

Lynch proposes 28-cent cigarette tax increase

By **NORMA LOVE**
Associated Press

CONCORD — Gov. John H. Lynch proposed raising the cigarette tax 28 cents per pack today to help pay for a lean state budget with few new programs.

"I promised the people of New Hampshire an honest and balanced budget that reflects our values and priorities. I promised not bigger government, but better government," the freshman Democrat said in prepared remarks to the Legislature.

Lynch also kept his promise to those unhappy with the statewide property tax. He included its repeal in the spending plan for the two years beginning July 1.

Lynch proposes cutting school aid by 46 percent, which would shrink his overall budget's growth. Lynch proposes

distributing \$455 million next year from non-property tax sources and \$467 million in 2007 — \$778 million less than allocated last year and this year.

The state property tax rate will be \$2.90 per \$1,000 of value next year if it remains on the books and \$860 million in aid will be distributed. In the current budget, the state distributed \$1.7 billion in aid.

"We have a responsibility to put in place a lasting school funding solution — and I ask you to join with us," said Lynch who considers the state property tax a gimmick, since most revenues it generates stay in the communities that raise them. "We can and we must solve school funding this year."

Lynch resolves a projected \$370 million shortfall by counting on the economy for higher revenues, raising the cigarette tax, recouping tax mistakes

through auditing, increasing lottery ticket sales and increasing liquor sales.

The increase in the cigarette tax would raise the total tax to 80 cents per pack. Tax rates in surrounding states are: Massachusetts and Connecticut, \$1.51; Rhode Island, \$2.46; Vermont, \$1.19; and Maine \$1. Unlike New Hampshire, those states also have sales taxes levied on top of their cigarette taxes.

Lynch proposed few new programs. He said New Hampshire students who qualify for the maximum federal Pell Grant would pay no tuition their freshman year at state colleges in 2007. About 200 students would qualify for the subsidy.

He also kept a campaign promise and included money to subsidize health insurance for an additional 6,000 children through the Healthy Kids program.

And he recommended giving \$10 mil-

lion to the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program, which got \$1.5 million in the current budget.

"Our state's beautiful natural environment is part of why we all love and live in New Hampshire," he said. "It's also one of our state's most important economic assets."

Lynch also wants to add 14 state troopers to the highways by reallocating spending in the Department of Safety

"In recent years, we've seen a reduction in the number of state troopers," he said. "At the same time, the number of fatal accidents is increasing. I've heard too many reports of insufficient backup for local police departments and large stretches of our highways with no trooper on duty. That's not safe for our troopers or for our citizens."

Lynch proposes fully funding aid pro-

grams for towns with catastrophic cases involving disabled students and those building schools. He said those programs were not adequately funded over the past two years.

Lynch's budget does not lay off any state workers, many of whom campaigned to elect him. It also contains an unspecified amount for a new wage contract with them. The contract expired July 1, 2003.

Veterans also got special notice: funding to open a wing at the Veterans Home and another staff person at the Veterans Council to help new veterans get services.

Like his predecessor, he would turn to the state's biggest agency — Health and Human Services — to save some money. He would cut \$12 million in funding for personnel — about 100 unfilled management jobs.

The gift of song, in 4-part harmony

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handed Sharon a rose and said, "Joe wanted you to have this."

And then they sang another song, "The Story of the Rose."

Sharon laughed. And she cried. At the same time. She wiped a tear from her eye through a wide smile. Though she was a little embarrassed, her eyes sparkled.

That's not an unusual reaction when you're visited by members of the Keene Cheshiremen barbershop chorus.

By the time they reached the Marottas, a core group of eight barbershop singers had visited eight locations, including Clark-Mortensen Agency Inc., Monadnock Waldorf School and Cheshire Medical Center. After they left Panera, they still had nine romantic stops to go.

Usually, the recipient of a singing valentine moves quickly through four stages: shock, embarrassment, resignation and joy, said choral director James Flanders.

"Rarely do we leave without somebody having a tear in their eye," Flanders said.

But every stop is different, too. At one house, the recipient of the singing valentine was in the shower.

At Home Depot in Keene, they harmonized for a construction worker in a hard hat. Even he had a tear in his eye before they were through, Flanders said.

They offer recipients optional hugs at the end of the serenade, and "they all take you up on it," Flanders said.

Barbershop quartets have four singers, but can have up to eight, a double quartet. When the eight-some showed up at Panera's to serenade Sharon, they ran into three more barbershop singers on their lunch break. So they teamed up, Flanders said.

"I thought it was very romantic," said Sharon, who added it was a complete surprise.

The Keene Cheshiremen barbershop chorus has been around since 1953, but Flanders organized the singing valentines four years ago. Since then, the program has grown: In the first year, it had 25 takers; this year it had 150.

A singing valentine costs \$45, and the money goes to charity and to the chorus's music education programs.

To meet this year's demand for singing valentines, the 30 members of the chorus split into six groups and spent all day Monday on the road — Brattleboro, Keene, Peterborough and towns in between.

