

Poll: A fourth of voters are up for grabs, holding big power over presidential race

WASHINGTON (AP) — They shrug at President Barack Obama and Republican challenger Mitt Romney. They're in no hurry to decide which one to support in the White House race. And they'll have a big say in determining who wins the White House.

One-quarter of U.S. voters are persuadable, according to an Associated Press-GfK poll, and both Obama and Romney will spend the next four months trying to convince these fickle, hard-to-reach individuals that only he has what it takes to fix an ailing nation.

It's a delicate task. These voters also hate pandering.

"I don't believe in nothing they say," says Carol Barber of Ashland, Ky., among the 27 percent of the electorate that hasn't determined whom to back or that doesn't have a strong preference about a candidate.

Like many uncommitted voters, the 66-year-old Barber isn't really paying attention

to politics these days. She's largely focused on her husband, who just had a liver transplant, and the fact that she had to refinance her home to pay much of his health bill. She just can't concentrate on it now," she says before adding, "If there were someone running who knows what it's like to struggle, that would be different."

ASHLAND SUMMER DAYS: Proceeds go toward next year's celebration

► *Continued from Page 1*
And six area fire departments participated in the water ball fight. "The highlight of the afternoon was when local young people were allowed to handle the

hoses and try their hand at hitting the ball with the water," Fulton said.

The grocery raffle winners were Graham Rieken and Dawn Stremsterfer, both of rural Ashland. Their names were

drawn at the conclusion of Summer Days Sunday afternoon.

"We have wonderful support from Ashland area businesses, which have helped keep the celebration alive," Ful-

ton said.

Proceeds from the event go toward the next celebration.

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WATER REPORT: Only a few violations — one in Jacksonville, two in Macoupin

► *Continued from Page 1*
and administrative violations not covered in the IEPA's annual report.

"In June after the flooding, we didn't get all our testing completed," said Water Plant assistant superintendent Rick Hearin. "We didn't get them all completed in June. But that was corrected in July."

There was also an added violation for not reporting the incomplete sample testing violation, but the Water Treatment Plant is now fully in compliance with EPA standards.

The city is still in the process of evaluating the plant and possible flood-prevention or relocation plans.

The next step will be hearing potential costs for building a new plant or improving the existing one. Cosner said he believes a special City Council meeting will be held soon where discussion on the comprehensive survey will continue.

No violations were reported from water suppliers in other west central Illinois counties, except for violations among two suppli-

ers in Macoupin County.

The city of Carlinville received a pair of violations related to disinfectants and its by-products.

The city's water plant is still undergoing removal of disinfectant byproducts, according to IEPA spokesman Maggie Carson. But the compliance commitment schedule it's under is set to be complete July 10 this year.

"As of this date they are in compliance and they are achieving exactly what is required in the agreement for what actions

they are supposed to take," Carson said.

It also received a violation for levels of chlorine dioxide — a disinfectant — that were over standard levels, but that has turned to being in compliance.

Central Macoupin County Rural Water District was also subject to one violation found to have high levels of chlorine dioxide, but was also reported to now be fully in compliance.

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SCHOOL SALE: Bidders will have the option of raising their bids at ... auction

► *Continued from Page 1*
that village zoning regulations do not allow multi-family dwellings.

"What if the bids don't bring the minimum bid of \$50,000?" Braundmeier asked. "Zoning laws in Fieldon prohibit multi-family dwellings. The residents of Fieldon had hoped it would go to the Fieldon Fire Department or hoped the city would get it, so the community would still have a say in it. We have had our fireworks (on the Fourth of July) there for years."

Attorney Bill Strang explained the process that will be used for the sale. Sealed bids will be taken, then an oral auction will take place at the bid opening.

"Bidders will have the option of raising their bids at an oral auction after the sealed bids are opened," Strang said.

It is the same process the district used a few months ago to sell farm property.

"It will be up to the board what to do if the bids come in under \$50,000. If it is under the minimum, they don't have to sell it."

The school will be closed next year and no longer will be needed by the district. Both the Fieldon Fire Protection District and Fieldon Baptist Church were interested in acquiring the building, which includes approximately five acres.

The school board asked the two parties to come to an agreement to share the facility, but after discussions, both agreed it was not feasible.

In March, businessman Terry Blasa said he was interested in buying the property to possibly develop studio apartments.

Last month, Blasa's attorney, Laef Lorton, reiterated Blasa's request that the district sell the school rather than donating it.

"We had been notified zoning would inhibit turning the school into apartments," Jersey Community School District Superintendent Ed Settles said. "We announced it previously so that anyone who purchases it understands that zoning is prohibitive."

The school sale is expected to be conducted in late July. The stainless steel kitchen equipment will be removed and used elsewhere in the school district.

Braundmeier also asked the board about the heating/cooling system at the newly renovated East Elementary School. Geothermal was discussed early in the planning of the facility. Braundmeier asked why it was not installed. Settles said the

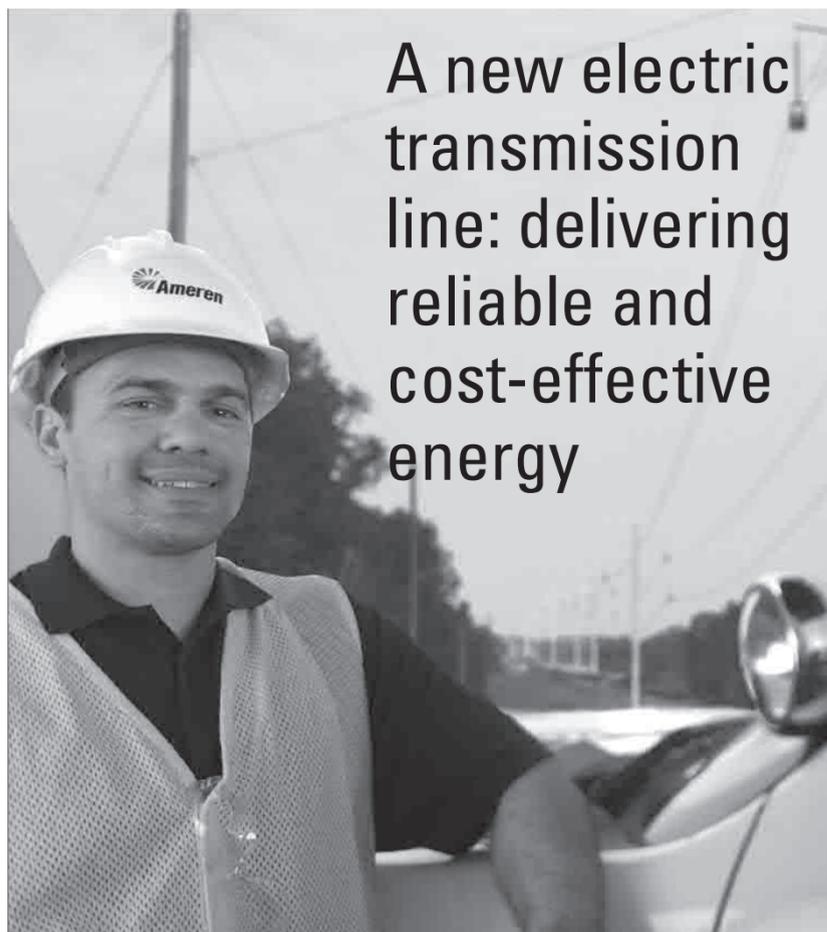
district had hoped to get a grant to fund geothermal, but it did not come.

"We had two proposals that were very close, but they would have driven the cost up beyond what we could afford. It would be many years out before you got your money back," District Administrator Kevin Schell responded. "The system we do have is highly efficient."

