

Good Morning, here are today's top stories and the weather forecast for Monday August 16, 2010.

Albuquerque Weather: High 86 50% chance rain

Rio Rancho Weather: high 96 “

Espanola Weather: high 81 “

Santa Fe weather: high 79 “

Belen/Los Lunas weather high 90 “

and now the news:

WASHINGTON - After skirting the controversy for weeks, President Barack Obama is weighing in forcefully on the mosque near ground zero, saying a nation built on religious freedom must allow it. "As a citizen, and as president, I believe that Muslims have the same right to practice their religion as everyone else in this country," Obama told an intently listening crowd gathered at the White House Friday evening to observe the Islamic holy month of Ramadan.

"That includes the right to build a place of worship and a community center on private property in lower Manhattan, in accordance with local laws and ordinances," he said. "This is America, and our commitment to religious freedom must be unshakable."

The White House had not previously taken a stand on the mosque, which would be part of a \$100 million Islamic community center two blocks from where nearly 3,000 people perished when hijacked jetliners slammed into the World Trade Center towers on Sept. 11, 2001. Press secretary Robert Gibbs had insisted it was a local matter.

It was already much more than that, sparking debate around the country as top Republicans including Sarah Palin and Newt Gingrich announced their opposition. So did the Anti-Defamation League, a Jewish civil rights group.

Obama elevated it to a presidential issue Friday without equivocation.

While insisting that the place where the twin towers once stood was indeed "hallowed ground," Obama said that the proper way to honor it was to apply American values.

Harkening back to earlier times when the building of synagogues or Catholic churches also met with opposition, Obama said: "Time and again, the American people have demonstrated that we can work through these issues, and stay true to our core values and emerge stronger for it. So it must be and will be today."

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, an independent who has been a strong supporter of the mosque, welcomed Obama's words as a "clarion defense of the freedom of religion."

But some Republicans were quick to pounce.

"President Obama is wrong," said Rep. Peter King, R-N.Y. "It is insensitive and uncaring for the Muslim community to build a mosque in the shadow of ground zero."

Obama's stance runs counter to the opinions of the majority of Americans, according to polls. A poll this week found that nearly 70 percent of Americans opposed the mosque plan while just 29 percent approved. A number of Democratic politicians have shied away from the controversy.

Opponents, including some Sept. 11 victims' relatives, see the prospect of a mosque so near the destroyed trade center as an insult to the memory of those killed by Islamic terrorists in the 2001 attacks.

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#### >>Memorial Honors CT Workplace Shooting Victims

(Hartford, CT) -- A memorial service was held in Hartford, Connecticut on Sunday for the victims of this month's workplace shooting at Hartford Distributors. Nine people died when 34-year-old Omar Thornton opened fire on his co-workers and then killed himself on August 3rd. Hundreds of workers from across the country attended the memorial, which was organized by the Teamsters Union. U.S. Congressman John Larson brought an American flag to each of the victims' families and read letters of condolence from President Obama.

#### >>BP Expecting Final Approval To Kill Well

(Houston, TX) -- BP is expecting to get the go-ahead early this week to finish its relief well in the Gulf of Mexico. That's the word from National Incident Commander Thad Allen. At a weekend news briefing, Allen said BP will conduct final testing and planning before it receives the final green light from federal authorities. He said that could happen by Tuesday. Then, it could be 96 hours before final intercept of the damaged well occurs, and the permanent sealing of the blown-out well that has spewed an estimated five-million barrels of crude oil into the Gulf since April.

#### >>War Of Words Over "Ground Zero Mosque" Rages

(Undated) -- The war of words continues to rage over plans to build a mosque about two blocks away from Ground Zero. On CNN's "State of the Union," Republican Congressman Peter King of Long Island, New York said constructing the 13-story Cordoba House near the former World Trade Center site "rubs salt in the wounds" of those affected by 9-11. Meanwhile, Democrat Jerrold Nadler, whose Congressional district includes the Ground Zero site, said on the same show that the government has "no right and no business" saying where a house of worship should be built.

#### >>Off-Road Racing Event Ends In Tragedy

(Undated) -- At least eight people were killed during a popular off-road racing event in the Mojave Desert on Saturday night. The tragedy happened in Lucerne Valley in San Bernardino County, California. A pickup truck apparently slammed into a crowd of onlookers who'd come out to watch what's known as the California 200 Night Race. The annual event attracts thousands of spectators to the desert about 100 miles northeast of Los Angeles. Authorities say a total of 12 people were injured. Some of them had to be air lifted from the scene in serious condition.

>>"Craigslist Killer" Suspect Commits Suicide

(Boston, MA) -- The so-called "Craigslist Killer" suspect has killed himself. ABC News is reporting that Philip Markoff slashed his wrists and tied something around his neck Saturday night. The Suffolk County Sheriff's Office said he was pronounced dead Sunday at 10:17 a.m. Eastern time at Boston's Nashua Street Jail, where he was awaiting trial in the slaying of a masseuse. Markoff was a medical student at Boston University in April 2009 when he was arrested in the shooting death of Julissa Brisman. The 26-year-old had apparently answered Markoff's ad on Craigslist.