The oldest singers are in their 70s and 80s. One of the youngest is 11-year-old Keene resident Christian Incandella, who got involved in the barbershoppers about a year and a half ago through his father, Jeff.

Christian, who looked quite dapper in his green suit jacket, said he enjoys the harmonizing.

"Before, I never really went over two parts," he said. "When it's four, that makes it much more fun and interesting."

One of the newest chorus members is Rich S. Provencher, 29. He hadn't been a singer before he decided to join the barbershop chorus this year.

"I like barbershop music, and I needed something that would be a stress release from work," he said.

His group had a chance Monday to stop at Cheshire Medical Center and visit Provencher's grandmother, Billie Rudolf, who had suffered a stroke the day before.

Now in her mid-80s, Rudolf was delighted, but Flanders said the grandfather's reaction was what impressed him the most.

The grandfather is "hard as nails," Flanders said, but he was hugging Provencher by the end of the visit.

"This guy did magic today," Flanders said, pointing to Provencher.

REGION / A LITTLE DAB WILL DO



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sarah Gruver holds her eyes tightly closed as Becca Greene-Cramer applies hair spray before the start of play rehearsal at Brattleboro Union High School. The school music department's performance of "Anything Goes" opens this week.

Fire destroys a landmark in Peterborough

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Heavy winds Monday night sent chunks of flaming embers down to the main streets of Peterborough, and Lenox said he worried another fire might spark up as a result.

Otherwise, he said, firefighters didn't encounter any major problems.

The house sat atop a hill at

the end of a roughly quarter-mile driveway, but Lenox said the driveway is well-maintained, and his trucks didn't have any trouble getting there.

Firefighters pulled hoses up the driveway from relay trucks at the guest house and on Old Street Road.

"We supplied massive water streams," Lenox said.

One small section of the building was still standing this morning, though the roof was ripped off and the inside was scarred black. Bricks from several chimneys, three of which were still standing, littered the ground.

The house was built in the mid-1700s and was one of the oldest buildings in Peterborough, Lenox said.

He said firefighters would be at the estate all day, putting out the last of the hot spots and cleaning up debris.

Extreme skier killed at Stowe

By ASSOCIATED PRESS

STOWE, Vt. — A skier died at Stowe Mountain Resort after falling off a cliff while making an extreme-skiing movie.

Alec Stall, 23, died Monday. Rescue crews recovered his body Monday night.

Stall was one of four members

of a film crew skiing in rocky, wooded terrain outside the boundaries of the nearby Stowe Mountain Resort, police said.

Police said moving snow pushed Stall off the cliff.

Stall had recently moved to Stowe from New York, police said.

The others were not injured.

WEATHER / LOTTERIES

Forecast

Sunset today, 5:20. Sunrise Wednesday, 6:44. The moon rises Wednesday at 10:32 p.m.

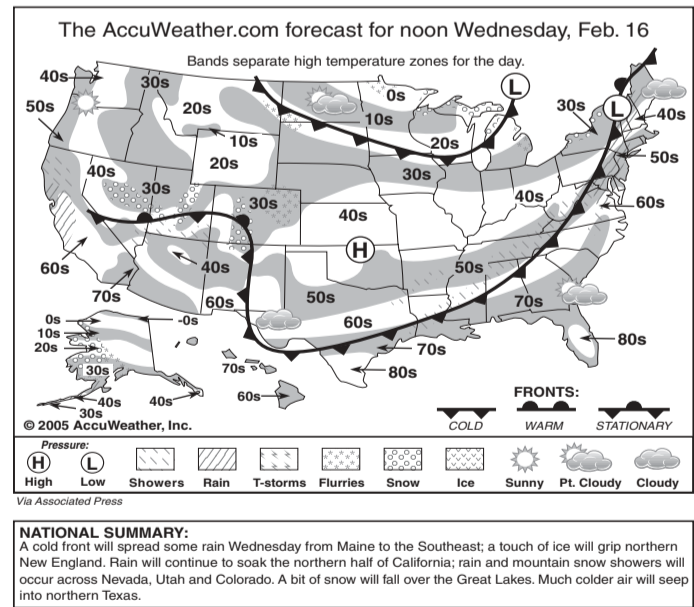
The National Weather Service forecast for the Monadnock Region: **Tonight**, partly cloudy, low 30. **Wednesday**, cloudy with a chance of rain, high 45, low 20.

Extended

Thursday, partly cloudy, high 25, low 10. **Friday**, partly cloudy, high 25, low 8. **Saturday**, mostly cloudy, high 28, low 5. **Sunday**, partly cloudy, high 25, low 8. **Monday**, partly cloudy, high 25.

On the road

Forecasts for **Wednesday**: Boston, thunderstorms, high 46, low 27; Burlington, Vt., rain or snow, 40, 18; Hartford-Springfield, thunderstorms, 50, 24; New York City, rain, 51, 34; Orlando,



sunny, 80, 55; Washington, D.C., showers, 61, 29.

