

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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President Obama's Health Care Law Survives Supreme Court Review

By Bridget Hunter | Staff Writer | 28 June 2012

Washington — In the most eagerly anticipated decision of its 2011–2012 session, the Supreme Court of the United States upheld most of the 2010 health care law championed by the Obama administration.

The court, in a 5–4 decision, found most provisions, including the so-called “individual mandate,” of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act constitutional. Only one portion of the law — the right of the federal government to withhold funding from states that refuse to participate in an expansion of the Medicaid program — was rejected by the court.

The legislation aims to increase the number of Americans covered by health insurance and decrease the cost of health care. Its most controversial element has been a mandate that most Americans purchase health insurance or pay a penalty (collected by the Internal Revenue Service) to the federal government.

That provision, part of a hard-fought compromise forged in Congress, functions as the financial engine for other elements of the law. Without such a requirement, which enlarges the pool of those paying premiums, the cost of health insurance likely would rise sharply, according to many analysts.

The Obama administration argued that the individual mandate was a proper exercise of federal authority under both the Commerce Clause and the Tax Clause of Article 1 of the U.S. Constitution.

In an opinion written by Chief Justice John Roberts, the court found “the individual mandate is not a valid exercise of the Congress’s power under the Commerce Clause” because the law does not regulate existing commerce but instead compels individuals to engage in commerce.

However, the court concluded the individual mandate “must be construed as imposing a tax on those who do not have health insurance.” Such an exercise of federal power is constitutional because the Tax Clause specifically assigns the power to “lay and collect Taxes” to Congress.

“The Court today holds that our Constitution protects us from federal regulation under the Commerce Clause so long as we abstain from the regulated activity,” Roberts writes. “But from its creation, the Constitution has made no such promise with respect to taxes.”

The opinion quotes a 1789 letter in which Benjamin Franklin wrote, “Our new Constitution is now established ... but in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.”

Justices Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan joined in the majority opinion, with Ginsberg and Sotomayor dissenting in part and expressing their view that the Medicaid expansion provision also should be upheld. Justices Antonin Scalia, Anthony Kennedy, Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito dissented.

“I know there will be a lot of discussion today about the politics of all this, about who won and who lost,” President Obama said in a televised statement from the White House following the release of the decision. “But that discussion completely misses the point. Whatever the politics, today’s decision was a victory for people all over this country whose lives will be more secure because of this law and the Supreme Court’s decision to uphold it.”

U.S. SYSTEM OF CHECKS AND BALANCES

Ensuring all Americans have access to health care is not a new concept. President Franklin Roosevelt pursued it in the mid-20th century and the Clinton administration aggressively promoted it in the 1990s, but it was not until 2010 that a federal law advancing that goal was enacted.

In the U.S. system of democracy, passage of a law requires approval by the legislative branch and the executive branch. Both chambers (the Senate and the House of Representatives) of the Congress passed the health care bill, which was then signed by the president.

With the June 28 decision, the third branch of the U.S. federal government, the judicial branch, has weighed in. Its role, as exercised by the Supreme Court, is to ensure that neither the Congress nor the president exceeds the authority bestowed by the Constitution.

The court’s nine justices make up the court of final appeal from the lower federal and state courts. The court is also the venue for settling legal disputes between states, between states and the federal government and between the United States and another nation.

The court receives more than 7,000 petitions for review each year, but generally agrees to hear 100 or fewer. Most cases have gone through an appeals process, in which they have been decided in a lower-level court. The health care case, formally titled *National Federation of Independent Business et al. v. Sebelius, Secretary of Health and Human Services*, was heard by the Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit before being appealed to the Supreme Court.

Many pundits expressed surprise that Roberts, a justice

appointed by President George W. Bush, penned a decision that upheld the landmark legislation of Bush's Democratic successor, President Obama.

Perhaps they should have paid more attention to the chief justice's confirmation hearing, when he pledged that if confirmed, he would consider each case carefully in light of the legal arguments presented to him, not with a political or personal agenda.

"I have no agenda, but I do have a commitment," he said. "If I am confirmed, I will confront every case with an open mind," Roberts told the Senate Judiciary Committee on September 13, 2005.

The framers of the Constitution would be pleased.

Looking Back at 90 Years of Friendship: Secretary Clinton Visits Latvia

By Anastasya Lloyd-Damjanovic | Staff Writer |
28 June 2012

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton affirmed the importance of the United States-Latvia relationship and praised the small Baltic country for its political success in the face of economic difficulties June 28 in Riga, Latvia.

"I want to commend you and your government for the very difficult decisions that you took in terribly challenging economic circumstances to chart a path forward that will provide a stable, prosperous future for the people of this country," she said.

