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POLL SHOWS APPROVAL RATING

OBAMA LEAVING OFFICE AT 60% APPROVAL

By: Allen Cone
UPI

President Barack Obama is leaving office with his highest job approval rating since shortly after becoming president -- 60 percent -- according to an ABC News/Washington Post poll.

Also, 61 percent of the respondents approve of him personally in the poll.

Obama's job rating is at its highest since June 2009 when it was 69 percent.

His transition approval rating was 83 percent in 2009.

That contrasted with his successor on Friday -- Donald Trump -- who has a 40 percent approval rating of

See RATING, page 2



President Barack Obama speaks to the media as he attends the final White House press briefing of his administration, in Washington, D.C., Wednesday. Obama leaves office with a 60 percent job approval rating in an ABC News/Washington Post poll. Photo by Kevin Dietsch/UPI | License Photo



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Trump accuser files defamation lawsuit against him

By: Stephen Feller
UPI

A former contestant on The Apprentice filed a defamation suit Tuesday in Los Angeles against President-elect Donald Trump for his public response to her accusation of sexual assault last year.

Summer Zervos and her attorney, Gloria Allred, announced at a press conference Tuesday that they have filed a lawsuit against Trump for allegedly lying about, attacking and denigrating Zervos during rallies and interviews. Zervos said she would be willing to drop the suit if the president-elect takes back what he said about her and admits the assault happened.

"Being branded a liar who came forward only for fame or at the manipulation of the [Hillary] Clinton campaign has been painful and demoralizing," Zervos said in the lawsuit.

Through a spokesperson, Trump called the suit "more of the same from Gloria Allred. There is no truth to this absurd story."



Summer Zervos, at right, a former contestant on The Apprentice, who previously accused Donald Trump of making unwelcome sexual advances toward her, kissing her on the lips and groping her in a Beverly Hills hotel, attends a news conference in Los Angeles with her attorney Gloria Allred to announce the filing of a defamation lawsuit against the president-elect over his denials of her allegations on January 17, 2017. Photo by Jim Ruymen/UPI | License Photo

In October, Zervos, who was a contestant on The Apprentice, accused Trump of kissing her with-

out consent, pressing himself against her and groping her body several times during a 2007 meeting at the Beverly Hills Hotel. While she told friends and family at the time, she did not come forward pub-

licly until late in the 2016 presidential campaign

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Billionaire DeVos promises no business conflicts with education post

By Doug G. Ware
UPI

Superstar GOP donor and billionaire Betsy DeVos faced some tough questions from congressional Democrats at her Senate confirmation hearing Tuesday, on issues relevant to her nomination as President-elect Donald Trump's education secretary.

DeVos, a well-known proponent of a national school choice and voucher program to cover the cost of private school placement, took her seat before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions late Tuesday afternoon. The hearing ended around 9 p.m.

During her testimony, DeVos answered questions about her qualifications to be education chief, LGBT equality and, of course, her vision for pushing the school voucher issue.

School Choice-School Vouchers

A primary concern of most opponents to government-funded private schooling is the potential cost-cutting impact it could have on the public school system.

"None of us in my family would have been able to go to college were it not for robust federal support," Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., the panel's top Democrat, told DeVos.

"I owe everything I have to strong public schools."

"I take this issue very seriously."

"While we may have differences, I think we can all agree that learning as a lifelong pursuit is a fundamental American virtue," DeVos said in her opening remarks.

"Every parent in America dreams of a future when their children has access to schools with the rigor, challenges and safe environments that successfully prepares them for a brighter, more hopeful tomorrow."

When asked whether she can guarantee that public schools will not lose "a single penny" of government funding after an implementation of vouchers, DeVos did not answer "yes" or "no."

"I am hopeful we can work together to find common ground in ways we can solve those issues and empower parents to make choices on behalf of their children that are right for them," she said.

Qualifications

Though DeVos has a track record in advocating for educational matters, some have expressed concern that her significant investments in education-related enterprises, such as a loan refinancing company, could bring about various conflicts of interest -- much in the same way skeptics are concerned Trump's businesses could interfere with his duties as



Senator Tim Scott, R-S.C., and former senator Joe Lieberman flank Betsy DeVos, President-elect Donald Trump's pick for education secretary, as they prepare to introduce her before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions during her confirmation hearing on Tuesday. Photo by Pete Marovich/UPI | License Photo

president.

Murray noted that the Office of Government Ethics has not yet cleared DeVos -- and could not provide any assurance that she would be cleared -- for the post of education secretary, with regard to possible conflicts.

Like Trump, DeVos has said she would sever ties with her businesses, if confirmed -- but return to them once she leaves office.

"Let me be very clear about any conflicts.

Where conflicts are identified, they will be resolved," DeVos said, noting that she is in the process of divesting from one potential conflict that was brought to her attention.

"I will not be conflicted, period."

LGBT Equality
DeVos said Tuesday that she "fully embraces"

equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students.

Concern about her LGBT views stems from her family's contributions to the Christian group Focus on the Family, which advocates "conversion therapy" for gays and lesbians.

"As a mom, I just can't imagine having a child who would feel discriminated against for any rea-

son and I would want my child in a safe environment," she said.

Rep. Tim Scott, R-S.C., and former Democratic and Independent Connecticut senator Joe Lieberman both expressed support for DeVos during her introduction at the start of the hearing.

If passed by the education committee, DeVos' nomination will get a vote in the full Senate.