Schell said contractors will be close to completing construction by the end of the week. The district will hold a special meeting at the school on Aug. 30 to show off the facility and to talk about digital conversion.

Board members toured the building last week.

"I was very much impressed," School Board President Ed Test said. "I didn't picture it that nice."



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WORLD & NATION

Power outages for millions in mid-Atlantic could last days as sweltering heat persists

FRANCONIA, Va. (AP) — A day after seeking refuge at shopping malls and movie theaters, hoping the lights would be back on when they returned, 3 million residents faced a grim reality Sunday: stifling homes, spoiled food and a looming commute filled with knocked-out stoplights.

Two days after storms tore across the eastern U.S., power outages were forcing people to get creative to stay cool in dangerously hot weather. Temperatures approached 100 degrees in many storm-stricken areas, and utility officials said the power will likely be out for several more days.

"If we don't get power tonight, we'll have to throw everything away," Susan Fritz, a mother of three, said grimly of her refrigerator and freezer. Fritz came to a library in Bethesda, Md., so her son could do school work. She charged her phone and iPad at her local gym.

On Sunday night, federal and state officials in the mid-Atlantic region gave many workers the option of staying home Monday to ease congestion on the roads. Federal agencies will be open in Washington, but non-emergency employees have the option of taking leave or working from home. Maryland's governor also gave state workers wide leeway for staying out of the office.

The storm was blamed for 14 deaths, most from trees falling on homes and cars. Meanwhile, Coast Guard officials say they have suspended the search for a man who went missing early Saturday while boating during the storm off Maryland.

'Unreal': Residents tour neighborhoods most devastated by Colorado Springs wildfire

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (AP) — Melted bowling balls in the front yard were among the strange sights that met C.J. Moore upon her return Sunday to her two-story home, now reduced to ashes by the worst wildfire in Colorado history.

"You wouldn't think bowling balls would melt," she told The Associated Press by phone from the scene in her Mountain Shadows neighborhood, where she was among residents who were allowed temporary visits to areas most affected by the fire.

More than a week after it sparked on June 23, the Waldo Canyon fire was still being attacked by some 1,500 personnel. But crews working grueling shifts through the hot weekend made progress against the 26-square-mile fire, and authorities said they were confident they finally had built good fire lines in many areas to stop the spread of the flames.

So far, the blaze, now 45 percent contained, has damaged or destroyed nearly 350 homes.

It was just one of several still burning in the West, where parched conditions and searing heat contributed to the woes facing crews on hundreds of square miles across Utah, Montana, Wyoming and Idaho.

Federal judge temporarily blocks enforcement of Miss. law that shuts down only abortion clinic

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — A federal judge on Sunday temporarily blocked enforcement of a Mississippi law that could shut down the only abortion clinic in the state.

U.S. District Judge Daniel P. Jordan in Jackson issued a temporary restraining order the day the new law took effect.

He set a July 11 hearing to determine whether to block the law for a longer time.

"Though the debate over abortion continues, there exists legal precedent the court must follow," Jordan wrote.

The law requires anyone performing abortions at the state's only clinic to be an OB-GYN with privileges to admit patients to a local hospital. Such privileges can be difficult to obtain, and the clinic contends the mandate is designed to put it out of business. A clinic spokeswoman, Betty Thompson, has said the two physicians who do abortions there are OB-GYNs who



Tyler Taylor, 14, of Falls Church, Va., walks across a large downed tree in Falls Church, Va., Sunday. A severe storm late Friday knocked out power to approximately one million residents, traffic signals and businesses in the region.

travel from other states.

Syrian opposition rejects new international plan allowing Assad role in political transition

BEIRUT (AP) — Syria's main opposition groups rejected on Sunday a new international plan that calls for a transitional government because the compromise agreement did not bar President Bashar Assad from participating.

Their reaction held out little hope for an end to more than 15 months of carnage on a day when the main opposition group said 800 people were killed in violence in the past week alone.

Opposition activists groups say more than 14,000 people have been killed since the uprising against President Bashar Assad's authoritarian rule began in March 2011, or on average about 900 a month. That would make last week's toll alone almost as high as the monthly average as government forces furiously pounded rebellious towns and cities with helicopters, tanks and artillery in an offensive aimed at recovering rebel-held territories.

World powers at a conference in Geneva on Saturday accepted a U.N.-brokered plan calling for creation of a transitional national unity government with full executive powers in Syria. But at Russia's insistence, the compromise agreement left the door open to Assad being part of the interim administration. It could also include members of Assad's government and the opposition and other groups. The transitional government would oversee the drafting of a new constitution and elections.

However Syria's fragmented opposition has long opposed any solution that involved negotiating with Assad or allowing him to cling to power.

Midweek July Fourth means confusion for travelers, businesses

NEW YORK (AP) — Who knew the calendar could cause so much vacation heartburn?

For the first time in five years Independence Day falls on a Wednesday, leaving travelers unsure when to celebrate and worrying those who make a living off tourists.

"The midweek holiday seems to have travelers confused," said Anthony Del Gaudio, vice president of hotel sales for Loews Hotels, which isn't seeing the normal July Fourth spike in bookings.

Those who sell vacations say this year's calendar gives Americans more options: Tack on Saturday through Tuesday or Thursday through Sunday to the holiday, or just take the entire week off.

But consumers' confidence has been waning. Now, some aren't happy about having to burn an extra vacation day or two to get that long weekend. From 2008 through 2011, the work holiday fell on either Friday or Monday, so employees and their families got an automatic three-day weekend, similar to Memorial Day and Labor Day.

Republicans say American voters will have final word on health care law in upcoming elections

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican congressional leaders said Sunday that voters — not the Supreme Court — will have the final word on President Barack Obama's health care law come November. And they are betting that the law's unpopularity will be enough to drive Democrats from power.

The White House's response? Bring it on.

"We've got one last chance here to beat Obamacare, and we can do that in the November election," said Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, calling the law the "single worst piece of legislation" passed in modern times.

White House chief of staff Jack Lew countered that he believes most Americans want to put the health care debate to rest.

"I actually think the American people want us to focus on the economy, on creating jobs and moving forward," said Lew.

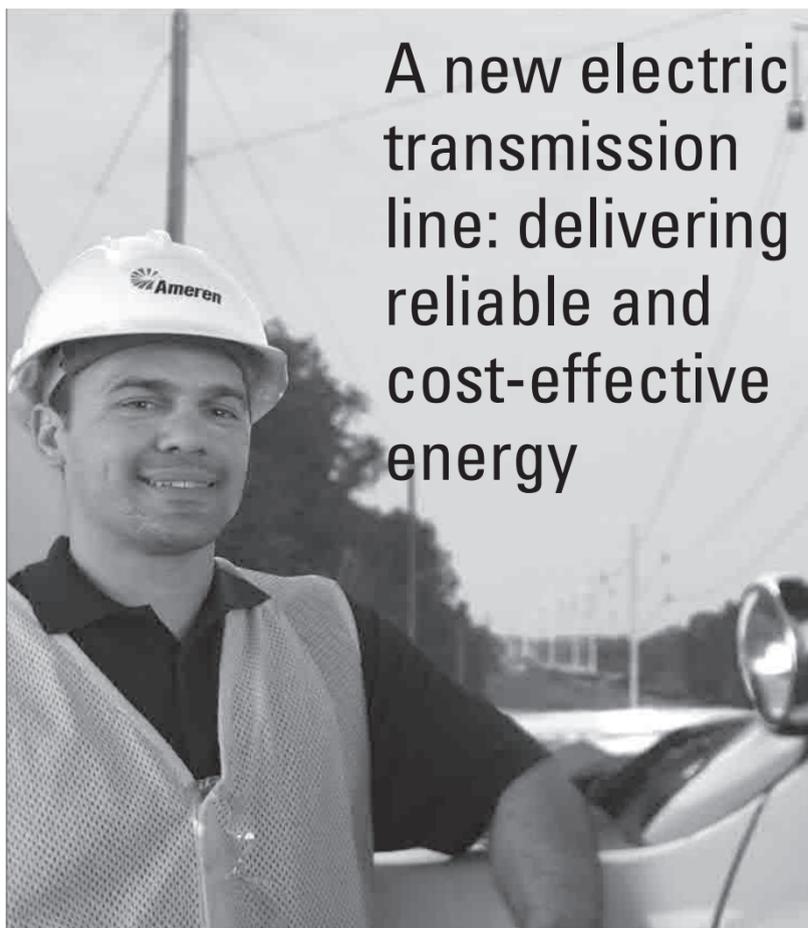
Mexico old ruling party leads in early exit polls