In Latvia, Clinton met with top officials to discuss a wide range of bilateral, regional and global issues as part of her four-days of official visits to Finland, Latvia and Russia. The visits, running from June 27 to June 30, will also feature meetings with civil society and private sector leaders in these countries to discuss such issues as security, women's empowerment, education and the environment. Clinton will visit Russia next and return to Washington on June 30.

After the talks with Latvian officials, Clinton attended the dedication of a street in honor of American diplomat Sumner Welles, visited the Freedom Monument and spoke with young Latvian civil society activists.

In a press conference, Clinton and Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs said that the talks had covered many important issues.

Clinton thanked the foreign minister for Latvia's continued support for Afghanistan, where 200 Latvian troops are supporting American and Afghan forces. Latvia plays a key role in the Northern Distribution

Network, a series of supply lines to and from Afghanistan through Baltic and Caspian ports, Russia, Central Asia and the Caucasus. The secretary said about half of all shipments to Afghanistan pass through the Latvian port of Riga.

Also important on the agenda were Latvia's participation in NATO and regional security efforts. Rinkēvičs said the Latvian government is committed to raising national defense budgets to the 2 percent of gross domestic product level stipulated by NATO. He also thanked the United States for its support for the future of the NATO Baltic Air Policing Mission. The two countries also discussed Latvia's relations with the Russian Federation and the situations of Eastern European countries in the European Union.

Latvia and the United States are also working together to respond to the increasingly unstable situation in Syria. Both governments are cooperating to increase pressure on the Assad regime, provide humanitarian assistance to Syrian civilians, support NATO ally Turkey and add to U.N.-Arab League Special Envoy Kofi Annan's efforts to have a workable democratic transition plan implemented, Clinton said.

While Latvia has proved a valuable partner in Afghanistan-related operations and NATO, Clinton said, the United States and Latvia look forward to cooperation in other arenas in the future.

"We think there is a great deal of work that we can do together to further the prosperity and energy security of Latvia," she said. To this end, Latvia must be open to more reforms that will improve its transparency, competitiveness and ability to provide employment for its populace, Clinton said. A U.S. business mission and a congressional delegation will also be traveling to Latvia in the coming weeks to demonstrate the United States' commitment to Latvia's economic progress.

Clinton also signed agreements with Foreign Minister Rinkēvičs to renew the United States' Fulbright exchange program with Latvia and to support the reform of the Moldovan justice sector, the State Department said.

With the renewal of the U.S.-Latvia Fulbright Academic Exchange Program, the two countries laid the groundwork for continued cooperation between American and Latvian scholars and institutions. To date, the Fulbright Program has enabled about 310,000 participants to conduct research and teach in other countries in an effort to increase understanding between the American people and citizens of other countries.

The U.S.-Latvian Agreement on Supporting Justice Sector Reform in Moldova promotes U.S.-Latvian cooperation by

coordinating the countries' work on projects in the Moldovan justice system. The agreement aims to facilitate Moldovan integration into Europe and follows a history of U.S. and Latvian economic and humanitarian assistance to Moldova.

On the whole, the visit to Latvia was "an opportunity to look back at the 90 years of friendship and relations between the people of Latvia and the United States and to look ahead to see how we can take our relationship to an even deeper level going forward," Clinton said.

Clinton's stop in Latvia marks the first visit by a U.S. secretary of state to the Baltic state since 1993.

Testimony of Ambassador-designate to Burma Derek Mitchell

27 June 2012

Testimony of Derek Mitchell

Special Representative and Policy Coordinator for Burma
Statement Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Washington, DC

June 27, 2012

Ambassador-Designate to Burma

Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to Burma, the first in more than two decades. I am humbled by the confidence that President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton have shown in me with this nomination. Mr. Chairman, I know you take a particularly keen personal interest in the situation in Burma, and I commend all you have done during your tenure to advance the relationship between our two countries.

It was almost exactly a year ago that I sat before you and this Committee as the President's nominee to serve as the first Special Representative and Policy Coordinator for Burma. I noted in my testimony then the many challenges facing Burma and our bilateral relationship. No one would have thought possible the remarkable developments that have occurred since a year ago. Ongoing reform efforts have created an opening for increased engagement between our two countries, and instilled a sense of hope among millions inside and outside Burma who have worked and sacrificed so much for so long for real change.

During my time as the Special Representative and Policy Coordinator for Burma, I traveled to the country many times. The government in Naypyitaw provided excellent hospitality and demonstrated a willingness to have open and candid discussions with me on each occasion. I also want to thank the many other interlocutors - political

party officials, civil society representatives, ethnic minority and religious leaders, former political prisoners, business executives, international diplomats and non-governmental representatives, and many local citizens -- for opening their doors to me to discuss a full range of perspectives on the complexity and diversity of Burma.