Rating

continued from page 1

his transition.

Obama's rating is boosted by an improving economy on which he has a 61 percent approval rating. His approval rating for handling healthcare is 52 percent and 53 percent for dealing with terrorism.

In the overall rating,

42 percent approve of him "strongly" compared with 42 percent disapproval.

Franklin Roosevelt had the highest poll approval rating upon leaving office -- 66 percent by Gallup.

The lowest was Richard Nixon at 24 percent. Obama was just behind Bill Clinton (65 percent), and Ronald Reagan (64 percent). Obama's predecessor, George W. Bush,

had a 33 percent rating when he left office eight years ago.

Since Obama became president, his average is 50 percent compared with 51 percent for George W. Bush.

Obama's lowest approval rating was 40 percent.

When asked whether Obama will go in history as an above-average president, 51 percent agreed.

That contrasts with 35 percent for the first Bush president, 47 percent for Clinton and 16 percent for the second Bush at 43.

Among specific segments of the population, Obama's rating is strongest among black people (92 percent), Democrats (90 percent), liberals (85 percent), Hispanics (85 percent) and city dwellers (75 percent). Conversely,

18 percent of Republicans approve of him but that's better than 7 percent in March 2015. His approval rating among conservatives is 18 percent. Among white people, he's at 47 percent. Other ratings are 58 percent among men and 62 percent among women as well as 61 percent among independents, 67 percent who are college grads, 58 percent non-college grads.

His approval rating among those who wanted Trump to win the presidency was 19 percent compared with 97 percent who wanted Hillary Clinton.

The poll, produced by Langer Research Associates, was conducted Jan. 12-15 among a random sample of 1,005 American adults and has a margin of error of 3.5 percentage points.

Lawsuit

continued from page 1

when a recording of Trump bragging about harassing and groping women without consent sounded like

what she accused him of doing to her.

"I vaguely remember Ms. Zervos as one of the

many contestants on The Apprentice over the years," Trump said in a statement at the time.

"To be clear, I never met her at a hotel or greeted her inappropriately a decade ago.

That is not who I am as a person, and it is not how I've conducted my life."

In the statement, he said Zervos had contacted him for help and asked for a meeting at a California restaurant in April 2016 in an attempt to discredit the accusation.

Zervos blamed the Clinton campaign for accusations by more than a dozen women that the president-elect had sexually assaulted them.

In a speech later in the campaign, Trump said "every woman lied when they came forward to hurt my campaign" and threatened

to sue them all after the election ended.

Zervos alleges in the lawsuit that Trump's use of a "national and international bully pulpit" opened her up to harassment and threats of physical violence from his supporters, which she claims he knew could happen.

Even still, Zervos said the lawsuit is not about money or fame, contrary to what Trump has said.

"I would still be willing to dismiss my case against him immediately for no monetary compensation if he will simply retract his false and defamatory statements about me, and acknowledge that I told the truth about him," Zervos said.



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Russia extends Edward Snowden's stay to 2020

By Ed Adamczyk
UPI

Russia extended Edward Snowden's leave to remain in the country until 2020, a Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said.

Maria Zakharova confirmed the extension of Snowden's invitation to stay in Russia after former acting CIA director Michael Morell suggested in an opinion column on the website The Cipher Brief that Russian President Vladimir Putin should consider returning Snowden to the United States as the "perfect inauguration gift" to President-elect Donald Trump.

Snowden, a former contractor for the National Security Agency, leaked information regarding U.S. intelligence and surveillance operations in 2013, then fled the country.

Russia granted him in

2013, and gave him a three-year extension of his leave to remain there in 2014.

In the United States he has been accused of espionage and theft of government property.

The White House received a petition with more than 1 million supporters to pardon Snowden, it announced Tuesday, but added Snowden had not submitted an official request for clemency.

The announcement came after President Barack Obama commuted the sentence of Chelsea Manning, who similarly leaked government information.

Obama reduced Manning's 35-year prison term to the seven years she has already served.

While Snowden has not commented on the extension of his invitation to stay in Russia, he offered thanks to Obama for freeing Manning.



Edward Snowden speaks from Russia via monitor at a New York conference on September 14. A Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said Wednesday that Snowden's leave to remain in Russia was extended to 2020. File Photo by Dennis Van Tine/UPI | License Photo

Secret Service settles racial bias suit for \$24 million

Eight of the 10 original plaintiffs could receive up to \$300,000 each under the settlement terms

By Ed Adamczyk
UPI

The U.S. Secret Service agreed to pay \$24 million to settle a class action lawsuit from 2000 which alleged racial bias in promotion of agents.

The settlement was filed Tuesday in U.S. District Court in Washington.

The case involved more than 100 African-American Secret Service agents who repeatedly applied for promotions from 1995 to 2005 and were turned down in favor of white agents. The plaintiffs said the white agents often had less experience and lower performance ratings than African-American applicants. The lead plaintiff and member of President Bill Clinton's security detail, Ray Moore, said in court documents that he bid for promotions more than 180 times and was overlooked, adding he trained several of the white agents who were given promotions.

Eight of the 10 original plaintiffs could receive up

to \$300,000 each under the terms of the settlement. The settlement ends more than 16 years of litigation, although the terms of the agreement stipulate the Secret Service is not obligated to admit wrongdoing.

