

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

Justices side with Colorado baker on same-sex wedding cake

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court ruled narrowly today for a Colorado baker who wouldn't make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple. But the court is not deciding the big issue in the case, whether a business can invoke religious objections to refuse service to gay and lesbian people.

The justices' limited ruling turned on what the court described as anti-religious bias on the Colorado Civil Rights Commission when it ruled against baker Jack Phillips. The justices voted 7-2 that the commission violated Phillips' rights under the First Amendment.

Justice Anthony Kennedy said in his majority opinion that the larger issue "must await further elaboration" in the courts. Appeals in similar cases are pending, including one at the Supreme Court from a florist who didn't want to provide flowers for a same-sex wedding.

The same-sex couple at the heart of the case, Charlie Craig and Dave Mullins, complained to the Colorado commission in 2012 after they visited Phillips' Masterpiece Cakeshop in suburban Denver and the baker quickly told them he would not create a cake for a same-sex wedding.

Colorado law prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and the commission concluded that Phillips' refusal violated the law. Colorado state courts upheld the determination.

But when the justices heard arguments in December, Kennedy was plainly bothered by comments by a commission member. The commissioner seemed "neither tolerant nor respectful of Mr. Phillips' religious beliefs," Kennedy said in December.

That same sentiment suffused his opinion today. "The commission's hostility was inconsistent with the First Amendment's guarantee that our laws be applied in a manner that is neutral toward religion," he wrote.

Liberal justices Stephen Breyer and Elena Kagan joined the conservative justices in the outcome. Kagan wrote separately to emphasize the limited ruling.

Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sonia Sotomayor dissented.

Trump says he has 'absolute right' to pardon himself

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump asserted his presidential power and escalated his efforts to discredit the special counsel Russia probe today, declaring he has the "absolute right" to pardon himself and attacking the investigation as "totally UNCONSTITUTIONAL!"

Trump's comments on Twitter came a day after attorney Rudy Giuliani played down the possibility that the president could pardon himself, suggesting he might have that authority but would be unwise to use it.

"Pardoning himself would be unthinkable and probably lead to immediate impeachment," Giuliani, a member of Trump's legal team, told NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday. "And he has no need to do it, he's done nothing wrong."

On Twitter today, Trump said: "As has been stated by numerous legal scholars, I have the absolute right to PARDON myself, but why would I do that when I have done nothing wrong?" He then again derided special counsel Robert Mueller's probe as a "never ending Witch Hunt."

Trump later added that the "appointment of the Special Counsel is totally UNCONSTITUTIONAL! Despite that, we play the game because I, unlike the Democrats, have done nothing wrong!"

Trump's legal team is making clear that it will combat any effort to force the president to testify in front of a grand jury. Giuliani on Sunday underscored one of the main arguments in a newly unveiled letter sent by Trump's lawyers to Mueller back in January: A president can't be given a grand jury subpoena as part of the investigation into foreign meddling in the 2016 election.

A court battle is likely if Trump's team argues that the president can't be forced to answer questions or be charged with obstruction of justice. President Bill Clinton was charged with obstruction in 1998 by the House of Representatives as part of his impeachment trial. And one of the articles of impeachment prepared against President Richard Nixon in 1974 was for obstruction.

Feds: Skimping can't save seniors from rising med cost

WASHINGTON — Medicare recipients filled fewer prescriptions for pricey brand-name drugs — but spent more on such meds anyway, says a government report released today. It blames rising manufacturer prices for squeezing older people and taxpayers.



AP Photo/Santiago Billy

Volcan de Fuego, or Volcano of Fire, blows out a thick cloud of ash Sunday.

Guatemala volcano toll up as rescuers dig in ash, mud flows

EL RODEO, Guatemala — Rescuers using heavy machinery and shovels found the bodies of several more victims of an eruption at Guatemala's Volcano of Fire today, and pulled 10 people still alive from ash drifts and mud flows.

The official death toll stood at 25, but journalists saw more burned and ash-covered bodies being unloaded after being dug out in the village of El Rodeo.

Sergio Cabanas, the head of the country's disaster agency, said rescuers using helicopters had rescued 10 people from areas hit by thick ash, mud or lava.

Residents said they were caught unaware by fast-moving pyroclastic flows.

The volcano west of Guatemala City exploded Sunday, sending towering clouds of ash miles into the air and hot flows of ash mixed with water and debris down its flanks, blocking roads and burning homes.

The charred landscape left behind was still too hot to touch or even to pull bodies from in many parts, melting the shoes of rescuers. Workers told of finding bodies so thickly coated with ash they appeared to be statues. Inhaling ash or hot volcanic gases can asphyxiate people quickly.

Ash from the volcano, which lies about 27 miles west of Guatemala City, fell on the capital area as well as the departments of Sacatepequez, Chimaltenango and Escuintla. Streets and houses were covered in the colonial town of Antigua, a popular tourist destination.

