

12/16/10

HEALTH CARE REFORM LATEST

VO: 20

Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott today appeared in federal district court, where he represented the State of Texas during legal arguments over the constitutionality of the Obama Administration's health care law. Last March, Attorney General Abbott and a bipartisan coalition of state officials from across the country challenged the constitutionality of the controversial Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Today's oral argument was the final court proceeding before U.S. District Judge Roger Vinson is expected to rule on the law's constitutionality sometime next year.

TAX CUT LATEST

LOURDES MELUZA- WASHINGTON, DC

PKG 2:09

The White House is pushing hard for the House to pass a tax package Thursday that would save millions of Americans thousands of dollars in higher taxes beginning Jan. 1. Some Democratic lawmakers are seeking changes to the package that could derail the bill. Democratic leaders are staying hands-off, leaving it to President Barack Obama to persuade fellow Democrats not to put the package at risk by imposing a higher estate tax than he negotiated with Republicans. The Senate overwhelmingly passed the package Wednesday, with broad bipartisan support. Obama is urging the House to pass it without changes, so he can sign it into law before a sweeping series of tax cuts expire at the end of December. House Democratic leaders plan to pass the bill Thursday evening. But first, they will hold a vote on imposing the higher estate tax, backed by rebellious Democrats who say the package is too generous to the wealthy.

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12/17/10

BANK OF AMERICA FRAUD

VO: 20

Bank of America Corp. violated Arizona's consumer fraud law by misleading consumers who tried to reduce their mortgage payments so they could keep their homes, state Attorney General Terry Goddard said Friday as he filed a civil lawsuit against the

bank. The bank also violated the terms of a 2009 consent agreement requiring the bank's Countrywide mortgage subsidiary to implement a loan modification program, the lawsuit alleges. Hundreds of homeowners kept making their mortgage payments because Bank of America repeatedly assured them their loan was being modified, he said. Instead, many lost their homes anyway.

TAX CUT EXTENSION
LOURDES DEL RIO- MIAMI, FLORIDA
PKG 2:20

President Barack Obama signed into law a huge, holiday-season tax bill extending cuts for all Americans on Friday, saluting a new spirit of political compromise as Republicans applauded and liberals seethed. The benefits range from tax cuts for millionaires and the middle class to longer-term help for the jobless. The most significant tax legislation in nearly a decade will avert big increases that would have hit millions of people starting in two weeks on New Year's Day. Obama said as a rare bipartisan assembly of lawmakers looked on at the White House. The package retains Bush-era tax rates for all taxpayers, including the wealthiest Americans, a provision Obama and congressional liberals opposed. It also offers 13 months of extended benefits to the unemployed and attempts to stimulate the economy with a Social Security payroll tax cut for all workers.

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12/18/10 (Saturday, 6:30pm & 11:30pm)

DREAM ACT BLOCKED BY SENATE
FERNANDO PIZARRO/ WASHINGTON, DC
PKG 2:10

Senate Republicans on Saturday doomed an effort that would have given hundreds of thousands of young illegal immigrants a path to legal status if they enrolled in college or joined the military. Sponsors of the "Dream Act" fell five votes short of the 60 they needed to break through largely GOP opposition and win its enactment before Republicans take over the House and narrow Democrats' majority in the Senate next month. President Barack Obama called the vote "incredibly disappointing." "A minority of senators prevented the Senate from doing what most Americans understand is best for the country," Obama said. "There was simply no reason not to pass this important legislation." Dozens of immigrants

wearing graduation mortarboards watched from the Senate's visitors gallery, disappointment on their faces, as the 55-41 vote was announced.

DONT ASK, DONT TELL

VO: 19

-- Word that the world's largest military power will allow gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military brought strong and swift reaction Saturday, with supporters declaring a civil rights milestone and detractors insisting it would weaken and divide the armed forces. In New York, home to one of the nation's largest gay communities and a gay pride parade whose grand marshal this year was an openly gay, discharged serviceman, 28-year-old Cassandra Melnikow glanced at a news ticker in Times Square announcing the repeal and said: "Excellent! It's about time." "I don't see what difference (sexual orientation) makes in the fighting military," said Melnikow, a public health researcher. "What's the big deal?" President Barack Obama had made repealing "don't ask, don't tell" a campaign promise in 2008, and rounding up a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate was a historic victory for him. By the time President Bill Clinton proposed allowing gays to serve in the military in 1993, they had been explicitly barred from military service since World War I. Foes of lifting the ban argued that the military shouldn't be used to expand the rights of gays and that allowing them to serve openly would hurt troop morale and a unit's ability to fight -- the same arguments used against women and blacks

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12/19/10 (Sunday , 6:30pm & 11:30pm)