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Presidential candidate Enrique Pena Nieto led Mexico's elections with about 40 percent of the vote, exit polls showed Sunday, signaling a return of his long-ruling party to power after a 12-year hiatus.

Conservative National Action Party candidate Josefina Vazquez Mota conceded almost immediately, saying none of the exit polls favor the first woman candidate for a major party in Mexico. Her party held the presidency for 12 years after kicking out Pena Nieto's Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, in 2000.

But she garnered little more than 23 percent in exit polls released by Milenio and TV Azteca networks. Former Mexico City Mayor Andres Manuel Lopez Calderon has about 30 percent of the vote.

The PRI held a strong lead throughout the campaign. The party, voted out of the presidency in 2000 after 71 years in power, also appeared likely to retake at least a plurality in the two houses of Congress and some governorship.



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MILLER: Reclaim our responsibilities

► *Continued from opposite page*
perform — but without dictating decisions, the federal and state government could empower consumers to make more responsible choices on their own.

It is just about certain that the courts and politicians will continue to disappoint us, but that's all the more reason why the

rest of us need to reclaim our roles and responsibilities in fixing what Washington keeps breaking.

Tom Miller heads the "Beyond Repeal and Replace" project at the American Enterprise Institute, and is the coauthor of "Why ObamaCare Is Wrong for America."

DOG SHOW

► *Continued from Page 1*
she was in 4-H.

"We find that former 4-H dog show exhibitors make good judges because they know how hard the kids work with their dogs," Heltelle said.

The dog show superintendents Sunday were Sarah Scheerer and Emily Davenport, both of Jacksonville.

The 4-H Dog Show winners were:
Obedience Classes: Beginner I, Hannah Pool of East Side Juniors 4-H Club; Beginner II, Blake Hadden of Agri Stars 4-H Club; Graduate Beginner, Abby Tomhave of Agri Stars 4-H Club; and Novice, Kilee Smith of Berea Ag 4-H Club.

Showmanship Classes: Junior Showmanship, Kilee Smith of Berea Ag 4-H Club and Senior Showmanship, Abby Tomhave of Agri Stars 4-H Club.

Dog Care Class, Abby Tomhave of Agri Stars 4-H Club.

PILOT: Competing next weekend

► *Continued from Page 1*
half-cuban, a loop, a 180 degree competition turn, and a slow roll.

Judges look at how accurately these maneuvers are executed and that they are done within strict spacing guidelines.

The International Aerobatic Club welcomes pilots of all stripes, including professional pilots, bankers, colleges and the U.S. Air Force Academy, Davidsmeyer said.

At the university, Davidsmeyer is double majoring in commercial aviation and English, which he said were both subjects that were fun for him.

"My short term goal, obviously, is to graduate, and maybe be an instructor with the aerobatic team," Davidsmeyer said. "I'd just like to instruct here for a little while, build up a good background, get a good solid footing, get a lot of hours in. ... Eventually I'd like to go north into Alaska and fly bush

Online:
Practicing for the aerial competition:
<http://youtu.be/PPAk5UGHNKE>

planes."

His ongoing success as a pilot he credits a lot to UND, and speaks humbly about being part of an aviation "dynasty" with so many awards and distinctions.

But he also gives a lot of credit to his hometown.

"I do indeed owe Jacksonville so very much for my successes as a pilot. Not just Cole Foote out at Jacksonville Airport but all my teachers and JHS and so many others," Davidsmeyer said. "I feel very grateful for where I am, doing what I'm doing."

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POLICE BEAT

FROM OFFICIAL REPORTS
OF PUBLIC RECORD

► *Continued from Page 2*
FIRE

• A trash fire that got out of control destroyed an old wooden shed on Stinson Road about five miles north of Arezville Sunday afternoon.

Arenzville volunteer firefighter Tony Thomas said heat from the shed fire melted vinyl siding on a garage at the residence of Dianne Kellerman.

The blaze also destroyed a few antiques and some miscellaneous items stored in the shed.

Arenzville firefighters were assisted by the Meredosia Fire Department. Firefighters were on the scene from about 5 p.m. until about 5 p.m.

MALWARE: Some don't trust government

► *Continued from Page 1*
where computer users could go to see if their computer was infected and find links to other computer security business sites where they could find fixes for the problem.

From the onset, most victims didn't even know their computers were infected, although the malicious software probably has slowed their web surfing and disabled their antivirus software, making their machines more vulnerable to other problems.

Many computer users don't understand the complex machines they use every day to send email, shop, and cruise for information. The cyberworld of viruses, malware, bank fraud and Internet scams is often distant and confusing, and warning messages may go unseen or unheeded.

Also, some people simply don't trust the government, and believe that federal authorities are only trying to spy on them or take over the Internet. Blogs and other Internet forums are riddled with postings warning of the government using the malware as a ploy to breach American citizens' computers. That's a charge the FBI and other cybersecurity experts familiar with the malware quickly denounce as ridiculous.

Still, the Internet is flooded with conspiracy theories:

"I think the FBI just wants everyone to go to that website to check our computers so they can check our computers as well. Just a way to steal data for their own research," one computer user said in a posting on the Internet.

Another observed: "Yet another ploy to get everyone freaked out ... remember Y2K."

There also is an underlying sense that

this will be much ado about nothing, such as the approach of 2000. The transition to that year presented technical problems and fears that some computers would stop working because they were not set up for the date change. In the end there were very few problems.

Considering there are millions of Internet users across the country, several thousand isn't a big deal, unless you're one of them.

Rep. Jim Langevin, D-R.I., and co-founder of Congress' cybersecurity caucus, said computer users have a responsibility to practice good sense and make sure their computers are not infected or being hijacked by criminals.

"These types of issues are only going to increase as our society relies more and more on the Internet, so it is a reminder that everyone can do their part," he said.

FBI officials have been tracking the number of computers they believe still may be infected by the malware. As of Wednesday, there were about 45,600 in the U.S. — nearly 20,000 less than a week ago. Worldwide, the total is roughly 250,000 infected. The numbers have declined steadily, and recent efforts by Internet service providers may limit the problems today.

Tom Grasso, an FBI supervisory special agent, said many Internet providers have plans to try to help their customers. Some may put technical solutions in place that will correct the server problem. If they do, the Internet will work, but the malware will remain on victims' computers and could pose future problems.

Other Internet providers are simply braced for the calls to their help lines.

HEAT: Americans try familiar solutions

► *Continued from Page 1*

The heat caused highways to buckle in Illinois and Wisconsin, officials said. In Maryland, investigators said heat likely caused rails to kink and led a commuter train to partially derail Friday. No one was injured.

