

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

Trump Fed choice Moore withdraws amid controversy

WASHINGTON — Conservative commentator Stephen Moore, President Donald Trump’s pick for the Federal Reserve, withdrew from consideration today after losing Republican support in the Senate, largely over his past writings about women.

Trump tweeted the news, calling Moore “a great pro-growth economist and a truly fine person.”

Numerous GOP senators said they objected to Moore’s disparaging past writings about women or sidestepped questions about whether they would back Moore. Moore has said he regretted the writings and said they were meant as humor columns.

Moore was an adviser to Trump’s presidential campaign and helped design the 2017 tax cuts.

Moore’s candidacy immediately met widespread skepticism about his qualifications for the Fed and concerns about his background as a highly political commentator on economic issues. He had called for the Fed to raise interest rates in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, when the central bank and other agencies were cutting rates or taking emergency actions to help resuscitate the economy and the banking system. After Trump’s election, Moore reversed course and argued for rate cuts even though the economy was much healthier by then.

After Trump named Moore as a potential nominee in late March, Gregory Mankiw, a Harvard professor who was a top adviser to President George W. Bush, observed that Moore “does not have the intellectual gravitas for this important job” and urged the Senate to keep him off the Fed.

Trump defends clinicians’ right to refuse to do abortions

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration is putting the finishing touches on a regulation to protect the rights of clinicians who object to participating in abortions.

President Donald Trump made the announcement today during a speech in the White House Rose Garden to mark the National Day of Prayer.

According to an earlier draft from the Department of Health and Human Services, the rule would require that hospitals, universities, clinics and other institutions that receive funding from federal programs certify that they comply with some 25 federal laws protecting conscience and religious rights. Most of these laws address medical procedures such as abortion, sterilization and assisted suicide.

The conscience rule is a priority for religious conservatives. Some critics fear the rule could become a pretext for denying medical care to LGBT people.

Venezuelans take to streets as uprising attempt sputters

CARACAS, Venezuela — Venezuelans heeded opposition leader Juan Guaidó’s call to fill streets around the nation Wednesday but security forces showed no sign of answering his cry for a widespread military uprising, instead dispersing crowds with tear gas as the political crisis threatened to deepen.

Thousands cheered Guaidó in Caracas as he rolled up his sleeves and called on Venezuelans to remain out in force and prepare for a general strike, a day after his bold attempt to spark a mass military defection against President Nicolas Maduro failed to tilt the balance of power.

“It’s totally clear now the usurper has lost,” Guaidó proclaimed, a declaration belied by events on the ground.

Across town at the Carlota air base near where Guaidó made his plea a day earlier for a revolt, intense clashes raged between protesters and troops loyal to Maduro, making clear the standoff would drag on. There and elsewhere, state security forces launched tear gas and fired rubber bullets while bands of mostly young men armed with makeshift shields threw rocks and set a motorcycle ablaze.

“I don’t want to say it was a disaster, but it wasn’t a success,” said Marilina Carillo, who was standing in a crowd of anti-government protesters blowing horns and whistles.

WikiLeaks’ Assange refuses extradition to US

LONDON — A defiant Julian Assange told a London court today he will fight extradition to the United States to face charges of conspiring to hack into a Pentagon computer, arguing that his work as WikiLeaks founder has benefited the public.

Speaking by video link from Belmarsh Prison in southeast London, Assange said: “I do not wish to surrender myself for extradition for doing journalism that has won many awards and protected many people.”

His formal refusal to be extradited marks the start of what is expected to be a bruising legal battle over whether he will be brought to trial in the United States.

Assange, wearing jeans and a sports jacket, appeared calm during the brief hearing at London’s Westminster Magistrates’ Court. Some of his supporters who couldn’t get seats in the small courtroom chanted support for Assange from the hallways, shouting “Shame on you” at the judge.

Judge Michael Snow said it would likely be “many months” before a full hearing was held on the substance of the U.S. extradition case. The judge set a procedural hearing for May 30, with a substantive hearing to follow on June 12 once a full U.S. extradition request has been received and studied by Assange’s lawyers.

Legal experts predict it will likely take 18 months or longer to resolve the case, with each side able to make several appeals of unfavorable rulings.

As car-sharing picks up in US, so do legislative battles

PHOENIX — When Chris Williamson was in the market for a new family car, a timely ad and conversations with a co-worker convinced him to try something out of the ordinary. He bought a BMW 3 Series convertible and covers the payments by renting it to strangers on a peer-to-peer car sharing app called Turo.

It allows his family of seven to have a nicer car, essentially for free.

“It’s great to have that little bit of extra income and not have to worry about the car payments,” said Williamson, a teacher from the Phoenix area.

But his customers and others using car-sharing apps around the United States get their rentals tax-free. That’s made them a target for rental car companies, airport authorities and local governments, which say users of the upstart apps should pay the same taxes and fees that come with traditional rental cars.

At stake is hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue that cities and airports count on to pay for stadiums and convention centers or to fund police, fire and other general operations.

Bill: Measure causes a strong partisan divide

Continued from Page A1

that toured the state to find out what ails Oregon’s education system. Lawmakers found large classrooms and tight budgets. They found homeless and hungry students. They found too few resources going to early learning and mental health.

“The bill before you is the policy response for what we heard and saw throughout the state,” said state Rep. Barbara Smith

Warner, D-Portland.

Despite those efforts, the bill still caused a strong partisan divide.

Republicans described it as a “hidden sales tax,” a resurrection of a similar tax rejected by voters in 2016.

They said it will hurt businesses, and the tax will be passed on to consumers. Rep. Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles, said it’s “unaffordable, ineffective and lacks transparency.”

While the bill provides

funding that must be spent on education, many Republicans said the plan just opens the door for general fund money currently going to education to be diverted to pay for the ballooning debt in the state’s public employee pension system.

Rep. David Brock Smith, R-Port Orford, called that the “\$26 billion gorilla” not being addressed.

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