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Snowstorm, rain 34/29 • Tomorrow: P.M. snow 40/29 • DETAILS, B8

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D.C. area puts up its dukes, ready for wallop

Snowplows are poised, emergencies declared and bread bought

BY ASHLEY HALSEY III AND LUZ LAZO

A winter storm that swept across a part of the country where people typically go to escape winter shut down the Deep South on Wednesday, then moved north to wallop the Washington region.

The ice and powerful wind gusts that robbed 350,000 homes and businesses of power in Louisiana, Georgia and South Carolina were headed here. Some forecasters were predicting "potentially catastrophic" conditions in parts of Georgia and the Carolinas.

Although the storm led to the cancellation of more than 3,100 flights Wednesday, many of them connections through the nation's busiest airport, in Atlanta, it had not caused the widespread panic seen there two weeks ago when a storm caught it unprepared.

This time, Atlanta was ready. And, with plenty of warning, Washington and its surroundings appeared to be, too.

Late Wednesday, snowplows were at the ready, salt trucks were poised, states of emergency had been declared, the populace was braced and the obligatory trio — bread, milk and toilet paper —



BILL O'LEARY/THE WASHINGTON POST

Travelers wait for rides at Union Station as what was forecast to be a major storm began. Nationally, more than 3,100 flights were canceled.

In the know as it snows: Follow the Capital Weather Gang's live coverage, which will include updates as conditions change, at washingtonpost.com.

SNOW CONTINUED ON A6

Health plans exceed mark

JANUARY SIGN-UPS TOP PROJECTIONS

Overall enrollment still short by 1 million

BY AMY GOLDSTEIN

For the first time since the federal and state health-insurance marketplaces opened early last fall, the number of people who signed up for coverage exceeded the government's expectations for the month in January, bringing the overall total to about 3.3 million.

Across the country, nearly 1.2 million people enrolled in health plans last month through the new insurance exchanges — more than federal officials had envisioned when they compiled monthly targets late last summer, weeks before the sign-ups began.

The figure is part of a detailed report issued Wednesday by the Obama administration, providing the latest look at how the effort to extend health insurance to more Americans is faring.

The report suggests that January was the first month in which enrollment was not dampened by serious computer defects, which initially stymied people trying to use the federal online marketplace, HealthCare.gov, and some of the 14 similar marketplaces run by states.

Still, the lingering imprint of those early problems remains visible in the new report. Overall, the 3.3 million people who have signed up for coverage are about 1 million fewer than federal officials had anticipated by the end of January. That difference dove-

HEALTH CARE CONTINUED ON A4

Sugar and corn syrup fight stealthy lobbying war

BY TOM HAMBURGER

A group called Citizens for Health recently began a campaign to encourage consumers to reduce high-fructose corn syrup in their diets, filing a petition with the Food and Drug Administration demanding stricter labeling on food items containing the sweetener.

Yet the petition did not disclose that the organization, which bills itself as the "voice of the natural-health consumer," received the bulk of its money at the time from sugar companies, which view corn syrup as a threat to their profits. Since 2011, the organization has received at least \$500,000 from the industry.

Sugar companies' investments in this nonprofit group, detailed in newly released internal documents, are part of a growing strategy used by corporate interests seeking to influence Washington policymaking.

No longer content to rely on traditional lobbyists, companies are investing in other messengers, such as nonprofit groups or academicians, that can provide expert testimony, shape news media coverage and change public opinion in ways that ultimately affect decisions in the nation's capital.

The new approach lacks the transparency that comes from traditional lobbyist registration rules that provide a visible trail of corporate contact with lawmakers.

SUGAR CONTINUED ON A6

Spyware lets regimes target U.S.-based journalists

BY CRAIG TIMBERG

Mesay Mekonnen was at his desk, at a news service based in Northern Virginia, when gibberish suddenly exploded across his computer screen one day in December. A sophisticated cyber-attack was underway.

But this wasn't the Chinese army or the Russian mafia at work.

Instead, a nonprofit research lab has fingered government hackers in a much less technically advanced nation, Ethiopia, as the

likely culprits, saying they apparently used commercial spyware, essentially bought off the shelf. This burgeoning industry is making surveillance capabilities that once were the exclusive province of the most elite spy agencies, such as National Security Agency, available to governments worldwide.

The targets of such attacks often are political activists, human rights workers and journalists, who have learned that the Internet allows authoritarian governments to surveil and in-

Italian firm's products turn up in cyberattack on Ethiopian reporters

timidate them even after they have fled to supposed safety.