I have also traveled throughout East Asia and Europe to share ideas and coordinate policy approaches. This included meetings with the many men and women in Thailand who have worked tirelessly along the border with Burma for decades to provide for the humanitarian needs of Burmese migrants and refugees. With so much attention focused on developments inside Burma, we should not forget the work of these committed individuals who help those in need. I am confident that these and many other committed individuals will join ongoing efforts inside the country when conditions are right.

And of course I have spent many hours with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. As we all know, Daw Suu Kyi remains a uniquely iconic figure inside and outside Burma. Upon helping bring her country to this point, she has now entered the field as an elected politician to help guide its next steps toward a secure, democratic, just, and prosperous future. I look forward to many more opportunities for discussions with her about her country and about how the United States can assist its progress going forward.

Perhaps the most important development of the past year, however, has been the partnership forged between Daw Suu Kyi and President Thein Sein. President Thein Sein has proven to be a remarkable figure. We should never forget to recognize his extraordinary vision and leadership, and for the many reformist steps he and his partners in government have taken over the past year. These actions have clearly reflected the aspirations, indeed sacrifices, of millions of brave Burmese.

At the same time, we have no illusions about the challenges that lie ahead. As Secretary Clinton has observed, reform is not irreversible, and continued democratic change is not inevitable. We remain deeply concerned about the continued detention of hundreds of political prisoners and conditions placed on those previously released. The rule of law requires an independent and effective judiciary. The constitutional role of the military in the nation's affairs is inconsistent with traditional democratic principles of civil-military relations.

Human rights abuses, including military impunity, continue, particularly in ethnic minority areas. Although there may be some hope for an end to the violence and establishment of serious dialogue on fundamental

political issues, mutual mistrust between the government and ethnic minority groups runs deep and a long road lies ahead. Recent sectarian violence in Rakhine State demonstrates the divisiveness in Burma cultivated over many decades, if not centuries, that will need to be overcome to realize lasting peace and national reconciliation in the country.

We have been quite consistent and direct in public and private about our continuing concerns about the lack of transparency in Burma's military relationship with North Korea, and specifically that the government must adhere to its obligations under relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions and its other international nonproliferation obligations. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will continue to make this issue of highest priority in my conversations with the government, and be clear that our bilateral relationship can never be fully normalized until we are fully satisfied that any illicit ties to North Korea have ended once and for all.

As the Burmese government has taken steps over the past year, so too has the United States in an action-for-action approach. Each action we have taken in recent months has had as its purpose to benefit the Burmese people and strengthen reform and reformers within the system.

Most recently, Secretary Clinton announced a broad easing of restrictions on new investment and the exportation of U.S. financial services to Burma. As she stated in May, we look forward to working with the business sector as a new partner in our principled engagement approach. If confirmed, I will promote U.S. business interests in Burma while ensuring companies understand the complex environment in which they will be engaging and the important role they can play in promoting American values and interests in the country. It is clear to me from my discussions inside the country that the Burmese people admire U.S. products, standards, and principles; staying true to them promises to serve both our public and private interests going forward.

As the Special Representative and Policy Coordinator for Burma, I made it a priority to provide regular briefings and consultations with Capitol Hill. I also urged the Burmese government to open its doors to Congressional visitors so they may see the changes on the ground for themselves. I believe the Administration and Congress have formed an effective, bi-partisan partnership on Burma policy. It is critical to maintain this partnership going forward. Should I be confirmed, I will make every effort to continue to reach out to interested Members and staffs, and hope to see you all regularly on our doorstep in Rangoon.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, let me conclude by taking this opportunity to extend my utmost

appreciation to my many partners within the Executive Branch with whom I have worked over the past year as Special Representative – including at USAID, Treasury, Commerce, DoD, the White House, and State. In particular, I want to commend the excellent career officers, interagency representatives, and locally employed staff members of our Embassy in Rangoon whom I have gotten to know during my visits. This team has proved again and again to me that we have people of the highest quality in Rangoon. They have responded superbly to a rapidly changing tempo of operations in the field, and have done so with professionalism and skill. If confirmed, I will make it my priority to ensure they have the tools and direction necessary to continue serving our interests in Burma in an exemplary fashion and be proud of the work they do for our country every day.

Thank you for considering my nomination.

U.S., Turkey Aim at Strategic Commercial Ties, U.S. Official Says

By Andrzej Zwaniecki | Staff Writer | 27 June 2012

Washington – The United States and Turkey should explore ways of advancing their commercial partnership beyond trade, says a senior U.S. official.

Acting Commerce Secretary Rebecca Blank said Washington and Ankara see a great potential for new bilateral economic linkages, which can form an essential part of a “model partnership” between the United States and Turkey. President Obama called for such a partnership on his first visit to Turkey in 2009. Blank made her remarks to a Turkish business group in Istanbul on June 25.

