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A New Military Council in the Making <extracted> for Printed Item: 284 ( Attachment 1 of 21)  
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# A New Military Council in the Making?

## Analysis

September 9, 2016 | 16:20 GMT

## Print

Text Size

(Stratfor)

**Editor's Note:** *Libya has been bitterly divided since downfall of former leader Moammar Gadhafi. Two governments were created, one in the west and one in the east, and neither recognized the legitimacy of the other. Now a third government, backed by the United Nations has also set itself up in Tripoli. The following piece provides updates to this crisis in real time.*

## Sept. 9: A New Military Council in the Making?

Libya's Government of National Accord (GNA) and the House of Representatives are discussing the formation of a new body to lead the Libyan army. As proposed, the Supreme Council of Armed Forces would comprise Prime Minister Fayez al-Serraj, House President Aguila Saleh, army Gen. Khalifa Hifter and two members of the Presidency Council. If the idea gains traction, it could bring an end to the current impasse between the GNA and the legislature, which was made worse by an August no-confidence vote in the House of Representatives over Serraj's Cabinet picks. The decision has since forced Serraj's administration to build a new list of candidates.

Hifter's role in Libya's new government has long been a point of contention, particularly among GNA supporters in Misrata. However, the council under consideration could deflect some of their concerns by acting as a check on Hifter's influence over the military. But even if the council is formed, it will not ease tension between Hifter and Misrata. After all, the general believes the Misrata militias are supportive of the extremists he is presently combating in Benghazi. So far Hifter's most stalwart backer has been Egypt, which is concerned about jihadists operating in Libya and the possibility of the country forming an Islamist-led government.

Meanwhile, it is still unclear who will be chosen for the council's final two spots. One rumor suggests the candidates will be Ahmed Matiq and Ali al-Qatrani. The former is Serraj's deputy prime minister and a representative of Misrata, while the latter hails from the east and boycotted the Presidency Council until the House of Representatives' no confidence vote last month. He is also Hifter's close ally. Of course, there are other potential candidates, though whether Defense Minister Mahdi al-Bargathi is among them is unclear. Al-Bargathi is not yet a member of the Presidency Council, but he belonged to the Cabinet before it was rejected and has served as a counterweight — and fierce rival — to Hifter. As such, he has gained far more popular support in the country's east and west than the divisive general has.

Libya desperately needs a unified government at the head of its military, something the GNA's formal establishment (and its approval by the House of Representatives) would bring the country closer to achieving. The creation of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces could be a step in that direction, should it come to pass in spite of the numerous pitfalls in its path.

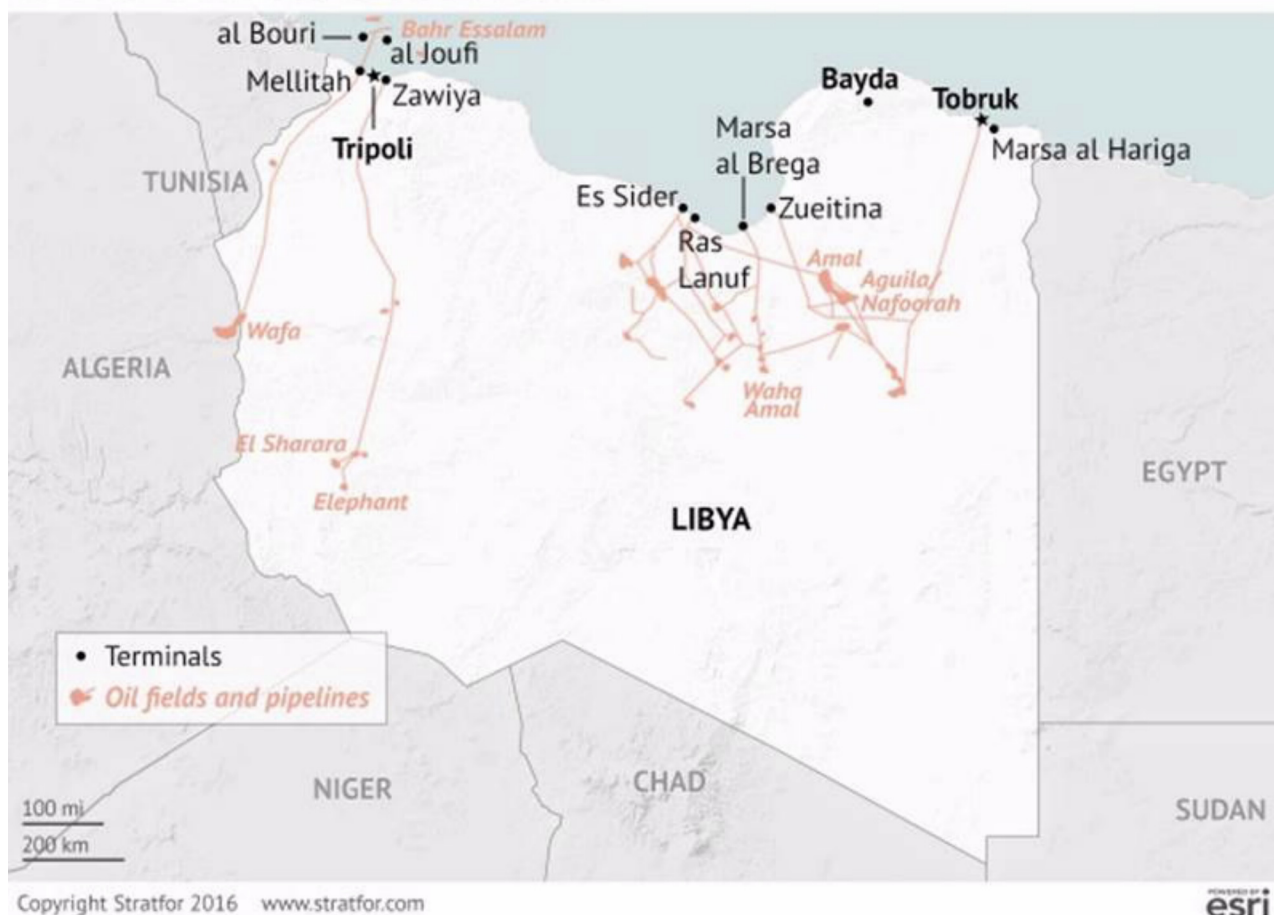
## Aug. 19: An Oil Deal at Zueitina

Libya's lucrative oil sector is [once again at the confluence of larger struggles](#) over political and military unity. On Aug. 19, a tanker arrived at the Zueitina oil terminal, located in the east, and began loading oil for transfer westward to the Tripoli-based National Oil Co. The terminal is controlled by the Petroleum Facilities Guards, a powerful group led by Ibrahim Jadhran. The Petroleum Facilities Guards are an eastern group but have nominally aligned with the unity government in Tripoli, the Government of National Accord. (Tripoli's National Oil Co. is under this government.) And the nearby city — and surrounding region — is controlled by the Libyan National Army, which is loyal to the rival Tobruk-based House of Representatives.

Since the fall of Moammar Gadhafi, Libya has been divided into regional camps, with a dizzying array of militant groups and up to three rival governments vying for influence — and for control of its natural resources. That the Libyan National Army would allow the shipment of oil by a rival militant group to a rival government is noteworthy — in the past it threatened to carry out airstrikes on any tanker trying to move oil without Tobruk's



## SELECTED LIBYAN OIL TERMINALS



The agreement over Zueitina, however, appears to be a one-time or temporary arrangement. In fact, over the past month, tensions between the rival militias have escalated. In July, the Petroleum Facilities Guards and the National Oil Co. [signed a deal to resume oil exports](#) through the National Oil Co. from the As Sidra and Ras Lanuf ports under the militants' control. Shortly thereafter, the Libyan National Army issued threats and, on Aug. 5, the two militias clashed around the Zueitina oil port. And in mid-August, the Libyan National Army moved several battalions into the city itself.

But Gen. Khalifa Hifter, head of the Libyan National Army, has had to live with this uneasy stalemate with the Petroleum Facilities Guards. Although his forces have occupied the city, they have not moved to occupy the Zueitina terminal itself. Instead, he has tried to use his nominal command of the Petroleum Facilities Guards to try to replace Jadhran. (On paper, the Petroleum Facilities Guards are still a subcomponent of the Libyan National Army.) The approach failed, but Hifter can do little more. The Libyan National Army is already stretched thin [fighting al Qaeda-aligned Islamists](#) around Darna, Benghazi and other parts of eastern Libya. Taking on the Petroleum Facilities Guards would take significant effort — the group is highly capable and boasts an estimated 35,000 fighters. Hifter's Libyan National Army has about twice as many troops in total, but many are untested and, moreover, his army is more of a confederation of loosely aligned militias.

Even if Hifter were to manage to take oil fields, it would damage his international standing and his long-term goal of leading a Western-backed unity government. Since this oil would be refined domestically — some of which will ultimately end up back in the east in the form of diesel or gasoline — Hifter cannot be seen as disrupting the flow of oil for Libya's benefit. He is far more opposed to the Western government's exporting oil for a profit. Politically, Hifter is in a tight spot. His ambitions to become defense minister in the U.N.-backed unity government were thwarted when he was passed over for longtime rival Mahdi al-Barghathi. Hifter's attempts to hit back by undermining al-Barghathi's loyalty within the powerful 204 Tank Brigade have been challenged, and al-Barghathi has managed to secure key tribal support for the Government of National Accord in the region. Al-Barghathi has also played an integral part in forming the alliance between the Petroleum Facilities Guards and the Government of National Accord. The uniting of two of Hifter's most powerful rivals is certainly not in his overall interest politically and could drive Hifter to be more aggressive in challenging the resumption of oil exports.

Exports from Zueitina would be a much-needed boon for the Petroleum Facilities Guards and their Tripoli-based patrons. Jadhran controls several other terminals, including the larger As Sidra and Ras Lanuf, which have not come back online. Of these, the Zueitina oil terminal is certainly not the most important, and it lies dangerously close to Hifter's forces. Zueitina is, however, in the best repair. Both As Sidra and Ras Lanuf were damaged in earlier attacks by the Islamic State and in 2014 battles between Libya Dawn and Hifter. Repairs are underway, but success by Al Bunyan al Marsous militants in Sirte against the Islamic State will likely push the Islamist militants south into the oil basin that feeds these ports, putting oil wells and future production in jeopardy. For the Petroleum Facilities Guards — and the National Oil Co. — Zueitina is the best bet for immediate large-scale oil exports, even with its relatively meager capacity of around 70,000 barrels per day.

Libya's oil production will not come close to full capacity any time soon, in spite of small-scale cooperation among some stakeholders. Security and financial troubles will continue to plague the sector, and political fragmentation will compound these difficulties. Though there is growing momentum behind finally unlocking oil exports at its three closed ports — Zueitina, Ras Lanuf and As Sidra — that momentum is slow and constantly in flux.

Libya's oil sector will continue in peaks and troughs, with more troughs than peaks.

## Aug. 1: The U.S. Intensifies Its Fight in Libya

In a significant escalation of U.S. involvement in the fight against the Islamic State in Libya, the U.S. military has launched airstrikes against the group's positions in Sirte, the Department of Defense announced Aug. 1. The airstrikes were requested by Libya's Western-backed unity government, the Government of National Accord (GNA). To this point, the United States has largely limited its military activity in Libya to occasional attacks on high-value Islamic State targets, such as a November 2015 airstrike targeting Islamic State leaders and the February 2016 airstrike on training camps in Sabratha.

Militias loyal to the GNA, primarily Misratan, have been engaged against the Islamic State in Sirte for three months now, and the sustained support of U.S. air power will greatly help their efforts. Close air support, when provided to a determined ground force, can make a big difference — as it has for Kurdish, Iraqi government and rebel forces in Syria and Iraq. The United States has likely already been sharing intelligence with Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj's forces and other anti-Islamic State factions in Libya. The addition of airstrikes, however, may be the crucial factor needed to dismantle Islamic State strong points and to block positions and groupings, paving the way for faster advances.

The West backed the original formation of the GNA with the implicit assumption that once the government carved out its political home in Tripoli, it would receive close Western support for its efforts against the Islamic State. Prior to the most recent airstrikes, this support was given through intelligence-sharing operations and training, particularly of the pro-GNA Misratan militias before their assault on Sirte. Now that the GNA largely has political control over Tripoli, Misrata and other areas in western Libya, Western governments have continued to support the GNA's institutions — military, energy and others — to ensure that the nascent government stays afloat.

Despite the GNA's advances, the Libyan battlefield is as complicated as ever. The GNA's legitimacy, influence and power extends east only into parts of the Gulf of Sirte. In the eastern half of the country, the rival government (the House of Representatives) and Libyan National Army forces under the command of Khalifa Hifter remain out of the GNA's purview. While the United States and its allies are hoping that the unity government can stay afloat, their primary objective is to avoid the creation of a power vacuum in which jihadist groups could thrive. Although Western countries hope that the unity government will also solve some of Libya's political problems, the reality is that Libya is nowhere close to becoming unified under one government.

Because of this harsh reality, Western countries have proved pragmatic when working with the factions involved in the Libyan conflict. The United States is clearly working closely with the al-Sarraj government, but on July 20 three French special operations troops were killed in a helicopter crash on the outskirts of Benghazi where they had been working with Hifter's forces. The fighting in Benghazi and France's support of Hifter follows overall trends. Hifter is a divisive figure within Libya, and while militias loyal to the GNA are leading the charge against the Islamic State, they have no real presence in Benghazi, where Hifter's forces are fighting other jihadist groups, such as the Benghazi Defense Brigades. The only way to support operations against those groups is by supporting Hifter. The United States has clearly signaled that it will support the GNA's anti-Islamic State operations. But as the international support for various, rival Libyan factions proves, Libya is far from unified.

## June 13: The Islamic State's Hold on Sirte Weakens

Signs of success are beginning to emerge for the monthlong offensive against the Islamic State in the Libyan city of Sirte. Over the past week, forces loyal to the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord have entered Sirte as part of an operation led by Misratan militia.

Bunyan al-Marsoos, or "Solid Structure." Then, on June 11, the Libyan forces claimed to have regained control of the city's port, marking a quick victory in retaking some of Sirte's most important infrastructure.

The fight may still prove to be a bloody one, however, if the Islamic State decides to make a serious stand. According to several reports, the group's fighters are heavily barricaded inside a densely constructed portion of the city center, and snipers have taken up positions on rooftops in the area. The Islamic State is estimated to have about 5,000 fighters in Libya, many of whom are believed to be in Sirte. As the Misratan militias have intensified their assault on the city during the past week, the group has responded in kind with suicide and armed attacks, which will likely continue in the coming days.

Despite having kept a firm grip on the city since February 2015, the Islamic State's Sirte component is weaker than most of its branches elsewhere in the world. Many of the group's Sirte fighters are thought to have been conscripts who lacked the formal training of their peers. Furthermore, there have been reports of militants being bound and possibly executed, perhaps for trying to defect from the group, while others have said militants are shaving their beards in an effort to disguise themselves as civilians as they flee the city.

Regardless of whether these rumors are true, recent gains by Misratan militias and the relative weakness of the Islamic State's Sirte faction suggest that the jihadist group will be pushed at least partially out of the city at some point. As it is, the Islamic State will abandon its efforts to seize wide swaths of territory, instead adopting guerrilla and terrorist tactics. Yet the question remains: If the Islamic State is pushed out of Sirte, where will it go?

One possible answer is south. As the Misratan militias have approached Sirte from the west, other forces loyal to the Government of National Accord, including the Petroleum Facilities Guards, have converged on the city from the east. Beyond their routes, however, much of the desert surrounding Sirte is only sparsely controlled. Fleeing Islamic State fighters could feasibly head south, where they would be able to attack upstream oil and natural gas infrastructure as well as the Misratan militias in Sirte's outskirts and forces under the command of Gen. Khalifa Hifter.

Meanwhile, the Islamic State will also have to cope with rising threats to its holdings in other parts of Libya. In April, Hifter's forces and several al Qaeda-linked groups forced the Islamic State out of Darnah, and Benghazi and Sabratha — the group's other primary areas of activity — are under intense military pressure.

In the face of its many challenges, the Islamic State still retains one crucial advantage: fragmentation among its Libyan foes. [Deep political and military divisions](#) persist among the country's competing factions, including the Misratan militias (loyal to the Government of National Accord) and the Libyan National Army (loyal to Hifter). Though these groups have tacitly cooperated somewhat over the past six months, enabling them to beat back the Islamic State, the rifts between them have remained without a strong central authority to heal them. The resulting political fissures — and at times, security vacuums — have been a boon for groups such as the Islamic State, which will continue to proliferate as long as Libyans remain divided.

## May 4: Clashes Continue, Regionally and Locally

For over a year, Libya's rival governments have hosted separate branches of the country's National Oil Corp. (NOC), with an internationally recognized headquarters in Tripoli and a competing branch based in Bayda. On May 4, the company's Bayda headquarters, which is loyal to Tobruk, blocked the Seachance, an oil tanker registered in Malta, from loading oil at the Marsa al Hariga terminal near Tobruk. NOC-Bayda directed workers at the terminal not to load oil onto the ship, according to port officials.

That order came just after NOC-Bayda's first attempt to export its oil was foiled: As its loaded tanker approached, Malta barred its entry. In the case of the Seachance, the ship was attempting to load crude oil sold by NOC-Tripoli, which supports the Tripoli government.

Accounting for over half of Libya's current 350,000 barrels per day in crude oil production, between 220,000 and 250,000 barrels per day pass through the Marsa al Hariga terminal. Of this, about half is delivered to Swiss trading company Glencore, while the remainder goes to western Libya for refining. In August 2015, Glencore signed a contract with NOC's Tripoli-based branch to export oil from the Sarir and Messla fields through Marsa al Hariga. To establish itself as the country's legitimate NOC headquarters, NOC-Bayda rejected all contracts signed after March 2015, including Glencore's deal. Nevertheless, the political disputes that have interrupted operations at other terminals in the region had not affected Marsa al Hariga until now.

In blocking the terminal, currently Libya's busiest, Tobruk is likely trying to undermine the legitimacy of Tripoli's institutions — both the unity government and the NOC branch there. The move suggests that, as the government in Libya's capital gains momentum and support, including the

Western backing that Tobruk's government once enjoyed, the eastern city's rival establishments are becoming more assertive. Even so, although the terminal's closure could halt production for Arabian Gulf Oil Co., the historically Tripoli-loyal company that produced the stymied oil, Tobruk is not likely to become successful as an independent oil exporter. The Seachance has since left Marsa al Hariga. For his part, the head of NOC-Bayda, Naji al-Maghrabi, announced that the delay was purely bureaucratic in nature, downplaying the decision's political implications. Meanwhile, skirmishes broke out in Jufra between Gen. Khalifa Hifter's Libyan National Army — or groups aligned with the army — and forces loyal to Ziad Balam, head of the Benghazi Revolutionaries' Shura Council-affiliated Omar Mukhtar Brigade. The clashes provide an important reminder that militias on both sides of the conflict between Tripoli and Tobruk are deeply fragmented and difficult to control. For example, the northwestern city of Misrata boasts dozens of militias. Many of these oppose Hifter, allying themselves with jihadist and Salafist groups that Hifter and his forces have consistently attacked in places such as Benghazi.

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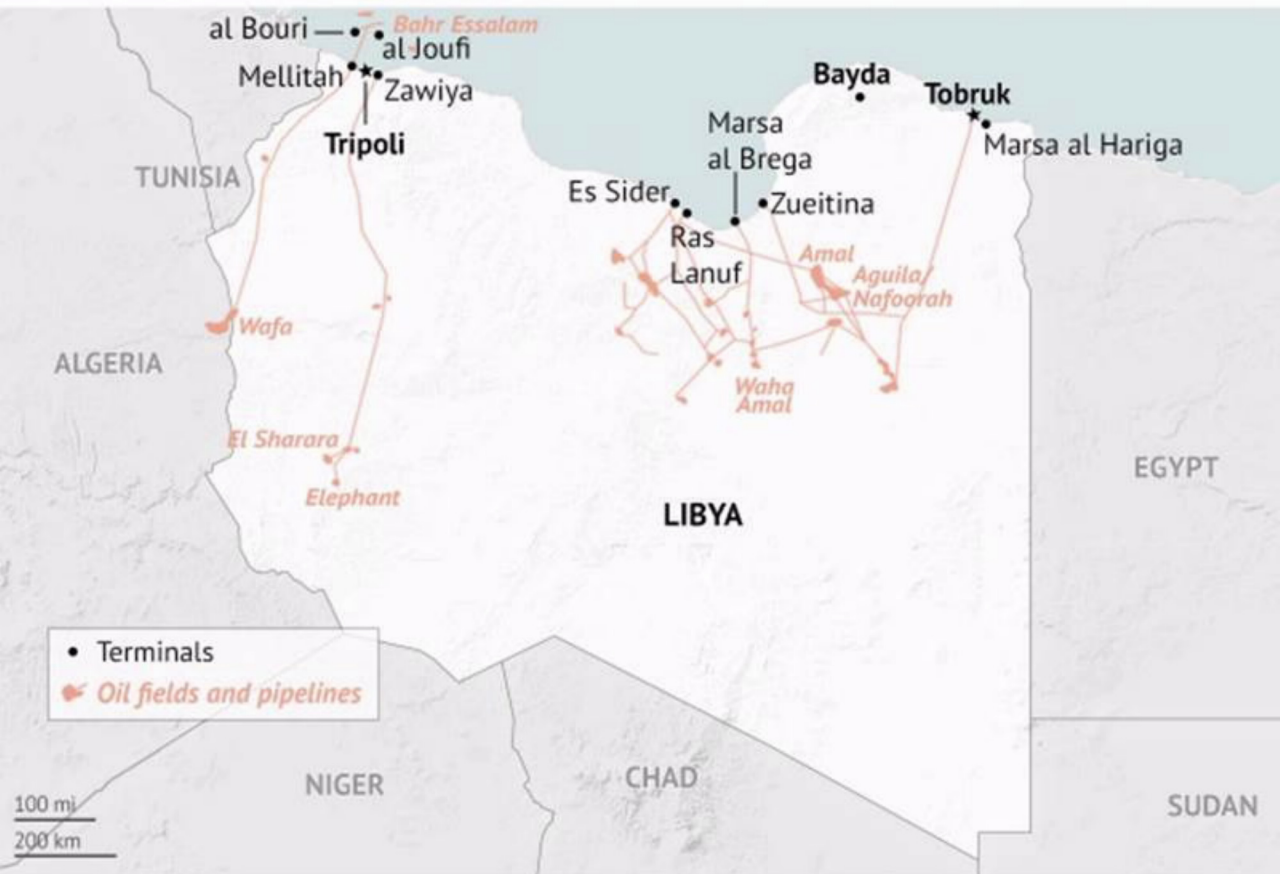
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# SELECTED LIBYAN OIL TERMINALS





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# Argentina: Buenos Aires Considers New Import Restrictions

September 9, 2016 | 14:40 GMT

**Print**

Text Size

(Stratfor)

Argentina is reportedly preparing to level new restrictions on imported textiles, a measure that would fly in the face of President Mauricio Macri's plans to liberalize his country's economy. According to a Sept. 8 Cronista report, officials from the Argentine textile industry have admitted that they are negotiating with Buenos Aires to put the trade barriers in place next year.

Pressure has been mounting against the Argentine government to restrict trade in certain sectors such as textiles, shoes and electronics.

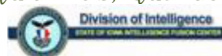
Opposition lawmaker and one-time presidential candidate Sergio Massa has even proposed the suspension of imports — with the exception of raw industrial materials and medicines — for 120 days. Several other prominent opposition figures, including Daniel Scioli, have backed Massa's bid, arguing that it could protect the country's small and medium-sized enterprises.

But Macri was elected on a [promise to liberalize the Argentine economy](#). Since assuming office in December 2015, the president has removed some of the bureaucratic red tape surrounding imports, reached a deal with holdout companies to pay [the country's defaulted debt](#), lifted foreign currency controls and lowered taxes on grain exports. As a result, Argentine imports by volume increased by 6.4 percent in the first seven months of 2016, compared with the same period the year before. However, inflation has also remained stubbornly high and is expected to climb to over 40 percent this year. The International Monetary Fund predicts the Argentine economy as a whole will shrink by 1.5 percent this year — a likely scenario, considering industry production fell 7.9 percent in July alone, the largest dip in industry production the country has seen in 14 years. Argentina's biggest labor unions, the General Confederation of Labor and Argentine Workers' Central Union, have pushed back against Macri's liberalizing policies as well, in large part because of the effect they have had (or could have) on jobs. The government has admitted that more than 120,000 jobs have been lost this year because of the recession. Of those, more than 10,000 were cut because of Buenos Aires' decision to slash its spending by laying off public sector employees. This, coupled with [a public utilities price hike](#) of over 200 percent and the lifting of import restrictions, has prompted the unions and several social movements to hold a national strike in October to protest the government's economic policies. The exact date of the demonstration will likely be set during a Sept. 23 meeting.

It is possible that Macri will yield to labor union and industry demands by enacting some form of import regulation on certain products in 2017. Should he place limitations on foreign shoes, textiles and electronics, the countries most affected would likely be Brazil and China — two trade partners Argentine industries have specifically complained about. Still, it is unlikely that Macri would go so far as to agree with Massa's proposal to suspend imports, even temporarily, for fear of [scaring away the foreign investors](#) the president has worked so hard to draw to Argentina. And so, even if Massa's suggestion is approved by Congress, Macri is liable to veto it.

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# China's Military Looks to the Sky

## Analysis

September 9, 2016 | 09:16 GMT

## Print

Text Size

As part of its shifting military strategy, China is putting more emphasis on its airborne forces. That includes beefing up its air logistics capabilities by updating its transport aircraft fleet. (AAMIR QURESHI/AFP/Getty Images)

## Forecast

*Airborne forces will complement China's strategic military needs.*

*China will continue to invest in the development of its airborne forces.*

*To enhance their effectiveness, Beijing will focus on upgrading the firepower and strategic mobility of its airborne forces.*

## Analysis

China is broadening its military horizons. The country is pursuing its global interests more proactively, driving its military to focus on becoming a more international presence as part of its ["active defense" doctrine](#). As China extends its reach and expands its efforts to defend its interests around the world, the country has had to rely on branches of its armed forces beyond the army, traditionally the dominant branch. To that end, Beijing has poured money into developing its [naval](#) and air power and overhauling and modernizing its [command and control structure](#). At the same time, it has worked to enhance its airborne forces.

## Meeting a Strategic Need

Beijing's focus on cultivating its airborne forces reflects its strategic needs. China is one of the largest countries in the world, and its borders contain vast swaths of remote territory. Furthermore, since the country is surrounded by potential flashpoints, from its [disputed borders with India](#) to its potentially explosive border with North Korea, Beijing can never be sure where its next crisis will erupt. China depends on flexible and mobile forces that can quickly deploy wherever needed, whether to counter an armed invasion or respond to a natural disaster. Airborne forces, which are lightly equipped, well trained and highly mobile, are uniquely suited to that role. Outside the Chinese mainland, China's airborne forces will probably take on a prominent role in managing problems in proximate areas such as the South China Sea or Taiwan. In addition, as China hones its power projection capabilities, airborne forces could prove useful for global missions, such as peacekeeping activities in Africa, evacuation operations and long-range counterterrorism missions.

China has already developed a formidable airborne contingent in its 15th Airborne Corps, an elite force comparable to the United States' XVIII Airborne Corps. The 15th Airborne Corps, composed of three divisions totaling approximately 30,000 men, forms the core of China's strategic reserve and rapid-reaction force and operates under the aegis of the air force (though the Central Military Commission maintains direct command). The corps' troops are some of the best trained in the Chinese military, receiving instruction in parachute jumps, air assault, operations behind enemy lines and combat in diverse environments. In recent years, their training has emphasized rapid deployments to the Tibet region of western China, where India has built up its new [Mountain Strike Corps](#) just beyond the border.

What's more, the 15th Airborne Corps has the gear to match its training. In terms of firepower, the corps traditionally receives the best light equipment available to the Chinese military. Since 2003, it has been equipped with light armored vehicles that can be dropped from transport aircraft, significantly increasing the firepower available to deployed troops, who could find themselves deep behind enemy lines. Moreover, Beijing remains committed to improving its airborne capabilities: Recent images from China suggest that a new airborne infantry fighting vehicle with better armor and firepower is under development.

## A Lingering Limitation

But for all their training and equipment, China's airborne forces lack the strategic air transport necessary to deploy troops efficiently. With limited numbers of Il-76 and Y-8 transport aircraft at its disposal, China can deploy only one division of the 15th Airborne Corps across the country in under 48 hours. Limited transport availability also restricts the stream of supplies to airborne infantry troops after deployment. Since airborne forces are valuable precisely for their ability to deploy rapidly from the air, China's insufficient transportation capacity is a challenge that Beijing will have to overcome.

## Xian Y-20 (Yun 20)

- Four-engine jet-powered aircraft
- One iteration will transport passengers, and another will transport military equipment such as tanks, armored combat vehicles and heavy artillery
- Similar, but smaller, than the Boeing C-17 Globemaster III
- Maximum payload: 66 metric tons
- Maximum level speed: 700 km/h (435 mph)
- Wingspan: 50 m (164 feet)
- Length: 47 m
- Range: 7,800 km
- Designed and developed by the 603 Aircraft Design Institute and the Xian Aircraft Corporation (XAC)
- Partially based on Russian Ilyushin Il-76 technology
- Ukraine's Antonov Design Bureau provided some development assistance



Source: Sino Defence

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To address this problem, China has been [investing heavily in its strategic transport fleet over the past few years](#). Soon, Beijing will begin to reap the rewards. China, for instance, recently began producing two new indigenously developed transport aircraft, the Shaanxi Y-9 medium-range transport and the Xian Y-20 strategic airlifter. Broadly equivalent, respectively, to the U.S. C-130 and C-17 transport aircraft, the Shaanxi Y-9 and Xian Y-20 will augment the lift capacity available to the 15th Airborne Corps in the years ahead. In addition, China signed an agreement with Ukraine on Aug. 30 that will provide it with a completed An-225, the world's largest transport aircraft, along with the specifications and license to produce it. Only one An-225, which is capable of lifting a payload of more than 250 metric tons, has been built to date. Though Beijing's intentions for the plane are unclear, its deal with Kiev further illustrates China's interest in strategic airlift that could support future force projection missions.





## Shaanxi Y-9 (Yun-9)

- Medium-sized, medium-range turboprop multipurpose transport aircraft
- Comparable to the U.S. Lockheed Martin C-130J
- Cargo bay: 16.2 m (53 feet) long, 3.2 m wide and 2.3 m in high
- Internal volume: 155 cubic meters
- Maximum payload capacity: 20 metric tons
- Can carry 98 paratroopers or nine international standard pallets of 108 by 88 inches
- Cruising speed: 550 km/h
- Cruising altitude: 8,000 m
- Range: 5,000 km
- Take-off/landing distance: 1,350 m
- Designed and manufactured by Shaanxi Aircraft Corporation with help from Ukraine-based Antonov Aeronautical Scientific-technical Complex (ASTC) aircraft company



Source: Sino Defence

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As China has invested more in developing its military power, it has had to adjust its force structure and capabilities, reducing the role of large-scale traditional ground maneuver units in favor of alternative means of projecting power. Beijing's emphasis on its airborne forces, particularly its 15th Airborne Corps, reflects its understanding that its changing military demands require more flexible and mobile power projection capability.

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## Xian Y-20 (Yun 20)

- Four-engine jet-powered aircraft
- One iteration will transport passengers, and another will transport military equipment such as tanks, armored combat vehicles and heavy artillery
- Similar, but smaller, than the Boeing C-17 Globemaster III
- Maximum payload: 66 metric tons
- Maximum level speed: 700 km/h (435 mph)
- Wingspan: 50 m (164 feet)
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- Range: 7,800 km
- Designed and developed by the 603 Aircraft Design Institute and the Xian Aircraft Corporation (XAC)
- Partially based on Russian Ilyushin Il-76 technology
- Ukraine's Antonov Design Bureau provided some development assistance



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## Shaanxi Y-9 (Yun-9)

- Medium-sized, medium-range turboprop multipurpose transport aircraft
- Comparable to the U.S. Lockheed Martin C-130J
- Cargo bay: 16.2 m (53 feet) long, 3.2 m wide and 2.3 m in high
- Internal volume: 155 cubic meters
- Maximum payload capacity: 20 metric tons
- Can carry 98 paratroopers or nine international standard pallets of 108 by 88 inches
- Cruising speed: 550 km/h
- Cruising altitude: 8,000 m
- Range: 5,000 km
- Take-off/landing distance: 1,350 m
- Designed and manufactured by Shaanxi Aircraft Corporation with help from Ukraine-based Antonov Aeronautical Scientific-technical Complex (ASTC) aircraft company



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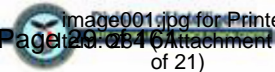


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of 21)

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# In Nigeria, a Familiar Debate Resurfaces

## Analysis

September 9, 2016 | 09:00 GMT

## Print

Text Size

Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari (L) talks with rival politician Atiku Abubakar in Lagos. (PIUS UTOMI EKPEI/AFP/Getty Images)

## Summary

The decadeslong debate over Nigeria's political structure has been reignited once again. On Aug. 21, Ekiti state Gov. Ayodele Fayose announced his support for the idea of moving toward "true federalism," in essence calling for the further devolution of power and revenue to Nigerian states. That the ruling All Progressives Congress has turned away from the same notion is odd, Fayose added, considering that the party ran on a federalist platform in elections last year. But amending the Nigerian Constitution to allow for greater federalism would require President Muhammadu Buhari to have — and be willing to burn through — substantial political capital. It would also risk intensifying Nigeria's disputes about what kind of country it wants to be and how best it can reconcile its often competing goals of national unity and local autonomy.

## Analysis

Fayose is merely the latest in a long line of prominent Nigerian figures to revive the federalism conversation; many politicians and groups, including militant and civil society organizations in the country's south, have done so before him. Others have proposed fiscal federalism as a middle ground, whereby states would have greater control of their finances but rely less on easy money from Abuja. Perennial presidential candidate and former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, perhaps picking up on where Nigeria's political winds seem to be headed, has made several statements in recent months in favor of restructuring the government. On July 1, he called for "a reset in our relationships as a united nation." Seven weeks later, former President Olusegun Obasanjo echoed his sentiment, saying Nigeria today is more divided than at any other time in its history, barring its civil war. But the problem with demanding federalism in Nigeria is that everyone already has. Because the country runs on a [rotational system of power](#), one group is consistently — if temporarily — given more clout than the rest. Unsurprisingly, those who feel left out routinely call for power at the top to be dispersed. Yet few good solutions have been proffered for how to do that in a sustainable way that benefits everyone. Wealthier regions in the south, for instance, would prefer states to have budgetary autonomy and generate their own revenues from local resources. Northern states that are economically weak, however, cannot afford to agree to such an arrangement.

## A Fragmented State

The challenges facing Nigeria date back to its foundation as a state. The country is geographically diverse: Swamps and marshes that dot the southern Niger Delta gradually transition into tropical forests and savannas farther north, only to give way to the semi-arid climate of the Sahel. But Nigeria's population — at roughly 175 million people, the largest in Africa — is even more diverse than its landscape. The country is home to hundreds of ethnic groups, three major cultural groups (Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo) and three major religious groups (Christianity, Islam and animism). These factors only begin to describe the many divisions in Nigerian society. The country's countless groups and subgroups, predictably, have made it incredibly difficult to govern as a single entity.

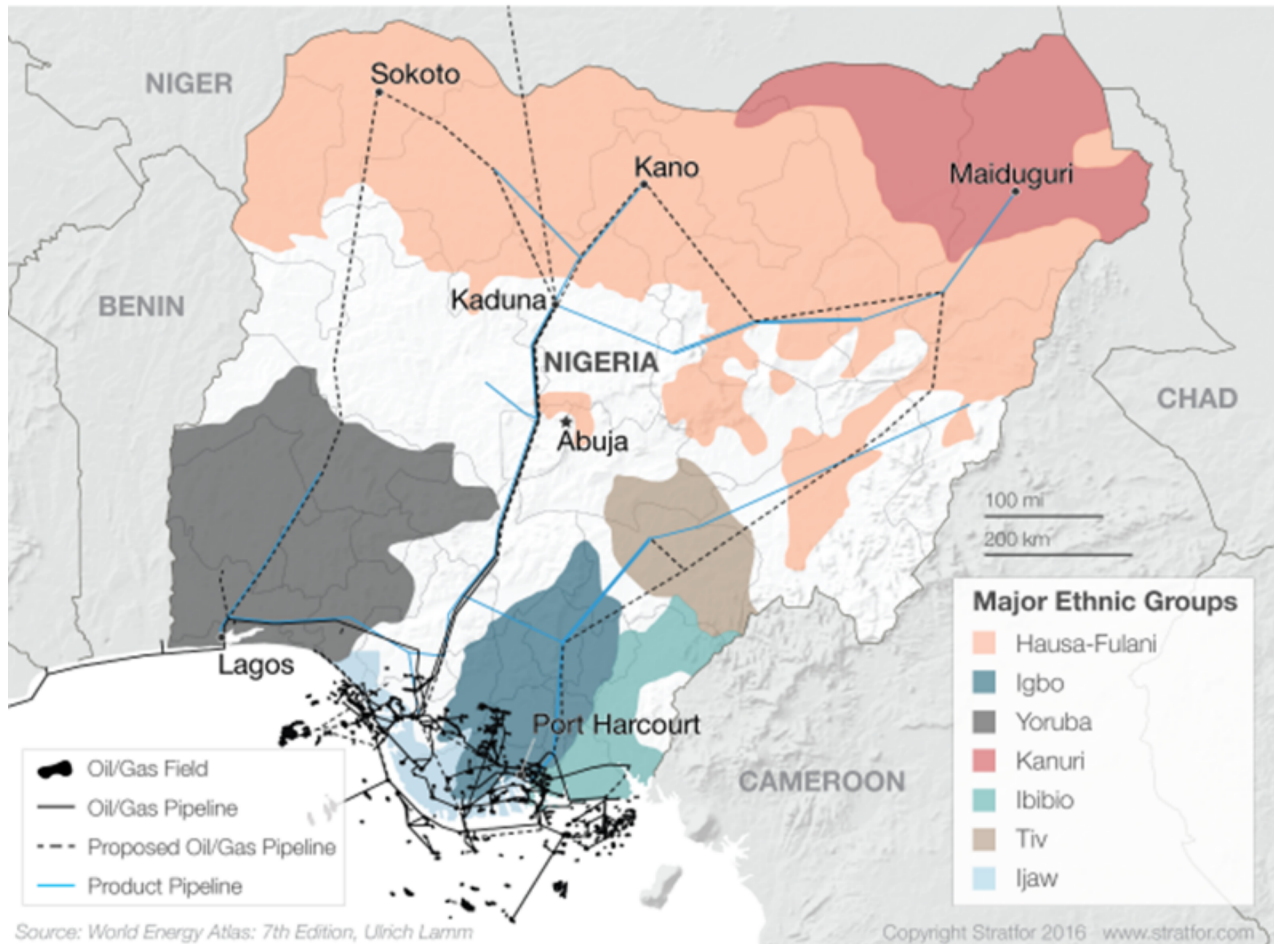
Nigeria, in its modern form, first emerged as a British colonial concept following the 1914 merger of Lagos and the Southern and Northern Nigerian protectorates. Before that, the British had ruled the largely Christian south directly, leaving the mostly Muslim north to the region's entrenched political dynasties. After the joining of north and south, the two halves maintained a fair amount of sovereignty — a setup Nigeria has struggled to overcome since gaining its independence in 1960. Even as the concept of "One Nigeria" has gradually taken hold over the decades, the country's vast size and persistent rifts have proved stubborn obstacles to a truly united nation.