The settlement talks were driven largely by Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson, whose agency includes the Secret Service. The settlement comes at the end of an eight-year period in which the Secret Service's primary job has been to protect the United States' first African-American president; it also follows a period in which the Secret Service changed its senior management structure and endured several embarrassing incidents regarding its agents. "I am pleased that we are able to finally put this chapter of Secret Service history behind us," said Johnson. "Had the matter gone to trial, it would have required that we re-live things long past, just at a time when the Secret Service is on the mend."



Members of the Secret Service Uniformed Division are seen on the South Lawn of the White House on May 4, 2015 in Washington, D.C. A settlement to a racial discrimination suit, in which nearly 100 African-American agents said they were denied promotions because of their race, was announced Tuesday. File Photo by Kevin Dietsch/UPI | License Photo

Florida airport shooter claims he was inspired by the Islamic State

By Stephen Feller
UPI

Law enforcement officials say the man accused

of shooting 11 people at an airport in South Florida, five of whom died, claims to have been radicalized online by jihadist websites

to commit the mass shooting.

Prosecutors said in federal court Tuesday that Esteban Santiago, who

allegedly flew to Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport on Jan. 6 to open fire on a crowded part of the airport, acted

after being inspired by the Islamic State and jihad-focused online chat rooms.

But prosecutors also suggested to a judge that

his motives for the crime remain somewhat unknown, despite previous reporting he had told FBI agents in Alaska he was being forced to fight for the Islamic State, also known as ISIS, ISIL and Daesh.

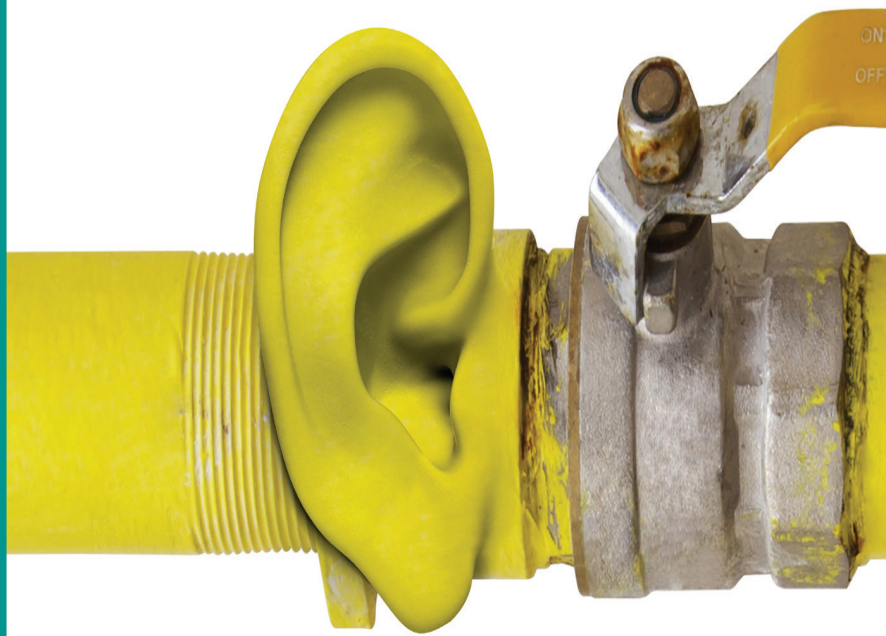
The Islamic State claim, however, has been directly contradicted by Santiago himself, who initially told police his mind was being controlled by the government.

Even with the conflict, Santiago freely admitted to planning and carrying out the attack, according to investigators and the prosecutor.

"He has admitted to all of the facts with respect to the terrible and tragic events of Jan. 6," Assistant U.S. Attorney Rick Del Toro said in court Tuesday. "These were vulnerable victims who he shot down methodically."

Santiago flew one way from Anchorage, Alaska to Fort Lauderdale, where he picked up his gun case from baggage claim, walked into a bathroom, loaded the weapon and came out shooting at random people. He shot 11 people, killing five and wounding six, most of whom have since been released from the hospital.

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Obama commutes 209 more sentences, including Chelsea Manning's

By Doug G. Ware
UPI

President Barack Obama on Tuesday commuted the sentences of 209 more U.S. prisoners and pardoned 64 others outright.

The additional actions bring the president's total to 1,385, which is more than the previous 12 U.S. presidents combined.

More than 500 of the commutations affected life sentences.

"These 273 individuals

learned that our nation is a forgiving nation, where hard work and a commitment to rehabilitation can lead to a second chance, and where wrongs from the past will not deprive an individual of the opportunity to move forward," Obama adviser Neil Eggleston wrote on the White House website.

One of the inmates granted relief with Tuesday's actions was Chelsea Manning, the former Army intelligence whistleblower who leaked classified in-

formation to WikiLeaks in 2010.

Three years later, she pleaded guilty on 10 criminal counts, was convicted on 21 others and was sentenced to 35 years in prison.

A transgender woman formerly known as Bradley Manning, she has pleaded with Obama for help and twice attempted suicide last year at the all-male U.S. Army prison in Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

Instead of her scheduled release in 2045, Manning



U.S. Army PFC Chelsea Manning was included Tuesday on a list of additional commutations granted by President Barack Obama, which scrapped the bulk of her 35-year prison sentence for 31 criminal counts related to her leak of classified materials to WikiLeaks in 2010. She was scheduled to remain in prison until 2045 but Obama's commutation pushed the release date up to May 17. File Photo by UPI/U.S. Army

will now be freed on May 17. Speculation arose in recent days that Obama would include Manning on

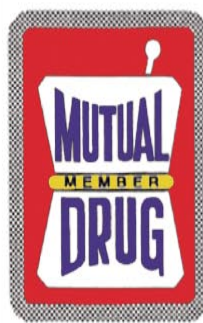
his list of commutations, but it wasn't confirmed until the White House's announcement Tuesday.

