

EVEN BETTER
Sunny today with highs in the low 80s; comfortable temperatures tonight.
Forecast, D8

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BALANCING THE BUDGET

Plan avoids tax hike; cuts programs

The Assembly's \$6.89-billion budget falls largely in line with Governor Carcieri's proposal to close a \$425-million deficit.

BY STEVE PEOPLES, KATHERINE GREGG and CYNTHIA NEEDHAM
JOURNAL STATE HOUSE BUREAU

PROVIDENCE — The General Assembly unveiled a \$6.89-billion spending package yesterday that largely avoids tax increases, relying instead on tens of millions of dollars in state employee savings, Medicaid cuts and the removal of thousands from state health and welfare rolls to plug the worst budget deficit since the credit union crisis of the early 1990s.

The legislative budget proposal would also cap the state's movie production tax

credits, hike the fines for driving violations by \$10 across the board and raise a premiums tax paid by the state's major health insurers — including Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island, United-Healthcare and Delta Dental — with no guarantee they won't pass the \$5.6-million hit along to their subscribers.

"Considering what they could have done," David R. Carlin III, chief lobbyist for the Rhode Island Chamber of Com-

merce Coalition said, "this budget represents a victory of the taxpayer ... who at the beginning of this legislative session were facing the possibility of tax increases and new taxes across the board."

The budget, which was approved by the House Finance Committee yesterday, mirrored most of the Republican governor's plans to close a massive def-

icit, now estimated at \$425 million for the budget year that begins July 1. While not yet fully clear, the deficit-reducing plan relies heavily on \$90 million in personnel savings and another \$67 million in reduced Medicaid spending for low-income, elderly and disabled Rhode Islanders that are still being negotiated.

There was some welcome news in the 254-page budget bill. The legislature reversed plans to close the West Warwick registry and added \$13.6 million in education aid to cities and towns.

But there was plenty of unwelcome news as well.

The committee froze non-school mon-

ey at recently-reduced levels, cut \$17 million from the state's three public universities and another \$2.6 million from the agency that gives need-based college scholarships.

"The only silver linings in the dark clouds of this budget is the fact that further cuts weren't made," said Daniel Beardsley, executive director of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns.

On the human-service side, the cuts could have been deeper.

The House plan cuts subsidized

SEE **BUDGET, A8**

projo.com
Your turn: To react to the House Finance Committee budget plan and to read a summary of the plan, go to projo.com

THE NEWEST YANKEE



AP / STEVEN SENNE

No, fearsome Red Sox slugger David Ortiz hasn't abandoned the Red Sox to join The Evil Empire. But yesterday, the native of the Dominican Republic did raise his right hand to be sworn in as a naturalized American citizen, along with 226 others at the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston. "My whole family, kids, and everyone have been born here," Ortiz said. "It's a great country, proud to be here, now proud to be a part of it." Added his wife, Tiffany: "It's a big deal for him."

U.S. air strike raises tensions with Pakistan

American officials say Pakistani forces were inadvertently killed during a raid on Taliban and al-Qaida militants.

BY ZULFIQAR ALI, HENRY CHU and PETER SPIEGEL
LOS ANGELES TIMES

PESHAWAR, Pakistan — The Pakistani army yesterday accused the U.S. military of an "unprovoked and cowardly" air strike that resulted in the deaths of 11 Pakistani infantrymen, threatening the cooperation between the two countries in combating terrorism.

In an unusually strong statement, the Pakistani army added that it reserved the right to protect citizens from unwarranted aggression.

As U.S. officials expressed regret for the deaths without claiming responsibility, the incident threatened to aggravate already tense relations between the United States and Pakistan, whose newly elected government has faced accusations from the U.S. military that it has failed to crack down on extremists in Pakistan's



SOURCE: ESRI AP

western tribal areas.