The geographic, ethnic and tribal divisions that exist in Nigeria also help to explain the vast economic discrepancies among the country's varied groups. Lagos, located in southwestern Nigeria, is home to the country's — and the continent's — busiest ports. The city, benefiting from West

In Nigeria, a Familiar Debate Resurfaces <extracted> for Printed Item: 284 ( Attachment 11 of 21)  
Africa's notorious lack of natural harbors and its sizable population, has become Nigeria's primary economic hub. Militancy, crime and a lack of development in Lagos' southeastern neighbor, [the Niger Delta](#), have helped to reinforce the city's comparative prominence even more. All the while, [grievances among Niger Delta locals](#) over the exploitation of their region's natural resources have grown. Farther north, agriculture and livestock, rather than oil and ports, are the primary source of wealth. In fact, the sector employs the vast majority of Nigerians. Yet in the extreme north, security threats largely stemming from Wilayat al Sudan al Gharbi — better known by its former name, [Boko Haram](#) — have severely weakened the region's economy. In places such as Borno state, more than 46 percent of children do not attend school, compared with the national average of 27 percent.

## Energy Infrastructure and Ethnicities in Nigeria

The oil-producing Niger Delta region, which generates the vast majority of Nigeria's economic activity, represents only a small share of the country's population. Various ethnic and sub-ethnic groups scattered across state lines create the underlying tensions between Nigerian unity and local autonomy.



This economic imbalance continues to fuel conflict across Nigeria. The north's bleak prospects, for example, have exacerbated tensions among its largely Muslim community, giving extremist groups such as Boko Haram ample means to draw recruits from the disaffected masses. Meanwhile, even the oil-producing south has encountered its own troubles. In the Niger Delta, well-paying jobs are tough to come by, and many residents lack the technical skills to work in the oil industry. So while the region is fairly urbanized relative to the north, it is still plagued by poverty, corruption, crime and environmental degradation. Separatist and revisionist movements seeking answers to the region's long-standing complaints have existed for decades, flaring up time and again as conditions in the south worsen.

## A Perpetual Balancing Act

Striking a balance among Nigeria's numerous opposing forces has been a constant and formidable challenge for its leaders, and many have failed. In the years following the country's independence, a string of military governments slowly amassed power in an attempt to forge a more cohesive nation. At the same time, though, the number of Nigerian regions exploded from three to 19, breaking the grip of the country's three major ethnic groups and fostering a state-centric system of governance. The proliferation of states made room for minorities to participate in Nigerian politics, granting some measure of control over the country's fate to a wider array of stakeholders. Though Nigeria's fragmentation did not necessarily create

In Nigeria, a Familiar Debate Resurfaces <extracted> for Printed Item: 284 ( Attachment 11 of 21)  
more stability or prosperity — coups and countercoups, as well as corruption, remained rampant — it did appear to stop the state's disintegration in its tracks.

Over the years, this federalist structure has evolved. The most recent version traces its roots to the 1999 constitution, written when Nigeria's former military rulers handed power to civilian leaders. It boasts a presidential system comprising three layers: the federal, state and local governments. Though the federal government is widely acknowledged as the most powerful body, the governors of Nigeria's 36 states hold a substantial amount of autonomy. (State budgets, for instance, have little oversight.) To prevent any one region or ethnic group from seizing the levers of power, a rotational power-sharing deal was also put in place in 1999. According to the agreement, one Cabinet minister must be selected from every state. Any president who appears to favor certain areas or groups over others while governing would place his or her position in jeopardy. Despite these safeguards, tensions have continued to rise between Nigeria's ethnic, regional and tribal groups since 1999. Dissatisfied [militants in the Niger Delta](#), arguing that the region should receive more funding and autonomy given the amount of oil it produces, have resumed their attacks against its oil and natural gas infrastructure. The attacks, in turn, triggered the latest debate over Nigerian federalism. Some Niger Delta residents have framed their predicament as one caused by a northern-led federal government taking advantage of southern minorities. But Nigeria's problems have less to do with the man in power than with a dilemma decades in the making. And as the country's more developed states demand greater control over their resources — resources without which the central government cannot survive — the constant tug-of-war between national unity and local autonomy will continue.

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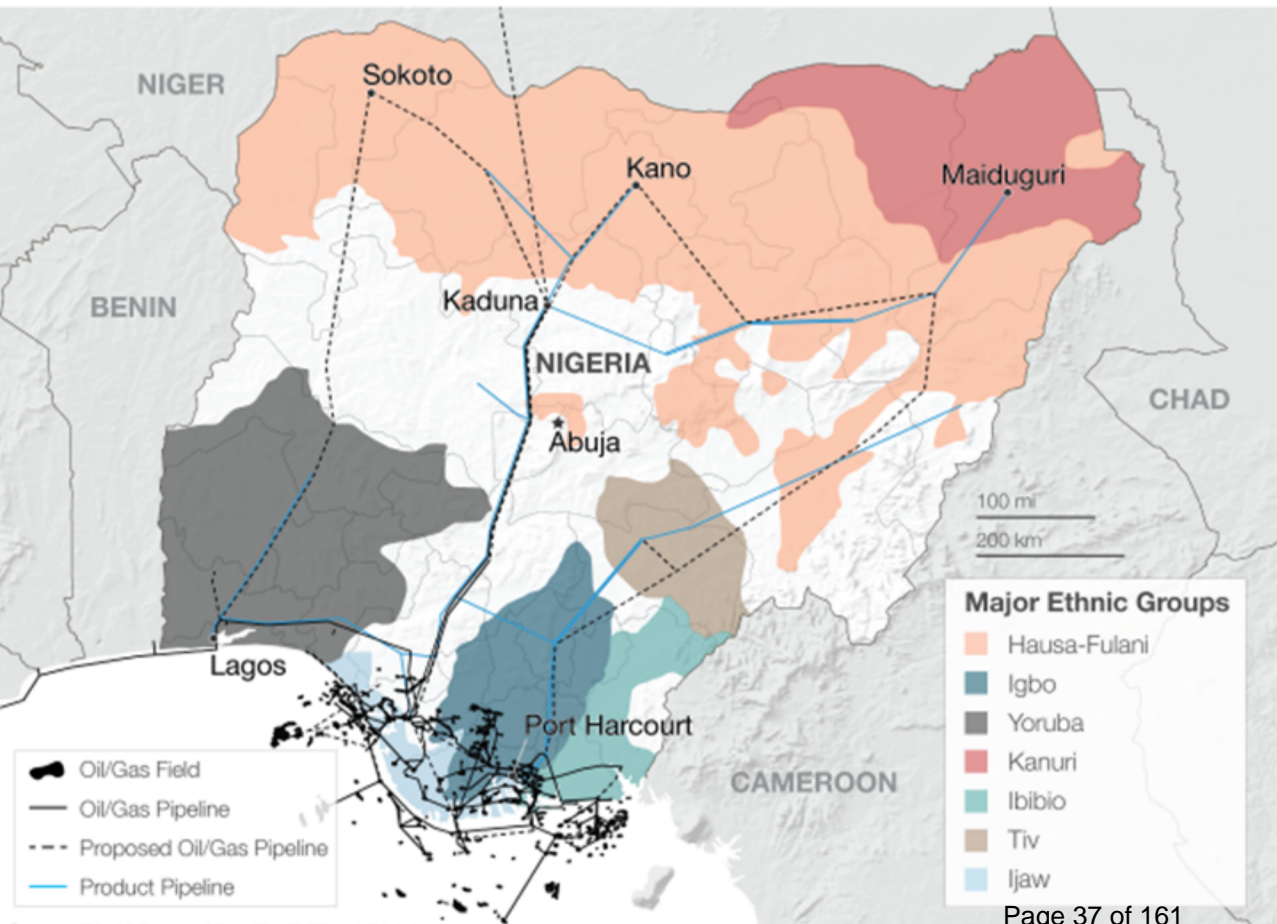
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# Energy Infrastructure and Ethnicities in Nigeria

The oil-producing Niger Delta region, which generates the vast majority of Nigeria's economic activity, represents only a small share of the country's population. Various ethnic and sub-ethnic groups scattered across state lines create the underlying tensions between Nigerian unity and local autonomy.



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**To:** "Lewis, Brian [HSEMD]" <Brian.Lewis@iowa.gov>  
**Sent:** Fri, 9 Sep 2016 10:11:42 -0500  
**Subject:** North Korea: A Fifth Nuclear Test?

# North Korea: A Fifth Nuclear Test?

## Analysis

September 9, 2016 | 04:14 GMT

Print

Text Size

South Korean officials examine a screen showing seismic waves from North Korea following the country's fourth nuclear test in January. (CHUNG SUNG-JUN/Getty Images)

## Analysis

North Korea appeared to carry out its fifth underground nuclear test on Sept. 9, coinciding with the 68th anniversary of the founding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The test occurred less than a day after U.S. President Barack Obama left Asia following his attendance at the G-20 and Association of Southeast Asian Nations summits. The test also follows by a few days the most recent series of North Korean Rodong medium-range ballistic missile tests. According to initial reports, a 5.3 magnitude earthquake was detected near the site of North Korea's previous nuclear tests. The seismic signature is similar to previous North Korean tests.

As noted in [Stratfor's annual forecast](#), North Korea was likely to continue its missile and nuclear tests this year. In addition, we have been monitoring an apparent acceleration in the North Korean nuclear and missile program as Pyongyang nears a demonstrable nuclear weapon and delivery system. The [final phases of the North Korean test cycle are the most critical](#) because they mark the last moments that foreign powers can [intervene](#) to prevent the completion of North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Thus, if there is to be military action to deter North Korea's progress, it must come soon. Pyongyang is gambling that its conventional military threat, coupled with the political situation in the United States and South Korea (both preoccupied by elections), will reduce the potential for any pre-emptive military action. This explains the acceleration of the program.

# Suspected Nuclear Test, Sept. 9, 2016

North Korea appears to have carried out its fifth underground nuclear test. According to initial reports, a 5.3 magnitude earthquake was detected near the site of North Korea's previous nuclear tests. The seismic signature is similar to previous North Korean tests.

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North Korea no longer sees its nuclear program as a bargaining chip to trade away, but rather as [a vital component of its national security](#). Without the ability to strike back at the mainland United States, Pyongyang does not feel it has a sufficient deterrent to potential future U.S. military action — nor to U.S. efforts to destabilize North Korea through social means (in a manner similar to the so-called color revolutions). Pyongyang is pursuing a dual track policy, one where its nuclear deterrent and economic development are supposed to [move forward in tandem](#). The North feels that it can force a change in international policy by showcasing that rolling back its nuclear program is no longer an option. From North Korea's perspective, the U.S. treatment of India and Pakistan after they developed nuclear weapons are case in point that this can be politically feasible.

The challenge for Pyongyang's neighbors and the United States is that sanctions and political pressure have been insufficient to quell the North's drive toward a viable nuclear weapon and [delivery system](#). Such actions may have even enhanced Pyongyang's determination. During his recent visit to Asia, Obama urged China to take a more activist role in North Korea, but Beijing continues to balk at direct action, fearing the destabilization of North Korea (and thus creating a refugee crisis and perhaps the flow of North Korean arms into northern China). Beijing is also not ready to alter its policy of nonintervention in other countries. Even with South Korea's assertion that, because of the North's missile tests, it will accept the [U.S. THAAD missile defense system](#) and its affiliated radar systems, China has [not taken concrete action](#) to alter the North's behavior.

If the North continues on this course, the chance for stopping or reversing its program will slip away. Already, Japan and South Korea are reconsidering their own military development to deal with a nuclear-armed North Korea (and even re-opening debate over whether they should develop nuclear weapons). China appears ready to accommodate a nuclear-armed North Korea, and Russia is similarly not taking any concrete steps to deter Pyongyang's path. As elections near in the United States and South Korea, the question facing the next presidents may no longer be how to prevent a nuclear North Korea, but rather [how to live with one](#).

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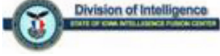
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# Suspected Nuclear Test, Sept. 9, 2016

North Korea appears to have carried out its fifth underground nuclear test. According to initial reports, a 5.3 magnitude earthquake was detected near the site of North Korea's previous nuclear tests. The seismic signature is similar to previous North Korean tests.



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# Politicizing the Hajj Pilgrimage

## Geopolitical Diary

September 9, 2016 | 02:29 GMT

Text Size

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Some 1.5 million pilgrims will make their way to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, where the Kaaba (pictured) is located. (AHMAD GHARABLI/AFP/Getty Images)

The annual hajj pilgrimage will peak in Saudi Arabia beginning this weekend, between Sept. 9 and Sept. 14. Approximately 1.5 million pilgrims from 180 countries will convene in the city of Mecca to visit centuries-old monuments such as the Kaaba to conduct group and individual rituals in what is for most a once-in-a-lifetime trip. Mandatory for those who can afford it, the hajj is something for which many pilgrims have saved and waited years. Envisioned and practiced as the ultimate embodiment of unity of the global Muslim umma (community), the hajj can still at times have a fracturing effect. And when the Sunni Kingdom of Saudi Arabia exercises its territorial right to custody over the sacred sites to which pilgrims stream, the accusations of politicization are often rife from the kingdom's chief regional Shiite rival, Iran.

Such is the heated situation this week as Saudi Arabia and Iran's most powerful religious authorities trade rhetorical blows over the hajj, jabbing at each other's spiritual and political legitimacy. Simmering tensions over last year's hajj stampede disaster have coursed between the two countries on the eve of this year's pilgrimage. Upward of 2,300 pilgrims died that day in September under circumstances that Saudi Arabia has investigated but has yet to fully clarify. The tensions merely add to a slew of other points of friction in the degraded relationship. The supreme leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, accused Saudi Arabia last weekend of mismanagement and committing "murder" during last year's hajj. This week, Saudi Arabia's grand mufti, its highest authority in Quranic law and interpretation, responded by claiming that Iranians are actually non-Muslim "sons of Magus," a reference to the pre-Islamic Zoroastrian tradition common throughout Iran.

Iran and Saudi Arabia have argued for decades about Riyadh's perceived mismanagement of the hajj. Their dispute heats up in years when the pilgrimage goes awry, such as in 1987, when Saudi security forces killed hundreds of demonstrating Iranian pilgrims. Iran's statements this week have this history in the background, but they specifically revisited last year's global outrage against Saudi Arabia in the immediate aftermath of the 2015 Mina stampede, during which 474 Iranian pilgrims died, more than any other nationality. The stampede was, of course, but one of several disasters over the many decades that Saudi Arabia has managed the pilgrimage, a testament to the difficulties of coordinating the logistics of a diverse crowd of millions moving in tight spaces. The logistics will grow only more complex as Saudi Arabia tries to squeeze more people in.

The management of the hajj is one of the cruxes of the House of Saud's legitimacy. It is an interesting thing to accuse Saudi Arabia of politicizing the pilgrimage when the hajj has long been deeply embedded into the politics of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with its neighbors, in part by Riyadh's own design. The kingdom's regional and international clout with other Muslim countries generally benefits from its work in managing the hajj, and when Egypt, Pakistan and the Gulf Cooperation Council states defended Saudi Arabia this week against the supreme leader's statements, it showed whose side they are on in the enduring Persian Gulf divide. Even Turkey was involved, mediating between Iran and Saudi Arabia to try to resolve this year's spat, but no resolution was found. Neither Tehran nor Riyadh are willing to bend, considering the heightened state of their feud. As for management practices, Saudi Arabia consults with several external firms and countries on various safety procedures related to the hajj (like the flashy new control center and this year's new security bracelets), but it has never and will never be expected to let other countries advise in the core management of the pilgrimage, or make the pilgrimage space international, as other actors have suggested before. The Gulf Cooperation Council states would not even dare encroach on the intricate management role that Saudi Arabia plays. The more Iran cries "mismanagement," the more Riyadh digs into what it considers its divine right and destiny, even if caution is thrown to the wind as Riyadh courts more and more pilgrims. This year, the pilgrimage is also in the spotlight as a source of non-oil revenue that aligns with Saudi Arabia's ambitious [Vision 2030 reform plan](#).

Attempts to increase the number of pilgrims, however, could lead to more disasters in the years to come. As announced earlier this year, Saudi

Arabia wants to increase the number of pilgrims by 13 percent annually until 2020, at which point the total would be 2.5 million. The number of pilgrims in umrah (a minor pilgrimage that can be taken at any point in the year) is supposed to increase by 30 percent annually, to 15 million in 2020, up from current numbers of 6 million.

Saudi Arabia is deeply engaged in comprehensive building and construction projects to expand the capacity of its holy sites to absorb this staggering rise in the number of pilgrims, but as last year's crane disaster can attest, even this renovation can be risky. When the House of Saud first came to control the official administration of the hajj after the Ottoman defeat and retreat after World War I, the capacity of the grand mosque was roughly 50,000. The House of Saud has built it up to a capacity of over 1 million, with constant goals to keep increasing.

Custodianship of the two holy mosques is a pillar that holds up the Saudi kingdom — one made more critical because of the shakiness of the kingdom's other pillars: oil revenue and a Wahhabist society. Of the other two pillars, lower oil prices have destabilized one, and the rise of radicalized Islamist groups across the region has rocked the other. Saudi Arabia is thus seeking to derive as much benefit as it can from hosting the hajj, despite the potential political repercussions. And despite the ideal of what the hajj is, because of what it provides to Saudi Arabia — and other Muslim nations — and its inherent politicization, Iran will always find a way to interject and critique.

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# Russia Spies an Opportunity in the Brexit

Media Center, Image

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## EU Sanctions in Response to the Crisis in Ukraine

- March 6, 2014** EU leaders condemned Russia's actions in Ukraine and started preparing individual restrictive measures (assets freezes and travel bans).
- March 17, 2014** EU ministers introduced a first set of measures against 21 officials responsible for actions threatening Ukraine's territorial integrity.
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- June 23, 2014** European Council implements policy of nonrecognition of the illegal annexation of Crimea and decides on a ban on goods originating from Crimea or Sevastopol.
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- Nov. 28, 2014** The European Union imposes an asset freeze and an EU travel ban on 13 persons and five entities involved in action against Ukraine's territorial integrity. This brings the total of persons subject to EU sanctions over Ukraine's territorial integrity to 132 and the number of entities under EU asset freeze to 28.
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Since the British electorate voted to leave the European Union, divisions within the bloc have deepened and spread. Northern and Southern European countries disagree more than ever on fiscal issues such as austerity measures, while countries in Central and Eastern Europe have called for power to be restored to their national parliaments. EU members are likewise [split over the future of the bloc's sanctions against Russia](#), which are designed to expire automatically on a specified date unless the bloc votes unanimously to extend or increase them. From the outset, the sanctions — in place since early 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea and began to support separatists in eastern Ukraine — have been the subject of heavy debate and scrutiny among EU members. Now Moscow hopes to make the most of the growing discord among EU member states, but its efforts will not go unchallenged.

The threat to EU unanimity on the question of sanctions lies in the rift between members with Moscow-friendly governments and those with governments hostile toward Russia. Countries in the latter group — most notably, Poland and the Baltic states — historically have had poor relations with Moscow. They are also especially wary of Russia's demonstrations of military power, mostly because of their exposure to it: The Baltic states abut Russia's Western Military district, and Poland borders Russia's militarized exclave in Kaliningrad. By contrast, members of the former group, such as Hungary, Slovakia and Greece, are farther removed from Russia's military presence and have strong economic and energy ties to Moscow. Meanwhile, the member state with the most influence over Russia's sanctions — Germany — falls into neither camp. Despite their differences, EU members have yet to break their unanimity in voting on sanctions. However, the United Kingdom's vote to leave the European Union has cast doubt on the bloc's consensus. The European Union has more pressing concerns than pressuring Russia into implementing the Minsk accords, which is a welcome development for Russia. The Brexit vote has created a window of opportunity for Moscow to try to exploit the European Union's divisions over various issues, particularly sanctions. After all, the Kremlin is well aware that it needs only one dissenting country to bring an end to the measures. Though the contingent of EU countries that want to uphold sanctions against Russia has so far prevailed, its continued success is far from guaranteed.

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KCCI: Governor orders flags at half-staff to honor fallen officer

Gov. Terry Branstad has ordered all flags in Iowa be flown at half-staff from sunrise to sunset Monday to honor West Des Moines police officer Shawn Miller, who was killed in the line of duty Wednesday afternoon.

The governor's directive applies to all U.S. and state flags under the control of the state.

Flags will be at half-staff on the state Capitol building and on flag displays in the Capitol complex, and upon all public buildings, grounds, and facilities throughout the state.

Individuals, businesses, schools, municipalities, counties and other government subdivisions are encouraged to fly the flag at half-staff for the same length of time as a sign of respect.

A visitation for Miller is planned Sunday from 5-7 p.m. at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church at 7075 Ashworth Road.

The funeral is planned to start Monday at 11 a.m. at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church. He will be buried at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery at 34024 Veterans Memorial Drive.

Law enforcement, fire and emergency medical services workers from across the state are expected to attend.

KCCI will carry the funeral live on-air on Me-TV (8.2) and on our KCCI mobile app.

DMR: 'Blue Lives Matter' bill in works

Iowa legislator aims to classify attacks on police as hate crimes

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Attacking a law enforcement officer could be considered a hate crime under “Blue Lives Matter” legislation being developed in Iowa.

Rep. Ken Rizer, R-Cedar Rapids, said he plans to introduce a bill during the 2017 legislative session that would create stiffer penalties for individuals who attack police officers or other law enforcement officers solely because of their profession.

“It came from some of these tragic shootings and targeting of law enforcement across the country,” Rizer said. “I believe that law enforcement stands between civil society and anarchy and that they need to be protected.”

But other Iowa lawmakers argue that the state already has stronger penalties in place for those who attack police officers. Assault, for example, is an aggravated misdemeanor. But assault against a police officer is escalated to a Class D felony.

“I’d have to obviously see whatever kind of language it has,” said Sen. Steve Soddors, a Democrat from State Center who is a deputy sheriff. “But I During the past month, officers have been targeted and killed in Dallas and Baton Rouge, La., amid national turmoil over police violence and race relations. Officials in Dallas confirmed that the shooter, who killed five officers, was acting in retaliation for the fatal police shootings of African-American men in Louisiana and Minnesota.

Federal Bureau of Investigation statistics show that in 2014, the most recent year for which data are available, 51 police officers were intentionally killed and an additional 45 died as the result of accidents that occurred in the line of duty.

Rizer said hate crime statutes are one place to enhance penalties for those who commit crimes against police officers, but he’s open to other possibilities.

“I think there’s still some research that needs to be done on this, because the devil is always in the details,” he said. “But I think the intent is good. I think there’s a lot of support behind that intent. Now, we’ve just got to figure out what’s the best way to do that.” This month, Louisiana became the first state in the country to enact Blue Lives Matter legislation. Police officers there are now considered a protected class of citizens under the state’s hate crime laws. Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards signed the bill into law in May.

At least nine other states have introduced similar legislation during the past two years, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Iowa’s current hate crime statute provides enhanced penalties for crimes that target individuals based on their race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, political affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, age or disability. This year, members of the Iowa Senate worked to enact legislation that would have broadened those laws by adding transgender individuals to the list of those protected under the state’s hate crime laws. It was opposed by all but one Republican in the Senate and it did not advance in the Republican-controlled House.

Donna Redwing, executive director of the LGBT advocacy group Onelowa, said there’s a difference between extending protections to transgender people and to people based on their occupation. She cited FBI statistics showing that LGBT people are more likely to be the target of hate crimes than any other minority group.

“And it’s because of who they are,” she said. “Not because of what they do. Not because of their occupation. Because of who they are.” She said her organization works with police officers across the state to provide cultural competency training, so she understands and appreciates the work they do for their communities.

“We respect the fact that it’s a very dangerous job, and we do respect that people do put themselves in harm’s way,” she said. “But violence against police or any law enforcement officer is already a crime.”

Sodders, who said he has worked in law enforcement for 26 years, said he thinks introducing Blue Lives Matter legislation is simply politicizing the tragic deaths of police officers.

“We ought to be talking about how we get people to work together to calm situations down and get the police and the citizens to work more closely together to solve crime,” he said. “I’d rather see us do things like that than continuing to enhance penalties that may not need to be enhanced.”

DMR: No-guns rule to remain at State Fair

But lawmakers are likely to debate ban on firearms in 2017

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A ban on guns at the Iowa State Fair will remain in place for this summer’s fairgoers, but state lawmakers will likely debate the issue when they return to the Capitol in January.

Heated testimony against allowing fair patrons to carry firearms was voiced at Friday’s meeting of the Iowa Legislature’s Administrative Rules Review Committee. Opponents described scenarios in which drunken and irresponsible fair guests toting handguns could create dangerous situations that could threaten innocent Iowans, or mass confusion that could result if thousands of fairgoers are armed and an activeshooter incident occurs.

“If you allow guns at the State Fair, I may never set foot there again,” said Lars Pearson, of Des Moines. “I suspect there are droves of Iowans who feel the same way. You will not have made the State Fair safer for children. You will have made it less safe.”

Richard Rogers, of West Des Moines, a board member of the Iowa Firearms Coalition, a progun group, said he questioned the Fair Board’s authority to ban the carrying of defensive firearms by fairgoers authorized by the state to do so. He also challenged the wisdom of the ban, saying that it provides an illusion of increasing public safety while actually diminishing it.

“Most of us will never experience a violent assault by a criminal or be targeted in an act of terror. However, it is important to realize that, in recent decades, roughly 90 percent of mass-shooting events have occurred in so-called ‘weapons-free zones,’ ” Rogers said. The committee adjourned without acting on the issue after lawmakers said they are limited in what action they can take. State Rep. Dawn Pettengill, R-Mount Auburn, said the issue was brought up for review after a member of the public requested it. But Rogers said he anticipates that Second Amendment activists will seek a permanent resolution during the Iowa Legislature’s 2017 session by proposing changes in state law. Iowa Code prevents individuals from bringing weapons of any kind onto the fairgrounds without permission from the fair’s board of directors. But Rogers said that ban only applies during the annual Iowa State Fair and not during gun shows held at other times on the fairgrounds when Iowans can legally buy and sell firearms.

This year's Iowa State Fair will be Thursday through Aug. 21 and is expected to draw more than 1 million visitors. Gary Slater, the fair's chief executive and manager, said the current policy banning guns has been in place since 1980. People with a valid weapons permit who attempt to bring a gun into the fair are escorted back to their cars by state troopers and do not face criminal charges, he said. State Rep. Bruce Hunter, D-Des Moines, strongly objected to changing the policy, saying that with 21 venues serving alcoholic beverages at the fair, it's possible that an intoxicated visitor could be carrying a firearm, something he views as a recipe for disaster. "To have somebody have a gun in that situation is a monumentally bad idea, and I would suggest that you leave things just the way they are," Hunter said.

Amber Gustafson, of Ankeny, a mother of three, told lawmakers she has spent \$150 on fair tickets, which is something she wouldn't do if fairgoers were allowed to carry firearms.

"Guns do not belong at the Iowa State Fairgrounds, except in the hands of law enforcement," Gustafson said.

Rogers said legally armed Iowans are among the public every day — in supermarkets, malls, offices, restaurants, theaters and churches. They attend art and music festivals, community and government meetings and county fairs, he added.

"We interact with them just like anyone else, generally completely unaware that they are carrying the most effective tool for the defense of themselves and others, just in case it is needed. Thankfully, it rarely is," Rogers said.

There are no immediate plans by the legislative panel to consider the Fair Board rules one way or another, said Sen. Wally Horn, D-Cedar Rapids.

"We have people for guns and against guns, and what I saw is that most people thought that the rules should be the way they are right now, and that no change should be made at this time," he said.

DMR: Welcome mats, but for whom?

Downtown will soon be awash in thousands of new apartments, but some advocates worry that prices will squeeze out low-, moderate-income renters

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Walk into an apartment at Cityville on 9th and you will find granite countertops and stainless steel appliances, as well as a balcony and a built-in washer-dryer.

The new downtown apartment complex offers two gyms, a theater and a clubroom that tenants can rent for parties. The courtyard boasts a dog park and a patio with grills and lounge chairs.

Forget those old, drafty apartments with squeaky floors and hissing radiators. The apartments being built in downtown Des Moines these days are all about luxury.

More than 2,300 rental units are scheduled to open before the end of summer 2017, and about 1,400 more apartments are on the drawing board, according to a Des Moines Register analysis.

The flood of new high-end housing will test how much renters are willing to pay to live in downtown Des Moines. Many apartments feature long lists of amenities such as heated parking, fitness centers and clubrooms.

They also have price tags to match. In about half of the new apartment developments, one-bedroom units start at more than \$1,000 a month.

## A call for more affordable housing

The influx of new market-rate units should make it easier for many renters to find an apartment downtown. But affordable housing advocates are cringing at an apartment boom that largely excludes housing for the city's low- and moderate-income renters.

Fewer than 100 of the new apartments are income-restricted, meaning that they are reserved for renters who make less than the median income.

Eric Burmeister, executive director of the Polk County Housing Trust Fund, said the downtown area needs more rentals in the \$500 to \$700 range to house downtown's clerical and service sector workers. The growth of companies such as Cognizant Technologies highlights the need for more affordable housing downtown, he said. The technology company recently announced plans to add more than 1,000 employees downtown in mostly call center jobs. In Iowa, those jobs pay about \$35,000 a year, on average, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"The variety of housing, both in terms of type and in terms of price, ought to match the local availability of jobs," Burmeister said. Tony Tyler, 34, recently moved to the Randolph, an apartment complex on Court Avenue. He worries that the new market-rate housing will make downtown a place where only white, middle- and upperclass residents live.

"It concerns me, the idea of gentrification," Tyler said. "Is downtown just going to be a lot of people who look like me? Are we going to lose some of that diversity?" Tyler, who works at Drake University, acknowledged that he is part of the changing downtown. Before it was renovated into apartments, the Randolph had been a payby-the-week hotel that served as long-term housing for many low-income residents. "I wish we could find a balance, a mixture of the rate-controlled and market-rate housing," Tyler said.

## Renters paying more than ever

Some of the new apartments will test the upper end of Des Moines' rental market, with \$1,000-a-month rent for a 500-square-foot apartment — about \$2 per square foot.

That represents a new high for the downtown rental market. Just a few years ago, apartment owners could expect to charge about \$1.30 to \$1.50 per square foot.

Rental rates have been steadily rising around the metro. Rent for a one-bedroom downtown apartment was \$911, on average, at the beginning of 2016, a 7 percent increase from the previous year.

Cityville on 9th, a development being built by Hubbell Realty Co. in the burgeoning downtown neighborhood south of Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway, offers a 436-square-foot studio for \$995 a month. A 1,102-square-foot two-bedroom unit goes for \$1,975 a month.

Nearby, Hubbell is building a rental townhome development called 5Fifty5. It features two and three-bedroom row houses, each with a garage and rooftop patio, starting at \$1,900 a month. Dwell, another Hubbell apartment project, will feature Nest thermostats in every unit.

Kris Sadoris, a vice president of development for Hubbell, said renters today desire shared spaces such as clubrooms and dog parks. Many renters are willing to live in a smaller apartment in exchange for more common space and a walkable neighborhood.

Confluence on Third, an 211-unit apartment complex under construction near Court Avenue, will feature underground parking, a pool, a hot tub, a gym and yoga studio and a business center. The lobby will feature a \$7,000 coffee machine and a \$15,000 package locker that will alert a tenant's phone when they have received a parcel.

Brian Roers, a partowner, said empty nesters and white-collar workers want extra amenities and high-end features. Adding a pool or a package locker makes financial sense when the cost is spread across more than 200 units, he said.

#### Renters have more choices

In downtowns across the country, developers are building high-end apartments and pushing up rental rates, said Ed McMahon, a senior resident fellow with the Urban Land Institute.

“The place is becoming more important than the product,” he said. “Because downtowns are at the center of it all, people are willing to pay more.”

Harry Booker, whose Des Moines-based company B.H. Equities is one of the 20 largest apartment owners in the country, said Des Moines is just catching up with larger cities such as Dallas and Denver, which already offer luxury apartments.

Other developers, though, question the rapidly rising rental rates approaching \$2 per square foot. “I don’t see it,” said Tim Rypma, a partner in an East Village apartment building scheduled to open next year. “I don’t think we’re there yet.”

But Rypma said apartment owners will have to offer a quality product to attract tenants once more apartments open. “People are going to have a lot more choices downtown,” he said. “And I want to be standing there with a nicer product than the next guy.”

#### DMR Editorial: Board of Regents has spent itself into hole

The Iowa Board of Regents, which exists to help fund, manage and oversee the state universities, now wants those schools to cough up \$3.6 million to help pay the bills at the board’s central office.

The additional funding represents a 30 percent increase over the amount of money the regents asked for last year from the University of Iowa, Iowa State University and the University of Northern Iowa.

And, as the Iowa City Press-Citizen recently pointed out, the \$833,435 year-over-year increase is nearly as much as the total increase in payments the board budgeted during the previous five years combined.

This increased spending by the regents, to be underwritten by the universities themselves, coincides with a recent \$250 tuition increase for resident undergraduates, and tuition increases of between \$50 and \$800 for all other students at the three schools.

The regents’ office says it is now faced with a \$435,000 year-over-year increase in personnel costs, which is aggravated by a \$300,000 cut in state funding and a \$140,680 reduction in grant funding.

The problem is that the resulting demand for more money comes from a regents office that is headed by an executive director, Bob Donley, who already makes more than twice the \$154,300 salary cap imposed by state law. His total compensation for the last fiscal year included a \$5,000 bonus and \$179,166 in deferred compensation.

This need for additional funding also follows the creation of a new position in the regents office — that of chief operating officer. Former UI administrator Mark Braun has taken that job, which pays \$240,000. His hiring was never even voted on by the board.

This is no way to run an office. You can’t create highpaying jobs for which there is no money in the

budget, then fill the position without an open-application process or the approval of the governing board, all while paying the top administrator more than double the salary that's allowed by state law, and then demand that the public institutions you oversee pony up for the extra expense. The regents have spent themselves into a hole and now are insisting that the taxpayers, through the state universities, come to their rescue. And because of the way the regents' budget is set up, that's exactly what will happen.

Officially, the Iowa Board of Regents says it exists to provide "broad oversight" of the state universities, partly to ensure public accountability and the "effective and efficient use of resources."

Clearly, that particular task is beyond the regents' skill set.

DMR: Iowa Capitol march to raise awareness about mental health

State's consistently low ranking on care spurs event

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Iowa has consistently ranked low among all states for its response toward mental health care. And it ranks last for access to psychiatric beds in mental health facilities, two of which were closed in 2015 — facts that infuriated Jack Harper and Zac Campbell. "When we first found out (of the ranking,) we were pretty upset," said the 21-year-old Harper. "We just knew we had to do something." That something will be to figuratively bang on the doors of the state Capitol. "We have to bring awareness of mental health care, or lack thereof, to the public and to our politicians," Harper said. Harper and Campbell will be doing so by holding a March on the Capitol for Mental Health on Sunday. Starting at 4 p.m., participants will gather at Cowles Commons, across from the Des Moines Civic Center, for a 5:30 p.m. march toward the state Capitol.

As of Thursday, more than 700 people were signed up on the event's Facebook page to attend, and the information has been shared more than 4,000 times.

This is the first of many efforts to start a conversation about mental illness throughout the state, Harper said. The men have been working with the National Alliance on Mental Illness Greater Des Moines chapter to learn about what they can do to help the thousands of Iowans dealing with mental illness.

Like many Iowans, Harper has dealt with mental illness — himself included, he said, and watching someone he cared about. He said he knew there had to be something he could do.

"This will, hopefully, help pressure legislators to making it (mental health awareness) a priority," Harper said.

DMR: Is Cedar Rapids mayor eyeing bid for governor?

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Cedar Rapids Mayor Ron Corbett outlined a statewide plan Friday to improve water quality and reform Iowa income taxes, and he appeared to dip his toe into the 2018 governor's race.

