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# *The Rosenberg Report*

Vol. XIV  
March 3, 2003

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Hello!

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

On February 26th, we took that first step when Governor Romney unveiled his budget proposal for fiscal year 2004, which begins July 1st. There's a lot to do between now and then and nothing that the governor has proposed can take effect without approval from the Legislature. Here is my initial reaction to the document.

The governor's proposal addresses the projected \$3 billion deficit by making more than \$2 billion in cuts and raising nearly \$700 million through a variety of fees. But the document itself is so radical in format that it is going to take several days, perhaps even weeks, to unravel it and understand what is getting funded and what isn't. For example, previous budgets have consisted of roughly 1,000 separate line items and programs. The governor has consolidated those line items into 72 large accounts and more often than not it is unclear how much has been allotted for specific programs. The governor claims that the cuts he has made will not affect essential services, and that education and human services accounts have been protected. Again, it will take time to read the fine print to determine whether he has in fact achieved that goal, but based on my initial read, some things that I consider to be essential have in fact been cut or eliminated.

The governor has also put forward a dramatic plan to reorganize state government. I have always said that such proposals should be seriously considered and not just rejected out of hand. His proposals for restructuring the state's higher education system are so sketchy at this time that it's difficult to evaluate them completely and fairly. But regarding the governor's plan for human services, some of his broad concepts for streamlining administrations and procedures seem to make sense. Again, there is much fine print left to read, but my initial take on the governor's plan for human services is that it could free up dollars for direct services that might otherwise stay tied up in the bureaucracy.

The jury is still out on Governor Romney's fiscal '04 budget. We need to hear a lot more about his proposals before the House of Representatives releases its version of the budget sometime in late April, and before the Senate produces its spending plan in May. Let's hope he's as open to our thinking as he is asking us to be about his.

Below is a link to the governor's budget, which is only available on-line. Below that is a feedback form you can use to send me your thoughts. I look forward to reading them and considering them as the fiscal '04 budget takes another step closer.

Governor Romney's Fiscal 2004 Budget Proposal

<http://mass.gov/budget/?refer=massgobudget3>

Stan's Feedback Form  
[www.stanrosenberg.com/form.html](http://www.stanrosenberg.com/form.html)

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stan". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized.

### March Focus

#### *Current year budget crisis*

The fiscal '04 budget is grabbing all the headlines now, but we still have a fiscal '03 budget crisis to address.

On Feb. 25th, the Legislature approved a package that seeks to close the gap in this year's budget, estimated to be between \$485-\$650 million. The package totals \$207 million and includes a variety of transfers from special purpose government funds into the General Fund, and a few new fees, like the \$60 million expected to be generated by increasing real estate transaction fees. The Legislature's \$207 million package, combined with the \$343 million in cuts Governor Romney made unilaterally in January, add up to \$550 million. We are all hopeful that the projected deficit will stay on the low end so further action on the fiscal '03 budget will not be necessary.

The Legislature also agreed with Governor Romney's plan to close some tax loopholes and send that money to the state's Rainy Day Fund. Those changes could pour as much as \$137 million into the Rainy Day Fund, which could help us in fiscal '04.

All of these proposals are on the governor's desk awaiting his signature.

#### *February revenues*

(Note: February revenues are scheduled to be announced Monday, March 3)

### Noteworthy

#### *Mitigation report*

Last month I told you I had been named to chair a 6-member panel to explore ways to give cities and towns more tools to assist with the impact of local aid cuts. On Feb. 15th we filed our report with the full Senate. It's too early to say what, if any, of the ideas contained in the report might be approved in the coming months, but I'm confident that

there will be some action for the fiscal '04 budget. I appreciate everyone who forwarded their suggestions to my office.

As you'll see when you read the report, it is an inventory of the ideas presented. The next step will be for the Senate chairs of the substantive committees to evaluate each of the proposals in their area of jurisdiction and make their recommendations to the full Senate. Incidentally, this approach is part of the changing Senate. In the past, a report of this sort might well have been sent to the Senate Ways and Means Committee where most of the decisions would have been made, perhaps without consultation with the chairs of the committees of jurisdiction.

If you would like to read the report, click here:

<http://www.stanrosenberg.com/mitigation.html>

### Roundup

#### *Stan's Municipal Conference*

State government comes to western Mass!

