

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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U.S. Elections: 2012 Primary Schedule

28 December 2011

The 2012 Republican primary/caucus schedule below is based on the most current information available from state election boards. (President Obama’s nomination by the Democratic Party is not contested.)

For those states holding primaries, voters go to polling places and cast their ballots. In caucus states, voters gather in meeting places throughout the state to discuss candidates and reach a consensus on which candidate they will support.

DATE	STATE
January 3	Iowa (caucus)
January 10	New Hampshire (primary)
January 21	South Carolina (primary)
January 31	Florida (primary)
February 4	Nevada (caucus)
February 4-11	Maine (caucus)
February 7	Colorado (caucus) Minnesota (caucus) Missouri* (primary)
February 28	Arizona (primary) Michigan (primary)
March 3	Washington (caucus)
March (Super Tuesday)	6 Alaska (caucus) Georgia (primary) Idaho (caucus) Massachusetts (primary) North Dakota (caucus) Ohio (primary) Oklahoma (primary) Tennessee (primary) Vermont (primary) Virginia (primary)

March 6-10	Wyoming (caucus)
March 10	Kansas (caucus) U.S. Virgin Islands (caucus)
March 13	Alabama (primary) Hawaii (caucus) Mississippi (primary)
March 17	Missouri* (caucus)
March 20	Illinois (primary)
March 24	Louisiana (primary)
April 3	District of Columbia (primary) Maryland (primary) Wisconsin (primary) Texas (primary)
April 24	Connecticut (primary) Delaware (primary) New York (primary) Pennsylvania (primary) Rhode Island (primary)
May 8	Indiana (primary) North Carolina (primary) West Virginia (primary)
May 15	Nebraska (primary) Oregon (primary)
May 22	Arkansas (primary) Kentucky (primary)
June 5	California (primary) Montana (primary) New Jersey (primary) New Mexico (primary) South Dakota (primary)
June 26	Utah (primary)

* Missouri will hold a nonbinding primary on February 7 that will not select delegates to the 2012 Republican National Convention. Instead, the Missouri Republican Party will hold a caucus on March 17 to select convention delegates.

U.S. Treasury Dept. Reports on International Exchange Rate Policies

28 December 2011

Washington — The U.S. Department of the Treasury on December 27 released its Semi-Annual Report to Congress on International Economic and Exchange Rate Policies.

The report, which covers international economic and foreign exchange developments in the first half of 2011, is mandated under Sections 3004 and 3005 of the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988. Where pertinent and available, data and developments through mid-December are included, according to the department.

The report highlights the need for greater exchange rate flexibility, most notably by China, but also in other major economies.

Based on the ongoing appreciation of the renminbi (RMB) against the dollar since June 2010, the decline in China's current account surplus, and China's official commitments at the G20, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum and the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue that it will move more rapidly toward exchange rate flexibility, the Treasury Department concluded that the standards identified in Section 3004 of the act during the period covered in this report have not been met with respect to China.

Nonetheless, the movement of the RMB to date is insufficient, according to the department. Treasury plans to monitor the pace of RMB appreciation closely and press for policy changes that yield greater exchange rate flexibility, a level playing field and a sustained shift to domestic demand-led growth.

The report, along with previous reports, is posted on the Treasury website.

U.S. Calls for Stop to Harassment of NGOs in Egypt

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration called on Egypt's ruling military council to immediately halt its harassment of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and their staffs, and to return property it confiscated during raids on at least 17 groups on December 29.

The raids have occurred between the rounds of Egypt's first parliamentary election since the end of Hosni Mubarak's 30-year regime, and State Department

spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said they are "not appropriate in the current environment." The NGOs, including the U.S.-based National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI), are operating in Egypt to support the country's democratic process, she said.

"Their primary purpose around the world is to support the development of democratic institutions. They work most actively, both NDI and IRI, in countries that are in democratic transition. They do things like train poll monitors, train poll workers, train political parties in how to mount their campaigns. But they don't support any individual candidate, any individual party," Nuland told reporters in Washington December 29.

Nuland acknowledged that both NDI and IRI receive U.S. government support, but said, "All of their work is open to public scrutiny and to government scrutiny," and they have been "extremely transparent about the programs that they have in Egypt."

