



Top Stories

Libertarian U.S. presidential nominee Bob Barr trying to remove running mate Wayne Allyn Root, reports say

Reports published on two political news websites Wednesday night said that the Libertarian National Committee and its party's presidential nominee, former congressman Bob Barr, are attempting to remove vice presidential nominee Wayne Allyn Root from the ballot due to what many believe are racially insensitive comments made by Root in a recent interview with Reason Magazine.



New I-35W Minneapolis bridge opens

The new Interstate 35W St. Anthony Falls Bridge in Minneapolis, Minnesota, United States was opened shortly after 5 AM today. It replaces a bridge which collapsed last year, killing 13 people. The September 18 opening was well ahead of the scheduled December 24 goal, earning the contractor, Flatiron-Manson, up to \$19.6 million in performance bonuses.



Markets rally as world's central banks infuse cash

Stock indexes around the globe reacted favorably after several national banks announced a joint

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effort to pump more money into the markets. At 0800 UTC, the Bank of Canada, the Bank of England, the European Central Bank (ECB), the U.S. Federal Reserve, the Bank of Japan, and the Swiss National Bank jointly announced that they would be working together to provide reciprocal credit arrangements to institutions facing a financial crush from the U.S. Dollar.

Russian markets remain closed until Friday

Trading on Russia's major stock markets remained suspended for a third consecutive day due to the ongoing turmoil in the financial markets around the world. The suspension took place due to an order of the Russian government's Federal Service for the Financial Markets.

Wikipedia Current Events

The Sri Lanka Navy sinks 10 Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) boats and kills 25 LTTE rebels in heavy fighting off the port of Nachikkudah in Sri Lanka.

•Trading is suspended for the third day in succession on Russia's two main stock exchanges, the MICEX and the dollar-denominated RTS, amidst fear of financial collapse. News agencies are quoting Russia's Finance Minister, Alexei Kudrin, as saying trading on Russian exchanges won't resume until September 19.

Wikipedia Current Events

•Officials at MICEX stock exchange describe conditions in the Russian markets as "extraordinary".

•Russia is facing its worst stock market decline in a decade mainly because of a confidence crisis rather than liquidity problems, Deputy Finance Minister Pyotr Kazakevich says.

World record set for balloon blowing with nose, on US talk show

Teen Andrew Dahl set an arcane world record today on the television show Live with Regis and Kelly. Starting before the show, Dahl started blowing up balloons with his left nostril, continuing for the next hour, hoping to beat the existing 213 balloon record.

On finishing, Guinness World Records judge Stuart Claxton announced Dahl had "literally blown the record away", blowing 308 balloons in the 60 minute span. All balloons had to be at least 8 inches wide when blown, and could only be blown with one nostril; Dahl chose his left nostril.

Dahl claims to have started the attempt with a slight cold, making breathing harder. He warned show hosts Regis Philbin and Kelly Ripa that "the first few balloons are a little gross".

When 7- or 8-years-old, Andrew was waiting behind in a car, while Dahl's father and uncle were in a tuxedo shop. He stuck a balloon up

to his nose, began to blow, and over the years has had increasing success, leading up to the record.

"Live's Guinness World Record Breaker Week", an annual feature on the program, continues until Friday.

Libertarian U.S. presidential nominee Bob Barr trying to remove running mate Wayne Allyn Root, reports say

Reports published by various political news websites on Wednesday night said that there may be a movement within the Libertarian Party to replace its vice presidential nominee, Wayne Allyn Root.

This comes after Libertarian National Committee (LNC) representative Stuart Flood made a motion to remove Root from the ballot due to remarks that the latter made in a recent interview with Reason Magazine. Many found these remarks to be racially insensitive.

It is reported that Libertarian presidential nominee and former congressman Bob Barr wants Root off of the ballot as well, which some believe is the reason that the Barr campaign supposedly advised party Chairman Bill Redpath to keep Angela Keaton, a probable vote for Root's removal, on the LNC. Over the past few weeks, several members of the LNC have been trying to remove Keaton from the committee due to what they felt were sexually inappropriate comments written by her in a blog.

