

Clinton: Nation needs to fix immigration

By KEN THOMAS
Associated Press



AP Photo/John Locher
Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton speaks at an event at Rancho High School Tuesday in Las Vegas.

LAS VEGAS — Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton said Tuesday that any immigration overhaul must include a path to “full and equal citizenship,” drawing a sharp contrast with Republicans who have promoted providing a legal status or blocked efforts in Congress to address the nation’s immigration system.

“This is where I differ with everybody on the Republican side. Make no mistake, not a single Republican ... is clearly and consistently supporting a path to citizenship. Not one,” Clinton said, adding, “When they talk about legal status, that is code for second-class status.”

Clinton’s remarks during her first campaign stop in Nevada underscored Democrats’ efforts to box-in Republican presidential candidates who have opposed a comprehensive bill including a pathway to citizenship. Congressional Republicans have said the changes must be made incrementally, beginning with stronger border security.

The issue of immigration resonates with many Hispanic Americans, who backed President Barack Obama by wide margins over Republican Mitt Romney in 2012 and helped

the president’s re-election campaign capture several hard-fought swing states, including Florida, Colorado and Nevada.

Clinton’s pitch to Latino voters came as two of her potential Republican rivals, former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, have courted Hispanics and talked about ways to overhaul the immigration system while opposing Obama’s executive actions last year to shield millions of immigrants from deportation.

Obama’s executive actions loom large in the immigration debate. The orders included the expansion of a program protecting young immigrants from deportation if they were brought to the U.S. illegally as children. Another provision extended deportation protections to parents of

U.S. citizens and permanent residents who have been in the country for several years.

Twenty-six states, including Nevada, have sued to block the plan, and a New Orleans-based 5th Circuit Court of Appeals panel heard arguments on the challenges last month. A ruling is pending.

Clinton, the leading Democrat in the presidential race, said she supported Obama’s executive actions and said she would “defend” them against Republican opposition while seeking ways to expand them if elected president. Her message was aimed at so-called Dreamers, young people who have been protected from deportation by Obama’s actions.

“I don’t understand how anyone can look at these young people and think

that we should break up more families or turn away young people with talent,” she said. “So I will fight for comprehensive immigration reform and a path to citizenship.”

Clinton also said she was worried about the use of family detention centers to hold women and children caught up in the immigration system, which activists have said is inhumane.

Her framing of the immigration debate has been closely watched by Latinos and immigration advocates as Obama has struggled to pass reform legislation through Congress.

For Clinton, “the \$64 million question is will she continue the executive actions,” said Marielena Hincapie, executive director of the National Immigration Law Center.

Clinton has been tripped up by immigration policy before. During the 2008 primaries, she initially vacillated on and then opposed allowing immigrants living in the U.S. illegally to obtain driver’s licenses. Her campaign said last month she now supports state policies that allow driver’s licenses under those circumstances. Last fall, some young Hispanics heckled her at a few campaign events, urging her to pressure Obama to issue the executive orders.

Republicans have sought to portray Clinton as opportunistic on the issue.

BRIEFLY

Obama chooses Marine general as Joint Chiefs chairman

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama tapped a highly respected combat commander as his next chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Tuesday, signaling that the battles against al-Qaida and Islamic State militants threatening the Middle East and the West remain top priorities for the nation’s military despite years of trying to change the focus to Asia.

Announcing his selection of Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford Jr. during a Rose Garden ceremony, Obama said America’s armed forces must be ready to meet a broad range of challenges, and that Dunford has proven to be one of the military’s most highly regarded strategic thinkers.

As the U.S. started to look beyond the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Pentagon had begun to increase its focus on the Asia Pacific region, where the North Korea threat was escalating and China was flexing its military muscles. But that has been eclipsed by the march of Islamic State militants across Syria and Iraq, and the group’s effort to expand to other regions.

In choosing Dunford, Obama picked a battle commander who led forces in the initial invasion into Iraq.

California fell far short of water-saving target

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Californians conserved little water in March and local officials were not aggressive in cracking down on waste, state regulators reported Tuesday as they considered tough measures to force savings amid a continuing drought.

The State Water Resources Control Board received the update as it considers sweeping mandatory emergency regulations to protect water supplies in the parched state.

Gov. Jerry Brown has argued that the voluntary targets in place since early 2014 were insufficient and that Californians needed a jolt to take conservation seriously.

A survey of local water departments released at the start of the two-day meeting shows water use fell less than 4 percent in March compared with the same month in 2013. Overall savings have been only about 9 percent since last summer, even though Brown set a voluntary 20 percent target.

Those conservation targets are among the most contentious provisions of the proposed rules. The board plans to order each city to cut water use by as much as 36 percent compared to 2013, the year before the governor declared a drought.

Doubts raised about Islamic State’s claims in Texas cartoonist attack

PHOENIX (AP) — The Islamic State group claimed responsibility Tuesday for the assault on a Texas cartoonist that featured images of the Prophet Muhammad, but counterterrorism experts said IS has a history of asserting involvement in attacks in which it had no operational role.

That suggests the two gunmen could have carried out their own lone wolf-style strike before they were shot and killed at the scene of Sunday’s shooting in the Dallas suburb of Garland.

Federal officials identified the pair as Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi, both Americans who lived in Phoenix.

Rep. Michael McCaul, chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, said a Twitter account linked to Simpson included images of Anwar Awlaki, a radical cleric killed in a CIA drone strike in Yemen.

Among the hashtags used by the account was “#texasattack.” And one of the final tweets was: “May Allah accept us as mujahideen,” or holy warriors.

“Was he on the radar? Sure he was,” McCaul said from Turkey, where he was leading a congressional delegation. “The FBI has got a pretty good program to monitor public social media.”

But McCaul said he is not ready to say law enforcement missed any red flags.

The evidence does not indicate the attack was

directed by the Islamic State group, “but rather inspired by them,” said McCaul, who was briefed on the investigation by federal law enforcement officials. “This is the textbook case of what we’re most concerned about.”

White House press secretary Josh Earnest said U.S. officials are working to counter terrorist efforts to use social media to radicalize individuals in the United States.

IS recently urged those in the United States, Europe and Australia who cannot safely travel to fight in Syria and Iraq to carry out jihad in the countries where they live. An audio statement on the extremist group’s Al Bayan radio station called the men “two soldiers of the caliphate.”

The shooting appeared to be another example of a “do-it-yourself” jihadist whose plots are often hard for law enforcement and intelligence agencies to stop, said Mitchell Silber, executive managing director for K2 Intelligence and former director of intelligence analysis for the New York City police department.

“It’s very tough to detect in advance, which means we are and will continue to be susceptible to lone actors who don’t give us much warning to thwart them,” he said.

The cartoon contest had been expected to draw outrage from the Muslim

community. According to mainstream Islamic tradition, any physical depiction of the Prophet Muhammad — even a respectful one — is considered blasphemous, and drawings similar to those featured at the Texas event have sparked violence around the world.

The 31-year-old Simpson and 34-year-old Soofi were wearing body armor, and one of the men shot a security officer in the leg before a single Garland police officer fired on the two gunmen. After his initial shots, nearby SWAT officers also fired, authorities said.

The security officer was treated at a hospital and released.

Simpson was arrested in 2010 after being the focus of a four-year terror investigation. But despite amassing more than 1,500 hours of recorded conversations, including Simpson’s discussions about fighting nonbelievers.

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