According to press reports, Egyptian soldiers and police seized documents and computers and prevented staffs from leaving in what Egyptian authorities have said is an investigation into the role of foreign governments in recent protests.

Nuland said U.S. officials have "made strong representations and asked for immediate action" in their discussions with the military government. The action against the NGOs "is inconsistent with the bilateral cooperation we have had over many years."

"We don't think that this action is justified, and we want to see the harassment end, and we want to see the property returned and the staff allowed to proceed as normal," she said.

Egypt has held several rounds of its parliamentary vote, and Nuland said they were "generally judged to be free, fair, with open, broad participation," but the country is still in the middle of an "intense electoral season," and the NGOs want to resume their normal activities in support of the democratic process in Egypt.

Betty Shamieh: Writing a Script to Connect Cultures

By Jeff Baron | Staff Writer

Washington — Playwright Betty Shamieh has built her career at the intersection of Arab and American cultures, but she aims for a wider audience — and she's getting it, with acclaim in New York and translations and productions in countries far from Broadway.

"My goal as an artist is to talk about humanity, and I think having the vantage point of being a first-generation

American gives me the ability to see very clearly what is universal about all human beings," she said. "I think that because I'm connected to two different cultures, it helps me widen my perspective."

Shamieh, born in California to Palestinian parents, has made a cause of connecting the two cultures offstage as well. UNESCO recognized that in April 2011 by naming her one of 20 young artists who have made exceptional contributions in promoting dialogue between Arab and Western countries.

Shamieh said her generation of Arab-American artists is "able to acknowledge a bit of our culture" in its work. "Arab Americans have always been part of the fabric of the cultural scene in America, but we're for the first time talking about issues, about our identity, more than just trying to assimilate."

That doesn't make her work polemical or dreary: Humor is an essential ingredient. "If somebody can make you laugh, it's very hard not to feel that you can find a common language, even if you're different," she said.

Shamieh is an actress as well as the author of 15 plays, several screenplays and an unpublished novel. In 2004, she became the first Palestinian-American playwright to premiere a play off-Broadway. *Roar* was a *New York Times* critics' pick for four weeks.

Shamieh also has become an advocate for Arab Americans in the arts. She said that message has to be heard first in the Arab-American community. In a 2010 presentation before the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, she said young artists need support — from their parents and from the community generally.

"Think about giving them a message other than: 'You'll never make it in a field that requires innovation. Better be a doctor,'" she said.

The benefits come to the community as well as the artists, Shamieh said, as Americans get a more accurate and more positive view of Arab Americans.

"We see that you have a black president after you have *The Cosby Show*. You have *The Cosby Show* after you have black comics who are really making it," she said.

Lebanese-American Surgeon Put Heart into His Work

By Sonya Weakley | Staff Writer

Washington — He was born Michel E. Dabaghi in Louisiana in September 1908, about 20 years before the discovery of antibiotics, the first of five children of

Lebanese immigrants Shaker and Raheeja. Nearly 100 years later, he died Michael E. DeBakey, considered by many as the greatest surgeon ever.

DeBakey's contributions to medicine spanned nearly 75 years. During World War II, his work led to the development of mobile surgical hospitals, called MASH units. He helped President John F. Kennedy lobby for Medicare, a federal health insurance program for people over age 65; he recommended creation of the National Library of Medicine, later authorized by Congress. In 1963, DeBakey won the Lasker Award for clinical research, considered the U.S. equivalent of a Nobel Prize.

His earliest contribution came at age 23. While in medical school at Tulane University in New Orleans, DeBakey invented the roller pump, the significance of which was realized 20 years later when it became a component of the heart-lung machine. Providing a continuous flow of blood during operations, the pump paved the way for open-heart surgery.

Though revered, he was at times controversial and occasionally ridiculed. In 1939, while at Tulane, DeBakey and Alton Ochsner linked cigarette smoking with lung cancer, a concept many prominent doctors derided. It wasn't until 1964 that the U.S. surgeon general documented the link.

Also in the face of skepticism, in the 1950s DeBakey discovered that grafts made of the synthetic material Dacron were excellent substitutes for parts of damaged arteries, and he made the first one using his wife's sewing machine. The finding allowed surgeons to repair previously inoperable aortic aneurysms.