>>New York Adopts No-Fault Divorces

(Albany, NY) -- New Yorkers can now have no-fault divorces. New York Governor David Paterson signed a bill into law Sunday that gives couples the right to end their marriages without having to give any reason for blame in court. New York is the last state to enact such a law. Before it was enacted, New Yorkers seeking a divorce had to either separate for a year or give reasons for the divorce, like adultery or cruel treatment. Opponents fear the new law will create a spike in the number of divorce cases in the state.

>>"Jersey Shore" Cast Member Arrested

(Seaside Heights, NJ) -- Another cast member on MTV's show "Jersey Shore" has been arrested. Police say Ronnie Ortiz-Magro had unpaid parking tickets. Police arrested him Sunday in Seaside Heights, New Jersey. They say the outstanding warrants were from Annendale and Stuartsville in New Jersey. Ronnie was released after he paid off the fines. The arrest comes two weeks after fellow cast member Snookie was arrested in Seaside Heights for disorderly conduct.

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>>Santa Fe Police Using Crime Website

(Santa Fe, NM) -- Santa Fe police are providing detailed crime information through the website crimereports.com. The website provides information on types of crimes, and where they occurred. Miquela Gonzales with Santa Fe police says it's important for residents to know what's happening where they live. It's also linked to the Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office. The site will tell you the number of traffic crashes on a road, the location of sex offenders, and where drug and alcohol arrests are concentrated. It will also tell about crimes elsewhere including Albuquerque.

#### >>Job Fair Held For Upcoming Hotel

(Albuquerque, NM) -- A job fair Saturday set out to fill more than 40 positions for a new Albuquerque hotel. The jobs, from maintenance to management are for the Hotel Parq Central. The 74-room boutique hotel is at the site of the old Memorial Hospital and should be ready for business late next month.

[[Note nature]]

#### >>Suspected Peeping Tom Linked To Several Crimes

(Albuquerque, NM) -- Police have identified a Peeping Tom suspected of going into women's bathrooms in two Albuquerque stores. A camera and license plate number helped police identify their suspect as 37-year-old David Bloodworth, listed as a resident of Rio Rancho. Bloodworth is also wanted on a warrant from Tucumcari related to voyeurism. He also has a history of similar crimes outside New Mexico. Rio Rancho authorities have other cases that match his description. Police want to hear from you if you think you've been a victim or if you can help their case.

[[Note nature]]

#### >>Dozen Arrested In Prostitution Bust

(Albuquerque, NM) -- An undercover prostitution sting nabbed eleven men and one woman. Albuquerque police used an undercover female officer asking the men for sex, and once they paid they were arrested. The woman arrested was accused of prostitution. APB spokesperson Nadine Hamby says those arrested included businessmen and members of the military. Police conduct the stings every few months -- more when there are more visitors, such as during Balloon Fiesta and the State Fair. Hamby says prostitution leads to more crime and is usually connected to drugs.

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#### >>City Of Washington, DC, Reverses Prayer Ban On Public Sidewalks

(Washington, DC) -- Washington, DC, officials have reversed their position and will allow prayer and free speech on public sidewalks. The decision follows the arrest of the Director of the Christian Defense Coalition, the Reverend Patrick J. Mahoney, for praying and reading the Bible on a public sidewalk in front of Planned Parenthood in June. Mahoney says, quote, "We thank God for this important victory for free speech, public prayer and the First Amendment."

#### >>American Bar Association Votes To Support Same-Sex Marriage

(Undated) -- The American Bar Association is calling on governments across the U.S. to "eliminate" any restrictions to same-sex marriage. CNSNews.com reports the ABA policy-making House of Delegates recently adopted Resolution 111 calling for changes in the law

nationwide. The Ohio Bar Association President Leslie Jacobs was the only voice opposing the measure and urged the ABA to avoid overreaching into areas of contentious social policy.

>>Flood Victims In Pakistan See Aid From Baptist Organizations

(Pakistan) -- Baptist organizations around the world are responding to flood victims in Pakistan. Associated Baptist Press reports U.S. Southern Baptists sent an initial 20-thousand dollars and British Baptists contributed about 16-thousand dollars shortly after the floods began. The United Nations says nearly 17-hundred people have died in the floods and as many as 14-million have been affected. BMS World Mission's Steve Sanderson says disasters of this kind the bigger challenge comes during the later recovery phase of work when homes, sanitation and livelihoods need to be restored.

>>Study Finds Shared Faith Practices Tend To Make Couples Happier

(Undated) -- The "Journal of Marriage and Family" published a study finding couples who share core religious beliefs are happier. According to "The Washington Post," the study found African-American couples are more likely than others to share religious beliefs and pray together at home. These factors are linked to greater happiness in marriages and relationships for whites, Hispanics and African-Americans. W. Bradford Wilcox is director of the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia. He says the study holds true to the old saying that couples who pray together stay together.

>>President Obama Weighs In On Controversy Over Ground Zero Mosque

(Washington, DC) -- President Obama has weighed in on controversial plans for a mosque two blocks from Ground Zero. He strongly backs the proposal. Obama made his remarks in support of the 100-million-dollar Islamic community center and mosque that would be located two blocks north of the World Trade Center site during at a White House dinner for the holy month of Ramadan. The President said, quote, "I believe that Muslims have the same right to practice their religion as anyone else in this country. That includes the right to build a place of worship and a community center on private property in lower Manhattan, in accordance with local laws and ordinances."

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That's the news, I'm Frank Haley, cjf for God's Glory alone..