To stay cool, Americans tried familiar solutions — dipping into the pool, going to the movies and riding subways just to be in air conditioning.

Even the beach offered no respite. Atlantic City, N.J., home of the famed boardwalk, set a temperature record Saturday of 100 degrees.

Working outdoors in New Jersey on Saturday was Freddie Jackson, a 48-year-old Toms River man who sells roses by the dozen from his car, which was parked in a heavily shaded area off a major highway. Clad in shorts, sandals and a white T-shirt, Jackson said he would stay out as long as he felt safe — and business was good.

"I do this mainly to make a few extra bucks, so I'm not going to stay if I started feeling (the heat)," he said.

Jackson said his teenage daughter stopped by to bring him a cooler with several bottles of water, and he had a couple of ham and cheese sandwiches with him.

"I'm tempted to leave them out in the sun for a while and see if I end up with grilled cheese," he joked.

If Americans ventured outside to do anything, they did it early. But even then, the heat was stifling.

"It was baking on the 18th green," said golfer Zeb Rogerson, who teed off at 6 a.m. at an Alexandria, Va., golf course but was sweltering by the end of his round.

In South Bend, Ind., serious kayaker took to the East Race Waterway, a 1,900-foot-long manmade whitewater course near downtown.

"A lot of times I'll roll over just to cool off," said Robert Henry of Carmel, just north of Indianapolis.

"The biggest challenge is walking coming back carrying a kayak three-eighths of a mile in this heat."

In Manhattan, customers who stepped in to see "Jiro Dreams of Sushi" at an IFC movie theater were there for more than entertainment.

"Of course we came to cool off!" said John Villanova, a writer who was on his second sweaty shirt of the day and expecting change again by evening.

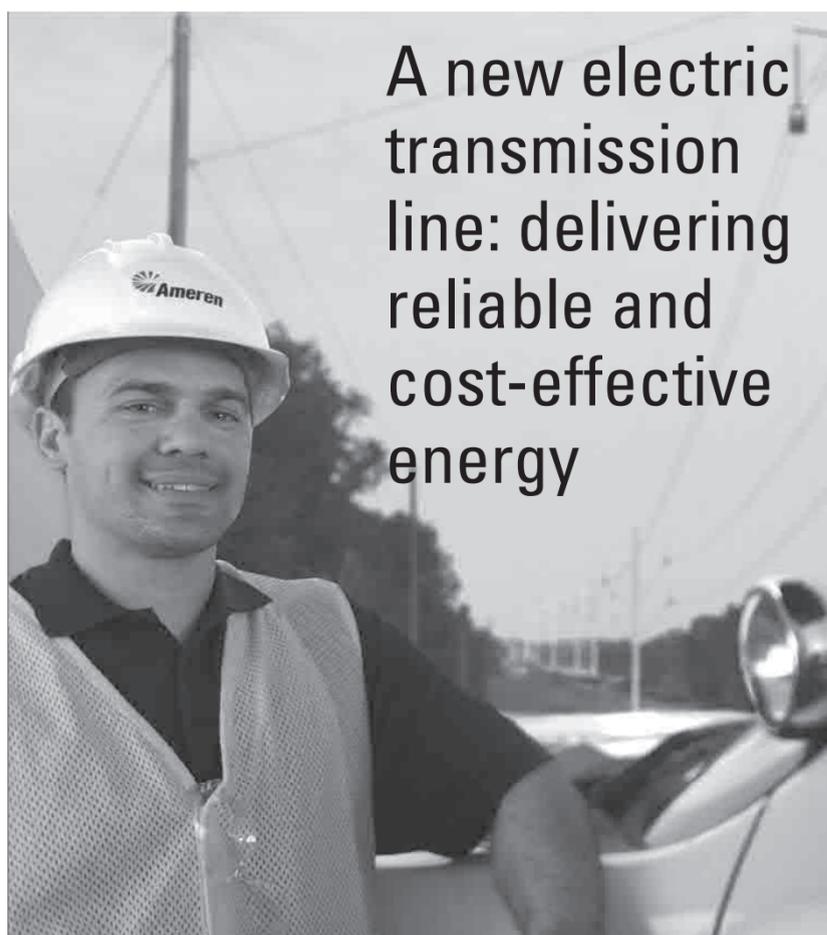
He said that earlier, he rode a Manhattan subway back a fourth for a half an hour, with destination in mind "because really keeps you cool."

In Chicago, street magician Jeremy Payne said he has been working through the three-day stretch of triple-digit temperatures, but acknowledged that he might do the Union Jack leather vest by the end of the day, even though it's part of his British magician character along with the black top hat.

His trick for beating the heat? He starts his shows at 2 p.m., "when the Trump Tower is gracious enough to block out the sun along his stretch of sidewalk."

"A lot of times I'll roll over just to cool off. The biggest challenge is walking coming back up carrying a kayak three-eighths of a mile in this heat."

— *Kayaker*
Robert Henry



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FROM OUR READERS

Fourth of July holiday often hard for pets

To the editor:

Did you know that July 5 is the busiest time of the year for animal shelters across the nation? Many dogs and cats are frightened of the loud noises associated with fireworks. In their panicked state, they may escape enclosures or bolt out of a door. Animals that are frightened are more likely to get hit by cars, become confused or disoriented and get lost.

Please do not let your pet be a statistic. Make sure your pets have identification tags. Microchips are a permanent form of identification and will allow your pet to be returned to you if they should lose their collar or tags.

Keep your pets at home. Their sensitive ears can be damaged by the loud blasts. Put them in a quiet place where the sound is minimized and bring outside pets into the house, if possible.

Owners often seek sedatives and tranquilizers to help calm their pet. Unfortunately, many of the medications either sedate the dog or do not last long enough. The most commonly prescribed medication tranquilizes the pet, making the owners feel like they are calm, but the animal is fully aware of the scary surroundings and is unable to do anything about it. This results in a more fearful pet. Properly medicated pets will be less anxious, but will not be sedated or look drugged.

If you have a puppy, you can help prevent the fear of loud noises by giving them long lasting treats or toys during the fireworks. Alternatively, pair fireworks with a treat — “bang” equals treat. The firework boom will then predict something good.

Have a wonderful Fourth of July and keep your pets safe.

**Colleen Koch
Jacksonville**

Return to a medieval state of mind?

To the editor:

In the early Middle Ages civilized life in western Europe was collapsing. Literacy and learning fled before the barbaric and semi-barbaric invasions of Germanic tribes.

Isolated, fortress-like monasteries were erected that became Christian islands in an unsafe, pre-literate and pagan wilderness. There, a disciplined Christian way of life was nurtured and brave monks were sent forth to convert the heathens in the forest.

These medieval bastions also became the primary keepers of the Greco-Roman literary canon of the previous fifteen centuries. Cloistered monks were taught to read and set to work transcribing what was left of that deteriorating cultural tradition into new Latin copies.

In dark and drafty scriptoria cowered monks hunched over their meticulous

work, silently, like worker ants, Abbey superiors constantly harangued them about the corruption implicit in their work. They were enjoined not to think about what they were copying, not to discuss or debate, or even to ask questions about the perfidious contents.

The new copies were quickly hidden away in locked lofts, away from the society of man. No matter how intriguing, convincing, artful or brilliant these pre-Christian works were, they were deemed dangerous to orthodox faith and sure to plant any but an entitled few readers in hell. Most copies did not see the light of day for centuries, some for a thousand years. Their recovery did not begin in earnest until the Italian Renaissance of the 15th century.