Corbett, 55, a former Iowa House speaker who served 13 years in the Legislature, acknowledged to The Des Moines Register that he's been the subject of gubernatorial speculation. But Corbett, a Republican, said he hasn't decided yet whether to seek a third term as mayor next year, and his trip to Des Moines was solely to promote a public policy discussion.

Corbett, the president of Engage Iowa, a conservative think tank, spoke to about 100 people Friday at a Rotary Club of Des Moines gathering at the Wakonda Club. He offered a proposal to raise Iowa's state sales tax by a cent with two goals in mind: Three-eighths of a cent would go to a constitutionally protected state fund where up to \$80 million annually would be used to improve water quality. The other five-eighths of a cent would be part of a plan to modernize Iowa's income taxes and reduce the marginal tax rate to 3 percent, making the state more business friendly.

"We are trying to make our state a little healthier and a little wealthier," Corbett said.

He believes a plan developed by state officials to reduce nutrients in water running off farm fields is widely supported. But he feels some farmers might not have the money needed to improve their conservation practices because of wide price swings for farm commodities.

He also cautioned that a lawsuit filed by Des Moines Water Works against drainage district trustees in three northwest Iowa counties "most likely will not end in the state of Iowa," and neither side may be happy after higher courts rule on the issue. In addition, he sees the potential for additional lawsuits and suggests the state must come up with a funding mechanism to assist farmers.

On income taxes, Corbett said Iowa's high marginal income tax rate has caused a net outflow of high earners to states such as South Dakota and Texas.

Citing a study by an Iowa State University economist, he said the outflow has cost the state nearly \$4 billion, or about 3 percent of total income. His solution is to eliminate deductions and credits for all Iowans earning above \$10,000 and to help pay for lower income tax rates with a higher sales tax, which would be based on consumption. People with incomes below \$10,000 could keep the same tax calculation so they could continue to receive the benefit of earned income credits, he said.

"What is good for Des Moines should be good for Iowa and what is good for Iowa should be good for Des Moines, but I have been really seeing a disconnect," Corbett said. Too much public policy has been imposed from the top down from the state and federal governments, and he said he is urging "good, old-fashioned debate that is not clouded by the toxic partisan policy that we have now."

Corbett's speech was politely received and several people offered compliments afterward, although most said it's way too early to talk about the 2018 governor's race. Corbett, who is also a former chief executive of the Cedar Rapids Chamber of Commerce, has made similar speeches around the state over the past year, fanning speculation about his political future.

Gov. Terry Branstad, the longest-serving governor in U.S. history, hasn't said yet whether he plans to seek another term. But Branstad has hinted he's serving his final term, and he's already made it clear he will support Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds if she decides to run for governor.

Robert Riley Jr., a former member of the Des Moines Water Works Board, said he had favorable reaction to Corbett's remarks.

"He is one of the few politicians who has come out in support of the three-eighths of a cent sales tax" for the constitutionally protected state fund to assist water quality projects, Riley said. "We cannot get the governor or the speaker of the House or many other organizations to go for this three-eighths of a cent, and he is stepping out and saying that he will, and that is very impressive." Branstad last week floated the idea of spending some future sales tax money on water quality programs, but without raising the current state sales tax.



Scott Raecker, a former Republican state legislator from Urbandale, said he was encouraged to see Corbett taking a deep look at public policy issues, and he suggested Engage Iowa should also examine mental health issues.

Douglas Heatherington of Des Moines, who owns a photography studio, played football with Corbett at Cornell College in Mount Vernon, where Corbett set single season records in the early 1980s by rushing for 21 touchdowns and 1,329 yards. He said he will support Corbett if he runs for governor.

“Most certainly. I can tell you he is a person of character and he is a winner and an excellent business person.”

DMR Iowa View: Donald Trump, David Young won't keep America safe

By: Jim Mowrer

As a veteran of the Iraq War and a former Pentagon official, the foreign policy agenda laid out by Donald Trump in recent weeks shows to me that he has no idea how to keep our country and service members safe. I was a part of the longest serving unit of the Iraq War — 22 months. While in Iraq we worked with our NATO allies consistently, and I served in a diverse unit with soldiers from all different faiths, backgrounds and ethnicities. The rhetoric of Trump has no place in our national dialogue and especially in our military.

What is even more concerning than just the rhetoric of a man who is totally unfit for the office of commander in chief is the total acceptance by David Young. Congressman Young has had numerous opportunities to rebuke Trump and show real leadership and political courage. Instead he has failed at every opportunity. Young has allowed Trump's disgusting attack on a Gold Star family to go unquestioned, and he would be a reliable vote for Trump's foreign policy agenda including privatizing the VA, turning our back on our NATO allies, and whatever else Trump comes up with.

Young has consistently shown a total lack of courage and inability to stand up for whatever beliefs he claims to hold. He will do what he is told by his party bosses, as demonstrated consistently over the course of his first year in office. This is not a surprise, this is the game he has been playing for more than 20 years as a staffer on Capitol Hill. He puts politics ahead of service to Iowa and the country. Young was caught signing over his legislative agenda to the national Republican Party so that he could receive more campaign contributions, which led to being strong armed into changing his vote on the floor of the House to fall in line with Republican Party leaders.

The Trump-Young agenda would be disastrous for our nation's veterans and make our country and service members less safe. Young needs to stand up to Trump, but unfortunately so far he has just been another politician who refuses to go against what his party bosses want.

In order to keep our country safe we need to have a strong and smart approach to foreign policy that centers on working with our allies around the world. We must prioritize our veterans again by fully funding the VA and making sure that every single veteran is taken care of when they come home. This should not be a partisan issue, but unfortunately Young has turned away from our veterans and instead remains silent because it is what Trump and Republican Party leadership has told him to do.

DMR: Libertarian, independent seek to unseat Grassley from Senate

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Two more candidates have joined Iowa's general election race for the U.S. Senate seat held by Republican Chuck Grassley.

Charles Aldrich, 59, of Clarion, filed papers Wednesday with the Iowa secretary of state's office as the Libertarian Party candidate, while Michael Luick-Thrams, 53, of Mason City, filed Monday as an independent. Both will appear on the November election ballot along with Grassley and his Democratic challenger, former Iowa Lt. Gov. Patty Judge. Aldrich is an industrial engineer who unsuccessfully ran for the U.S. Senate in 2008 in Minnesota as a Libertarian Party candidate. He is a Marine Corps veteran who is single and has three adult children. Aldrich said his top issues include opposition to U.S. involvement in wars now underway; occupations by U.S. troops in foreign countries; and giving taxpayer money to foreign countries and to corporations. He also wants to abolish the U.S. government's relationship with the Federal Reserve. The Libertarian Party in Iowa says it is also supporting former New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson for president, plus more than 20 candidates for the Iowa Legislature. In addition, the party is backing Bryan Jack Holder, of Council Bluffs, who is a partner in a family photography business, for the 3rd District seat in Congress. Holder filed for his candidacy Friday.

Luick-Thrams, an educator and writer who is single, filed about 1,800 signatures with the secretary of state's office in support of his candidacy.

He says the driving motivation throughout his adult life has been to connect people to each other, to voices from the past and to dreams of a better shared future. His background includes a doctorate in modern European history and research on World War II refugees and on German soldiers who were sent to Iowa and other states as prisoners of war. He has worked in San Francisco in shelters for the homeless and battered women, helped in soup kitchens and AIDS clinics, and served in the Peace Corps in what is now the Czech Republic.

Luick-Thrams' campaign brochure calls for bypassing the Republican and Democratic parties and finding solutions closer to home.

He proposes revitalizing Iowa by reviving its rural areas. He also proposes strengthening international ties through teacher-student exchanges and welcoming all individuals who come to live peacefully and productively.

Iowa's 3rd District congressional race also has an independent candidate.

Claudia Addy, of Des Moines, is a retired foot and ankle surgeon who was nominated by petition. She is proposing to bring all political factions together to address fiscal reform and to improve health care, the environment and other issues. She also favors re-evaluating foreign aid and implementing a sliding scale repayment system for college loans.

The major candidates in the 3rd District race are incumbent U.S. Rep. David Young, R-Van Meter, and Democrat Jim Mowrer, of Des Moines.

DMR: Controversy over Clinton parody dogs Arcadia's first parade in 10-plus years

Mayor fields angry calls from across the U.S. over float

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Arcadia's first parade in over 10 years, meant to honor the 100th anniversary of the town's Fire Department, has been met with controversy after a float depicted presidential candidate Hillary Clinton

behind bars. Three men from neighboring towns entered a float that held a Clinton look-alike wearing an orange prison jumpsuit, trapped inside of a makeshift prison cell.

Parade-goers were encouraged to throw water balloons at the fake Clinton.

Some of the crowd booed, some cheered and many took to social media to vent their frustrations with the parade. "I've also gotten quite a few phone calls," Mayor Kevin Liechti said. "Let me tell you, I haven't had my rear end chewed out that bad since the military."

Liechti said he's received calls from all around the country from angry people offended by the float. "Everybody is entitled to their own opinion and the freedom of speech so I'll listen to the phone calls," Liechti said. "Some people, when they call me, don't even let me talk. But what I want people to know is that this float reflected the political views of three gentlemen. It is not, in any way, a reflection on Arcadia's Fire Department or the city of Arcadia."

This was the first major parade in Arcadia in over 10 years and the celebration as a whole was great for the community, Liechti said. "It's ashame that the spotlight on the parade was for controversy," he said.

"This wasn't the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade," Liechti said. "There was a pre-registration process but they didn't inspect every float beforehand."

That's something that will definitely change if they have another parade anytime soon, he said.

DMR: Iowa couple hangs up canoe over fear of nitrates in river

In years past, Douglas and Kathleen Redhead would have traversed the Raccoon River in their big red canoe dozens of times by early August.

But this year their canoe gathers dust in storage. The Des Moines couple hasn't been on the river once this year.

The reason is simple: They're scared.

"It's a safety concern," Douglas Redhead said. "We don't want to be exposed to all the nitrates."

Last month, my colleague Mike Kilen wrote an excellent series on the troubles of the Raccoon River.

Des Moines Water Works contends that runoff from farm fertilizer has driven up nitrate levels in the river that supplies drinking water to 500,000 people in central Iowa.

Nitrates are nutritious for plants, which is why farmers use fertilizers that contain them. But in drinking water, they can be problematic — even deadly.

Nitrates can reduce oxygen in blood. Consuming water with high amounts of nitrates, if untreated, can be fatal to infants 6 months and younger.

Kilen and a group of environmentalists tested the Raccoon's waters in a variety of spots and found the nitrate level at 10 milligrams per liter or higher.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency requires nitrate levels to be 10 milligrams or less per liter of water for safe drinking. However, the EPA says nitrates aren't absorbed through your skin, so swimming or paddling in water with high levels shouldn't be a problem, as long as you don't ingest it.

Last year, the Des Moines Water Works spent \$1.5 million controlling nitrate levels in drinking water.

Officials sued Sac, Calhoun and Buena Vista counties, claiming farm tiling was flushing nitrates into the water supply. The lawsuit drove a wedge between the capital city and rural Iowa. Gov. Terry Branstad described the lawsuit as declaring war on rural Iowa. The Redheads aren't political or environmental activists, however.

Douglas is a retired parole officer. Kathleen works at a law firm. They're just a family who likes to canoe.

And they're afraid to go on the water, no matter what the EPA might say. "We go out with a group of people we've known for about 20 years," Kathleen Redhead said. "One is a cancer survivor. Another lives with Parkinson's disease." No, the Redheads aren't drinking from the river. But water splashes them. They get wet. It happens in a canoe.

They wonder if they're covering themselves in something that will poison them in the future.

Douglas is 62. Kathleen is 63. They often paddle the waters with their 8-year-old grandson.

The Redheads don't begrudge farmers their living.

"If I could get more yield from one or two more acres of ground with good market prices, I would do that," Douglas Redhead said. "It makes good sense."

Yet they stay off the river.

They started by renting canoes from a business in Indianola. They would put in near Adel and paddle down toward Van Meter. When the business stopped renting, they bought their own canoe.

"We made a day out of it," Kathleen Redhead said. "We would take along a picnic lunch. We loved watching the ducks, deer, turtles and frogs."

They also treasure hunted. Kathleen developed an affinity for buckets. Anytime she spotted an abandoned bucket along the shoreline, she'd paddle over and collect it.

Over the years, she's found ceramic dishes from England, a few American Indian arrowheads and various types of rocks. "We were out every Saturday we could, unless it was raining," Kathleen said. Last year, though, the couple started to rethink its favorite summer pastime. The Water Works lawsuit got their attention.

They saw the documentary "The Messenger" at the Varsity last year. The movie details the declining worldwide population of songbirds, in large part because of human factors such as destruction of natural habitat, industrial noise and pesticides.

They saw a parallel to their time on the water.

"If those nitrates are bad for us, how good can they be for all the wildlife we see along the river?" Kathleen asked.

"You don't want a dead zone like they have in the Gulf of Mexico all the way up here in the Raccoon River," Douglas said.

In the grand scheme of things, it may seem a small sacrifice to the noble pursuit and important Iowa industry of farming that a couple in its 60s can't enjoy their preferred form of recreation.

But it is a hell of a sad thing to hear everyday people say aloud they are afraid of their water. After all, their address is Des Moines, Ia., not Flint, Mich.

In the end, the Redheads hope the leadership of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, state lawmakers and even the belligerents in the lawsuit find a workable solution that preserves both farmers' profits and the environment.

"There are a lot of smart people in this state," Douglas said. "They ought to be able to come up for something."

Kilen wrote of some efforts underway by farmers and officials already. But a long-term solution is going to require a boldness in environmental leadership and vision seldom seen in the governor's mansion or the State Capitol.

The Redheads suggest they get to it.

"This isn't for us," Kathleen said. "It might take 20 years to fix this problem. We might be gone for then. But I'd hate to think my 8-yearold grandson could never go back out on the water."

DMR Editorial: Obama protects college students, taxpayers

Feds rightly sanction bad actors in higher education

College students are seeking a better future.

Unfortunately, some for-profit colleges are only seeking to make a buck. They advertise heavily, charge a small fortune for tuition, and crank out students with mountains of debt and few job prospects. Taxpayers frequently help pick up the tab.

The federal government did essentially nothing to address the mess until President Barack Obama came along. He adheres to the notion that government has a responsibility to protect average people. He made honesty and transparency a priority in higher education.

Federal regulations now require that schools publicly disclose program costs, graduation rates and earnings of graduates. The goal is to give prospective students access to accurate information and prevent squandering taxpayerfinanced grants and loans for education.

The Obama administration is rightly sanctioning schools that don't comply with regulations. Over the last three years, it has denied Title IV recertification to more than 30 institutions, which prevents them from receiving student aid and grant money.

Last week the U.S. Department of Education announced it would cut off funding to three Medtech College campuses located in Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C. A government investigation uncovered egregious misrepresentations of job placement rates. The for-profit school, which provides medical education and received \$16 million in federal grants and student loans last year, lied to essentially everyone about its post-graduation employment.

"Students should be able to trust that colleges are telling the truth," said U.S. Under Secretary of Education Ted Mitchell. "When schools mislead students, accreditors or the federal government, we will take action."

Medtech can continue to operate, but taxpayers won't foot the bill. And the Obama administration is trying to ensure we're not responsible for cleaning up any financial mess left behind. The school is required to post a \$36.6 million "letter of credit" to receive full certification. That money can be used for student refunds and other expenses if a campus closes.

Who, other than bad actors in higher education, would resist such measures?

Enter Republicans, who seem to oppose any government regulation and anything this president does. In its recently released 2016 platform, the Republican National Committee included some tidbits about the party's vision for America's colleges. In addition to getting the federal government out of the business of originating student loans, it wants to do away with the existing accreditation system, which ensures schools meet specific educational standards.

"States should be empowered to allow a wide array of accrediting and credentialing bodies to operate. This model would foster innovation, bring private industry into the credentialing market, and give students the ability to customize their college experience," the platform says.

Translation: anything goes in funding and educational standards for colleges.

Higher education, which is critical to our electorate, is too important to be a free-for-all. Families save for years to send their children to college. Students incur huge debt to obtain an education. Government doing what it can to prevent them from being hoodwinked is hardly a radical notion.

DMR: Summit provides look at Iowa art trends

Members of art community gather in D.M. to address variety of topics

MARIAH WELLMAN

SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER

Members of the art and artist community from around the state gathered in downtown Des Moines on Friday for the Iowa Arts Summit. The summit, organized by the Iowa Arts Council, brought together artists, filmmakers, entrepreneurs, nonprofit professionals and community leaders for a day of networking, learning and celebrating the arts in Iowa. Presentations covered a variety of topics:

Residency programs

Brad Kik, a board member for the Alliance of Artist Communities, touted artist residency programs; he runs one in Michigan.

"There's 500 programs across the United States, and that is not enough for the artists we have here," Kik said. Residency programs can take place in rural and urban spaces, Kik said. Here are a couple of Iowa's:

Grin City Collective.

This artist residency spot, located in Grinnell, acts as a social practice art collaboration and a working farm. Grin City's residency program welcomes writers, and visual and performance artists for stays of three to six weeks. Residents are provided housing and individual workspace. Up to eight people can be a part of Grin City Collective at any point in time.

Legion Arts. This independent artist organization, located in Cedar Rapids, is based at a restored landmark building on the edge of downtown. Legion Arts presents cutting-edge art, music, theater, film and other events at a variety of venues. The organization also supports young artists, experimental art forms and other new ideas.

Public art trends

Public art, and how we perceive it, is always changing, said Kirstin Wiegmann, consultant and program

director for Forecast Public Art.

“We all come at public art from different places,” Wiegmann said. “We all have different definitions, and it’s always important to try and redefine and expand that definition.”

Audience members helped identify some Iowa trends:

Participatory culture.

“Pokemon Go” took flight, and crowds started packing downtown Des Moines, specifically the John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park. Because those catching Pokemon gravitate toward the park, a younger generation is interacting with public art.

“Public art has the power to bring people together in a place in ways you never imagined before,” Wiegmann said.

DIY art. Children in Iowa will have the chance to create and add to public art during the Iowa State Fair this year. John Brommel, an artist with disabilities who has created other pieces around Des Moines, will be building a Magical Willow Tree, a stainless steel tree that will be covered in 5,000 aluminum butterflies and permanently installed in the Fun Forest.

Innovation in rural Iowa

Communities shared quick summaries of current projects during a speed-round forum Friday.

Forest City. Community schools and Waldorf University partnered to build the Forest City Fine Arts Center. Forest City was designated one of Iowa’s newest Great Places this summer and received a \$157,000 grant in July from the Department of Cultural Affairs.

Dubuque. Steeple Square in Dubuque is a hub for personal growth, celebration and community empowerment. Renovation and restoration of an 1867 church campus into a community and cultural center ended in May, and the town’s residents were given a new place to collaborate and connect. Dubuque’s Washington Street and North End neighborhoods were designated as one of Iowa’s newest Great Places this summer and received a \$399,665 Iowa Great Places grant and a \$50,000 Historical Resource Development Program grant from the Department of Cultural Affairs.

Bondurant and Malvern.

The two cities are using public art to strengthen recreational opportunities and community development, respectively. Bondurant and Malvern were named two of Iowa’s newest Great Places this summer. Bondurant received a \$220,200 Iowa Great Places grant to develop local assets including parks, trails and public art to make the city a family-centric, recreational destination. Malvern received a \$292,900 Iowa Great Places grant to strengthen community development initiatives through downtown streetscaping and public art

DMR: D.M. offers federal courts site

Public-private plan pitches 5 blocks on riverfront, with hopes of fueling Market District development

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The city of Des Moines is pitching a five-block riverfront site beside the East Village for a new \$137

million federal courthouse — a bid that city officials hope will spur development in the downtown Market District.

A public-private proposal bundles two blocks for a 230,000-square-foot U.S. District Court building, plus an additional three blocks for private development.

Officials are betting that a new courthouse on the site surrounding Market Street near East Second and East Third streets will help transform the industrial area into prime real estate along the east bank of the Des Moines River next to Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway.

“We’ve looked at this area for a long time for redevelopment,” said Erin Olson-Douglas, economic development coordinator with the city.

“This could be that development that helps tip the scale.”

The city, in partnership with local developer Jim Cownie, intends to submit their proposal to the General Services Administration this month. The federal agency overseeing the new courthouse plans to select a site in the spring, after a lengthy vetting process. Site proposals are due by Aug. 16. Federal officials recently earmarked \$137 million to replace the federal courthouse in Des Moines because of problems with size, accessibility and security at the structure built in 1929.

Construction of the new courthouse would start in spring 2019 and finish by the end of 2022. Olson-Douglas said the city is aware of at least one other party in Des Moines that has expressed interest in making a proposal to the GSA for the courthouse site.

Zach Hawks, a GSA project manager overseeing the Des Moines courthouse plans, said he could not share whether any other site proposals have been submitted.

Cownie, who is helping oversee the accumulation of land for the proposal, called the project exciting but “highly speculative at this point.”

“It would be a great enhancement to downtown Des Moines and specifically the East Village Market District,” he said. The proposal includes three city-owned blocks that primarily house snowplows, trucks and public works maintenance sheds. MidAmerican Energy owns the other two blocks, dedicated to similar industrial and administrative uses, that are part of the potential site plan.

Olson-Douglas said Cownie’s involvement ensures that the courthouse building won’t be surrounded by scrap yards and other industrial uses. “Practically speaking, the courthouse doesn’t want to sit next to maintenance sheds, fleet garages,” she said. “There is a commitment to clean up the area around there.”

She added that the city is proposing five blocks to allow more flexibility on locating and configuring the courthouse building.

Hawks said he has spoken with city officials about their proposal multiple times during the past few months — something he has not done with other parties. “If you strictly look at empty lots downtown, then (the site options) would be very limited,” Hawks said. “We’re looking at any possible lots, including something like what the city intends to submit. ... We’re really anxious to see what kind of responses we get.” The GSA’s “request for expressions of interest” for the Des Moines site included a shortlist of minimum requirements: located within the central business district; capacity for a 230,000-squarefoot structure, including interior parking; and located outside the 100-year flood plain, “unless there are no other practicable alternatives.”

After all site proposals are submitted this month, the vetting process will be done behind closed doors while environmental studies are conducted on the properties.



The GSA will assemble a site-selection panel made up of federal judges and GSA officials to make the decision.

Hawks said he could not disclose who will be on the panel. The standard procedure is meant to prevent property owners who want their site selected from trying to influence panel members.

There will be an opportunity for public comment after the GSA selects a site and before it closes on the purchase of the property.

City officials in Des Moines plan to discuss the site proposal at a public work session Monday morning before the City Council votes to submit the plan at its Monday afternoon meeting.

DMR: Trump's pledge: Caucuses in Iowa to stay first

In D.M. stop, he rails on Clinton, insists that 'I love babies'

JASON NOBLE AND BRIANNE PFANNENSTIEL

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Donald Trump is no great fan of the Iowa caucuses, he told the crowd at a rally in Des Moines on Friday.

"I don't love the caucus system, by the way, I could do without it," Trump said. "I like to vote! I like when you walk in and vote and leave."

But, the Republican presidential nominee promised, the quirky nominating contests' first-in-the-nation status will endure if he's elected in November.

"Not gonna happen if I win," he said of perennial efforts to rearrange the nominating calendar and depose Iowa, which has gone first since the 1970s. "You're going to stay right where you are. ... Iowa is an amazing place. You're going to keep your place in history. You're going to be that first state."

Trump, who placed second in Iowa's caucuses Feb. 1, drew more than 1,000 supporters to the Iowa Events Center in downtown Des Moines on Friday for a wide-ranging speech touching not only on the future of the caucuses, but also defense of foreign allies, his representation in the media and, above all, an unrelenting attack on Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton.

"If Hillary Clinton becomes president, you will have terrorism, you will have problems, you will have really, in my opinion, the destruction of this country from within," Trump said. "Believe me."

Trump's comments reiterated longtime campaign promises, such as his pledge to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, repeal the Affordable Care Act and renegotiate foreign trade agreements, but also brought new specificity to previous suggestions that he might deny support to U.S. allies in Europe and Asia. Unless countries such as Japan, South Korea, Germany, Saudi Arabia and NATO allies that enjoy substantial military support and protection from the U.S. begin paying more toward the cost of that protection, Trump warned, he would consider withdrawing support or declining to uphold treaty obligations. "You always have to be prepared to walk," he said. "I don't think we'd walk. I don't think it's going to be necessary. Could be, though. Could be that Japan will have to defend itself against North Korea."

Joining Trump and introducing him onstage was vice presidential nominee Mike Pence, the Indiana governor whose presence on the ticket is seen as a strength in Midwestern swing states like Iowa. Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad and Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds also warmed up the crowd, and remained at the rally

throughout Trump's speech. The Des Moines rally came just a week after Trump held well-attended events in Davenport and Cedar Rapids, underscoring the feeling within the campaign that he can compete and win here.

Iowa, and particularly the state's industrial eastern flank, is seen as receptive to Trump's populist "America First" message, and could be crucial to his success in November. The unconventional candidate's most obvious pathway to victory is by holding traditionally Republican states such as Iowa and Wisconsin, as well as winning over Rust Belt states like Ohio and Michigan that have gone Democratic in recent presidential elections.

Trump's visit follows a troubling week for his campaign, in which he remained mired in a losing rhetorical battle with the parents of a soldier killed in action and ignited intraparty fury over his refusal to endorse several GOP leaders, including U.S. Rep. Paul Ryan, the highest-ranking Republican in the country.

At a campaign stop Friday night in Wisconsin, Trump endorsed Ryan, as well as Arizona Sen. John McCain and New Hampshire Sen. Kelly Ayotte.

Polling nationally and in key states has turned sharply against Trump in recent days, while several high-profile Republican donors and activists have withdrawn their support for his candidacy. At midweek, there was open talk about how the GOP would respond should he quit the race altogether, although there has been no evidence that Trump plans to drop out. Trump on Friday pushed back against the negative news cycle at the rally by accusing media of bias against his campaign, specifically refuting the narrative that emerged over his interaction with a woman and a crying baby during a rally Tuesday.

It was widely reported that Trump had the small child removed from the Ashburn, Va., event after Trump said from the stage, "You can get the baby out of here."

But that's not true, Trump told the audience in Des Moines. After recounting the story, and saying he wanted to find the baby and get it into an opera training program, Trump accused reporters of intentionally misrepresenting an lighthearted remark.

"They say, 'Trump throws baby' — you know how terrible that is? Such a lie. And they know it's a lie," Trump said, adding, "I don't throw babies out, believe me. I love babies."

John Essig, a Clear Lake voter who stopped by the rally on his way home from an out-of-town trip, presented himself as a reluctant Trump supporter. He's dead set against Clinton and likes the Libertarian Party but has no confidence in its ability to win nationally. That leaves Trump. "I'm hoping the campaign goes better than it has so far. His statements were fine in the primaries but need to be more campaign-y now," Essig said, adding, "the media's attack on Trump is disappointing, but he kind of begs the question. He's an inviting target." Most of the rally attendees, though, were committed. Angie Suchan, of Urbandale, wore a T-shirt with iron-on lettering reading "lock her up" — a reference to chants frequently heard at Trump events calling for Clinton to be jailed for perceived crimes. "Trump is 100 percent better than Hillary. You've got to consider the alternative," Suchan said. "They keep hitting Trump, and Trump keeps hitting harder. I'm on the Trump train." Organized opposition to Trump's candidacy was subdued around the rally Friday, with one demonstration organized by the Clinton campaign and another challenging his hard-line stances on immigration.

As people began lining up outside the convention center Friday morning, Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller and about two dozen Clinton supporters gathered across the street to voice their support for the Democrat and to attack Trump's record. Miller faulted Trump for not laying out meaningful proposals to help Iowa's middle-class workers and called his candidacy antithetical to Iowa values.

They held signs bearing phrases such as "Trump: Outsourcer in Chief" and "Donald Trump's a fraud, he sends our jobs abroad." About 40 people protested Trump in front of the convention hall as the event began, holding signs and shouting such things as "No to hate, Trump get out of our state!" and

“Immigrants welcome!”

In one tense exchange, a Trump supporter approached the protesters and began shouting in their faces that only legal immigrants are welcome. Another Trump supporter heckled from the sidelines, yelling at the protesters to consider Clinton’s positions on late-term abortions and her handling of the attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, Libya.

Some drivers passing through honked in their support of the protests or booed at them out their windows.

DMR: Fallen officer’s funeral set for Monday

Formal procession of first responders will travel to burial at Iowa Veterans Cemetery

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The West Des Moines police officer who died in the line of duty this week in a motorcycle crash will be laid to rest Monday.

Visitation for Officer Shawn Miller is scheduled for 5 to 7 p.m. Sunday at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, 7075 Ashworth Road in West Des Moines. His funeral will begin at 11 a.m. Monday at the church. Burial will follow at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery in Van Meter. A formal procession of emergency responders will travel from the church to the cemetery.

The 47-year-old was killed Wednesday after colliding with a car while riding his personal motorcycle on U.S. Highway 169 in Dallas County. He was returning to West Des Moines after testifying in a hit-and-run case at the Dallas County Courthouse in Adel.

He had been with the police department for 26 years. Miller attended Dowling Catholic High School, where he served on the volunteer corps, a student group that conducts service projects throughout the Des Moines area. He graduated in 1987 and joined the Iowa National Guard. His company deployed to northern Saudi Arabia and Iraq during Desert Storm from January 1991 through May 1991.

Miller had several roles at the West Des Moines Police Department, including narcotics investigator, field-training officer, firearms instructor, evidence-processing technician and drug recognition expert. Miller was scheduled to be promoted to sergeant at the end of the month.

Miller’s late mother, Mary Miller, was a longtime 911 dispatcher and part-time records clerk for the West Des Moines Police Department. Miller’s father, Jerry Miller, retired from Clive police in 1999, after 30 years.

Miller is survived by his wife and three children.

A memorial fund has been established for the family at the Des Moines Police Officers’ Credit Union. Donations can be made in either location, 423 E. Court Ave., or inside the Federal Building, 210 Walnut St., Room 927, or online at [dmpo-cu.org](http://dmpo-cu.org).

DMR: Concerns voiced over wage hike proposed for Polk County

Care center owner seeks exemption to prevent rate raise for seniors

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Anne Peters says a change in federal labor regulations prompted her to raise rates last year for the seniors who rely on her home-care business.

Now, she said, she fears that Polk County's effort to raise the minimum wage to \$10.75 per hour by 2019 will force her to do it again.

Peters owns Home Instead Senior Care in Des Moines. Her employees provide help with cooking, bathing, cleaning and other household chores in seniors' homes.

Until last year, these workers were exempted from certain federal wage and hour protections. But the U. S. Department of Labor has since tightened those rules, mandating that agencies pay for travel time and time employees wait between appointments, as well as pay overtime.

Peters attended last week's Polk County minimum wage task force meeting, asking the group to consider an exception for such workers, at least during the hours they are driving or waiting to work. Home health agencies are among several business interests seeking to carve out exceptions to the county's new minimum wage ordinance.

The Iowa Restaurant Association unsuccessfully lobbied to freeze the minimum wage for tipped workers. And the minimum wage task force has discussed a separate, lower minimum wage for youth workers, whose hours and duties are more restricted than adult workers.

While Peters' 60 home-health employees earn \$10 to \$12 per hour while working, she pays them the state and federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour while they are traveling to clients' homes or waiting between appointments.

"If they don't grandfather it in, it's going to have to be passed on to the consumer," she said. "And in our case, the consumers have a fixed income."

After years of legislative and congressional inaction on raising the current minimum wage of \$7.25, the Polk County Board of Supervisors formed the 13member task force this spring to recommend a new countywide rate. Linn County formed a similar task force, and Johnson County is phasing in a minimum wage of \$10.10 per hour.

Supervisor Tom Hockensmith, who is leading the task force, feared that if the Polk County task force began exploring possible exceptions to its new minimum wage ordinance, requests for exemptions would never end.

Plus, officials worry that the less Polk County's ordinance mirrors the state's minimum wage law, the more likely it is to face a legal challenge.

Polk County Assistant Attorney Roger Kuhle said the county ordinance would be on "thinner ice" legally with a youth wage. That declaration and further study led Hockensmith to rethink his position on the youth wage, which he had suggested be 85 percent of the overall minimum wage. And he remains wary of allowing any exceptions.

The task force will discuss a possible exception for home health workers, but Hockensmith is inclined to reject it.

"It became so convoluted and complicated that I think it might be an administrative nightmare," he said. "I can only speak for myself, but once you start taking specific classes of workers and doing

exemptions, there's just no end to it." Jessica Dunker, president and CEO of the Iowa Restaurant Association, chafed at the lengthy discussions over the two possible exceptions.

Arguing that bartenders and servers are among the highest-paid restaurant employees, her group lobbied the county to freeze the current tipped minimum wage of \$4.35, which is set by state law at 60 percent of the overall minimum wage. But that plea was rejected by most task force members. After losing that battle, Dunker was incensed that the task force would consider other exceptions, calling it "incredibly hypocritical." The tipped minimum is already a component of state law, Dunker said, and even tipped workers must earn the full minimum wage or more. "We are looking at two categories of groups that we want to make exceptions for that aren't willing to pay the minimum wage," she said. "You can't start literally making up categories of winners and losers that state law doesn't address at all." Peters, owner of Home Instead Senior Care, said all of her clients pay for their own care, though some have long-termcare insurance policies. The company charges \$23 to \$28 per hour. She said the county's minimum wage change will particularly challenge providers that bill through Medicaid, because the government health program does not reimburse for travel and wait times. The services provided by home health agencies are not considered medically necessary. Yet Peters said they are essential to everyday life.

Some workers cart laundry up and down stairs. Some go grocery shopping and prepare meals. Others may help clients get bathed and addressed. "I would say it is a transitional care for a lot of people," Peters said. "Maybe they're not ready to go to assisted living yet, be it emotionally, financially, physically, but they need a little help." Anne Porter, who owns A+ Home Care Services and Supplies, said minimum wage hikes can price seniors out of home care if they go too far.

"The minimum wage frightens me," she said. "There's a price point where the average, even the above-average consumer, is going to say, 'Wow, that's expensive.'" Yet she is comfortable with Polk County's current path to \$10.75. She already pays her employees \$10 to \$14 per hour.

Some of her employees are only assigned to one client, who they might spend the whole day assisting. So she has fewer concerns over travel and wait time.

In addition to the hourly wage, Porter offers employees bonuses and extra incentives like gas cards and movie tickets.

"It's a profession," she said, "And it's not easy work. A lot of my staff, I wish I could pay them more."

DMR: CONDO MARKET ON COMEBACK?

CONGRESSIONAL LEGISLATION COULD PROVIDE REVIVAL OF D.M.-AREA HOUSING UNITS, WHICH HAVE BEEN LACKING SINCE RECESSION

During the rebound from the housing crash, Des Moines homebuilders have been busy building thousands of new apartments, townhouses and single-family homes.

But one big slice of the housing pie has been noticeably absent: Condominiums.

For several reasons (including both lending requirements and market conditions) Des Moines-area condo construction screeched to a halt when the recession hit. Since then, virtually no one has built new condos in the metro.

Now, legislation recently approved by Congress is providing a little hope for a condo market revival. The legislation, which is still awaiting the president's signature, would loosen some Federal Housing Administration requirements for condo mortgages.

The proposed changes come in response to complaints from mortgage and housing advocates that the FHA, which historically has been a key lender for firsttime and middle-class homebuyers, had made it too difficult to get condo loans.

“It’s not earth shattering, but it will open the door a little wider for some condo associations to be approved for FHA financing,” Jason Froehlich, Iowa regional mortgage manager for HomeServices Lending, said of the legislation.

No one expects a rush of new condo construction tomorrow. The changes only affect FHA loans, which account for just about 15 percent of the mortgage market.

But some say the FHA changes could encourage developers to consider dipping their toes back in the condo waters.

“If this passes, it’s going to give somebody, if not a bunch of people, a little confidence so say ‘Let’s try to build some’” condos, said Des Moines area real estate agent and developer Timothy Schutte.

Schutte is one — if not the only — developer building condos in Des Moines these days. He is converting the Kirkwood apartment building at Fourth and Walnut streets into condos.

As rental leases expire, he is renovating units and selling them as condos. So far, he has sold 14 of the building’s 54 units.

If things go well at the Kirkwood, Schutte said he will consider building new condos somewhere in the metro.

Schutte said he has seen strong demand for condos, both high-rise downtown units and garden- style condos in the suburbs.

Baby boomers and millennials like the idea of living in a community where someone else mows the lawn and shovels the sidewalk, he said.

But with few new units being built, the market for condos is tight.

“I’ve told the developers I can sell these if you can build them,” Schutte said. “Their response is always ‘I can’t get financing for them.’” One key thing to understand about FHA policy is that an entire condo building must be approved by the agency in order for a buyer to use an FHA loan for an individual unit. The changes (approved unanimously by the Senate last month and by the House earlier this year) aim to make it easier for condo associations to get FHA approval.

The legislation orders FHA to streamline the approval process and lifts restrictions on things like condo transfer fees.

Other changes include: » Allowing more mixed-use developments. The legislation increases from 10 percent to 25 percent the amount of a condo building that can be used as commercial space (like retailers, restaurants or offices). Froehlich said this is probably the most significant change. A condo building with a coffee shop on the ground level, for example, may not have qualified for FHA loans previously but will now.

» Reduce owner-occupancy requirements. To qualify for FHA loans, a certain portion of the units in a condo building must be occupied by their owner (rather than being rented or sitting empty). The legislation reduces that requirement from 50 percent to 35 percent, which will make more condo associations eligible for FHA loans.

FHA loans are seen as a critical tool for firsttime homebuyers, with the agency allowing down payments as low as 3.5 percent.

Lenders say it is important for first-time buyers to have access to the condo market. Prices for single-family homes are increasing and young buyers have shown a preference for urban areas, where condos are common. "Condos are often the most affordable homeownership option, especially for first-time and entry-level buyers, which is who FHA loans are meant for," Froehlich said.