For all the municipal official out there, it is my pleasure to announce the program for my 2003 Hampshire & Franklin Municipal Conference on **Saturday, April 12th, at The Clarion Hotel and Conference Center in Northampton**. Several leaders from the Legislature and the Administration have agreed to attend and I hope that you will be able to join us for a day of lively discussion, a sandwich buffet lunch, a keynote speech and a panel discussion on the future of state finances.

Please take a minute to review the lineup of this year's conference. If you have any questions, or to RSVP, call my district office at 413-587-6289, or send an e-mail to Tom in my district office at [tumitch@sprynet.com](mailto:tumitch@sprynet.com).

I'm looking forward to seeing you April 12th!

#### ***Senator Stan Rosenberg's Conference for Municipal Officials***

#### ***Schedule***

8:00 am	—	Registration, Refreshments
8:45 am	—	Welcoming Remarks
9:00 am	—	First Session Begins

- 10:30 am — First Session Ends
- 10:45 am — Second Session Begins
- 12:15 pm — Second Session Ends
- 12:30 pm — Lunch
- 1:15 pm — Keynote Address from Lt. Governor Kerry Healey
- 2:00 pm — Panel Discussion: The Future of State Finances
- Panelists: Michael Widmer, President  
Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation
- Senator Therese Murray (D-Plymouth)  
Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means
- 3:00 pm — Conference Ends

**First Session Panels**  
**9 am-10:30 am (choose one)**

Elder Affairs

Topics likely to be covered in session are: the future of health care financing for seniors, including home care programs and prescription drug subsidies, the \$1.30 pharmacy tax, and the future of programs run by the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, like grants to local Councils on Aging.

- Panelists: Senator Richard Moore (D-Uxbridge)  
Chair, Health Care Committee
- Senator Susan Tucker (D-Andover)  
Chair, Elder Affairs Committee
- Secretary Jennifer Davis Carey  
Executive Office of Elder Affairs
- Representative Antonio Cabral (D-New Bedford)  
Chair, Elder Affairs Committee
- Representative John Scibak (D-South Hadley)  
Elder Affairs Committee
- Moderator: Isaac BenEzra, Chair  
Amherst Council on Aging

### Smart Growth Initiative

The Smart Growth Initiative will be discussed during this session, along with other possible changes in zoning and planning.

- Panelists:
- Representative Stephen Kulik (D-Worthington)  
Natural Resources Committee
  - Senator Pamela Resor (D-Acton)  
Chair, Natural Resources Committee
  - Linda Dunlavy, Executive Director  
Franklin Council of Governments
  - Patricia Crosby, Executive Director  
Regional Employment Board
  - Fred Habib, Deputy Director  
Department of Housing and Community Development
- Moderator: Representative Ellen Story (D-Amherst)

### Education Policy

Topics will likely include MCAS and bi-lingual education, and questions about the Education Reform Act.

- Panelists:
- Senator Robert Antonioni (D-Leominster)  
Chair, Education Committee
  - Representative Marie St. Fleur (D-Boston)  
Chair, Education Committee
  - Commissioner David Driscoll  
Department of Education
  - Secretary Peter Nessen (designee)  
Executive Office of Education
- Moderator: Representative Christopher Donelan (D-Orange)

### Arts, Libraries and Historic Preservation

Panelist will discuss how the state's fiscal crisis has affected their agencies and what steps they are taking to preserve programs.

- Panelists: Charlie McDermott, Deputy Director

Massachusetts Cultural Council

Rob Maier, Director  
Board of Library Commissioners

Cara Harbecke Metz, Executive Director  
Massachusetts Historic Commission

Moderator: Elsa Fitzgerald (Invited)  
Preservation Mass.

**Second Session Panels**  
**10:45 am-12:15 pm (choose one)**

Public Safety

Topics that are likely to come up include: the future of emergency management planning programs, assistance the state is receiving from the federal government for homeland security, and changes in community policing and DARE programs.

Panelists: Representative Timothy Toomey (D-Cambridge)  
Chair, Public Safety Committee

Senator Brian Joyce (D-Milton)  
Vice Chair, Public Safety Committee

Patrick Carnevale, Director, Region III  
Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

Moderator: Representative Christopher Donelan (D-Orange)

Housing & Community Development

Topics that are likely to come up include: the future of Executive Order 418, the prognosis for streamlining the regulatory process for housing and economic development projects, and general questions and concerns regarding affordable housing

Panelists: Senator Harriette Chandler (D-Worcester)  
Chair, Housing Committee

Paul Douglas, Executive Director  
Franklin County Housing & Re-Development Authority

Don Bianchi, Housing Director  
Hilltown Community Development Corp.