Another whistleblower, Edward Snowden, who leaked classified documents in 2014 exposing the National Security Agency's domestic phone surveillance program, has pushed for clemency for Manning on social media.

However, it appears unlikely he will receive similar treatment anytime soon.

"Chelsea Manning is somebody who went through the military criminal justice process, was exposed to due process, was found guilty, was sentenced for her crimes, and she acknowledged wrongdoing," White House spokesman Josh Earnest said Tuesday.

"Snowden fled into the arms of an adversary, and has sought refuge in a country that most recently made a concerted effort to undermine confidence in our democracy."



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An Ode to The Liberal Kraken

I can remember vividly the first time I met David. It was in the winter of 2002; my colleague Nancie and I were on the train coming from New York to DC, and everyone on the train recognized, and David, ever inquisitive, wanted to know who that guy was.

We hit it off right away, and ended up talking and cracking jokes all the way to D.C. David invited me to a Ravens game, and since then we became fast friends.

David and I's friendship was based on mutual respect and humor. I can clearly remember him playfully chiding me for my conservative views – and threatening to release the Liberal Kraken (himself) if I went too far on one issue or another.

Over time our dialogues evolved into deeper discussions about the state of our country, and how to help the inner cities. David became a regular co-host on my radio show on Monday's and Thursdays, and he even guest hosted when I would go out of town on vacation.

David made amazing connections with people and even my audience members. I remember at times coming back to the show and callers would call in and say, hey – why did you come back so soon? What happened to David? He's the real brotha' – not you Armstrong.

I have to admit I would sometimes get annoyed that David had become a real star and overshadowed

me on my own show - but it was real.

David had an uncanny ability to connect with people and relate to their sorrows and their triumphs.

He had empathy and understanding that belied a wisdom about the meaning of life. When I recently revealed to our audience that he was leaving us, grown men called in crying. They literally lost it – he deeply touched them and they appreciated his kindness and empathy.

David was always thoughtful about my mother and he would always send flowers on my mother's birthday to wish her well.

Just this past Mother's Day 2016 he reached out to me with a text, saying "Hoping your Mother's Day and weekend are going wonderfully.

Hugs and love to all." Everyone who knows me understands how close and precious my mom is to me and it really touched me that he would remember to say kind things about her.

In fact, one of the things that really made us bond closer with each other was when he had a falling out with his own mom, and was not communicating with her as much as I thought he should.

I literally harassed him to rekindle his relationship with his, which he of course did.

He would always thank me for this, and counted his strengthening his relationship with his mother as one of his greatest life's



ARMSTRONG WILLIAMS

and character.

David was the ultimate travel companion.

I tend to be somewhat reserved in public situations because of my perceived public image – you never know how someone is going to react to you – but David would literally talk to anyone and everyone.

It was never more fun than our annual pilgrimage to Pimlico race track to watch the Preakness.

David would be the life of the party.

We would pre-game at the Black Eye Suzie the day before. It was a blast! I remember the year the odds on favorite Barbaro broke his leg and had to be euthanized – it was a sad day at the track, but David came up a winner.

He made so much money on his own 5 to 1 bet that when he went to cash out his winnings they had to call security to escort us to the car – he won thousands and thousands of dollars and basked in the limelight. It wasn't really about winning all that money that mattered to David – it was the spice of life, the excitement of seeing the odds dance that made his deep blue eyes gleam with joy.

David was generous to a fault, not only with his

achievements. It showed me that deep down David was a person of strength

time, but with his fortune. Ever fascinated by technology, he would marvel at all the new gadgets that came out.

I remember when the new Apple Watch came out, he thought it was the coolest thing ever.

And he wanted to share the experience with me, so he kept urging me to get it.

I was of course too penny-pinching at the time – having to meet payroll every month in a growing company can force one to lose perspective on enjoying the blessing we have already accrued.

But he kept insisting, and I said no way would I spend so much money on a watch like that.

But one day he showed up with a brand new Apple Watch as a gift.

I must admit I was so happy, it was such an unexpected and pleasant surprise.

I now wear the watch every day – even when I'm wearing another watch! I love it, and often when it chirps, or I get a text, I chuckle and remember David's sincere generosity.

David really was the Liberal Kraken. He was a man, a myth and a legend.

Like the Norwegian monster of lore, he would lay in wait, stringing you along with easy arguments, letting you think you were winning.

And just when you thought you had him beaten in a debate he would lean back, laugh, and just destroy you with pierc-

ing logic and unassailable facts.

It was a marvel to watch in these circles of wealth and privilege when people assumed just because he shared their class status, he also shared their class sentiments.

David was a humanist, through and through, and would not hesitate to let you know where he stood on issues of social concern.

He would often call me or text me after such marathon debates and say, with a laugh, "I finally turned Kraken on those fools!"

When I heard that his health had turned for the worst and the situation looked terminal, I was more afraid than he was.

He seemed to take the finality in stride, living every day to the fullest, taking care to let all those who he loved know he loved them – and to show it in his actions.

