

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

Republican plan to slash legal immigration wins Trump's support

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump has embraced legislation that would dramatically reduce legal immigration and shift the nation toward a system that prioritizes merit and skills over family ties.

Trump joined with Republican Sens. David Perdue of Georgia and Tom Cotton of Arkansas to promote the bill, which so far has gained little traction in the Senate.

"This legislation demonstrates our compassion for struggling American families who deserve an immigration system that puts their needs first and puts America first," Trump said during an event Wednesday in the White House's Roosevelt Room.

It was the latest example of the president championing an issue that animated the core voters of his 2016 campaign, following decisions to pull out of the Paris climate treaty and ban transgender people from the military.

Perdue and Cotton's legislation would replace the current process for obtaining legal permanent residency, or green cards, creating a skills-based point system for employment visas. The bill would also eliminate the preference for U.S. residents' extended and adult family members, while maintaining priority for their spouses and minor children.

Overall, immigration would be slashed 41 percent in the legislation's first year and 50 percent in its 10th, according to projection models cited by the bill's sponsors. The bill would also aim to slash the number of refugees in half and eliminate a program that provides visas to people from countries with low rates of immigration.

Trump to announce new ways to help veterans get medical care

WASHINGTON — The government wants to make it easier for veterans to get medical care and is promoting new ways to use technology to help.

The steps include using video technology and diagnostic tools to conduct exams, and veterans soon can use mobile devices to help with appointments.

President Donald Trump is announcing the initiatives today at the White House.

Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin says the goal is better health care for veterans whether they are in their homes or traveling.

The new programs are in addition to "telehealth" programs that Shulkin says provided care to more than 700,000 veterans last year.

Keystone XL survived politics, but economics could kill it

LINCOLN, Neb. — The proposed Keystone XL pipeline survived nine years of protests, lawsuits and political wrangling that saw the Obama administration reject it and President Donald Trump revive it, but now the project faces the possibility of death by economics.

Low oil prices and the high cost of extracting Canadian crude from oil sands are casting new doubts on Keystone XL as executives with the Canadian company that wants to build it face the final regulatory hurdle next week in Nebraska.

The pipeline proposed in 2008 has faced dozens of state and federal delays, many of them prompted by environmental groups who ultimately persuaded President Barack Obama to deny federal approval in November 2015. President Donald Trump resuscitated the project in March, declaring that Calgary-based TransCanada would create "an incredible pipeline."

After all that, a TransCanada executive raised eyebrows in the energy industry last week when he suggested that the pipeline developer doesn't know whether it will move forward with the project. Paul Miller, an executive vice president who is overseeing the project, told an investor call that company officials won't decide until late November or early December whether to start construction.

"We'll make an assessment of the commercial support and the regulatory approvals at that time," Miller said in the conference call Friday with investors.

The company has invited customers to bid for long-term contracts to ship oil on the pipeline. The bidding will run through September.

An energy expert said the project has been delayed so long it may no longer make economic sense.

Nearly 2 tons of seized ivory to be crushed in Central Park

ALBANY, N.Y. — Nearly two tons of trinkets, statues and jewelry crafted from the tusks of at least 100 slaughtered elephants



AP Photo/ Mary Esch

Ivory artifacts seized by NY state investigators will be crushed in Central Park today to highlight New York's determination to crush the illegal ivory trade.

are heading for a rock crusher in New York City's Central Park to demonstrate the state's commitment to smashing the illegal ivory trade.

The artifacts being destroyed include piles of golf ball-sized Japanese sculptures, called netsuke, intricately carved into monkeys, rabbits and other fanciful designs.

Many of the items are beautiful. Some are extremely valuable. One netsuke, depicting three men with a fish, is worth an estimated \$14,000. A pair of elaborately carved ivory towers set to be ground into dust is worth \$850,000.

But state environmental officials, who are partnering with the Wildlife Conservation Society and Tiffany & Co. for today's "Ivory Crush," say no price justifies slaughtering elephants for their tusks.

The sale of ivory across international boundaries has been banned since 1990, but the United States and many other countries have allowed people to buy and sell ivory domestically subject to certain regulations that gave smugglers loopholes. Last year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service instituted a near-total ban on the domestic commercial ivory trade and barred sales across state lines.

Since August 2014, New York law has prohibited the sale, purchase, trade or distribution of anything made from elephant or mammoth ivory or rhinoceros horn, except in limited situations with state approval. Enforcement efforts have focused on New York City, the nation's largest port of entry for illegal wildlife goods, state officials said.

The ivory articles heading for the crusher include more than \$4.5 million worth seized by undercover investigators from Metropolitan Fine Arts & Antiques in New York City in 2015. In pleading guilty last week to illegally selling ivory, the store's owners agreed to donate \$100,000 each to the World Wildlife Fund and Wild Tomorrow Fund for their endangered species protection projects.

