

World News Roundup

Politics

Trump's campaign raises \$10 mln

RNC bids to retain 'control of House'

WASHINGTON, April 16, (Agencies): The Republican National Committee has committed \$250 million to a midterm election strategy that has one goal above all else: Preserve the party's House majority for the rest of President Donald Trump's first term.

Facing the prospect of a blue wave this fall, the White House's political arm is devoting unprecedented resources to building an army of paid staff and trained volunteers across more than two dozen states. The RNC is taking the fight to Senate Democrats in Republican-leaning states, but much of the national GOP's resources are focused on protecting Republican-held House seats in states including Florida, California and New York.

"Our No. 1 priority is keeping the House. We have to win the House," RNC political director Justin Johnson said. "That is the approach we took to put the budget together."



Trump

RNC officials shared details of their midterm spending plan with The Associated Press just as several hundred volunteers and staff held a day of action on Saturday in competitive regions across the country. The weekend show of force, which comes as Democrats have shown a significant enthusiasm advantage in the age of President Donald Trump, was designed to train 1,600 new volunteers in more than 200 events nationwide.

There were more than three dozen events in Florida alone, a state that features competitive races for the Senate, the governorship and a half dozen House races.

Seven months before Election Day, there are already 300 state-based staff on the RNC's payroll. The committee expects to have 900 total paid staff around the country — excluding its Washington headquarters — before November's election, Johnson said. The number of trained volunteers, he said, has already surpassed 10,000.

The strategy is expensive. And it carries risk. The RNC's focus on a sophisticated field operation designed to identify and turn out key voters, an approach favored by former chairman Reince Priebus and expanded by Trump's hand-picked chairwoman, Ronna McDaniel, leaves the RNC with no additional resources to run advertising on television or the internet. It also puts tremendous pressure on the president and senior party leaders to raise money to fund the massive operation.

And few believe that even the best field operation could wholly neutralize the surge of Democratic enthusiasm on display in recent special elections, which has some Republican strategists fearing that the House majority may be lost already.

Democrats need to pick up at least 24 seats to take control of the House for the last two years of Trump's first term. They need just two seats to claim the House majority, though the map makes a Democratic Senate takeover much less likely.

An optimistic McDaniel said strong Republican fundraising has allowed the aggressive strategy. During the first year of Trump's presidency, the GOP set a fundraising record by raising more than \$132 million.

"Our sweeping infrastructure, combined with on-the-ground enthusiasm for President Trump and Republican policies, puts us in prime position to defend our majorities in 2018," McDaniel said.

The \$250 million price tag for what she described as a "permanent data-driven field program" is the committee's largest ground-game investment in any election season. The resources are focused in some unfamiliar territory, including several House districts in Southern California, which Johnson described as "a huge focus."

At a minimum, each targeted state features an RNC state director, a data director and at least a few staff devoted to each competitive House district. They are aggressively recruiting and training local volunteers to expand the GOP's presence in key communities.

Also:

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's re-election campaign raised \$10 million in the first quarter of the year, leaving his re-election operation with \$28 million in cash, his campaign disclosed on Sunday.

Trump spent \$3.9 million in the first quarter. Trump has opted — unlike presidents before him — to begin actively fundraising in the early part of his first term. He could use some of the money which he has already raised to help Republicans in the upcoming midterm election in November.

In addition to raising money for his own campaign, Trump has also collected funds for joint efforts with the Republican National Committee, which uses that money to help congressional candidates.

His re-election campaign finished 2017 with \$22 million in cash.

During the first quarter of the year, Trump spent about \$834,000 on legal expenses — down from the \$1.1 million he spent in each of the previous two quarters, according to disclosures filed with Federal Election Commission.

Trump's campaign has used millions of his campaign cash in the past year to pay legal fees — including some fees associated with responding to the Russia investigation being conducted by Special Counsel Robert Mueller. His campaign spent over \$3 million in 2017 in legal fees.

In addition to legal fees, he has also used that money to keep a small campaign staff, to fund campaign rallies and to pay for digital advertising focused on his supporters.

Trump filed for re-election the day he took office, an unusual move for an incumbent president. Traditionally, incumbent presidents have waited until after their second year in office to begin their re-election campaign. Trump will stand for re-election in November 2020.