That includes the United States, where laws prohibit unauthorized hacking but rarely succeed in stopping intrusions. The trade in spyware itself is almost entirely unregulated, to the great frustration of critics.

"We're finding this in repressive countries, and we're finding that it's being abused," said Bill Marczak, a research fellow for Citizen Lab at the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs, which released a report Wednesday. "This spyware has proliferated around the world ... without any debate."

Citizen Lab says the spyware used against Mekonnen and one other Ethiopian journalist appears to have been made by

ETHIOPIA CONTINUED ON A14

"Everyone is expecting only one thing from us. And we won't have the right to make an error."

Pavel Datsyuk, captain of Russia's men's hockey team

For Ovechkin and his country, it's gold or goose egg

BY DAVE SHEININ

SOCHI, RUSSIA — These days, Alex Ovechkin can barely swing his Russian-flag-themed hockey stick without encountering another reminder of both the legacy and the burden he carries here. His head coach, general manager and team president are all Olympic gold medal winners from the Soviet era, when the Big Red Machine dominated international ice hockey. His uniform for these Winter Games, the first on Russian soil, will feature eight



stars on the shoulders, one for each of the country's Olympic golds won between 1956 and 1992. Bronzes and silvers apparently aren't worth the extra thread.

A few weeks ago, Russia's hockey federation released on its Web site an open letter to its Olympic team from a group of gold-medal-winning Soviet-era veterans, including Vladislav Tretiak, the revered ex-goalie and current head of the federa-



BRIAN SNYDER/REUTERS

Alex Ovechkin and Russia seek redemption after a 7-3 loss to host Canada in 2010.

tion. "The entire country will be looking at you," it read. "In our time, we did everything for the victory. We glorified the USSR, our people and our sports. Don't let Russia down, guys!"

Such is the atmosphere — filled more with anxiety than exhilaration — and such are the expectations on Ovechkin and his teammates when they take the ice Thursday against Slovenia for their opening game of the Sochi 2014 Olympic tournament. Because if one of the aims of Vladimir Putin, Russia's hockey-loving president, in staging these Olympics is to reclaim some of the international prestige his country lost with the collapse of the Soviet

OLYMPICS CONTINUED ON A10

Saving the strays

Alarmed by Sochi's extermination of dogs, a clandestine rescue patrol steps in. A10

More Olympics coverage in Sports

The women's downhill ends in a golden tie; speedskater Shani Davis falls short. D1

IN THE NEWS



LINDA DAVIDSON/THE WASHINGTON POST

Utility offices searched FBI and IRS agents seized documents from the headquarters of the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission in Laurel. B1

IRS backlash An effort to rein in politically active nonprofit groups is facing criticism. A5

THE NATION

The Senate cleared the critical 60-vote threshold that allowed for passage of legislation to suspend the limit on the Treasury's borrowing limit. A5

A federal judge ruled that Kentucky must recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states. A3

As states make the transition to Common Core academic standards, California is in a related standoff with federal officials over standardized testing. A4

President Obama launched a fresh effort

to focus on raising the minimum wage ahead of this year's midterm elections. A14

Scientists are creeping closer to their goal of creating a controlled fusion energy reaction. A11

C. Ray Nagin, mayor of New Orleans during Katrina, was convicted of taking bribes. A3

THE WORLD

The U.S. Embassy in Cairo has confirmed that Egyptian police arrested and were holding a local employee of the embassy. A8

A Central African Republic town is bracing

for violence amid fears that fighting between Christians and Muslims is entering a new, wider phase. A8

Syrian government warplanes pounded rebel-held areas near the border with Lebanon as peace talks foundered. A9

THE ECONOMY

Keeping women in science and high-tech fields — and helping them reach top positions — has proved difficult, a report has found. A13

PayPal's president said he thinks his credit card was cloned by hackers even though it contained chip technol-

ogy designed to reduce fraud. A13

THE REGION

Marion Barry was hospitalized on Monday, for the second time this year. B1

A Virginia judge ordered a man's name removed from the state's sex offender registry and his rape conviction vacated. B1

The College Park City Council voted to allow 18-year-olds to run for public office. B8

Metro police said a man charged with violating a court order restricting his use of mass transit is the focus of their "cellphone flasher" investigation. B4

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Sid Caesar, 91

The broadcast pioneer crafted the blueprint for television comedy. C1

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County of love

Couples are increasingly looking to Loudoun as a wedding destination.

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