U.S.-Turkey bilateral trade has nearly doubled to \$20 billion in the past two years, according to the Commerce Department. But Blank said that the potential for bringing economic benefits to both countries is far greater than the trade figures would indicate.

Stronger and more balanced bilateral investment is of particular importance, she said. For example, U.S. companies can play a major role in upgrading the infrastructure Turkey will need to achieve its goal of making it to the top 10 world's economies by 2023.

However, Blank said, Turkish companies need to invest more in the U.S. economy to foster “even greater balance in our relationships.” An increasing number of Turkey's businesses see the benefits of investing in the U.S. economy and seize related opportunities, Blank said. But U.S. investments in Turkey are still much larger than Turkish investments in the United States.

U.S.-Turkish commercial relations do not have to be

limited to bilateral trade and investment though, Blank said. Working in partnerships, U.S. and Turkish companies can help accelerate economic development and economic growth in the Middle East and North Africa, she said.

Both countries need to address barriers that prevent them from tapping the full potential of commercial opportunities, Blank said. Issues related to market access, intellectual property protection and transparency and predictability of the investment environment are among major barriers, according to U.S. companies. Turkish investors have concerns of their own, she added.

A day later in Ankara, Blank participated in a meeting of a bilateral economic cooperation group. In a joint statement issued at the conclusion of the June 26 meeting, Turkey and the United States said they agreed to advance cooperation in several areas, such as reducing energy use by the industrial sector and building an electricity smart grid in Turkey. Efforts to promote entrepreneurship and innovation and assist small businesses to get access to foreign trade opportunities were also discussed.

U.S., EU Cooperate on Law Enforcement, Security

26 June 2012

Washington — An international summit June 21 highlighted several new partnerships between the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the European Union (EU).

Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano and Attorney General Eric Holder traveled to Copenhagen, Denmark, to join their European counterparts for the biannual U.S.-EU Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial Meeting. The focus was U.S.-EU efforts related to border management, countering violent extremism, law enforcement cooperation, global supply-chain security, aviation security and cybersecurity.

Napolitano and Holder were joined by EU Vice President and Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Viviane Reding; EU Commissioner for Home Affairs Cecilia Malmström; Cyprus Minister of Justice and Public Order Loucas Louca; and Danish Minister of Justice Morten Bødskov.

In particular, the officials discussed DHS' cooperation in expanding information sharing and improving its ability to identify and address threats.

The Department of Homeland Security and the EU recently announced three international agreements to protect the global supply chain while facilitating legitimate trade and travel:

- Passenger Name Record (PNR) agreement between the United States and the European Union.
- A Mutual Recognition Decision between U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism program and the EU's Authorized Economic Operator program.
- An air cargo security partnership between the U.S. Transportation Security Administration and the EU to mutually recognize their respective air cargo security regimes.

Napolitano also discussed U.S.-EU collaboration on cybersecurity, a standing U.S.-EU Working Group on Cybersecurity and Cybercrime. The group will focus on enhancing public-private partnerships, raising awareness about cyberthreats, combating cybercrime, and protecting critical infrastructure and intellectual property.

Napolitano traveled to Paris and Brussels June 22-23 to discuss information sharing, cybersecurity and facilitating legitimate trade and travel.

Financial Diplomacy Key to Building Global Economy

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 26 June 2012

Washington — Cultivating common ground among financial leaders around the world will be critical to effectively facing 21st-century economic challenges, says Treasury Under Secretary for International Affairs Lael Brainard.

"Economic decisions made in one country have an outsized impact on jobs and growth here in the United States and around the world," Brainard said June 25 in remarks to the Women's Foreign Policy Group in Washington. The under secretary encouraged more women to become involved in financial diplomacy and said the field is growing in importance, thanks to globalization.

She said that in an increasingly interconnected world, a single country's domestic policies can affect the economies of countries around the globe as much as an international treaty.

"By determining whether currencies and stock markets plunge or stabilize, [financial diplomacy] can make the difference in whether families can afford to send their children to college, buy a home or retire comfortably," she said. "Convincing leaders of other countries to change their domestic economic policies can be challenging and intensely political, yet it is essential" when the policies have a significant impact on the international community, Brainard said.

"And while classic diplomacy moves through the synapses of foreign ministries, financial diplomacy

navigates through finance ministries and central banks, directly connecting the decisionmakers that determine tax and fiscal operations, reserve management and debt issuance," she said. "Through frequent interactions and similar responsibilities, financial diplomats develop a common set of tools, analytics and language."

Brainard said developing and maintaining this common vision for diplomacy has been the key to effectively cooperating during tough economic times.

"More often than not, crisis is the crucible that forges the innovations with the most lasting impact," she said, referring to action taken by the Group of 20 advanced economies to change international financial resources and institutions in response to the global economic crisis in 2009.

She commended the steps taken that year by international leaders to mobilize \$1 trillion through the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in order to boost global demand, enhance trade flows and build up international economic confidence.

