

Trump backs off climate, Clinton campaign vows

President-elect focuses on filling Cabinet

By JONATHAN LEMIRE
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Two weeks after his election victory, President-elect Donald Trump began backing off campaign promises Tuesday, including his hard line on climate change and his vow to jail “Crooked Hillary” Clinton that had brought thunderous “Lock her up” chants at his rallies.

A top adviser said Trump is now focused on matters that are essential in setting up his administration, not on comments he made during the heat of the campaign.

After a year blasting *The New York Times*, Trump submitted to an interview with reporters and editors at their Manhattan office. Among the topics covered, he:

- Pushed back against questions about conflicts that could arise due to a lack of separation between his government post and his many businesses, declaring that “the law’s totally on my side, the president can’t have a conflict of interest.”

- Took his strongest stance yet against the “alt-right,” a term often used as code for the white supremacist movement. Though members are celebrating his victory, he said, “It’s not a group I want to energize. And if they are energized, I want to look into it and find out why.”

- Spoke positively not only of fellow Republicans in Congress — “Right now they are in love with me” — but also of President Barack Obama, who he said is “looking to do absolutely the right thing for the country in terms of transition.”

Trump, who left late Tuesday to spend Thanksgiving at his estate in Florida, also continued to work to populate his incoming administration, officially asking GOP presidential rival Ben Carson to head the Department of Housing



President-elect Donald Trump waves to the crowd as he leaves the New York Times building following a meeting, Tuesday in New York.

and Urban Development, according to a person familiar with the offer who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the person was not authorized to discuss the deliberations publicly. Carson is expected to respond after the holiday.

Adviser Kellyanne Conway said earlier on MSNBC’s “Morning Joe” that Trump is “thinking of many different things as he prepares to become the president of the United States, and things that sound like the campaign aren’t among them.”

His interview comments on a possible prosecution of his former foe Clinton stood in stark contrast to his incendiary rhetoric throughout the campaign, during which he accused her breaking laws with her email practices and angrily barked at her that “you’d be in jail” if he were president.

“I don’t want to hurt the Clintons, I really don’t,” Trump said in the interview. Sympathetically, he said, “She went through a lot and suffered greatly in many different ways.”

Though he declined to definitively rule out a prosecution, he said, “It’s just not something that I feel very strongly about.”

Trump had vowed throughout the campaign to use his presidential power to appoint a special prosecutor to probe his Democratic rival for both her reliance on a private email server as secretary of state and what he called pay-for-play schemes involving the Clinton Foundation. Adviser Conway signaled to congressional Republicans earlier Tuesday that they should abandon their years of vigorous probes of Clinton’s email practices and her

actions at the time of the terror attacks in Libya.

“If Donald Trump can help her heal, then perhaps that’s a good thing,” she told reporters at Trump Tower in New York.

But some of his conservative supporters strongly disagreed.

If Trump’s appointees do not follow through on his pledge to investigate Clinton for criminal violations he accused her of, “it would be a betrayal of his promise to the American people to ‘drain the swamp’ of out-of-control corruption in Washington,” said the group Judicial Watch.

And Breitbart, the conservative news site whose former head, Stephen Bannon, is now a senior counselor to Trump, headlined its story “Broken Promise.”

FBI Director James Comey has declared on two occasions there

is no evidence warranting charges against Clinton. Justice Department investigations are historically conducted without the influence or input of the White House.

As for global warming, Trump has repeatedly questioned the idea, suggesting at times that it is a hoax perpetrated by the Chinese to hurt U.S. manufacturers with environmental regulations.

But on Tuesday, he said he would “keep an open mind” about pulling the landmark, multi-national Paris Agreement on climate change — he’d said in the campaign he would yank the U.S. out — and he allowed, “I think there is some connectivity” between human activity and climate changes.

Trump, who has yet to hold the traditional news conference held by a president-elect in the days after winning, said his own businesses are “unimportant to me” in comparison to the presidency, but he also said he now believes he could continue to run them at the same time if he wanted.

There have been concerns raised about conflicts of interest since many of the businesses are subject to government actions in the U.S. and abroad. But he said he would be “phasing” control over to his grown children, although “in theory I could run my business perfectly and then run the country perfectly. There’s never been a case like this.”

