

Draft agreement cuts Iran’s nuclear hardware

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (AP) — The United States and Iran are drafting elements of a nuclear deal that commits Tehran to a 40 percent cut in the number of machines it could use to make an atomic bomb, officials told The Associated Press on Thursday. In return, the Iranians would get quick relief from some crippling economic sanctions and a partial lift of a U.N. embargo on conventional arms. Agreement on Iran’s uranium enrichment program could signal a breakthrough for a larger deal aimed at containing the Islamic Republic’s nuclear activities. The sides are racing to meet a March 31 deadline for a framework pact and a full agreement by the end of June — even as the U.S. Congress keeps up pressure on the administration to avoid any agreement leaving Iran with an avenue to become a nuclear power. Officials said the tentative deal imposes at least a decade of new limits on the number of centrifuges Iran can operate to enrich uranium, a process that can lead to nuclear weapons-grade material. The

sides are zeroing in on a cap of 6,000 centrifuges, officials said, down from the 6,500 they spoke of in recent weeks. That’s also fewer than the 10,000 such machines Tehran now runs, yet substantially more than the 500 to 1,500 that Washington originally wanted as a ceiling. Only a year ago, U.S. officials floated 4,000 as a possible compromise. But U.S. officials insist the focus on centrifuge numbers alone misses the point. Combined with other restrictions on enrichment levels and the types of centrifuges Iran can use, Washington believes it can extend the time Tehran would need to produce a nuclear weapon to at least a year. Right now, Iran would require only two to three months to amass enough material to make a bomb. President Barack Obama appealed directly to Iranian citizens in a message commemorating Nowruz, the Persian New Year. “Our negotiations have made progress, but gaps remain,” Obama said Thursday in a video message posted online.



AP Photo/Brian Snyder, Pool
U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, left, holds a meeting with Iran’s Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, right, over Iran’s nuclear program, in Lausanne, Switzerland, Wednesday.

“If Iran’s leaders can agree to a reasonable deal, it can lead to a better path — the path of greater opportunities for the Iranian people,” he said. The pressure in Congress on the administration over Iran remained intense, with

the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee saying he would move ahead with legislation giving lawmakers a say over any nuclear deal. And 360 House Republicans and Democrats — more than enough to override any

presidential veto — sent a letter to Obama saying if an agreement is reached, Congress will decide on easing sanctions it has imposed. “Congress must be convinced that its terms foreclose any pathway to a bomb, and only then will Congress be able to consider permanent sanctions relief,” the lawmakers wrote. Rep. Eliot Engel of New York, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, told administration officials at a hearing Thursday that Congress cannot be marginalized and “any attempts to sidestep Congress will be resisted on both sides of the aisle.” The one-year breakout time has become a point the Obama administration is reluctant to cross in the set of highly technical talks, and that bare minimum would be maintained for 10 years as

part of the draft deal. After that, the restrictions would be slowly eased. The total length of the deal would be at least 15 years, possibly 20. As part of the agreement, punitive U.S. economic sanctions would be phased out over time. President Barack Obama has the authority to eliminate some measures immediately, and others would be suspended as Iran confirms its compliance over time. Some sanctions would be held to the later years of the deal, while a last set would require a highly skeptical U.S. Congress to change laws. Although time periods, centrifuge caps and sanctions schedules have previously been discussed, most of the specifics divulged by the officials were new. They demanded anonymity because they weren’t authorized to speak publicly on the confidential talks.

WYDEN: Umatilla County Board of Commissioners suggest the line follow I-84

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Oregon communities — will benefit in the long run from thorough public participation and by addressing concerns early on,” he wrote. Umatilla County Board of Commissioners took a stand Wednesday against the transmission line. The board voted 3-0 to adopt statements opposing the line and expressed the opinion in a 5-page letter: “Based upon an examination of the project and extensive input received from a variety of sources and incorporated in this response,” according to the letter’s conclusion, “the Board of Commissioners, representing the citizens of Umatilla County,

would prefer the project go elsewhere in light of the fact the project provides no substantial benefit to the county.” And short of that, the letter states, the board supported the county planning commission’s recommendation for the power line to follow the Interstate 84 corridor. The BLM did not immediately return a request for comment, but the project’s website, www.boardmantohemingway.com, still lists March 19 as the last day for public comment on its homepage.
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TEST: ‘Any time you bring in a new statewide test system, there are going to be some growing pains’

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million students, including 24,000 in Oregon, were part of a pilot project for the test. “This bill gives a temporary reprieve for the use of this high-stakes assessment,” said Rep. Susan McLain, D-Forest Grove, the bill’s floor manager. The Oregon Board of Education adopted Common Core, which was developed by the states, on Oct. 28, 2010. The House Education Committee has scheduled a hearing on a bill to scrap it, but it is unlikely to advance. Lawmakers and others have expressed concern about the new test, which some officials say half the students may fail. “If a school or educator is labeled as failing by this test, it does not matter later if the test is deemed inaccurate or invalid,” said Rep. Lew Frederick, D-Portland. “That label will be hard to shake. Bad reputations are more durable than good ones.” Frederick has been a critic of the test. “It is not ready for prime time,” he said. “It is not clear it ever will be. The point today is that it is not ready now.” Teachers have protested its use in determining their evaluations, not just in measuring academic achievement of students. “As a business person, I can tell you if I have a rebellion going on in my customer base, I’d better be paying close attention to it,” said Rep. Carl Wilson, R-Grants Pass. But state and federal laws require some form of testing. Under the current Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, which began in 1999, students in grade 3 through 8, and in grade 11, are tested. Some students, such as those learning English, also are tested.

“The same things were said about OAKS when we rolled that out,” said Rep. Mark Johnson, R-Hood River, who remains on his local school board. “Any time you bring in a new statewide test system, there are going to be some growing pains.” Rep. Julie Parrish, R-West Linn, opposed the bill. She said the aim of testing is to help improve teaching and learning. “I think accountability is important,” she said. “We are here this session debating how much money we are going to put into education. I am all about getting more money for schools. But money into schools with no accountability is a recipe for disaster.” The bill also requires an informal work group to review state assessment practices — something already started by Rob Saxton, deputy schools superintendent and leader of the Oregon Department of Education, and Nancy Golden, the state’s chief education officer. The panel released its recommendations on Feb. 9, the same day the House Education Committee heard HB 2680. Oregon is among the 43 states with waivers from the U.S. Department of Education on standards under the federal education law known as No Child Left Behind. But Oregon’s waiver requires the state to show how it will evaluate teacher effectiveness based partly on student assessments. Rep. Jodi Hack, R-Salem, voted for the bill. But she said if the delay extends beyond one year, Oregon could jeopardize the \$42.4 million that it receives in federal aid for education of students from low-income families. *The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.*



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Samsung GALAXY S5

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