Barr has been the subject of controversy for over a week due to his last minute refusal to attend former Republican presidential hopeful Congressman Ron Paul's third party unity conference at the

National Press Club in Washington, DC last Wednesday.

Somali pirates seize Greek freighter, 25 crew in the Gulf of Aden

According to the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), pirates have seized a Greek bulk carrier en route to Kenya with 25 crew on board in the Gulf of Aden some 370 kilometers from Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia.

Noel Choong, who represents the International Maritime Bureau], advised ships traveling through the gulf to take extra precautions. "It appears that the pirates are now attacking ships in two areas, the eastern part of Somalia and northern parts of the Horn of Africa nation," he said. "Ships are warned to take extra measures and stay 200 nautical miles away from the coast. They must maintain a strict watch.

The Gulf of Aden is a dangerous place for ships, with many incidents of piracy occurring regularly in the Gulf.

Four hours earlier pirates had attacked another vessel, a chemical tanker from Hong Kong, which was at the time carrying 22 crew members. Following that attack, the gulf was described by the managing director of the Hong Kong Shipowners Association as an "incredibly dangerous place."

In response to this, several large shipping organisations have called for countries to deploy forces from their Navies in the Gulf of Aden.

"The shipping industry's plea is in response to a situation which it describes as in danger of spiralling completely and irretrievably out of control," said the group which consisted of the International

Chamber of Shipping, Intercargo, Bimco and Intertanko. "Continued inaction against these violent acts could prompt shipowners to redirect their ships via the Cape of Good Hope, with severe consequences for international trade, including increased prices for delivered goods."

The group also said that there have been 40 hijackings in the gulf, resulting in 133 crew members being kidnapped and 10 ships being help. According to the IMB six gangs totalling approximately 1,200 people have carried out these attacks.

Man pulls a 126,292-pound truck over 137 feet, sets world record

Canadian Reverend Kevin Fast has set a new record in the "heaviest vehicle pulled over 100 feet", beating his previous best. The record was set on "Live's Guinness World Record Breaker Week", an annual feature on the American talk show program Live with Regis and Kelly.

The previous record for this category, also set by Fast, was 125,660 lbs (57,000 kg). With the surprise addition of 92-pounder co-host Kelly Ripa to the International Loadstar truck being pulled, Last hauled a load of 126,292 (57,285 kg) lbs over 137 feet (42 meters).

Between pants, the Cobourg, Ontario resident told Regis Philbin and Ripa that he was "a little worried" during the pull. But the first thing he said after the attempt was "I feel great!" Paramedics were standing by, and quickly inspected him after the attempt.

Fast's only food in preparation for the event was a cup of coffee. He

pulled on a rope, anchored by a parked car.

"Live's Guinness World Record Breaker Week" continues until Friday. Stuart Claxton from the company Guinness World Records has been judging all of the record attempts, as he has for many years for the program.

Markets rally as world's central banks infuse cash

Stock indexes around the globe reacted favorably after several national banks announced a joint effort to pump more money into the markets.

At 0800 UTC, the Bank of Canada, the Bank of England, the European Central Bank (ECB), the United States Federal Reserve, the Bank of Japan, and the Swiss National Bank jointly announced that they would be working together to provide reciprocal credit arrangements to institutions facing a financial crush from the U.S. dollar. The credit arrangements, also known as "swap lines", will be used to help short-term funding of smaller loan groups.

Totaling US\$180 billion, the Federal Reserve arranged to increase existing swap lines with the European Central Bank from US\$55 billion to US\$110 billion, and with the Swiss National Bank from US\$12 billion to US\$27 billion. Additionally, it opened new swap lines with the Bank of Japan for up to US\$60 billion, up to US\$40 billion with the Bank of England, and up to US\$10 billion with the Bank of Canada. These swap lines will be available until January 30, 2009.

In its press release, the Federal Reserve stated, "These measures, together with other actions taken in the last few days by individual

central banks, are designed to improve the liquidity conditions in global financial markets. The central banks continue to work together closely and will take appropriate steps to address the ongoing pressures."

