

Transgender law tangles lawsuits

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — The dueling lawsuits over North Carolina's law on bathroom use by transgender people have landed in the hands of three federal judges appointed by Republican presidents, with both sides trying to maneuver into the most favorable courtroom possible.

Legal experts expect some or all of the five cases to be combined. But it remains to be seen whether they will be decided in the court picked by the law's opponents for its moderate reputation, or in the more conservative court chosen by the measure's GOP supporters.

"This is definitely a strategic decision by the plaintiffs to file in the district they like best," said Tom Metzloff, a Duke University law professor and expert on civil procedure.

Either way, the dispute could ultimately be headed for the U.S. Supreme Court for a ruling once and for all on whether federal laws including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protect transgender people from discrimination.

At issue is a state law that says transgender people must use public bathrooms, showers and changing rooms that correspond to the sex on their birth certificate. Supporters



Attorney General Loretta Lynch speaks during a news conference at the Justice Department in Washington, Monday. AP Photo/Evan Vucci

say the law is needed to safeguard people's privacy and protect women and children from molesters. Opponents, including the Obama administration, say the danger is imaginary and the law discriminatory.

With economic pressure on the state mounting, the U.S. Justice Department and North Carolina's governor sued each other over the measure Monday. Lawsuits for and against the law have also been filed by the American Civil Liberties Union, leaders of the Republican-controlled state Legislature, and a conservative legal organization.

As for possible clues to how the judges might rule, one of them has already decided in favor of a transgender plaintiff in a

separate case.

Still, whatever the judges' backgrounds, opponents have a strong hand because of a recent federal appeals court ruling in favor of a transgender teen who was seeking to use the boys' bathroom at his Virginia high school. The ruling by the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which oversees North Carolina, interpreted the federal discrimination law Title IX in a way that directly affects a key aspect of the North Carolina case.

"It's going to be hard for the judge not to follow the 4th Circuit precedent. And if he does that, the language of Title VII — the '64 Civil Rights Act — is basically the same as the Title IX language. It prohibits discrimination on the

basis of sex," said William Yeomans, a legal scholar who spent 26 years at the Justice Department during Democratic and Republican administrations.

The five cases are split between two districts — one in the eastern part of the state that is considered more conservative, the other in the middle section. Legal scholars agree that opponents of the law chose the middle district because of the more moderate overall reputation of its six judges. That strategy only goes so far, however, because cases are initially assigned at random, Metzloff said.

To the east, the case filed by the governor in defense of the law wound up before U.S. District Judge Terrence Boyle, a former aide to archconservative Sen. Jesse Helms who was denied a seat on the 4th Circuit by the Democrats after a 16-year standoff. He was first appointed to the federal bench by President Ronald Reagan in 1984.

Still, observers say his conservative reputation may be overstated. In 2015, he gave a favorable ruling to a transgender job applicant.

It's difficult to predict how the North Carolina judges will unknot the tangle of cases.

Clinton on track despite sound defeat by Sanders

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Bernie Sanders won his 19th state, only four short of Hillary Clinton's tally, but that's not the gap that counts.

Despite his decisive victory in West Virginia on Tuesday, winning 51 percent of the vote to her 36 percent, Sanders trails nearly hopelessly in the contest for delegates needed to secure the Democratic presidential nomination.

Clinton is in the mop-up phase now, 94 percent of the way to the magic number when the party insiders known as superdelegates are included, and on track to clinch the nomination in early June.

Republican Donald Trump is closing in on his prize, too, 92 percent of the way there after wins in West Virginia and Nebraska on Tuesday — in a field with no rivals left.

Sanders is vowing to fight on. He campaigned in Oregon and California on Tuesday and his victory in West Virginia highlighted anew Clinton's struggles to win over white men and independents — weaknesses Trump wants to exploit in the fall campaign.

"Let me be as clear as I can be, we are in the campaign to win the Democratic nomination," Sanders said at a campaign event in Salem. "We are going to fight for every last vote."

Among those voting in

the West Virginia Democratic primary, about a third said they would support Trump over either Clinton or Sanders in November. An additional 2 in 10 said they wouldn't vote for either candidate. But 4 in 10 also said they consider themselves to be independents or Republicans, and not Democrats, according to exit polls.

While Sanders is still attracting thousands to rallies, his campaign has grown more difficult as Clinton closes in on the nomination. His fundraising has fallen off and so, too, has his advertising, with only about \$525,000 in ads planned for California and \$63,000 each in West Virginia and Oregon, according to advertising tracker Kantar Media's CMAG.

That's a significant decline from the wall-to-wall advertising campaign he ran earlier in the primary, during which his \$74 million in ads outspent Clinton by \$14 million.

Even as the primaries continue, Clinton has largely shifted her focus to the general election.

"I don't care about what he says about me," she said of Trump in Louisville, Kentucky, on Tuesday night. "But I do resent what he says about other people, other successful women, women who have worked hard, women who have done their part."

Abortion rate steady in poor nations, plunging in rich nations

By MARIA CHENG
AP Medical Writer

LONDON — The rate of abortions in the developed world has dropped to an all-time low while remaining steady in poorer regions, where nearly 90 percent of the abortions worldwide occur, researchers say in a new study published Wednesday in the journal Lancet.

In the first analysis of global abortion trends since 2008, scientists found that 56 million abortions are performed globally every year among women aged

15 to 44, and that about one in four pregnancies ends in abortion. Nearly three-quarters of abortions are obtained by married women.

The researchers used government data and modeling techniques to calculate their estimates.

