

# Trump's primary plays leading him out of bounds

Associated Press

ABINGDON, Va. — In the 2016 presidential campaign, it's long been an article of faith: The rules of political gravity don't apply to Donald Trump. Maybe now they do.

After winning state after state while bouncing between controversies in the GOP primaries, Trump is still stumbling on the stump. His latest unforced mishap: an off-hand remark that critics quickly slammed as a suggestion that gun-rights backers should take a literal shot at Hillary Clinton should she win the White House.

But rather than continuing to float above the criticism, Trump is losing ground in preference polls and alienating prominent Republicans by the day. Even some of his supporters worry Trump's lack of a filter is hurting his White House chances, a concern they say has only grown in recent weeks.

"You'd think it would be pretty simple for a grown man to keep his mouth shut sometimes," said Seth Walls, 18, a landscaper from Whitetop, Virginia, who attended his first Trump rally on Wednesday. "These Twitter rants and things he does in the media, I definitely think it's hurting him."

With early voting set to begin next month in several states, time is running short for Trump to make a major change in his approach. As he did in the primaries, the billionaire continues to dismiss guidance from senior Republicans, in and out of his campaign. He has yet to return to running television ads even as Clinton fills the airwaves, and leads a campaign team that remains badly understaffed.

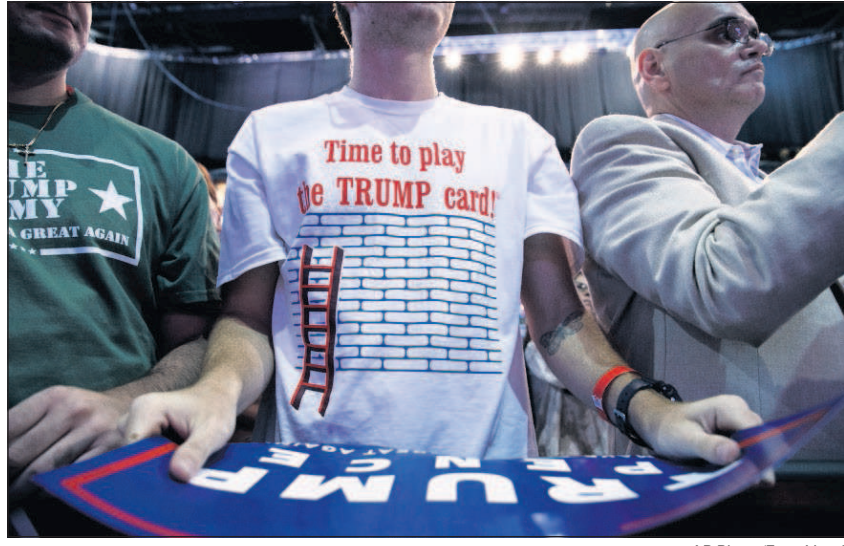
But it's not a surprise the latest flap springs from a Trump rally, the centerpiece of his campaign. Trump revels in the energy provided by the crowd, made up mostly of white, working-class voters, as he delivers hour-long speeches largely without notes — and never with a teleprompter.

Trump rode such events to great success in the primaries, when each of Trump's eyebrow-raising statements — including a moment when he appeared to mock a disabled journalist and his repeated retelling of a debunked story about U.S. soldiers dipping bullets in pig's blood — earned him a tremendous amount of attention and carried little electoral consequence.

"He tries to amp up the crowd, which he's very good at," said former Trump adviser Barry Bennett, who said the rallies may be large, but don't represent the broader coalition of voters who typically decide general elections. "The problem is there's a television audience watching at home as well. They have a hard time understanding what he's doing."

Among that more diverse and moderate general electorate, polls find Trump trailing Clinton nationally and in most battleground states. The Democratic nominee's emerging advantage comes at a key moment after both political conventions are over, when the state of a presidential race tends to stabilize and leads are difficult to surmount.

"He can't seem to put himself in a general election mindset," said Stephan Thompson, an aide to Repu-



AP Photo/Evan Vuoci

Supporters of Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump listen to him speak during a campaign rally Wednesday in Sunrise, Fla.

## Trump accuses Obama of being the 'founder of ISIS'

SUNRISE, Fla. (AP) — Donald Trump accused President Barack Obama on Wednesday of founding the Islamic State group that is wreaking havoc from the Middle East to European cities. A moment later, on another topic, he referred to the president by his full legal name: Barack Hussein Obama.

"In many respects, you know, they honor President Obama," Trump said during a raucous Florida rally. "He is the founder of ISIS."

He repeated the allegation three more times for emphasis. The Republican presidential nominee in the past has accused his opponent, Democrat Hillary Clinton, of founding the militant group. As he shifted the blame to Obama on Wednesday, he said "crooked Hillary Clinton" was actually the group's co-founder.