In the first 90 minutes in the American stock markets, the Dow Jones surged nearly 200 points, the NASDAQ was up nearly nine points, and the S&P 500 was up nearly 15 points. Mid-day trading in the European markets saw the UK's FTSE 100 was up 25 points, the DAX was up over 54 points, and the CAC 40 was up nearly 15 points. While Japan's Nikkei index closed at a three-year low of 11,489.30 points, and the Hang Seng bottomed out at 16,283.72 points before closing at 17,849.97 points.

The Russian markets continued to remain closed for a third day under orders of the Russian government. Russia announced that it would be infusing their own markets with an additional US \$19.7 billion, half of which would come from the federal budget. Russia's exchanges will re-open on Friday morning.

Two largest known prime numbers discovered just two weeks apart, one qualifies for \$100k prize

Two new records for the largest known prime number have been set, both breaking the 10 million digit threshold. On August 23, Edson Smith, a systems engineer for the Program in Computing laboratory at the University of California, Los Angeles in California, United States, confirmed the primality of the number through his work as a volunteer in the distributed computing project known as the Great Internet Mersenne Prime

Search, or GIMPS. This new prime qualifies GIMPS for a \$100,000 award from the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), offered to the first person or group to discover a prime number of 10 million digits or more. According to GIMPS' prize agreement, \$50,000 will be given to the UCLA Department of Mathematics, \$25,000 will be given to charity, \$20,000 will be split among previous discoverers of Mersenne primes, and GIMPS will keep the remainder for funding and other uses. Smith, who was contacted by Scientific American by phone, said that the discovery was "quite unexpected."

Just two weeks later, on September 6, another Mersenne prime was discovered, this time by German electrical engineer Hans-Michael Elvenich, who worked for the chemical company Lanxess in Germany. This number is expressed as two to the 37,156,667th power minus one, and is 11,185,272 digits long. However, since this prime number was discovered later than the one found on August 23, it does not qualify for the EFF prize. Elvenich said that it was a "finally a great success" after having participated in GIMPS for four years.

A prime number is a positive integer that can be evenly divided only by 1 and itself. For example, 2, 3 and 11 are prime numbers. 21 is not a prime number because it is a product of 3 and 7. This new prime number is expressed as two to the 43,112,609th power minus one, and consists of 12,978,189 digits when written out. This type of prime number is called a Mersenne prime, one which can be expressed as one less than a power of two. Mersenne primes are rare, and only 46 are known up to now. The first few Mersenne primes are 3, 7, 31, 127 and

8191.

Both of these numbers took over a week to verify, using different software and hardware. The two primes were announced by GIMPS on September 16. Before these two discoveries, the two previously largest known prime numbers were discovered by UCMO professors Curtis Cooper and Steven Boone in Missouri, United States, and their record lasted almost three years. Historically, prime numbers discovered by GIMPS are larger than the one previously found. The only other exception was when the 29th Mersenne prime was discovered after the 30th and 31st were found.

Founded by M.I.T. graduate George Woltman in 1996, GIMPS has found 12 Mersenne primes, or about one per year on average. Volunteers who wish to help find primes can download a program called Prime95, which runs in the background.

Smaller prime numbers, such as those with a few hundred digits, are often used in cryptography. The recently discovered prime numbers are too large to have much practical use, but mathematics enthusiasts often seek them for fun. It is believed by some that such prime numbers may still have undiscovered uses.

New I-35W Minneapolis bridge opens

The new Interstate 35W St. Anthony Falls Bridge in Minneapolis, Minnesota, United States was opened shortly after 5 AM today. It replaces a bridge which collapsed last year, killing 13 people.

A fire engine and ambulance were first across on each side. In each

direction, a line of State Highway Patrol cars was followed by a formation of Department of Transportation construction trucks. A cluster of awaiting vehicles went honking across for a few minutes, then traffic returned to the sparse levels more typical of the pre-dawn period.

The September 18 opening was well ahead of the scheduled December 24 goal, earning the contractor, Flatiron-Manson, up to \$19.6 million in performance bonuses.

The bridge is 189 feet wide, with a main span length of 504 feet and a deck height of over 100 feet above the Mississippi River. Traffic is expected to return to previous levels of 141,000 vehicles per day on the 10 lanes. The accelerated construction (of only 11 months) was accomplished by pouring 120 concrete sections in heated pole barns, and then lifting them all into place via a crane mounted on a river barge. The bridge contains 323 electronic sensors for real-time monitoring of stresses and movement of the bridge components. It is illuminated with white light-emitting diodes.