Literacy, then, was considered good, but curiosity was bad. Intelligence, while beguiling, was fraught with vice. Ignorance, on the other hand, was blessed innocence, the soul of virtue.

But for the recovery of those ancient pagan works, we in the modern West would not be who we are today. And yet, a growing cacophony of Americans, in the country long thought to be on the cutting edge of modernity, have succumbed to a fearful, semi-medieval frame of mind.

Many resent hearing any perceived challenge to favorite orthodoxies. Messengers are trashed so the message can be ignored. Free, independent thought strikes some as heresy or treason. Convenience, prejudice and profit tends to trump evidence, analysis and truth.

A recent presidential candidate condemned the college experience as harmful to youthful faith, loyalty and innocence. He won 10 primary elections.

**Richard Nelson
Jacksonville**

Legion group appreciates help with roof project

To the editor:

The Woodson American Legion Post 249 would like to thank the following volunteers who participated in reshingling the Post's roof June 16: Frankie Wildhagen, Raymond Wildhagen, Brad Northrup, Riley and A. J. Henson, Larry Ludwig, Bruce and Mary Milner, Doug and Reese Megginson, David Henry, Lester Stinebaker and Bill Gibson.

We would also like to thank the following who made donations to purchase the materials: Woodson Legion Auxiliary, Woodson Lions Club, Letha Steward, Dean and Janet Allen, Ruth Ann Adams, Frances Sheehan, Bill and Darlene Gibson, John and Linda Hartz, Frankie Wildhagen and Raymond Wildhagen. Also funds from the Jim White and Lester Barfield memorials were used.

Lunch was prepared by Janet Allen, Letha Steward, Chris White, Vickie McNece, Melanie Wildhagen, Mary Milner and Linda Kitson.

**Bill Gibson
Woodson**

Ruling will end campaign mystery, unleash ads

BY JULIE PACE AND STEVE PEOPLES

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Barely four months before the nation votes, one of the biggest factors in the fight for the White House still is a mystery. That will change on Thursday.

The Supreme Court's expected ruling on President Barack Obama's sweeping federal health care law will shape the contours of the presidential campaign through the summer and fall. Both Obama and Republican rival Mitt Romney are primed to use the ruling — whatever it is — for political gain.

Obama expresses confidence the court will uphold his signature legislative initiative. But he won't be shocked if a conservative majority overturns the most controversial provision, those familiar with his thinking say. Romney aides say the Republican candidate will get a political boost if the court strikes down the measure. But they don't want celebrations that could alienate voters who could lose health care benefits through the decision.

Neither candidate has any direct influence over the decision. The court may uphold the health care law, strike it down or deem the requirement that most Americans carry health insurance unconstitutional while keeping other aspects in place.

The ruling is expected to be followed almost immediately by a barrage of advertisements and fundraising appeals from Democrats and Republicans, with both sides trying to cast the decision in the most advantageous light for its candidate.

Romney, running on a pledge to repeal Obama's overhaul as a costly federal power grab, has focused more than usual on the Supreme Court ruling this week. In campaign appearances in Virginia, New Jersey and New York, he offered supporters and donors a preview of his likely response to the decision.

At a Tuesday evening New Jersey fund-

raiser, Romney declared that if the Supreme Court lets the law stand, “it will make it very clear to the American people that they must elect someone who will stop it.” If the high court overturns the law, “then the first three and a half years of the Obama administration will have been entirely wasted, because that’s where he devoted his energy and passion.”

Romney's campaign also is running new ads this week in Virginia, North Carolina and Iowa promising he would move to “repeal Obamacare” on his first day in office.

Obama, while recently avoiding mentioning the impending court ruling directly, has vigorously defended the overhaul as critical to the public's health and well-being in his own campaign events this week.

“I think it was the right thing to do. I know it was the right thing to do,” he told supporters in Boston.

Obama advisers say the Supreme Court showed reasonableness earlier this week in ruling on an Arizona immigration case, and they see it as a hopeful sign for how the court might rule on health care.

If the court upholds the law, Obama could get an election year gust of wind at his back with his vision and leadership validated. If the court strikes down the overhaul, the White House would seek to cast the decision as detrimental to millions of Americans by highlighting popular elements of the law that would disappear, such as preventive care and coverage for young adults on a parent's plan.

Romney, who as Massachusetts governor signed a health care law on which Obama's federal law was modeled, is expected to use the health care law — or what remains of it — as a defining issue going forward in the presidential contest, regardless of which way the court's ruling goes.

Aides say that that Romney will hold the law either as a symbol of Obama's ineffective leadership or as federal overreach that only the Republican can stop.

GOLDFIELD: Civil War burdens

► *Continued from the opposite page* path.” This is the war that often gets lost in the self-congratulatory narratives of the history books.

And what of the former slaves, on whose behalf this carnage was allegedly undertaken? The Civil War sealed their freedom, but little else. It would be more than a century before African-Americans attained the basic rights of that freedom. The vast majority of blacks still toiled on farms and plantations, often in conditions some called worse than slavery.

Might not peace, rather than war, have

put an end to slavery and secured the rights of African-Americans much sooner?

In commemorating the Civil War, we should remember that wars are easily made, difficult to end, and burdened with unintended consequences and unforeseen human casualties. We should also keep in mind that there is no higher law than the Constitution. That is America's Scripture.

David Goldfield is the author of “America Aflame: How the Civil War Created a Nation.”

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Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia speaks at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Conn., March 8.

Scalia critics say justice too political last term

WASHINGTON (AP) — Justice Antonin Scalia drew unusually critical attention during this past Supreme Court term for comments he made in court and in his writing that seemed to some more political than judicial.

His dissent in the Arizona immigration case contained a harsh assessment of the Obama administration's immigration policy and prompted a public rebuke from a fellow Republican-appointed judge.

Scalia's aggressive demeanor during argument sessions even earned him some gentle teasing from his closest personal friend on the court. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, speaking at a Washington convention, said the term's high-profile cases may explain why Scalia "called counsel's argument 'extraordinary' no fewer than 10 times."

The 76-year-old Scalia is a gifted writer with a razor wit and willingness to do battle with those on the other side of an issue. Those qualities have made him a powerful voice, an entertaining presence and a magnet for criticism on the court for more than 25 years. Even with that vivid background, some of Scalia's recent remarks stood out in the eyes of court observers.

Measured by wins and losses, the court term did not end well for Scalia. He was on the losing end of the court's biggest cases involving health care, immigration, lying about military medals and prison sentences, both for crack cocaine offenders and juvenile killers.

The last words Scalia uttered in court this term dealt with his disagreement with the court's majority in a decision that watered down Arizona's crackdown on illegal immigrants.

Summarizing his views in court, Scalia commented on President Barack Obama's recent announcement changing the deportation rules for some children of illegal immigrants. And in his written opinion, he referenced anti-free-black laws of slave states as a precedent for state action on immigration. Both drew critical notice.

"The president said at a news conference

that the new program is 'the right thing to do' in light of Congress' failure to pass the administration's proposed revision of the Immigration Act. Perhaps it is, though Arizona may not think so. But to say, as the court does, that Arizona contradicts federal law by enforcing applications of the Immigration Act that the president declines to enforce boggles the mind," Scalia said.

The outcry over his reference to Obama's announcement was immediate and included a call by liberal Washington Post columnist E.J. Dionne for Scalia to resign. Conservative Judge Richard Posner of the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago, who was appointed by President Ronald Reagan, contributed this passage to Slate magazine's annual end-of-term discussion:

"These are fighting words. The nation is in the midst of a hard-fought presidential election campaign; the outcome is in doubt. Illegal immigration is a campaign issue. It wouldn't surprise me if Justice Scalia's opinion were quoted in campaign ads. The program that appalls Justice Scalia was announced almost two months after the oral argument in the Arizona case. It seems rather a belated development to figure in an opinion in the case," wrote Posner, who had taken Scalia to task in the past.

