

# The Boston Globe

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## Steward probed over possible corruption

Justice Dept. focusing on overseas dealings

By Jessica Bartlett, Elizabeth Koh, and Hanna Krueger  
GLOBE STAFF

The Department of Justice is investigating Steward Health Care for potential corruption in its international business dealings, the company confirmed Thursday, the latest development in a high-stakes drama surrounding the Boston-born health

care system. The focus of the investigation is potential violations of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, a law that prohibits US companies or citizens — as well as foreign entities doing business on US soil — from engaging in bribery and other corruption overseas. The law also sets requirements for accounting practices

abroad. When asked about a pending foreign corruption probe, Steward spokesperson Josephine Martin confirmed in an e-mailed statement that the company is cooperating with an ongoing investigation by the DOJ. “As a matter of policy, Steward will have no further comment on this investigation as it remains ongoing.” A spokesperson for the Justice

Department declined to comment, and a spokesperson for US Attorney of Massachusetts Joshua S. Levy did not respond to a request. CBS News, citing sources, first reported news of the investigation Thursday. Steward’s international activities have already drawn substantial scrutiny, most notably in Malta, where the company first attempted to expand its brand overseas. The

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‘I don’t know how much more I can take.’

JANE DESCHAMPS, an 80-year-old homeowner in Barre, Vt.



CHARLES KRUPA/ASSOCIATED PRESS

John Companion dumped a bucket of muddy water while helping a friend clean up his basement Thursday in Waterbury, Vt.

## YEAR AFTER VT. FLOODS, A PAINFUL DEJA VU

Torrential rains devastate still-recovering areas, and intensify fears about future

By Kevin Cullen  
GLOBE STAFF

BARRE, Vt. — Like other parts of Vermont, people here in this old blue-collar town can be forgiven for thinking they’re star-crossed. On Wednesday, a year to the day when the worst floods in a century devastated this central Vermont city, tributaries of the Winooski River burst their banks again amid heavy storms cast off by the remnants of Hurricane Beryl, sending cascades of water and mud into front yards and basements.

As the water receded Thursday, sections of Main Street were enveloped in lingering dust clouds, as work crews scraped mud and debris from the roads. The grim residue reflected the grim outlook of residents, many of whom worry it’s only a matter of time before they’re flooded again. This place was once famous for its granite quarries. Now, residents fear, it’s becoming known for its catastrophic floods. “I don’t know how much more I can take,” said Jane Deschamps, 80, looking down into her basement, which had 4 feet

of standing water. “Sometimes I wish the good Lord would just take me.” Like many of the 8,000 residents of this city, Deschamps had barely recovered from last year’s flood, spending considerable time and money to repair the home she’s lived in for 40 years, hoping to sell it. Now, she’s back to square one. She needs to pump out and fix her house again, and wonders, “Who would buy it?” Heavy rain hit communities from central to northern Vermont, sparing those in

FLOODING, Page A7

## A tragedy in the making

Police knew Joseph Francis shouldn’t be allowed to buy guns. But they say they were powerless to stop him.

By Amanda Milkovits  
GLOBE STAFF

HOPKINTON, R.I. — The Hopkinton police didn’t want Joseph Francis to be able to buy a gun. Twice, they denied his applications to buy firearms. He hadn’t been convicted of a felony, so he could pass a national criminal background check. But a Rhode Island law passed in 2020 also requires local police chiefs to do extensive background checks on residents who apply to buy firearms, and the Hopkinton police saw things that left them concerned. Francis had been arrested for disorderly conduct. He’d threatened suicide. He drove erratically, causing an accident, and when he was arrested, Francis threatened the officer, exposed himself, and urinated in the back seat of a cruiser. The Johnston police denied his request

‘We knew that things were bad and that things were very toxic.’