Brainard said that at the G20 summit in Los Cabos, Mexico, earlier in June, leaders addressed the challenges facing Europe's economic recovery.

"The decisions that lie ahead for the leaders of euro area member states will have a profound impact not only on their economies but also on their political future," she said, adding that while the decisions are for European leaders to make, the outcomes "matter profoundly" to the rest of the world.

She said European leaders are committed to "take all necessary measures to safeguard the integrity and stability of the euro area, to improve the functioning of the financial markets and to break the feedback loop between banks and sovereigns."

Brainard said the United States and its partners are committed to supporting Europe as it navigates its recovery.

The G20 leaders said in a statement that the group "will work collectively to strengthen demand and restore confidence with a view to support growth and foster financial stability in order to create high-quality job opportunities for all our citizens." They announced a new, coordinated Los Cabos Growth and Jobs Action Plan to achieve those goals.

"Despite the challenges we all face domestically, we have agreed that multilateralism is of even greater importance in the current climate, and remains our best asset to resolve the global economy's difficulties," the June 19

statement said.

The G20 is scheduled to hold its 2013 summit in St. Petersburg under the chairmanship of Russia.

U.S. Farmers Find New Markets with Growing Muslim Population

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 26 June 2012

Washington — Eating goat meat hasn't really caught on with most Americans, but raising goats for meat has certainly caught on with U.S. farmers.

That's because U.S. farmers are recognizing that there is a growing market among an ever-increasing population of immigrants from Muslim countries, where goat meat is popular.

There are an estimated 2.75 million Muslims living in the United States as of 2011, according to the Pew Research Center, an American think tank. But Muslim immigrants have been rising both in absolute numbers and as a share of all immigrants receiving permanent U.S. residency, the Pew study says.

"By 2020, Muslims are projected to comprise 10.5 percent of more than 1 million new permanent U.S. residents per year, or about 109,000 people annually," says the Pew study *The Global Muslim Population: Projections for 2010-2030*.

Pew's research has found that most Muslim immigrants assimilate smoothly into mainstream American life. But, like all immigrants, they often yearn for the familiar foods they knew back home, and American farmers are happy to satisfy those cravings.

According to the most recent figures available from the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, there are an estimated 128,000 goat meat operations in the United States. Goats raised for meat make up 82 percent of all goats in the United States, and between 2005 and 2008, the number of goats expanded by 3-5 percent per year, NAAS says.

Under U.S. federal law, all goats must be slaughtered under federal or state regulations, and any carcasses slaughtered for sale must be inspected. The numbers of inspections reported show the growing popularity of goat meat. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 779,000 goat carcasses were inspected in 2010 compared to 107,299 in 1984.

A NASS report released in 2011 says the expansion in the goat industry is partly due to government buyout programs offered to tobacco farmers, which encouraged them to move into other areas of production agriculture.

The Southeast, where the majority of tobacco is grown, initially saw the largest growth in goat numbers.

But immigrants are the primary reason for increased goat production in the United States, according to NASS. "With the United States population becoming more diverse each year, the outlook for continued growth in the goat industry is favorable and will be needed to meet domestic demand," NASS says.

Among Muslim Americans, goat meat is especially in demand around Islamic holidays. For observant Muslims, the goat meat must be certified halal.

Halal is an Arabic term meaning "lawful" or "permissible." According to the Islamic Services of America, the oldest halal certification agency in the United States, halal, as applied to animals slaughtered for consumption, means that the animals must be fed properly and treated humanely. Slaughter of the animals must be merciful and quick. The slaughtering process must be conducted by a practicing Muslim who recites the prayer: "In the name of Allah [God] and Allah is great."

Although some observant Muslims prefer to slaughter their goats themselves, there are many commercial operations available. For example, Halal Farms USA, located in Shannon, Illinois, serves Muslim communities in Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Iowa and Minnesota. It buys its goats from independent farmers and slaughters the animals in the manner approved by Islam. According to its website, Halal Farms USA bought more than 50,000 animals in 2011 and is seeking 100,000 more for 2012, 80 percent being goats.

Some immigrants are abandoning city life to start goat farms of their own. Mukit Hossain, who immigrated to the United States from Bangladesh in the 1970s, built a successful career as a telecommunications executive. But he felt financial success and city life were making his two young daughters dangerously materialistic. So in 2008, he left Washington and moved his family to a 6-hectare farm in Virginia, where he now raises several hundred goats for the halal market. With some 300,000 American Muslims living in Northern Virginia alone, there is more demand than he can keep up with right now.

"My big problem is not finding the customers," Hossain told the Voice of America in an interview. "My big problem is building up my capacity."

