

B6 City & Region

THE BOSTON GLOBE

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Compromise plan pushed to ease homeowner tax hikes

By Scott S. Greenberger
Staff Writer

A stalled plan to protect homeowners from property tax increases that could top 40 percent tucked away on Boston Hill yesterday, as both Governor Mitt Romney and Senate President Robert E. Travaglia endorsed a compromise forged by Mayor Thomas M. Menino and members of the city and state legislatures.

all about representing the people and representing the working class." Menino's proposal would change the so-called Classification Law, a 1978 accord that limits the rate for residential and commercial property, but the residential rate cannot be more than 50 percent of what it would be if the city didn't distinguish between residential and commercial properties, and the commercial rate cannot be higher than 175 percent of what the rate would be without classification.

Under the compromise, the rate for residential property would be raised to 200 percent of the current rate, and the rate for commercial property would be raised to 175 percent of the current rate. Menino and his aides have lobbied hard for the bill, arguing that without it, the average Boston homeowner would be over-

whelmed by the tax hike. In many cases, the rate would be raised to 200 percent. Without the change to the limit, city officials say only 47 percent of business owners — an approval to the property tax increase — and the increase for the average homeowner would be 400 percent.

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Doctor campaigns to tighten seat belt law

Back-up of rate here is lowest of 47 states

By John Killebrew
Staff Writer

To doctors and nurses who treat victims of traffic accidents, the current Massachusetts seat belt law is not working. It is time to tighten the law, they say.



Janet Dewey Kollen was among doctors, nurses, and safety advocates who spoke at Boston Medical Center yesterday promoting a stronger seat belt law.

Such a law was defeated by a vote in the state House of Representatives in 1997. It would have allowed police to stop a car if the driver was not wearing a seat belt. Currently, police must have probable cause to stop a car, such as a broken stop sign, before they stop a car.

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in the car were wearing a seat belt, authorities have said. And on Nov. 18, eight people not wearing seat belts were ejected from a van that overturned to avoid another vehicle and flipped over on Interstate 93 in Wilmington. The driver and front seat passenger, both wearing seat belts, were unhurt, but the eight people thrown out of the vehicle needed medical treatment.

A spokeswoman for Governor Mitt Romney said yesterday that he supports a primary seat belt law. "It's fundamentally unfair to make taxpayers who wear their seat belts to shoulder the greatest cost of medical bills of those who intentionally choose not to buckle up."

Charges are threatened for silenced fire alarms

By Susan Talbot
Staff Writer

Boston Fire Commissioner Paul A. Christian said yesterday he will pursue criminal charges in a Bank 6 fire that ravaged 14 apartments on Newbury Street, if he can identify who disabled smoke detectors in the building.

Firefighters found several smoke detectors without batteries in the student-occupied apartments, an offense punishable by up to a year in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

"It's a very serious offense," Christian said. "It's not only morally wrong, it's also extremely illegal. Anyone found doing that, we will prosecute."

Smoke detectors are required in every house and apartment in the state.

The fire at 531 and 539 Newbury St. on Monday hit as many as 25 people huddled, but no one was seriously injured. It caused an estimated \$10 million in damage.

Five firefighters were treated at the hospital for minor injuries. At least two of those firefighters reported he was prosecuted.

Susan Talbot can be reached at stalot@boston.com.

Push is on for DNC security funds

By Scott S. Greenberger
Staff Writer

Bank convention planners as it is in Boston this stage.

Adviser to Governor Mitt Romney, one of the Bay State's few high-placed Republicans, have been engaged to help lobby the GOP-controlled Congress. There have been increasing reports that they have been impressing on top Washington lawmakers the importance of getting the money done early next year, saying that planners would find a way to cover "whatever the owner the decision is made, the better but certainly would be happy to have the funding wherever we can get it," he said.

Each of the security money, including overtime for police officers and firefighters, won't be spent until the work of the convention. But other expenses, including anti-terrorism training and the purchase of specialized equipment, will be incurred months before the event. An infusion of cash from the federal government would ease the way to that planning.

A federal bill is being sought that would allow the flow of private donations to the Democratic convention has allowed, US Senator Edward M. Kennedy and Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino lined up \$20 million in commitments before the convention had, but only about \$8 million more has been secured since then, New York

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planners, meanwhile, have brought in more than \$60 million from private sources for a convention that is expected to cost \$91 million.

Boston organizers are trying to raise at least \$20 million from private sources, with the rest of the estimated \$60 million convention budget to be funded by state and federal government. Menino has said he wants to avoid using city tax dollars for the convention, and Romney has taken a similar stance with regard to state tax revenues.

Boston's original convention planning called for \$10 million for security, but the estimated cost is now \$25 million after the convention was tagged as a National Special Security Event in May. A similar designation cleared the way for the federal government to provide \$20 million of the \$10 million security bill at the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City. The designation ensures that Boston security plans will be aided by the Secret Service, the FBI, and other federal agencies.

The precise amount of the security money at the convention has not been determined, and organizers are awaiting the completion of a security plan by the Secret Service and Boston police to determine the cost with more precision.

Caputo said he is optimistic about getting the \$25 million approved before Congress breaks for the holidays, but will remain vigilant until the money is in hand.

Rick Klein can be reached at rklein@boston.com.

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