

In fight against bad food, RFK Jr. seen as ally

Some in public health feel his campaign has brought attention to important issue

By Adam Piore
GLOBE STAFF

In their long slog to tame the big food lobby, Jerold Mande often had to assure his allies that the time would come when the grueling campaign to liberate America from its ruinous addiction to the cheaply

made, laboratory-engineered products known as ultraprocessed foods would finally catch fire.

That moment may finally be at hand, sparked by the unlikelyst of evangelists: A notorious conspiracy theorist and longtime critic of the public health establishment who al-

so has it in for mass-produced foods engineered to be hyperpalatable, convenient, and profitable.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., President-elect Donald Trump's nominee to head the Department of Health and Human Services, might be an "imperfect messenger," Mande acknowledges. But his campaign to "Make America Healthy Again" (MAHA) has already catapulted the issue to the forefront of the national conver-

sation.

"It's extraordinary," said Mande, a Harvard University public health professor who has served in senior policy making positions under three presidential administrations. In 2021, he cofounded Nourish Science, a nonprofit devoted to combating childhood obesity and metabolic disease. "We have the shortest lifespan of any developed country by

RFK, Page A8

Lawmakers trying to reach deals on key bills

Legislation on health care, disability needs, addiction stalled on Beacon Hill

By Matt Stout
GLOBE STAFF

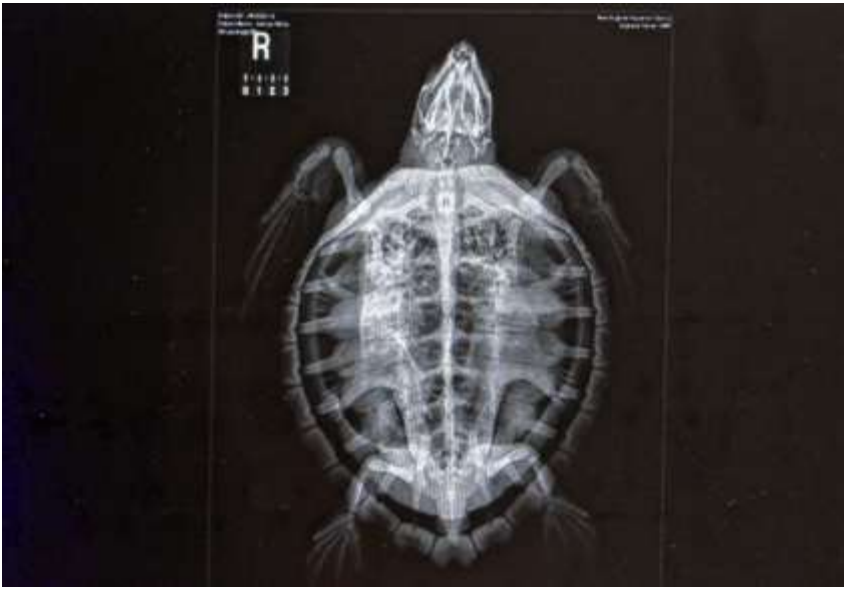
Massachusetts legislators say they've done "historic work" this session. There is also a raft of it that's still unfinished.

With just weeks until a new legislative class arrives Jan. 1, Democratic leaders are grappling with how, or whether, they can reach deals on several high-profile bills before the year ends. There are proposals that would help those in recovery from addiction or residents struggling to get needed prescriptions, and others that would benefit people with disabilities, all locked in closed-door talks between a so-called conference committee or stalled in one of the chambers.

The uncertainty has left advocates and rank-and-file members bracing for several scenarios: An unusually busy lame-duck period that's produced far-reaching legislation could get even busier — or the possibility of bills they've pushed for months, even years, dying a quiet death on New Year's Eve.

"My fear, of course, is that conference committees happen behind closed doors, where well-

BILLS, Page A12



PHOTOS BY JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

TURTLE RESCUE

The New England Aquarium is treating more than 200 cold-stunned turtles that have washed onto shore in recent weeks. Above, Mary Beth Tims, a biologist, moved a loggerhead onto the table so that it could be X-rayed at the aquarium's hospital in Quincy. Staff at Massachusetts Audubon's Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary found the turtles along Cape Cod Bay. Changing water temperature and wind patterns can cause some turtles to become hypothermic as the seasons change. The turtles will be cared for until they're ready to be released back into the ocean. **B2.**

Lessons under belt, city planner returns with fresh approach

By Catherine Carlock
GLOBE STAFF

Kairos Shen taught the class on city-making. Quite literally, Boston's once-and-future chief planner taught a semester-long course on real estate development during his years as a professor at MIT's Center for Real Estate. It drew on his two decades at the then-Boston Redevelopment Authority, and his experience planning everything from the reimagined Fenway to the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway to the Seaport.

Now Shen is back at City Hall as Mayor Michelle Wu's newly named chief of planning. And he's bringing a fresh perspective from the lecture hall.

SHEN, Page A12

MCAS fall leaves no state standard

Wide variation in high school graduation rules

By Mandy McLaren
GLOBE STAFF

What's a Massachusetts high school diploma worth? These days, it depends.

There used to be a standard measure: passing scores on the 10th-grade math, science, and English Language Arts MCAS exams.

But now that voters have struck down the state's long-standing requirement for students to pass those exams in order to graduate, the answer is more complicated.



ERIN CLARK/GLOBE STAFF

A Globe analysis of the largest 50 districts' high school graduation requirements found a wide variation among math, **MCAS, Page A9**

Science teacher Jamie Kendall provided one-on-one guidance to Rudy, 17, during class at Chelsea Opportunity Academy.

The state Senate postponed a vote on a bill to prevent residential property owners in Boston from seeing a significant hike in taxes. **B1.**

A memorial for six Worcester firefighters killed in a warehouse blaze in 1999 is planned for Tuesday. **B1.**

A matter of brisk

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