PENTAGON DONT ASK DONT TELL

VO: 22

The debate over gays in the military has been settled with a historic decision to allow them to serve openly, but big questions lie ahead about how and when the change will take place, how troops will accept it and whether it will hamper the U.S. military effort in Afghanistan and Iraq. President Barack Obama is expected to sign into law this week the legislation that passed the Senate on Saturday, an act some believe will carry social implications as profound as President Harry S. Truman's 1948 executive order on racial equality in the military. The new law probably won't go into practice for months. Obama and his top advisers must first certify that repealing the 1993 ban on gays serving openly will not damage U.S. troops' ability to fight. That ban, known as "don't ask, don't tell," has

allowed gays to serve, but only if they kept quiet about their sexual orientation.

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12/20/10

**POLITICAL REDISTRICTING DUE TO CENSUS RESULTS
BLANCA ROSA VÍLCHEZ- NEW YORK
PKG 2:34**

The 2010 census report coming out Tuesday will include a boatload of good political news for Republicans and grim data for Democrats hoping to re-elect President Barack Obama and rebound from last month's devastating elections. The population continues to shift from Democratic-leaning Rust Belt states to Republican-leaning Sun Belt states, a trend the Census Bureau will detail in its once-a-decade report to the president. Political clout shifts, too, because the nation must reapportion the 435 House districts to make them roughly equal in population, based on the latest census figures. The biggest gainer will be Texas, a GOP-dominated state expected to gain up to four new House seats, for a total of 36. The chief losers New York and Ohio, each projected by nongovernment analysts to lose two seats were carried by Obama in 2008 and are typical of states in the Northeast and Midwest that are declining in political influence.

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12/21/2010

**TERRORISTS THREAT WARNINGS
LOURDES DEL RIO- MIAMI, FLORIDA
PKG 1:57**

Attorney General Eric Holder says he's worried about terrorist attacks on the U.S. by Americans. And high on his list of concerns is the threat posed by anti-American cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, a U.S. citizen believed to be hiding in Yemen. Holder says al-Awlaki has a familiarity with the U.S. that terrorists usually lack. He says he puts him on the list of people who worry him the most, along with al-Qaida head Osama bin Laden. In an interview on ABC's "Good Morning America," Holder said the terrorism threat is real and constant. He says he's concerned that the authorities may have missed a signal that an attack is coming. He says Americans have to be prepared for "potentially bad news."

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12/22/10

**CONGRESS HEALTH- 911 ATTACKS
BLANCA ROSA VILCHEZ- NUEVA YORK
PKG 1:57**

The Senate has passed a package of health care and economic aid for people sickened by dust from the ruins of September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. The measure was passed on a voice vote with no one objecting after Democrats and Republican critics reached a compromise reducing the bill's cost from \$6.2 billion to \$4.2 billion. The bill provides free health care and compensation for lost wages and other economic losses to first-responders for the Sept. 11 terrorist attack and survivors who fell ill after being exposed to toxins from the trade center ruins. New York and New Jersey lawmakers have waged a long, bitter fight for the measure. The House was expected to vote on it later Wednesday before Congress adjourns for the year.

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12/23/10

**HOLIDAY HEART SYNDROME
LUIS MEGID- SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
PKG 1:40**

The term "holiday heart syndrome" was coined in 1978 when researchers detected heart rhythm abnormalities in 24 study participants, none of whom had a history of heart disease. What they all did have was too much to drink, too fast. Since then, several studies have confirmed alcohol's heart rhythm-disturbing effects. The most common abnormal heart rhythm, atrial fibrillation, occurs when the upper heart chambers quiver instead of contracting regularly. Although it's often asymptomatic, it can lead to congestive heart failure or stroke. As the moniker suggests, holiday heart syndrome peaks on weekends and at holidays. Although alcohol alone can derail normal heart rhythms, its effects are exaggerated when mixed with caffeine. Rimmerman warned against the popular practice of mixing alcohol with energy drinks, calling it a "very bad combination."

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12/26/10 Sunday (6:30pm & 11:30pm)

**HEALTH INSURANCE RULES
LUIS MEGID/ SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
PKG 1:48**

California will create an Internet-based insurance exchange to let consumers comparison-shop for affordable health insurance coverage under two of the many laws taking effect with the new year. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed bills in September making California the first state to authorize an oversight board for an insurance exchange marketplace since the federal health care overhaul was enacted earlier this year. Massachusetts implemented its exchange before the federal reforms. The Republican governor and Democratic legislative leaders who carried SB900 and AB1602 said the companion bills will drive down costs and give consumers more options by promoting competition between health insurance companies. Republican lawmakers countered that the measures create an expensive new health care bureaucracy even before the federal law takes effect in 2014. Supporters said the five-member board overseeing the California Health Benefit Exchange will need those three years to hire staff, set up the program, select health plans to participate and enroll Californians needing health insurance.