Military Rule Can Bring Order, but Not Good Results

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 26 June 2012

Washington — If might makes right, why isn't every country ruled by its military? The military possesses all,

or at least most, of the guns. Some frustrated civilians at times may prefer the idea of stable and efficient military rule over the messy, argumentative and deadlocked governance by the politicians for whom they voted.

But history shows that the military cannot deliver the jobs, economic prosperity and other essentials that people want, so the relatively new idea of instituting civilian control over the military has a pragmatic appeal, if the basic human desire for freedom is not enough.

The military brings "power under the barrel of a gun," but "it brings no special ability to govern or rule to provide the kinds of things that people ... come to expect," said Lawrence Wilkerson, a professor of government at the College of William and Mary in Virginia.

Wilkerson, as a former soldier and former U.S. government official, has a unique understanding of civil-military relations, serving for 31 years in the U.S. Army before retiring as a colonel in 1997, and then serving under Secretary of State Colin Powell as his chief of staff and an associate director of policy planning.

What people expect from political leaders is "more than just liberty and freedom. ... It's a good job. It's a reasonable degree of security. It's the ability to think and speak your mind," he said. "But that's not the military's culture," which is focused on following orders and fulfilling the mission at hand.

"That's not the kind of order and discipline and culture you want to bring to governance," Wilkerson said. History shows, he said, repeated shortcomings of military rule, from Napoleonic France to more recent regimes around the world.

"Military, no matter how many times in history it has taken over governance, has failed and will fail. It simply can't do it," he said. "Its culture, its modus operandi, the way it thinks, the way it deals with life is not conducive to governance."

PUTTING CIVILIANS IN CHARGE

The notion of civilian control over the military is fairly new. Normally, ruling monarchs, generals and other autocrats not only have commanded the military, but have also been free to use it to suppress their own people.

Escaping from a history of military dominance takes time and institution-building, as well as encouraging a culture that sees its interests best served by a government the people have freely and fairly elected, Wilkerson said.

"It's a difficult thing to talk about in countries where there is no institutional fabric," he said, and in some countries

with no history of effective civilian rule, the acceptance of the idea could take decades.

However, in the United States and other countries, the concept has firmly taken hold. To Wilkerson, an coup d'etat in America is "not a possibility." The reason is not because the military is weak, or even the sacrosanct rule of law, but because military officers themselves are highly educated in both the civilian and the military spheres, he said. "They understand what it means to overthrow civilian power or to contest civilian power," he said. The military also understands the institutions, laws and traditions that have upheld and validated civilian control of the military over time as an essential element in the American system.

"The tradition is as old as George Washington," Wilkerson said. As the first commander of U.S. military forces, Washington averted a coup and the desire of his officers to install him as the ruler of the recently independent American Colonies in 1783 by appealing to their loyalty to American revolutionary ideals. Later that year, he resigned his military commission and returned to his farm, prompting Britain's King George III to declare him "the greatest character of the age."

In disputes between American elected officials and their generals, the officials have always prevailed. In 1951, President Harry Truman relieved General Douglas MacArthur of command during the Korean War despite MacArthur's immense public popularity, saying the general was "unable to give his wholehearted support to the policies of the United States government and of the United Nations in matters pertaining to his official duties."

In 2010, President Obama relieved Army General Stanley McChrystal of command over U.S. forces in Afghanistan after the general's staff made comments critical of the president and other senior civilian officials as reported in a magazine article.

Announcing his decision, Obama said, "The conduct represented in the recently published article does not meet the standard that should be set by a commanding general. It undermines the civilian control of the military that is at the core of our democratic system."

U.S. democracy "depends upon institutions that are stronger than individuals," and that includes respect for civilian control over the military chain of command, the president said.

WITHOUT CIVILIAN CONTROL, CORRUPTION IS LIKELY

As with other opaque and unaccountable governments, the military can be tainted by corruption, and its heavy

investment in a country's economic system will make it less willing to accept civilian control.

"It doesn't want to relinquish that power" and ultimately lose those assets, and "that's a huge component of the problem," Wilkerson said.

In such cases, where the military constitutes a major part of the economic structure, divorcing it from the economy "requires civilians not just willing to risk their lives, but some kind of comparable ability to take the power away," he said.

Aside from its economic interests, the military may also assert itself out of concern over what kind of regime would take its place.

"Is it going to be someone who really knows how to deliver some of the things the people want or is it just going to be an inept, incompetent group of people who are just as interested in filching the system and feathering their own caps and their own pocketbooks as military — but don't have guns," Wilkerson said.

Ultimately, to create a society that sees civilian control over the military as essential, elected officials "have to deliver," and do so on a sustained basis, he said.

U.S. Congratulates Egypt's President-Elect

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 25 June 2012

Washington — The election of Egypt's first president following the end of Hosni Mubarak's regime in 2011 is a "milestone" for the Egyptian people in their transition to democracy, U.S. officials say.