But the FHA legislation is far from a magic bullet. "I don't think it will have a lot of an impact," said Randy Henkle, president of the Iowa Mortgage Association.

Lenders are still shy about condo loans for several reasons. For one, many condo mortgages do not qualify to be sold on the secondary market. Mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac have their own set of requirements for condo loans.

If a bank can't sell a condo loan on the secondary market, it has to keep the loan on its books, which reduces its liquid assets.

The type of loans banks are willing to keep on the books can vary. At the Kirkwood, for example, many buyers have obtained adjustable rate mortgages; the interest rate is set for the first 10 years and is variable for the next 20. "Overall, a condo is tough to finance," Henkle said. "There is still a stigma that you sure have to have your ducks in a row to get" a condo mortgage.

DMR: Scouting report: Booker wows at DNC

We all know that national political conventions are about nominating presidential candidates, who will lead their party to either glorious victory or ignoble defeat come November.

Well, the conventions are mostly about that.

They're also a little bit about who is on deck, ready to emerge four years from now should the need and opportunity arise. Who has that spark, that charisma, that sizzle to make the party rank-and-file — and the media — take notice. Iowa delegations in particular are usually flames to the subtle — or not so subtle — ambitious souls who are starting to stretch their wings. It's a rare convention that one doesn't come home with at least a short scouting report for future cycles.

This year, the scouting report is very short indeed. For one thing, many faithful party members feel obliged to pretend this year's nominee will certainly be in the White House for the next eight years. Alternatively, many Republicans seemed to believe their odds of future success would improve if they never came within 100 miles of Cleveland.

For John Kasich, the distance was 141.6 miles from Columbus, the capital city of Ohio.

There were no repeats of Barack Obama's 2004 convention star turn, in part because of Obama himself. Democrats were so dazzled by their current president, vice president and first lady — and the fellow who lost this year's nomination — that it was tough for even Hillary and Bill Clinton to compete. But the real postconvention buzz belonged to Khizr and Ghazala Khan, the Muslim parents of an American serviceman killed in action.

There were, however, a few names to put on the Iowa caucus watch list for a future cycle.

Cory Booker: No rising star at either convention won over more Iowans than the garrulous New Jersey senator. His speech to the convention was better than average, but his remarks to the Iowa delegation on July 27 had members on their feet and literally roaring their approval.

Booker has an engaging way of wrapping inspirational political messages inside humorous stories,

many of which poke fun at himself. Bonus: His grandmother was an Iowan and he still has an aunt living in Des Moines.

Other Ds: Iowa delegates also heard from not one but two Castro brothers. Texas Congressman Joaquin Castro, the scheduled speaker, showed up with brother Julian, the secretary of Housing and Urban Development, in tow. Both were considered potential veep candidates, and Iowans can bet they won't be strangers. The delegation also heard from 2016 candidate Martin O'Malley, who has kept Iowa on his GPS and may well run in the future. Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota is an entertaining nextdoor neighbor who may have an interest in higher office someday. And let's not forget Iowa's own Tom Vilsack, whose position on the shortest of short lists for veep only enhanced his national profile. Michelle Obama's speech was so well-received at the convention that one Iowa Democratic Party official said she might be a better draw for a future state party event than her husband.

Tom Cotton: The only "fresh face" to make time for Iowa Republican delegates was the Arkansas senator, who also spoke to the convention. Cotton, as the youngest member of the Senate and a decorated war veteran of both Iraq and Afghanistan, has an appealing profile for future party leadership. His speech to the Iowa delegation fell short of setting the room on fire but he was warmly received. And his wife was born in Iowa because the nearest hospital was over the border from her Nebraska hometown.

Other Rs: Most of the other speakers

to the Iowa contingent, notably Newt Gingrich, Rick Santorum and Scott Walker, had run before. Of the three, Walker in particular seemed to be keeping his options open for the future. He noted that if he ran again 20 years from now, he'd still be younger than Hillary Clinton is now.

Sen. Ted Cruz, who caused the greatest stir at the convention for refusing to endorse Trump, didn't speak to the Iowa delegation despite being the 2016 caucus winner. Some Iowans were invited to a reception he hosted, however. Other also-rans from the current cycle — Kasich, Marco Rubio, Jeb Bush just to name a few — avoided the convention but may try again someday. House Speaker Paul Ryan, who presided at the convention but didn't give a speech, should also stay on Iowans' watch list.

Some notable Republican women also stayed home, such as South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley and New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez, neither of whom are fans of Trump. But Iowa's own Sen. Joni Ernst, who spoke at the convention about military policy, belongs on the list of GOP rising stars. Trump's daughter Ivanka Trump also showed she could do more than be an effective surrogate for her father.

Now, don't start complaining about how the next election is still more than 90 days away and it's too ridiculously early to even think about 2020. Of course, the focus belongs on 2016. But this is Iowa, and we can do more than one thing at a time.

Or, as Booker put it last week, when some Iowans stepped on a line in his speech: "I was getting to Iowa! You all are impatient," he said.

That's right, senator. Better get used to it.

DMR Editorial: Give poor Iowans the support to succeed

Branstad ensures state is a national embarrassment on child care assistance

The Polk County Board of Supervisors is contemplating a minimum wage increase in the state's largest county.

Changing the pay floor in one community is not ideal, but it must be considered when the U.S.



Congress refuses to raise the \$7.25 federal minimum wage. Local officials are the ones left to do right by low-income workers because Iowa lawmakers lack the backbone for a statewide increase.

The debate on minimum wage in Polk County has brought attention to another example of Iowa's flagrant disregard for poor families: the failure to raise financial eligibility limits for a government program to help parents pay child care expenses.

The Child Care Assistance Program is administered by the Iowa Department of Human Services and largely funded with federal dollars.

To receive help paying for care, parents must be working, going to school, or participating in a jobs program and earn less than 145 percent of the federal poverty level.

This state's income ceiling is one of the lowest in the country, according to a 2014 report from the Iowa Policy Project. Only seven states had a lower eligibility threshold.

Simply put, we are a national embarrassment.

Iowa lawmakers and Gov.

Terry Branstad should increase the income limit for assistance to 175 percent of poverty and modify parents' co-payments based on income. This would allow a single

mother to earn up to \$13.08 per hour, instead of \$10.82, before entirely losing child care benefits, according to IPP.

It would also help people like Stephen Williams.

The 29-year-old Des Moines man received a promotion and pay increase at his job running an after-school program at Oakridge Neighborhood Services. The \$12 hourly wage nudged his total income \$9 over the state threshold for assistance. Without it, he faced paying \$600 per month instead of \$70 for his 4-year-old daughter's care.

Williams considered cutting back on hours at work or searching for a higher-paying job. Ultimately he paid the difference, in part because he considers the education, structure and socialization at his daughter's child care center important for her development.

Just imagine if Branstad recognized the importance of that for children, too. In 2015, he vetoed legislation that increased eligibility from 145 to 150 percent of the poverty level. The irony in his veto message was stunning: "We must support working families.... Enlarging government programs that only further perpetuate the cliff effect felt by these families when their incomes rise and benefits are lost is not the right policy for Iowa."

More of the governor's convoluted rationale was captured in his statement on this issue published in this newspaper last week: "Our benefit system is so generous that sometimes it makes it more advantageous not to work or not to get a promotion. We need to incentivize and encourage people to work and to look for opportunities to improve their skills and move up."

No kidding, governor. Moving up was what Stephen Williams was doing. The child care assistance program is intended to help low-income parents who are working and going to school take care of their children.

Yet Branstad seems to believe supporting families is accomplished by providing them less help — a philosophy he does not apply to businesses seeking tax credits.

CHRISTOPHER R. MARTIN of Cedar Falls is a professor and former department head in communication studies at the University of Northern Iowa, and is a 2004 recipient of the State of Iowa's Board of Regents Award for Faculty

When former University of Northern Iowa president Bill Ruud announced he was leaving, Iowa Board of Regents president Bruce Rastetter praised him for "great progress" and leaving "UNI in a stronger position than when he arrived."

It remains curious why Ruud had to go. Officially, the board didn't fire Ruud, but his contract wasn't renewed and that sends a message. Ruud's graceful exit masks the injustice the regents did to him and UNI. Ruud's departure is also another sign the board lacks accountability. The board's own policy manual sets the standards: "Regents and institutional officials must endeavor to remain free from the influence of, or appearance of, any conflicting interest in acting on behalf of the Board or a Regent institution."

Here is where the Board of Regents' actions often fail to meet the smell test. On multiple occasions, Rastetter and the board have violated the appearance of conflicting interest:

» According to Politico, Rastetter recruited Terry Branstad for his return run for governor in 2010 and was his top donor at more than \$160,000. The year after Branstad's election, Rastetter got his six-year appointment to the board.

» State law requires that not more than five of the nine members of the Iowa Board of Regents be from the same political party. The board's "current mix of five Republicans, three independents, and one Democrat on the board," meets the legal requirements, but does little to dispel the appearance of intentional partisanship.

» As a regent, Rastetter partnered with ISU to develop land in Tanzania that would have benefited his company.

ISU dropped out of the project in 2012 "in the face of mounting criticism," the AP reported.

» The board hired Bruce Harreld, the least qualified of University of Iowa presidential candidates. The hiring process, which favored Harreld and lacked transparency, is now subject to at least two lawsuits.

» UI used a no-bid contract to hire a polling company run by a former Iowa Republican Party chairman.

» ISU hired two high-level positions with no advertisements. One position went to former state Speaker of the House Kraig Paulsen, the other to former state Rep. Jim Kurtenbach, both Republicans. The decision to hire unadvertised positions at ISU is rare and requires the ISU president's approval.

» Whereas Ruud didn't get a contract renewal after his three-year contract expired in 2016, ISU president Steven Leath received a five-year contract extension in 2014. Moreover, he was offered tenure, as was Harreld. Ruud was never offered tenure.

» The Des Moines Register revealed Rastetter's company acquired and sold 140 acres of property at a discount price to ISU's Leath.

» The board paid its CEO, Robert Donley, \$338,466 in 2015, "more than doubling a salary cap set by the state Legislature," the Cedar Rapids Gazette reported.

» Most recently, the board approved a budget that takes \$3.6 million from the universities to cover its own increasing expenses, including \$240,000 a year for a new chief operating officer to oversee what

the board itself calls “one of the smallest public higher education board staffs in the nation.”

» Finally, the board does not allow citizens to make comments at its meetings. People can only make brief recorded “transparency hearing” statements, but there is no way to know if the regents watch these videos.

There are three patterns here, all not befitting the board: 1) The board functions as a revolving door of political patronage, 2) the board is secretive in its dealings, particularly where cronyism and favoritism might come to light, and 3) the board seems to treat compliant university presidents with special favor, and those it deems less compliant with disdain.

I have been a professor and an administrator at UNI for almost 20 years. I write not as a representative of UNI, but as a citizen who sees the educational jewels of Iowa’s public universities spoiled by the Board of Regents.

This is not just my assessment. The American Association of University Professors, the watchdog of university academic freedom, nearly sanctioned UNI for its board-approved program cuts and firings in 2012. Only Ruud’s course of good governance helped UNI avoid the sanction. In 2016, the AAUP sanctioned UI, with its report “primarily directed against the Iowa Board of Regents.” Plainly, the Rastetter-era Board of Regents has been abysmal.

If Branstad is unwilling to hold the board accountable, it falls upon the opposition party in the Senate to call hearings and investigate the board’s actions and ask why the regents let go an effective president at UNI.

#### DMR Iowa View: CLEAN WATER REQUIRES BALANCED APPROACH

CLARE KERNEK is a water program attorney at the Iowa Environmental Council. She focuses on regulatory issues related to the implementation of the Clean Water Act in Iowa.

JOSH MANDELBAUM is an attorney with the Environmental Law and Policy Center. He focuses on water quality and clean energy issues.

For nearly 45 years, the Clean Water Act has provided critical protections for the nation’s waters. Anti-degradation standards are a pillar of the act and are meant to keep clean water clean by preventing unnecessary new or increased pollution.

Iowa’s anti-degradation standards were carefully designed to ensure economic and environmental considerations are balanced. The anti-degradation review process, which is only triggered when a facility applies for a permit to increase pollution, requires applicants to consider and appropriately account for the costs and environmental benefits of alternative treatments that reduce pollution. This analysis, known as economic efficiency, determines if the option is cost-effective, essentially evaluating the “bang for the buck.”

Unfortunately, the economic efficiency analysis in Iowa’s antidegradation standards has not been properly implemented, prompting the Iowa Environmental Council to request a review by the courts.

This spring, an Iowa District Court judge sided with the council in a ruling that compels DNR to appropriately enforce Iowa’s antidegradation standards. The ruling confirms that facilities seeking permits to increase water pollution must appropriately account for the environmental benefits of affordable alternatives that would decrease pollution.

Now, three groups — the Iowa Association of Business and Industry, the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities, and the Iowa League of Cities — have petitioned DNR to change Iowa’s anti-degradation

standards. If adopted, the changes would allow facilities to arbitrarily eliminate affordable, less polluting options based on cost alone without any consideration of environmental benefits. This would significantly weaken existing water quality protections and undercut current clean water efforts.

Determining the cost effectiveness of any investment — be it a wastewater pollution control option or a home security system — includes weighing the costs against the desired result. A homeowner shopping for a home security system considers more than just the cost of the system, and may determine a more expensive system is worth the additional protections provided. Furthermore, this evaluation varies from home to home. Similarly, water quality benefits vary from watershed to watershed, and a one-size-fits-all approach does not take into account the unique water quality benefits at a watershed level. A good anti-degradation process does not exclude affordable less polluting options because that option crosses an arbitrary cost threshold.

Despite assertions to the contrary, we have no desire to bankrupt towns and cities or force them to install unaffordable pollution controls. In fact, the anti-degradation standards already include a separate affordability analysis that evaluates the community's financial capacity to implement such options. Alternatives that reduce pollution are only required if they are affordable. This was true before the recent lawsuit, and it continues to be true after the court's ruling. Additionally, thanks to technological advancements, some alternative treatment technologies may provide cleaner water and save communities money.

The proposed changes also undermine Iowa's Nutrient Reduction Strategy, which calls for reductions from all sources contributing to water pollution. If adopted, we expect the proposed changes will lead to fewer instances of industries, cities and towns implementing wastewater treatments that reduce nutrient pollution during the anti-degradation process. If that happens, an even greater burden will fall on agricultural contributors.

We all have a shared responsibility — and interest — in preserving clean water in Iowa. We urge the Iowa Environmental Protection Commission to look beyond the rhetoric of those that seek to weaken Iowa's anti-degradation standards and reject the proposed changes. The result of failing to do so will mean more pollution entering our streams and rivers when affordable alternatives exist that could have, and should have, prevented it.

DMR Iowa View: Iowa leaders have used incentives to lure good jobs

By: Mike Ralston and Joe Hrdlicka

It's difficult to be a public official. Women and men in Iowa, of both political parties, deserve our respect for their service.

Fair or not, one of the issues on which elected officials of both parties are judged is their support for good jobs, jobs with good pay and benefits. The kind of jobs that allow workers to provide for their families and support their communities. Every state is seeking those jobs.

For better or worse, every state is competing for those jobs with incentives of some kind. Tax credits, exemptions, training incentives, land acquisition services; you name it, and states are offering it. If Iowa is to compete, it must be involved in making those same incentives available when the situation calls for it.

Iowa's elected officials and state administrators have worked hard to target those incentives to situations that provide the good jobs that everyone, including The Des Moines Register, says are important. In fact, the Register has in the past focused on jobs that involve research and innovation, the very jobs targeted by Iowa's Research Activities Credit (RAC). In an editorial in Sunday's newspaper, the Register editorial board was critical of such incentives [Corporate welfare run amok].

If you were a worker in the Quad Cities and state officials didn't do everything possible to keep your job at Kraft Heinz, you would surely be upset. If you were a researcher at Rockwell Collins in Cedar Rapids and your job was moved to California because Iowa ended the RAC, you would surely be upset. Your community would notice the loss as well.

An example of an industry that has been the focus of incentives is the ethanol industry. In 2006, Iowa began investment in its ethanol industry through tax incentives. This \$60 million investment was paid off in less than a year and now the state is a leader in the production of biofuels. This investment has helped create approximately 9,000 jobs in 50-plus bioprocessing facilities throughout the state.

That said, it is agreed that a much better approach would be a tax structure that is the best in the nation. Until Iowa is truly serious about that discussion, it is disingenuous to criticize public officials for their work in retaining and attracting good jobs. Working for good jobs is something that the platforms of both parties can support.

DMR Iowa View: State Fair gun ban is useless, dangerous

By: Joel Kurtinitis

My family will not be attending the Iowa State Fair this year, and it's not because we don't like the food selections or the grandstand headliners.

My family and I will miss all the fun because of one increasingly absurd policy that the fair and its quasi-government board of directors stubbornly cling to: banning licensed firearms.

I've tolerated the policy in years past, but not without a degree of resentment common to law-abiding gun owners who grow weary of being treated with discriminatory suspicion.

As a trained and licensed concealed weapon carrier, I proudly exercise my right to defend myself and my family all over the state. In fact, the only places I cannot defensively carry are the places where I'm most likely to actually need a concealed weapon — places like the Iowa State Fair.

Despite its wholesome image, the Iowa State Fair is no stranger to violence.

Aside from the usual contingent of drunken brawls and East Side Night rowdiness, the State Fair and its surrounding area have played host to a number of serious assaults and injuries.

Most notably, several nights of violence broke out in 2010, culminating in the incident infamously dubbed "Beat Whitey Night," based on witness reports at the time. That year's fracas resulted in beatings, stabbings, two injured police officers, and one fairgoer with a fractured skull.

Far more troubling than random acts of gang violence, though, is the specter of domestic terrorism. It is tempting to think that Iowa is a low-risk target, but that's what every community thinks until it happens there. San Bernadino wasn't known as a hotbed of terrorist activity a few years ago. Neither Was Garland, Texas.

Or Orlando.

Or Fort Hood.

Or Boston.

For a determined killer looking to make a point, there's no juicier target in Iowa than the State Fair. At

its height, the fair is full of noise, confusion and crowds of men, women, and children packed so thick there's hardly room for the mullets to sway between them.

Imagine the folks standing in line at the food stands, the laughing couples taking selfies with the butter cow, the crowds in the grandstand, the kids splashing in the fountains.

Now imagine you're Omar Mateen.

The data is beginning to pile up against gun control advocates. Mass shootings in recent years have turned gun-free zones into graves for scores of helpless victims forced to cower, hide, and beg before being brutally killed while waiting for police to arrive.

It is neither partisan nor political to observe that mass-shooters prefer unarmed targets. It is merely applying common sense and honest analysis to the growing preponderance of evidence.

Aaron Dorr, executive director of Iowa Gun Owners, says that gun-free zones like the fairgrounds are a slap in the face to law-abiding gun owners. "These zones are the favorite target for madmen with guns as virtually every recent mass shooting proves." Dorr said. "Gun-free zones are killing us, they need to be repealed."

Iowa is generally a gunfriendly state, with well over a million gun owners and around 250,000 concealed carry permit holders. Statistically, you're likely to pass a concealed weapon or two on any given trip to the gym or the grocery store. Still, Iowa has one of the lowest gun crime rates in the U.S., which I mention to drive home one point: Iowa's law-abiding gun owners — all 1.3 million of them — are not a threat to anyone's safety.

Iowa's gun-free zones, however, are.

The State Fair's prohibition of legal firearms is one of the few remaining roadblocks to Iowans' right to self-defense — and it wasn't even passed democratically.

As it turns out, the fair's weapons ban lives in something of a political Bermuda Triangle: The Legislature established the Fair Board, the Fair Board decided to ban weapons and the governor enforced the Fair Board's decision.

Aside from the fact that this bowl of legal spaghetti virtually invites a lawsuit, the language of the rule exposes the fact that it never had any realistic bearing on public safety anyway.

The administrative rule simply states, "Failure to comply with this rule shall be cause for expulsion from the fairgrounds or being charged under Iowa Code chapter 724." A cursory review of chapter 724, however, reveals that Iowa recognizes only schools and parks as gun-free zones.

The fair isn't even mentioned.

When asked what charges would be filed against someone found violating the weapons ban at the fair, Iowa Assistant Attorney General David Dorff told me, "If this person had a permit to carry under chapter 724 of the Iowa code and if he was otherwise in compliance with chapter 724, he would not be charged under that chapter."

So in other words, if you get caught carrying a gun at a school, you get a class D felony, but if you get caught carrying a gun at the fair, you have to tell your friends buhbye and go put your gun away before you can resume your fried-food-and-beer-tent carousing.

If the ban were intended to deter violent criminals, it would carry the same charge as school bans do. As it is, the penalty disparity between carrying a weapon at a school and carrying a weapon at the fair makes it obvious that the rule's adoption was always a farce.

The only people who will be stopped by this toothless weapons ban are good, lawabiding gun owners looking to defend themselves and others in the event of an active shooter.

People like me.

And that's why you won't see me at the fair this year.

AP: Trump to try to steady campaign with economic speech

LAURIE KELLMAN and JILL COLVIN

Donald Trump is trying to shift from a disastrous stretch of his presidential campaign to one focused on policy and party unity. But even as his allies speak of lessons the political newcomer has learned, two of his staunchest Republican critics warn that he could be heading for losses in a pair of battleground states.

Trump is set to deliver an economic speech on Monday to the prestigious Detroit Economic Club in his effort to step past his spats over the past 10 days with the Muslim-American parents of a slain Army captain and the leaders of a Republican Party he has promised to unite.

"Mr. Trump on Monday will lay out a vision that's a growth economic plan" that will focus on cutting taxes, cutting regulation, energy development and boosting middle-class wages, campaign chairman Paul Manafort said in remarks broadcast Sunday on Fox Business. "When we do that, we're comfortable that we can get the agenda and the narrative of the campaign back on where it belongs, which is comparing the tepid economy under Obama and Clinton, versus the kind of growth economy that Mr. Trump wants to build."

What came before Monday's speech, Manafort suggested, doesn't count in the race to Election Day on Nov. 8. "It's a three-month campaign," he said.

Trump may have done irreversible damage in two critical states, Arizona and Ohio, with an approach to immigration reform that some say is divisive, two fellow Republicans say. Trump wants to build a wall between the United States and Mexico and now says he wants to suspend immigration from "terror countries" — though he has yet to say what those are.

Ohio Gov. John Kasich, who lost the Republican nomination to Trump, has not endorsed the billionaire and skipped the party's convention in Cleveland, said Trump faces a difficult climb in a state that's a must-win for Republican presidential candidates.

"He's going to win parts of Ohio, where people are really hurting. There will be sections he will win because people are angry, frustrated and haven't heard any answers," Kasich said on CNN's "State of the Union." "But I still think it's difficult if you are dividing, to be able to win in Ohio. I think it's really, really difficult."

In an interview on CBS's "Face the Nation," Sen. Jeff Flake, R-Ariz., said, "Yes, it is possible" that Democrat Hillary Clinton could beat Trump in his state, noting that Bill Clinton won Arizona in 1996 and that Hispanics represent about a third of the Arizona population.

"You can't just throw platitudes out there about a wall or about Mexico paying for it and then be taken seriously here," Flake said.

Clinton is expected to deliver her own economic plan to the Detroit Economic Club on Thursday.

That's who Republicans want to see Trump fighting — the former senator and secretary of state, not Republicans and others. It's a message furious senior members of the party carried to Trump privately and publicly in the days after Trump last week refused in a Washington Post interview to endorse the re-election bids of House Speaker Paul Ryan, Sen. John McCain of Arizona and Sen. Kelly Ayotte of New Hampshire. The trio had strongly disapproved of Trump's fight with Khizr and Ghazala Khan, Muslim-Americans whose son, Capt. Humayun Khan, was killed in Iraq in 2004.

On Friday at a Wisconsin rally not attended by Ryan or Gov. Scott Walker, Trump reversed course and endorsed all three lawmakers, saying, "We have to unite."

"If you look at the last few days, I think he's gotten the messages," former House Speaker Newt Gingrich said on "Fox News Sunday." "It's very tricky if you've never run for public office, to jump from being a businessman to being one of the two leaders fighting for the presidency, and he's made some mistakes."

Former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani said on ABC's "This Week" that Trump's endorsements show he "has the ability and the understanding to realize that there are going to be disagreements and you've got to be able to reach out to the entire party."

SCJ OUR OPINION: Cellphone use and driving do not mix

Top of Form

Bottom of Form

Perhaps next year will, finally, be the year Iowa lawmakers take substantive steps to crack down on the pervasive, dangerous problem of distracted driving.

At his July 25 weekly news conference, Gov. Terry Branstad said he asked Public Safety Commissioner Roxann Ryan to lead a task force in a study of driving distractions. Ultimately, the panel will make recommendations to Branstad ahead of the next legislative session.

Branstad said safety on Iowa's roads will be "one of the major issues" he will discuss in his January Condition of the State address.

"We've seen not only an increase in the deaths of cyclists, bicyclists (and) motorcyclists, but also motorists," Branstad said. "And I do want to see us address those issues."

We commend state government for undertaking this study, which we hope will help push the issue of distracted driving to near the forefront of next year's session, where it deserves to be.

We have used this space on multiple occasions in the last several years to advocate for state action on distracted driving -- in particular, use of a cellphone while driving.

Advertisement

We support making use of a hand-held cellphone while driving illegal. At a minimum, the state should make texting while driving a primary offense. The state was right in 2010 to make texting while driving illegal, but because the ban is enforceable only as a secondary offense, or only when a law enforcement officer stops a driver for a primary offense, it lacks impact.

We also support discussion, pushed by the Iowa Bicycle Coalition, of changes to the state's reckless driving law. In response to the deaths of nine bicyclists on Iowa roads so far this year (the most since 2010), the coalition advocates for an expanded definition of reckless driving (to include, for example,



texting while driving), with a goal of stronger charges and punishment for motorists who strike bicyclists. Under current law, drivers must be drunk, high, drag racing or fleeing from police to be considered reckless.

Alarming statistics about the scourge of cellphone use by drivers abound. According to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, some 660,000 drivers use cellphones or manipulate electronic devices while driving at any given daylight moment. The National Safety Council reports use of cellphones causes 26 percent, or roughly one in four, of the nation's car accidents, resulting in some 1.6 million crashes each year.

Iowa should seek to become a leader in protecting the public from this national epidemic.

To this end, we look forward to reading what the new task force recommends. And we urge state lawmakers to join Branstad and make distracted driving a priority legislative issue next year.

LEE: Iowa in play: State's six electoral votes looms large in 2016 presidential outcome

Rod Boshart

Consider Iowa an overachiever in the nation's Electoral College.

With only six of the 538 electoral votes in the 2016 presidential election, Iowa again will play a significant role in what is expected to be a close race between Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Hillary Clinton, given its place among the sub-cluster of battleground states that could swing November's outcome either way.

"Iowa, for right now, is in play," said Dennis Goldford, a Drake University political science professor.

"Normally, Iowa is the center of the political universe during caucus time and then the morning after, we fall off the face of the earth. We fall into a political black hole and disappear because Iowa's six electoral votes normally don't matter. But in a close election, a single electoral vote matters.

"We're three months out, so there's a long time to go, but if it looks to be a close election even six little electoral votes could make the difference."

The U.S. Electoral College — established by the Constitution's 12th amendment — is the institution that elects the president and vice president every four years based upon state-by-state popular vote outcomes in November's general election. Electors, totaling 538, are apportioned to each of the 50 states as well as to the District of Columbia in numbers equal to the members of Congress — giving Iowa six for its four representatives and two senators.

It takes at least 270 electoral votes to win the presidency, but because there are a number of states that traditionally go "red" for Republican candidates or "blue" for Democrats, elections often come down to about 130 or fewer electoral votes contested in up to 10 "purple" states where both major political parties are competitive.

Iowa is one of those purple states again this year, with its voter registration numbers carved up in proximity among Democrats, Republicans and independent Iowans who declare no party affiliation. As of Aug. 1, 664,909 Iowans were identified as independents, 649,579 as Republicans and 615,365 as Democrats among the nearly 1.94 million active voter registrants tallied by the Iowa Secretary of State's office.

"Iowa does not vote reliably Democratic or Republican in presidential elections — some years it swings to the Democrats and some years it's Republican, and therefore it's worth investing a lot of money and

even a little time coming to Iowa trying to push the voters over to your side and get those six electoral votes,” said Iowa State University political science professor Steffen Schmidt.

Evidence of Iowa’s importance was demonstrated by Trump’s trio of campaign stops in Iowa — including a duo appearance Friday with running mate, Indiana Gov. Mike Pence — over a nine-day period that also saw Clinton surrogates U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., and actor Sean Astin of “Rudy” and “Lord of the Rings” movie fame campaign in Iowa on her behalf.

“I can’t think of a state our size that is in any better position than we are right now to command the attention of the leader of free world next year,” said Jeff Kaufmann, chairman of the Republican Party of Iowa.

He noted that Iowa polls have shown Trump and Clinton locked in a dead heat.

“If indeed this election is close electorally, we’re going to be in as important of a position as we’ve ever been,” he said.

The biggest prize among the 2016 swing states is Florida with 29 electoral votes, along with Pennsylvania, Ohio, North Carolina, Virginia, Wisconsin, Colorado, Iowa, Nevada and New Hampshire to lesser degrees.

If Trump can win Florida, Iowa becomes “almost a necessity” in his road map to the White House, Kaufmann said. If Clinton wins Florida, “We’re down to a hail-Mary pass, and absolutely he cannot win the presidency without Iowa,” he added.

There are other scenarios and theories on how the battleground states may play out, but political scientists point to the 2000 outcome in which Republican George Bush edged Democrat Al Gore in electoral votes of 271 to 266 as evidence of important a state with six electoral ballots can be in a tightly contested election.

“The whole game is to hang onto the states that you always do well in and not lose those, and then win enough swing states to get to 270,” Schmidt said.

What makes 2016 so hard to predict is that Trump has run an unconventional campaign that has confounded the research and traditional thinking about how to wage a successful bid. Also, this year’s contest features a matchup between “very unpopular, untrusted candidates” that makes predicting turnout and other variables difficult.

“In the almost 50 years that I’ve been analyzing presidential elections, I’ve never seen a year when the past is not a very good predictor of what’s going to happen this year because you have a candidate who is different than any other candidate who has ever run for president, and you have two candidates who are so mistrusted that we don’t know if the voter turnout is going to be low or high. And so the best models that I’ve seen is that Hillary Clinton needs to hang on to all the states that Democrats normally win,” Schmidt said.

“If she wins in those and Florida, then she could become president.”

Eric Branstad, state director for Trump’s Iowa campaign, said Iowa is among the battleground states that factor heavily into the Donald Trump-Mike Pence strategy.

“We can certainly say that we are a priority for the campaign,” Branstad said. “With the time and attention that we are getting now and will be receiving here in the coming months, I can certainly see that — like in cycles past — we are a priority for the campaign and we will get the resources and attention that Iowa deserves.”

Kaufmann said Republicans are assembling “the largest ground game in Iowa history” that will include a

focus on absentee ballots and get-out-the-vote efforts intended to erase a traditional edge held by Iowa Democrats. Likewise, Branstad said the Trump campaign will be opening an Urbandale headquarters, announcing staff hires and “putting the ultimate ground game together” to “do what it takes to win Iowa in November.”

On the other side, Bailey Romans, one of Clinton’s regional organizing directors in Iowa, said Democrats are building on President Obama’s successful campaign structure to recruit volunteers, knock on doors, make phone calls and connect with current and future Clinton supporters in Iowa.

“Iowa is important. We have had people working on this campaign working here since April, and we’re going to continue to be here until November,” Romans noted. “Hillary was here a ton during the caucuses. She visited the state a lot. She was all over the place, and hopefully we’ll be seeing her around some more.”

SCJ: CF: New Port Neal plant mechanically complete

DAVE DREESZEN

The \$2 billion expansion of CF Industries' Port Neal fertilizer complex has hit a milestone.

The new ammonia plant is mechanically complete, CF announced Wednesday. The 2,420-tons-per-day plant is expected to start production late in the third quarter, which ends Sept. 30, or the beginning of the fourth quarter, the company said Wednesday.

Construction continues on the 3,850-tons-per-day urea synthesis and granulation plant, which is expected to start up "closely thereafter," the ammonia plant, company said.

Deerfield, Illinois-based CF, one of the world's largest producer of nitrogen-based fertilizer, updated the status of the Port Neal construction in its earnings report for the second quarter ended June 30. The company had earlier said it expected the ammonia plant to be completed in the second quarter.

CF broke ground in the fall of 2013 on the mega expansion in rural Woodbury County, just south of Sioux City and Sergeant Bluff. At the time, it was the largest single private capital investments in Iowa history.

After peaking at around 5,300 earlier this year, the number of construction workers at the site has gradually ramped down in recent weeks, as laborers finish their portion of the mega project. As of July 24, about 4,300 workers remained at the sprawling site, according to a CF report. While a reduction, that's still more than double the original estimates at peak construction.

Through July 24, more than 18.5 million man hours have been completed over the course of the project, according to the company report.

Port Neal CF staff have already begun the detailed commissioning, or testing, process both plants must go through before production can begin.

In Wednesday's earnings report, CF said the new offsites and utilities also have been completed. Offsites and utilities include all structures and buildings that support the plants, which include structures for water collection and purification, power generation, the wastewater system, the fire water system, cooling towers and various other functions.

The new ammonia plant will triple the Port Neal complex's daily production of ammonia, the basic building block for nitrogen-based fertilizers. The urea plant will produce granular urea, a solid nitrogen fertilizer that has not been produced at Port Neal in two decades.

The expansion added 125 new full-time jobs, more than doubling CF's Port Neal workforce. The new workers have been hired and have gone through training.

LEE: Clinton, Trump are historically unpopular candidates

ERIN MURPHY

The major political parties have had their moments in the sun.

The national conventions of the last two weeks of July broadcast to the nation the parties' presidential candidates, Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Hillary Clinton.

But as the parties leave behind the speeches and balloon drops of the conventions to focus on the three-month sprint to the November election, there remains a significant number of voters who are wholly unimpressed with those two candidates.

Voters view Trump and Clinton less favorably than any other major-party presidential candidates since pollsters first started asking the question in the late 1960s, and more voters are seeking other options than in any election in two decades.

"Just talking to friends and family and other folks, you know, I haven't met very many people who are excited or positive about the election," said Christopher Larimer, a political science professor at the University of Northern Iowa.

"The people who I know are regular voters are really struggling with (the question of), 'Who am I going to vote for?'" he said.

Among those disenfranchised voters is Aaron Rochester of Sioux City, a Republican conservative who said he will vote for neither Trump nor Clinton.

"You want someone who can represent you and support your ideals," Rochester said, saying neither candidate fits that bill for him.

Rochester, a former Sioux City council member, said he will vote in November, but he has not decided on an alternative candidate.

Highly unpopular

Donald Trump, the New York businessman who in many ways has turned this election on its head, has the worst favorability ratings of any major party presidential candidate on record.

The second-worst: Hillary Clinton.

Voters' viewpoints of the top two presidential candidates has never been worse than this year. The data is illuminating.

In national polls conducted during and after the recent national conventions, Clinton was viewed unfavorably by 51 percent to 57 percent of voters surveyed. Trump was viewed unfavorably by almost two-thirds of voters in one recent poll.

According to an analysis of polling data by the political news website fivethirtyeight.com, the net strongly favorable ratings for Trump and Clinton shatter the previous low.

When subtracting the candidates' strongly unfavorable from their strongly favorable ratings, using averages over March and April, Clinton scores negative 20 and Trump negative 40. The previous low for the same period was Mitt Romney at negative 8 in 2012.

Results from the Pew Research Center show voters are less satisfied with the top two presidential candidates than in any election since 1992, and two out of five voters say neither candidate would make a good president.

"We've never seen both candidates in negative favorability at the same time and over the course, so far, of the entire election campaign," said Charles Franklin, director of the Marquette Law School Poll in Wisconsin.

The high unfavorable ratings can be attributed in part to political polarization, experts say. But Trump and Clinton have given voters other reasons to be turned off, according to polling data.

Clinton polls poorly on questions about honesty and trustworthiness, while Trump fares poorly on questions about having the proper qualifications or experience to be president.

### Third-party candidates

Those low levels of approval have led, in part, to a rise in support for third-party candidates this cycle.

The biggest beneficiaries thus far have been Libertarian Gary Johnson, the former governor of New Mexico, and Green Party candidate Jill Stein, a physician and political activist from Massachusetts.

Johnson has polled in the high single digits in recent national polls.

Franklin said voters' unfavorable views of Clinton and Trump have created an opening for third-party candidates such as Johnson and Stein.

"It certainly provides an opportunity, because it provides a pool of voters who are dissatisfied with their major party choices," Franklin said.

The experts interviewed for this story agreed, however, that it is unlikely any third-party candidate will shift the election results.

One reason is the defection of support does not appear to be harming Clinton or Trump; rather, it seems both candidates are losing voter support to third-party candidates equally.

Another reason is disenfranchised voters, particularly those with a strong ideological bent, eventually may decide to vote Democrat or Republican.

"As we get closer to the election, a lot of the people considering at the moment a third-party candidate as a protest vote may well come home and hold their nose for what they consider the least of two evils," said Dennis Goldford, a political science professor at Drake University.

### Time to decide

Ultimately, what those disenfranchised voters will do on Election Day remains unknown, and what shows in polling now may be much different by November.

They may sit out the election and not vote. They may vote for other offices, but skip casting a vote for president. They may vote third party.

Or they may yet be persuaded to vote for Clinton or Trump.

“That’s the essential question. We don’t know,” Goldford said.

For now, many voters remain uninspired by the major party candidates for president and are wrestling with what to do with their vote.

Larimer said those voters are going through a personal and emotional struggle.

“They’re just really having a hard time with who they want to vote for president,” Larimer said. “They’re just having a really hard time getting over that hurdle, having to (vote) for someone they don’t like.”