The Health and Human Services inspector general's office says it found a 17 percent drop in the overall number of prescriptions for brand-name medications under Medicare's "Part D" drug program over a recent five-year period.

But beneficiaries' costs for branded drugs went in the opposite direction. From 2011 to 2015, their share of annual costs rose by 40 percent, from \$161 in 2011 to \$225 on average. Data for 2011-2015 were the most recent available for the analysis.

"Increases in unit prices for brand-name drugs resulted in Medicare and its beneficiaries paying more for these drugs," said the report. Rising Medicare payments for brand-name drugs "will continue to affect Part D and its beneficiaries for years to come."

Although new drugs priced at \$100,000 a year or more grab headlines, the report emphasized that the most persistent problem for Medicare beneficiaries is the high cost of maintenance medications for common chronic conditions like diabetes. Total out-of-pocket costs for patients were highest for brand-name insulin, cholesterol drugs and asthma inhalers.

The affordability of maintenance medications "directly impacts Medicare beneficiaries and their ability to access the prescription drugs they need to stay healthy," Ann Maxwell, assistant inspector general, said in an interview. "This has an immediate direct impact on their quality of life and their health."

China says trade deals are off if US raises tariffs

BEIJING — China has balked at stepping up its purchases of American products, raising the odds of a trade war, if President Donald Trump follows through on his threat to tax billions of dollars' worth of Chinese imports.

The warning from Beijing came after delegations led by U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and China's top economic official, Vice Premier Liu He, wrapped up talks on Beijing's pledge to narrow its trade surplus. White House advisers were insisting on fundamental changes in ties between the world's two biggest economic powers.

At the outset of the event Ross said the two sides had discussed specific American exports China might purchase, but the talks ended with no joint statement and neither side released details.

"Both sides appear to have hardened their negotiating stances and are waiting for the other side to blink," said Eswar Prasad, professor of trade policy at Cornell University. "Despite the potential negative repercussions for both economies, the risk of a full-blown China-U.S. trade war, with tariffs and other trade sanctions being imposed by both sides, has risen significantly."

Asked specifically on Fox's "Sunday Morning Futures" if the U.S. is willing to throw away its relationship with China by proceeding with threatened tariff hikes, Peter Navarro, director of the White House National Trade Council, pointed in part to an unfair relationship involving a multi-billion dollar trade deficit, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis' warning of China's activities in the South China Sea and the threat of China stealing U.S. intellectual property.

The United States has threatened to impose tariffs on up to \$50 billion of Chinese products in a dispute over Beijing's aggressive tactics to challenge U.S. technological dominance; Trump has asked U.S. Trade Rep. Robert Lighthizer to look for another \$100 billion in Chinese products to tax. China has targeted \$50 billion in U.S. products for possible retaliation.

Police: Suspect in 4 Phoenix-area slayings kills himself

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — A man suspected in four Phoenix-area slayings that happened over three days fatally shot himself today as police swarmed the hotel where he was staying, authorities said.

The man, who was not identified, was suspected in the deaths of a forensic psychiatrist, two paralegals and a counselor.

Marshall Levine, a 72-year-old marriage and divorce counselor and life coach, was found shot inside an office building shortly after midnight Saturday, police said. The Arizona Republic reported Levine also worked as a hypnotherapist.

On Thursday, Dr. Steven Pitt, a prominent forensic psychiatrist who assisted in high-profile murder cases, including the JonBenet Ramsey mystery in Colorado and a notorious Phoenix serial killer investigation, was found dead near Scottsdale. Witnesses reported hearing a loud argument and gunfire outside Pitt's office.

Police said the killings Friday of paralegals Veleria Sharp, 48, and Laura Anderson, 49, were related to Pitt's shooting, but they were still trying to determine exactly what linked the three victims.

"We don't know the relationships or the connections," said Sgt. Ben Hoster.

How, or if, Levine's death also had ties to the killings of the two women and Pitt was still being investigated, Scottsdale police told The Republic.

Phoenix police say Pitt's killer was described as a bald man wearing a dark-colored hat with a short brim. Investigators released a sketch of the suspect in the three killings.

Sharp and Anderson were shot Friday inside a law office. Police say one of the women managed to walk to an intersection to seek help despite a gunshot wound to her head. She was taken to a hospital where she died.

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TV SCHEDULE MONDAY Evening listings MONDAY JUNE 4

Table with columns for time slots (6 PM, 6:30, 7 PM, 7:30, 8 PM, 8:30, 9 PM, 9:30, 10 PM, 10:30, 11 PM, 11:30) and rows for various TV channels (KATU, KOMO, KING, KOIN, KIRO, KGW, KRCW, KOPB, KPTV, KPDX, KCPQ, TBS, KZJO, ESPN2, NICK, DISN, FAM, FMC, LIFE, ROOT, F51, SPIKE, COM, HIST, A&E, TLC, DISC, NGEO, TNT, AMC, USA, FOOD, HGTV, FX, CNN, FNC, CNBC, BRAV, TCM, SYFY, RFD) listing their respective programming.