White House press secretary Jay Carney congratulated Egypt's new president-elect, Mohamed Morsi June 24, after Egyptian election authorities declared that he had won 51.73 percent of the vote in the presidential run-off election June 16-17 and defeated former prime minister General Ahmed Shafiq.

"We look forward to working together with President-elect Morsi and the government he forms, on the basis of mutual respect, to advance the many shared interests between Egypt and the United States," Carney said in a statement.

He called upon Morsi to advance Egyptian national unity by "reaching out to all parties and constituencies in consultations about the formation of a new government," and for that government to respect the rights of all Egyptians, including women and religious minorities such as Coptic Christians.

"Millions of Egyptians voted in the election, and

President-elect Morsi and the new Egyptian government have both the legitimacy and responsibility of representing a diverse and courageous citizenry," Carney said.

He said the Obama administration looks forward to "the completion of a transition to a democratically elected government," and believes "it is essential for the Egyptian government to continue to fulfill Egypt's role as a pillar of regional peace, security and stability."

"We will stand with the Egyptian people as they pursue their aspirations for democracy, dignity, and opportunity, and fulfill the promise of their revolution," Carney said.

In separate statements, Carney said President Obama telephoned both President-elect Morsi and former prime minister Shafiq on June 24.

Obama congratulated Morsi and said the United States will continue to support Egypt's democratic political transition. Obama "emphasized his interest in working together with President-elect Morsi, on the basis of mutual respect, to advance the many shared interests between Egypt and the United States," Carney said.

The president telephoned Shafiq to commend him on "a well-run campaign," and encouraged him to continue playing a role in Egyptian politics "by supporting the democratic process and working to unify the Egyptian people," Carney said.

At the State Department, spokeswoman Victoria Nuland told reporters June 25 that Morsi's election is one step in a political transition process "that very much has to continue."

Along with the need for Morsi to form a government, "there has to be a resolution to the issues surrounding the seating of a constitutional assembly that can write a constitution and get to a democratically elected parliament," she said.

It will be challenging, and Egypt will need U.S. and international support, Nuland said, adding "all of these steps and all of the actors involved need to be true to the spirit and the values that spurred Egypt to this point."

U.S., Global Partners Prep for AIDS 2012 Conference in Washington

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 25 June 2012

Washington — The United States and its international partners are preparing to meet in July for the AIDS 2012 conference in Washington, where global leaders will work together toward the goal of eradicating HIV/AIDS worldwide.

"Hope is taking the place of despair," U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator Eric Goosby said June 25 in a briefing at the Brookings Institution, a policy research organization in Washington.

He said tremendous support from the United States, its partner countries and multilateral organizations is "truly putting countries in a stronger position to ensure we can reach the goal we are all committed to: achieving an AIDS-free generation and creating a stronger and more secure world."

The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), launched in 2003 by then-President George W. Bush, is the largest response mounted by one country against a single disease on record. Goosby said the program has been successful in providing HIV prevention, treatment and care for people around the world since its start.

"PEPFAR's job is to bring science to the table and pursue dialogue toward responses that are country-owned, science-based and human rights-sensitive," he said.

Through the program, the United States has directly supported lifesaving anti-retroviral treatment for nearly 4 million people worldwide as of September 2011.

"That's up from 1.7 million people in 2008, showing continued, rapid expansion even during these tight budget times," Goosby said.

He said PEPFAR also allowed for HIV testing and counseling for more than 40 million people in 2011 alone, including more than 9 million pregnant women. The program supported drugs to prevent mother-to-child transmission for more than 660,000 of those women who tested positive for HIV, allowing approximately 200,000 infants to be born HIV-free.

"These results aren't just numbers — they are lives saved," Goosby said, adding that each life saved strengthens families and communities around the world.

He said that just 10 years ago, AIDS was killing off a generation and reversing health gains around the world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Hospitals were overwhelmed by the massive volume of dying patients and had little or no access to lifesaving anti-retroviral treatment.

"AIDS threatened the very foundations of society," Goosby said. "It wiped [out] people in the prime of their lives when they should have been caring for their families. It created millions of orphans unable to attend school without the support provided by their parents."

Additionally, he said, the disease stalled economic development, leaving countries stuck in the cycle of poverty.

"That, in turn, created societal instability, leading the United Nations Security Council to identify AIDS as a security issue in 2001," Goosby said. It was then that resources to address the disease began to be mobilized.

"Today, AIDS is no longer a certain death sentence in sub-Saharan Africa," he said. "By adopting a targeted approach to address one of the most complicated diseases and global health issues in modern history, and then taking it to scale with urgency and commitment in resource-challenged settings, the United States has challenged conventional wisdom on what is really possible."

Commending PEPFAR's results-oriented approach, Goosby said the program has strengthened national health systems so they can more effectively meet the needs of all their people, both HIV-positive and HIV-negative.