The Gazette: Eastern Iowa Honor Flight holds first-ever plane pull fundraiser

Pulling for Honor event at airport raises nearly \$40,000 Saturday

Participants in a fundraiser Saturday pulled a tremendous cause to help local veterans — nearly 140,000 pounds, in fact.

The first-ever Pulling for Honor, held Saturday morning at The Eastern Iowa Airport, was a plane pull competition that aimed to raise thousands of dollars for former U.S. servicemen and women.

The event was held to benefit Eastern Iowa Honor Flight, a non-profit organization that takes U.S. veterans to Washington, D.C.

Teams grouped in two rounds competed to determine which team could pull a 137,000-pound 757 FedEx cargo jet 12 feet the fastest.

It was a virtual tie between two teams, said Leighton Smith, a volunteer who spearheaded the event. In the end, the Linn Star Transfer company team went home with the traveling trophy with a time of 6.422 seconds. A combination team of Spotix and the Simmons Perrine Moyer Bergman law firm came in a close second at 6.534 seconds.

“I feel like I’ve just gone 10 rounds with Mike Tyson,” said Matt Adam, a member of the Spotix/SPMB team and a volunteer on the event planning committee, after his team’s pull.

17 teams of about 25 individuals signed up for the plane pull, and two more impromptu teams were formed during the day, Smith said. That’s more than 400 plane pullers.

Most of the teams formed were primarily corporate teams who were sponsoring the event, including Hy-Vee and Rockwell Collins. Central administration from the University of Iowa also participated in the event, including President Bruce Harreld and Rod Lehnertz, senior vice president of finance and operations. The university was challenged by Carroll Reasoner, legal counsel for the university, and administrators were thrilled to participate, Lehnertz said.

Pulling for Honor organizers hoped to raise enough to send one plane full of veterans and their guardians to D.C. next summer from The Eastern Iowa Airport, said Marty Lenss, director of the airport.

From team fees and sponsors, the event raised about \$36,500, Smith said. Although it will be a few days before organizers know the total from other freewill donations, Smith estimated the event raised about \$40,000 overall.

Although short of the initial \$50,000 goal, Smith said organizers have already decided to host Pulling for Honor next year.

Looking at the hundreds of people who attended the event throughout the morning, organizers were

confident the fundraiser was popular enough to merit a repeat.

“It feels like we got a lot of momentum to keep this going in the future,” Adam said.

The Experimental Aircraft Association Chapter 33 was also present at the event to offer free plane rides to kids ages 8-17 through the Young Eagles program. The program, which aims to inspire an interest in aviation, had more than 60 children sign up in the first hour alone, Lenss said. By the end of the event, Smith said Young Eagles reached its biggest ever event in Eastern Iowa at over 100 flights.

Eastern Iowa Honor Flight is a part of the Honor Flight Network, which works across 44 states providing free daylong trips to the nation’s capital for World War II, Korean and Vietnam veterans to see memorials built in their honor. Since 2009, the organization has served 2,062 veterans in 10 counties, said George Rickey, public relations coordinator for the organization.

Rickey said the trips are often emotional for the veterans, who often say the trip was the first real thank you they have ever received.

“On our last flight, we had a Vietnam veteran who found one of his platoon members on the Vietnam wall,” Rickey said. “He said to me, ‘I finally feel accepted for where I’ve gone and what I had to do.’”

Howard Purty, a Vietnam veteran in the Marine Corps and a Vinton resident, said Honor Flight is a way veterans get the coming home ceremony they never had — something they absolutely deserve, he said.

“This is a way to pay them back for their service,” Purty said.

For more information on the Eastern Iowa Honor Flight, visit [eihonorflight.org](http://eihonorflight.org).

The Gazette: Former Board of Regents President David Miles shares tight bond with Tim Kaine

Miles on Democratic vice presidential hopeful: 'He's good people'

The guy David Miles met back in 1979 as a first-year student at Harvard Law School never mentioned political aspirations, partisan objectives, or White House dreams.

Tim Kaine, rather, was a bright but down-to-earth natural friend who ended up in the same orientation group and class section as Miles, a Des Moines-based businessman and attorney who spent six years on the Board of Regents, has served 13 years on the Drake University Board of Trustees, and recently was named chair of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges.

As first-year classmates, Miles and Kaine lived a few dorm rooms apart. By year four, they were living in the same house with two other guys. On the last day of their Harvard experience, they threw a party, and Kaine made a mixed tape.

Miles ended up with the tape, which he held on to “as a memento of our time together” and hopes to dig up one day. But the two have continued collecting memories in the 37 years since they met, getting together three to four times a year — even more of late — for hiking trips, camping expeditions, family vacations, or occasional meals together as Kaine’s schedule allows.

In fact, 20 years ago to the day that Kaine on July 27 accepted the Democratic nomination for vice president, he dipped his bike tire into the Mississippi River after finishing RAGBRAI with Miles and five other friends.

“He’s incredibly bright, incredibly funny, and more interested in what’s on your mind than on his,” Miles

said of his friend. “He asks great questions and is just as common as can be.”

So when Miles heard Kaine was Democratic Presidential Candidate Hillary Clinton’s choice for vice president, he was “ecstatic.”

“I feel the country would be very fortunate if he were in the vice president position,” Miles said. “He cares about all the right things.”

Although Miles said Kaine never hinted of political aspirations while back at Harvard, he’s not surprised that’s the path Kaine took.

“He was always more interested in social justice issues and public policy than maybe the typical student,” Miles said, adding those are the interests that drive him still today.

“It’s not about him, it’s about what good he can do for other people,” Miles said. “You never hear him talk about what his official title or office is. It’s getting the work done, and trying to make the world a better place.”

Miles, who at times over the years has traveled with Kaine on his various campaigns and plans to do so in the coming months, got to sit in the “family box” at the recent Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia.

At breakfast the morning after Kaine’s speech, Miles said, friends and family were laughing at the social media explosion of “dad jokes” the vice presidential candidate had sparked.

“Tim Kaine is that soccer dad who can sing along to any rap song, but hums the cuss words,” one person wrote on Twitter.

“Tim Kaine will be driving you TO and FROM the prom, mister,” another person wrote.

“We thought they were hilarious,” Miles said, noting that Kaine and his wife Anne Holton, stayed up into the early morning hours one night reading them. “They were enjoying them too.”

And, Miles said, they sort of ring true — “if your dad was completely committed to public service and had all the chops to deliver on that.”

“He’s good people,” Miles said. “He’s more than good people, because he’s brilliant. But he’s also just good people.”

Miles said he’s personally experienced Kaine’s “Of course I’ll drive you to the airport Monday morning” attitude. And once, when they were hiking together in Virginia in 2014, they went into a general store and a cashier said to Kaine, “I remember you. Weren’t you lieutenant governor once?”

“He just smiled and said, ‘Thanks for remembering that,’” Miles said. “Since then, he had been governor and chair of the DNC and was a sitting senator. But he just said, ‘Thanks for remembering that.’”

Miles said he would worry about the mudslinging and hateful attacks leveled during presidential campaigns, but Kaine has a history of maintaining perspective and staying resolute.

“Tim is fine,” Miles said. “He knows what’s important and what’s not, and he doesn’t let small things get under his skin.”

As for Kaine and Clinton’s prospects, Miles admitted he’s no expert but does have his friend’s track record to go on.

“Tim has always run as an underdog — he’s had a lot of tight races,” Miles said. “And he’s 8-0. So I



think he'll prevail.”

Miles said he plans to do what he can to help make that a reality by advocating for Kaine's abilities and leadership qualities on the campaign trail and by fundraising.

“He's made it clear that he would like us to come and travel with him some,” Miles said. “And Iowa is a battleground state. If he can get to Iowa ... we will certainly try to hold a fundraiser for him.”

The Gazette: Medicaid payment challenges still plaguing Iowa health care providers

One Cedar Rapids company considers cutting staff

Medicaid payment problems have forced one Cedar Rapids-based wheelchair provider to no longer sell medical equipment to skilled-nursing facilities.

JVA Mobility owner Vince Wolrab said that, despite obtaining prior authorizations to supply individuals living at nursing facilities or group homes with new wheelchairs or repairs, Iowa's three managed-care organizations no longer are reimbursing the company for the cost.

“The MCO gives up prior authorization, but then they don't pay it,” Wolrab said. “They've come up with all sorts of answers why. Some of them say it's trial and error — we've used the wrong (billing code). But then some they just flat out deny and tell us it needs to be billed to Medicare, when they know Medicare won't cover it.”

This issue, combined with improper reimbursements well below the negotiated contract fees, have led the company to be out more than \$100,000, Wolrab said.

Under the fee-for-service system, Iowa Medicaid reimbursed the company for 85 percent of the suggested retail price on a wheelchair, he added. But under managed care, the MCOs are only paying for 10 percent to 50 percent of the retail price.

Suppliers can't continue to give away free equipment, he said, so after three months of no payment, the company has had to make hard decisions.

“We planned ahead for” payment problems, he said. “That's probably the only reason we've gone as long with facilities as we have. But if this continues to happen, there's no way we can afford it. We've talked about cutting staff.”

Medicaid makes up about 30 percent to 35 percent of the company's budget, Wolrab explained. And now, four months into the Medicaid transition, Wolrab said he feels as if there is no resolution on the horizon.

Two of the MCOs don't have a great track record of returning phone calls and emails, he said, and the one that does — UnitedHealthcare — has few answers.

## BILLING ISSUES

Iowa handed over its \$5 billion Medicaid program to three out-of-state insurers in April. Since the transition, JVA Mobility isn't the only Medicaid provider to run into these kinds of problems. Providers statewide — from rehabilitation therapists and in-home care providers to Meals on Wheels and nursing homes — have reported slow or inaccurate payments, forcing them to dip into savings or extend their lines of credit.

What's more, a provider survey released late last month by Iowa Democratic legislators found that

hundreds of Medicaid providers have run into billing issues:

| Nearly two-thirds of the more than 400 survey respondents said they have received lower reimbursement rates than what is stated in their contracts

| Almost 80 percent said they are not getting paid on time

| 20 percent of respondents said they have been forced to take out loans to cover their expenses while waiting for payment.

“I don’t think any of you three companies this week are borrowing money to make your payroll,” Sen. Joe Bolckom, D-Iowa City, said during a July 26 Senate Human Resources committee meeting in Des Moines.

Iowa Medicaid Director Mikki Stier said during that meeting the issues stemmed from a “cultural shift” with Medicaid providers now moving away from paper claims and toward a more automated system in managed care. The state said the most likely reasons for claims to be denied or rejected include duplicate claims, missing information, invalid service dates or services are not approved benefits.

But according to state Department of Human Services data released in late July, the Iowa’s three MCOs — Amerigroup Iowa, AmeriHealth Caritas Iowa and UnitedHealthcare of the River Valley — already have paid a total of \$899.3 million to providers from April through June.

Data shows that of the more than 4.9 million claims submitted in those months:

| About 3.4 million have been paid

| 1.2 million have been denied

| 300,000 have been suspended

| 101,000 have been rejected, meaning the claims were missing key pieces of information.

Sen. Liz Mathis, D-Cedar Rapids, has said there is a “disconnect” between the state’s data and what legislators are hearing from providers.

“I think the transition has been rugged, it’s been sloppy, and again there’s just a disconnect between what we’re hearing from state officials and what the providers are telling us,” she said in late July. “We need some resolution because pretty soon we’re going to see providers go out of business, and I’m most concerned that the providers in rural areas — the smaller providers that really give essential services to people in the rural areas — are going to go out of business, and that’s not good.”

Additional data provided to The Gazette shows that during the same time period in 2015 — when the Medicaid program was the state-operated fee-for-service — the state paid out \$1.22 billion in claims.

| More than 10 million claims were submitted

| 14 million were paid — there was a carry-over from month to month since providers would file a number of claims at one time

| 1.1 million were denied

| 241,625 were suspended

| 75,344 were rejected.

However, this data can't be seen as apples-to-apples, explained Amy McCoy, Department of Human Services spokeswoman, as providers have 180 days to file claims with the MCOs compared with a year under state-run Medicaid. She also stressed that this still is a new system, and it will take additional time to do more trend analysis.

"When it comes to claims reimbursement, we will continue to evaluate the MCOs' performance based on the contract requirements for Iowa's managed care plan — which is similar to other commercial plans — not how the previous system operated," McCoy said.

## The Gazette: Johnson County moves forward with solar projects

### Supervisors vote to set power agreement

IOWA CITY — In April, Johnson County officials received project proposals from four solar companies vying for the county's plans to add solar arrays to the roof of the Health and Human Services Building and adjacent to the Administration Building. Both buildings are located on South Dubuque Street.

The two projects are planned to be the county's next foray into solar power. Last October, North Liberty's Moxie Solar completed an 86-kilowatt-hour array on the Secondary Roads Facility at 4810 Melrose Ave.

### WHAT'S HAPPENED SINCE

On Thursday, the Johnson County Board of Supervisors voted to enter into a power purchase agreement (PPA) with Dubuque's Eagle Point Solar for the two arrays.

Local governments cannot receive renewable energy tax credits, but a company such as Eagle Point Solar can.

A PPA allows the solar company — which can receive federal and state tax credits — to construct the array, while the municipality buys the electricity at a reasonable price.

When the PPA ends in 20 years, the county can buy it for \$1 and take over ownership of the solar array.

"We just essentially will pay the bill for the energy for 20 years," said Josh Busard, director of Johnson County planning and development.

The county also has the option of buying the array after 10 or 15 years, which comes with a termination fee, but results in savings on the energy costs.

Panels for the Administration Building will generate about 25 percent of the building's annual use, while the Health and Human Services Building array will produce about 12 percent of the building's use.

Combined, the arrays are proposed to generate more than 300,000 kilowatt-hours per year.

Becky Soglin, county sustainability specialist, said that energy production would be similar avoiding greenhouse gases produced by nearly 46 passenger vehicles in a year, or the annual energy use of almost 23 houses.

Larry Steffen, vice president of sales with Eagle Point Solar, said construction of the arrays could be finished in a matter of weeks.

"We are ready to go as a company as far as the build on this," he said Thursday.

The Gazette: Washington High teacher-student sex inquiry not conducted by trained investigators

Cedar Rapids district's designated investigators were not trained until this week

Neither of the two in-district investigations of a sexual relationship between a Washington High School substitute teacher and a 17-year-old student were carried out by a trained investigator, though district policy requires it, records show.

Moreover, training records indicate the Cedar Rapids Community School District's designated investigators were all at least three years overdue for recertification, a violation of Iowa Code.

The handling of 24-year-old substitute teacher Mary Beth Haglin's conduct earlier this year with the Washington High student led to the sudden retirement of Principal Ralph Plagman, 72, after 35 years as the head of the school.

According to training records from all nine area education agencies in the state, which provide the training, no Washington High administrator — including Plagman and associate principals Darius Ballard, Valerie Nyberg, Michael Johnson and recently retired Paul James — has undergone training in at least 10 years.

Plagman received training in 2003, but board-approved Level One Investigators must be certified every five years.

None of the administrators responded to requests by The Gazette for comment.

District officials have said the February and May investigations of Haglin were conducted by Washington High administrators but have declined to name who was involved in those inquiries.

Plagman took responsibility for the probes in an Aug. 2 statement.

Cedar Rapids police arrested Haglin on July 22 on a charge of sexual exploitation, and she since has admitted to having sex with the 17-year-old male student while she worked at Washington High.

That kind of conduct — defined in the district's policy handbook as "abuse of students by district employees" — should be investigated by a Level One Investigator who receives training at least every five years.

"There's a lot riding on that, certainly," said Evan Abbey, director of the training program, based in Des Moines. "Students' safety is very paramount to this, so having training that covers the basics — that should be your bare minimum."

But records show not even the district's three board-approved Level One Investigators had been trained for more than five years until last week. Those investigators were not involved in the Haglin investigations, district officials have said.

The three current board-approved investigators are Prekindergarten-through-grade-8 Executive Director Val Dolezal, Wright Elementary Principal Greg O'Connell and Human Resources Director Jill Cirivello.

Cirivello since has left the district, and O'Connell — now principal at Coolidge Elementary — would not comment for this story. Dolezal could not be reached.

The required training for investigators spells out their legal obligations during an investigation of

employee abuse, Abbey said, including how to correctly create a report about the investigation.

District officials have said no report was created during the February investigation on Haglin and have not answered questions about the May probe.

When The Gazette first examined records on Monday, Aug. 1, O'Connell's last training was dated in 2004, Dolezal's in 2006 and Cirivello's in 2007.

By Friday, Dolezal and O'Connell had been recertified, which takes about two hours online. Kennedy High Principal Jason Klein also completed the training this past week.

At the time of the Haglin investigations, the only district employee with current certification was Travis Wolf, a fourth-grade teacher at Cleveland Elementary, records show.

Ensuring investigators have current certification, Abbey said, is the responsibility of school district officials.

"Given the seriousness of the potentiality of injuries (against a student) that are sustained for these issues that would require Level One investigations, it's very important that these people are knowledgeable about these issues," Abbey said.

Haglin is out on \$6,500 bail, awaiting trial.

The Gazette: Donald Trump says his campaign 'has never been stronger' in Des Moines rally

GOP candidate goes on offense against Hillary Clinton

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump insisted his 2016 campaign "has never been stronger," pointing to an exuberant crowd of 3,000 Iowans Friday who cheered his slams on rival Hillary Clinton and chanted support for his get-tough approach for restoring American greatness.

Responding to GOP calls for him to refocus his message on Clinton after recent campaign missteps, Trump peppered his hourlong town hall remarks by calling his Democratic opponent "the queen of corruption" and "a dangerous liar" who he said "lacks the judgment, temperament and moral character" to lead the country for four years on the heels of Barack Obama's "terrible job" as president.

Read more: Iowans protest "reckless" Trump in Des Moines

"I can tell you this," Trump told the crowd, "if Hillary Clinton becomes president, you will have terrorism, you will have problems; you will have really, in my opinion, the destruction of this country from within. Believe me."

Supporters at times chanted "lock her up" and "USA" during Trump's critique of Clinton's foreign policy history, her immigration views and her jobs plan while pledging to restore law and order in America, keep out undocumented immigrants and potential terrorist infiltrators, and strengthen the U.S. position in international alliances and trade negotiations.

Trump's second trip to Iowa is as many weeks came amid reports that his GOP allies have been urging him refocus his campaign message on Clinton after a week of dropping opinion poll numbers, a public spat with the parents of a U.S. soldier killed in Iraq and disagreements with some fellow Republicans.

During an interview with the Cedar Rapids Gazette before taking the stage at the Iowa Events Center, Trump said the 2016 general-election race is just in the beginning stages and talk of turmoil and interventions "put out by the mainstream media" has been "ridiculous."

“The campaign has never been stronger,” Trump told The Gazette.

“I think we’re going to do very well,” he added. “The crowds are tremendous. The enthusiasm is incredible, so I think we’re doing very well.”

Trump said he has “great support” within the Republican Party, but acknowledged “I think they really want to focus on her because she’s a very flawed candidate and people don’t like her.”

He attributed Clinton’s gains in battleground-state polling to the fact that she and supportive groups have been advertising heavily, and he expected to “turn it around” by making personal visits like Friday’s joint appearance with running mate, Indiana Gov. Mike Pence — and building a campaign war chest to launch his own ad campaign.

“Don’t forget she’s spent tremendous amounts, hundreds of millions of dollars as I understand it, on ads and we haven’t spent. We’re collecting a lot of money. We’re getting ready. We picked up \$82 million, much of it from small donors over the last four weeks. So I think we’re going to do very well,” he said. “We’re going to do some great ads, but we haven’t advertised yet and she’s spending well over \$100 million as I understand it.”

Iowa Democratic Party Chairwoman Andy McGuire issued a statement drawing a contrast between Trump’s stump speech and Clinton’s campaign of substance that included laying out a five-point plan to build an economy “that works for everyone — not just those at the top” with the largest U.S. investment in job creation since World War II.

“Donald Trump has insulted a gold star family, evaded questions about why he manufactures products overseas, and kicked a mother and her baby out of his rally,” McGuire noted.

“Hillary Clinton is offering real solutions to the issues and problems working families face on a daily basis,” she added. “Donald Trump continues to harness a message of hate that excludes minorities and celebrates intolerance.”

For his part, Trump said he loves coming to Iowa and felt he should have won the Feb. 1 Iowa caucuses, where he finished second to Texas Sen. Ted Cruz before going on to secure his party’s presidential nomination last month in Cleveland.

“I think we will win it this time,” Trump said during the interview, before later telling the town hall attendees he supports keeping Iowa in its leadoff position for the 2020 election cycle and adding “I hope you can get out on Nov. 8th and vote for Trump.”

Iowans got their first glimpse of Trump’s running mate, Indiana Gov. Mike Pence, since he won the vice presidential nomination — a job he accepted “in a heartbeat” last month. He introduced himself as “a Christian, a conservative and a Republican in that order.”

Pence drew loud cheers when he described Trump as a man who is “distinctly American — one “who never quits, who never backs down, who is a fighter and a winner” and has proved himself to be “a doer in a game usually reserved for talkers.”

The Gazette: Iowa State University cuts another seven ITS employees

This 'completes the reorganization'

AMES — As part of a reorganization of Iowa State University’s information technology services unit, another seven employees this week are being notified their positions are being eliminated, ISU

spokesman John McCarroll confirmed for The Gazette.

Those cuts bring the total eliminated positions to 30 and “completes the reorganization,” which also created eight new jobs, McCarroll said. All seven employees affected by this week’s announcement are “merit” workers represented by a union.

Of the 23 positions cut in May, 12 were union jobs and 11 were considered “professional and scientific” positions not covered by the union contract but by ISU policy requiring 90 days notice in cases of position elimination.

Because industry best practice advises removing cut IT workers’ system access, most of those P & S employees have been staying home on a paid nonworking status since being notified. Based on the 90-day notice period, they have until Aug. 23 to find another position on campus.

“If they don’t apply for and get hired for other jobs, they are laid off,” McCarroll has said.

Cutting merit employees is more complicated, as the union contract outlines a “bumping process” that allows eliminated workers with more seniority to bump newer workers out of their jobs. Those who are bumped can potentially bump others or look for open positions elsewhere on campus.

And that takes time. While waiting, 11 of the initial 12 eliminated merit employees spent weeks reporting to a room on campus they dubbed “Gitmo Iowa State.” Those employees in July were given an additional option of staying home on paid nonworking status after The Gazette reported their concerns — and they all took it.

Iowa State’s ITS unit employs about 175 people.

Jim Kurtenbach — named interim chief information officer in January 2015 and appointed permanently in July without a formal search — initiated the reorganization.

In a May email to ITS employees announcing the cuts, he said, “This is the first time in over 10 years — since the merger that formed ITS — that we have stepped back to review our business processes, to examine how technology has affected our workload and workforce needs to identify redundancies.”

Through July 1 — covering 27 work days in May and June — ISU had paid \$126,234 to nonworking employees as part of the restructuring, according to McCarroll. The university has not provided an updated figure.

Danny Homan — president of AFSCME Council 61, which represents the unionized workers — said his organization is upset with the way Iowa State has handled the restructuring, calling it “privatization at its worst.”

He accused the institution of using contracted workers to perform duties of cut employees.

“They are doing the work our employees used to do, and we believe that’s inappropriate,” Homan has told The Gazette.

He said the issue could eventually end up in a grievance or litigation.

LEE: Iowa State Fair's gun ban to remain unchanged

Committee unlikely to take action, leaves matter up to legislature

The Iowa State Fair’s gun ban will remain unchanged unless lawmakers change state law, leaders of a

state panel said Friday after a hearing on the subject.

The committee of state legislators that oversees the implementation and operation of state laws and rules on Friday reviewed the State Fair's policy of banning weapons for attendees.

Leaders said the committee will not implement rules changes that would allow certified individuals to carry weapons during the state fair. Those leaders said such changes would have to be made by the full Iowa Legislature.

"There's a rule by the fair board. We didn't bring it up. It's not ours," said Iowa Sen. Wally Horn, D-Cedar Rapids, chairman of the Legislature's Administrative Rules Review Committee. "It's a fair board (rule). As far as I know, we will not consider the fair board rule one way or the other. It is a fair board rule."

The committee's vice chair, Rep. Dawn Pettengill, R-Mount Auburn, had the rule review added to the committee's agenda at the behest of a member of the public, she said.

Pettengill said the review was necessary because it appears to conflict with state law, especially after the 2011 change that made it easier for residents to obtain a permit to carry weapons in public.

"The reason we're having the review is because it is in opposition to the law. So this committee, our function is to make sure that the rules match the law," Pettengill said during the committee meeting. "Anybody who is not an attorney can look at the rule and look at the law and say it doesn't match. So that's our function."

Pettengill said after the meeting however that the rules committee is unlikely to take any action, and that the matter will be up to the legislature.

Roughly a handful of members of the public came to the committee meeting to speak on the issue. Most opposed the possibility of changing State Fair rules to allow for certified individuals to carry weapons during the fair.

Richard Rogers, a board member for the Iowa Firearms Coalition, said during the hearing that the organization believes permitted residents should be able to carry weapons during the fair. Rogers said after the meeting the group will continue to seek a more open policy through changes to state law.

"We expect to pursue a legislative resolution to this to be made more permanent and more fitting," Rogers said. "This has been an objective of ours for a long time, but it wasn't the highest priority. We've been waiting for the right time."

Rep. Bruce Hunter, D-Des Moines, said changing the policy to allow individuals to carry weapons during the fair would be dangerous due to the large number of attendees and the sale of alcohol on the grounds.

"So you very well could be drunk, walking around the fair with a gun," Hunter said.

The Gazette: Iowa farmers slash spending as crop prices languish

Production expenses fall, feed largest single cost

With corn and soybeans prices continuing to languish at low levels, Iowa farmers slashed their capital spending in 2015, according to new data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service.



Farmers spent \$610 million in 2015 for tractors and self-propelled machinery, down 34 percent from \$920 million in 2014. Spending on farm improvements fell 31 percent to \$880 million last year from \$1.3 billion in 2014.

Deere and Kinze have felt the impact of lower farm implement purchases. Both companies have reduced their payrolls through layoffs as sales have declined in recent years.

Truck and auto purchases by Iowa farmers were down 30 percent to \$210 million in 2015 from \$300 million in 2014, and miscellaneous capital expenses dropped 25 percent to \$30 million in 2015 from \$40 million the previous year.

Crop input expenditures also were lower, as seed and plant purchases dropped 8 percent to \$2.01 billion in 2015 from \$2.2 billion the prior year. Agricultural chemical spending fell 8 percent to \$990 million in 2015 from \$1.1 billion a year earlier, and spending on fertilizers, lime, and soil conditioners was down 11 percent from \$2.3 billion last year to \$2.04 billion in 2014.

Iowa farmers spent less on total crop production expenditures — \$27.8 billion in 2015, down 13 percent from \$31.9 billion the previous year.

Feed expense, which fell 16 percent from \$6.2 billion 2014 to \$5.19 billion, represented the largest single production expense for Iowa farmers in 2015, accounting for 19 percent of the total. Livestock and poultry purchases, which fell 7 percent from \$5.5 billion in 2014 to \$5.12 billion last year, were the second-largest expense and accounted for 18 percent of total expenditures.

Farmland rent expense fell 5 percent to \$3.97 billion last year from \$4.2 billion in 2014, and accounted for 14 percent of the total.

The Gazette: Grassley agrees to two debates with rival Judge

Incumbent Republican U.S. Sen. Chuck Grassley announced Friday he has accepted invitations to participate in two face-to-face debates with challenger Patty Judge, a Democrat who in June had challenged him to four debates.

Grassley campaign manager Robert Haus issued a statement saying the Grassley Committee has accepted invitations to debates hosted by Iowa Public Television and WHO Radio. He said the debates will reach audiences statewide in Iowa and include broadcast, print and digital formats, “maximizing the contribution of their debate formats” to Iowa voters who will cast ballots in the November general election.

“Sen. Grassley looks forward to these debate opportunities. That is why he has always debated opponents in each of his past campaigns,” Haus said.

“In addition to being one of most accessible and open members of the U.S. Senate ever to serve, Sen. Grassley continues to demonstrate his commitment to responding to media questions, communicating with Iowans how he’s working for them, and participating in campaign debates,” Haus added. “This stands in sharp contrast to his opponent this fall.”

Previously, Judge — a former lieutenant governor, secretary of agriculture and state senator — challenged the six-term GOP incumbent to four, live televised debates heading up to the Nov. 8 balloting, saying the two major-party candidates should hold televised debates in the state’s four largest media markets based in Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Sioux City and Davenport. She also proposed a radio debate.

At that time, Judge’s campaign indicated the Democratic challenger already had received and accepted

an invitation from KCCI-TV and the Des Moines Register to participate in a general-election debate.

On Friday, Judge's campaign manager Joe Fox issued a statement saying the two camps had "a constructive initial discussion" aimed at setting a debate schedule agreeable to both candidates. He said the two campaigns plan to have further conversations in hopes of announcing a final schedule next week.

"Patty Judge continues to believe that at least four televised debates — at least one each in Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Davenport, and Sioux City — in front of Iowa voters is the fair and respectful way for both candidates to convey their priorities for the entire state," Fox said in his statement. "All Iowans deserve the opportunity to be engaged with this election in order to make a truly informed choice in November."

The Gazette: Voters could decide \$40 million Linn County water and lands bond

If ultimately approved, money would go to help water quality, habits and trails

Linn County voters could be asked to weigh in this fall on issuing up to \$40 million in bond debt over two decades to help the county's waters, trails and wildlife habitats.

On Monday, the Linn County Board of Supervisors is scheduled to discuss a proposed referendum that would put the question before voters on the Nov. 8 general election ballot.

The board will not vote on the ballot question during Monday's work session, but could during its formal meeting Wednesday.

The bond sales, if approved by at least 60 percent of the voters on that question, would raise funds "for the purposes of protecting sources of drinking water and the water quality of rivers and streams, including the Cedar and its tributaries," a draft of the resolution states.

The bond proceeds also would be used to provide natural flood storage to reduce flooding, to improve parks, provide biking and walking trails and protect and acquire wildlife and natural areas.

The Linn County Conservation Board approved the idea during its July 25 meeting and forwarded a draft resolution to the Board of Supervisors for action.

Documents show that the national non-profit organization Trust for Public Lands commissioned a public opinion survey of Linn County voters in May that found public support for such a referendum.

According to the draft resolution, a feasibility study in April — also conducted by the Trust for Public Lands, at its own expense — found that a \$40 million, 20-year general obligation bond would cost the average Linn County homeowner about \$27 a year.

In 2008 in Johnson County, a similar conservation bond issue but of half the size — \$20 million — won approval of about 61 percent of voters there.

On the other hand, more recently, voters in Cedar Rapids handily turned down in 2015 a proposed levy to help the local libraries.

That levy would have added about \$23 a year to the property taxes of the owner of a \$150,000 home. Nearly 55 percent of voters considering the issue turned it down.

The Gazette: Linn County floats a water quality plan

Maybe you've noticed our lawmakers and governor are treading water when it comes to figuring out how to raise new bucks for protecting and cleaning up the state's impaired rivers and streams. It's been in all the papers.

I may have mentioned it once. Maybe twice.

But in November, Linn County voters will have a chance to show the Statehouse crowd how it's done.

This week, the Linn County Board of Supervisors is set to approve a request by the county's Conservation Board to put a 20-year, \$40 million bond issuance on the Nov. 8 ballot. More than half the money raised would be spent on water quality improvement and land protection projects, with smaller shares for park improvements and trails.

The property tax increase needed to pay back the debt would cost the owner of a home with the county's median assessed value of \$142,300 roughly \$27 annually. Or \$2.25 monthly.

The bond issue, dubbed Linn County's Water and Land Legacy, needs support from 60 percent of voters to pass. Supervisors will discuss the proposal Monday, with a vote Wednesday that could put it on the ballot.

"For a cup of coffee per month, we can do something about water quality and future flooding that isn't just throwing up a wall," said Supervisor Brent Oleson. "We can make our contribution here. For that price, I think people will be receptive, if we make the case right."

That \$40 million, supporters contend, could be leveraged to draw much more funding from other government agencies, conservation groups and the private sector. It could also be used as a local match for future bucks from the state's Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust fund, if lawmakers ever get around to filling the fund.

"This \$40 million could be \$120 million, \$180 million," Oleson said.

The funds would be controlled by the conservation board, with supervisor review.

"It could be wetland development, it could be easements along the river, could be land acquisitions along the river, stream bank protection," said Dennis Goemaat, deputy director of the board.

Backers stress the kind of land acquisition they're talking about would involve land along the Cedar River, its tributaries and other waterways with low farming or development value. In many cases, conservation easements could be used, where landowners retain ownership while agreeing to curtail use or development and allow conservation measures.

So nobody's talking about a land grab. What they would like to grab, however, is floodwater, holding it in expanded or enhanced wetlands upstream before it makes its way into Palo, Cedar Rapids and other communities. Wetlands would be a major focus of the initiative. While Cedar Rapids builds its walls and levees, the county can do its part by improving the watershed's ability to absorb runoff upstream.

Backers say the ballot measure is the product of two years' worth of study and public engagement as the Conservation Board considered how best to cover future environmental protection and outdoor recreation needs. A feasibility study conducted by The Trust for Public Land concluded that a bond issuance would be the best way to provide funding.

The trust also commissioned a poll of 400 county voters by John Wilson Research, which found support above the 60 percent threshold for such a measure. Uses for the money, protecting drinking water, protecting the Cedar River and other waterways, creating wildlife habitat and holding floodwater

upstream all scored support in excess of 85 percent.

A good example of how bond proceeds could be used to leverage partnerships can be found on Buffalo Creek at Coggon. That's where country conservation, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are removing much of a low-head dam dating back to the 1960s, mitigating a safety hazard and improving the creek's fish habitat.

In Morgan Creek Park, the county is partnering with the Nature Conservancy to restore "oxbows," or old cut off stream channels that hold water from the main channel and provide wildlife habitat.

"This is just an example of what could be replicated 100 times," Oleson said.

Linn County has a AAA bond rating, which wouldn't be affected by this bond issue. The county has plenty of bonding capacity, and interest rates are low.

But no tax increase is a slam dunk, even for the right reasons. Ask the Cedar Rapids Public Library. The electoral scrap yard is filled with well-intentioned ballot measures.

And 60 percent is a very tall order. In 2010, 57 percent of county voters supported creation of the constitutional Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust fund. This November, that won't be enough.

But the Linn County proposal, making generational investments in measures to improve water quality, protect lands and mitigate flooding, isn't a typical plea for more taxes. Along with Cedar Rapids' watershed partnerships and its efforts to curtail stormwater runoff, Linn County voters have a chance to cement this region's leadership on water issues.

"Everybody uses water. And that's the main thing here," Oleson said. "Everybody knows Iowa has a water quality problem. And everybody knows that the Legislature and the governor can't seem to get on the same page.

"Here we have our local square, one of 99 squares in Iowa, where people are coming together," he said.

The Gazette Editorial: Lawmakers must address Iowa's livestock laws

Iowa environmental regulators think it's a bad idea to build a confinement operation for 2,499 hogs in Allamakee County on steep terrain atop shallow, porous bedrock and overlooking two trout streams.

"A manure spill or leak at this site would have the potential to do great environmental damage to the ground water and surface water," Department of Natural Resources Specialist Tom McCarthy wrote in a letter to an executive with Reicks View Farms, which is building the confinement.

McCarthy thinks the project is a bad idea. So does DNR Director Chuck Gipp. Neighbors are opposed, as are environmental experts. But thanks to Iowa's porous laws regulating large livestock operations, they all must stand by and watch the project proceed. Only Reicks can stop it now.

State law requires confinement projects designed to hold more than 2,500 hogs to obtain a construction permit evaluated by state regulators. County officials and residents also get a chance to weigh in. Facilities of that size can't be built within 1,875 feet of a residence, school or church, or within 2,500 feet of a park or public area. So when the Reicks originally proposed a much larger facility, state officials rejected it.

But now Reicks is planning a facility just one hog below 2,500, so no such permission is needed. The

separation distance drops to 1,250 feet. Local officials have no role.

These standards, passed by the Legislature in 2002, were intended to better protect lowans and the environment against potential problems posed by large concentrations of livestock. Now, they're little more than nuisance traffic cones producers can easily bypass. That's not shocking, considering livestock interests were given a big role in writing those laws, largely behind closed doors.

We certainly understand the value of Iowa's livestock industry, and its importance. We also get the need to strike a regulatory balance that's not overly burdensome.

But when leaders and experts we depend upon to protect our water, air and land from damage are powerless to stop a project they see as a threat, those laws must change. The Legislature must come up with better, smarter protocols for evaluating livestock projects, and with safeguards empowering regulators and local officials.

It needs to be a legislative priority in 2017. What happened in Allamakee County must not be repeated.

QC TIMES: Environmental excellence honored

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Alcoa Davenport Works was one of 22 organizations, business and communities recognized by Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad with the annual Governor's Environmental Excellence awards.

Alcoa was honored for the results of its steam replacement project in the category of Renewable Energy-Energy Efficiency.

The steam replacement project was a \$30 million investment that switched the plant from steam generated by the coal-fired boilers at the Mid-American Riverside Generating Station to Alcoa-owned natural gas boilers. The switch reduced carbon dioxide emissions by 69 percent and energy use by 43 percent. That saves Alcoa nearly \$500,000 per month.

"This is a real win-win by reducing our impact on the environment and delivering savings to the bottom line," said Rob Woodall, Alcoa's manufacturing director, Davenport Works & Satellites.

"We are committed to doing the right thing for the environment and our business," Woodall said. "We also appreciate the ability to continue working with the IDNR (Iowa Department of Natural Resources) on other projects and issues that make good sense for business and the state."

Other Quad-City area efforts receiving recognition are:

\*Davenport Public Works Department, Special Recognition in Habitat Restoration.