I remember his last trip to Rome with his family, where he spent a month in a beautiful villa and renewed his vows to his beautiful wife Michele.

He soaked up every minute and took it all with a sense of equanimity.

"Well. The idea is to just not worry about it while I'm away," he wrote to me. "NOT getting chemo can't kill me any faster at this stage.

Good heavens. I almost weigh what you weigh....!!!! I need to eat for six weeks solid. No place better than eating pasta in Italy!"

He sent me picture of his trip to Rome, marveling at the six-bedroom villa in Rome on five acres where he and his family stayed for over a month.

"This was the expensive option," he quipped, "but pretty much well worth it. We figured there's a chance we never quite get to do something like this ever again together."

I saw David recently at Johns Hopkins to finally say good bye and express my deep love and respect.

Up to the very last, David pressed the juice of life fully.

He acted in the way the philosopher Seneca would have advised in his letters to his cousin Lucilius – "Who knows what a day is worth? Who understands that he is dying every day? Our mistake, you see, is in looking ahead to death.

A good deal of death has already passed. The years which have so far gone by are in the hands of death.

So, do what you claim to be doing, and embrace every hour. In that way you'll be less dependent on tomorrow if you set your hand to today.

Life flits by while things get put off."

Armstrong Williams is manager and sole owner of Howard Stirk Holdings I & II Broadcast Television Stations and Executive Editor of American CurrentSee online magazine. Watch our Right Side Forum every Saturday on NewsChannel 8 TV 28, 10:30 a.m. to 11 a.m., with repeats at 6:30 p.m. EST.

Western Union Aida Diarra Chats With Afrikan Post

Western Union Aida Diarra Chats With Afrikan Post And TheAfricanDream.net

Afrikan Post Newspaper and TheAfricanDream.net had the opportunity of interacting with Aida Diarra; Regional Vice President (Africa) of Western Union (WU), a leader in global payment services as it celebrates 20 years of business with Africa.

At a meeting in WU's Washington DC offices in the USA, Aida gave a thorough insight into WU Operations in Africa as she spoke to George Bright-Abu of the Afrikan Post and Oral Ofori of TheAfricanDream.net; respective news organizations targeting African audiences in the US.

Below is the Question (Q) and Answer (A) session that transpired:

Q: You have been with

WU since 1999; starting as Assistant Marketing Manager in charge of US Outbound to Africa operations, give us a background to your rise up the ranks?

A: I look at my career as the fantastic opportunity that it is which allowed me to be on both sides of the transactions when it comes to sending and receiving money to and from Africa.

So I was fortunate to be in charge of our operations from the US servicing the African corridors.

A few years later I decided to join our team in Africa because that is where everything is happening.

I was assigned the marketing responsibility for all Africa and my role evolved into a regional role which ended up with me being in that role for Africa.

Q: Where in Africa are you currently based?

A: We are based in Morocco; the headquarters for Africa, though we also have regional offices - one in South Africa and the other one in Lagos Nigeria - on the continent.

Q: Your Decision to go to Africa might be borne out of your study of the demographics and the huge financial potential. Can you give us some insight into the financial aspects of your study?

A: What is important to know is that the financial flows in Africa is driven mainly due to the migration patterns of Africans, as you know Africans move a lot.

It is believed that about 30 million Africans live outside of their countries of origin.

A lot of this migration is happening also in the

United States, Europe, as well as within Africa itself.

All this is to say that there is a lot of movement that is fostering a lot of the remittance that we see in the region.

In terms of total flows: the varying numbers depend on the respective

organizations monitoring the industry, it is believed that there is as much as \$60B US sent to Africa through WU, but again it varies from different sources.

Q: Which Country can you single out as the highest inflow destination?

A: The way I would like to look at remittance is more from the aspect of the impact on a given country.

In some 15 countries in Africa, the remittance flow contributes to more than 10 percent of their GDP so that is how impactful it is.

PUBLIC MEETING

NCDOT TO HOLD PUBLIC MEETING FOR THE PROPOSED NEW INTERCHANGE ON I-95 AT SUNSET AVENUE (S.R. 1770) IN ROCKY MOUNT, NASH COUNTY TIP PROJECT NO. U-5026

The N.C. Department of Transportation will hold a public meeting regarding the proposed project to construct a new interchange on I-95 at Sunset Avenue (S.R. 1770) in Rocky Mount. The meeting will take place on Monday, February 6, 2017 from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Nash Community College, Business & Industrial Center, Brown Auditorium, Room 5 located at 522 North Old Carriage Road in Rocky Mount.

The purpose of the proposed project is to provide improved access to I-95 in support of an economic development initiative in the Rocky Mount area. The project will involve adding ramps at the existing Sunset Avenue overpass and widening Sunset Avenue to four lanes with a median between Old Carriage Road (S.R. 1603) and Halifax Road (S.R. 1544).

Interested citizens may attend at any time during the hours mentioned above. NCDOT representatives will be available to answer questions and listen to comments regarding the project. The opportunity to submit written comments will also be provided at the meeting or via phone, email, or mail by February 21, 2017. Comments received will be taken into consideration as the project develops. Please note that no formal presentation will be made.

Project information and materials can be viewed as they become available online at <http://www.ncdot.gov/projects/publicmeetings>.

For additional information, contact Jay McInnis, P.E., NCDOT Project Engineer by mail: 1548 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1548, by phone: (919) 707-6029, or via email: jmccinnis@ncdot.gov.