Lotteries

Numbers drawn **Monday**:

Tri-state daily, (first pick) 872, 0578; (second pick) 079, 0514; Tri-state Heads or Tails, 8-13-26-27-29, tails; Mass. daily, 4170; CASH Winfall, 4-9-13-25-28-35, no jackpot winner.

1955, 1980 / IN THE SENTINEL

Tuesday, Feb. 15, 1955

The N.H. Senate passed a bill today, giving Keene Teachers College an additional \$50,000 to complete a \$300,000 dormitory. The measure now goes to Gov. Lane Dwinell for his signature.

The first explosion of the 1955 atomic test series, set for early today, was postponed for 24 hours by the Atomic Energy Commission because of unfavorable weather conditions.

Friday, Feb. 15, 1980

A nine-person panel probably didn't resolve any of the

controversy surrounding the issue of a Route 101 bypass of Dublin, but the discussion may have cleared up some misconceptions. Richard G. Marshall, planning engineer of the N.H. Department of Public Works and Highways, said the divisiveness among local people over the location of a bypass has given the highway department "more flexibility than we really wanted" in coming up with a decision.

You know there's a snow drought when a strawberry farmer would like to have his own snow-making machine. Ellis Farms on West Surry

Road, Keene, operates a pick-your-own berry operation and is one of the many businesses in the region hit by the snow drought. It wants a blanket of snow atop its fields, to prevent damage to plants. The sufferers include more than ski salesman and driveway plowers. Users of hydroelectric power, homeowners with pipes buried shallow and volunteer firemen have also felt the crunch of frosty, snowless winter. The winter, of course, has been a record-breaker. Only 3.03 inches of precipitation fell in Keene in December and January, compared to 11.24 inches a year ago.

OBITUARIES

Herbert Burger Jr.

Herbert Lee Burger Jr., 88, of Hartwell, Ga., died Feb. 10, 2005, at Hart County Hospital in Hartwell.

He was born in Vesper, Kan., March 13, 1916, son of Pearle Gertrude (Luff) and Herbert L. Burger Sr.

Mr. Burger was an administrator at Cheshire Medical Center in Keene before he retired.

He was a member of Hartwell First Presbyterian Church. He was a veteran of World War II, and retired from the U.S. Navy as a chief hospital corpsman after 20 years of service. He was a member of American Legion Post 109 in Hartwell.

Survivors include his wife, Norma (Johnson) Burger of Hartwell; three sons, Fredrick Burger of Arvada, Colo., Charles Burger of Louviers, Colo., and David Pursell of Lavonia, Ga.; three daughters, Raeleen Finn of Melbourne, Fla., Libby Mears of Sitka, Alaska, and Judy Marshall of Naperville, Ill.; 17 grandchildren; and 14 great-grandchildren. His first wife, Priscilla Longley Burger, and a son, Herbert L. Burger 3rd, both died earlier.

Mr. Burger wished to be cremated. No services are planned. Strickland Funeral Home of Hartwell is in charge of arrangements.

Contributions may be made in Mr. Burger's memory to American Legion Post 109, P.O. Box 513, Hartwell, Ga. 30643; or to Hartwell First Presbyterian Church, 41 South Carter St., Hartwell.

Mildred Stoodley

Mildred Stoodley, 90, of 17 Frost St., Marlborough, died this morning at Cheshire Medical Center in Keene after a period of failing health.

Funeral arrangements and a full obituary will be announced later by Fletcher Funeral Home & Cremation Services of Keene.

Florence M. Whittle

Florence Mary Whittle, 71, of Tucson, Ariz., died Feb. 11, 2005.

She was born in Northfield, Mass., Jan. 30, 1934, daughter of Philip and Florence (Pitts) Johnson. She spent her early years around Brattleboro before settling in Hinsdale. She moved to Tucson in 1977.

In 1951, she married Eugene Lehane of Hinsdale. Later, she married Harold Whittle, also of

Hinsdale. Both marriages ended in divorce. She was recently engaged to Robert Klicinski of Tucson.

Survivors include four sons, Robin Lehane of Winchester, Michael Lehane of Shillington, Pa., and Mark Lehane and Larry Lehane, both of Tucson; and a daughter, Sheri Hornby of Tucson. A son, Scott Lehane, died in infancy.

Her companion of many years, Franklin Pierce, died in 2003.

Her life was centered on her family and friends. She never tired of her crafts or of learning about any subject that came up. She especially enjoyed her 15 grandchildren.

Services were held this morning at Adair Funeral Home in Tucson. Spring burial will be in Pine Grove Cemetery, Hinsdale.

Obituaries and funeral notices

The Sentinel publishes without charge obituaries that, subject to editing, conform to the newspaper's news style standards.

Additional information, such as extended lists of survivors, names of pets and details of special interests, as well as funeral information and suggestions regarding contributions, can appear for a flat \$30 fee. Further, a follow-up notice about the funeral service can also be published for a \$30 fee.

Paid additional information and funeral notices appear beneath the following symbol:

The full policy governing obituaries and paid additional information and funeral notices can be found at www.keenesentinel.com (click on "obituary and funeral notice policy") or by calling 603-352-1234, extension 1421 during normal business hours.