Trump has long blamed Obama and his former secretary of state — Clinton — for pursuing Mideast policies that created a power vacuum in Iraq that was exploited by IS, another acronym for the group. He's sharply criticized Obama for announcing he would pull U.S. troops out of Iraq, a decision that many Obama critics say created the kind of instability in which extremist groups like IS thrive.

The White House declined to comment on Trump's accusation. The Islamic State group began as Iraq's local affiliate of al-Qaida, the group that attacked the U.S. on Sept. 11, 2001. The group carried out massive attacks against Iraq's Shiite Muslim majority, fueling tensions with al-Qaida's central leadership. The local group's then-leader, Jordanian-born Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, was killed in 2006 in a U.S. airstrike but is still seen as the Islamic State group's founder.

Trump's accusation — and his use of the president's middle name, Hussein — echoed previous instances where he's questioned Obama's loyalties.

lican Gov. Scott Walker in Wisconsin, where a poll released Wednesday puts Trump 15 points behind.

After the Democratic convention, Trump sparked days of outrage across the political spectrum by repeatedly criticizing a Muslim family whose son died fighting the war in Iraq. He further alarmed Republican leaders when he declared he wasn't ready to endorse House Speaker Paul Ryan — a stance he later reversed.

Frustrated GOP officials responded by calling financier Carl Icahn to help persuade Trump to shift his approach. Some were pleased with the results, pointing to Trump's economic address on Monday in Detroit and the restraint he showed in the face of repeated interruptions by protesters.

The next day, however, Trump inflamed matters anew — and overshadowed a negative report about Clinton's use of a private email account as secretary of state — by going off script at a rally in North Carolina. Trump said that if Clinton were elected president, there would be "nothing you can do" to stop her from stacking the Supreme Court with anti-gun justices.

He added ambiguously: "Although, the Second Amendment people, maybe there is, I don't know. But I'll tell you what: that will be a horrible day."

Democrats pounced, immediately slamming Trump for seeming to suggest Clinton should be shot. Trump was quick to blame the media for that reaction, responding with a blunt "Give me a break!" At an Iowa rally Wednesday, Clinton said Trump's remark was a "casual inciting of violence" that shows he's unfit to be president.

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich denounced the reaction to Trump's comment as "absurdity."

"He's better than he was a week ago — I think he's learned some very painful lessons," Gingrich said, predicting Trump will "continue to grow" as a candidate.

Trump and his supporters have pointed to positive signs, including a significant boost in his at-first-tepid fundraising, bringing in nearly as much last month as Clinton. And while he is now lagging in polling, he remains competitive, despite having spent nothing on television ads.

# Why it matters: Voting rights

EDITOR'S NOTE — One in an Associated Press series examining issues at stake in the presidential election and how they affect people.

## THE ISSUE:

Who should be able to vote and how easy should it be? It's a question that goes to the core of democracy.

Voting rights are in flux in the final months of Barack Obama's two terms as the first black president.

Citing a need to combat fraud, Republican-controlled legislatures are tightening voter laws by limiting early voting and same-day registration, by requiring IDs at polling places, and more. In 2013, declaring "our country has changed," the Supreme Court invalidated a key provision of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which required mostly Southern states with a history of discrimination to get advance federal approval to change election laws. The court decision made it easier for states to impose new restrictions.

This year, 17 states were set to have restrictions involving voter ID or other requirements for the first time in a presidential election. Among them: the battlegrounds of North Carolina, Virginia, Ohio, Wisconsin, Arizona and Georgia.

The Obama Justice Department has challenged voter ID and other laws, saying they could restrict access for minorities and young people. In recent weeks, lower courts temporarily staved off some of the toughest requirements in North Carolina, Texas and Wisconsin after judges found no evidence of rampant voter fraud.

With the November election looming, litigation remains knotted up with Supreme Court appeals likely. Bills in the GOP-led Congress to restore the voting act are stalled.

## WHERE THEY STAND:

Without offering specifics, Republican Donald Trump has emphasized the dangers of voter fraud, calling America's electoral system "out of control" with people who are "voting many, many times." He has said — without evidence — that dead voters helped elect Obama. Trump opposes same-day voter registration, saying it could allow people to "sneak in through the cracks."

Democrat Hillary Clinton is urging Congress to restore the Voting Rights Act. She

seeks a national standard of at least 20 days of early in-person voting and urges automatic voter registration for eligible 18-year-olds. Clinton backs voting rights for ex-felons. Her campaign has joined lawsuits to stop policies that may burden minorities, including in Arizona, where voters had to wait hours in March after cuts in polling locations.

## WHY IT MATTERS:

Who gets to vote, and how easily, matters because it can determine who wins elections. The issue is particularly salient for black Americans, who for much of U.S. history were disenfranchised and then effectively barred from voting until passage of the 1965 law. It's also become more partisan with the rapid growth of minorities such as Latino and Asian immigrants, who tilt Democratic.

In 2008, Obama was elected with the help of a record black turnout rate that rose even higher in 2012, surpassing the white turnout rate.