Revelers march at the Ole & Nu Style Fellas 20th anniversary second line parade in the historic Tremé neighborhood on April 15, in New Orleans, Louisiana. Traditional second line parades are put on by social aid and pleasure clubs organized by African-American communities and are held most Sundays in New Orleans.

The parades represent a history of solidarity, empowerment and cultural pride within the African-American enclaves of the city. New Orleans, originally founded by the French in 1718, is marking its 300th anniversary this year. The city became part of the United States in 1803 as part of the Louisiana Purchase. (AFP)

Immigration

Politics at play where GOP has grown weak

Opposition to sanctuary spreads in Calif

SANTA ANA, California, April 16, (AP): More local governments in California are resisting the state's efforts to resist the Trump administration's immigration crackdown, and political experts see politics at play as Republicans try to fire up voters in a state where the GOP has grown weak.

Since the Jeff Sessions-led Department of Justice sued California last month over its so-called "sanctuary state" law limiting police collaboration with immigration agents, at least a dozen local governments have voted to either join or support the lawsuit or for resolutions opposing the state's position. Those include the Board of Supervisors in Orange County, which has more than 3 million people.

More action is coming this week, with leaders in the Orange County city of Los Alamitos scheduled to vote Monday on a proposal for a local law to exempt the community of 12,000 from the state law.

On Tuesday, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors is meeting to consider joining the Trump administration lawsuit.

Immigration has been a hot topic across the country since President Donald Trump campaigned in 2016 on promises of tougher enforcement and a wall on the US-Mexico border. It has been a lightning rod issue in California far longer.

The state passed a measure backed by Republican Gov Pete Wilson in the 1990s to deny public health care and education to immigrants in the country illegally. It was later overturned but left a lingering resentment among the state's growing Hispanic population.

In recent years, California Republicans have taken a less strident ap-

proach to immigration in a state where one in four people are foreign-born. But the Trump administration lawsuit has energized many in a party that has been rendered nearly irrelevant at the state level, where Democrats control every key office.

"When the attorney general of the United States decides to take a firm position against it, I think that gave a signal to a lot of us that, 'Hey, California is on the wrong side of this thing,'" said Fred Whitaker, chairman of the Republican Party in Orange County. He also is a councilman in the city of Orange who proposed a local resolution on the issue that passed last week.

Raphael Sonenshein, executive director of the Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs at California State University, Los Angeles, said it's not surprising Republicans are galvanizing over immigration.

Midterms

"Politics is very much about emotions, especially in midterms," he said. "I think it was only a matter of time when people went back to the issue that actually hits the nerve in the Republican base these days more than any other."

Under Democratic leadership, California has enacted a series of laws in recent years aimed at helping immigrants, including issuing driver's licenses regardless of legal status and assisting with tuition at state universities. After Trump was elected, lawmakers passed the measure to limit police collaboration with federal immigration agents.

Immigrant and civil rights advocates applauded the measure, known as SB54, as a way to encourage immi-

grants to report crime to police without fearing deportation. Critics said it would make it too hard for federal agents to find and deport ex-convicts who are a danger to communities.

Most of the local governments siding with the Trump administration are in Orange County, an area once considered a GOP stronghold but that voted for Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election. But it's starting to spread.

Escondido in neighboring San Diego County has voted to support the federal lawsuit and last week the small city of Ripon in the state's Central Valley did the same.

In many cases, meetings on the issue have drawn boisterous crowds. Anti-illegal immigration activists have traveled from city to city to attend, heightening tensions with those who want their communities to support immigrant-friendly policies or stay out of the fray.

In response to the controversy, some local governments have taken the opposite approach. Leaders in Santa Ana, an Orange County city home to about 330,000 residents, voted to support California in the lawsuit.

Some of the supervisors pushing the issue in Orange and San Diego counties are Republicans running for Congress and they may see this as a way to generate needed enthusiasm, said Louis DeSipio, a political science professor at the University of California, Irvine.

"The mobilization that could come from introducing immigration debates into county political races may be a critical element in a year like 2018 when Democrats will likely be more mobilized than Republicans," he said.



Protestor Nina Lyrispect Ball, 35, demonstrates outside a Starbucks on April 15, 2018 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Police arrested two black men who were waiting inside the Center City Starbucks which prompted an apology from the company's CEO. (AFP)



Blagojevich



Baker

America

Blagojevich appeal rejected: The US Supreme Court has for the second time rejected an appeal by imprisoned former Gov Rod Blagojevich of his convictions on corruption charges.