NCDOT will provide auxiliary aids and services under the Americans with Disabilities Act for disabled persons who wish to participate in this meeting. Anyone requiring special services should contact; Caitlyn Ridge, P.E., Human Environment Section, Public Involvement Officer via e-mail at ceridge1@ncdot.gov or by phone (919) 707-6091 as early as possible so that arrangements can be made.

Persons who speak Spanish and do not speak English, or have a limited ability to read, speak or understand English, may receive interpretive services upon request prior to the meeting by calling 1-800-481-6494.

Aquellas personas que hablan español y no hablan inglés, o tienen limitaciones para leer, hablar o entender inglés, podrían recibir servicios de interpretación si los solicitan antes de la reunión llamando al 1-800-481-6494.

Solicitation for DBE/MBE/WBE Quotations

Sanford Contractors, Inc. is seeking certified DBE/MBE/WBE quotations on the following projects:

Project: Union Pines HS Track Improvements & Stormwater Upgrades

Location: 1981 Union Church Road, Cameron, North Carolina 28326

Owner: Moore County Schools

Bid Date: January 31, 2017

**Quotes must be submitted to our office no later than 10 am on January 30, 2017 to be considered*

Interested parties may contact Matt Brown at (919) 775-7882 or mjbrown@sanfordcontractors.com for further information. Plans and specifications can be reviewed at the office. Sanford Contractors, Inc. is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

Basic Skills Plus is training students for the workplace

In just its third year, the Basic Skills Plus program at Edgecombe Community College is making a solid impact.

The program enables students seeking a high school diploma or its equivalent to earn an occupational credential and even work toward college credits at the same time.

Basic Skills Plus, which is a program in the Division of College and Career Readiness (CCR), began in Fall 2013.

Students in the program are co-enrolled in high school courses, occupational courses, and college-level courses. Through structured career pathways, students receive industry-specific training.

Initially, the only career pathway offered was Nurse Aide I. Since 2013, career pathways have expanded to the current slate of seven. In addition to Nurse Aide I, pathways are Automotive Technology, Barbering, Certified Production Technician, Cosmetology, Early Childhood Education, and Emergency Medical Technician.

"This is an excellent opportunity for students who

are looking for a pathway to employment while gaining their high school credential," says LaShawnda Washington, Basic Skills Plus instructor on the college's Rocky Mount campus.

Last fall, ten students completed a pathway and earned an industry credential while completing the requirements for a high school credential.

This is twice the number of students who completed a pathway the previous fall.

Jerry Harper, director of College and Career Readiness, points to other initiatives under way to ensure that students are provided training opportunities while they work toward their high school credential.

The latest example is the start-up of an Integrated Education and Training (IET) class that will provide Basic Skills Plus students with basic advanced manufacturing knowledge and training.

"It is no longer enough to lead a student toward a high school credential," Harper says.

"We must ensure that all students receive ca-



Students representing four of the seven career pathways in College and Career Readiness Basic Skills Plus recently celebrated their attainment of various stackable credentials and pathway completion as they worked toward their high school credential. Seated from left are D'Najia Dickens, Cosmetology; Wilma Daniels, Early Childhood Education; Javares Dawes, Barbering; and Tracey Moore, Nurse Aide I. Standing are LaShawnda Washington, Basic Skills Plus instructor, and Jerry Harper, director of College and Career Readiness.

reer-related education and training so that their path to employment will be a successful one."

Army Corps of Engineers launches Dakota Access study

By Allen Cone
UPI

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has launched a full environmental study of the Dakota Access pipeline's crossing in North Dakota.

On Wednesday, the Army published a notice to prepare an impact study on the Lake Oahe crossing of the Missouri River.

It's about a half-mile upstream from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's reservation.

The tribe protests the crossing because it relies on the lake for a variety of purposes, including fishing.

Energy Transfer Partners can't lay pipe under the reservoir during the study of the \$3.7 billion project.

But the company asked U.S. District James Boasberg on Monday to block the study, claiming it already has the necessary

approval to drill under the lake.

On July 25, the Corps determined the crossing wouldn't have a significant impact on the environment but on Dec. 4 it said it "proposed location merits additional analysis, more rigorous exploration and evaluation of reasonable siting alternatives, and greater public and tribal participation and comments."

The Army Corps wants opinions from the public and will schedule meetings.

Approximately 570,000 barrels per day will flow through the pipeline, which is 30 inches in diameter.

The approximate 1,172-mile pipeline connects the Bakken and Three Forks oil production areas in North Dakota to current crude oil market near Patoka, Ill.

At least 589 protesters have been arrested, including three on Monday.



Police and protesters clash on the Backwater Bridge, north of a protest camp in North Dakota's Morton County on November 20. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers published a notice it's initiating an environmental impact statement related to the routing the Dakota Access pipeline under Lake Oahe in North Dakota. Photo courtesy of Morton County Sheriff's Department

Obama administration gives another \$500M to U.N.'s Green Climate Fund

By Allen Cone
UPI

The State Department gave \$500 million to the U.N. Green Climate Fund just before Donald Trump,

who has called global warming a "hoax," takes office.

The outgoing administration announced the contribution Tuesday, which is in addition to the \$500

million the United States gave to the fund last year. President Barack Obama originally pledged \$3 billion.

The money came from the fiscal year 2016 Eco-

nomics Support Fund appropriation and helps fund the Paris climate agreement approved by more than 180 nations to cut emissions.

