

‘We hope for the best and plan for the worst.’

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
KIM DRISCOLL

As state tightens belt, tax revenue up for once

Still unclear how many positions will be frozen

By Samantha J. Gross and Matt Stout
GLOBE STAFF

Massachusetts tax collections for March broke a months-long downbeat streak, coming in slightly above expectations, officials reported Wednesday — the same day Governor Maura Healey implemented a hiring freeze in portions of state government.

The Department of Revenue reported just over \$4 billion in tax collections for the month, \$129 million above official projections that had been adjusted downward in January during a long streak of sagging revenues.

Experts said the more positive revenue news doesn't necessarily signal a 180-degree turn for the better. Temporarily halting hiring, they said, is also a normal maneuver for administrations to pump the brakes on spending during uncertain financial times.

Year-to-date collections for fiscal year 2024 total just over \$25 billion, which is still \$145 million below year-to-date projections entering April — typically the most consequential month for revenue collections in the fiscal year.

“I don't think the hiring freeze is a sign of crisis, nor do I think vaguely positive March revenues are a sign that happy days are here again,” said Doug Howgate, president of the business-backed Massachusetts Taxpayers FREEZE, Page A12

Nursing home gets reprieve with receiver

Will help determine if Benjamin can be saved

By Jason Laughlin
GLOBE STAFF

A Mission Hill nursing and rehabilitation home that has prioritized care for Black patients was put in receivership Wednesday, a dramatic step that could save the home from a planned closure this summer.

Suffolk County Superior Court Judge Katie Rayburn agreed that conditions at the Edgar P. Benjamin Healthcare Center threatened the health and safety of its residents and appointed as receiver Joseph Feaster, a Boston attorney and chair of the city's task force on reparations. He will take control of the home's finances and management to stabilize a facility that has failed to meet payroll four times since November, according to court filings.

The Benjamin's chief executive, Tony Francis, has said the facility, home to 71 people, is not financially viable and filed a proposal with the state to close the facility by July 1. Francis did not respond to a request for comment Wednesday.

The judge's decision could be a lifeline for the facility. “Appointment of a receiver is a crucial step,” said Feaster. NURSING HOME, Page A9

Keeping heat on Biden over Gaza

After urging uncommitted vote in primaries, activists look to convention

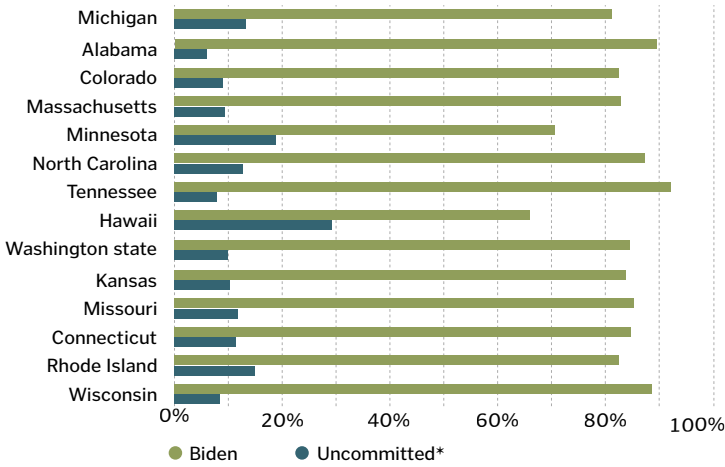
By Jim Puzzanghera
GLOBE STAFF

WASHINGTON — The effort by activists to use the Democratic primaries to force President Biden to do more to stop the war in Gaza now turns its focus to the party's convention this summer after reaching what organizers called a milestone in Wisconsin: the number of uncommitted ballots cast exceeded his margin of victory in 2020.

Roughly 48,000 voters on Tuesday chose Wisconsin's equivalent of uncommitted on

their ballot, more than double Biden's slim margin in the crucial battleground state four years ago. The results from the primary were a bookend to the push that began in Michigan with a surprisingly strong showing of uncommitted votes on Feb. 27.