**BRAIN SOCIAL STUDY
VO 20**

If you spend time with a lot of friends, a part of your brain may be unusually large. That part is called the amygdala (uh-MIG'-duh-luh), and it's deep in your brain. Researchers found that among volunteers who got brain scans, those with a bigger amygdala tended to report seeing more friends and family regularly. Lisa Feldman Barrett of Northeastern University reports the work in a paper published online Sunday by the journal Nature Neuroscience. She says the result makes sense because the amygdala is at the center of a brain network that's important for socializing. The study couldn't show whether a bigger amygdala leads to more friends, or vice versa. Barrett says the influence might run in both directions.

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12/27/10

**AT&T DOCUMENTARY ABOUT TEXTING AND DRIVING
JAIME GARCIA- LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**

PKG 2:06

The wireless company planned to release the video today, before New Year's Eve. The timing is aimed, the company said, at showing that texting and driving deserves to be considered as dangerous as drunk driving. The documentary includes intense, sometimes disturbing, images, including that of Ms. West, as she spent her last minutes alive on a breathing tube. Research from the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute shows that motorists who text face a 23 times greater risk of crash or near crash. Other wireless carriers, like Verizon Wireless, have in the last year stepped up efforts to warn about the risks of texting and driving. AT&T said it plans to distribute the documentary to schools, safety organizations and government agencies, and is urging people to take a pledge on its Facebook page not to text and drive.

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12/28/10

STRAWBERRIES AND CHOCOLATE GENE**VO:20**

Strawberries and chocolate go all too well together in fondue, cakes, and any other dessert you can imagine. Now scientists are learning more about the genetic makeup of both of these foods. The journal "Nature Genetics" is publishing studies about the genomes of the cocoa and strawberry plants. Researchers say what they've learned about antioxidants in both could lead to genetically modified versions -- that could be more nutritious, and easier to grow.

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12/29/10

MORE JOBS FOR 2011**LOURDES MELUZA/ WASHINGTON, DC****PKG : 2:10**

A new CareerBuilder survey finds that more employers plan to add full-time workers in 2011 compared to 2010. The survey found that new hiring is more likely "in technology and revenue-producing fields." "More than half of employers reported they are in a better financial position today than they were one year ago," Matt Ferguson, CEO of CareerBuilder, said in the survey statement. "2011 will usher in a healthier employment picture as business leaders grow more confident in the economy. Our survey

indicates more jobs will be added in 2011 than 2010, but job creation will remain gradual. The year will be characterized by steady, measured gains across various industries." The hiring outlook is different by geographic region, with the West having the best outlook and the Midwest and South having the lowest percentage hiring expectation.

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12/30/10

UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES
BLANCA ROSA VÍLCHEZ/ NUEVA YORK
PKG 2:17

The number of people applying for unemployment benefits last week fell to its lowest level since July 2008. New jobless claims dropped 34,000 to 388,000, the fewest since July 2008, the Labor Department said Thursday. The level of applications has either fallen or remained unchanged in five of the past six weeks. Unemployment applications below 425,000 signal modest job growth. But economists say applications need to fall consistently to 375,000 or below to indicate a significant decline in unemployment. Applications for unemployment benefits peaked during the recession at 651,000 in March 2009. The level of applications can be particularly volatile during the holidays. But a department analyst said no unusual factors affected the report. Analysts said what matters most is the downward trend. "If we can continue this improving trend, we'll likely see stronger job growth in 2011," said Benjamin Reitzes, an economist at BMO Capital Markets. Applications are the closest thing to a real-time snapshot of the job market. They reflect the level of layoffs but can also indicate whether companies are willing to add workers. The four-week average, a less-volatile measure, dropped 12,500 to 414,000 in the week ending Dec. 25. That's the lowest level since late July 2008.

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12/31/10

STATES IMMIGRATIONS LAWS
JAIME GARCIA/ LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
PKG 1:51

Get ready for some states to try for Arizona-style immigration laws. Gov.-elect Nikki Haley, R-S.C., is among the state chiefs who want to crack down on illegal immigration with legislation that is similar or tougher than

Arizona's statute, which allows law enforcement to check on legal status if there is reason to believe someone is in the U.S. illegally. A federal judge has blocked full enforcement of the Arizona law. Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer, a Republican who was re-elected last month, is appealing the ruling. The National Conference of State Legislatures predicts there could be a record number of state bills dealing with immigration in 2011, according to a Bloomberg story That would be up from 1,500 such measures filed in each of the past two years.

=====END OF REPORT=====