The fund's goal is \$100 billion by 2020 from public and private funding.

"The GCF is the world's largest multilateral finance institution dedicated to advancing low-emission,

climate-resilient development," according to a State Department release.

"The GCF was created to help protect vulnerable populations and drive clean energy deployment, all with a special focus on engaging the private sector and mobilizing private capital."

Trump has threatened to pull the United States out of the accord.

"It's not being done to try to provoke a reaction from the incoming administration or to try to dictate to them one way or the other how they are going to deal with climate issues," John Kirby, the State Department spokesman, said at a media briefing Tuesday.

"This is an investment that had been long planned."

Trump, since becoming president-elect, has become more "open-minded" to the possibility of climate change.

He recently met with former Vice President Al Gore to discuss climate change.

"I'm still open-minded. Nobody really knows.

Look, I'm somebody that gets it, and nobody really knows.

It's not something that's so hard and fast," Trump said last month in an interview on Fox News Sunday.

He named Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt, who has denied the existence of climate change, as his choice to lead the Environmental Protection Agency.

But other cabinet nominees are more open to climate change.

Rex Tillerson, the former ExxonMobil chief and the president-elect's nominee for secretary of state, said during his Senate confirmation hearing last week that he wants the United States to keep "a seat at the table" on addressing global warming.

And interior secretary nominee Ryan Zinke said Tuesday during his hearing that humans' role in the rise of global temperatures is not yet fully understood.

Solicitation for DBE/MBE/WBE Quotations

Solicitation for MWBE Quotations
Sanford Contractors, Inc. is seeking certified MWBE quotations on the following projects:

- Project:** Mebane Community Park
- Location:** Mebane, North Carolina
- Owner:** City of Mebane
- Bid Date:** January 26, 2017

*Quotes must be submitted to our office no later than 10 am on January 25, 2017 to be considered

Interested parties may contact Matt Brown at (919) 775-7882 or mjbrown@sanfordcontractors.com for further information. Plans and specifications can be reviewed at the office. Sanford Contractors, Inc. is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

Thank You



Eric and I would like to thank each of you for all your support and encouragement. History has been made and it's because of you, the great citizens of Pitt County. I am looking forward to Making a Difference From the Bench and continuing to make a positive impact in our Community.

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District Court Judge



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POSSESSION OF COCAINE — FELONY
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Chicago Cubs feted at White House for World Series title

By The Sports Xchange
UPI

President Barack Obama, wrapping up his last week in office, celebrated with the World Series champion Chicago Cubs at the White House on Monday.

The president, who has a home in Chicago, is a diehard Chicago White Sox fan but rooted for the Cubs after the Sox failed to reach the postseason.

The Cubs won their first World Series title since 1908 by defeating the Cleveland Indians in November. Cubs players filed into the White House East Room on Martin Luther King Day for Obama's final ceremony for a championship sports team.

He leaves office Friday when Donald Trump is sworn in. As Obama walked into the East Room, the boisterous audience chanted, "Let's Go, Cub-

bies!" "They said this day would never come," Obama said as he started his remarks, adding: "Something none of my predecessors ever had a chance to say, 'Welcome to the White House, the World Series champion Chicago Cubs.' ... I will say that the Cubs took long enough.

I've only got four days left." Cubs first baseman Anthony Rizzo, who wears No. 44, presented the nation's 44th president with a No. 44 Cubs jersey with OBAMA on the back.

"Among Sox fans," Obama said, "I'm the Cubs' No. 1 fan."

Cubs president Theo Epstein issued a "midnight pardon" to the president for being a White Sox fan.

Obama said on Martin Luther King Day that "sports has the power to bring us together even when we're divided.



President Barack Obama hold up his Chicago Cubs jersey during a ceremony honoring the Cubs in the East Room of the White House in Washington, D.C., on January 16, 2017. The Cubs won Major League Baseball's World Series in October. Next to Obama is co-owner Laura Ricketts and first baseman Anthony Rizzo. At left is manager Joe Maddon. Photo by Pat Benic/UPI | License Photo

Family Over Football: Ricky Proehl quits coaching Carolina Panthers for sons

By Alex Butler
UPI

Ricky Proehl is ditching a pro football gig in favor of the lesser lights.

The former wide receiver resigned from his gig as the Carolina Panthers wide receivers coach Monday. Instead, he'll spend his time watching his two sons play college football.

They both play wide receiver.

Austin is a junior at the University of North

Carolina.

Blake will be a freshman at East Carolina University.

"I always told him when he started at Chapel Hill that if he became a starter or an impact player, that I would walk away to come to all his games," Proehl told Panthers.com.

"It would really hurt me to not be there for him.

"The first thing kids do is look back for mom and dad. That doesn't change, no matter how old you are.



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San Francisco 49ers expected to hire Kyle Shanahan



The San Francisco 49ers plan to offer their vacant head coaching position to Atlanta Falcons offensive coordinator Kyle Shanahan, ESPN's Adam Schefter reported on Tuesday, citing sources. File Photo by Kevin Dietsch/UPI | License Photo

By The Sports Xchange
UPI

The San Francisco 49ers plan to offer their vacant head coaching position to Atlanta Falcons offensive coordinator Kyle Shanahan, ESPN's Adam Schefter reported on Tuesday, citing sources.

Shanahan reportedly is interested in the position, although his primary focus remains on Sunday's NFC Championship Game as Atlanta hosts the Green Bay Packers.

