

# Los Angeles Times

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## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Obama, Romney battle for female voters

The challenger says women suffered under the president, who stresses equal pay and Planned Parenthood.

BY CHRISTI PARSONS AND SEEMA MEHTA

MOUNT VERNON, Iowa — Picking up where their contentious debate left off, President Obama and challenger Mitt Romney battled Wednesday for the support of female voters, underscoring their potentially decisive role in settling the fiercely competitive race.

Buoyed by a much-improved performance Tuesday night, Obama traveled to the swing state of Iowa, where he renewed his attacks on Romney for proposing an end to federal funding for Planned Parenthood, and again touted legislation he signed making it easier for women to sue for job discrimination.

"When Gov. Romney was asked about it, his campaign said, 'We'll get back to you,'" Obama said of the legislation, repeating a line from the debate. "That shouldn't be a complicated question: Equal pay for equal work."

Romney campaigned in Virginia, another battleground, where he suggested women had borne the brunt of hardship during an Obama tenure marked by economic anxiety.

"Why is it that there are 3.6 million more women in poverty today than when the president took office?" Romney demanded during a stop at Tidewater Community College in Chesapeake. "This president has failed America's women. They've suffered."

Women have been a key constituency for Obama, and their enthusiastic backing is vital to his reelection hopes. The president has counted on a strong showing among women to offset Romney's edge among men. Generally, Obama has been [See Analysis, A11]

### Courting female decision-makers

Women's advocates say the presidential debate brought a rare mention of workplace gender inequality as a campaign issue. **BUSINESS, B1**

## Assessor jailed in bribe case



AL SEIB Los Angeles Times

**L.A. COUNTY ASSESSOR** John Noguez is taken into custody by investigators from the district attorney's office at his home in Huntington Park. Noguez has described the alleged bribes he received as loans.

### THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE ASSESSOR'S OFFICE

**\$285,000**

Bribes prosecutors allege were funneled to assessor's officials

**13**

Number of properties whose values were allegedly lowered

**\$1.16 million**

Loss to Los Angeles County from the alleged misconduct

## Libya IDs leader of attack

Militias say no arrest order has been issued in the raid on U.S. mission

BY SHASHANK BENGALI AND RICHARD A. SERRANO

BENGHAZI, Libya — The militia commander who led the deadly raid on the U.S. mission in Benghazi is an Islamist whose fighters were also blamed for assassinating a senior military officer after he defected during last year's revolution, a senior Libyan official said.

FBI agents have been shown a cellphone picture of the commander at the scene of the attack, according to Libyans familiar with the investigation. But it is unclear where the man, identified as Ahmed Abu Khattala, is now, and militias loyal to the government say they have received no orders to arrest him or any other suspect in connection with the attack.

In a contentious exchange Tuesday night with Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney, President Obama reiterated his pledge to bring the attackers to justice. But the chaos in Libya after the fall of Moammar Kadafi creates daunting obstacles.

With the army and police forces yet to be rebuilt, the

government depends on a patchwork of militias to maintain security. Although many of the largest armed groups are allied with the government, authorities are reluctant to order a local militia to move against the attackers for fear of inflaming rivalries — or having their orders refused.

Sending in a militia from

400 miles away in Tripoli risks exacerbating tension between Libya's eastern and western regions.

And even though Libya's weak central government is pro-American, unilateral U.S. military action would invite a backlash.

A senior Libyan official on Wednesday identified the [See Libya, A9]

### COLUMN ONE

## Impossible dreamer

7-foot-1 Ronnie Aguilar has a bit part at Lakers' camp as a fill-in for preseason drills, but he has high hopes

BY DAVID WHARTON

The Lakers had just finished their first practice of the season and, one by one, all the big names disappeared into the locker room.

Steve Nash. Dwight Howard. Even Kobe Bryant, who ranks among the hardest workers in the game.

Only one man remained on court after they had gone. His body stretching to a perilous 7 feet 1, his long face framed by black hair and a beard, Ronnie Aguilar shot a steady progression of jump hooks.

When that was finished, he asked a trainer to run him through footwork drills that looked like something out of "Riverdance."

"I'm just doing my job," Aguilar said. "I want to show these guys that I belong."

