
POLITICO

Congress' tricky debate over surveillance – BOEHNER ON GMA: SNOWDEN 'A TRAITOR' – Obama rallies support for immigration – Congressional picnic postponed – FBI INSIDER PROBE HITS CONGRESS

By Scott Wong – June 11, 2013

CONGRESS' TRICKY DEBATE OVER SURVEILLANCE; SECURITY OFFICIALS BRIEF HOUSE TODAY – Burgess Everett and Jake Sherman report for the hometown paper: “As surveillance disclosures rock the political world, lawmakers are urging intense discussion over the methods used by the Obama administration to monitor email and cellphone traffic. Much of that ‘tremendous debate,’ as Sen. John Boozman (R-Ark.) put it, will happen behind closed doors because of the classified nature of the National Security Agency programs in question. But vast changes to major national security laws like the PATRIOT Act and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act seem unlikely – although some lawmakers will push for more transparency and some tinkering around the edges. ...

-- “For now, [Senate Intelligence Committee Chairwoman Dianne] Feinstein is concentrating on educating her colleagues. After holding one classified briefing attended by 27 senators last week, Feinstein said Monday that she plans to hold another classified briefing with Obama administration security officials on Thursday. ... In the Senate, a band of pro-privacy crusaders – including Sens. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), Rand Paul (R-Ky.), and Mike Lee (R-Utah) – are readying to push forward in their quest to implement more transparency. Rep. Thomas Massie (R-Ky.) and Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) have indicated they back that effort. ... But the legislation that serves as the legal basis for the NSA surveillance – the PATRIOT Act and FISA – seems to be relatively popular in Congress, even if some lawmakers believe it is now being misinterpreted. ...

-- “Meanwhile, the House Republican leadership is bracing for a debate over privacy and government snooping, but their message is: not this week. Top Republicans are going to swiftly move to ensure that lawmakers don't use the National Defense Authorization Act – the bill that sets policy for the armed forces – to litigate privacy policy. The reasons are numerous, but most important, the bill will be debated in an open setting, not a closed session where classified information could be discussed. They also don't want any substantive policy changes to seem rushed. A more appropriate venue might come during the next few weeks, when House Intelligence Chairman Mike Rogers (R-Mich.) will bring his intelligence reauthorization bill to the floor.

-- “Republican leadership will keep a close eye on lawmakers’ reaction to a House-wide Tuesday intelligence briefing featuring Deputy Attorney General James Cole; FBI Deputy Director Sean Joyce; NSA Deputy Director Chris Inglis; and Robert Litt, the general counsel of the office of the Director of National Intelligence. Those same four officials briefed the Senate last week.”
<http://politi.co/12C4BgA>

THE CLOSED-DOOR BRIEFING is scheduled for 5 p.m. today in the CVC Auditorium. A media stakeout will be allowed.

SPEAKER JOHN BOEHNER, appearing on “Good Morning America,” called Snowden “a traitor” for leaking classified info about the NSA programs. <http://politi.co/116wFWt> And two members of the Senate Intelligence Committee – Chairwoman Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Bill Nelson (D-Fla.) – agreed it amounted to “treason.” <http://cbsn.ws/11cLwuW> and <http://bit.ly/ZGZqbi>

THE NEW YORK TIMES’ A1 HEADLINE captures the obvious challenges of debating a top-secret program: “Debate on Secret Data Looks Unlikely, Partly Due to Secrecy.”
<http://nyti.ms/15TePpK>

WASHINGTON’S FALL LINEUP: DEBT-LIMIT FIGHT, SHUTDOWN THREAT – Manu Raju and John Bresnahan report for the hometown paper: “With Washington consumed by scandals this summer, the White House and GOP congressional leaders are slowly lurching toward a potential debt default or government shutdown this fall. Three months after President Barack Obama began his charm offensive with Senate Republicans, the two sides have yet to even agree on the scope of the spending or deficit problems — let alone what’s needed to solve it. Their sharp differences were on display in private meetings on Capitol Hill last week between Senate GOP lawmakers and top White House officials. They underscore the growing expectations that the two sides will fail to reach a budget agreement this year, meaning the crisis atmosphere that dominated the fiscal debate during much of 2011 and 2012 could return in the coming months.

