

A DUSTUP
Cold today with snow showers this afternoon and this evening; clearing tonight.
Forecast, F8

The Providence Journal

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Labor leaders say the governor isn't working with them to solve the budget gap

TALKING POINTS



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / CONNIE GROSCH

George Nee, secretary-treasurer of the state's AFL-CIO, being interviewed at the State House yesterday, says the relationship with the governor is the worst that labor has had with any governor over the past three decades.

But Governor Carcieri says he is working with lawmakers and state employees on his proposals.

BY STEVE PEOPLES and KATHERINE GREGG
JOURNAL STATE HOUSE BUREAU

PROVIDENCE — Desperate to close the state's largest budget deficit in modern history, former Gov. Bruce Sundlun did not wait for labor union leaders to come to his office to discuss the situation.

The Democratic governor went to them.

In 1991, several weeks after he was elected, Sundlun personally appeared at the AFL-CIO's Providence office to negotiate a cost-

cutting proposal to shut down state government for 10 days. The subsequent three-day shutdown and pay-deferral plan saved nearly \$50 million over two years.

"That's the only way to get agreement," Sundlun said yesterday of the importance of collaborating with unions. "If you don't let labor in the door, you're going to get nothing but your head handed to you."

SEE **BUDGET, A8**

Lawmakers rush to craft stimulus plan

Prodded by chaos in the stock market and the prospect of a recession, leaders of both parties say a package including tax rebates could be unveiled as early as today.

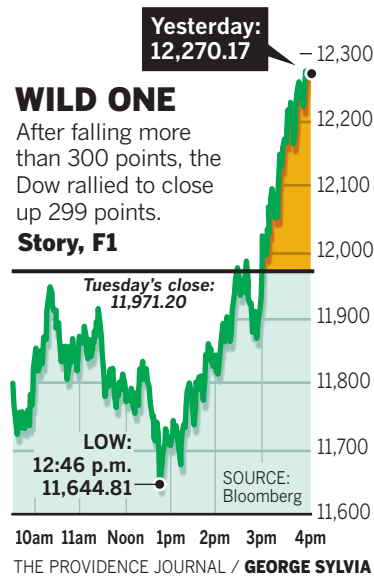
JOURNAL WIRE REPORTS

WASHINGTON — Congressional leaders and the Bush administration were close to reaching a deal on a \$145-billion economic stimulus package last night as the Treasury Department crunched the numbers on components of the plan, senior House officials said.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California met three times yesterday with Treasury Secretary Henry M. Paulson Jr. and the Republican leader, Rep. John A. Boehner of Ohio, who have served as chief architects of the plan in a rare show of bipartisan ship.

"We'll have more to say tomorrow morning [today]," Boehner said last night as he left the final meeting of the day. "We're hopeful."

Asked if agreement was near, Pelosi said, "We're moving toward that, but all the issues are



not resolved." Democratic aides said greater GOP flexibility over giving income tax relief to poor families with children — who would not be eligible under President Bush's tax rebate proposal — had moved the talks forward. Democrats said the centerpiece of the plan would be a widely distributed tax rebate, perhaps

SEE **ECONOMY, A9**

Drugs examined for suicide risk

In a shift in policy, the FDA is requiring drug makers to put a comprehensive suicide assessment into their clinical trials.

BY GARDINER HARRIS
THE NEW YORK TIMES

After decades of inattention to the possible psychiatric side effects of experimental medicines, the Food and Drug Administration is now requiring drug makers to study closely whether patients become suicidal during clinical trials.

The new rules represent one of the most profound changes of the past 16 years to regulations governing drug development. But since the FDA's oversight of experimental medicines is done in secret, the agency's shift has not been announced publicly.

The drug industry, however, is keenly aware of the change. Makers of drugs to treat obesity,

urinary incontinence, epilepsy, smoking cessation, depression and many other conditions are being asked for the first time by the drug agency to put a comprehensive suicide assessment into their clinical trials.

In recent months, the agency has sent letters — it would not say how many — to drug makers requiring that they use such a scale. Merck, Sanofi-Aventis and Eli Lilly are all using a detailed suicide assessment in clinical trials being conducted now.

The seeds for the new federal effort were planted four years ago with the discovery that anti-

SEE **DRUGS, A9**

The votes are in: GOP contenders dislike Romney

Whether it's his wealth, attack ads, or supposed pandering on the issues, it's breeding resentment toward the former Massachusetts governor.