Russian markets to remain closed until Friday

The Russian government has continued to hold all stock markets closed until Friday, including the MICEX and RTS exchanges. Facing its worst financial crisis since 1989, the government is fighting to stem off a crash and restore consumer confidence.

President Dmitry Medvedev went on national television to appease the public. "There is no more important task for Russian authorities than stability of our financial system under the current circumstances. This is our top

priority," Medvedev said. "The market should be given all the necessary support."

Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin announced that 500 billion rubles (US\$ 19.7 billion) would be infused into the stock markets when they opened on Friday, with half of that amount coming from the federal budget. In addition, the Central Bank responded by offering to loan an additional 60 billion rubles (US \$2.63 billion) on top of the 1.13 trillion rubles (US\$ 44.6 billion) that it offered yesterday to Sberbank, VTB Group and Gazprombank. The Central Bank is encouraging the nations top banks to provide the money to smaller lenders.

Central Bank chairman Sergei Ignatiev also announced on Wednesday that mandatory reserve requirements for banks would be slashed, freeing up an additional 300 billion ruble. "We hope that banks will spend these funds not on long-term crediting or other kinds of crediting of clients," he said, "but on the maintenance of the necessary volume of their liquidity and on making settlements."

In the aftermath of Russia's invasion of neighboring Georgia, the markets saw investors pull out nearly US\$ 36 billion in wealth since early August. Further compounding economic woes are the recent slump in oil and gas prices, which have bolstered Russia's economy for several years. To help with this, starting on October 1 regulators will lower the export duty on oil, saving Russian oil companies around US\$ 5.5 billion.

Royal Society education chief forced out in creation row

Following misleading reports that

Rev Professor Michael Reiss had advocated that creation should be taught in science class, he left his post as director of education at the Royal Society, the UK's national academy of science.

Last week at the British Association's science festival Rev Professor Michael Reiss said that creation should not be ignored if it come up in class. Professor Reiss, who was director of education at the Royal Society, said that since a substantial number of pupils have concerns about the issue, they are likely to "detach from" science if their concerns and world view are not addressed. Creation should not be taught, he said, but if it comes up, teachers should be encouraged to explain the science of evolution. He also said that students should be taught the nature of a scientific theory - that it does not simply mean a hypothesis about the way things might work, but a rigorously supported system of ideas that fit with the available evidence.

The Times of London reported him as saying that Creationism should be taught in science classes as a legitimate point of view. This provoked a storm of protest from a group that included two Nobel Laureates and other scientists who strongly oppose the teaching, or even the discussion of creation in science class.

Yesterday the Royal Society said in a statement that some of Professor Reiss' comments had been "open to misinterpretation", and that this had damaged the Society's reputation. "As a result, Professor Reiss and the Royal Society have agreed that, in the best interests of the society, he will step down immediately as director of education"

They went on to say: "However, if a young person raises creationism in a science class, teachers should be in a position to explain why evolution is a sound scientific theory and why creationism is not, in any way, scientific."

The chief executive of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Roland Jackson, said that the Royal Society should have supported Professor Reiss and used this opportunity to further a reasoned debate.

"I was at the actual discussion, and what I heard him say, however it has been reported, was essentially the position advocated by the Royal Society."

Flu shots for pregnant women protect newborns after birth

Late term pregnancy flu shots continue to protect newborns after birth, according to a study published Wednesday in the New England Journal of Medicine. This gives reason for more expectant mothers to follow U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations and obtain a flu shot during flu season. Only 15% of women in the United States receive the vaccination during pregnancy, although the CDC has advised this preventive treatment for the past 11 years.

The study was conducted in Bangladesh on a group of 340 pregnant women during third trimester and reduced the risk of respiratory illness among the mothers by 36 percent. The benefit to their infants was even greater: 63 percent reduction in influenza incidence and an overall reduction of respiratory illness by 29 percent. The study found 6 confirmed cases of influenza in the vaccinated group compared to 16 cases among the mothers of a

control group.