"Clinics and hospitals that are no longer overwhelmed with dealing with AIDS now have the capacity to address other health issues," he said. "Beyond that, we have rebuilt hospitals and clinics, increased the quality and numbers of trained health care workers, put in patient information systems, put in quality control laboratories and strengthened our commodity procurement and distribution systems."

The ambassador said this focused investment has enabled access to basic health care often where little or none existed before.

"PEPFAR has proved that we can take a situation with little hope and turn it around," he said. "It challenges all of us to raise the bar for what our global programs are expected to achieve."

Goosby said the July 22-27 AIDS conference will focus on continuing global cooperation in the fight to end HIV/AIDS.

He called on leaders to address using PEPFAR infrastructure to help countries face new and changing health challenges. The ambassador also asked conference participants to take a new look at the importance of country ownership. Additionally, Goosby spoke about the importance of continuing a robust multilateral response to HIV/AIDS through organizations such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the World Health Organization and the United Nations disease program (UNAIDS).

Young Delegates Enthusiastic About 2012 Political Conventions

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 22 June 2012

Washington – Three young delegates gearing up to attend their political party's 2012 national conventions are excited about their roles in choosing candidates to the U.S. presidency.

"To be part of the electoral process is important to me," said Sodiqa Williams, 29, from Chicago. She will be an Illinois statewide delegate to the Democratic National Convention September 3-6 in Charlotte, North Carolina. "I'm looking forward to meeting other delegates who I'm sure will have many different perspectives on the issues," she said.

Rachel Hoff, also 29, currently lives in Washington. She will attend the Republican National Convention August 27-30 in Tampa, Florida, representing the District of Columbia. "I look forward to being part of history," she said.

At the Democratic Convention, more than 5,000 delegates and alternates from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and five U.S. territories will endorse President Obama and Vice President Biden as their candidates for a second four-year term. At the Republican Convention, 2,125 delegates, backed by 2,125 alternates, are expected to nominate Mitt Romney for president and a yet-to-be-determined vice presidential candidate.

One of the youngest delegates among her state's 50 elected Democratic Convention delegates and alternates is 19-year-old Anna Langthorn of Edmond, Oklahoma.

"It's going to be an exciting convention, both getting to be there and being part of history," Langthorn said. She also looks forward to seeing many of the other young delegates from other states she has gotten to know through her involvement in Young Democrats of America. The group encompasses Democrats under age 36.

Approximately 15,000 journalists from around the world will also attend the conventions. Their coverage will help people in the United States and throughout the world understand the visions and commitments made by the presidential nominees.

POLITICAL ACTIVISM STARTS EARLY

All three of the young delegates developed an interest in politics at an early age and have parents who support their ongoing political involvement.

Williams, who is biracial, grew up in the Midwestern city of Muncie, Indiana, with parents who encouraged her to

excel and be aware of current issues. Her mother, who had polio as a child, worked every day at a hospital laboratory despite the physical challenge. For that determination, her daughter calls her “a hero.” Williams’ father, a retired policeman, also inspired her. “He encouraged me to pay attention to the news and be engaged in politics,” she said.

“You need someone like that in your life. My awareness increases every day,” she said.

She became active in politics while a student at Princeton University and later working on environmental issues for then-Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn (now governor of Illinois). As a lawyer, she now works as an advocate for environmental issues in Chicago. She hopes to run for office some day and continue her support for environmental protection, affordable education, prison reform and fighting poverty and human trafficking. “My job would be to serve the public, my state and our nation,” she said.

“It’s a real honor to be put into a position and have a voice,” Williams said of the role of party delegate.

Hoff, raised by civilian parents who worked on military posts, watched her parents as they voted. As a student at Tufts University, she volunteered during the 2000 Republican presidential campaign and in Romney’s 2002 campaign for governor of Massachusetts.

She currently serves as director of government relations and outreach for the Foreign Policy Initiative, a nonprofit advocacy group, and is active in the Washington chapter of Young Republicans. She formerly worked as an aide to a Republican representative to Congress and for a Middle East-focused policy development group promoting democracy and regional security. In 2003, she was named Young Republican of the Year. She plans to be actively involved in Romney’s campaign after the convention.

“When you’re engaged [politically] you spend your free time on politics,” she said.

Langthorn, a student at the University of Central Oklahoma, has been a Young Democrat since secondary school. She said, “It has always seemed important to me that I participate in the decisions that affect my life.” She also is interested in promoting awareness of lesbian, gay, transsexual and bisexual issues.

She is proud the Oklahoma caucus promotes youth inclusion and set a goal of selecting at least four youth delegates out of a total of 50 who range in age from 18 to early 70s. The caucus exceeded its goal, electing seven youth delegates.

“Youth inclusion is important,” she said.

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