650 billion in its second 10 years.

And, in fact, the strategy seemed to be working. Nebraska Sen. Ben Nelson and Louisiana Sen. Mary Landrieu both sounded more positive about voting to allow debate to proceed.

Nelson told reporters he still had problems with the public option plan - he prefers a plan that would allow states to opt in instead - but signaled he'd wage that fight on the floor. He also made clear the vote to allow debate wouldn't be the final fight on the bill.

"There will be opportunities to amend the legislation, and if it is amended to the satisfaction of several people, then it will have enough votes to pass on the back end," Nelson said. "If not, it won't. That is the risk."

Other centrists sounded positive toward the bill. "If the bottom line is what it appears to be, that's an encouraging thing. ... But you've got to trust but verify," said Sen. Evan Bayh (D-Ind.), who said he would vote to allow debate.

One holdout appeared to be Sen. Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas, who faces a tough reelection fight next fall. On her way in to the briefing with Reid, Lincoln was asked how she will vote on the motion to proceed: "We'll wait and see," she said.

Reid's hopes of calling a vote to proceed with debate as early as Friday seemed to fade, but a Saturday vote remained a possibility. But he has no margin for error, needing all 58 Democrats and two independents to block any move toward a filibuster and bring the bill to the floor.

And over the course of Wednesday, the announcement of the plan emerged as a key test of his leadership and vote-corralling abilities - with President Barack Obama dispatching Vice President Joe **Biden** back to his old Senate haunts to help.

Adding to the uncertainty Wednesday was the absence of Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus, who flew back to Montana to deal with a family emergency.

Beyond the moderates, Democrats praised Reid's effort to thread the needle with a bill that will keep costs lower than Obama's target of \$900 billion, reins in deficit spending and still expands coverage to more than 31 million Americans. The reimbursement rates for the public plan will not be tied to Medicare, and co-ops will still be offered.

As for the \$650 billion estimate, it grows out of a calculation by the CBO that the Senate Finance Committee bill would reduce the deficit by one-fourth to one-half percent of gross domestic product over its second 10 years. Finance Committee officials converted that to \$650 billion to \$1.3 trillion, and Reid's office believes his bill to be in the one-fourth range and maybe higher - leading to the claim of \$650 billion.

The Senate bill pushes back implementation of major parts of reform to 2014 -- a shift from both the House and the Senate Finance Committee bill, which created 2013 effective dates.

This is bad news for lawmakers who will need to explain to constituents why the elements that have attracted the most attention -- the public plan, the Medicaid expansion and the insurance exchanges -- won't be available for four years. Some reforms would kick in earlier, Senate aides explained, but the big pieces would still be a ways off.

Reid sought to sidestep hot-button issues that could cause trouble for the bill. Illegal immigrants will not get health benefits under the bill, and it would restrict taxpayer funding of abortion - an issue that almost derailed the House bill.

Abortion rights supporters were quick to praise the language Reid included in the bill, which was an early warning sign that it doesn't go far enough for some in the anti-abortion community who led the effort to amend the House bill.

The National Right to Life Committee slammed the language as "unacceptable."

"Reid seeks to cover elective abortions in two big new federal health programs, but tries to conceal that unpopular reality with layers of contrived definitions and hollow bookkeeping requirements," NRLC Legislative Director Douglas Johnson said in a statement.

Other Democrats praised Reid's efforts.

Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass), who was concerned about the tax on Cadillac benefits, praised Reid for raising the limits to policies costing \$23,000 for a family and \$8,500 for an individual. "They moved, and I like the new numbers. It is closer to where I first began. ... I think we are going pass this legislation."

Kerry also praised Reid's efforts to reduce the tax on medical device manufacturers to \$20 billion, down from \$40 billion, over 10 years.

The Reid bill would increase the Medicare payroll tax on couples who earn more than \$250,000 and individuals that earn \$200,000 from 1.45 percent to 1.95 percent.

The bill levies a 5 percent tax on elective cosmetic surgery. The provision raises \$5 billion and was needed to make the numbers work, a Democratic Senate aide said. The Finance Committee considered the tax but dismissed it, in part because it was a public relations battle that senators were not willing to wage.

The Senate bill includes a public insurance option that allows states to choose not to participate. In order to opt-out, states would have to pass a law, the aide said.

The Reid bill only slightly toughens the requirement that people carry insurance. It levies a \$95 fine in 2014 and scales up to \$750 by 2016. The Senate Finance bill had no penalty in the first year.