Earlier Tuesday, it was confirmed that Trump’s charity had admitted it violated IRS regulations barring it from using its money or assets to benefit Trump, his family, his companies or substantial contributors to the foundation.

According to a 2015 tax return posted on the nonprofit monitoring website GuideStar, the Donald J. Trump Foundation acknowledged that it used money or assets in violation of the regulations during 2015 and in prior years. The tax filing, first reported by *The Washington Post*, didn’t provide details.

Father of injured pipeline protester says she may lose arm

Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. — A New York woman seriously hurt protesting the Dakota Access oil pipeline faces multiple surgeries and could lose an arm, her father said Tuesday, and protesters and law enforcement gave conflicting accounts about what might have caused the explosion that injured her.

Sophia Wilansky, 21, was listed in serious condition and was undergoing surgery at a Minneapolis hospital.

Wilansky’s father, Wayne Wilansky, said his daughter was hurt when law enforcement threw a grenade. The Morton County Sheriff’s Office maintains authorities did not use concussion grenades or any devices that produce a flash or bang during a clash late Sunday and early Monday near the camp along the pipeline route in southern North Dakota where protesters have gathered for months.

The sheriff’s office suggested in a statement Monday that an explosion heard during the skirmish might have been caused by small propane tanks that authorities said protesters had rigged to explode.

Dallas Goldtooth, a protest organizer with the Indigenous Environmental Network, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Wayne Wilansky disputed the claim by authorities, saying “there’s multiple witnesses and my daughter, who was completely conscious, said they threw a grenade right at her.”

The North Dakota Highway Patrol in a statement Tuesday backed up the sheriff’s office’s version of events, saying officers during the skirmish spotted protesters with “multiple silver cylinder objects.”

“It was at this time an explosion occurred and several protesters ran to the area, pulled a female from under the burned vehicle, and fled the scene,” the patrol said.

Officers who investigated found 1-pound propane tanks “including one that appeared to be intentionally punctured,” the agency statement said.

During the clash, officers using tear gas, rubber bullets and water sprays against



Protesters against the Dakota Access oil pipeline stand on a burned-out truck near Cannon Ball, N.D., Monday, that they removed from a long-closed bridge on Sunday on a state highway near their camp in southern North Dakota.

“Multiple witnesses ... said they threw a grenade right at her.”

— Wayne Wilansky, father of injured protester

protesters who they say assaulted officers with rocks, asphalt, water bottles and burning logs. One officer was injured when struck in the head with a rock. At least 17 protesters were injured severely enough to be taken to hospitals.

Wayne Wilansky denounced the law enforcement tactics, saying “this is not Afghanistan, this is not Iraq. We don’t throw grenades at people.”

Morton County Sheriff’s office spokeswoman Maxine Herr on Tuesday said “authorities continue to defend our tactics.”

A GoFundMe account for Wilansky had raised more than \$194,000 in 18 hours, with more than 7,200 people contributing. It was the highest trending account on Monday night, according to GoFundMe spokeswoman Kate Cichy.

The \$3.8 billion pipeline to carry North Dakota oil to a shipping point in Illinois is largely complete outside of a stretch under a Missouri River reservoir in North Dakota near the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. The tribe and others have been opposing the construction for months, saying the pipeline threatens the tribe’s drinking water along with American Indian cultural sites.

Protests have intensified

as the dispute plays out, with total arrests since August reaching 528 on Monday.

North Dakota officials may need to borrow more money to police protests, with costs exceeding the \$10 million in emergency spending authorized by the state.

Total state law enforcement costs related to the protests reached \$10.9 million last week, according to state Emergency Services spokeswoman Cecily Fong. Morton County has spent an additional \$8 million.

Fong said it’s “very likely” officials will go back to the state’s Emergency Commission to request more money.

Kelcy Warren, CEO of pipeline developer Energy Transfer Partners, told The Associated Press last Friday that he made a verbal offer to reimburse the state for policing costs during an earlier conversation with Gov. Jack Dalrymple.

Dalrymple’s spokesman, Jeff Zent, said the governor doesn’t recall Warren making an offer and that even if one was made, it’s unclear whether the state could legally accept it.

“The bottom line is the governor has not received a formal (offer), nor are we seeking one out,” Zent said adding that “our focus is to continue to press the Obama administration to help cover these costs.”