BY MICHAEL LUO
THE NEW YORK TIMES

TAMPA, Fla. — At the end of the Republican presidential debate in New Hampshire this month, when the Democrats joined them on stage, Mitt Romney found himself momentarily alone as his counterparts mingled, looking around a bit stiffly for a companion.

The moment was emblematic of a broader reality that has helped shape the Republican contest and could take center stage again at the debate today in Florida.

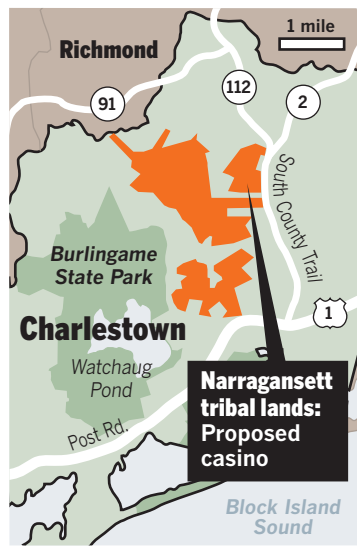
Within the small circle of contenders, Romney has become the most disliked.

With so much attention recently on the sniping between Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton and Barack Obama on the Democratic side, the almost visceral scorn directed at Rom-

SEE **CAMPAIGN, A9**

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Your turn: What's your take on the state of the state? To respond, and for the latest on politics in Rhode Island, go to projo.com/politics



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / GEORGE SYLVIA

Tribe sees casino as budget solution

In exchange for help in repealing a law that has hampered their previous efforts, the Narragansetts offer to make a cash payment to the state.

BY KATIE MULVANEY
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

CHARLESTOWN — The Narragansett Indian Tribe yesterday used Governor Carcieri's grim State of the State address to launch its latest casino plans, saying a gambling venture on its land would give Rhode Island a badly needed financial boost.

The tribe plans to ask state leaders this week to support its efforts to persuade Congress to repeal a law that requires the

Narragansetts to seek statewide voter approval for high-stakes gambling on its 1,800 acres, Chief Sachem Matthew Thomas said. If the law is rescinded, the tribe could immediately forge ahead with a destination casino, and its backers would

promptly reward the state with a cash payment, said Thomas. "We're looking to help the state immediately," he said. He would not specify how much the initial payment would be, but promised that the establishment would hire only Rhode Islanders for the estimated 3,500 jobs and buy local goods and supplies from Rhode Island businesses.

"We'll put it in writing," he

SEE **CASINO, A8**

Health-care cutback for needy decried

BY BENJAMIN N. GEDAN
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — Dressed in lab coats and clutching Spider-man Band-Aids, a platoon of medical students fanned out across the State House yesterday, buttonholing legislators to argue against proposed cuts to the RItE Care program.

Their guerrilla lobbying followed a rally in the rotunda, where health-care leaders lambasted Governor Carcieri for his attempts to strip nearly 9,000 low-income residents from the state's health-care rolls.

"It is a crisis of fairness," K. Nicholas Tsiongas, president of the Rhode Island Medical Society, said, drawing applause from doctors and nurses holding

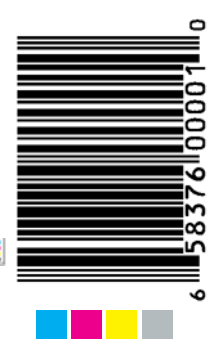
SEE **CUTS, A8**



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / BOB THAYER

Joel Huleatt, left, along with other Brown University Medical School students as well as doctors and nurses, protest the governor's proposed health-care cuts at the State House yesterday.

projo.com Your turn: What do you think government's spending priorities should be in Rhode Island? To respond, go to projo.com



INSIDE TODAY

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A total of \$410 has been donated.
See latest donations on Page B6.

COUPLE GUILTY OF SERVING MINORS

The Barrington couple plead no contest to charges of illegally serving alcohol to minors under the state's social-host law. **B1**

EXODUS FROM GAZA

Tens of thousands of Palestinians flood into Egypt after militants blast holes in a border fence, puncturing Israeli efforts to maintain an economic blockade on the territory. **A2**



MAKING HIS MARK

Jimmy Baron, left, pours in 17 points — including his 1,000th of his career — as URI rolls to an 81-70 win over George Washington. **C1**