Critics worry that people will choose to pay the cheaper penalty rather than buying the more expensive insurance plans because the bill also requires insurers to offer coverage to people who are sick. That combination could lead to an older, sicker and more expensive risk pool.

In what can be viewed as an election-year sweetener for senior citizens, the coverage gap in the Medicare prescription drug program would shrink by \$500 in 2010 only under the Senate bill. The Senate

aide described it as a "down-payment" that would move the Senate closer to the House bill, which eliminates the donut hole over the next decade.

Getting 60 votes on what amounts to a procedural vote has proved challenging for Reid. **Biden** held court for more than three hours in a room off the Senate floor. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle were also dispatched to the Capitol by Obama to lobby senators.

As expected, moderates were the focal point. Salazar ate lunch with Sen. Mark Pryor (D-Ark.) in the Senate dining room. Lincoln hustled into the Senate reception room for a sit-down with **Biden**, but she emerged without making any public commitments.

"We're still counting. Harry is still counting and working," said Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-Ill.).

Manu Raju, Patrick O'Connor, Chris Frates and Jake Sherman contributed to this story.

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Senate's \$849 Billion Health Bill Widens Coverage, Cuts Deficit (BLOOM)

By Laura Litvan And Nicole Gaouette

[Bloomberg News](#), November 19, 2009

Nov. 18 (Bloomberg) -- Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid released an \$849 billion health-care plan that calls for new government competition for private insurers, covers almost all Americans and raises Medicare taxes on the wealthiest people.

Reid's proposal, the most sweeping overhaul of the U.S. health system in four decades, cleared a major hurdle when the Congressional Budget Office said it would cut the federal budget deficit by \$127 billion in the first decade. That met a standard set by President Barack Obama and allows Reid to seek a vote as early as Saturday to open the way for Senate debate.

The 2,074-page Senate bill would extend coverage to 94 percent of Americans or some 31 million people, lawmakers said. The House already passed its version on a vote of 220-215 on Nov. 7.

"This legislation is a tremendous step forward," Reid told reporters at the Capitol. "Tonight begins the last leg of this journey."

The measure is intended to both reduce the ranks of the uninsured and curb rising medical costs. Both the House and Senate versions require that Americans get health coverage or pay a penalty, set up online insurance-purchasing exchanges and offer government aid to help lower-income people.

The Senate legislation would reduce the deficit by \$650 billion in the second decade, according to preliminary estimates from the nonpartisan CBO cited by lawmakers.

'Good Deal'

Reid is trying to jump-start legislation, which Obama has said he wants to sign into law this year. Reid has cast doubt on that goal after months of setbacks and signs the Republicans want to prolong the debate by using delaying tactics.

"We're closer than ever to enacting solutions to these problems," Obama said in a statement released by the White House. "I look forward to working with the Senate and House to get a finished bill to my desk as soon as possible."

Reid included a so-called public option program to compete with private insurers such as Hartford, Connecticut-based Aetna Inc. even though it's opposed by all Senate Republicans and some Democrats. He's gambling he can get support to start debate on a bill that's likely to be rewritten by the full Senate.

While the House opted for an income surtax on the wealthiest Americans, much of the funding for the Senate bill will come from a tax on high-end, Cadillac insurance plans, said Senator Kent Conrad, a North Dakota Democrat.

New Taxes

The Cadillac tax would be placed on insurers that offer plans valued at \$8,500 for individuals or \$23,000 for families, Conrad told reporters. It would have higher thresholds for high-risk workers and people living in states with costlier premiums, Conrad said.

Reid did settle on a Medicare tax increase for some Americans, raising the rate to 1.95 percent from 1.45 percent for couples earning more than \$250,000, Conrad said. He also plans a new commission to help set rates paid by Medicare, the government program for the elderly, Conrad said.

The Senate's requirement for employers is also different. Under Reid's bill, companies with 50 or more workers would be subject to penalties if they don't provide coverage and have workers who get taxpayer-funded subsidies to buy policies.

'Class Act'

The Senate bill includes a federally run long-term care insurance plan dubbed the "Class Act" that would let workers pay premiums and then get a cash benefit later for adult day care or assisted living expenses, lawmakers said. It would also bar insurers from denying coverage based on pre-existing conditions, and would expand Medicare prescription-drug coverage.