...

-- “While the Senate was paying its respects on Wednesday to the late Democrat Frank Lautenberg, White House chief of staff Denis McDonough privately met with more than a dozen Senate Republicans who outlined their view of the budget picture over the next three decades instead of over the 10-year window used by administration number crunchers, according to attendees. McDonough and Rob Nabors, White House deputy chief of staff, were noncommittal on Senate Republicans’ budget projections, which were presented by Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.). But sources familiar with the meeting say the White House is skeptical of the Republican numbers because they would make it easier for the GOP to achieve its policy objectives.”
<http://politi.co/13yRY2v>

NYT, A1, “U.S. Drops Bid to Limit Sales of Morning-After Pill, By Michael D. Shear and Pam Belluck: “The Obama administration has decided to stop trying to block over-the-counter availability of the best-known morning-after contraceptive pill for all women and girls, a move fraught with political repercussions for President Obama. The government’s decision means that any woman or girl will soon be able to walk into a drugstore and buy the pill, Plan B One-Step, without a prescription. The Justice Department had been fighting to prevent that outcome, but said late Monday afternoon that it would accept its losses in recent court rulings and begin putting into effect a judge’s order to have the Food and Drug Administration certify the drug for nonprescription use. ... The Justice Department appears to have concluded that it might lose its case with the appeals court and would have to decide whether to appeal to the Supreme Court.

That would drastically elevate the debate over the politically delicate issue for Mr. Obama.”
<http://nyti.ms/15TfCaa>

IMMIGRATION BILL SEES FIRST VOTES TODAY IN SENATE – Erica Werner writes for the AP: “Senators prepared Monday for the first votes in the full Senate on a landmark immigration bill, readying amendments on contentious issues including border security, back taxes and health care coverage. The two votes scheduled for Tuesday afternoon are on procedural measures to officially allow debate to move forward on the far-reaching measure to remake the nation’s immigration laws and offer eventual citizenship to some 11 million people now here illegally. Both votes are expected to succeed by comfortable margins, because even some senators with deep misgivings about the immigration bill say that the issue deserves a Senate debate. The real fights will come in the following days and weeks, as Republican senators offer amendments they say are needed to strengthen the bill enough that they can vote in favor. Some of these may pass; others already are being dismissed by the bill’s supporters as attempts to kill the bill.

-- “One of the bill’s authors, Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., has said the measure needs stronger border control measures if it is going to make it all the way to President Barack Obama’s desk. He’s been supportive of an amendment announced by Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, to add new requirements on border security that need to happen before anyone can obtain a permanent residence green card.” <http://bo.st/14SodHP>

PRESIDENT OBAMA WILL RALLY SUPPORT FOR THE IMMIGRATION BILL – The Washington Post’s David Nakamura reports: “President Obama, his second-term agenda bogged down amid political controversies and partisan gridlock, will attempt Tuesday to keep public pressure on the Senate to move forward with a sweeping proposal to overhaul the nation’s immigration system. Obama is scheduled to appear at the White House with a broad coalition of immigration supporters to tout the legislation that has reached the Senate floor this week. With the full chamber expected to engage in weeks of debate, the president is trying to exert his influence while not upsetting the delicate balance of a bipartisan group of eight senators that negotiated the deal. ...

