

The Providence Journal

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FRIDAY
JANUARY 9, 2009

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CLEARLY COLD

Sunny but cold today with highs in the upper 20s; clear, very cold tonight.

Forecast, C6



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / GRETCHEN ERTL

After years with the Tampa Bay Rays, Rocco Baldelli will wear a Red Sox cap this season.

Signing with Red Sox a homecoming for Baldelli

BY JOE McDONALD
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

BOSTON — Rocco Baldelli loves home cooking. He will now have plenty of it.

The 27-year-old Rhode Island native officially became a member of the Boston Red Sox yesterday when he was introduced at a news conference at the Westin Waterfront Hotel in South Boston.

The free-agent outfielder, and former Tampa Bay Ray, inked a one-year deal worth a base

salary of \$500,000 with a roster bonus of \$1.75 million if he's able to stay off the disabled list. Along with other incentives and bonuses, in the contract it's possible he could earn \$5.25 million.

This isn't a story about the money, or contracts, or bonuses, or health. This is about a kid from Cumberland, a former standout student-athlete from Bishop Hendricken High School, who grew up watching and rooting for the Red Sox. Now, he's one of them.

SEE BALDELLI, A4



EXTRA: Watch Rocco Baldelli's news conference announcing his signing with the Red Sox along with highlights of the annual Boston Baseball Writers dinner featuring Jim Rice and Dustin Pedroia at projo.com/video

Carcieri cuts get chilly reaction

Teachers, state police and pensioners are particularly worried about the deficit-reduction plan.

BY CYNTHIA NEEDHAM
and KATHERINE GREGG
JOURNAL STATE HOUSE BUREAU

PROVIDENCE — As Rhode Islanders turned on their televisions Wednesday evening, a solemn Governor Carcieri faced the camera and promised to close the state's \$357-million budget deficit without raising taxes.

But for that plan to work, the Carcieri administration is depending on massive state aid cuts, quick cash infusions and potentially seismic changes across state and local government — changes that could lead to the exodus of up to 1,659 state employees by April 1 and as many as 1,011 teachers before the end of the school year.

The prospect sent shivers through the halls of the State House and beyond yesterday as Rhode Islanders wondered what will happen if state lawmakers approve the budget-cutting plan. "I'm worried, can it work?" Providence Rep. Thomas C. Slater asked.

State pension administrator Frank Karpinski reported that his office has been barraged with phone calls from those fearful that their pensions will be affected.

For most, the answer was yes. That's because Carcieri is proposing a change that if approved by lawmakers would create a minimum retirement age of 59 and eliminate the annual 3-per-

SEE BUDGET, B4

Obama: Economy at risk



PROVIDENCE JOURNAL FILES / KATHY BORCHERS

Triton, one of the polar bears born at Roger Williams Park Zoo, rolls at home during his glory days in 1999.

R.I.'s bear necessities a national target

The National Taxpayers Union says Providence should not receive stimulus money for its polar bear exhibit at Roger Williams Park Zoo.

BY KATE BRAMSON
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

In a bluish image of ice and rocks stands a sad-looking polar bear, with its head slightly cocked to the side, staring out at CNN Web viewers under the headline "Mayors' infrastructure request full of pork, critic says."

The bear under attack is a former Rhode Island resident, at the Roger Williams Park Zoo, and it has been singled

out as a grand example of wasteful spending.

Among 607 pages of stimulus spending proposed last month by the United States Conference of Mayors — and now under consideration by President-elect Barack Obama — is \$4.8 million for the Providence polar bear exhibit.

As zoo visitors would tell you, those

SEE BEARS, A6

The bear facts

- Exhibit open for 25 years before closing in 2005.
- The exhibit featured eight different bears during that period, including two — Triton and Kobe — who were born at the zoo.
- Trixie, mother of Triton and Kobe, died after being sedated in advance of transferring her to a zoo in Indianapolis 2005.
- Reopening, first scheduled for 2007, now set for 2012.

But call for action already under fire

JOURNAL WIRE REPORTS

WASHINGTON — President-elect Barack Obama warned yesterday that the nation is sliding into the deepest economic crisis since World War II and urged Congress to pass a stimulus package quickly or risk an entire generation of Americans losing any hope of prosperity.

