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BUDGET CUTS



OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY PETE SOUZA

President Barack Obama studies a challenge coin presented to him by an emergency responder during a greet in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building South Court Auditorium Ante Room before remarks urging action to avoid the automatic budget cuts scheduled if Congress fails to find a path forward on balanced deficit reduction, Feb. 19.

Sequester Disaster Coming

Obama spends week pressuring Republicans on impasse

By Julie Pace
AP White House
Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama, intensifying pressure on congressional Republicans, said Friday that lawmakers still have "the opportunity to make the right decisions" and avert a series of mandatory budget cuts by March 1.

Despite little sign of a deal emerging with Republicans, Obama said he does not

believe it is inevitable that the \$85 billion in across-the-board budget cuts will take effect. He said finding a way to avert the cuts should be a "no-brainer" for congressional lawmakers.

Speaking in the Oval Office during a meeting with visiting Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Obama said that in contrast to earlier Washington fiscal fights, he didn't believe the economic impact of the cuts would threaten the world financial market. But he

added that if the U.S. economy slows as a result of the cuts, the global economy could suffer as well.

Obama's statements continued an administration drum-roll of warnings this week, with appeals from Cabinet members ranging from Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and Secretary of State John Kerry to Education Secretary Arne Duncan and Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood.

Even a slew of Democratic

governors in the capital for their annual meeting picked up the cudgel, making arguments for Obama's position to reporters.

The fight between Obama and congressional Republicans has centered on a seemingly intractable issue: Obama says he wants a more methodical and restrained plan for budget-cutting and one that would necessitate an additional tax increase. GOP lawmakers and their leaders, House

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Seattle Arena Win

Judge rejects case that could have derailed deal

By Gene Johnson
The Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — A Washington state judge rejected a lawsuit Friday aimed at undoing a deal to build a new professional basketball and hockey arena in Seattle — a key part of plans to bring the NBA back to town.

King County Superior Court Judge Douglas North held that the agreement between the city of Seattle, King County and an investment group led by hedge fund manager Chris Hansen does not violate state environmental law.

"This is a big win in our work to bring the Sonics home to Seattle," Mayor Mike McGinn said in a written statement.

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union is concerned that adding a third stadium to the area south of downtown would choke freight traffic and cost jobs. The union's Local 19, representing workers at the Port of Seattle, sued, saying an environmental review should have preceded any agreement.

The judge disagreed. He said the agreement technically set out a framework for a future deal, but didn't commit the city or King County to building an arena south of downtown.

"There isn't a binding decision here," North said.

The "memorandum of understanding" signed last year sets out the parameters of a deal to build the \$490 million arena. Lawyers for the union said that created irreversible momentum toward construction, and therefore the environmental study was required ahead of time, union lawyer David Mann said in asking the judge to invalidate the agreement.

"This case is not about whether the Sonics should or are returning to Seattle," Mann said. "What the case is about is whether the city council, the mayor, the county council and executive went too far."

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Activists, Teachers Apply for Commission

New charter school system attracts range of applicants for panel

By Donna Gordon Blankinship
The Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Education activists, teachers, lawyers, a PTA leader and a woman who used to work with charter schools in California are among the applicants to the new state commission that is expected to approve some of Washington's first charter schools.

The governor, the lieutenant governor and the speaker of the House have until March 6 to each appoint three volunteers to the new Charter School Commission for four-year terms.

They will have a variety of people to choose from, The Associated Press has learned through public records requests and interviews with people expected to apply. There is no deadline for applying and their

choices are not limited to those who fill out applications.

Washington became the 42nd state to OK the independent public schools in November. Voters authorized the opening of up to 40 charter schools over five years.

Charter schools will be authorized through two different paths in Washington:

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