DeBakey visited Lebanon in 2005 at age 97 and spoke on developments in cardiac surgery at the University of Balamand, which established the Michael DeBakey Chair in Cardiovascular Sciences.

He nearly died from an aortic aneurysm in 2006, and his own innovation was used to save his life. In April 2008, a few months before his death, he received the Congressional Gold Medal, Congress's highest civilian honor.

According to a 2009 article by his sisters Lois and Selma, professors at Tulane, DeBakey said his parents, who came from Marjayoun in southern Lebanon, set standards for excellence and generosity. His mother taught him to sew, crochet and knit — skills he used in developing surgical techniques. His father owned a pharmacy, where he

talked to local doctors about their work.

Arab-American Politician Succeeds Through Community Service

By M. Scott Bortot | Staff Writer

Washington — Rashida Tlaib's service to her community paid off in 2008 when she became the first Muslim woman elected to the state of Michigan's House of Representatives.

Today, Tlaib supports her Detroit district by leading social service initiatives and providing a voice for her neighbors in the state capitol. Apparently, her constituents approve. During her re-election bid in 2010, Tlaib won an astounding 92 percent of the vote.

Tlaib made a name for herself during the 2008 campaign by going door to door to hear residents' concerns. If no one was home, she left a card pledging to return — in person.

"When I showed up, people were like, 'You actually came. You came to my house,'" Tlaib said, adding that most people thought volunteers would come in her place. "It just motivated me more because of the smiles on their faces with the assurance that possibly there would be change."

The daughter of Palestinian immigrants, Tlaib is the eldest of 14 children. Inspired by her hard-working parents, she felt obliged from a young age to give back to her community.

Tlaib, who holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Wayne State University and a law degree from Thomas Cooley Law School, was known to neighbors before she entered politics. As an attorney, Tlaib provided social and advocacy services through the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services, Latin Americans for Social and Economic Development and the Neighborhood Tax Center.

Since entering office, Tlaib has helped provide free tax-preparation service to low-income families, offered case management to residents for social services and utility assistance and distributed more than 9,000 free books to children to increase literacy.

Although Tlaib is Arab American, most of her constituency is not. Only 2 percent of her district is Arab American, with the remainder 40 percent Latino, 30

percent non-Latino white and 25 percent African American. The people she represents know that she is Muslim.

"It is wonderful that many of my residents know that I am Muslim and call me when they want to do something special for my son during Easter and give him an Easter basket," Tlaib said. "It's really wonderful because they accept me and they know that Islam is a very compassionate religion through the work that I'm doing."

At the state capitol, Tlaib is on the House Appropriations Committee and is the co-chair of the legislature's recently formed, bipartisan Michigan Nonprofit Caucus.

Students Pledge to Black Out Bullying

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer

Washington — Students at Lake Braddock Secondary School in Virginia promise to do their part to "black out bullying."

In past years, the 4,000-student school in Burke, Virginia, which is a few miles southwest of Washington, has had a day of bullying awareness-building. December 12-16 marked the first time the school devoted an entire week to the behavior, said Megan Cashman, a school counselor.

The students, ranging from grade eight to grade 12, demonstrated their resolve during activities designed to expose ways that people bully and to teach what to do if bullying or sexual harassment occurs. During the week, planned by the school's Student Government Association and its counseling department, students signed a pledge: "On my honor, I promise to be respectful and courteous to others. I not only will refrain from bullying but prevent others from bullying."

They also wore anti-bullying bracelets — in a style popular with American teens — and viewed a video showing how to intervene when bullying or harassment occurs.

The video exposes bullying and harassment in all their forms, from verbal comments to physical assaults to cyber-bullying, which involves posting vulgar or untrue photos or words online. It counsels students to confront a bully, tell a parent or other trusted adult, and keep a written record of the unpleasant incidents. "Don't ignore bullying. Take a stand before it's too late," it says.

At the end of the week, Lake Braddock students gathered for a school assembly at which most wore black clothes as a symbolic gesture to “Black Out Bullying at Lake Braddock.”