"For every day we wait or point fingers or drag our feet, more Americans will lose their jobs. More families will lose their savings. More dreams will be deferred and denied," he told an audience at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va. "And our nation will sink deeper into a crisis that, at some point, we may not be able to reverse."

But within hours of delivering his address, Obama's plans were running into a crossfire not only from Republicans but from his own party in Congress, suggesting

SEE ECONOMY, A7

Financial service jobs drop in R.I.

For years, the sector, with its high-paying positions, was one of the bright spots in the state's economy.

BY BENJAMIN N. GEDAN
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Fidelity Investments, the mutual-fund giant, colonized a swath of Smithfield. Providence-based Citizens Bank began swallowing competitors. The insurer FM Global tapped Johnston for its new \$60-million headquarters.

For years, the financial-services sector has been one of the few growing industries in the state's sputtering economy, generating consistent job growth and high wages. Employment in financial services has risen every year since 1996, up 31 percent in all. The average salary for the state's finance workers — including real estate agents, stockbrokers and analysts — is \$67,349, almost 60 percent above the average income.

SEE JOBS, A6

'Shovel-ready'

The Department of Transportation says it has \$130 million worth of "shovel-ready" projects that could go out to bid within 180 days. They include:

- Washington Bridge Park and bikeway: \$15 million
- Parts of Route 95 resurfacing: \$10 million
- Jamestown-Verrazzano Bridge improvements: \$6 million
- Asphalt road overlay statewide: \$4 million
- Sidewalk construction to meet federal disability law: \$4 million
- Route 10 signage: \$2.6 million
- Road crack sealing statewide: \$1 million
- Sakonnet Light renovation: \$850,000
- Kingston Station Tower renovation: \$300,000
- Route 1 median landscaping: \$250,000

Source: RIDOT

THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / FRIEDA SQUIRES



State scrambles for a stimulus wish list

Officials weren't assigned to create a list of "shovel-ready" projects for the federal stimulus plan until Wednesday.

BY BRUCE LANDIS
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — With a major exception — the Department of Transportation — state government has been caught flat-footed by the opportunity offered by the economic stimulus plan taking shape in Washington.

Preoccupied with budget problems, the Carcieri administration didn't assign officials to assemble plans for using the money until Wednesday, weeks after the governor began receiving criticism for lack of action.

Amy Kempe, the governor's press secretary, said yesterday, "They are working on a final list."

SEE PROJECTS, A7

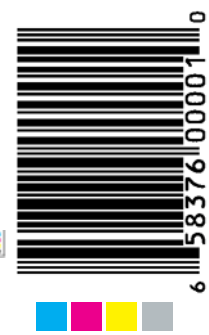


Your turn: React to Governor Carcieri's plan to curb R.I.'s budget deficit at projo.com

More on the budget

Education officials say that if Governor Carcieri's proposed budget cuts are approved, it would mark the first time since the state's banking crisis in the early 1990s that lawmakers slashed education aid in the middle of the year. **B1**

A hearing will be held today at 10 a.m. at the State House on the Medicaid "waiver" agreement that is a key element of Governor Carcieri's plan to cut the state budget. **B1**



INSIDE TODAY

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5 SECTIONS	
Ask Amy	E10
Bridge	E10
Business	C1
Classified	C4
Comics	E11
Crossword	E10
Editorial	B6
Legal ads	C3
Lifbeat	E1
Movies	E1
Lotteries	D6
Obituaries	B4
People	E1
Rhode Island	B1
Sports	D1
Television	E9
Today's Events	E2



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DIGITAL DILEMMA

President-elect Barack Obama asks Congress to postpone the Feb. 17 switch from analog to digital television broadcasting, arguing that too many Americans who rely on older TV sets to pick up over-the-air channels won't be ready for the change. **A2**

DASCHLE'S DEBUT

Former Sen. Tom Daschle, nominated to be the new secretary of Health and Human Services, wins support from Sen. Jack Reed and other key senators. **A3**



EFFORT TO HALT FIGHTING IN GAZA

With the death toll climbing and fighting threatening to spread to Lebanon, international pressure increases on Israel and Hamas to declare an immediate cease-fire in Gaza. **A2**