Reid, a Nevada Democrat, has been melding plans passed by the Senate health and finance committees and still faces splits in his party over issues including how to pay for the bill, whether to set up a public option, and how to ensure that federal funds aren't used for abortions.

One of the top Democrats involved in the overhaul effort, Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus, may be missing the next few days. Baucus flew back to his home state of Montana to be with his ailing mother.

"We'll get him back here when we need him," Reid said.

New York Senator Chuck Schumer, one of the Democratic leaders, told reporters "everything looks good" for an initial vote to start debate. At least three Democrats -- Senators Ben Nelson of Nebraska, Mary Landrieu of Louisiana and Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas -- had refused to pledge their votes for that step until they could review the bill's text.

'Not Enough'

The bill "is better in some ways than in other ways," Nelson said tonight. "Until I have a chance to go through it, a brief explanation is not enough" to make a conclusion, he said.

Reid met with the three senators this afternoon and got some help from Vice President Joe **Biden**, who went to Capitol Hill to lobby other senators on the bill. Former senators Tom Daschle and Ken Salazar who now serves as President Barack Obama's Interior Secretary, also met with lawmakers.

To win passage, Reid has to keep all 60 votes controlled by Democrats together. Besides Nelson, Landrieu and Lincoln, Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman has been critical of the public option. Lieberman, an independent who caucuses with the Democrats, said he would support the vote to start debate and work with lawmakers to strip out the government program.

Maine Senator Olympia Snowe, the only Republican to vote for a health-care plan in the committee phase, said she can't support a public option. She's pushing for a trigger to put a government plan in effect only if there is evidence that policies offered by private insurers are unaffordable.

Time for Debate

Senator Orrin Hatch, a Utah Republican, today said it's doubtful any Republican will vote for Reid's plan. He also said Reid should allow enough time for debate.

"We're talking about one-sixth of the economy," Hatch said. "This should be a very deliberative process. And it should take more than a month and a half."

Reid has safeguards to keep federal dollars from funding abortion, though not the restrictions adopted in the House, lawmakers said. Abortion rights supporters have threatened to vote against a final bill if it contains the House language and have been working to keep it out of the Senate version.

If the Senate passes legislation, it would work with the House to come up with compromise legislation for a new round of votes in both chambers before a bill would go to Obama.

"We are now down to the week we have been waiting for," Massachusetts Senator John Kerry told reporters tonight. "This is not just a matter of months in the waiting, this has been decades in the waiting."

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Reid Pushes Holdouts To Vote For Health Bill Debate (Update2) (BLOOM)

By Laura Litvan And Kristin Jensen

[Bloomberg News](#), November 19, 2009

Nov. 18 (Bloomberg) -- Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid plans to give fellow Democrats details of his proposal to overhaul U.S. health care even as lawmakers raise concerns over issues from abortion to a government-run insurance program.

Reid will meet with Senate Democrats at 5 p.m. Washington time and deliver a summary, North Dakota Senator Kent Conrad said. The next step is the push to begin debate on the bill, which would require several procedural steps and corralling 60 votes to overcome efforts to block action.

"I feel cautiously optimistic that we can do that," Reid said yesterday.

To keep the 60 votes controlled by Democrats in line, Reid is enlisting the support of former senators including Vice President Joe **Biden**, who went to Capitol Hill today. Former Senators Tom Daschle and Ken Salazar, who now serves as President Barack Obama's interior secretary, also met with lawmakers.

The legislation, Obama's top domestic priority, is intended to cover tens of millions of uninsured Americans while curbing medical costs. The proposals for purchasing exchanges, subsidies and a requirement that all Americans have coverage would cost more than \$800 billion over 10 years and mark the biggest changes to U.S. health care in more than four decades.

'Still Counting'

The House passed its version on a 220-215 vote on Nov. 7. Reid has been waiting for Congressional Budget Office analyses on various proposals drawn up by the Senate health and finance committees before unveiling his plan.

Senator Tom Harkin, an Iowa Democrat and chairman of the health committee, said the CBO found the cost of "coverage" in the legislation is less than \$900 billion. He didn't elaborate. House leaders initially put the cost of their \$1.05 trillion bill at \$894 billion, a net figure that took into account new revenue such as penalties for not buying insurance.

Reid is "still counting" members and plans to hold a vote on the motion to proceed to debate before the Thanksgiving holiday recess planned for next week, said Illinois Senator Dick Durbin, the No. 2 Senate Democrat. The Senate might be in session on both days of the coming weekend, Durbin said.

Baucus Leaves