\*Weikert Iron and Metal Recycling, Muscatine, Overall Environmental Excellence.

\*City of Clinton, Special Recognition in Water Quality.

"The vision and initiatives undertaken by the award recipients to benefit Iowa's citizens both economically and environmentally are recognized and celebrated through these awards," Branstad said.

"They showcase the commitment being made to make Iowa a better state now and into the future."

QC TIMES Editorial: Branstad, Ernst follow Trump into the abyss

Quad-City Times editorial board

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Such unabashed cowardice. More is expected from the likes of Gov. Terry Branstad and U.S. Sen Joni Ernst, who continue binding themselves to Donald Trump's campaign of senseless hate and brimstone.

Republican presidential candidate Trump last week took to burning down all that remained of traditional GOP sacred cows. A Gold Star family -- the Kahns -- what have they sacrificed, Trump questioned. On Tuesday, the man even booted a crying infant from a rally.

Kissing babies might not be Trump's style. But sicking security on one would be political suicide in most election years.

Now, you might think that Iowa's Republican elite would have some real problems with Trump's most recent sojourn into political suicide. At least, you'd think so based on their past rhetoric. Some mythical lack of patriotism among Democrats Hillary Clinton and President Barack Obama is the entire basis for Ernst's support for Trump.

Budgetary maneuvers and questionable calls in the Middle East: That's anti-military, says Ernst. But blasting that Muslim family whose son died in a Iraq during George W. Bush's administration: We wouldn't want to come down too hard on Trump now, would we?

Late last month, Trump's hate circus came to town. And side-show performers Branstad, Ernst and state Republican Chairman Jeff Kaufmann piled praise on the GOP's narcissistic standard bearer. He's pro-business, Branstad lauded. Everyone should be knocking on doors for him, Kaufmann screamed so loud that his voice cracked. And yes, Ernst recycled her nonsensical allegations of a troop-hating Democratic president and former secretary of State.

You'd think Obama and Clinton had spat on headstones in Arlington National Cemetery.

To be fair, Iowa's Trump triplets weren't completely silent when Trump, yet again, decided to lambaste anyone who challenged him. Attacking the Kahns was a bad political move, Branstad advised. Gold Star families should be "honored," parroted the others.

Hardly a repudiation. In some respects, it was nothing but political advice. Imagine if Clinton had done something similar. Convene the investigatory congressional committee. ASAP.

Iowa Republicans know they've tied themselves to a foundering ship that could sink careers. They took to local town halls and held ceremonies for military veterans, which, in context, ring hollow. No amount of damage control can wash off the Trump stain. Only a full-throated rebuke of Trump's entire campaign will wash it clean.

Donald Trump is a spoiled, self-absorbed bully with a serious Messiah complex. But don't count on Iowa's Republican elite to choose country over party, even if it means unyielding allegiance to a threat that makes Joe McCarthy look tame. He shamed women for their periods. Nothing. He stoked racial and religious prejudice. They sat on their hands. He tore down every basic tenet of post-Reagan Republicanism. They went on tour promoting his candidacy. And this is for a man who, last week, declined to return the favor and support the re-election bids of Speaker Paul Ryan and Sen. John McCain, a one-time prisoner of war with the courage to label Trump the demagogue he is.

Trump, in one fell swoop, has exposed the feckless pretense that's at the core of Iowa's GOP. It's a party so married with first-in-the-nation status that contradicting national GOP bosses qualifies as heresy. It's a cadre that has become disturbingly comfortable with the know-nothing wing that now runs the Party of Lincoln. It's a legion that hitched itself, for better or worse, to a man with no respect for the basic rule of law.

Trump's attack on the Kahn family was the last straw for many Republicans who've declared Trump "unfit" for the presidency. Maybe Reps. Richard Hanna, R-New York, and Adam Kinzinger, R-Illinois, recognized the danger allegiance to Trump poses to a career before denouncing him. Maybe Jeb Bush's top adviser, Sally Bradshaw, decided to jump ship before things got worse. Maybe the slew of elected Republicans in Illinois that avoided Trump since the outset tout the gift of precognition.

Or, just maybe, Iowa's top Republicans don't mean a damn word they say about God, country or patriotism.

QC TIMES Guest view: Work continues to enfranchise Iowa's felons

Bonnie Pitz

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The League of Women Voters of Iowa (LWVIA) works diligently each year to register voters and provide candidate forums and VOTE411.org information to give citizens the information they need to cast an informed vote that counts.

Even as we celebrate the rights we have as citizens of Iowa, there are 56,000 Iowa citizens who are not eligible to vote, including 1 in 5 African-Americans. As we register voters each year, we often meet individuals who would like to register, but cannot because of a felony conviction.

These citizens are permanently blocked from voting in Iowa, even if they have served their time and probation. Across the country, most states automatically restore voting rights to all citizens completing sentences for past criminal convictions. Only Florida, Kentucky and Iowa permanently deny voting rights for life for everyone with a felony in their past.

The league was very disappointed by Iowa Supreme Court's narrow 4-3 decision in Griffin vs. Pate issued on July 1. The Iowa American Civil Liberties Union took up the case because Kelli Jo Griffin, a Montrose resident and mother of four, was convicted of a nonviolent offense in 2008. Kelli was told by her defense attorney at the time that her voting rights would be restored after she completed probation. This was true back in 2008, but Gov. Terry Branstad rescinded this rule in 2011 on his first day back in office. The change made Kelli and all other Iowa citizens with a felony conviction ineligible to vote for life.

There is a way to get voting rights back in Iowa, but the process is arduous. The governor reviews applications for voting rights restoration on a case-by-case basis. Applying costs time and money in acquiring a criminal history check and other information. The state can take up to six months to review an individual's application. Between 2011 and 2014, an estimated 14,500 people completed their sentence for a felony in Iowa; of that number, only 64 had their voting rights restored by Gov. Branstad.

It is important to remember the 56,000 disenfranchised individuals are raising families, working, paying taxes and trying hard to be reintegrated into society. We must be mindful of the consequences our law has for families and extended families. Doesn't it make sense that those who have paid their debt to society should be reintegrated in the most positive way so they can participate fully in the election

process and demonstrate that involvement to their children?

After all, voting is an activity we do as a family and as a community. Lifetime disenfranchisement means in Iowa's African-American communities, nearly a quarter of adults and many parents are deprived a say in policies affecting schools, taxes, policing and everything else affecting their family and community. It means that we are creating a permanent underclass in our state that our officials are free to disregard.

We would also be wise to think in terms of a "family-focused citizenship." Children do not learn citizenship only in a school setting but by the actions and beliefs of their families. Why not have parents act as role models and demonstrate the importance of voting and citizenship to their kids? We should give them the chance to discuss political views and their part in the political process and ultimately vote. We should be encouraging maximum participation in our political process.

That is why the League of Women Voters of Iowa provided an amicus brief in support of Kelli Jo Griffin in Griffin vs. Pate. The brief set out the case for voting rights restoration as a way to strengthen Iowa's democracy, while at the same time, improving the re-entry process for citizens leaving prison and returning to their families and communities.

The league is undeterred by the Iowa Supreme Court's decision, and we are committed to finding a way to restore voting rights to everyone living and working in our communities, either through a constitutional amendment or state law change.

RI: Jefferson casino marks its first year of operation

The Wild Rose Casino in Jefferson marked its first year of operation Friday. It's the last casino to be built on a new site in Iowa that didn't replace an existing casino or riverboat.

The developer of the casino, Gary Kirke, says he had never thought about building in the Greene County town until a supporter brought in a map. Kirke says he saw what he calls a donut hole the current casinos weren't covering and decided it would work to build one there.

"And from that day on the whole Jefferson and Greene County and the people have been wonderful to deal with. They went back an organized and got the largest first vote referendum passed in the state of Iowa — over 75 percent of the people voted for it," Kirke says. He says people bought into the idea that the casino could bring good things.

"That town, just like when we did Emmetsburg, needed a lift. And it has really sparked a lot of economic development in that town already," Kirke says. Figures from the casino show nearly 500,000 people have visited the casino, while 25,000 people have attended shows, concerts, meetings and conventions.

Not everyone backed the idea of a new casino in the town, but Kirke says he's seen few negatives for the community. "You know people talk about casinos bringing in problem gamblers — the state pretty much covers that — they talked about how it will increase the crime rate and bring in strip clubs and things like that," according to Kirke. "You hear everything, but quite frankly that's not happened there. We've had some instances there, but not out of the normal."

He says contributions to the casino's non-profit organization have benefited the city, schools, community projects and surrounding counties. Kirke says the state is now almost saturated with casinos, with the only area he sees as being underserved is central Iowa in what's called the Golden Circle area around Des Moines. He says that state's gambling industry could face a threat from across the border.



“Nebraska is seriously considering gaming and it has gone as far as it has ever gone before,” Kirke explains. “They’re seeing \$500 million a year going across the river there, and one of these days I think they are going to wake up.” He says if Nebraska approves gambling, Iowa will have to react.

RI: Trump says Clinton’s diplomacy sent world ‘into flames’

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump and his running mate, Mike Pence, rallied with nearly 2,000 people in downtown Des Moines this afternoon.

Trump called his Democratic rival Hillary Clinton the “queen of corruption” and accused her of being a “weak” secretary of state.

“After Hillary Clinton, the world went up in flames,” Trump said. “...This is the legacy of Hillary Clinton. It’s called death, destruction, chaos and weakness.”

Trump gave a litany of instances in which he argued Clinton’s influence had made countries like Syria and Libya worse. He specifically used the word “unfit.” It’s a word Clinton and her allies have been using frequently as they describe Trump as being unsuitable for the Oval Office.

Trump also railed about the news coverage he’s been getting.

“It’s so disgusting what’s going on with the media,” Trump said, to supportive cheers from the crowd. “That’s why we have to win.”

Trump again promised Iowans would be first to vote in the 2020 election if he’s president, but – as he did last week in eastern Iowa — Trump said he wasn’t enamored with the Caucus process itself.

His 61-minute speech this afternoon concluded with a request.

“Let me just tell you: I hope you can get out on November 8th and vote for Trump,” the Republican presidential nominee said to loud cheers.

Iowa is considered one of the few truly toss-up states in the General Election.

Iowa Democratic Party chairwoman Andy McGuire issued a written statement, saying Americans are faced with a clear “contrast” this November.

“Iowans care about issues like equal pay for equal work, raising the minimum wage and college affordability,” McGuire said. “Hillary Clinton is the only candidate who is talking about these issues and has a plan to improve the lives of everyday Iowans.”

Governor Terry Branstad, Lieutenant Governor Kim Reynolds and former Iowa Congressman Greg Ganske spoke to the crowd before Trump along with an entourage of staff, security and national media arrived. Neither of Iowa’s U.S. Senators — Republicans Joni Ernst and Chuck Grassley — attended today’s rally, although Ernst did go to a Trump event in eastern Iowa last week.

Trump’s appearance today was in the third congressional district. Congressman David Young, the Republican who represents the area, was not present.

RI: Bush backer Ganske urges Iowa crowd to donate to Trump

A crowd of nearly 1800 has gathered in downtown Des Moines this afternoon to rally with Republican

presidential nominee Donald Trump and his running mate, Mike Pence.

Three well-known Iowa Republicans spoke to the crowd before Trump arrived.

Former Iowa Congressman Greg Gankse of Des Moines endorsed Jeb Bush before Iowa's February 1 Caucuses.

"But you know, Donald Trump beat him fair and square and he's our nominee," Ganske said, to cheers.

Ganske told the crowd he's donated to the Trump campaign twice and Ganske urged Trump's supporters at the rally to do the same.

Governor Terry Branstad's son, Eric, is Trump's state director and the governor spoke briefly to the crowd. Branstad accused Hillary Clinton's staff of considering a California law that Branstad said would curtail use of corn-based ethanol.

"That causes me great concern because I was governor during the Farm Crisis and I don't want to go back to another Farm Crisis induced by the bad policies of a Democratic administration," said Branstad, who started his first run as governor in January of 1983.

A spokeswoman for the Clinton campaign responded to Branstad, saying Clinton is "committed to getting the Renewable Fuels Standard "back on track."

"While we have engaged a wide range of stakeholders and experts throughout the campaign on biofuels and other issues," Clinton spokeswoman Kate Waters said, "we do not support replacing the RFS with a national low-carbon fuel standard."

Lieutenant Governor Kim Reynolds was the third speaker to appear in the "pre-rally" program at the Trump event. She never said the name "Donald Trump" — but Reynolds did urge the crowd to get behind the "Trump-Pence" ticket.

"We need to show not only Iowa but the nation that momentum is on our side," Reynolds said. "And we did that in the caucuses and the primaries where we saw more Iowans and Americans across this nation show up to vote, where we saw new people coming into our party because they are sick and tired of the direction this country is going in and we're going to stand up and we're going to make a difference."

Both Reynolds and Branstad hammered Hillary Clinton. The crowd responded to Branstad with the chant: "Lock her up!" It's a chant that originated at Trump's nominating convention in Cleveland.

A sheriff's deputy estimated the crowd today in the Hy-Vee Hall in downtown Des Moines at between 1600 and 1800.

RI: King rejects Obama explanation, asserts U.S. paid ransom for Iranian hostages

Iowa Congressman Steve King is questioning President Obama's assertion that the U.S. does not pay ransom for the release of Iranian hostages.

This week the Wall Street Journal reported \$400 million of a settlement with Iran was delivered, in cash, by plane to Iran, around the time Iran released four American prisoners.

"I actually listened to the president's seven minutes of trying to describe why he wasn't trying to pay ransom and it was a painful thing to listen to and he stretched it out a long, long time — and truthfully it was boring," King says. "But I don't know how anybody could believe that."

King says it appears to him Obama paid \$100 million in ransom per hostage.

"It walks and talks like a chicken," King says, "and it is a chicken."

President Obama yesterday said it "defies logic" to call the payment ransom. Obama Administration officials say the payment settled a decades-long dispute negotiated by an international court at The Hague and the timing was coincidental. King says it was no coincidence.

"This story is a bigger fish story than Hillary's story that it was the video that caused the fight at Benghazi. I don't know how anybody can seriously accept that and the president tells us with a straight face: 'Well, they're not connected,'" King says. "Of course they're connected."

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump has criticized the Obama Administration for sending "bushels and bushels" of cash to Iran. Trump is scheduled to campaign in Des Moines later this afternoon. Rally-goers began lining up this morning, hours before the doors opened at 1:30. Trump, along with his running mate Mike Pence, are scheduled to start speaking to the crowd at 3 p.m.

Hillary Clinton's campaign held a news conference outside the venue late this morning to criticize Trump for opposing a minimum wage increase.

RI: Branstad lobbied Prestage to consider another Iowa location

Governor Terry Branstad says he's pleased Prestage Farms chose another Iowa location after the City Council in Mason City deadlocked on a development agreement for the proposed pork processing facility.

"There was a lot of other states wanted 'em — South Dakota, Nebraska, Wisconsin," Branstad says. "Fortunately, we had a lot of other communities in Iowa that wanted it. I'm glad it's going to be here."

Prestage announced plans a month ago to put the \$240 million facility five miles south of Eagle Grove. Branstad says it wasn't a given that Prestage was going to stick with a location in Iowa as their next choice.

"It's going to be jobs for Iowans here in north Iowa, but it's also a market for our independent pork producers, so that's a good thing and we're pleased that they've chosen to locate in Wright County," Branstad says. "It looks like everything is going forward on that."

Wright County is a perfect fit for the facility, according to Branstad.

"Wright County is a county that has a lot of pork production. It's right in the heart of our corn-growing area," Branstad says, "and, of course, corn and soybeans are the food that goes into the pork."

Branstad lobbied Prestage Farms to consider other sites in Iowa when the deal in Mason City fell through.

"This is a family-owned company. I was impressed by them," Branstad says. "...I'm glad they chose Wright County and I know the Wright County people are excited about it as well."

On Monday, the Wright County Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing on a proposed urban renewal plan. The board has scheduled to vote on an economic development agreement with the company at its August 22 meeting.

## POLITICO: Inside the swing-state trench warfare

Donald Trump is taking an interest in the most important counties in the key battleground states. Democrats have been methodically working those places for months.

By DARREN SAMUELSON, KATIE GLUECK, KYLE CHENEY and DANIEL STRAUSS

For Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, their strategies for winning in November are compounded by a significant obstacle: They've already lost once in some of the most important counties in this election's most important swing states.

These battlegrounds — spread across the 11 battleground states from Jefferson County in Colorado to Brown County in Wisconsin to Scott County in Iowa — have become epicenters of the 2016 campaign. Both campaigns know it too, and that's why the candidates and their surrogates have been scrambling to crisscross the country for personal visits to these places as the White House race enters a final lap.

Story Continued Below

Close to 50 interviews with GOP and Democratic party chairs from 25 of the most vital counties on the map — counties that are poised to play a major role in determining their state's outcome either because of their size or voting history — revealed Trump himself is on his own mission to learn as much as he can from the local officials who know their voters the best.

And the Clinton campaign is methodically working to lock down these pivotal places by leveraging the family's longtime relationships with local officials and activating a field organization that's far more extensive than the ad hoc, seat-of-the-pants effort on the GOP side.

Trump's interest in hyper-local intelligence gathering stands in sharp contrast to his campaign's public positioning. Publicly, the GOP nominee feuds with his party's biggest national stars and dismisses the standard strategic and tactical approaches utilized by his top-of-the-ticket predecessors. What organization and outreach he has is provided by the Republican National Committee and state parties.

But several GOP leaders on the ground told POLITICO that in private, Trump has shown an animated and personal interest in what makes their hometowns tick and a bottom-line focus on what it would take to win there. They recounted brief but intense backstage conversations once they're introduced to him as the leader of the county he's visiting.

"He looked me right in the eye and said you need to tell me what does it take to win in this county," Deborah Tamargo, the chairwoman of Florida's Hillsborough County GOP, recalled of a June conversation she had with Trump at the Tampa Convention Center.

While declining to go into specifics, Tamargo insisted she provided Trump with the crown jewels he'd need for winning what's widely seen as one of Florida's most important swing counties. "In political terms, that's like an hour," she said of her three-minute conversation with the then-presumptive Republican presidential nominee.

In Virginia, local GOP leaders say Trump's recent visits to some of the state's most critical battlegrounds have also included a heavy dose of the candidate's personal fact-finding inquiries. "He just stopped and said, 'We've got to win Loudoun. How do we win Loudoun?'" Will Estrada, the chairman for the Northern Virginia exurb, said of the encounter he had last week with Trump on the sidelines of a campaign rally.

Visiting Richmond, Virginia, in June for a rally and private fundraiser, Trump likewise pumped suburban Henrico County GOP chairman Eddie Whitlock for information.

"He immediately started firing off questions to me about what are the significant issues in Henrico. He knew it was important," Whitlock said, adding that he told Trump to stay laser-focused on jobs and security issues.

To win the White House, Trump is going to need all the local knowledge he can get from the 25 counties POLITICO identified as the general election's true battlegrounds. That's because the GOP nominee failed to win almost half of them during the primaries and caucuses earlier this year. Those losses include both Henrico and Loudoun counties in Virginia (to Marco Rubio); Ohio's Hamilton, Lake and Stark counties (all went for home-state Gov. John Kasich); Wisconsin's Brown and Racine counties (both voted for Ted Cruz) and Iowa's Scott and Polk counties (Rubio), among others. In Colorado, Republicans did not hold a presidential preference poll this year, but at the state's convention in April, it was Cruz, not Trump, who swept all of the delegates.

During the Democratic primary, Clinton also fell short in eight of the battleground counties against Bernie Sanders — including suburban Denver's Arapahoe and Jefferson counties, Green Bay's Brown County and Reno's Washoe County in Nevada. But she appears to have a far firmer grip in these counties. Many of the nearly two dozen Democratic chairs that POLITICO interviewed predicted Clinton will make up for any lackluster primary performances thanks to a polished data-savvy campaign infrastructure, personal visits from the candidate and her surrogates and deep roots with local community leaders dating back years to her husband's administration.

In Colorado, there are still small pockets of activists and voters who backed Sanders and won't get behind Clinton, according to the Democratic chairs from Jefferson and Arapahoe, two of the five most populous counties in the state. But they maintained that large numbers of the Vermont senator's supporters were also unifying around the nominee at a rapid pace since the party's convention last month in Philadelphia.

"The majority of the people we had involved that were big Bernie supporters are still very much involved, and are very much involved in electing Secretary Clinton," said Cheryl Cheney, the Democratic chair of Jefferson County.

As for their personal conversations with the Clintons, many laughed at Trump's approach of seeking out county GOP leaders for direct help on what it takes to win in their counties.

"They expect us to know this," Terrie Rizzo, the Democratic chair of Florida's Palm Beach County, said of the Clintons.

John Cordisco, the Democratic chairman of suburban Philadelphia's Bucks County, referenced his own long-standing connections to the Clintons, recalling details of a visit Bill Clinton made to the area in 2006 and the campaigning Vice President Joe Biden did with Arlen Specter when the Republican-turned Democratic senator from Pennsylvania switched parties. Earlier this year, Cordisco said he visited Clinton's Brooklyn headquarters for a sit-down with an aide overseeing Pennsylvania who sketched out the campaign's thinking on his county.

"The Clinton campaign is fairly active, we have a lot of interaction going on," he said. "There is constant follow-up. They have people calling people every day, calling more people. It's quite an active situation we have in the county at this point."

Both Clinton and Trump in recent weeks appear to have gotten the memo about the importance of committing to the trench warfare necessary in the battleground counties.

Clinton starts her week Monday in St. Petersburg, Fla., a visit that will draw crowds and media coverage from the neighboring battleground of Hillsborough County. Prior to that, along with her running mate Tim Kaine, Clinton traveled to Pittsburgh's Allegheny County on their post-convention bus tour. Last week, she made stops in the Denver and Las Vegas media markets.

As for Trump, since the Republican National Convention ended last month, he and running mate Mike Pence have been to 10 of the counties identified by POLITICO as among the most critical for winning the election. That includes stops just in the last week to Loudoun County in Virginia, Duval County in Florida, Iowa's Polk County, Wisconsin's Brown County and New Hampshire's Rockingham County.

And even when the Republican isn't making a direct visit to a battleground county he's also benefiting from a spillover effect, according to many local GOP officials. His prolific social media presence and the proliferation of live television feeds every time he speaks serves to amplify his reach — something that wasn't true of previous GOP nominees. Plus, many of the crowds at his rallies are traveling from the more critical parts of the swing states, and his events are also in areas that share media markets with prime electoral terrain.

Polk County GOP Chairman Will Rogers, for example, said Trump's visit to Des Moines — Iowa's biggest media market — last Friday would likely earn the Republican media attention all weekend across much of the state, competing pretty much just with the start of the Summer Olympics. Likewise, Trump's visit Monday to speak to the Detroit Economic Club, while not open to the public, will pick up eyeballs from the two nearby suburban counties of Macomb and Oakland that are seen as critical if a Republican presidential candidate is going to win Michigan for the first time since 1988.

There is other promising news for Trump at the county level. Many of the local GOP leaders who'd rather be working now on a general election campaign for Cruz or Rubio or Ben Carson said they've rallied behind the Trump ticket — if for no other reason than to do their duty for the party and the rest of the ticket that's to some degree reliant on his performance.

"The folks who understand the game...they're engaged, they're part of the team," said Don Ytterberg, the GOP chairman for Colorado's Jefferson County, explaining that dissatisfaction for Trump had largely fallen away since the Republican National Convention once it became clear Cruz wasn't going to snare the nomination.

"A lot of people had a favorite candidate, including myself," said Dave Majernik, a one-time Cruz backer who serves as vice chairman of the Allegheny County GOP in western Pennsylvania. "Now we've chosen the candidate, we want to unite behind that person so we can win."

Trump still has fences to mend on the local level, especially as he takes on prominent state leaders. Brian Murphy, the chairman of the Rockingham County GOP in New Hampshire, for example, said Trump continued to hurt his cause locally by taking on the state's GOP Sen. Kelly Ayotte, who's engaged in a tough re-election campaign. "I don't think it's cut well for him," he said, just prior to Trump's announcement Friday that he would indeed endorse Ayotte for re-election, along with Arizona Sen. John McCain and House Speaker Paul Ryan.

Hard feelings also remain among some Republicans in North Carolina's Wake County, a wealthy, well-educated community that includes part of the Research Triangle. Cruz trounced Trump in this once-competitive but increasingly Democratic county in the primary, and the Republican presidential candidate's campaign still hasn't reached out to the local GOP chair in what is the second-most populous county in the state.

"He's doing his own thing," John Bryant, the Republican chairman, said in an interview of Trump.

But Bryant said he'll still back Trump because he's the party nominee. "I'm a team player," he said. "Our organization here in Wake County is a team also. We're going to support the team."

POLITICO: National poll: Clinton, surging among women, leads Trump by 8

Hillary Clinton has opened an 8-point lead over Donald Trump after both parties' conventions, according

to a new national poll.

Powered by boosts in support from women, Catholics and the college-educated, Clinton leads the presidential race by 50 percent to 42 percent in the latest Washington Post/ABC News poll of registered voters — up from 4 percentage points in mid-July.

Among likely voters, Clinton bests Trump 51 to 44 percent. When Libertarian Gary Johnson and Green Party nominee Jill Stein are included, Clinton leads Trump 45 to 37 with registered voters, followed by 8 percent for Johnson and 4 percent for Stein.

Seventy-three percent of those surveyed, including 59 percent of Republicans, said they disapprove of Trump's recent feud with the Khans, parents of a Muslim-American Army captain killed in Iraq in 2004.

Clinton has opened a wide lead among women in particular — 58 percent to his 35 percent. Among college-educated women, she leads Trump by 19 percentage points, 57 percent to 38 percent.

Trump leads Clinton by 10 points among men, 51 percent to 41 percent. But Clinton is leading by 6 points among college-educated whites, a group typically won by Republicans. She also has picked up support among Catholics, a key swing vote in recent elections, 51 percent to 45 percent.

The poll also highlights Trump's struggles in consolidating the GOP behind his candidacy — he has the support of just 83 percent of Republicans, compared with 92 percent of Democrats for Clinton. Among Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents who backed Bernie Sanders in the Democratic primary, 86 percent now support Clinton; Trump, in contrast, has the backing of only 74 percent of Republicans and leaners who preferred another candidate in the GOP primary.

Clinton has also seen a modest uptick in favorability since the previous survey, moving from 42 percent to 48 percent. Her unfavorability rating, while still high, is now 50 percent, down from a peak of 55 percent in June.

The poll was conducted by landline phones and cellphones from Aug. 1-4 in English and Spanish, using a random national sample of 1,002 adults that included 815 registered voters. The margin of error is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points for the full sample, and plus or minus 4 percentage points for the registered voter sample.

POLITICO: Iran executes nuclear scientist reputed to have spied for U.S.

The strange case of Shahram Amiri launched during Hillary Clinton's tenure at State.

By NAHAL TOOSI

The Iranian government has executed a nuclear scientist who was believed to have cooperated with U.S. intelligence but who returned to Iran after claiming he had been abducted and tortured by the CIA.

The tale of Shahram Amiri was one of the stranger sagas to emerge from Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton's tenure as secretary of state, testing her diplomatic skills in highly sensitive circumstances. His death comes just over a year after Iran and the U.S. struck a deal aimed at reining in Iran's nuclear program, an agreement Clinton was instrumental in launching.

State-controlled Iranian media on Sunday confirmed Amiri's execution, quoting an Iranian judiciary spokesman as saying that Amiri "provided the enemy with vital information of the country." His family told the BBC his body had rope marks, indicating he had been hanged, apparently in the past week.

Amiri went missing in Saudi Arabia in May or June 2009 while on religious pilgrimage to Mecca. In the

following months, Iranian officials accused the U.S. of abducting him. The State Department claimed for months that it "had no information" on Amiri.

The Iranian resurfaced publicly on June 7, 2010, in a pair of Internet videos. In one, he claimed he'd been kidnapped by the CIA during his pilgrimage and was being held in Tucson, Arizona, where he had been subject to torture and psychological pressure. In the other, he claimed he was in the U.S. to further his education and was free and safe.

Amiri appeared in a third video, posted June 29, 2010, in which he said he'd escaped U.S. custody and had reached Virginia. Two weeks later, Amiri walked into the Pakistani Embassy in Washington, D.C., which houses an Iranian interests section, and said he wanted to return to Iran.

Clinton confirmed at that point, during a news conference, that Amiri had been present in the U.S., saying he arrived "of his own free will and he is free to go. These are decisions that are his alone to make."

When he did land in his native country on July 15, 2010, he was given a hero's welcome, and Iranian officials cast him as a double agent, claiming he had infiltrated U.S. intelligence and that Iran had the upper hand in an intelligence war. But soon after returning home, Amiri was taken into custody, presumably imprisoned because of his dalliance with the U.S.

The CIA and the State Department declined to comment for this story, and the White House said it had no immediate comment. But the U.S. was clearly embarrassed over the drama as it played out six years ago, not to mention unhappy about the public window it offered into the high-stakes spy battles between Washington and Tehran over the latter's nuclear program.

American officials at the time quickly went about trying to debunk Amiri's allegations, scoffing at claims that they had kidnapped and held Amiri against his will. (It was never quite clear how Amiri managed to record the videos, still available on YouTube, if he was being held a prisoner of the U.S.)

The U.S. officials told American news organizations that Amiri had provided intelligence on Iran's nuclear program for years from inside Iran, and that although he was not a major player in the country's nuclear apparatus, his information still proved useful. They said he had been paid some \$5 million for the information he provided.

As Amiri made his way across the U.S. to the Pakistani Embassy, Clinton's advisers fretted over how to react.

In an email published among the trove of messages originally on Clinton's private server, top Clinton adviser Jake Sullivan (who now has a top role in her presidential campaign) expressed concern about how Amiri's story would play in the media.

"The gentleman you have talked to [top State Department official] Bill Burns about has apparently gone to his country's interests section because he is unhappy with how much time it has taken to facilitate his departure," Sullivan wrote. "This could lead to problematic news stories in the next 24 hours. Will keep you posted."

Another email, written by energy envoy Richard Morningstar and sent days earlier, portrayed Amiri as having psychological problems.

"Per the subject we discussed, we have a diplomatic, 'psychological' issue, not a legal issue," Morningstar wrote. "Our friend has to be given a way out. We should recognize his concerns and frame it in terms of a misunderstanding with no malevolent intent and that we will make sure there is no recurrence. Our person won't be able to do anything anyway. If he has to leave, so be it."

At the time, there were some reports that Amiri, who was born in 1977, was worried about what would



happen to his family, especially his young son, whom he had left behind in Iran and who clearly were under the pressure of watchful Iranian authorities.

When he arrived back in Iran, he held his son, then age 7, in his arms as he faced a bank of microphones. He alleged that U.S. and Saudi officials were complicit in his kidnapping, that Israeli agents were involved in interrogating him, and that he'd been offered \$50 million to be resettled in Europe.

Amiri's case was one of several dramatic U.S.-Iran developments in 2010. That same year, President Barack Obama signed into law a new set of sanctions on the Islamic Republic, penalties that are believed to have helped push Iran toward the bargaining table a few years later.

Clinton left the Obama administration before the nuclear talks with Iran began in full force in 2013. But during her final year as secretary of state, she greenlighted secret bilateral talks with the Iranians — sending Sullivan as an envoy — that eventually led to the ultimate deal.

The nuclear deal, reached July 14, 2015, has led Iran to dismantle large parts of its nuclear program, which Tehran has always insisted was meant for peaceful purposes. The U.S. and other nations involved in the agreement have in turn cut back on their sanctions.

Suspensions remain strong on both sides, however. Iranian leaders have complained they are not getting sanctions relief fast enough, leading some in the West to worry that Tehran will back out of the deal.

Earlier this month, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei used Twitter to accuse the U.S. of violating the deal, saying it proved Iran "cannot negotiate in any issue with U.S. as a reliable party." He added: "Americans want to take everything & give nothing. Talks with US on regional issues is a lethal poison & they cannot be trusted in any issue."

In the days afterward, another flash point emerged when The Wall Street Journal reported details of how the U.S. shipped \$400 million in cash to Iran in mid-January, around the same time Iran released five Americans in its custody.

U.S. officials insist the payment was the first installment of a completely separate \$1.7 billion settlement the Obama administration reached with Iran over a decades-old financial dispute, and they point out that that agreement was publicly announced at the time of the prisoner release.

But the Journal's description of the cash transfer — in pallets of foreign currency — revived Republican allegations that the so-called separate financial settlement was really a ransom payment for Americans unjustly held by a rogue regime. GOP presidential nominee Donald Trump is among those who have attacked Clinton over the \$400 million transfer.

#### WSJ: Delta Air Lines Flights Grounded World-Wide on Computer Outage

The No. 2 U.S. carrier by traffic warns of large-scale cancellations after its systems went down "everywhere"

Delta Air Lines Inc. said Monday it has suffered a computer outage throughout its system and warned of "large-scale" cancellations after passengers were unable to check in and departures were grounded globally.

The No. 2 U.S. carrier by traffic said via Twitter that "our systems are down everywhere."

Delta said in a statement it had "experienced a computer outage that has impacted flights scheduled for this morning. Flights awaiting departure are currently delayed. Flights en route are operating normally."

A power outage occurred in Atlanta, where the carrier is based, at about 2: 30 a.m. local time. It affected the airline's computer system and operations world-wide, Delta said. "Large-scale cancellations are expected today," the company added.

The airline's shares were hit last week when the airline reported a sharper than expected drop in passenger unit revenue for July. Shares in Delta are down more than 25% this year amid a wider slump in airline shares over concern of overcapacity.

Delta said it was working to fix the issue and advised travelers to check the status of their flights this morning while the issue is being addressed. The airline warned passengers that some systems showing the status of flights were providing inaccurate information.

Computer glitches disrupting airline passengers aren't unusual, though they can have knock-on effects that last long after technical issues are resolved.

British Airways has been phasing in a new at-gate check-in system, at times snarling the processing of passengers. United Continental Holdings Inc. suffered repeated computer problems after United and Continental merged. Last month Southwest Airlines Co., the No. 4 U.S. airline by traffic, also suffered a tech outage, grounding some flights.

U.S. airline passengers this year also have suffered under a shortage of staff to perform security checks, leading to long checkpoint lines and many passengers missing flights. The Transportation Security Administration, airports and airlines were forced scramble to cut wait times.

WSJ: Donald Trump Tries a Campaign Reboot

As the GOP nominee slumps in polls, he plans an economic speech in Detroit

Donald Trump is trying to quickly reset his presidential campaign to address worsening poll numbers and growing isolation from influential members of the Republican Party.

At weekend rallies, the GOP nominee read from a hand-held script and offered endorsements for the re-elections of a trio of Capitol Hill Republicans whom he had toyed with rebuffing. On Monday, he will head to Detroit to deliver an economic policy address that is expected to draw contrasts with Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton.

Many in Mr. Trump's party have been clamoring for weeks to see these kinds of adjustments. If he is to persuade Republican skeptics to buy back into his campaign, just weeks before the crucial post-Labor Day stage, the unorthodox, first-time candidate now must show he can make the changes stick.

Part of the issue for the New York businessman is that he has run his campaign much like his family business, with his grown children as his top counselors and surrogates. That has meant he hasn't developed a strong connective tissue to party stalwarts and activists that can sustain a candidate through difficult times.

Reports of Republicans leaving the party, lining up behind Libertarian candidate Gary Johnson or even backing Mrs. Clinton gained momentum last week, after the nominee criticized the parents of a U.S. soldier killed in Iraq.

"The friendly fire within the Republican Party over the last week has been extremely counterproductive," said veteran GOP strategist Dave Carney, who isn't involved in the Trump campaign but says he will vote for him. "In modern presidential politics, this election is an outlier in terms of deterioration of support."

Mr. Trump hopes for a reboot with his Detroit speech, which will talk about “the tepid economy under Obama and Clinton, versus the kind of growth economy that Mr. Trump wants to build,” Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort said Sunday on Fox News.

“We’re comfortable we’ll get the agenda and the narrative of the campaign back on where it belongs,” Mr. Manafort added.

Mr. Trump in his speech is expected to give broad strokes about his economic plan, particularly to underscore his support for tax cuts. He is also likely to reiterate his plan to create a single top business tax rate that would apply to corporations and to businesses that pay taxes through their owners’ individual returns.

The candidate isn’t likely to offer a detailed revision of his previously announced plan for big tax cuts. Advisers have been working on an overhaul of that plan to address criticism it would rapidly expand the federal deficit, but that revision isn’t yet ready, advisers said.

Mr. Trump has shown an ability to survive rough patches, and he and his running mate, Indiana Gov. Mike Pence, have stressed party unity in recent days. At a rally in New Hampshire Saturday night, Mr. Trump largely stuck to lines of attack against Mrs. Clinton that bind most Republicans together.

Still, House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin and Sen. Kelly Ayotte of New Hampshire, both of whom are facing election challenges, didn’t appear on stage with their party’s nominee during weekend rallies in their respective states. It was at Mr. Trump’s appearance in Wisconsin Friday night that he announced his belated support for the re-election of those two lawmakers, and of Arizona Sen. John McCain, the 2008 Republican presidential nominee, who faces a primary challenge this month.

Robin Vos, the GOP speaker of the Wisconsin State Assembly, also skipped the Friday event in Green Bay because of Mr. Trump’s reluctance to embrace Mr. Ryan’s re-election and the positive comments the nominee made about Mr. Ryan’s primary opponent.

“There’s this exasperation. We want to all rally; give us a reason,” Mr. Vos said.

If Mr. Trump continues to slide in national polls and surveys of battleground states—the latest Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll found Mrs. Clinton leading by 9 points—more Republicans will be emboldened to declare their independence from the top of the ticket, GOP strategists and party leaders say.

A new re-election ad by Rep. Mike Coffman of Colorado vows to “stand up” to Mr. Trump. Scattered resignations from local parties could mean fewer grass-roots activists knocking on doors and working phone banks.

