



National Federation of Republican Women

POLITICAL BRIEFING

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This Week on the Hill:

The Senate takes on the National Defense Authorization Act, including Senator Gillibrand's controversial sexual assault amendment, and the House works on three energy bills.

Failed Security of ObamaCare Website

The House Science Committee will call computer hackers to testify on Capitol Hill at committee hearings on the lax privacy safeguards when an individual logs on to the ObamaCare website, and divulging sensitive personal information

The website requires users to input such personal information as birth dates, Social Security numbers and household incomes in order to obtain information about potential health coverage, says House Science Committee Chairman Lamar Smith (R-TX), but security experts have pointed out flaws in the site that put the personal data at risk and subject users to the threat of identity theft.

A second flaw will be exposed by testimony from Morgan Wright, an expert in cybersecurity, who will expose operations dysfunction that could lead to fraud when consumers attempt to sign up on the insurance exchange. Wright has said that the Obama administration could not have completely complied with privacy provisions in the Federal Information Security Management Act when it was making changes to the website just before its ill-fated launch. "It is inconceivable that there could have been a comprehensive security review if they were still making major changes and substantial changes to it one or two days before" it went live, he says (*The Hill*, November 13, 2013).

In a letter to White House Chief Technology Officer Todd Park, inviting Park to appear and defend the website's possible security flaws, Chairman Smith explained that the committee "will examine concerns about the lack of privacy standards for personal information passing through the HealthCare.gov website and the threat posed to Americans if hackers on the

Internet gained access to such information."

According to a source, *The Hill* reports that the White House declined to make Park available to testify. Park has been subpoenaed to appear before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee as part of a hearing on the roll out of the entire website.

Approval Ratings for Obama Drop Drastically

The Washington Post reports that disapproval ratings of President Obama and strong public sentiment against the Affordable Health Care Act have "pushed Obama to the lowest point of his presidency, with dwindling faith in his competence and in many of the personal attributes that have buoyed him in the past" (*The Washington Post*, November 19, 2013).

Fifty-seven percent of those polled by *The Washington Post* and ABC News say they oppose ObamaCare with 46 percent of that number stating they are strongly against it. The provision of the law which requires that all individuals obtain health insurance or pay a penalty is opposed by almost 2 to 1, with more than half indicating they strongly oppose it. Disapproval of Obama's handling of the healthcare law's roll-out stands at 63 percent with a majority saying they strongly disapprove.

For the first time in Obama's presidency, 55 percent of Americans polled say they have an unfavorable impression of him with his overall approval rating having dropped six percentage points in a month. Forty-four percent of those polled state they strongly disapprove of the way he is handling his job--the worst numbers of his presidency.

Budget Solutions May Include Farm Bill

A farm bill conference committee began last month along with the budget conference committee and the top stumbling block will most likely be reconciling

the \$40 billion in food stamp cuts in the House farm bill with the \$4.5 billion cut found in the Senate version.

Senator Mike Johanns (R-NE), former Governor of Nebraska and Secretary of Agriculture under President George W. Bush, believes that farmers might be willing to sacrifice annual direct payments which bolster their income and pay into crop insurance programs which provide a backstop in rough years as long as they have the risk management tools they need to succeed. Senator Johanns states that eliminating direct payments to farmers and streamlining duplicative conservation programs could save as much as \$13 billion.

He points to the food stamp program as "the biggest sticking point in farm bill negotiations," (*The Hill*, November 13, 2013). Roughly 80 percent of the farm bills in both houses go to nutrition programs, according to Representative Collin Peterson (D-MN). The Senate bill cuts \$4 billion from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or one-half of one percent, and the House bill cuts approximately ten times more. One method of compromise, Senator Johanns adds, would be to crack down on States that skirt eligibility requirements for SNAP recipients by enrolling individuals who do not qualify, thus saving approximately \$20 billion and also ensure the limited resources are not being diluted by State programs that "lure unqualified Americans into unneeded federal benefits."

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