Late term pregnancy flu vaccination represents an important window for preventive treatment because the flu vaccine is not recommended for infants less than 6 months old. Infants under the age of 6 months also run the highest risk of dying from the flu.

Clearing the air: Positions of Canadian parties vis-à-vis the environment

In the lead-up to the 2008 Canadian federal elections much speculation was made about environmental issues and initiative, with various parties maneuvering to claim some portion of the green mantle. But it was the Liberal party which first brought a full-blown policy to the public.

In the months since the Green Shift initiative was brought forth, the political pundits and activists have both talked about this year as the first election where the environment would be a major issue on the minds of voters, and possibly a decisive one for the electorate.

It's indeed true the environment ranks very high in minds of voters across the country, particularly among young voters. One national survey of Canadians between 18 and 25 finds the environment is the top issue. A poll of all voters found it to be the third most important single issue over all, behind the economy and health care, but the poll suggested that no one issue has really caught the attention of the electorate with many issues gaining similar attention.

The parties themselves seem indecisive, trying to claim a focus

on environmental issues but rarely making specific proposals or promises, with the notable exception of the Liberals whose platform has been targeted by opponents and commentators as "wildly experimental" and "doesn't go deep enough" by turns.

Examining the platforms of the New Democratic Party regarding air pollution and global warming as available on their website, one is struck by a lack of substance. Reference is made to C-377, the Climate Change Accountability Act, which the NDP calls "Layton's Kyoto-Plus Bill", which was passed in 2006. The party believes Canada can achieve its Kyoto requirements by 2012, though no mention is made of how a Layton government would do so.

In June of 2008 the Liberals tabled a plan, the Green Shift, which they claim would reduce Canada's greenhouse gas emissions 20% under 1990 emissions - well below the 6% required by Canadian law when Canada ratified the Kyoto Accord - by 2020, which is rather after the 2008-2012 phase-in period required by that same law. The method of performing this reduction would be to shift the Canadian tax system, reducing income and revenue taxes by replacing them with taxes on greenhouse gas emissions. The plan generated considerable discussion and opposition, and the party has back-pedaled in some portions and added on in others, as well as announcing a couple of separate initiatives to soften the effects for farmers, homeowners, and fishermen among others.

A more diverse approach than solely a "Carbon Tax" is proposed in the Green Party's platform, which presents an almost holistic approach of adherence to the

Kyoto obligations, "Cap and trade" of carbon emissions, industry development with both green technology R&D and regulation as well as consumer subsidies, and their own version of a carbon tax. Alone of the parties they specifically mention the role of international diplomacy/trade as a part of their approach.

Such an approach appears to be anathema to the Conservatives, whose mantra since their election has been that Kyoto cannot be complied with without forcing an economic recession on the country, and used the Throne Speech of 2007 to reiterate that position. They have opposed cap-and-trade schemes in the past, but their platform for this election states their plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions includes emissions caps for "four air pollutants commonly associated with smog and acid rain," as well as "tough emission reduction targets".

In contrast to the laundry-list of unconnected initiatives on the Conservative's website, the clean platform pamphlet created by the Bloc Québécois makes a simple and apparently heartfelt statement on the environment:

La lutte aux changements climatiques est devenue un enjeu fondamental pour l'humanité et le Québec est déterminé à apporter sa contribution, à sa façon. À Ottawa, c'est le Bloc Québécois qui mène la lutte en faveur de l'application du protocole de Kyoto dans le respect des choix du Québec.

Tackling climate change has become a fundamental issue for all of humanity and Québec is determined to make its contribution, in its own way. In Ottawa, the Bloc Québécois, respecting Québec's choices, is

leading the fight to enforce the Kyoto Protocol.

Just how they plan to enforce the Kyoto obligations is not stated, though they do discuss a carbon market, and tax incentives for home heating upgrade and transportation.

There seems to be a wide if somewhat shallow interest in the electorate as to just what each party is offering on the environmental file. But with sketchy platforms regarding environmental issues, it's no wonder some of the parties have turned to the subject of economics in recent days.