“People would ask my opinion and they would say, ‘How can you support this man?’” said John Fielding, a former chairman of the Berks County, Pa., Republican Party, who recently resigned his post as a local GOP committeeman and switched his registration to independent. “I didn’t want to have to defend him.”

Lew Oliver, chairman of the Orange County Republican Party in Orlando, Fla., said new volunteers inspired by Mr. Trump are “extremely enthusiastic,” but added, “There are certainly others among longtime volunteers who are staying away who never stayed away before.”

One of the starkest signs of Mr. Trump’s weakened support within the party came last week when his campaign circulated an appeal on Capitol Hill for an “urgent pivot” and asked members to write press releases and social media posts defending Mr. Trump’s criticism of the parents of Capt. Humayun Khan, the Muslim U.S. soldier killed in Iraq in 2004 while protecting his unit.

Only about half a dozen lawmakers publicly vouched for Mr. Trump, while numerous others chided him for questioning the Khan family's motives for appearing at the Democratic convention.

Rep. Duncan Hunter of California, the Trump campaign's co-chairman on Capitol Hill, defended Mr. Trump over the Khan episode last week on Fox News. But he has stopped going to the weekly meetings with Trump officials, in part because he has been disappointed by the nominee's lack of personal outreach to his colleagues.

"There's still a lot of reluctance among members to not just rally behind Trump but to also back up the campaign during moments of controversy," Mr. Hunter said in an email. "Their tendency is to focus on their races and almost treat the national campaign as almost a sidebar event."

New Hampshire Republicans who were hoping Mr. Trump would tout his new endorsement of Ms. Ayotte were disappointed when he didn't mention her re-election campaign during his Saturday night rally in Windham.

"Both the candidate and the party leaders need to remind themselves that millions of people who voted for Trump are expecting them to work together to prevent the continuation of Barack Obama's policies for four more years," said Gary Bauer, a leading religious conservative and president of the American Values nonprofit. "The score settling has to stop."

POLITICO: Trump fundraising sets off Clinton camp alarms

'We must redouble our efforts in the coming weeks,' a concerned Robby Mook writes.

By GABRIEL DEBENEDETTI

Taken aback by the size of Donald Trump's July fundraising haul, Hillary Clinton's campaign is quickly working to beef up its efforts to raise campaign cash before the fall — sending the candidate, running mate Tim Kaine, and former President Bill Clinton on an all-out financial sprint through August while explicitly warning top fundraisers this week that they need to pick up the pace.

In an internal memo, first obtained by POLITICO, that will be circulated to high-level donors on Monday morning, campaign manager Robby Mook specifically writes that the Republican nominee's July haul overshot the campaign's expectations, necessitating a new wave of action.

Story Continued Below

"Donald Trump also had his best fundraising month of the campaign, raising \$80 million," explains Mook in the roughly 750-word missive — titled "Wake Up Call" — after trumpeting Clinton's own \$90 million haul between the campaign and other Democratic committees. "This was far more than anyone expected — and should be a wake-up call to all Hillary supporters. We must redouble our efforts in the coming weeks."

Clinton has had a robust fundraising operation going since she launched her campaign in April 2015, allowing her to build up a cash stockpile of \$58 million heading into August and funding campaign ads across the country that Trump has been unable or unwilling to match — that's in addition to the big-money efforts from her supportive super PACs. But Trump's recent cash strength after months of not lifting a finger to raise money has given party leaders pause, particularly since — as Mook notes — Clinton's cash pace is behind that of President Barack Obama four years ago.

"While we are very proud of the more than \$469 million our campaign has raised so far, we remain behind the historic pace that President Obama set in 2012, raising \$520 million during the same time frame. With only three months to go, it is critical that we close the gap between President Obama's

record-level fundraising and the pace we are currently on," reads the memo. "Falling short of the resources raised in 2012 will require us to scale back from the investments President Obama's campaign made in organizing, data and other critical tools."

To avoid such a fate while matched up against a Trump operation with \$37 million on hand, the campaign is sending both Clintons and Kaine on a fast-paced fundraising tour of the country on top of their public campaigning. And while many of their events were scheduled prior to the release of Trump's numbers, the campaign intends to use Trump's figures to amp up the urgency among its fundraisers.

In August alone, the three campaign principals will headline over 80 finance events in more than 25 states, according to a schedule of the private events distributed to donors and obtained by POLITICO. The candidate herself will hit over 35, while Kaine will make it to more than 30 and the former president will headline somewhere around 20.

In just the next week, Hillary Clinton will hold two events in Florida, one in Illinois, one in Pennsylvania, and one in Connecticut. Bill Clinton will have one in Colorado, one in Utah and two in California. Kaine will hit three in Texas, one each in Louisiana and New Hampshire, and two in Rhode Island.

In addition, campaign surrogates will continue to headline their own fundraising events all over the world, while the Brooklyn-based team also looks to ramp up its online grass-roots operation. Both Obama and Vice President Joe Biden are also expected to step up their fundraising on behalf of Clinton.

Much of Mook's pitch to wealthy Democrats is based around bolstering the campaign's on-the-ground capabilities to end the summer, making the case that money raised in August is especially important — particularly given the campaign's efforts to register 3 million voters before registration deadlines hit and early ballot distribution begins this fall.

"We have to make investments now in order to scale our organizing programs in time to be ready for GOTV. Our ability to reach targeted voters and turn them out will be decided by the number of organizers we can hire now and the volunteers they can start recruiting today," he urges, making the segue to TV ads — of which Trump still has none, while Clinton and her supportive super PACs have blanketed battleground state airwaves for months. "Similarly, we know that television in the quieter month of August and in early September will do much more to cement the narrative of the campaign on our terms than in the last few weeks of the election. Simply put, a dollar raised in August has a much greater impact than one raised in October, especially if Trump closes the gap with us."

Part of the Clinton team's current task is to convince its fundraisers that the national polls showing Clinton up by double digits or high single digits are no reason to sit back and relax.

"The worst thing that could happen would be the campaign decides they're seven or eight points up and people who are raising money stop being involved," said Tom Nides, a former deputy secretary of state who remains close with Clinton and who's been helping with the campaign's fundraising efforts, predicting that Trump's campaign coffers will continue to fill.

"Trump will get resources, there's no question. They clearly understand that Trump is going to have the money he needs. For Trump, raising several hundred million dollars is going to be pretty important, so at the end of the day this campaign will not rest, and they shouldn't."

The real estate developer was always expected to build up his fundraising capacity at some point in the campaign, but even veteran campaign financiers have expressed surprise at his strength online, a phenomenon that's reminiscent — if hardly equal — to the Bernie Sanders cash machine that bedeviled the Clinton camp during the primary.

Clinton's team has worked to build up its own capacities on this front. But Mook warned even that could be swamped by Trump's rank-and-file supporters.

"While we have been working for more than a year to build and grow our grassroots support, Trump only recently started earnestly fundraising from small donors and has clearly seen significant growth in the last month," he writes. "We anticipate that his grassroots donor support will continue to grow dramatically in the final three months. Trump also has the capacity to write his campaign an eight or nine figure check, which could single-handedly tilt things in his favor."

#### NBC NEWS: Quetta Bombing: Dozens Killed in Attack Targeting Pakistan Hospital

A powerful bomb went off on the grounds of a hospital in the southwestern Pakistani city of Quetta on Monday, killing at least 52 people.

The blast took place shortly after the body of a prominent lawyer killed in a shooting attack earlier in the day was brought to the government-run facility, senior police official Zahoor Ahmed Afridi told The Associated Press. However, it was unclear if the two events were connected.

Nearly 100 lawyers and other people had gathered there at the time, he added.

Television footage from the site showed scenes of chaos, with panicked mourners fleeing through debris as smoke filled the corridors of the emergency ward.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the blast.

Anwar Kakar, the official spokesman for the government of Baluchistan, said 52 people had been killed in the attack. He added that it was a suicide bombing.

"This doesn't look like the action of insurgent separatists, rather religious extremists," Kakar told NBC News. "Their only cause is to create fear. Not fear of God. Just fear of living."

Sanaullah Zehri, the chief minister in the Baluchistan province, said it seemed to be a suicide attack, but police were still investigating.

It was also unknown who was behind the killing of the lawyer, Bilal Kasi, who was gunned down on his way to court earlier in the day.

More than 50 mourners were entering the emergency ward to accompany Kasi's body when the bomb went off at the building's gates, a journalist at the scene told Reuters.

Targeted killings have become increasingly common in Quetta, the capital of a province that has seen rising violence linked to a separatist insurgency as well as sectarian tensions and rising crime.

Several ethnic Baluch separatist groups operating in the resource-rich province, but al Qaeda and other militant groups also have a presence there.

Quetta has also long been a base for the Afghan Taliban, whose leadership has regularly held meetings there in the past.

The Hill: Trump to announce fully tax-deductible childcare in economic speech

By Jonathan Swan

Donald Trump will announce in a major economic speech on Monday that childcare payments will be fully tax deductible under a Trump administration, a senior aide told The Hill on Sunday night.

"We're going to help working parents by making childcare payments fully tax deductible.

"That's new policy," the aide added.

Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton has said she would make child care costs more manageable through steps including tax relief and increased federal funds. She has pledged to work to cap child care expenses to no more than 10 percent of a family's income.

The Republican presidential nominee is giving an economic address in Detroit that will focus on four main policy areas: Energy, tax, regulation and trade.

The speech comes as the Trump campaign is trying to put a week of bad press and distractions behind him, and to home in on Clinton's vulnerabilities and the economy.

Among the specific policies mentioned in Trump's speech on Monday will be a "temporary moratorium on regulations," the senior aide said.

Asked to explain what that policy meant, the Trump aide said, "Barring urgent needs, there will be a temporary moratorium on new regulations.

"Because there is such a glut of regulations, thousands and thousands of regulations in recent years ... companies are not investing; their cash is on the sidelines; they're not hiring," the aide added.

Other policies outlined in Trump's speech will include the corporate tax rate being lowered to 15 percent, "which will make us a magnet for global investment in the United States and bring in thousands of new companies."

Also mentioned will be the elimination of the death tax -- though the elimination of it and the 15 percent corporate tax rate are part of the tax plan Trump released last year.

The title of the speech is, "An America First Economic Plan: Winning the Global Competition," the aide said.

The speech's premise will be that every policy that Clinton offers "handicaps America's ability to compete globally."

"For instance, raising taxes, increasing regulations, shutting down energy, one-sided trade deals," the aide added.

Trump will then argue that every policy he offers "is going to make us more globally competitive and make it easier to work.

"We'll become the jobs magnet for the world," the aide said. "Everyone's going to want to come here and start a business, hire workers.

"It's going to mean higher wages, higher incomes, and just a renaissance of American prosperity."

Trump will continue attacking Clinton for her past support for trade deals such as NAFTA and the Trans-Pacific Partnership, "that threaten the American automobile industry and basically would destroy it in the case of TPP," the aide said.

And Trump — as he's done in the past — will scoff at the official unemployment figure of around 5

percent, saying the real jobless number is much higher.

"The real number of jobless is the number outside the labor force, which is 94 million," the aide said.  
"And that's the number that we should be talking about, obviously.

"This 5 percent unemployment thing is absolute hokum."



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<military@e0.email.military.com> on behalf of Military.com  
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To: Lewis, Brian [HSEMD]  
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To: Lewis, Brian [HSEMD]  
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Third-Quarter Forecast 2016

Forecast

July 11, 2016 | 09:30 GMT

The Brexit referendum, and the fallout from it, will be among the most heavily scrutinized themes of the next quarter. And though it may have been the most visible confirmation of the European Union's disintegration, it was May 1, 2004, that sowed the seeds of London's departure.

On that day, a day that came to be known, perhaps ironically, as the "Day of Welcomes," the bloc admitted 10 countries — the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Malta and Cyprus — into its ranks. It epitomized an era of unprecedented EU expansion and honored the promise of prosperity that sold the European project to so many countries that were all too eager to buy it, particularly those that for decades had been bridled by the Soviet Union. The European Union now had 10 more members, each with its own set of policy priorities, national identity, rules of law, economic irregularities and methods of regulating them. Their accession created differences that simply could not be reconciled, for no country can be expected to subordinate its own well-being to another's.

Twelve years later, the United Kingdom — a country unique not for its inclusion in the Continental bloc but for the tepidness with which it joined — voted to leave the European Union altogether. It was always clear that it would be among the first EU members to leave, even if it was unclear precisely when it would choose to do so. But leave it will, and the next three months will be messy as the United Kingdom sorts itself out and as a general air of uncertainty impairs the British economy and the European Union at large.

The United Kingdom's departure is Germany's nightmare. Members from every corner of the Continental bloc will submit proposals on how to re-engineer the European Union according to their respective interests. Southern European countries will increase spending and push for deeper financial integration to nurse their structural wounds. Poland and Hungary will lead an eastern bloc of countries trying to repatriate their rights from Brussels. Germany will try to focus its proposals on the uncontroversial aspects of integration, such as security and job creation, to at least give the impression that the union is still in fact a union, but the government in Berlin will be pressured to place tighter limits on financial assistance to the European Union's more profligate members. As divisions deepen and economic panic rises, the Netherlands will gradually nudge Germany away from France and the southern belt.

Russia is one of the few countries that can take delight in Europe's fragmentation. After all, Moscow can

more effectively ease the financial pressure against it, advance economic deals and limit Western encroachment on its periphery when Europe is divided and distracted. Russia always meant to leverage its involvement in Syria to strengthen its negotiating position with the United States. This quarter, Moscow will actually have some success in coaxing Washington into a dialogue as the United States tries to clear obstacles in its fight in Syria against Islamic State. The White House will use the common threat of the Islamic State to keep Russia engaged on tactical matters, but it will resist making bigger concessions. (In any case, there is only so much the Kremlin can get out of the White House in an election year.) The United States, moreover, will be counting on a recent reconciliation between Turkey and Russia to deconflict the battlefield, something that will end up giving Turkey more breathing room to hedge against Kurdish expansion in northern Syria.

No major shift in energy markets can be expected this quarter. Iranian oil production will rise more slowly than it did for the first six months of the year, and while some members of the Gulf Cooperation Council could modestly increase output in months of high summer demand, the Saudi-led bloc is still waiting out a gradual market correction with U.S. production in decline. Nigerian oil production will also remain volatile as the government struggles to tame militancy in the oil-rich Niger Delta region.

In the meantime, the markets will continue to be volatile as the world comes to grips with the Brexit. The appreciation of the yen and dollar will apply downward pressure on the yuan, but Beijing still has the means to manage the rate of decline. Its efforts to reduce industrial overcapacity in China will be limited as local governments hold out for central government promises of readjustment aid. China's economic situation may be stagnant, but its political situation is more animated, and the power struggle that underlies it will be something to watch in the third quarter.

There are, however, some signs of encouragement coming from Latin America. In Colombia, the government will proceed to the demobilization phase of its agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, and in doing so, will stabilize the country. Brazil will conclude its impeachment saga this quarter and move ahead with austerity measures to rein in spending. Economic forces, meanwhile, are pushing Brazil and Argentina to at least start discussing the easing of trade constraints on Mercosur, South America's free trade bloc. But talks will remain in the rhetorical stage for the next few months as Brazil tries to tie up the impeachment process and as Argentina tries to balance structural reform with social stability. Having Venezuela, which is beset by so many problems and already a polarizing member, chair the bloc will not help things either.

## Europe

### The Impact of the British Referendum

During the third quarter, the European Union will deal with the consequences of the British referendum on EU membership.

The victory of the "leave" camp and Prime Minister David Cameron's decision to resign have triggered a political crisis in the country, with the ruling Conservative Party and the opposition Labour Party struggling with internal disputes. The United Kingdom will not start formal negotiations to disconnect from the European Union this quarter because a new prime minister will have to be selected first. This will delay the process of Britain's withdrawal from the European Union by a few months but will do little to ease the economic and political consequences of the referendum.

The United Kingdom will gradually move to accept the result and focus on how to effectively negotiate an exit. Officially, the European Union will continue to refuse to start negotiations until London formally announces its decision to leave. But informal contacts between British officials and their European counterparts will start once a government is in place in the United Kingdom. Brussels will give London time to appoint a new government but will stand firm in its demand that preserving access to the common market also means allowing the free movement of EU workers.

The uncertainty generated by the Brexit will continue to produce volatility in the British economy and, to a lesser extent, hurt the economies on the Continent. Effects on the bloc could include rising bond yields for countries in the eurozone periphery, delayed decisions on spending and investing in the European Union's main economies, and depreciations of the euro and Eastern European currencies.

The United Kingdom's territorial integrity will also be debated, but the government in Scotland probably will not make any drastic unilateral moves this quarter. The Scottish government will try to negotiate with Brussels over ways to remain connected with the bloc. But Scottish authorities will wait for the political situation in London to become clear before making any definite moves. The announcement of an independence referendum this quarter is unlikely.

The British situation will also test the stability of the French-German alliance. In the third quarter, Paris and Berlin will make proposals to strengthen the European Union. Considering that both countries will hold elections in 2017, those proposals will probably focus on areas where an agreement is possible instead of issues such as the functioning of the eurozone. These will include EU-wide initiatives on issues such as security and terrorism, protection of the bloc's external borders, and migration as well as employment and economic growth. Even if there is room for agreement in these areas, implementation will not happen this quarter.

Those proposals on less controversial issues will not stop other EU members from putting forth their own ideas on how to reshape the union. Nor will it stop the political debate in some countries about whether to hold referendums on aspects of their memberships in the bloc. Different regions in the European Union will put forth different proposals on how to prevent the bloc's disintegration, but those ideas will come from fundamentally opposing directions.

For example, countries in Southern Europe, led by Italy, will push for more EU spending on social policies and more flexibility on fiscal targets for member states. Northern countries, led by Germany, will oppose these moves. Countries such as Poland and Hungary, on the other hand, will push to give a greater role to national parliaments in decision-making. Most EU members oppose changing the Lisbon treaty, so that will not be on the table.

#### Political Volatility in the Eurozone

Some of the largest eurozone members will see a quarter of political volatility, with social tensions over labor reforms in France, financial and political uncertainty in Italy, a long process of forming a government in Spain and political divisions in the German government.

In France, the government's authority will continue to erode, and social unrest will remain strong. Despite popular protests, the French government is likely to pass labor reform legislation. But this will probably be the last significant policy introduced by President Francois Hollande, as the controversial reform will leave his Socialist Party weak and divided. The Elysee is likely to announce some reductions in taxes and increases in public spending in a bid to regain popularity, but right-leaning opposition parties are likely to retain popularity. Influenced by the events in the United Kingdom, French politicians will seek to position themselves for the 2017 presidential election by promising various referendums on EU-related issues.

In Germany, the ruling center-right/center-left grand coalition will also be under domestic pressure. Regional elections in Berlin and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in September will probably result in growing support for emergent opposition parties on both ends of the political spectrum, such as the progressive Greens and the right-wing Alternative for Germany. With Germany's ruling coalition pulled in different directions as elections draw closer, Berlin will find it increasingly difficult to fill its role as the European Union's political center of gravity.

In Italy, the government of Prime Minister Matteo Renzi will try to regain the political initiative after the poor performance of the ruling Democratic Party in municipal elections in June and before a key

referendum on constitutional reforms in October. The main opposition parties, including the anti-system Five Star Movement and the anti-immigration Northern League, will campaign against the reforms. To win back popular support, Renzi will promise lower taxes and higher public spending. Brexit-induced volatility in financial markets will continue to hurt Italian banks, increasing the probability of government intervention. Italy will seek authorization from Brussels to provide state support for its banks, but Germany is likely to oppose such a move. Should pressure on Italian banks become too strong, Rome and Brussels will reach a compromise.

In Spain, the country's main political parties will spend the first part of the quarter negotiating the formation of a government after the fragmented parliament produced in June 26 elections. Once a government is formed, the next administration will announce increases in public spending and cuts in taxes, regardless of the EU Commission's recent threat to sanction Madrid.

The fiscal situation in countries such as Spain and Portugal will create another source of friction between north and south in Europe. Southern countries will press for more flexible fiscal targets, while northern countries will push for sanctions against those that fail to meet commitments. Countries in Southern Europe will avoid sanctions, or receive only symbolic punishment, in exchange for promising to introduce reforms in the future. This will lead only to more north-south frictions.

### Europe's East-West Divide Continues

The next three months will also see the continuation of Europe's east-west divide, as countries in Central and Eastern Europe continue to resist Brussels' influence and introduce measures that alienate their western neighbors. For countries in the region, Brexit removes a significant counterweight to the French-German influence on the bloc and a defender of the interests of the nations that are outside the eurozone. In the coming months, countries in Central and Eastern Europe will become the loudest defenders of national sovereignty in the European Union.

In Hungary, the government of Prime Minister Viktor Orban will proceed with plans to hold a referendum in October on a proposal by the European Commission to distribute asylum seekers across the Continent. The authorities in Brussels will criticize the referendum, but the government in Budapest will use that to consolidate its domestic popularity.

Poland will remain committed to its membership in NATO, request a greater allied presence in Eastern Europe and defend a tough stance on Russia.

At the same time, the government in Warsaw will continue to introduce measures that will cause concern in the West. During the quarter, for example, Warsaw will start collecting a tax on retailers, a sector dominated by foreign companies, and pass a plan to convert foreign-denominated loans into zlotys. The final version of the conversion plan will be less costly for banks than the original proposals, but it will still force banks, most of which are controlled by foreign firms, to face losses. The Polish economy will see strong growth this year, but those moves will progressively erode business confidence and weaken the Polish economy.

### The Migration Crisis Abates

Since the agreement between the European Union and Turkey designed to stem migrant flows into Europe entered into force in late March, emigration from Turkey has fallen significantly. The drop can be attributed not only to cooperation between Turkish and European authorities to stop migrants from reaching Greece but also to the perception among asylum seekers that reaching Northern Europe has become more difficult because of stronger border controls along the main migration routes.

The agreement should largely hold during the quarter, but its continuity will be under constant pressure. Relations between Turkey and the European Union will remain tense. Brussels desires to preserve the accord but wants Ankara to meet all the necessary criteria to be granted visa liberalization for its citizens. The Turkish government also wants to maintain the deal but is unwilling to submit on issues



such as EU-requested changes in terrorism legislation. In addition, recent decisions by Greek appeals committees to prevent deportations of asylum seekers to Turkey could encourage more people to try to reach Greece. In the meantime, border controls along the Balkan migration route will remain in place, as will border controls in the main migrant destinations in Northern Europe.

With the situation relatively stable on the Aegean Sea, most of the migration activity will come on the central Mediterranean route, which connects northern Africa with southern Italy. As weather conditions improve this quarter, more migrants will arrive in Italy. Overall, the number of people reaching Italy will remain much lower than the numbers that flooded Greece during the peak of the crisis last year. The government in Rome will continue to press for a unified approach to the issue. The European Union is likely to make progress on plans to provide financial assistance to migrants' countries of origin to discourage emigration, and proposals to strengthen EU coastal and border-control forces are likely to be approved during the quarter. At the same time, Italy's neighbors will reintroduce border controls if they feel that the Italian government is not doing enough to keep the migrants in its territory.

## Former Soviet Union

### Russia's Standoff Continues

This quarter, Russia and the West will remain locked in an intractable standoff. Now that the European Union is set to extend sanctions, Moscow does not see a reason to compromise for now. As Europe begins discussions to ease sanctions later in the year, however, Russia's view could change. The European Union's internal focus on managing Brexit, though likely an enduring trend, will probably make issues such as the Ukraine crisis, Nagorno-Karabakh and perhaps even Russia sanctions lower priorities for the European Union in the short term. Russia could take advantage of the divisions between EU members, but Moscow will be careful not to act too aggressively. Instead, it will focus on winning the support of Russia-friendly member states.

Russia will continue its active military involvement in the Syrian conflict this quarter, prioritizing air support to loyalist forces, particularly in Aleppo. As fighting heats up near the Syrian capital, refugee flows could increase, exacerbating Europe's migrant problem. Moscow will keep pushing for increased coordination with the United States, but the harder it tries to engage the United States in a more substantive dialogue, the more acrimonious the relationship between Washington and Moscow will become.

In Syria and elsewhere, cooperation between Moscow and Ankara depends on Washington's involvement. Although Turkey has laid the groundwork to resume negotiations with Russia on the Syrian crisis, Moscow will be cautious in allowing Ankara into the country and reluctant to give up its relationship with the Kurdish People's Protection Units. This quarter, Russia and Turkey will also rekindle talks in other areas, including trade and tourism. As Moscow looks to revive plans for energy infrastructure in the Black Sea, Russia will renew negotiations with Turkey over natural gas.

Tensions between Russia and the West will continue beyond the NATO summit, which took place in Warsaw, July 8-9. During the summit, NATO confirmed its plans to station four battalion task groups on a rotational basis in the Baltic states and Poland. These countries will also ramp up their own efforts at military modernization, focusing on air defense. NATO also continued discussions on Black Sea deployments. Considering the issue concerns many member states, they eased tonnage restrictions on the Black Sea that the Montreux Convention imposed. In addition, NATO announced measures to strengthen cooperation — albeit far short of a membership action plan — with Georgia and Ukraine.

Russia, in turn, will focus on its military position in the Western Military District and in border areas such as Kaliningrad, Belarus and Crimea. Over the long term, Moscow will stick with its current strategy, prioritizing its strategic nuclear forces in response to U.S. ballistic missile defense initiatives, transitioning its forces in the Western Military District to prepare for large-scale conventional war and

strengthening its Black Sea Fleet. As Russia and NATO scale up their military operations, nuclear arms treaties such as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and New START will come under mounting pressure.

### Investing in the East

In the third quarter, Russia will maintain its emphasis on East Asia. Russia will hold its Eastern Economic Forum in September, intended to attract investment, partnerships and technology from the East, particularly China, South Korea and Japan. During the recent St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, Russia initiated several deals with these countries, and the Eastern Economic Forum will offer an opportunity to finalize many of them. In September, moreover, Russian President Vladimir Putin plans to visit Japan. Both countries are interested in increasing investment agreements, and they are also once again negotiating a formal peace treaty that includes the exchange of an island. But in light of the upcoming elections, Russia will be careful in presenting the talks to the public to avoid nationalist backlash over the loss of territory.

### Fostering Growth and Quashing Unrest

Though Russia's recession is no longer deepening, its economic crisis wears on. To combat stagnation and encourage growth, the Central Bank of Russia will implement a string of measures, increasing budgetary spending and cutting interest rates and salaries. The ruble's value is stabilizing, which means that one of the main drivers of inflation is letting up. Before the end of the year, the government hopes to reduce inflation, which climbed to 15 percent at the start of 2016, to under 6 percent, a goal that may prove unattainable. Nevertheless, falling inflation will be enough to pacify the public, especially as the Kremlin eases its monetary policy and the economy begins its slow recovery.

During the third quarter, one of the most pressing economic challenges that the government will face is drafting the final versions of the 2016 budget, due in October. Finance Ministry and central bank officials will struggle over a string of budgetary items, namely how much to devote to the 2016-17 anti-crisis plan and how to fund it — through Reserve Fund withdrawals or international borrowing. The future of wide-ranging regional, public and corporate subsidies will also be up for debate. Finally, the Finance Ministry will proceed with privatizing Alrosa and Bashneft. Meanwhile, unless he gets an advantageous offer from China, India or another global power, Rosneft chief Igor Sechin will continue to resist plans to privatize a large portion of his company by year's end.

In the Kremlin and beyond, the Russian people will become more divided over how to address the country's economic and foreign policies. The Russian public will continue to bear the brunt of the economic slump, giving rise to more protests across the country.

With the approach of parliamentary elections in September, the government worries that economic protests could grow and turn political, as they did in response to allegations of election fraud in 2011 and 2012. This time, the ruling United Russia party will not blatantly manipulate the elections. Instead, it will hold elections earlier than originally scheduled and work with other mainstream parties to flood the electoral system with options. Organizers of previous protests will be detained or sidelined as the vote approaches, and Putin will test out his new National Guard and increase the Federal Security Service presence across the country to crack down on demonstrations. As much as the Kremlin needs United Russia though to keep its majority in parliament, it must also keep protests to a minimum to validate Putin's fourth run for the presidency in 2018.

### Some Progress for Ukraine

After a major government shake-up brought Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman to power last quarter, Ukraine's political situation will likely steady in the third quarter. Political stability will facilitate further reforms, enabling Ukraine to access the International Monetary Fund assistance package that has been stalled since the beginning of the year. This will give Kiev much-needed financial reprieve.

Even so, Kiev will face challenges in other areas, most notably in eastern Ukraine. Since the European Union has decided to extend its sanctions on Russia for another six months, Moscow has less incentive to make any immediate security concessions in the Ukraine conflict. Consequently, clashes between Moscow-backed separatists and Ukrainian security forces will stay at a simmer and could escalate, though major offensives or land grabs are unlikely. In September and October, the breakaway republics of Donetsk and Luhansk are scheduled to hold primaries for local elections. Kiev, however, will not recognize the votes, which will showcase the failure to implement the Minsk protocols. Nevertheless, Russia and the West will continue their negotiations over Ukraine's future, but they are unlikely to reach any breakthroughs this quarter.

## Elsewhere in the Former Soviet Union

### Eastern Europe

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland will each receive a deployment of additional NATO troops on a rotational basis in September. Though Belarus will further pursue its campaign for economic integration with the West, NATO buildups in the Baltic states and Poland will push Minsk toward deeper military cooperation with Moscow. In Moldova, pro-Russian and pro-EU groups will hold competing rallies ahead of the country's October presidential election — the first direct vote since 1996.

### Caucasus

Political activity and strife within the ruling Georgian Dream party will intensify in Georgia as parliamentary elections, slated for early October, draw near. Pro-Russian forces will become more active in the country, but they will not be enough to undermine Georgia's focus on the West. The dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh will remain contentious this quarter, though major military escalations like that of the previous quarter are unlikely. The two countries will maintain their regular diplomatic meetings, as Russia — as the most influential external power and mediator in the standoff — tries to keep the conflict manageable. Turkey and the United States will also be involved in the negotiations, though Moscow's fraught relationships with Washington and Ankara will impede any meaningful political progress over the dispute.

### Central Asia

In Central Asia, low oil prices, falling remittances and growing unemployment will prolong economic problems, fomenting unrest and political instability. Kazakhstan will be particularly vulnerable as its economy languishes and the government tries to contain growing dissent in the country, especially in its energy-producing western regions. The threat of militant spillover along the Afghan border with Central Asia will be a persistent concern for Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, prompting Russia, the United States and China to boost their respective security partnerships in the region.

## Middle East and North Africa

### The Syrian War Intensifies

The Syrian civil war will continue to be a defining feature of the Middle East during the third quarter, stitching together the trends of Turkey's rising ambitions, the struggle between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Iran over the regional balance of power, the European immigration crisis, and the standoff between Russia and the West.

The United States' focus this quarter will be to enlist more coalition support in the fight against the Islamic State. Russia has tried to edge its way into this U.S.-led fight in Syria in hopes of forcing the

White House into a negotiation on broader issues, mainly relief on sanctions over Russia's actions in eastern Ukraine. Now that Russia has given in to Washington's request that it re-engage with Turkey to minimize the potential for clashes on the battlefield, the United States is reciprocating with a proposal to coordinate U.S.-Russia efforts in Syria. By potentially agreeing to jointly bomb jihadist targets and designating no-bombing zones, the United States is aiming to remove the ambiguity in the rebel landscape that Russia relies on to justify expanding its bombing to moderate rebel factions backed by the United States. It will be easier said than done, especially considering how deeply embedded jihadist groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra are in the rebel landscape. Russia will cooperate enough to keep the United States in dialogue but will use the threat of escalating loyalist operations and bombing U.S.-backed rebels to reinforce its demands with Washington.

At the same time, three battlefronts will develop in the crucial Aleppo province. In southern Aleppo, Islamist rebel group Jaish al-Fatah will continue its operation to drive opposing forces, mostly led by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), from the area. While the international community continues cease-fire efforts for Aleppo city and the surrounding area, combatants in the area will seek to bolster their positions ahead of any possible talks. Meanwhile, in northern Aleppo province, the Islamic State will continue losing territory as multi-ethnic Syrian Democratic Forces, rebels and loyalists take advantage of its weakness in the area.

Turkey will stay alert to advances by the Syrian Democratic Forces, which includes Kurdish fighters, across its border and will work through the United States and its rebel proxies to limit the Kurdish People's Protection Units' territorial expansion and influence in northern Aleppo. The Turkish government hopes these efforts will diminish the security threat Kurdish forces pose to the country, especially as it continues its campaign against Kurdistan Workers' Party insurgents in its southeastern provinces and northern Iraq. The United States will try to draw in more support overall from its Sunni allies in the coalition, including Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Jordan, to reinforce the air campaign against the Islamic State in Syria, augment rebel training and in some cases, deepen the involvement of special operations forces on the ground.

#### Turkey Prioritizes Security

Ankara is determined to contain Kurdish expansion in northern Syria and to mitigate the terrorist threat posed by the Islamic State. Turkey's attempt to get its military more involved in northern Syria has been hindered significantly by Russia so far this year. Consequently, Ankara — with U.S. nudging — reconciled with Moscow in the second quarter. Turkey will now try to steer its dialogue with Russia toward an understanding that gives Turkey more room on the battlefield to reinforce its rebel proxies. Russia will withhold its full cooperation as leverage over Turkey, but it could reopen negotiations on natural gas discounts to reinvigorate financing and planning for TurkStream, the pipeline project that would carry gas from Russia to Turkey via the Black Sea.

An escalation in Aleppo province could increase the flow of refugees out of Syria, straining the Turkey-EU agreement to control migrant traffic headed for Europe. Turkey will uphold the agreement but will use the added pressure to push the European Union to give on visa liberalization and to reduce EU interference in Turkey's internal security measures. The Europeans will be the ones to concede on their demands for Turkey to ease counterterrorism measures rather than Turkey aligning with EU expectations.

Financial uncertainty over the Brexit will create volatility for the Turkish lira. Persistent security threats will also drag down Turkey's tourism revenues. The large number of North Caucasus and Central Asian militants — who were responsible for the June 28 attack on Istanbul's Ataturk Airport — making their way into the Islamic State theater to threaten Turkey will drive Ankara toward tighter security and intelligence cooperation with Russia and former Soviet states. Ankara will also be wary of other countries funneling problematic jihadists out of the country to mitigate their own security problems.

The government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will push the central bank to continue cutting interest rates to encourage economic growth. The government, now with a new prime minister who is supportive of Erdogan's plan to reform the constitution to strengthen the presidency, will use this quarter to draft its proposal for a new constitution. A vote in parliament to table an actual referendum will not come until later, however.

### Deepening Power Struggles in Iran

Iran will make incremental progress on opening up its petroleum sector to foreign investors under its revamped Iran Petroleum Contract framework. Final agreements may not be signed until after the quarter. The companies expected to participate will be the large European oil exploration and production companies such as Eni, Royal Dutch/Shell and Total, but there will also be interest from Russian and Asian companies. Iran's post-sanctions growth in oil production is likely to taper off over the second half of the year, once most of the energy fields that it shut down during sanctions have been brought back online. Substantial new production will not occur until new investment arrives. Still, Iran's production will continue to grow this quarter, albeit at a slower pace than the roughly 700,000-barrels-per-day increase that Iran has experienced since its nuclear deal with the West was implemented.

Politically, preparations for the presidential race in 2017 will begin in earnest this quarter. Attention on IRGC Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, speaker Ali Larijani, former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and other potential challengers to President Hassan Rouhani will build as hard-line conservatives try to portray the incumbent as the squanderer of economic investment opportunities. The more Iran opens up economically, the more the power struggle will intensify among Iran's leaders. The IRGC will seek to protect its business interests and steer a more aggressive foreign policy in the region against Iran's Sunni adversaries in the GCC, led by Saudi Arabia.

Iranian internal security forces will be focused on containing a rise in militant activity throughout the country. This includes Kurdish groups in the northwest, Ahwazi Arabs in the southwest and Balochi separatists in the southeast near Pakistan, as well as jihadist plots in the heartland. Militant activity will remain at a manageable level, but Tehran will be on guard nevertheless for meddling by Sunni powers as regional competition intensifies.

### The Gulf Cooperation Council Sees Some Relief

Saudi Arabia and its GCC allies will continue to wait out a correction in the oil markets. The organization's combined oil production is likely to rise moderately to reach summer air conditioning and other electricity demands, but a sustained market-sharing grab reminiscent of the first quarter of 2015 is unlikely. This quarter will provide some relief to GCC economies thanks to a gradual rebound in oil prices, in turn allowing for some megaproject construction to resume. GCC countries will continue to draw down foreign exchange reserves to maintain their peg to the dollar (or in Kuwait's case, a peg to a basket of several currencies).

Saudi Arabia and Oman will likely issue sovereign bonds, or government debt securities, to raise capital during the third quarter to protect their reserves from declining further as the overall oil price slump continues. After all, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates issued sovereign bonds during the second quarter, and Riyadh and Muscat hope to capitalize on the same success in stabilizing their reserves. In Saudi Arabia, efforts to diversify the economy in line with its Vision 2030 reform package are underway. The strategy outlined in a massive plan unveiled in June will soon begin to convert into tactical directives by ministries. Still, the largest burden throughout the quarter will fall on private companies. They will be taking stock of their assets in preparation for potentially destabilizing initiatives by the end of the year that aim to replace foreign workers who fulfill duties in many important economic sectors with Saudi citizens. Workers' disputes and layoffs in the most vulnerable industries — construction and

oil and natural gas — will persist.

The Saudis are also trying to pre-empt growing social and security vulnerabilities in the GCC. Saudi Arabia will gradually curtail the influence of the religious establishment in the kingdom to ease its own social pressures but will be limited because of its need for the religious scholars' support in co-opting Saudi radicals and preventing a rise in jihadist activity. Riyadh will support Bahrain's crackdown on its Shiite opposition, which began during major protests against the Sunni government in 2011, standing by to reinforce Bahraini security if needed. Bahrain will be unable to stamp out unrest completely. Iran, meanwhile, will use its connections to Shiite communities in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province to try to stoke tensions, short as its covert arm in the Arabian Peninsula is.