Thousands show up for jobs at Amazon warehouses in US cities

FALL RIVER, Mass. — Thousands of people showed up Wednesday for a chance to pack and ship products to Amazon customers, as the e-commerce company held a giant job fair at nearly a dozen U.S. warehouses.

Although the wages offered will make it hard for some to make ends meet, many of the candidates were excited by the prospect of health insurance and other benefits, as well as advancement opportunities.

It's common for Amazon to ramp up its shipping center staff in August to prepare for holiday shopping. But the magnitude of its current hiring spree underscores Amazon's growth when traditional retailers are closing stores — and blaming Amazon for a shift to buying goods online.

Amazon said it received "a record-breaking 20,000 applications" and hired thousands of people on the spot, and will hire more in the coming days. That number represented fewer than half of the 50,000 people it had said it planned to hire.

Most of the jobs are full-time positions in packing, sorting and shipping and will count toward Amazon's previously announced goal of adding 100,000 full-time workers by the middle of next year.

The bad news is that more people are likely to lose jobs in stores than get jobs in warehouses, said Anthony Carnevale, director of Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce.

On the flip side, Amazon's warehouse jobs provide "decent and competitive" wages and could help build skills.

Bend lawmaker announces run for governor in 2018

SALEM — A Republican lawmaker from the mountain town of Bend announced his candidacy for governor today, aiming to unseat Democratic Gov. Kate Brown in 2018.

Rep. Knute Buehler said on Twitter he is "ready to bring change with education, budget and economic reforms."

He told editors of The Bulletin, Bend's daily newspaper, on Wednesday that he planned to announce he was running. A website has also been activated asking for donations of as little as \$10 and beyond \$1,000. Buehler said retirement pay formulas should be reworked in the pension system for state employees, which has been draining state coffers, and the level of health care payments reformed.

The Senate Republican Office this week said the state's pension debt has surged to \$52 billion.

"Oregon's ticking time bomb known as PERS is on the brink of exploding," the Republicans said, referring to the Public Employees Retirement System.

The Legislature is dominated by Democrats. The highest GOP state official is Secretary of State Dennis Richardson, who occupies the second-highest office in the state.

Brown sprung to the governorship from that position in 2015 when then Gov. John Kitzhaber resigned amid a state ethics investigation into alleged influence-peddling by his fiancée. Brown beat oncologist Bud Pierce, the GOP candidate, by 7 percentage points in the election last November to serve out the remaining two years of Kitzhaber's term.

Buehler, an orthopedic surgeon, would need to win the Republican primary to run for the state's highest office in November 2018.

Seeking a dream, Indonesian family finds nightmare in Raqqa

AIN ISSA, Syria — The 17-year old Indonesian girl made a persuasive case to her family: lured by what she had read online, she told her parents, sisters, aunts, uncles and cousins they should all move to Syria to join the Islamic State group.

Each of her two dozen relatives found something in it for them. Free education and health care for the girls. Paying outstanding debts for her father and uncle, finding work for the youngest men.

And the biggest bonus: a chance to live in what was depicted as an ideal Islamic society on the ascendant.

It didn't take long before their dreams were crushed and their hopes for a better life destroyed as each of those promised benefits failed to materialize. Instead, the family was faced with a society where single women were expected to be married off to IS fighters, injustice and brutality prevailed, and a battle raged in which all able-bodied men were compelled to report to the frontline.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Nurshardina Khairadhania, now 19, recalled her family's fateful decision to immigrate to the IS stronghold of Raqqa two years ago — and how, only months later, their bid to escape began.

Venezuela president disputes vote tampering allegation

CARACAS, Venezuela — Venezuela's president defiantly dismissed allegations that official turnout figures for the election of an all-powerful constituent assembly were manipulated, accusing the international software firm behind the claim of bowing to U.S. pressure to cast doubt over a body that he hopes will entrench an even more staunchly socialist state.

In his first meeting with assembly delegates Wednesday night, President Nicolas Maduro not only stood by the official count of 8 million-plus votes cast in Sunday's divisive election, but proclaimed that an additional 2 million people would have voted if they hadn't been blocked by anti-government protesters.

Maduro also announced a one-day delay in the assembly's installation, saying it would convene on Friday instead of today as planned, in order to "organize it well in peace and tranquility."

The body is empowered to rewrite Venezuela's constitution and Maduro vows he will use it to target his opponents and solidify the socialist system installed by the late President Hugo Chavez. Maduro called the vote in May after weeks of protests fueled by widespread anger over food shortages, triple-digit inflation and high crime — unrest that continues and has caused at least 125 deaths.

The head of voting technology company Smartmatic said earlier Wednesday that the National Electoral Council's voter turnout number was off by at least 1 million, further darkening uncertainty over the veracity of the results. Independent analysts and opposition leaders have contended that the actual participation level was much lower.

TV LISTINGS

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Evening listings THURSDAY

Table with 12 columns representing TV channels (A-L) and 11 columns representing time slots from 6 PM to 11:30 PM. It lists various programs such as KATU News, Wheel of Fortune, Jeopardy!, and various syndicated shows.