No battleground states with upcoming primaries have a similar ballot option, so activists plan to continue protesting Biden's strong support of Israel through the spring and into the summer. They're also working BIDEN, Page A8



SOURCE: Associated Press • * Or similar, including “no preference,” “non-committed delegate,” “uninstructed,” and “none of the names shown.” Results for Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin current as of 2 p.m. CHRISTINA PRIGNANO/GLOBE STAFF

Protesting the war at the ballot box

Organizers said they reached a milestone in Wisconsin's vote this week — the number of uncommitted ballots cast exceeded Joe Biden's margin of victory in the state in 2020.

QUAKE JOLTS TAIWAN



LAM YIK FEI/NEW YORK TIMES

Rescue personnel in Hualien prepared to enter a leaning building on Wednesday following a magnitude-7.4 earthquake that killed at least nine people and injured at least 1,000 more. The quake, the biggest in Taiwan in 25 years, was followed by over 200 aftershocks throughout the day, bringing warnings about possible landslides. A4.

With all eyes on the skies, Vermont tries to get ready for the totally unexpected

KEVIN CULLEN

AROUND NEW ENGLAND

NEWPORT, Vt. — Two years ago, Fritz Halbedl answered the phone at the quaint country inn he and his wife, Paula, run outside of town here, a stone's throw from the Canadian border.

“Some guy,” Fritz Halbedl said, in the thick accent of his native Austria, “tells me he wants to reserve a room for the eclipse. And I'm saying, ‘What eclipse?’”

Halbedl had no idea then of the coming celestial event, much less that it would be a rare day-

time “totality” that would block the sun for 3 minutes across a swath of northern New England on Monday and attract untold thousands of eclipse pilgrims to the empty — and usually pretty sleepy — expanses here. But the phone kept ringing, as it did at

►100-year-old woman ready to see the spectacle again. B1.

inns and motels and farmhouses across the region. In no time, each of Derby Line Village Inn's five rooms was booked.

According to local hotel and innkeepers, there now isn't a room to be found anywhere in CULLEN, Page A12



JIM DAVIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Kushies, a cannabis shop in Derby, Vt., has made some preparations for the eclipse crowd, if it materializes.

Senators Ed Markey and Elizabeth Warren criticized embattled Steward Health Care CEO Ralph de la Torre for not testifying at a Senate panel's hearing. D1.

Governor Maura Healey's blanket pardon of marijuana possession convictions was approved by a state panel, possibly clearing tens of thousands of people. B1.

John Barth, one of the luminaries of the postmodern literary movement, died at 93. He extended the limits of storytelling with intricately woven novels. C11.

The Red Sox continued their fast start, finishing a sweep of the A's with a 1-0 win. C1.

Gunshot tracker used by police now facing closer scrutiny

Data brings questions about equity, overall effectiveness

By Spencer Buell
GLOBE STAFF

SOMERVILLE — For a decade, a network of ShotSpotter sensors has been listening in on Somerville, waiting to hear pops of gunshots. Some of the devices are perched out of view atop buildings. Others blend in, hiding in plain sight on utility poles.

The concept is simple: When the sensors detect telltale bang sounds that could be gunfire, they calculate the coordinates of where the sounds originated, then alert police departments, which can send officers rushing to the scene to investigate.

Supporters say ShotSpotter, which is used in more than 150 municipalities, including Boston and a handful of other Massachusetts cities, saves lives and helps police catch criminals. But for

years, civil libertarians have said that the technology is flawed and that it makes it more likely in communities of color that people will have tense or even dangerous run-ins with police, or that they will be accused of crimes they didn't commit.

Now, amid research suggesting underwhelming results, a data leak that amplified concerns about its use in communities of color, and Chicago's high-profile decision to stop using it, a debate about the technology is spreading nationally, and officials — including in Somerville — are scrutinizing it with new fervor.

Some elected leaders say they are getting the full picture, for the first time, about how the tech is used, after the release of data that purports to reveal the locations of the sensors, which the ShotSpotter's parent company has kept secret for years, even from the police and elected officials who approved their installation. Decisions like that of Chicago's mayor shone a spotlight on a tool SHOTS, Page A9



JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

Somerville City Councilor Willie Burnley Jr. stood in front of what is believed to be a ShotSpotter device on a pole.



Again, the wind

Thursday: Rain tapers off. High 39-44. Low 32-37.

Friday: Breezy, overcast. High 45-50. Low 35-40.

High tide: 7:40 a.m., 8:26 p.m. Sunrise: 6:21 Sunset: 7:14

Weather and Comics, D5-6. Obituaries, C11.

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