That was noted by Chief Justice John Roberts, who led the 5-4 ruling that the Voting Rights Act was outdated. In dissent, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg argued the law is needed to stop new forms of discrimination — redrawing districts to reduce Hispanic voting, for instance, or restricting early voting near a historically black university.

It's unclear how much voting restrictions may suppress turnout. The Government Accountability Office in 2014 found voter ID laws could reduce voting by 2 to 3 percent, particularly among young people, blacks and newly registered voters. That can tip a race in close contests. Still, voter enthusiasm for a candidate and mobilization can offset that.

GOP legislatures cite voter fraud, including those who impersonate dead people on voter registration lists. Studies found the number of actual cases was minuscule.

States and the lower courts largely shape who can vote. But the next president will set the tone on federal oversight — through legislation in Congress, the prosecutorial stance of the Justice Department and nominations to the Supreme Court, which is certain to revisit Voting Rights Act powers.

If minorities continue to back mostly Democrats, the issue could decide which party gets the upper hand in elections.

—Associated Press

## BRIEFLY

### Scathing report on Baltimore cops vindicates black residents

BALTIMORE (AP) — With startling statistics, a federal investigation of the Baltimore Police Department documents in 164 single-spaced pages what black residents have been saying for years: They are routinely singled out, roughed up or otherwise mistreated by officers, often for no reason.

The 15-month Justice Department probe was prompted by the death of Freddie Gray, the black man whose fatal neck injury in the back of a police van touched off the worst riots in Baltimore in decades. To many people, the blistering report issued Wednesday was familiar reading.

The Justice Department looked at hundreds of thousands of pages of documents, including internal affairs files and data on stops, searches and arrests.

It found that one African-American man was stopped 30 times in less than four years and never charged. Of 410 people stopped at least 10 times from 2010 to 2015, 95 percent were black. During that time, no one of any other race was stopped more than 12 times.

With the release of the report, the city agreed to negotiate with the Justice Department a set of police reforms over the next few months to fend off a

government lawsuit. The reforms will be enforceable by the courts.

Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake and Police Commissioner Kevin Davis acknowledged the longstanding problems and said they had started improvements even before the report was completed. They promised it will serve as a blueprint for sweeping changes.

### Source: Boy was decapitated on waterslide at Kansas park

KANSAS CITY, Kan. (AP) — The 10-year-old boy killed during a ride on the world's tallest waterslide was decapitated in the accident, a person familiar with the investigation said Wednesday.

The person, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the person was not authorized to speak publicly, gave no other details of how Caleb Schwab died Sunday on the raft ride at the Schlitterbahn WaterPark in Kansas City, Kansas. Authorities have yet to explain how it happened.

Two women who are not family members were in the raft at the time with the boy and were treated for facial injuries. The boy's parents — Republican state Rep. Scott Schwab and his wife, Michele — have requested privacy and have not spoken publicly since the death. His funeral is scheduled for Friday.

A spokeswoman for the waterpark on Wednesday declined to discuss the circumstances of the boy's death on the ride called "Verruckt" — or German for "insane."

Verruckt featured multi-person rafts that make a 168-foot drop at speeds of up to 70 mph, followed by a surge up a hump and a 50-foot descent to a finishing pool. Since the accident, investigators have removed the netting above the 50-foot section from the hump to the finishing pool.

Riders, who must be at least 54 inches tall, were harnessed in with two nylon seatbelt-like straps — one that crosses the rider's lap, the other stretching diagonally like a car shoulder seatbelt. Each strap is held in place by long Velcro-style straps, not by buckles. Riders also hang on to ropes inside the raft.

The park reopened Wednesday except for the sprawling section that includes the waterslide, although its towering profile greeted visitors as soon as they drove through the entrance.

### Woman killed by Florida officer in academy exercise

PUNTA GORDA, Fla. (AP) — A police "shoot/don't shoot" demonstration in Florida went shockingly awry when an officer shot and killed a 73-year-old former librarian with what police said was real

ammunition used by mistake at an event designed to bring police and the public together.

Authorities didn't immediately say how a gun with a live round came to be used at Tuesday evening's demonstration, noting blank rounds are typically used in such classes. The officer has been placed on administrative leave, and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement is investigating.

"We were unaware that any live ammunition was available to the officer," Punta Gorda Police Chief Tom Lewis said at a news conference Wednesday. "The officer involved is grief stricken. We've got officers assigned to him to make sure he's psychologically stable."

Mary Knowlton, a well-known community volunteer, was shot after being randomly selected to take part in the role-playing scenario illustrating the split-second decisions an officer must make about firing. It was part of a popular citizens academy attended by 35 people, including her 75-year-old husband, and the police chief.

Her son, Steve Knowlton, said his father was "devastated."

Punta Gorda Police Lt. Katie Heck said officers in such demonstrations normally use "simulation guns," which are real-looking weapons that fire a non-lethal projectile with reduced force. But Knowlton was mistakenly struck with a live round, officials said.

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