U.S. court blocks overtime expansion pay rule for 4 million

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A federal court on Tuesday blocked implementation of a rule imposed by President Barack Obama’s administration that would have made an estimated 4 million more higher-earning workers across the country eligible for overtime pay starting Dec. 1.

The U.S. District Court in the Eastern District of Texas granted the nationwide preliminary injunction that prevents the Department of Labor from implementing the changes while the regulation’s legality is examined in more detail by the court. The order comes after 21 states sued the agency to block the rule before it took effect.

“Businesses and state and local governments across the country can breathe a sigh of relief now that this rule has been halted,” said Nevada Attorney General Adam Laxalt, who led the coalition of states fighting the rule and has been a frequent critic of what he characterized as Obama Administration overreach. “Today’s preliminary injunction reinforces the importance of the rule of law and constitutional government.”

The regulation sought to shrink the so-called “white collar exemption” and more than double the salary threshold under which employers must pay overtime to their workers. Overtime protections under

the regulation would apply to workers making up to \$913 a week, or \$47,476 a year, and the threshold would readjust every three years to reflect changes in average wages.

Laxalt said the rule would burden private and public sectors, straining budgets and forcing layoffs or cuts in working hours.

The court agreed with plaintiffs that the Department of Labor exceeds its delegated authority with the rule, and that it could cause irreparable harm if it was not quickly stopped.

The Department of Labor had no immediate comment on the order on Tuesday.

U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez said after the original lawsuit was filed in September that he was confident in the legality of the rule, calling the lawsuit a partisan and obstructionist tactic. He noted that overtime protections have receded over the years. They applied to 62 percent of U.S. full-time salaried workers in 1975 and just 7 percent today.

“The overtime rule is designed to restore the intent of the Fair Labor Standards Act, the crown jewel of worker protections in the United States,” Perez said in September. “I look forward to vigorously defending our efforts to give more hardworking people a meaningful chance to get by.”

WORLD BRIEFLY

U.S. airstrikes top 1,000 against IS in Iraq and Syria

USS EISENHOWER, Persian Gulf (AP) — One after another, fighter jets catapult from the flight deck of the USS Eisenhower, a thousand-foot (305-meter) American aircraft carrier, afterburners glowing amber above the blue Persian Gulf, on their way northwest to join the fight in Iraq and Syria against the Islamic State.

The fighter jets refuel on the way before receiving from coalition partners targets like convoys, hideouts and mortar positions in IS-controlled territories such as Mosul and Raqqa, said Rear Adm. James Malloy, commander of the Eisenhower carrier strike group.

From his office aboard the USS Eisenhower, Malloy described coalition success around Mosul while cautioning that victory is close at hand.

“Mosul is the last large city in Iraq that is held by Daesh, but Daesh is by no means finished in Iraq, so our mission in Iraq won’t end as Mosul falls,” he said, using the Arabic acronym for IS.

While inter-coalition coordination was “seamless,” communication with Russia was limited to “deconfliction,” Malloy said. “There’s no coordination there because the goals are not the same,” the admiral said.

The carrier’s captain Paul Spedero said sorties from the Eisenhower have dropped nearly 1,100 bombs on IS targets since June when the ship entered the Persian Gulf after launching strikes from the eastern Mediterranean.

The ship’s 5,200 sailors arm, repair, launch and recover 7-20 Super Hornet F18

fighter jets every day that drop on average 10 bombs each or reconnoiter in support of anti-IS coalition forces.

Turkey fires 15,000 more people in coup probe

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkey’s government on Tuesday dismissed a further 15,000 people from the military, police and the civil service as part of an ongoing investigation into the failed military coup in July.

The government also shut down some 500 associations, 19 health establishments and nine media outlets in the two government decrees.

Turkey has accused U.S.-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen of masterminding the failed July 15 attempt to topple the government and has launched a large-scale crackdown on his followers and institutions said to be run by his movement. Authorities have arrested close to 38,000 people and purged more than 100,000 others from government.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Tuesday that the civil service was still not entirely purged of Gulen’s followers and vowed to take all measures necessary to eradicate the group.

“We know that the state is not fully cleared of this treacherous gang. They are still within the Armed Forces, they are still within the police, they are still within the judiciary and they are still within the various sections of the state,” Erdogan said.

He added: “We won’t allow them to destroy this country nor to crush the people. We will do whatever is necessary.”