Negotiations over a settlement in Yemen will resume in Kuwait. The Houthis, the insurgency movement fighting government troops loyal to Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi backed by Saudi-led coalition security forces, are more likely to make concessions at this point of the conflict and dialogue. Though a partial settlement could be reached in the third quarter, the battlefields in the central regions of Marib, Shabwa and Taiz will remain violent, regardless of what deals negotiators make. The United Arab Emirates will slowly disengage from offensive operations, having largely expelled militant groups from southern Yemeni population centers. But it will continue security operations there to avoid a resurgence of al Qaeda forces. Even so, with less at stake in northern Yemen — the area Saudi Arabia is chiefly concerned with, so near to its southern border — UAE forces will probably avoid direct involvement in the ground operations moving on the capital, Sanaa.

#### Iraq's Approach to Mosul and Beyond

Iraqi forces made considerable gains against the Islamic State in Anbar province in the last quarter. Earlier in the year they took Ramadi, and they recently seized Fallujah. In the next quarter, Iraqi forces will continue offensive operations in the province but will shift their attention northward to Mosul. The Iraqis will not be ready to attack Mosul directly this year but will launch preparatory operations this quarter. Serious friction on the battlefield among the anti-Islamic State coalition is a distinct possibility: An array of Iraqi army, Kurdish peshmerga, Turkish-backed rebels and Iranian-backed Shiite militias will be involved.

The focus on operations against the Islamic State will prevent the dissolution of Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's government this quarter. Still, political unrest will remain high. Shiite leader Muqtada al-Sadr will likely renew his efforts to pressure Baghdad into implementing reforms to create a more transparent, less corrupt government, simultaneously using the crisis to expand his own political base. Meanwhile, Iraq's Cabinet has approved the reforms needed to secure \$5.4 billion in loans over the next three years from the International Monetary Fund. (The IMF has approved the dispersal of \$634 million of these funds.)

In Iraqi Kurdistan, the political partnership of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Gorran party will force the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) to re-engage with it in the Kurdistan Regional Government parliament. The KDP will try to dissolve the PUK-Gorran alliance by striking its own deal with the PUK, but those attempts will fail. The PUK and Gorran will continue to pressure President Massoud Barzani to step down. But Barzani can still use the Islamic State security crisis, the financial crisis due to low oil prices, and the distraction of a Kurdish referendum on becoming an autonomous region to postpone elections. All of this political polarization will feed into renewed competition between Iran, which supports the PUK and its resistance to Turkish influence in the area, and Turkey, which supports the KDP.

Arbil and Baghdad, still months behind on payments to oil companies, will continue struggling to pay them back this quarter, prolonging their overall financial straits. Moreover, Arbil and Baghdad will not come to an agreement over Iraq's State Organization for Marketing of Oil marketing KRG-produced oil. Negotiations between Arbil and Tehran on an alternative oil pipeline agreement will continue, however,

potentially straining relations between Iran and Turkey further.

## Egypt Prepares for Unrest

Despite weakening popular support and more visible signs of decline in the Egyptian economy, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, military leaders and Cairo's security forces will be able to manage opposition protests this quarter, even as protests over the deal to transfer two Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia are expected to grow. Because the Egyptian government and the court system prize internal stability, it is likely that the Supreme Administrative Court's findings will support the claim that the islands have always been Saudi territory. The parliament will then have the final say on the issue, and because it consists of mainly al-Sisi political supporters, it will likely vote in favor of the deal. Public protests, driven by the belief that Egypt ultimately exerts sovereign control over the islands, will be inevitable but contained. Even in the more unlikely event that the islands deal falls through and al-Sisi drops the transfer in deference to state institutions, Saudi Arabia will continue providing financial support to ensure that al-Sisi and the military council remain in power to manage Egypt's security and financial challenges.

Egypt was already wary of Turkey over Ankara's support for the Islamist party the Muslim Brotherhood. Now Egypt will also have to worry about Turkey's increasing influence in Gaza as Ankara begins shipping aid to the territory this quarter, following a thawing of diplomatic ties with Israel. Turkey will expand ties with Palestinian groups that have traditionally looked to Cairo for mediation with Israel. The Israeli-Turkish normalization will push forward a dialogue on a subsea pipeline from Israel to Turkey through Cypriot waters. For these talks to go anywhere, however, obstacles in Israel's regulatory environment and in Turkey's negotiations between Greek and Turkish Cyprus will have to be cleared up. Egypt will fast-track the Zohr natural gas field discovery, deflating potential demand for Israeli natural gas that Egypt could consume. Instead, including Turkey will be an important factor for Israel to realize its full ambitions to become a significant natural gas exporter.

## Jordan's Islamists Band Together

Preparations for Jordanian parliamentary elections on Sept. 20 will unfold over the quarter. From the Zamzam-Muslim Brotherhood Society alliance will emerge an Islamist party advocating the reordering of Jordan's government more in accordance with conservative mores of Islam. The alliance may join forces with the Islamic Action Front, which recently announced its intention to run in the elections, breaking a six-year boycott, or it may run alongside it in a separate Islamist party. The Muslim Brotherhood alliances will frustrate the Jordanian government's efforts to divide Islamists, though the end of the Muslim Brotherhood's electoral boycott will add legitimacy to the fall elections. And despite recent terrorist attacks along Jordan's borders, the country's relative stability will continue.

## Enduring Fractures in Libya

Al-Bunyan al-Marsoos, which comprises various militias from Misrata, Libya, will continue consolidating its control over the former Islamic State stronghold of Sirte. It will force Islamic State fighters to adjust their tactics and operate more as a terrorist group or insurgency instead of attempting to control and administer territory in central Libya.

Negotiations between the U.N.-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) and Libya's eastern and western institutions — the Central Bank of Libya, National Oil Corp. and Libyan Investment Authority — will continue throughout the quarter, but the GNA will struggle to gain legitimacy outside of Tripoli and Misrata. The international community will continue to pressure the competing government in Tobruk, the House of Representatives, to approve a political agreement and support the GNA, but it is unlikely to do so this quarter unless there are substantial changes to the Libyan Political Agreement, which

outlined the proposal for the GNA. The potential position in the GNA of Gen. Khalifa Hifter, a divisive figure among the many factions in Libya, also remains an incendiary issue.

Hifter and his Libyan National Army will continue military operations against militant groups in Darna, Ajdabiya and Benghazi and will continue to consolidate control over the country's interior. But tension between forces aligned with the GNA and those aligned with Hifter in the areas around Ajdabiya is growing, and skirmishes between the two are likely as they move to counter Islamist and jihadist groups.

Libya may also make progress toward getting oil production back online. The political and military alliance between the GNA and the Petroleum Facilities Guard has aligned views on restarting oil production from the ports controlled by the guard along Libya's central coast. Islamic State fighters fleeing Sirte and the damages sustained at ports and southern oil fields will complicate efforts to revive the country's energy sector, which means that substantial production increases are unlikely until after the quarter. Still, plans may be put in motion.

## East Asia

### China's Only Relatively Stable Position

At first glance, summer in China appears calm, but below the surface contentious political initiatives are roiling Beijing. The most significant of these is the new round of anti-corruption investigations launched by China's Central Commission for Discipline Inspection. The investigations are part of an intensified campaign aimed at eliminating what opposition President Xi Jinping has left in government, and this round is the most overtly political yet. Rather than being aimed at the Party apparatus in targeted agencies, it focuses on individuals in government and Party agencies. The effort will only further divide the government as various political factions fight to benefit from the corruption probes, both by exposing the wrongdoings of their rivals and by trying to fill the gaps created. Though details about the storm undoubtedly brewing in Beijing are sparse, new information will likely be leaked once the Beidaihe meeting is held sometime this summer.

China's intensifying political struggle overlays an increasingly weak, yet still relatively stable, economy. In fact, Beijing's chief goal this quarter will be to maintain stability. To that end, the government will cautiously monitor its place in the global economy in the wake of Brexit. And though the yuan will slowly depreciate, helped by Brexit-driven appreciations of the yen and the dollar, the government will manage the rate of decline to avoid a plunge, partly by offering fiscal stimulus and cutting the reserve requirement ratio. Given that China's foreign exchange reserves will stand at \$3 trillion at the beginning of the quarter, Beijing will have little trouble keeping the yuan stable. Trade is down year-on-year, but it is likely to remain relatively stable at least through the quarter, keeping southern manufacturing provinces afloat and moderating the pace of capital outflows.

China will continue small-scale stimulus this quarter to maintain limited growth, including by investing in targeted infrastructure projects. These projects will be supported by new local government bond issuances, and banks will also increase their lending to support these investments. This will lead to upticks in nonperforming debt, but it will not exceed what the financial system can manage. As a result of stimulus, robust investment in real estate and construction (along with reconstruction) is likely to continue at a stable, though reduced, pace. This will ensure that the economies of the northern provinces that rely on the production of steel and other construction materials will stagnate but will not totally tank. Local governments will continue to maintain employment by supporting local-level heavy industries, which will be hesitant to implement capacity cuts in line with central and provincial targets as they wait to see if the central government will provide the readjustment aid promised earlier this year.

### Looking Beyond the Chinese Mainland



While China attempts to maintain stability, the countries around it will be undergoing some key changes. The potential for disruptive protests in Hong Kong will increase as new nativist parties, some of which favor full independence from China, try to rally the support they need to score seats in Hong Kong's Legislative Council in September. Protests may be particularly disruptive depending on the mainland's attempts to strong-arm Hong Kong's government to return bookseller Lam Wing-kee. Lam has refused to return to the Chinese mainland, which he is required to do under the terms of his bail agreement, because of accusations that he was illegally held there. He is planning more provocative rallies questioning the viability of the "one country, two systems" plan, just further incentivizing Beijing to pressure Hong Kong for his return.

China will also continue to diplomatically dissuade Taiwan from pursuing independence. Beijing is working to convince countries such as Kenya, Malaysia and Cambodia to repatriate Taiwanese fraud suspects to China. This will keep the Taiwanese government in contact with the Chinese — on Chinese terms. Newly inaugurated Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen will focus on a campaign of diplomatic and economic diversification to counter the Chinese isolation campaign. Tsai will try to downplay and avoid the Okinotori territorial dispute with Japan to strengthen ties with the country. She will also begin making the opening moves of her New Southbound Policy to deepen economic ties with member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Though she and the ruling Democratic Progressive Party will not endorse the 1992 Consensus that China demands as a precondition for talks, Tsai will avoid actions and proclamations that will unduly disturb ties with China.

In the South China Sea, China will be compelled to act on an imminent ruling of the U.N. Permanent Court of Arbitration on the status of several Chinese-held islets, scheduled to take place July 12. The ruling will almost certainly go against China. The United States, perhaps in conjunction with the Philippines, may try to uphold the ruling by conducting military operations in the vicinity of some Chinese-held islets (either in the Spratlys or Scarborough Shoal). While China will deem the ruling illegitimate, it will see it as a challenge meriting a response, and it could use increased U.S. military activity as a pretext to declare a South China Sea air defense identification zone, which it threatened to do ahead of the Shangri-La Dialogue. Should China choose to declare an air defense identification zone, it would likely wait until after the multinational Rim of the Pacific naval exercise, which starts in July and ends in early August. Faced with an unfavorable ruling, China could also withdraw from the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which would be an explicit rejection of what it sees as an unfair U.S.-built international order. Such a strong reaction, however, could push countries such as Indonesia to build stronger ties with the United States.

#### Japan: Abenomics and Its Shadow

The Japanese economy will enter the quarter under considerable economic pressure, especially caused by external factors including weak demand and rising political uncertainty in major markets such as Europe. Economic policy in Japan has continually failed to produce more than weak inflation and wage growth.

The yen will continue to face pressures to appreciate, particularly after Brexit. The currency is already being pushed up because of perceived failures of the Bank of Japan's policies as well as Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's three arrows to successfully stimulate the economy. The strengthening of the yen relative to the currencies of major trading partners such as China and the United States will lead to higher cost pressures on Japanese exports. Further fiscal stimulus and monetary easing will probably be implemented within the quarter, most likely during the July Bank of Japan meeting, and will be dependent on the global fallout of Brexit. The effect of monetary policies on the currency will be limited, since the Bank of Japan already owns so much of the bond market (37 percent in May). With the potential of conventional policy reaching its limits, there is likely to be increased talk within Japan's political circles of enacting more unconventional policies such as directly allocating funds to the public. But action on such divergent policies within the quarter is unlikely as Japan waits for more clarity on the long-term effects of Brexit.

The ailing economy will play into the most significant political event in Japan during the third quarter:

the upper house elections on July 10, where the Liberal Democratic Party-led ruling coalition does not have a supermajority. The opposition will seek to deny the ruling coalition the supermajority that would enable it to push for constitutional amendment. Nonetheless, the opposition's failure to run a unified list of candidates in proportional representation districts shows that cooperation has limits. Sweeping the Liberal Democratic Party from the majority appears to be beyond the opposition's capability, especially given its unproven record of governance, and Abe will proceed with broadening the Japan Self-Defense Force's freedom of action with or without a constitutional amendment.

After upper house elections, Abe will call on the Diet to pass the second stimulus budget of the year of about \$91 billion, which would take effect during the fall, in another attempt to stimulate consumption. Stimulus itself will not significantly affect the economy within the quarter, however. While the approval of more stimulus is not beyond the grasp of the ruling coalition (with Brexit lending more urgency to the stimulus), corporate-vested interests — with which the Liberal Democratic Party has strong ties — will continue to constrain Abe's ability to push structural reform, whatever the result of the upper house elections.

In the East China Sea, Japan will face an increasingly active Chinese navy as China attempts to deter Japan from intervening too forcefully in the South China Sea. This may in turn encourage the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force to more actively confront Chinese incursions rather than sitting behind the Japanese coast guard.

#### North Korean Defense

North Korea will slowly continue to equalize its defense and economic priorities. Most recently, the country replaced the Kim Jong Il-era National Defense Commission with a new State Affairs Commission (made up in large part of Party rather than military officials) as the highest decision-making body in the country. This effectively finalizes the return to institutionalized administration in North Korea.

Regardless of new economic policies, North Korea is unlikely to halt development of a survivable nuclear deterrent capability, and during the third quarter of 2016 the country is likely to test weapons such as the Musudan mobile intermediate-range ballistic missile, which appears to be a current testing priority. This in turn will drive steady improvement in the Japan-South Korea military relationship.

#### South Korea: Headed Toward Collapse

Entering the third quarter, the South Korean economy is teetering on the edge of collapse. External forces have decreased trade demand, and domestic consumption remains sluggish as household debt is rising and incomes falling. Most of South Korea's economic performance is heavily tied to trade, especially with China, which buys 26 percent of South Korea's total exports. But weak Chinese import demand and low global consumption demand will continue to hurt the South Korean economy. Thus, the country will be unable to depend on export manufacturing demand to soften the problems of growing household debt and wage stagnation.

The won will continue to weaken relative to the dollar given the unfavorable macroeconomic conditions for greater international investments — which have become even more unfavorable with Brexit. South Korea will attempt to ensure that the won remains competitive with the yuan and the yen, relative to the dollar. To manage external pressures against the economy, the government will make use of monetary easing and a recently unveiled fiscal stimulus package of about \$17 billion. The effectiveness of these measures is limited, however, by growing household debt: Any money pumped into the economy will likely be spent on debt payments rather than on consumption. While easing and stimulus measures will help alleviate some of the debt burden on household disposable income meant for consumption, weakness in exports, domestic expenditures and global investment will constrain the South Korean government's efforts to strengthen its economy.

#### Trade and Investment

During the quarter, the economies of ASEAN will cautiously monitor the global economic situation, avoiding drastic action if possible. Though severe trade impacts from Brexit are unlikely this quarter, ASEAN currencies may become more volatile because of appreciation in the yen and the dollar, which would increase the cost of financing any international debt held within ASEAN. Managing international debt will be most difficult for Indonesia (which has \$319 billion in debt) and Malaysia (\$208 billion). Malaysia faces increasing domestic problems arising from its political crisis combined with high household and corporate debt; Indonesia, meanwhile, continues to focus on economic reforms while also dealing with its sizable corporate debt financed by foreign currency.

In China, new construction (along with some demolition and reconstruction of old housing units) will keep commodity demand from tanking, but near-term increases in commodity prices will be tame because of China's persistent overcapacity — or its production of much less than it is actually capable of producing. Commodity-heavy economies such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Australia should therefore not expect a significant improvement in commodity prices. Their economies will remain constrained by the limited demand for commodities.

The quarter will be slow for trade deals, especially as Japan and the ASEAN countries wait for action in the U.S. Congress on the ratification of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which is not expected until at least the fourth quarter of 2016. But while there will be little activity toward the ratification of new trade deals, the race for infrastructure investment will remain vibrant. China and Japan will continue the search for infrastructure deals; Japan is planning to increase its investment into infrastructure projects from \$110 billion to \$200 billion. Both China and Japan will also take advantage of opportunities in Thailand as the ruling junta seeks to inject money into the economy ahead of 2017 elections by streamlining project approvals.

#### South China Sea

China's response to the U.N. Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling on territorial rights in the South China Sea will not be the only important maritime development to occur during the quarter. U.S. firms will explore the possibility of new arms deals with Vietnam now that the lethal arms embargo has been lifted, but maritime security assets will remain the easiest to integrate into Vietnam's logistics infrastructure at this early stage.

Finally, Indonesia, having improved the harmonization of its maritime policy across its various ministries, will continue to take a more active central role in the region. Within the quarter, it will probably start anti-terrorism patrols in the Sulu Sea under a trilateral maritime cooperation agreement among Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. Rodrigo Duterte, who was inaugurated president of the Philippines on June 30, is expected to formally sign the agreement soon. Though actual maritime activity under the deal will be limited, it does stand as an important foundational block for increased regional security cooperation.

#### Elsewhere in East Asia

##### Thailand

If voters support the new military-drafted Thai Constitution in a referendum in August, Thaksin Shinawatra's Pheu Thai party will reluctantly accept the result in order to hasten a return to elections. If it is voted down, the risk of protest will be the highest it has been since the 2014 coup. A rejected constitution would delay elections — still Thaksin's foremost goal, even if under a restrictive charter — indefinitely. The junta will crack down hard on any attempts to organize opposition and will try to rein in the Shinawatras by hanging ongoing legal cases over their heads, particularly those pending against Thaksin's sister, former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, and Thaksin's son.

##### Myanmar

The National League for Democracy plans to open comprehensive peace talks with the country's

myriad ethnic rebel groups — talks that will undoubtedly be laden with tension between the government and the military. But with the government and military reconciling their positions on ethnic issues, the talks are unlikely to trigger significant military action to undermine the new government's standing in the quarter. The talks will lay the groundwork for a new federal system of governance in Myanmar, but peace with the rebel groups holding territory along the Chinese border is not imminent.

## Malaysia

International investigations into the 1Malaysia Development Berhad scandal will continue to pressure Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak. But with the opposition still in disarray and his opponents within the ruling United Malays National Organization largely sidelined, the embattled prime minister will survive the quarter, even if former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad successfully rouses mass protest against him.

## Philippines

Other countries will spend the quarter cautiously observing President Duterte's actions, having had difficulty discerning his stance on foreign affairs. China will continue to float the possibility of aid from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, but large deals are unlikely given that the bank is only beginning and because Duterte still needs to settle into office during the quarter. Taiwan will hold early discussions with Duterte on opportunities for investment in the Philippines under Tsai's New Southbound Policy. The United States will make it an early priority to talk to Duterte and ensure that his avowed determination for the Philippines to chart its own course does not include a rollback of rotational basing under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement.

## Latin America

### Shortages and Inflation Threaten Venezuelan Stability

Venezuela enters the third quarter facing deepening economic and social crises with fewer and fewer funds. Meanwhile, the administration of President Nicolas Maduro will do its best to hang on to power amid calls for a referendum on a presidential recall. Some officials who see Maduro as the best guarantor of their interests — which include avoiding extradition to the United States and protecting their assets and power — remain loyal to him for now. But the opposition will continue to press for a referendum to be held this year so that an election for Maduro's successor can take place. The United States will probably keep encouraging dialogue between Maduro's government and his opponents to reduce political conflict in Venezuela. Maduro has the means to drag out talks and deflect pressure from the opposition for the next three months.

In the wake of the Brexit, a strengthened dollar will likely keep oil prices low, restricting Venezuela's already limited ability to boost imports amid its downturn. As a result, food shortages and skyrocketing inflation will continue. The economy's downward slide could, in turn, spur widespread social unrest. If instability gets drastically more violent and spreads, opposition parties and dissidents in the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela will press harder for the president to resign or submit to a recall referendum.

Lower revenues for state-owned energy firm Petroleos de Venezuela will raise the risk of Venezuela defaulting on its foreign debts early in the fourth quarter. (Some \$5 billion in debt payments are due in October and November.) The government will continue to scale back its imports in an effort to pay these bills, but the strategy could aggravate food shortages. This could, in turn, fuel more public unrest, which would widen the splits within the ruling PSUV and weaken Maduro's position.

### Colombia Demobilizes Its Biggest Insurgency

Now that the Colombian government has reached a firm cease-fire with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Bogota's attention will turn toward solidifying and implementing a permanent peace deal. To that end, the FARC will likely begin demobilizing over the next few months, a process that will require the militants to gather at a predetermined location to surrender their weapons. Though some progress on this issue will be made in the third quarter, the demobilization process will probably drag out for the remainder of the year. Alongside it, the government will take the necessary legal steps to set up a national vote on the peace deal. If the accord is approved, it will become law, giving the rebels an additional incentive to permanently stand down.

Once the FARC starts to demobilize, the most significant security threats left in Colombia will be the smaller National Liberation Army (ELN) and criminal groups, the largest of which is Clan Usuga. Bogota will continue to target both, though it is possible that the ELN will agree to open peace talks of its own in the third quarter. Negotiations would largely depend, however, on whether the ELN acquiesces to certain government demands, including the release of hostages.

### Brazil Wraps up Its Impeachment Process

The lengthy political drama surrounding former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff will draw to a close over the next few months. During the third quarter, the Brazilian Senate will hold hearings to determine Rousseff's fate; the decision of whether to impeach her must be made by November. Should the Senate choose to proceed with the impeachment process, it could extend into the final quarter of the year.

Meanwhile, Brazil's interim president, Michel Temer, is embroiled in his own legal scandal. Temer faces allegations that he illegally tapped into the funds of state-owned energy firm Petroleo Brasileiro, though the charges appear unlikely to lead to a formal case in the near future that could threaten his position. Legally, the president may be shielded from prosecution for any crimes committed prior to his term.

As Brazilian officials continue to deal with the political fallout of the Petrobras affair, they will also start implementing tough austerity measures, including a proposed cap on government spending. In the long term, approval for reducing mandated expenditures in certain areas of Brazil's budget, including education and health care, would give future administrations more room to rein in runaway spending.

### Argentina Struggles With Austerity

Argentina will continue to implement austerity measures as well in the third quarter. President Mauricio Macri's government will stick to its current path, trimming government spending through budget cuts and layoffs in the public sector. Macri, however, will be limited in just how far he can scale back expenditures since measures such as bigger hikes in electricity or natural gas prices could carry steep political costs. With the country's 2017 midterm elections in mind, the president will try to avoid moves that could incite more protests or undermine his support among voters.

### Mexican Politicians Gear up for an Election

In Mexico, potential candidates will vie for their parties' nominations ahead of the 2018 presidential vote. Discussions are also likely to continue between the conservative National Action Party and the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution, which intend to seal an alliance and make a joint bid for the presidency. The ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, having suffered a setback in June's state elections, will also hold internal talks to select a presidential candidate. Because the election is still nearly two years away, though, any alliances or candidates to emerge in the coming months will be subject to change.

In the meantime, Mexico will probably continue to experience lower export growth than it has seen in several years. The decline in exports can be explained in part by slowing growth in U.S. demand for some high-value Mexican products, such as automobiles, as well as by low oil prices.

## Panama's Newly Expanded Canal Opens for Business

The expansion of the Panama Canal was completed on June 26, and the project will doubtless make waves in global trade. Larger vessels can now transit the canal, and some ports on the U.S. East Coast and in the Caribbean are building or modifying infrastructure to receive them. These adjustments will enable the Panama Canal to compete with other trade routes. That said, the largest cargo vessels still will not be able to pass through the canal, which will somewhat limit the amount of trade that shifts to it. In the long term, the impact of a wider and deeper Panama Canal will also be constrained by external factors, including the slowing of trade worldwide.

## Amending Mercosur

The Brazilian and Argentine governments have recently said they were unhappy with the policies of the Common Market of the South (Mercosur) that limit among its members free trade options. Current Mercosur regulations prohibit individual members from negotiating free trade agreements with outside parties, something that, according to Brazil and Argentina, constrains foreign trade in a period of slowed economic growth. Brasilia and Buenos Aires will lobby for the regulation's amendment accordingly, but it will be a long arduous process thanks in part to Mercosur's institutional inertia and to its members' domestic constraints.

## South Asia

### In India, Tax Reform Will Dominate 'Monsoon Session'

New Delhi will probably bring an amendment to the Goods and Services Tax Bill to a vote in the upper house of parliament during the late July to mid-August Monsoon Session of parliament. If passed, this would create a single tax regime for all India. Amending the bill is the first step in a lengthy legislative process toward implementing the overall tax reform, which is intended to improve tax collection, promote consumption and boost economic growth.

The opposition Indian National Congress party, the largest voting bloc in the upper house, has so far blocked the bill. Congress' opposition to the measure stems from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) refusal to agree to three amendments. These amendments would cap the tax rate at 18 percent, create a dispute resolution mechanism for resolving tax disputes that empowers the states and impose a 1 percent interstate tax.

Rather than agree to the Congress party's demands, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has sought to woo regional parties away from Congress' coalition using incentives such as offering states tax reimbursements for up to five years of lost tax revenue. Its overtures have won support from across the political spectrum, including ideological rivals on the left such as West Bengal's All India Trinamool Congress and Uttar Pradesh's Samajwadi Party.

As a result, the BJP is better positioned than ever to marshal the two-thirds of parliament it needs to win passage of the amendment. Even so, the Congress party might be able to thwart passage by causing disruptions in the chamber, such as shouting and sit-ins. By leaving Congress few allies on the issue beyond the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) party, which represents the southern state of Tamil Nadu, the BJP has limited its ability to block the bill.

Indian monetary policy probably will remain steady in the new quarter even though Reserve Bank of India Gov. Raghuram Rajan — who will chair the bank's August policy meeting — is stepping down in September. With the implementation of land, labor, and tax reforms unlikely this quarter, the government will turn to monetary policy to boost growth, meaning it probably will choose a successor to

Rajan willing to contemplate deeper rate cuts.

As the name of India's summer session implies, the annual monsoon typically arrives during the third quarter. If this year does see rains that are heavier than normal, a more abundant October harvest can be expected. Either way, the country's 5.76 percent inflation rate will not be affected this quarter.

In the wake of the United Kingdom's referendum on leaving the European Union, India expects rising compliance costs for the more than 800 Indian-owned firms in the United Kingdom. These companies now will have to ensure regulatory compliance in both the United Kingdom and the European Union. The Brexit will also compel India to negotiate a free trade agreement with the United Kingdom separate from the one it is currently negotiating with the European Union. It also has implications for India's IT service exports, one-sixth of which go to the United Kingdom.

At 7.6 percent, India's growth rate is the fastest among the world's major economies. Recently released government data, however, shows jobs growing at the slowest pace since 2009, suggesting India's growth is capital intensive rather than labor intensive. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent decision to relax foreign direct investment requirements across the insurance, aviation, retail, and defense sectors is a bid to promote job growth. The executive measures Modi used to relax those requirements will expire, however, unless parliament approves them, something he hopes will happen during the Monsoon Session. This quarter will likely see an uptick in consumption, since New Delhi approved a 23 percent pay increase for 10 million federal employees and pensioners.

#### Conflict and Cooperation on the Afghan-Pakistani Border

The Pakistani military will continue the last phase of anti-militant Operation Zarb-e-Azb in the northwestern region of North Waziristan, prompting militants to launch sporadic retaliatory attacks against soft targets throughout Pakistan. Meanwhile, Afghan-Pakistani ties will continue to be strained as Islamabad forges ahead to secure the shared 1,370-mile (2,204-kilometer) border by installing checkpoints and continuing work on a trench along its entire length roughly four meters deep and four meters wide. By securing its western border, Pakistan can demonstrate its leverage over landlocked Afghanistan, which relies on supply routes crossing through Pakistan. NATO will maintain a presence in Afghanistan through 2020. The Taliban insurgency will sustain its vigor throughout the fighting season, ensuring that a steady stream of Afghan migration into Europe continues.

In response to Pakistan's border security moves, Afghanistan will enhance its cooperation with India on building the Chabahar Port in Iran to diversify its trade routes. Kabul, which also fears Pakistan could deport Afghan refugees, will work to ensure relations with Islamabad do not worsen ahead of talks at the United Nations in July to discuss the future of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. For its part, Washington will work to improve its strained relationship with Islamabad to help jump-start peace talks with the Taliban suspended by Pakistan in the aftermath of the U.S. attack that killed Taliban leader Mullah Mansour in Pakistan. Indo-Pakistani ties will remain weak but stable as both nations jockey to gain entrance into the Nuclear Suppliers Group

Fallout from the Panama Papers scandal will continue in Pakistan. Since the opposition cannot even agree on how to proceed with an investigation, it is unlikely that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will be forced to resign this quarter. Sharif's delaying tactic is apparently working, so we can expect more of the same from the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz). Islamabad will continue to try to distract the public from the issue by pointing to the government's successes in combatting terrorism and in attracting foreign investment for development projects related to the China-Pakistan-Economic-Corridor.

Afghanistan's National Unity Government led by President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah

Abdullah is due to implement electoral reforms in the coming months. A string of challenges including a gridlocked parliament suggest Kabul will not achieve its objectives this quarter, thereby threatening to delay parliamentary and district council elections scheduled for Oct. 15. A loya jirga in September to debate a constitutional amendment aimed at converting Abdullah's role into that of a prime minister is unlikely despite an agreement between Ghani and Ashraf to hold one. The National Unity Government is also likely to extend its term through the end of the quarter even as rivals challenge its legitimacy.

### Attacks in Bangladesh Will Continue

Despite Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's launch of a nationwide crackdown resulting in 18,000 arrests, her boldest effort at stamping out militancy, sporadic attacks will persist. Hasina will blame her political rivals, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami, for the attacks, using them as a pretext to marginalize them.

## Sub-Saharan Africa

### Leadership Transition Pending in Angola

The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) has spent the past several months preparing for its Aug. 17-20 party congress. The stakes are higher than usual at this congress because President Jose Eduardo dos Santos, who has held office since 1979, has said he plans to retire from "active" politics in 2018.

The new MPLA leadership list may reveal a successor for dos Santos, allowing us to assess the direction of the party and the country. The candidate to take over when dos Santos decides to retire as president, party head or both could be the new party head or the No. 2 figure in the party. The candidate is likely to be a veteran party official who has risen from the ranks and probably will have economic or defense experience. He will also probably have a mastery of the complex system of patronage that defines the MPLA-run system.

The country is also on the cusp of another significant change as state oil company Sonangol is set to begin a restructuring ordered by dos Santos in the upcoming quarter. The changes will give the president greater power over the company in the form of a new board overseeing the company that will report directly to his office. Dos Santos has already installed his daughter, Isabel dos Santos, to head the company (her official role is non-executive administrator and president of the board of directors). Her appointment will ensure the overhaul is thorough. Having her at the helm of what is arguably Angola's most powerful entity could also help the president ensure a smoother transition to his preferred candidate to be the next president.

### Nigeria Faces Pressure on Multiple Fronts

Though Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari recently marked a year in office, the country's tough financial and security situation gave him little reason to celebrate. The slow recovery of oil prices has stymied growth, while official unemployment and inflation have risen. The economic picture is unlikely to brighten significantly in the next quarter, and the country might even dip into recession. The floating (and subsequent sharp devaluation) of its currency, the naira, will help stop reserves from dropping sharply. But it has made the currency volatile, helping to increase inflation. If the currency continues to decline and inflation continues to rise, labor unrest could break out.

Meanwhile, attacks on oil and natural gas infrastructure in the Niger Delta region have contributed to declining oil production. A group calling itself the Niger Delta Avengers has been behind almost all of the sabotage. Nigeria has few military options to address the attacks because of the scale of oil and gas infrastructure combined with limitations on military resources and difficult terrain. So the federal government has reached out to the militants and stakeholders in the Niger Delta, offering talks in



search of a negotiated solution.

But talks will prove difficult, too. The federal government will struggle to satisfy the region's myriad stakeholders. These actors include figures from the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (a militant group that eventually came to terms with the federal government in the late 2000s), a new generation of militants, and local leaders possibly seeking to redress their drop in political fortunes since Goodluck Jonathan left the presidency.

But between the state of the economy and needs elsewhere in the country, Abuja may not have much to offer the Niger Delta region. In light of this, we predict militancy in the Niger Delta will continue to fester. Attacks on oil and gas infrastructure will continue at some rate as government efforts to find a solution drag on, causing Nigeria's oil production to remain volatile.

While militancy persists in the delta region, northeastern Nigeria has seen a decline in Boko Haram's conventional capabilities, even though the group continues to make bombs and recruit suicide bombers. Infighting among militants plus an increasing tempo of operations by the Nigerian and neighboring governments against it have driven the radical Islamist group to shift tactics. In a move reminiscent of the longtime Central African militant group the Lord's Resistance Army, smaller bands of Boko Haram adherents have taken to raiding smaller towns for food and other provisions. This dynamic is likely to continue.

In the regulatory sphere, Nigeria's economic difficulties and institutional weaknesses have hampered efforts at reform. Despite Buhari's best intentions to reform the oil industry, for example, upstream reform has lagged, though some progress has been made in downstream reform. Investment in the petroleum sector has tapered off in part because of fears of how the Petroleum Industry Bill currently before the Nigerian Senate would adjust royalty payouts. The matter will remain a major challenge for the Buhari administration in the months ahead.

#### Municipal Elections in South Africa

Municipal elections in South Africa are slated for Aug. 3. Held every five years, the elections will occur in districts and municipalities in all nine provinces. While local elections rarely merit scrutiny, the races will provide a picture of the health of the African National Congress (ANC), which has governed South Africa since the end of apartheid. Public dissatisfaction has simmered as key economic indicators, including unemployment and production in multiple sectors, continue to disappoint.

The Brexit could pile on South Africa's economic woes given the country's economic ties to the United Kingdom and the rand's recent volatility. South African GDP contracted 1.2 percent in the first quarter of 2016 compared with the previous quarter, and the chances are good that the economy will enter recession before the end of the year. With commodity prices and drought conditions unlikely to improve any time soon, the ANC's ability to improve matters before the elections is limited.

The ruling party may well lose in some urban centers, including Port Elizabeth and Pretoria, to the Democratic Alliance. It probably also will lose support to the nationalist-Marxist Economic Freedom Fighters. A poor showing will increase calls to remove President Jacob Zuma from the party leadership before his presidential term ends in 2019. Meanwhile, the ANC may choose to increase handouts (such as subsidized housing, water and jobs) to shore up its support among the impoverished majority going forward, especially if the Economic Freedom Fighters continue to make inroads into this prized constituency. By contrast, any losses to the Democratic Alliance will be mostly symbolic, given the ANC's proven ability to mobilize massive numbers of voters.

#### Presidential Elections in Gabon and Zambia

Low global energy prices have limited economic growth in Gabon with a presidential election set for Aug. 28. This has translated into public dissatisfaction with the ruling Gabonese Democratic Party and the country's president, Ali-Ben Bongo Ondimba.

Bongo struggled to win the presidency after the death of his father, longtime Gabonese ruler Omar Bongo, in 2009; credible claims of voter fraud were raised against Bongo in the aftermath of the election. Given the economic headwinds Gabon faces, minor protests could break out after the election among partisans of the losing side. The lack of unified opposition means Bongo is likely to win given the advantage of incumbency and the resources the ruling party will bring to bear.

In Zambia, incumbent President Edgar Lungu will struggle for re-election Aug. 11. In office since just January 2015, he has had little time to build his support network. Unlike Bongo, Lungu lacks a powerful and entrenched political machine. But as in Gabon, commodities-dependent Zambia is struggling economically. The slump in global copper prices has led to unemployment and other difficulties in the country's Copperbelt province. Severe drought has also afflicted the country.

The election pits Lungu against Hakainde Hichilema, who lost to Lungu by fewer than 28,000 votes (or just under 1.7 percent of total votes cast) in the 2015 by-election held after the death of longtime President Michael Sata. Since then, Hichilema has worked to broaden his coalition, meaning Lungu may not garner as much support as he did before. Regardless of who wins, Zambia will still face economic difficulties as copper prices remain relatively low and efforts to diversify its economy falter.

#### Terrorism in West Africa

Transnational terrorist groups operating in the Sahel and Greater West Africa have struck several soft targets in urban centers in recent months, particularly hotels and other locations frequented by Westerners. An uptick in attacks against U.N. convoys and peacekeepers in Mali has also been noted. The countries most at risk are Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and, to a lesser extent, Senegal and Chad.

There are three reasons we expect attacks on soft targets to continue: They are relatively easy for terrorist groups to execute, they bolster support for the extremists' cause, and they demonstrate the relevance of groups such as al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb at a time when international attention is focused on the Islamic State. While radical Islamist groups may try to carry out attacks on a much larger scale, the sort of smaller, soft target attacks seen lately will remain more common. This is because bigger attacks have a higher rate of failure, and security at important sites across the region has been strengthened since the spate of attacks. West African states are unlikely to face existential threats from these transnational groups.

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"Cave Quid Dicis, Quando Et Cui"

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