The rate in rich countries fell to an all-time low between 1990 and 2014, from about 46 abortions per 1,000 women in 1990 to 27 abortions per 1,000 women in 2014.

But in the developing world, the rate remained virtually unchanged, at about 37 abortions per 1,000

"Family planning services do not seem to be keeping pace with the increasing desire for smaller families."

— Gilda Sedgh, Guttmacher Institute

women.

"Family planning services do not seem to be keeping pace with the increasing desire for smaller families," said Gilda Sedgh of the Guttmacher Institute, a U.S. research group that supports abortion rights and the paper's lead author.

The world's highest rate of abortions was in the Caribbean, at about 65

abortions per 1,000 women. The lowest rate was in North America, at 17. The biggest drop was in Eastern Europe, where the abortion rate fell to 42 abortions per 1,000 women from 88.

There was no difference in the incidence of abortion in countries where the procedure is legal versus where it is heavily restricted or outlawed.

"The obvious interpretation is that criminalizing abortion does not prevent it but rather drives women to seek illegal services or methods," wrote Diana Greene Foster of the University of California in San Francisco, in an accompanying commentary. She said the new estimates could help researchers predict the consequences of policies including

expanding family planning programs, liberalizing abortion laws and developing new birth control methods.

Researchers also said about 225 million women in the developing world aren't able to access birth control.

Women in other studies have said that was because they feared the side effects of contraception methods or were worried about the stigma of not being married when seeking birth control.

The study was paid for by governments including Britain, the Netherlands and Norway, several U.N. agencies and others.

ATF: Intentional fire caused fatal blast at Texas plant

WEST, Texas (AP) — An intentionally set fire caused the 2013 explosion at a Texas fertilizer plant that killed 15 people, federal officials said Wednesday, saying the fire was "a criminal act."

Federal and state investigators said no arrests have been made, but that they are investigating who was responsible for causing the fire at the West Fertilizer Co. facility in the town of West on April 17, 2013. The fire caused ammonium nitrate to ignite, triggering a massive explosion that also injured hundreds of people and left part of the small town in ruins, and marked one of Texas' worst industrial accidents.

Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives special agent Robert Elder said investigators came to the conclusion after ruling out other reasonable causes, but he didn't release specifics or a possible motive. Inspectors have previously said three possible scenarios caused the fire: faulty electrical wiring, a short circuit in a golf cart stored at the plant, or arson.

"We have eliminated all reasonable accidental and natural causes," Elder said during a news conference. "This was a criminal act."

The ATF also released a statement saying the fire had been ruled "incendiary," or intentionally set, after investigators reviewed more than 400 interviews, a fire-scene examination, witness photos and videos, and "extensive scientific testing" at an ATF fire research laboratory.

Federal regulators had previously issued a report that found inadequate emergency response coordination and training and careless storage of potentially explosive

BRIEFLY

materials contributed to the blast, which left a crater 90 feet wide and 10 feet deep. The U.S. Chemical Safety Board adopted recommendations earlier this year that federal regulators set higher standards for safe handling and storage of fertilizer-grade ammonium nitrate.

Among those killed in the explosion were 12 emergency personnel, primarily ones with the West Volunteer Fire Department who responded to the initial blaze.

Trump down to 5 or 6 choices for VP

NEW YORK (AP) — Shifting swiftly to the general election, Donald Trump says he's narrowed his list of potential running mates to "five or six" people and doesn't want to accept taxpayer money to finance a fall campaign against likely Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton.

In a break from recent major party nominees, Trump does not plan to invest heavily in a data-driven effort to court voters in the fall campaign.

Despite pressure, the billionaire said he doesn't believe he has an obligation to release his tax returns and won't release them before November unless an ongoing audit of his finances is completed before Election Day. He said he wouldn't overrule his lawyers and instruct them to release his returns if the audit hasn't concluded by then.

Trump's comments came as he begins to prepare for a long, expensive general election campaign. His two remaining Republican rivals suddenly dropped out of the race last week, anointing him the party's presumptive presidential nominee faster than even the confident candidate expected.

As part of his general election planning, Trump

told AP at his office in New York that he's moving aggressively to identify a running mate with deep political experience. While he would not provide a full list of names, he did not rule out New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, the former rival whom he's already tapped to head his transition planning.

93 killed in Iraqi capital's bloodiest day this year

BAGHDAD (AP) — In the deadliest violence in Baghdad this year, three car bombs claimed by the Islamic State group killed 93 people across the Iraqi capital Wednesday, demonstrating the extremists' ability to mount significant attacks despite major battlefield losses.

The separate bombings, which also wounded 165 people, came at a time of turmoil and deadlock in Iraq's government and parliament. The Interior Ministry blamed the attacks on "political bickering" that is increasingly threatening the security of the civilian population.

The largest car bomb ripped through a crowded outdoor market selling food, clothing and household goods in the predominantly Shiite neighborhood of Sadr City during the morning, killing at least 63 people and wounding 85.

Streets were stained with blood, building facades were heavily damaged and smoke billowed from stores gutted by the blast. Dozens of people walked through mangled wreckage of cars and other debris.

The sprawling slum of Sadr City is home to 2.5 million people — almost half of Baghdad's population of about 6 million.

Two more car bombs exploded elsewhere in the afternoon, killing at least 30 and wounding 80.

Carriers Needed in Pendleton

We have available routes for North Hill, South Hill, as well as the East and West Sides.

Sign on bonus offered after 90 days contracted.

Call or stop in person for more information.



\$200 Sign On Bonus*

*Paid after 90 days contracted

EAST OREGONIAN

211 SE Byers Ave., Pendleton
541-276-2211 or 1-800-522-0255