-- “Appearing in the East Room on Tuesday, Obama will be joined by a coalition of immigration reform supporters meant to illustrate the broad support. Among them will be U.S. Chamber of Commerce President Thomas Donohue, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, former Bush administration Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez, business executive Steve Case, and San Antonio Mayor Julian Castro (D).” <http://wapo.st/11sFt4u>

BACK AT 100: SEN. CHIESA SWORN IN AHEAD OF IMMIGRATION VOTES – James Rowley reports for Bloomberg: “Just in time for the debate on immigration overhaul, Jeffrey Chiesa was sworn in by Vice President Joe Biden as the new U.S. senator from New Jersey, a post he’ll hold until an Oct. 16 special election. ‘Senator Chiesa comes at a time when we are having some momentous debates’ particularly on immigration, New Jersey’s other senator, Democrat Bob Menendez, said in a floor speech welcoming his new colleague. Despite a short tenure, ‘he will have an opportunity to cast some critical votes,’ Menendez said. Chiesa was New Jersey’s attorney general until his June 6 appointment by Republican Governor Chris Christie to the seat vacated by the death of Democrat Frank Lautenberg. Analysts say Chiesa can be expected to represent the policy views of his political patron.” <http://buswk.co/13U2TTt>

BY THE NUMBERS: @HillaryClinton

Tweets: 1

Following: 5 (including Bill Clinton and Chelsea Clinton)

Followers: 332,932 as of 7:20 a.m. Tuesday

TWITTER WARS HEAT UP IN BATTLE FOR SENATE – James Hohmann writes for POLITICO: “Here’s a glimpse at the real-time battle for the Senate being waged from party headquarters in Washington: Republican Brad Dayspring suggests Democrat Justin Barasky is mentally ill and offers to send over ‘a big bottle’ of anti-depressants. Barasky’s boss, Matt Canter, likens Dayspring to a rabid dog. Dayspring calls Barasky a ‘stalker.’ Barasky called him the same thing a day later. And on and on it goes, in an often juvenile game of Twitter one-upmanship between spokesmen for the party’s official committees — the entities in charge of getting their candidates elected to the world’s greatest deliberative body. The men fighting the Twitter war (and they are all men) insist the time-consuming antics serve an actual political strategy.” <http://politi.co/12BRkV9>

A message from POWERJOBS: Looking to make a career move? New positions on our radar this week: Vice President, Chief of Staff at Johns Hopkins University, Public Policy Principal at American Cancer Society and Research Manager at Congressional Research Service. Interested? Apply to these jobs and more at POWERJOBS.com; finally, a career site made for YOU!

GOOD TUESDAY MORNING, JUNE 11, 2013, where your Huddle host is wishing a very happy birthday to his daughter, Olivia, who turns 1 today! Send tips, suggestions, comments, complaints and corrections to swong@politico.com. If you don't already, please follow me on Twitter @scottwongDC.

My new followers include @patdelaney and @RepMarthaRoby.

TODAY IN CONGRESS – The Senate is in at 10 a.m. and continues debate on the immigration reform bill. The chamber will recess from 12:30 to 2:15 p.m. for weekly party caucus luncheons, then hold a key procedural vote on the immigration bill.

The House meets at noon with votes expected about 6:30 p.m. on several bills considered under suspension of the rules, including the South Utah Valley Electric Conveyance Act, Rattlesnake Mountain Public Access Act, and the North Cascades National Park Service Complex Fish Stocking Act.

AROUND THE HILL – House Democratic Conference Chairman Xavier Becerra joins immigration reform advocates to at 9 a.m. at the National Press Club, 529 15th St. NW. Also at 9 a.m. at the Press Club, Sen. Ted Cruz addresses The Federalist Society’s First Annual Executive Branch Review Conference. Sen. Bernie Sanders speaks on climate change and the Keystone pipeline at 10 a.m. at the Senate Swamp. House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer holds pen and pad briefing at 10:30 a.m. in H-144.

Rep. Scott Garrett, chairman of the Congressional Constitution Caucus, participates in the Cato Institute’s briefing on federal control of America’s schools, noon in Rayburn 2325. Rep. Jim Renacci, Sen. Rob Portman and others speak on the Pro Football Hall of Fame Commemorative Coin Act at 2 p.m. at the House Triangle. Sens. Mark Begich and Jack Reed host a tele-town hall at 5 p.m. to discuss keeping student loan rates low.