Doug Kmiec, a conservative legal scholar who backed Obama's election in 2008 and served as his ambassador to Malta, said, "To broadly assert, as Justice Scalia seems to do in his Arizona dissent, that the Obama administration's enforcement priorities are 'too lax,' substitutes the unelected Antonin Scalia for the elected Barack Obama."

Scalia's defenders say the criticism is misplaced. They say the justice was doing something much more familiar and common, attacking the majority opinion by Justice Anthony Kennedy. "He really wasn't criticizing the Obama administration's position. He was just using it as a timely example of why he thought his position was the better one in the Arizona case," said Brian Fitzpatrick, a Vanderbilt University law professor who once served as a law clerk to Scalia.

Romney calls Obama's health care requirement a tax

BY KASIE HUNT
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WOLFEBORO, N.H. — Mitt Romney on Wednesday said requiring all Americans to buy health insurance amounts to a tax, contradicting a senior campaign adviser who days ago said the Republican presidential candidate viewed President Barack Obama's mandate as anything but a tax.

"The majority of the court said it's a tax and therefore it is a tax. They have spoken. There's no way around that," Romney told CBS News. "You can try and say you wish they had decided a different way but they didn't. They concluded it was a tax."

Romney's comments amounted to a shift in position. Earlier in the week, senior adviser Eric Fehrnstrom said Romney viewed the mandate as a penalty, a fee or a fine — not a tax.

The Supreme Court last week ruled that the federal requirement to buy health insurance or pay a penalty is constitutional because it can be considered a tax. The requirement is part of the broad health care overhaul that Obama signed into law in March 2010.

An identical requirement was part of the state health care law that Romney enacted when he was governor of Massachusetts.

"The governor believes that what we put in place in Massachusetts was a penalty and he disagrees with the court's ruling that the mandate was a tax," Fehrnstrom said Monday on MSNBC.

Romney told CBS on Wednesday that the court opinion makes clear the state's mandate is not a tax, but a penalty.

Romney's campaign insisted it was not a change because the Republican said he agreed with the justices who dissented and would have ruled the mandate unconstitutional. The campaign said Romney agreed it is a tax simply because the court determines the "law of the land."

The back-and-forth within the GOP over what to call the mandate illustrates how difficult the health care issue is for Romney. The law he signed as governor in 2006 moved Massachusetts toward universal coverage and became a blueprint for Obama's overhaul. But Romney has spent much of the presidential campaign shying away from talking about it, preferring instead to keep voters focused on the slow economic recovery under Obama.

Both measures require individuals to have health insurance, require that businesses offer health care to their employees and provide subsidies or exemptions for people who can't afford it. Both also impose penalties on people who can afford health insurance but don't pay for it.

Despite calling Obama's mandate a tax, Romney insisted that the court ruling did not mean that he raised taxes as governor of Massachusetts. He said Chief Justice John Roberts was clear in the court's 5-4 ruling

that states have the power to mandate purchases using mechanisms other than taxes.

"At the state level, states have the power to put in place mandates. They don't need to require them to be called taxes in order for them to be constitutional," Romney said in the interview. "And as a result, Massachusetts' mandate was a mandate, was a penalty, was described that way by the Legislature and by me, and so it stays as it was."

Romney also said Obama broke his promise not to raise taxes on middle-class families by putting the mandate in place.

In the week since the Supreme Court ruling, Republicans have criticized Obama, pointing to the tax and accusing him of raising taxes. Democrats, meanwhile, have been eager to accuse Romney of also raising taxes in Massachusetts. They cite a 2009 opinion piece in which Romney wrote that Massachusetts "established incentives for those who were uninsured to buy insurance." In the piece, he acknowledged that the requirement amounted to a tax: "Using tax penalties, as we did ... encourages 'free riders' to take responsibility for themselves."

Romney's comments to CBS came in an interview conducted in Wolfeboro before he marched in the town's Fourth of July parade, holding hands with his wife, Ann. He also was joined by New Hampshire Republican Sen. Kelly Ayotte, a possible candidate for a running mate.

"I see you waterskiing!" one parade watcher told Romney as he crossed from one side of Main Street to the other, shaking hands with well-wishers. "Oh, I do from time to time," Romney replied, smiling. At the end of the parade, he spoke to a crowd waiting at Brewster Academy.

Romney is spending this week on vacation at his lakeside estate. His participation in the parade through the center town was his only official public appearance during a weeklong family break from campaigning.

Yet, it was not the first time that Romney has been seen around Wolfeboro since he arrived last weekend. His entire family — numbering 30 in all — has gathered at Romney's home on Lake Winnepesaukee for the annual family vacation. And even though the family patriarch is now the presumptive Republican candidate for president, many of their normal routines haven't changed. They've attended church, bought ice cream in town and taken the boat out on the lake.

Still, the vacation hasn't been all fun and games for the likely Republican presidential nominee. Romney huddled Tuesday with top advisers, including his campaign manager and the aide overseeing his vice presidential search. His top strategist was town shooting video for new TV ads.

Officially, the week by the lake gives Romney some time to focus on his family and relax before the campaign push to the GOP convention in August.

FREE LEGAL AID: Consultation

► Continued from Page 1

Domestic Violence and participating attorneys can receive free continuing education credits developed by Simon's legal staff.

Sandra Quello Chiz is an attorney who consults with the Peoria clinic via webcam from her Manteno office.

She said she saw the benefit of the Virtual Legal Clinic in her first consultation.

"At the time of the consultation, my first client was involved in a legal battle and was fearful because she didn't understand what was happening," Quello Chiz said. "Not only did I explain to my client what was happening legally, but I was able to point her in the direction of other resources, too. The Virtual Legal Clinic is the best idea I've heard in a long time and I wish we could expand it faster."

Martha Herm, the executive director at The Center for Prevention of Abuse in Peoria, said her agency is averaging two to three consultations a month, primarily women who are new to the shelter and need legal guidance after obtaining an order of protection.

The center serves 3,500 domestic violence survivors each year in Peoria, Tazewell and Woodford counties.

"Survivors often face many legal challenges and they don't know where to turn,"

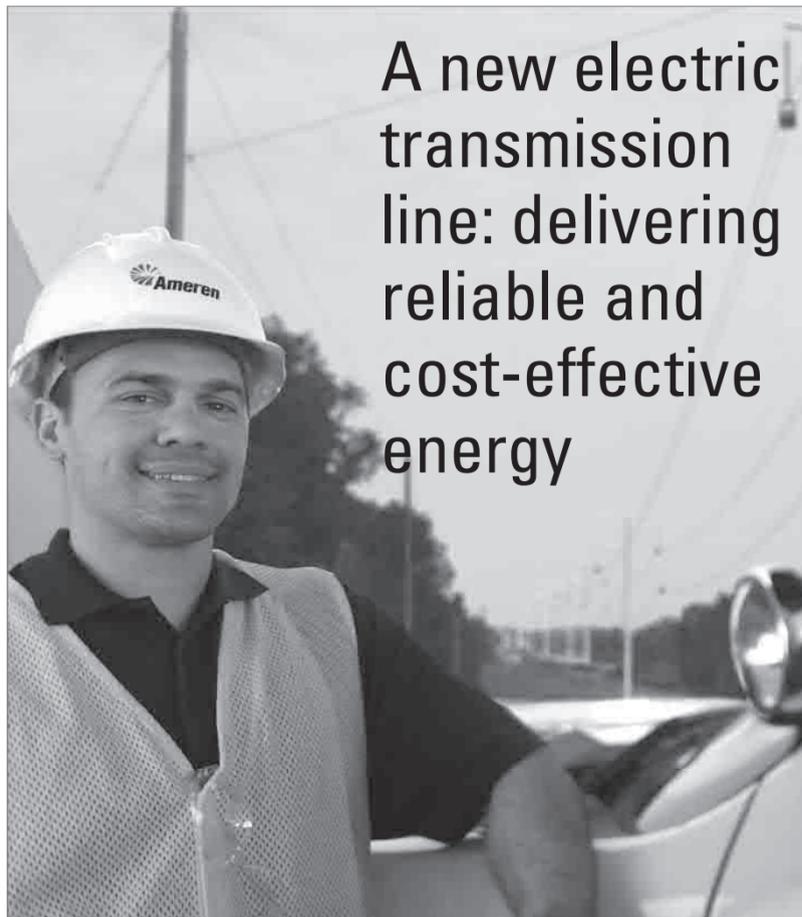
Herm said. "If we can offer survivors a starting point — a free and confidential legal consultation — they'll know their options before making any other decisions."