Fred Habib, Deputy Director

Department of Housing and Community Development

Moderator: Representative John Scibak (D-South Hadley)

Education Financing

Topics will include the future of the School Building Assistance program, possible revisions to the Chapter 70 formula and questions about the Education Reform Act ten years later

Panelists: Senator Robert Antonioni (D-Leominster)  
Chair, Education Committee

Representative Marie St. Fleur (D-Boston)  
Chair, Education Committee

Commissioner David Driscoll  
Department of Education

Secretary Peter Nessen (designee)  
Executive Office of Education

Moderator: Representative Ellen Story (D-Amherst)

Transportation & Construction

Topics will include the status of the new “fix it first” policies and how communities might help make those policies work. Other topics likely to come up include: the small-town road standards and the proposals concerning county roads.

Panelists: Senator Steve Baddour (D-Methuen)  
Chair, Transportation Committee

Representative Joseph Wagner (D-Chicopee)  
Chair, Transportation Committee

Secretary Dan Grabauskus  
Executive Office of Transportation and Construction

Ross Dindio, Director  
Mass Highway District 1

John Hoey, Director  
Mass Highway District 2

Moderator: Representative Stephen Kulik (D-Worthington)

**Registration Form**

(Please register by April 9<sup>th</sup>)

If you want to register on-line, please click here [tumitch@sprynet.com](mailto:tumitch@sprynet.com) and give us your name, your office title (i.e. selectboard member, school committee member, etc.), your daytime phone number, your e-mail address and tell us if you'd like to receive my monthly e-mail newsletter.

And don't forget to tell us which panels you want to attend.

### **Choose One Program From Each Session**

#### **First Session**

- Elder Affairs**
- Smart Growth Initiative**
- Education Policy**
- Arts, Libraries and Historic Preservation**

#### **Second Session**

- Public Safety**
- Housing & Development**
- Education Financing**
- Transportation and Construction**

#### *Local event*

On Sunday, March 9th, from 3-5:30 p.m., Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity will hold a benefit auction at the Red Barn, Hampshire College. I'm going to be one of the auctioneers and I'm told that the items for this event are "heirloom treasures and collectibles" that are at least 50 years old and worth at least \$50. The folks at Habitat are still assembling the items, but so far they have a Civil War cavalry sword, a number of wooden hand tools and a collection of Victorian children's toys.

For more information about Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity, and the upcoming auction, you can visit their website at [www.pioneervalleyhabitat.org](http://www.pioneervalleyhabitat.org) .

#### **Trivia**

The answer to last month's question -- Name the state fish -- is: the Cod.

Thanks to everybody who played along. And now the winner of the lunch and State House tour, chosen at random from the thousands (just kidding!) of correct answers is Sandy C. from somewhere in cyberspace. We'll send Sandy information on who to contact in my Boston office and we'll look forward to seeing Sandy at the State House. Congratulations Sandy!

Now to this month's question and another chance to win lunch and a State House tour. Name the state horse.

Submit your answer to [tumitch@sprynet.com](mailto:tumitch@sprynet.com) and watch this space for the correct answer and the prize winner.

### Links

Here are a few links. Until next time, happy surfing!

Click here [tumitch@sprynet.com](mailto:tumitch@sprynet.com) if you want to be removed from our list.

Click here for our on-line feedback form [www.stanrosenberg.com/form.html](http://www.stanrosenberg.com/form.html)

Forward this link to a friend [www.stanrosenberg.com/issues/rosenreportreg.html](http://www.stanrosenberg.com/issues/rosenreportreg.html)

Guide to Lawmaking -- <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/lawmkng.htm>

Senate Live -- <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/senate/live/live.htm> (NOTE: Because of budget cuts, live webcasts of Senate sessions are no longer available)

Massachusetts State Government Home Page – <http://mass.gov/>

The Legislature's web page – <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/>

Senate's Bill Text System – <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/billsrch.htm>

Legislative Tracking System – <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/ltsform.htm>

My personal website – <http://www.stanrosenberg.com/>

The Rosenberg Report (January, 2003, edition) --  
<http://www.stanrosenberg.com/issues/jan2003.html>