FBI INSIDER-TRADING PROBE TURNS TO CONGRESS – Brody Mullins, James V. Grimaldi and Devlin Barrett write for the Wall Street Journal: “The Federal Bureau of Investigation has shifted the focus of a broadening insider-trading investigation to Congress, seeking information to determine whether one of Sen. Charles Grassley's aides may have been involved in sharing information about an important government decision with Wall Street this spring, said a person familiar with the matter. It is rare for federal law-enforcement officials to involve congressional aides in investigations, mainly because the Constitution extends legal protection to legislative-branch employees for their official duties. Making matters more unusual, the Iowa senator is the top Republican on the Senate Judiciary Committee, which oversees the Justice Department. In addition to the FBI probe, the Justice Department last month sent Mr. Grassley's office a letter seeking information on the same Grassley health-care aide, Rodney Whitlock, said a person familiar with the matter. Mr. Grassley agreed to cooperate and has shared the information with the Justice Department, his spokeswoman said.

-- “The Justice Department and FBI want to know about communications Mr. Whitlock may have had with people and entities who had a role in passing along word of the government decision to investors, said people familiar with the matter. One of the individuals is Mark Hayes, a former Grassley aide and now a lobbyist, said people familiar with the matter. Mr. Whitlock worked for Mr. Hayes for several years when Mr. Hayes was Mr. Grassley's top health-care aide.

-- “At issue is whether anyone violated insider-trading laws by improperly tipping off investors of a coming announcement by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to restore cuts in funding for private health insurance plans. ‘Rodney could not possibly have conveyed to Mark Hayes or anyone else what CMS was planning to do on Medicare Advantage because he didn't know,’ Mr. Grassley's spokeswoman said, speaking on behalf of Mr. Whitlock and referring to the decision in question by the CMS. She added that the Justice Department has told Senate lawyers that Mr. Whitlock is not a target of their investigation.” <http://on.wsj.com/14SrneC>

THE ROGERS REPORT: 5-YEAR FARM BILL CLEARS SENATE – “A landmark five-year Farm Bill cleared the Senate on Monday evening, setting the stage for a long-delayed fight on the House floor next week over major revisions in agriculture policy and the future of food stamps,” David Rogers writes for POLITICO. “The 66-27 roll call exceeded last year's margin with 18 Republicans joining Democrats on passage. And the increased GOP support makes it more difficult for Speaker John Boehner to walk away from the choices before him — as he did last summer. ‘We have a real shot to get this done,’ said Sen. John Hoeven (R-N.D.). Nonetheless, the task at hand is difficult. Republicans are genuinely divided over the role of government in farm policy, with the speaker — a veteran of the House Agriculture Committee — engaged in his own personal war against a new milk- supply management proposal in both the House and Senate bills. Food-stamp reform and the deep cuts demanded by the House raise fundamental questions for both parties. On top of all this, nearly 200 of the 435 House members have never before been part of a farm bill debate given the immense turnover of recent years. The result could be a bloody free-for-all, driven by regional and ideological differences.” <http://politi.co/19iUf6M>

POLL: MARKEY LEADS GOMEZ BY 7 POINTS – Joshua Miller reports for the Boston Globe: “A new poll of likely voters released Monday found Democrat Edward J. Markey leading Republican Gabriel E. Gomez by seven percentage points, two weeks before Massachusetts voters choose their next US Senator. The Suffolk University poll found Markey ahead 48 percent to Gomez's 41 percent, with 10 percent of respondents still undecided. The margin of error was plus or minus 4.4 percent. The race appears to have tightened substantially since early May,

when a Suffolk University/7 News poll found that Markey had a 17-point lead over Gomez. ... On Wednesday, President Obama is set to campaign for Markey in Boston.” <http://bo.st/14Sp5MK>