The project's site in Jacksonville serves between 350 and 400 clients in Morgan, Scott, Cass and Greene counties each year, Executive Director Dona Leonard said.

"Domestic violence survivors are already facing a great deal of stress and pressure, before adding in legal issues," Leonard said. "These attorneys are trained to handle domestic violence situations and can be incredibly helpful to clients that can't find help anywhere else."

Nationally, one in four women has experienced domestic violence in her lifetime, and in Illinois, nearly 40 percent of women will experience domestic violence.

The Virtual Legal Clinic turnkey program should be available by 2014 to fill a gap in services, Simon said. Ideal agencies are those that serve rural or underserved communities and likely users are survivors who cannot afford a legal consultation but do not qualify for legal aid, or survivors whose alleged abusers are represented by legal aid. Legal topics for consultation include child custody and visitation, marriage and divorce, elder abuse, immigration and property issues.



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KULHMANN: 6th-12th principal

► Continued from Page 1

help students get ready for the future," he said.

Franklin School District shares many similarities with Bluffs School District; former Bluffs Superintendent Andy Stremlau

was recently hired to serve as the new superintendent there.

"I'll be leaving one great community and joining another," Kuhlmann said.

jrusell@myjournalcourier.com

In historic visit, Clinton reaches out to Laos

BY BRADLEY KLAPPER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

VIENTIANE, Laos — Decades after the U.S. gave Laos a horrific distinction as the world's most heavily bombed nation per person, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton pledged Wednesday to help get rid of millions of unexploded bombs that still pockmark the impoverished country — and still kill.

The U.S. dropped more than 2 million tons of bombs on the North Vietnamese ally during its "secret war" between 1964 and 1973 — about a ton of ordnance for each Laotian man, woman and child. That exceeded the amount per person dropped on Germany and Japan together in World War II.

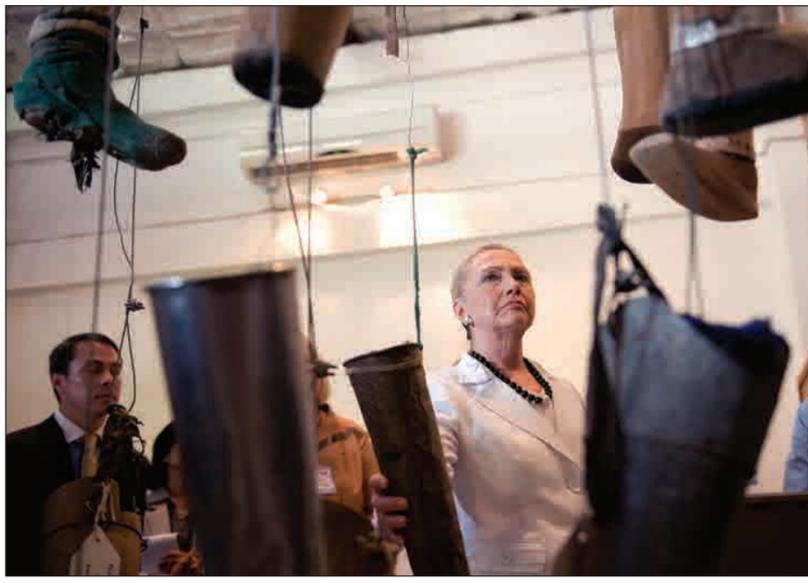
Four decades later, American weapons are still claiming lives. When the war ended, about a third of some 270 million cluster bombs dropped on Laos had failed to detonate. More than 20,000 people have been killed in Laos since then by ordnance, according to its government, and agricultural development has been stymied.

Clinton, gauging whether a nation the U.S. pummeled in wartime can evolve into a new foothold of American influence in Asia, met with the prime minister and foreign minister, part of a weeklong diplomatic tour of Southeast Asia. The goal is to bolster America's standing in some of the fastest growing markets of the world, and counter China's expanding economic, diplomatic and military dominance of the region.

Clinton said she and Laotian leaders "traced the arc of our relationship from addressing the tragic legacies of the past to finding a way to being partners of the future."

Thirty-seven years since the end of America's long war in Indochina, Laos is the latest test case of the Obama administration's efforts to "pivot" U.S. foreign policy away from the long wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The efforts follow a long period of estrangement between Washington and a former Cold War-era foe, and come as U.S. relations also warm with countries such as Myanmar and Vietnam.

In her meetings, Clinton discussed environmental concerns over a proposed



U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton watches an exhibition of artificial limbs on her tour at the Cooperative Orthotic Prosthetic Enterprise Center (COPE), in Vientiane, Laos, Wednesday. COPE provides free prosthetics to those who need them including the victims of blasts of unexploded Vietnam War era ordnance.

dam on the Mekong River as well as investment opportunities and the joint efforts to clean up the tens of millions of unexploded bombs the U.S. dropped on Laos during the Vietnam War. Greater American support for programs in these fields will be included in a multimillion-dollar initiative for Southeast Asia to be announced later this week.

Clinton visited a Buddhist temple and a U.S.-funded prosthetic center for victims of American munitions. There, she met a man named Phongsavath Souliyalat, who told her how he had lost both his hands and his eyesight from a cluster bomb on his 16th birthday, four years ago.

"We have to do more," Clinton told him. "That's one of the reasons I wanted to come here today, so that we can tell more people about the work that we should be doing together." Although the U.S. bombed Laos to loosen its alliance with the North Vietnamese, the current Vietnamese government

focuses its efforts in Laos on recovering its own dead, more than cleaning up unexploded bombs.

Cleanup has been excruciatingly slow. The Washington-based Legacies of War says only 1 percent of contaminated lands have been cleared and has called on Washington to provide far greater assistance. The State Department has provided \$47 million since 1997, though a larger effort could make Laos "bomb-free in our lifetimes," California Rep. Mike Honda has argued.

"Let us mend the wounds of the past together so that Laos can begin a new legacy of peace," he has said.

The U.S. is spending \$9 million this year on cleanup operations for unexploded ordnance in Laos and is likely to offer more in the coming days.

It is part of a larger Obama administration effort to reorient the direction of U.S. diplomacy and commercial policy as the

world's most populous continent become the center of the global economy over the next century. It is also a reaction to China's expanding influence.

The last U.S. secretary of state to visit Laos was John Foster Dulles in 1955. His plane landed after a water buffalo was cleared from the tarmac.