The justices did not comment Monday in letting stand the convictions and 14-year prison term that Blagojevich is serving. He's scheduled to be released in 2024.

Blagojevich's lawyers had wanted the high court to take up his case to make clear what constitutes illegal political fundraising. They argued that politicians are vulnerable to prosecution because the line between what's allowed and what's illegal is blurry.

His convictions included trying to extort a children's hospital for contributions and seeking to trade an appointment to the Senate seat Barack Obama vacated when he was elected president for campaign cash.

The court rejected an earlier appeal in 2016. (AP)

7 inmates dead in fighting: Seven inmates were killed and at least 17 others seriously injured as inmates were left to fight for more than seven hours before authorities regained control of a maximum-security prison.

South Carolina prisons spokesman Jeff Taillon announced the grim outcome after State Law Enforcement Division agents helped secure Lee Correctional Institution around 3:00 am Monday.

It's the latest violence in a system where 12 inmates were killed by other prisoners last year and 250 prisoners were assaulted so severely in 2016 and 2017 they had to be treated in outside hospitals, according to public records obtained by a Charleston newspaper columnist.

At the Bishopville prison where the seven were killed, one inmate held a guard hostage for 90 minutes in March and another killed a fellow prisoner in February.

Taillon said no officers were wounded after multiple inmate fights broke out at 7:15 pm Sunday. He said 17 inmates required medical attention outside the prison. (AP)

Oklahoma wildfires kill 2: Wildfires have killed two people and burned more

than 400,000 acres (1,600 sq kms) in western Oklahoma, and dry, windy weather already hindering firefighting efforts there will only get worse as the week progresses, fire and forestry officials said Monday.

Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management spokeswoman Keli Cain said in a news release late Sunday that a 61-year-old man died Thursday because of injuries suffered in the fire that began that day near Leedey, about 110 miles (180 kms) northwest of Oklahoma City. Cain said a woman also died as a result of a fire near Seiling, about 90 miles (145 kms) northwest of Oklahoma City.

Additional details have not been released and Cain said she has no further informa-

tion on the deaths.

The largest fire, which began near Leedey and has burned more than 245,000 acres (990 sq kms) in Dewey County, is about 3 percent contained, according to forestry services. A fire that began near Woodward, about 20 miles (32 kms) north of Leedey, has burned nearly 68,000 acres and is 45 percent contained.

The National Weather Service issued Red Flag Fire warnings for the region through Tuesday, saying the threat will be critical Monday with temperatures reaching the mid-80s, humidity as low as 10 percent and wind gusts of up to 30 mph (48 kph). (AP)



A mallard swims through the fallen cherry blossom petals as they float her water in the Tidal Basin on Sunday, April 15, 2018, in Washington. The cherry blossoms were in peak bloom on April 5 and are rapidly losing all of their petals. (AP)

Boston marks 5 yrs since attack:

The bells of Old South Church in Boston rang at 2:49 pm to commemorate a city-wide moment of silence in honor of Boston Marathon bombing survivors and victims.

It was an emotional moment in a day filled with service projects and ceremonies to remember those impacted by the deadly bombings five years ago.

Boston began the anniversary of the attacks Sunday with Mayor Marty Walsh and Gov Charlie Baker laying wreaths early in the morning at the spots along downtown Boylston Street where two bombs killed three spectators and maimed more than 260 others April 15, 2013.

Both addressed families and survivors at a private ceremony inside the Boston Public Library.

"On April 15, 2013, our city changed forever but over the last five years, we have reclaimed hope. We have reclaimed the finish line and Boston has emerged with a new strength, a resilience rooted in love," Walsh said.

Jane and Henry Richard, siblings of the youngest victim Martin Richard, and members of the family's foundation, also spoke.

Henry Richard urged those listening to follow Martin's message to "choose kindness and do more." The family's foundation was founded in 2014 to connect young people with opportunities for volunteerism and community engagement.

Victim Lu Lingzi's uncle, Sherman Yee, was present at the ceremony and private gathering. He said, "The family has been overwhelmed by love and support from all over the world." He called Lingzi an "extraordinary girl" who represented the youth that come to the US from China to study.

"While she didn't realize her dreams, as her family we invest in the youths through our foundation to keep her memory going," he said. (AP)