KARY CHURCH, a co-worker of Stephanie Francis (below)



FACEBOOK

Stephanie Francis was slain by her estranged husband.

for a permit to carry a concealed weapon because he lied on his application. And, Francis had been charged with cyber-harassment of a woman, a misdemeanor. After looking at the scope of Francis’ past contacts with other law enforcement agencies, Hopkinton Police Chief Mark Carrier told the Globe, “we saw a pattern with his character flaws, temper, and mental health issues.” The police denied Francis’ applications to buy guns in 2020 and 2021, Carrier said. But Francis fought back, and hired a lawyer: Frank Saccoccio, the president and lobbyist of the Rhode Island Second Amendment Coalition. Saccoccio got the cyberstalking charge expunged, clearing the way for Francis to buy firearms. Without that charge,

GUNS, Page A7

## This time, Biden has most of the answers

He makes a few gaffes, but news conference no disaster

By Jim Puzzanghera and Jackie Kucinich  
GLOBE STAFF

WASHINGTON — President Biden began his highly anticipated news conference at the NATO summit on Thursday with a clear voice and, aided by a teleprompter, his eight-minute opening remarks were delivered with few verbal stumbles. But with the first question came the type of mental slip he can’t afford with so many concerns about his mental acuity since his debate debacle. Asked about his political future and whether he had any concerns about Vice President Kamala Harris taking on Donald Trump if Biden was not the Democratic nominee, he immediately stumbled. “Look, I wouldn’t have picked Vice President Trump to be vice president, [if I thought] she’s not qualified to be president. So let’s start there, number one,” Biden said, eliciting a couple of gasps from the 150 reporters in the room. But unlike in the June 27 debate, the gaffe didn’t lead to a disastrous performance. He quickly found his footing. And over the course of

BIDEN, Page A4



SUSAN WALSH/ASSOCIATED PRESS

The president fielded questions for nearly an hour, and said he is the best qualified Democrat to beat Donald Trump.

## Money short, towns turn to override votes

By James Vaznis  
GLOBE STAFF

Cities and towns across Massachusetts are increasingly turning to voters to override the state’s cap on property tax increases to avoid severe cuts to schools, police, and other services.

Nearly 100 such votes have taken place in the past 18 months, the most robust period in more than a decade, according to a Globe review of data compiled by the state Division of Local Services.

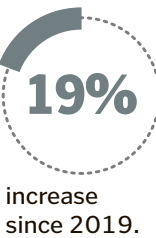
The boom in overrides is a sign of how local communities and school districts are struggling to keep pace with higher costs from inflation as they attempt to provide essential services within the constraints of the state’s property tax cap, which limits increases to 2.5 percent annually.

But overrides can add to the financial challenges confronting many residents who are grappling with their own inflationary pressures in a state with soaring housing values, saddling homeowners with expensive mortgages and tax bills. The average single-family tax bill in Massachusetts hit \$7,400 during the fiscal year ending June 30, roughly a 19 percent increase since 2019, according to the state’s Division of Local Services.

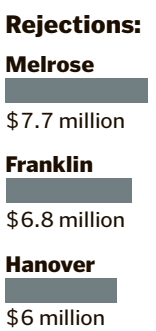
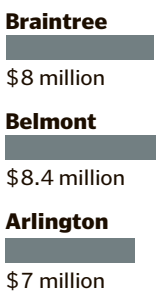
“This is not a sustainable way to meet students’ needs year in and year out,” said Mary Bourque, executive director of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, not-

OVERRIDES, Page A6

The average single-family tax bill in Mass. hit **\$7,400** during the fiscal year ending June 30, roughly a



**TAX OVERRIDES**  
Passing votes:



The Israeli military said hostages in a home struck by tank fire on Oct. 7 were likely killed by Hamas militants, not Israeli shelling. **A3.**

Must landlords provide air conditioning? No — but if it’s there, it’s got to be maintained. The Fine Print, **B5.**

Shelley Duvall, star of “The Shining” and a string of Robert Altman movies, died. Her quirky screen personality made her one of the biggest stars of the 1970s. **C9.**

### Lower the boom

**Friday:** Thunderstorms. High 84-89. Low 71-76.  
**Saturday:** More of the same. High 78-83. Low 71-76.  
**Weather and Comics, G6-7. Obituaries, C9.**

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