At that time, the mountainous, sparsely populated nation was near the center of U.S. foreign policy. On leaving office, President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned his successor, John F. Kennedy, that if Laos fell to the communists, all Southeast Asia could be lost as well.

While Vietnam ended up the focal point of America's "domino theory" foreign policy, Laos was drawn deeply into the conflict as the U.S. helped support its anti-communist forces and bombed North Vietnamese supply lines and bases.

Landlocked and impoverished Laos offers fewer resources than its far larger neighbors and has lagged in Asia's economic boom. It remains one of the poorest countries in Asia, even as it hopes to boost its development with accession soon to the World Trade Organization.

In recent years, China has stepped up as Laos' principal source of assistance, with loans and grants of up to \$350 million over the past two decades. But like many others in its region, Laos' government is wary of Beijing's intentions. And it has kept an envious eye on neighboring Vietnam's 4 percent surge in commercial trade with the United States over the past two years, as well as the sudden rapprochement between the U.S. and nearby Myanmar.

Persistent human rights issues stand in the way of closer relations with Washington. The U.S. remains concerned about the plight of the ethnic Hmong minority, most of whom fled the country after fighting for a U.S.-backed guerilla army during the Vietnam War. Nearly 250,000 resettled in the United States. The U.S. has pressed Laos to respect the rights of returned refugees from neighboring countries.

Washington also has been seeking greater cooperation from Laos on the search for U.S. soldiers missing in action since the Vietnam War. More than 300 Americans remain unaccounted for in Laos.

Electric rates not falling along with fuel costs

BY JONATHAN FAHEY
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — A plunge in the price of natural gas has made it cheaper for utilities to produce electricity. But the savings aren't translating to lower rates for customers. Instead, U.S. electricity prices are going up.

Electricity prices are forecast to rise slightly this summer. But any increase is noteworthy because natural gas, which is used to produce nearly a third of the country's power, is 43 percent cheaper than a year ago. A long-term downward trend in power prices could be starting to reverse, analysts say.

"It's caused us to scratch our heads," says Tyler Hodge, an analyst at the Energy Department who studies electricity prices.

The recent heat wave that gripped much of the country increased demand for power as families cranked up their air conditioners. And that may boost some June utility bills. But the nationwide rise in electricity prices is attributable to other factors, analysts say:

- In many states, retail electricity rates are set by regulators every few years. As a result, lower power costs haven't yet made their way to customers.
- Utilities often lock in their costs for natural gas and other fuels years in advance. That helps protect customers when fuel prices spike, but it prevents customers from reaping the benefits of a price drop.
- The cost of actually delivering electricity, which accounts for 40 percent of a customer's bill on average, has been rising fast. That has eaten up any potential savings from the production of electricity.

Utilities are building transmission lines, installing new equipment and fixing up power plants after what analysts say has been years of under-investment.

This may reverse what has been a gradual decline in retail electricity prices. Adjusted for inflation, the average retail electricity price has been drifting mostly lower since 1984, when it was 16.7 cents per kilowatt-hour.

"The ratepayer is going to have to foot the bill," says David Wright, vice chairman of the South Carolina Public Service Commission and president of the National Association of Regulatory Commissioners.

The average U.S. residential electricity price is expected to be 12.4 cents per kilowatt hour for the June-to-August period, up 2.4 percent from the same time last year. For the full year, electricity prices are expected to rise 2 percent.

In a typical summer month, that would mean an extra \$3 on a residential bill, which includes the cost of generating the power and delivering it to a home, plus

local taxes and fees.

Electricity pricing is complicated, and it differs from state to state. In states where power providers are allowed to compete, such as Texas, Pennsylvania and New York, customers can shop around for cheaper electricity, although delivery charges are still set by regulators.

Natural gas has plummeted in price because of a dramatic increase in U.S. gas production over the past few years and a warm winter that allowed supplies to build up.

Even though coal accounts for 38 percent of all power produced in the U.S., natural gas plays an outsized role in determining the price of electricity. The price paid for electricity from the last power plant fired up to meet demand at any given moment is what sets the wholesale price for a given region. And since gas-fired power plants are usually the most expensive, they tend to be fired up last.

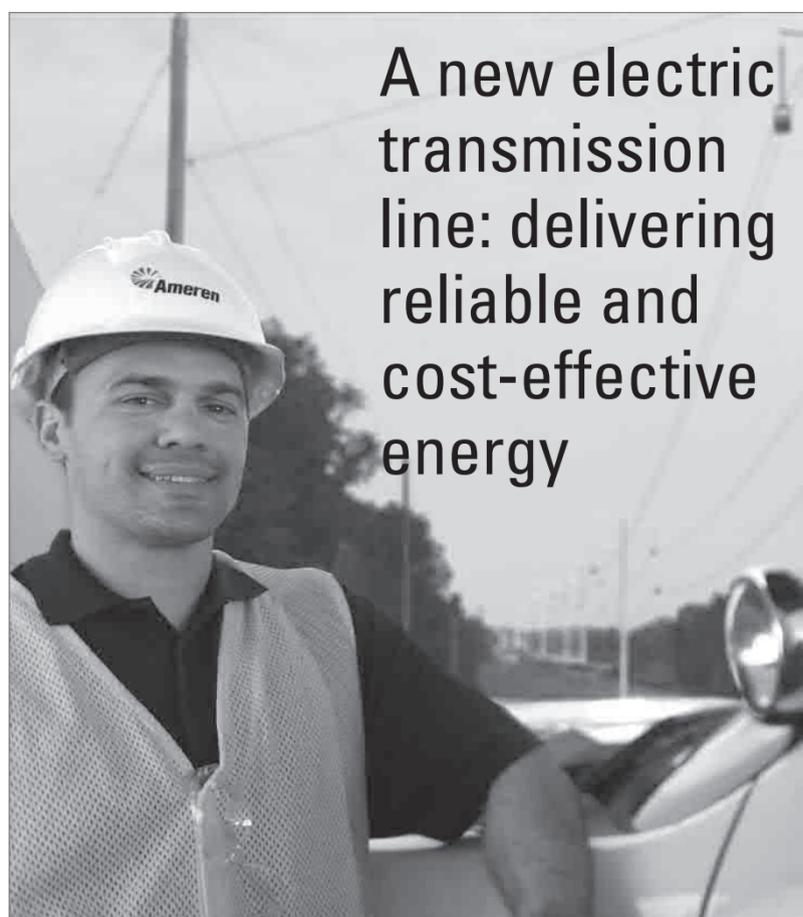
Cheaper natural gas has led to lower wholesale power prices. Power companies operating in states with competitive markets, such as Exelon Corp. and NRG Energy Inc., have seen profits and stock prices tumble along with wholesale prices. Those operating in more regulated power markets, such as Southern Co. and Dominion Resources Inc., have fared much better because their rates don't fluctuate as much.

The lower wholesale prices have made it through to some customers' bills, and others could see a temporary dip next year. At the very least, analysts say, the drop in natural gas prices is keeping electric rates from rising faster than they otherwise would have.

Customers could still get a break this summer — if not on their electric rates, then at least from Mother Nature.

This summer has gotten off to a scorching start in much of the country and is expected to be hotter than normal. But it isn't expected to be as hot as the last two summers, according to Matt Rogers at Commodity Weather Group, which provides forecasts for the energy industry.

Don't get too excited, though. The Energy Department's Hodge calculates that if the summer forecast holds true, customers will save an average of \$5.95 per month.



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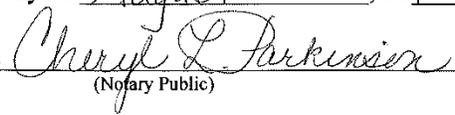
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