The 25-year-old center from Cal State Dominguez Hills had arrived at the team's training facility with the intention of earning a spot on the roster. He said: "I know how hard I've worked to get here."

But his chances appeared slim from the start. Passed over in the NBA draft, he had spent the previous year playing minor league ball and working out [See Aguilar, A18]



STEPHEN DUNN Getty Images

**RONNIE AGUILAR**, right, competes against Kent Bazemore of Golden State during an exhibition game. Aguilar is essentially a preseason temp with Lakers.

The arrest of John Noguez and two others is part of a yearlong inquiry into allegations of illegally reduced assessments.

BY JACK DOLAN, RUBEN VIVES AND JACK LEONARD

About six months before John Noguez was elected Los Angeles County assessor, he received an \$80,000 check from his old friend and prominent property tax consultant, Ramin Salari. Over the next few months, Salari cut Noguez two more checks, for a total of \$180,000.

In return, authorities say, assessor officials began giving tax breaks to many of Salari's clients.

Prosecutors on Wednesday alleged that the payments to Noguez — and an additional \$100,000 given to a lower-level assessor's official — were bribes to illegally reduce the values of properties so that Salari's clients would pay less in taxes. The alleged scam deprived the county of at least \$1.16 million in tax revenue, according to prosecutors.

Noguez, Salari and a top executive in the assessor's office, Mark McNeil, were arrested and charged with conspiracy and misappropriation of public funds following a yearlong influence peddling investigation that has roiled the office responsible for determining property taxes on more than 2 million homes and businesses.

In addition, Noguez and Salari are charged with bribery and Noguez is charged with perjury.

Prosecutors began probing the case last year. In April, investigators served a search warrant at Noguez's Huntington Park home and found what they characterized as a list from Salari of 18 properties whose values he wanted reduced. The assessor's office made good on nearly all of Salari's requests, prosecutors said.

Noguez and Salari described the alleged bribes as loans, according to prosecutors, who noted that Noguez only tried to pay back some of the money earlier this year "shortly after reporters from the Los Angeles Times began making inquiries regarding allegations of misconduct at the Assessor's Office." Prosecutors also described a \$5,000 campaign contribution in February 2010 from Salari to Noguez as another bribe.

The knock on Noguez's door came from Los Angeles County district attorney's investigators about 8:20 a.m. Noguez, 47, was led away in handcuffs for booking at the county jail. Salari, 49, was arrested at a house in Encino, and McNeil, 54, was taken into custody at his West Los Angeles home. Each is being held on more than \$1-million bail.

Dist. Atty. Steve Cooley described the case as the most significant public corruption scandal involving a county official in decades.

"Honest taxpayers and the public at large, it seems, were to be damned," Cooley said. "Residents must have [See Assessor, A17]

### Armstrong steps down from charity

The disgraced former Tour de France champion also loses Nike and Anheuser-Busch endorsement deals. **SPORTS, C1**

**Weather**  
Mostly sunny.  
L.A. Basin: 90/64. **AA6**  
**Complete Index ... AA2**

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### FADING DREAMS

## Hard-up colleges turn to donors

Community campuses face challenges in trying to follow a path long traveled by four-year universities.

BY LARRY GORDON

Many colleges seek donations for new construction or scholarships. Pasadena City College, however, has an additional goal that was unthinkable before California's budget crisis forced community colleges to slash course offerings.

The school is seeking donations from alumni and others to restore some of the 570 classes it planned to cut this academic year. The campaign, launched in April, has received about \$89,400 in donations, and the school is also devoting \$106,000 from savings result-

ing from some cost cuts, officials said.

The result: 35 classes are being revived in such high-demand fields as biology, political science and psychology.

Beyond the effect on that 30,000-student campus, the effort highlights how community colleges around the state and nation are increasingly courting donors and reconnecting with their alumni — tasks often neglected when state funds were more plentiful.

"Community colleges are definitely taking huge steps in fundraising that they have not in the past. Ten years ago, you would never hear of us raising money for this kind of thing," said Bobbi Abram, executive director of PCC's foundation, which raised about \$2 million last year.

More two-year schools are trying to follow a path [See Donations, A16]