The 37-year-old Shanahan initially met with the 49ers earlier this month

and is expected to receive a second interview in the following week, Schefter reported. New England Patriots offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels elected to remove himself from the running on Monday to concentrate on his team's Super Bowl run.

The other known candidate is Seattle Seahawks offensive line coach Tom Cable, who has experience as a head coach with the Oakland Raiders.

Anthony Lynn, former Buffalo Bills offensive coordinator and interim head coach, interviewed with the 49ers on Jan. 4 before being

hired as head coach of the Los Angeles Chargers.

Shanahan is in his second season as offensive coordinator with the Falcons, who averaged an NFL-best 33.8 points per contest.

He has also served as offensive coordinator with the Washington Redskins (2010-13) and Cleveland Browns (2014).

Shanahan is the son of longtime NFL coach Mike Shanahan.

San Francisco is looking for a new head coach for the third time in as many seasons, with Chip Kelly being fired after the team's dismal 2-14 campaign.

San Diego Chargers QB Philip Rivers shoots down reports of trade request

By The Sports Xchange
UPI

Quarterback Philip Rivers shot down reports Tuesday that stated he asked to be traded in the wake of the Chargers' move from San Diego to Los Angeles.

Rivers told multiple outlets that he isn't pushing for a trade and plans to be part of the team in its first season in Los Angeles.

One report stated Rivers was seeking a trade to the San Francisco 49ers.

Rivers spent his first 13 NFL seasons with the Chargers in San Diego and expressed reservations in the past about a possible move to Los Angeles.

But after the team announced its move last week, Rivers said he was

looking forward to playing in Los Angeles despite being

disappointed the team was leaving San Diego.

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Hombre de Australia es multado por 9.000 dólares por usar drone para envíos

por Daniel Uriá UPI

CANBERRA, Australia - Las autoridades de seguridad de aviación civil de Australia están investigando el video viral que involucra a un hombre que estaba usando un drone para enviar una salchicha. El usuario oficial de YouTube de CASA comentó en el video de YouTube, el cual desde entonces ha sido eliminado, amenazando con una posible multa de esta 9.000 dólares, según EFTM.

“Actualmente estamos revisando este video conforme a las regulaciones de seguridad de

aviación del país”, decía el comentario.

“Violar estas leyes con vuelos ilegales de drones puede que atraiga multas que van desde 540 a 9.000 dólares.

El portavoz de CASA, Peter Gibson, dijo al Sydney Morning Herald que las acciones en el video violaron las regulaciones que involucran el uso de un drone a aproximadamente 100 pies de las personas, así como también el uso de un drone fuera de la línea visible y sobre un área muy poblada.

El piloto del drone, quien se identificó como Tim, dijo que el video fue “un poquito de diversión” y estableció



que cortó los videos de varios vuelos y luego los unió para que pareciera que fuese uno solo.

Hersheys manda a victima de robo de Kit Kat 6.500 barras de chocolate

por Sarah Mulé UPI

MANHATTAN, Kan. Cuando Hunter Jobbins volvió a su carro luego de una clase en la Universidad Estatal de Kansas unas semanas atrás, su chocolate Kit Kat no estaba y en su lugar había una nota de disculpas departe del ladrón de dulces. Ahora Hersheys, la compañía asociada de Kit Kat, envió a Jobbins 6.500 barras de chocolate para pagar por lo sucedido. “Solo me estacioné unos minutos para tomar mi ropa sucia y mi mochila”, dijo Jobbins a The Whicita Eagle.

“Sabía que tenía que darme rápido o me iban a poner una multa por estacionarme ahí. Cuando



salí, la barra de Kit Kat que tenía en mi portavasos ya no estaba”.

El ladrón de chocolates dejó una nota escrita en una servilleta pidiendo perdón por el robo, la

cual Jobbins publicó en Twitter: “Vi el Kit Kat en tu portavasos. Amo los Kit Kat entonces revisé tu puerta y estaba sin seguro”, decía la nota. “No tomé más nada que

no fuese el Kit Kat. Pido disculpas, estaba hambriento”.

El tweet se hizo viral y eventualmente Hersheys se dio cuenta, contactó a Jobbins y le ofreció un

“reemplazo” por el chocolate robado.

“Kit Kat me contactó y me envió 6.500 Kit Kat para ser exactos”, Jobbins dijo. “Vinieron al campus de la universidad

y le estaba dando Kit Kats a los estudiantes quienes pasaban y escuchaban la historia. Fue un momento muy divertido para conocer a todo el mundo en campus”.

Manhattan celebra la victoria de Trump con una torta en forma de su cara

por Sarah Mulé UPI

NUEVA YORK, N.Y. - Los organizadores de la fiesta de Donald Trump pusieron el pastel la noche de las elecciones.

Una torta grande que representa el busto del nominado a la presidencia por el Partido Republicano fue llevado al hotel Hilton en Manhattan el martes, donde fue más tarde puesto para exposición. Trump tuvo su fiesta de elección en el Hilton de Midtown, el

cual también tenía un bar de solo efectivo.

La cerveza domestica costaba 10 dólares cada una, las importadas 11 dólares y distintos tragos o vinos costaban 13 dólares, según el menú.

Una torta hecha de la cara del ahora presidente electo Donald Trump está de muestra en el día de elecciones en el Hilton de Midtown Nueva York el 8 de noviembre de 2016. Foto por John Angelillo/ UPI





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