Bullying has a significant impact on students’ school performance, according to Bullying Statistics. Nearly three-fourths of U.S. students from kindergarten to grade 12 have reported either having acted as a bully or been bullied. Half of such incidents occur online, where taunts or mean rumors are all-too-common, Bullying Statistics reports. Fear of being bullied is the cause of 15 percent of students’ school absences, the organization reports. Some bullied teens become depressed or even take their lives.

After the assembly, student Spencer Achiu, who helped organize the activities, said he was able to tell his sister, who has been teased, about the awareness events. While he wants to protect her, he said that he knows he can’t do it alone, that the whole community must improve. “Being on the committee has given me a chance to expand my response,” Achiu said.

“If just one or two kids take the anti-bullying pledge seriously, this week was worth it,” said Courtney Hale. “We hope that through our efforts the word will spread” to other teens, added Michelle Hernandez. “The week demonstrates that a bullied student is not alone.”

Circumcision Gains More Acceptance in AIDS Fight

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer

Washington — Growing acceptance of male circumcision, in Africa especially, is having a dramatic and positive effect on the fight against HIV/AIDS.

AIDS has killed 30 million people around the world since it was first reported in 1981, but according to a Johns Hopkins University affiliate, for men and adolescent boys, the one-time procedure of circumcision can mean a lifetime of reduced risk of getting HIV, the virus that can lead to AIDS.

The good news is that “in some areas, it’s becoming a social norm to be circumcised, particularly among adolescents,” said Kelly Curran, director of HIV and infectious diseases at the Hopkins affiliate Jhpiego. In sub-Saharan Africa, the region of the world most devastated by AIDS, Kenya and Tanzania are making the most progress in reducing HIV infections, she added.

Jhpiego implements HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention programs funded by the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The fight to stop new HIV infections accelerated in 2007, when the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organization began to scale up voluntary medical male circumcisions to reduce transmission of the virus. According to Curran, the groups that year also endorsed three surgical methods for performing the procedure following successful trials in South Africa, Uganda and Kenya. Since then, 1 million men around the world have been circumcised. Three-fourths of the procedures were funded by PEPFAR, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said November 8 while stressing that the U.S. goal is to see a global AIDS-free generation. Clinton has noted that about 34 million people still live with the disease.

“Virtually every other strategy we have to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS depends on people doing things that are not easy,” Curran said. She cited behavioral changes such as remembering to use a condom, reducing the number of sexual partners and learning the HIV status of partners. (Jhpiego offers circumcision to men and adolescents as part of a package of services that includes teaching the correct use of condoms, testing and treating sexually transmitted diseases, promoting safe sexual practices and offering antiretroviral therapy for people who are HIV-positive.)

Circumcision is a safe and simple procedure done by well-trained and -equipped medical providers that takes 20–30 minutes, she said. There is compelling evidence that circumcision reduces the risk of sexual transmission of HIV by 60 percent, according to UNAIDS. Circumcision also has been shown to reduce urinary tract infections.

Male circumcision benefits women because it reduces the transmission of other sexually transmitted diseases such as herpes and the virus that causes cervical cancer, according to Curran.

Curran said taking HIV prevention services close to where people live has been a successful strategy. In Tanzania, for instance, Jhpiego works with a nonprofit group that uses mobile health centers so men don’t have to walk long distances to be circumcised. Jhpiego also uses radio programs and short text messages to communicate information about HIV/AIDS prevention methods to targeted groups.

In order to help other countries reach the success levels that Kenya and Tanzania are experiencing, UNAIDS and PEPFAR announced December 5 a five-year plan to expand male circumcision services for HIV prevention in 14 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The plan was developed by the two groups along with the World Health Organization, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the World Bank, in consultation with the national ministries of health of those countries.

If 80 percent of men in the 14 countries are circumcised, 3.4 million new infections could be averted and \$16.5 billion in HIV/AIDS treatment costs could be saved, Curran said. Reaching 80 percent would entail performing 20 million circumcisions on men ages 15-49 by 2015, according to UNAIDS.

The 14 targeted countries are Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The joint plan to scale up voluntary medical male circumcision is on the UNAIDS website. More information about PEPFAR and Jhpiego is on their websites.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov>)