BEING PRESIDENT IS NO PICNIC: W.H. POSTPONES CONGRESSIONAL PICNIC – David Hawkings writes for Roll Call: “Mark 3:14 p.m. Monday as the moment when President Barack Obama’s always-overhyped congressional charm offensive was officially called to a halt. That was when the president’s legislative affairs staff dispatched a curt and totally unapologetic email informing every senator and House member that one of their two guaranteed invitations to the White House for the year had been rescinded. The congressional picnic, an annual right of early summer for more than three decades, has been postponed indefinitely. ‘We are hopeful that we will be able to reschedule this event for September,’ was all the hope the email offered. ‘Thank you.’ No official reason was given, although administration officials only magnified the slight with their backchannel explanation. The move had nothing to do with the sequester, they asserted defensively, remembering all the lawmaker annoyance after blaming the across-the-board cuts at the Secret Service for the cancellation, at least through September, of White House tours. (Some disgruntled members proposed keeping the tours by cutting the presidential entertainment budget.)

-- “Instead, aides offered, the decision had everything to do with the already overstuffed presidential schedule. ... To many lawmakers, it matters not at all which staffers are to blame. Either by commission or omission, they’ve been dissed by the president once again. And this is a snub they’ll likely remember long after the president’s second-term agenda has been dispatched.” <http://bit.ly/11TksQf>

PRITZKER, FOXX WIN UNANIMOUS VOTE IN COMMITTEE – The AP: “A Senate committee has voted unanimously to approve President Obama’s nominees to head the Commerce and Transportation departments. The Commerce, Science and Technology Committee didn’t bother to meet to vote on the nominations of Chicago billionaire business executive and philanthropist Penny Pritzker for Commerce and Charlotte, N.C., Mayor Anthony Foxx for Transportation. Senators instead dropped by a room off the Senate floor, where a committee clerk recorded their ‘ayes.’ Pritzker is a longtime Obama friend who raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for his presidential campaigns. Foxx won national recognition when Charlotte hosted the Democratic National Convention last year. He was a key surrogate in North Carolina for Obama during his re-election. Republican Sen. John Thune of South Dakota said he expected Pritzker and Foxx to be confirmed easily.” <http://usat.ly/18rMqfq>

FORMER REP. VUCANOVICH, ‘TOUGH GRANDMOTHER,’ DEAD AT 91 – Guy Clifton writes for the Reno Gazette Journal: “Barbara Vucanovich, the ‘tough grandmother’ who became the first woman elected to represent Nevada in Congress, has died. She was 91 and died Monday at a Reno care facility. ... Vucanovich was 61 in 1982 when she launched her first political campaign, running for and winning the newly created Second Congressional District seat which represented all of Nevada outside of Las Vegas. She ran with the campaign slogan of being a tough grandmother, and combined that with a grassroots political savvy picked up from decades as a Republican volunteer and connections throughout the state that she made while running U.S. Sen. Paul Laxalt’s Northern Nevada office. She was elected to seven consecutive terms, retiring at age 75 in 1996 and returning home to Reno where she remained a force in Nevada Republican politics until her death. Any Republican candidate seeing statewide or federal office sought and touted an endorsement from Vucanovich.” <http://on.rgj.com/11bp2ut>

MONDAY'S TRIVIA WINNER – David Heymsfeld was first to correctly answer that Norman Thomas, a socialist candidate for president, delivered the Marion (Ohio) Star when it was edited by future President Warren G. Harding.

TODAY'S TRIVIA – This hotel, depicted in a black and white photograph in the Capitol, sat on the site of what is today the Cannon House Office Building. The first person to correctly answer gets a mention in the next day's Huddle. Email me at swong@politico.com.

GET HUDDLE emailed to your Blackberry, iPhone or other mobile device each morning. Just enter your email address where it says "Sign Up." <http://www.politico.com/huddle/>

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