A senior official acting as an intermediary between the two countries said there was a flurry of high-level phone calls and meetings yesterday attempting to defuse the incident. Top Pakistani officials were so irate that they summoned U.S. Ambassador Ann W. Patterson to the foreign office to complain, the official said.

"Nobody wants this to become bigger than it is," said the senior

SEE **PAKISTAN, A5**

Judge points to way court might consider same-sex issue

BY EDWARD FITZPATRICK
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — A Superior Court judge yesterday raised the question of whether it's constitutional for Rhode Island to block divorces for same-sex couples married in Massachusetts.

Two Providence women, Margaret R. Chambers and Cassandra B. Ormiston, married in Fall River in 2004 after Massachusetts became the first state to grant marriage licenses to same-sex couples, and in 2006 the couple sought Rhode Island's first same-sex divorce in Family Court.

But in a December 2007 decision that drew national attention, a divided state Supreme Court

SEE **DIVORCE, B6**

Action! Star in place for Cianci film

Former mayor says he has a rival project in the works

BY MICHAEL JANUSONIS
JOURNAL ARTS WRITER

Michael Corrente said yesterday that he will begin shooting his long-planned film about former Providence Mayor Vincent A. Cianci Jr. in August in Rhode Island.

But Cianci in a later interview said he was in negotiations with a production company to do a competing, authorized movie about his life.

Corrente verified a report that appeared in yesterday's Hollywood Reporter that Oliver Platt will play the former mayor. He also confirmed that he is in talks with Robin Williams for a supporting role and that director Steven Soderbergh, whose films include *Ocean's Eleven* and *Twelve*, would be the executive producer of *The Prince of Providence*.

The film, which Corrente will direct, is based on the best-selling book by Providence Journal reporter Mike Stanton. David Mamet, a Pulitzer-Prize winning playwright, wrote the screenplay, with writing credit going to Howard Korder for his services on a polish draft.

Cianci, reached by phone during a break from his radio talk show on WPRO, said he had "been in negotiations for about a year" with Tribeca Productions, the



Actor Oliver Platt, right, will play former Providence Mayor Vincent A. Cianci Jr. in an upcoming film. Learn more about the wide variety of roles Platt has played in the past on **A11**.

projo.com
Your turn: Does Oliver Platt fit the role? To respond and for more on the movie, go to projo.com

SEE **MOVIE, A11**

Don't look for any relief from \$4-a-gallon gas

The Energy Department, which historically underestimates how high prices will rise, predicts prices will stay around \$4 well into next year.

BY H. JOSEF HEBERT
ASSOCIATED PRESS

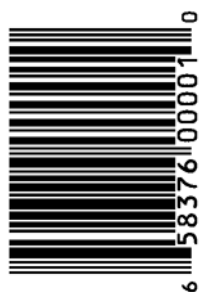
WASHINGTON — If it's a shock to pay \$60, or even \$100, to fill up your gas tank, you better get used to it.

Prices around \$4 a gallon are likely to be here for quite a while.

The Energy Department said yesterday that it expects gasoline prices to peak in August at about \$4.15 on average nationally — a dime more than today. That might be encouraging for people who are beginning to think prices will keep climbing forever.

But wait: The government also estimates that prices at the pump could stay near that level the

SEE **GASOLINE, A8**



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The Providence Journal SUMMERTIME FUND™



A total of \$2,317.27 was donated last week. See the latest donations, **B3**.

FIRM FAULTED BY OSHA

The federal Occupational Safety & Health Administration cites a Lincoln manufacturing company for failing to adequately safeguard a high-speed machine in which a Guatemalan illegal immigrant became trapped and was gravely injured. **B1**

WARNING TO IRAN

During his European tour, President Bush warns that "all options are on the table" unless Iran halts what the West believes are its efforts to develop a nuclear weapon. **A5**



RETURNING TO FORM

After poor performances in the playoff series against Atlanta and Cleveland, Celtics guard Ray Allen has regained the form that makes him one of the most prolific shooters in the NBA. **D1**