Doha round negotiations might restart in a matter of weeks

The head of the World Trade Organization (WTO) has called for trade negotiations to restart on the Doha Development Round, citing the need for the round to be concluded to help the global economy. Pascal Lamy, Director-General of the WTO, speaking at a United Nations conference, said "In the weeks to come, and depending on progress made by the negotiators, I am ready to call Ministers to Geneva to try and close the issues which remain open so that the scheduling process in both areas can commence."

The Doha round of talks, named after Doha, the capital city of Qatar, where it was inaugurated in November 2001, focuses heavily on creating a fair system of trade for the benefit of developing countries, in particular for trade in agricultural products.

The last major negotiations collapsed in July, after nine days of talks, over issues of agricultural trade between the United States,

India, and China. Since then, a series of small negotiations have been held. Lamy called for a ministerial level conference, which would involve ministers from member states.

The WTO believes that a completed deal will restore confidence in the global economy and improve the global outlook. Lamy said, "A failure of the Doha Agenda would have serious implications on the ongoing efforts by all developing countries to address their challenges and in particular to meet the UN Millennium Development Goals. The reasons why we must conclude the Round are visible to all of us and are becoming more critical by the day as the economic and financial outlook continues to deteriorate."

Since the collapse in July, there has been a willingness by member states to hold negotiations again. The United States has been willing to hold negotiations even though the U.S. presidential election will be held in November and a shift in policy on the Doha round might occur as a result of the election.

Huang Rengang, a senior diplomat at China's WTO mission, told Reuters, "The problem now is that often in the negotiating rooms you find that some members are obsessed with market access rather than development, are obsessed with inventing new terms like 'key emerging countries'".

Wikipedia Current Events

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev orders ministers to inject another 500 billion roubles (£10.8 billion) of funds from the state budget into the markets and pledges in remarks broadcast on national television that the financial system would receive "all necessary support".

- British bank Lloyds TSB completes a £12.2bn takeover of rival HBOS, the UK's largest mortgage lender. The Competition Commission has allowed the deal as it has government backing, despite the fact that it will leave Lloyd's HBOS in control of a third of the UK mortgage market.

- The Swedish National Debt Office announces it is putting a temporary hold on its market commitment in treasury bills due to the spike in demand for treasury bonds, which are seen as a safe investment during rocky periods in the financial markets.

- Following the recent rapid fall of the share value of HBOS, The FSA restricts short selling in an attempt to bring about market stability in the United Kingdom. This action follows a similar move by SEC in the United States on Wednesday.

- Republican presidential candidate John McCain calls for Christopher Cox, Chairman of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, to be dismissed.

- Kraft replaces American International Group in the Dow Jones Industrial Average.

- A United States Army CH-47 Chinook helicopter crashes in southern Iraq killing seven United States soldiers.

- Pirates hijack a Greek bulk carrier with 25 crew aboard off

Wikipedia Current Events

the coast of Somalia.

Today in History

1356 – Hundred Years' War: English forces led by Edward the Black Prince decisively won the Battle of Poitiers and captured King Jean II of France.

1796 – George Washington's Farewell Address was published in many American newspapers, warning citizens, among others, about the dangers of political factionalism and to avoid permanent alliances with other foreign powers.

1893 – New Zealand became the first country to introduce universal suffrage, following the women's suffrage movement led by Kate Sheppard.

1985 – A magnitude 8.1 earthquake devastated Mexico City, killing at least nine thousand people and leaving up to 100,000 homeless.

1995 – The Manifesto of "Unabomber" Ted Kaczynski was published in The Washington Post and The New York Times, almost three months after it was submitted.

September 19 is Independence Day in Saint Kitts and Nevis (1983); Armed Forces Day in Chile; International Talk Like a Pirate Day

Quote of the Day

Basically I'm an optimist. Intellectually I can see man's balance is about fifty-fifty, and his chances of blowing himself up are about one to one. I can't see this any way but intellectually. I'm just emotionally unable to believe that he will do this. This means that I am by nature an optimist and by intellectual conviction a pessimist, I suppose. ~ William Golding

Word of the Day

kitsch adj

1. Considered of questionable aesthetic value; excessively sentimental, overdone or vulgar.

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