

Corruption case spotlights campaign finance

Outcome in Ohio could signal crackdown on dark money — or open doors to more

By Tal Kopan
GLOBE STAFF

WASHINGTON — The former speaker of the Ohio House is facing federal corruption charges in a trial that has received little national attention but that could ultimately have broad implications for campaign finance practices and when

public officials can be charged with abusing their office.

The case alleges that the former speaker, Larry Householder, and associates funneled more than \$60 million from an energy company through a dark-money group in exchange for passing state legislation that benefited the company. The



Householder is on trial.

bill into law. The trial is expected to finish closing arguments and go to the jury on Wednesday.

money then lined Householder's pockets personally and politically, prosecutors assert, and funded the effort to get the bill into law. The trial is expected to finish closing arguments and go to the jury on Wednesday.

Legal experts say that if the jury convicts Householder, the case could send a message through the campaign finance world about the consequences of misusing dark-money groups, a term for a category of nonprofit groups that can raise unlimited sums to influence politics without ever disclosing their donors. But the experts warn that an acquittal could open the floodgates even more for the political use of

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Biden aims to tax richest to bolster Medicare

White House says changes would give program an additional 25 years

By Jim Tankersley
and Margot Sanger-Katz
NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — President Biden, as part of his budget set for release Thursday, will propose raising and expanding a tax on Americans earning more than \$400,000 as part of a series of efforts to extend the solvency of Medicare by a quarter-century.

In spotlighting his Medicare plans, Biden is seeking to sharpen a contrast with Republicans and cast himself as a protector of cherished retirement programs — both for his likely reelection campaign and for a looming congressional battle with House conservatives who are demanding steep cuts in federal spending in order to raise the nation's borrowing limit.

The early release of the Medicare proposals, detailed in a White House fact sheet Tuesday, also underscored the degree to which Biden has fully embraced the political upside of taxing high earners. That is the case even though administration officials have conceded there is little chance those tax increases will pass Congress.

The proposals would affect the so-called net investment income tax, which was enacted to help offset the cost of former President Barack Obama's signature health care law. They would increase the tax rate to 5 percent from 3.4 percent for people earning above \$400,000 a year and expand the income subject to it. Independent estimates from the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center and the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget suggest the changes could raise at least \$350 billion and possibly as much as \$600 billion over the course of a decade. White House estimates are even higher: \$700 billion in net new revenue over a decade, all from high earners.

Biden is also proposing new cost savings for the government stemming from more aggressive

MEDICARE, Page A12



PHOTO BY CHRIS E. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

Elena Palladino and her husband were drawn to the house in Ware, but did not know about its history when they bought it.

Where memories flood back

Pieces of a beloved home demolished decades ago for a reservoir have found new life

By Spencer Euell
GLOBE STAFF

When Elena Palladino and her husband, Matt, were house-hunting in 2015, they couldn't help but fall in love with a stately Colonial they found in Ware.

It was clear there was something special about the property, and the couple was charmed by its historic character and antique finishes. Inside, it was full of touches like an elegant central staircase and Victorian pocket doors with ornate brass pulls. "We were drawn to it," said Palladino, who purchased the property soon after seeing it. "You could tell it was different."



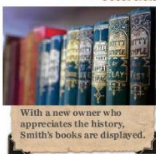
Four towns were sacrificed to make way for the Quabbin Reservoir.

But it wasn't until they moved in and met their neighbors, who called her new home "the Quabbin house," that Palladino began to uncover the small pieces of history that made it unique.

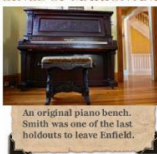
She would soon learn that many of the home's most eye-catching elements had once been part of a home that stood in Enfield, one of four towns flooded nearly a century ago to create the Quabbin Reservoir. The pieces might have been lost forever were it not for the woman who once owned them, and spared no expense to ensure they lived on.

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THE BELONGINGS OF MARION ANDREWS SMITH



With a new owner who appreciates the history, Smith's books are displayed.



An original piano bench. Smith was one of the last holdouts to leave Enfield.



Smith's music. "Marion felt very present to me," said Elena Palladino.

Healey boosts push for free prison calls, but with limits

1,000-minute monthly cap; county jails and houses of correction would be exempt

By Matt Stout
GLOBE STAFF

Advocates who have long pushed to make phone calls free for the state's incarcerated people appeared to have scored something highly unusual so early in Beacon Hill's new legislative session: a seeming glide path to their priority becoming law.

Under Governor Maura Healey's new budget plan, Massachusetts would become the third state in the country to provide calls in state prisons at no cost. Her pitch follows a similar proposal that both legislative chambers embraced, but couldn't finalize, last year to shift the financial burden off those serving sentences and their families.

But in revising the issue, Healey would set a monthly 1,000-minute cap for free calls per person, making it one of the most restrictive such programs among those adopted across the country. She is also seeking to limit the change to the Department of Corrections.

Should that pass, it means county jails and houses of correction — which hold more than half of the state's incarcerated population and typically charge higher phone rates than state prisons — would not be required to offer free calls.

PRISON CALLS, Page A9

THE COST OF A CALL



12 cents a minute for in-state calls at state facilities

5.308 inmates housed in Department of Correction facilities



14 cents a minute at county facilities

6,029 inmates housed in County facilities



ADORE STOUT/GLOBE STAFF

Dull set

Wednesday: Chilly, windy. High 42-47, Low 32-37.
Thursday: Still cloudy, cool. High 42-47, Low 30-35.
Sunrise 6:09, Sunset 5:42
Weather and Comics, 66-7, Obituaries, C11.

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Fed Chair Jerome Powell indicated interest rates will be raised even higher than previously expected. B5.

Some Republicans pushed back on the narrative of Jan. 6 as 'peaceful chaos.' A7.

Trail-blazing politician Felix D. Arroyo has retired from his post as Suffolk County register of probate. B1.

Artist Leonore Rodriguez has made a splash with her realistic jell-O sculptures, and has sold more than 150 pieces. G1.

DiZogio says she'll audit Legislature in what would be first time in century

By Matt Stout
GLOBE STAFF

State Auditor Diane DiZogio said Tuesday that she is launching a wide-ranging audit of both the Massachusetts House and Senate, the first of either legislative body in more than a century, setting up a potentially thorny confrontation with some of Beacon Hill's most powerful Democrats.

DiZogio, a Democrat from Methuen who routinely criticized the Legislature's opacity when she was a state representative and senator, said in a statement that the Legislature has long re-

mained a "closed-door operation," where some committee votes are private and major legislation is routinely pushed through "in the dark of night."

"Citizens deserve more — they deserve the opportunity to weigh in on legislative, budgetary and regulatory matters that are important to them," DiZogio said in a statement Tuesday. She noted the Legislature has not been audited since 1922, even though the state

LEGISLATURE, Page A12

'In most cases, you need a part-time job just to pay for phone calls and commissary to help support your loved ones.'

ROMILDA PEREIRA, founder of Project Turnaround

Healey pushes for free prison calls, but with cap

► PRISON CALLS

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The proposed parameters surprised some prison rights advocates who, while praising Healey for elevating the issue, are simultaneously urging lawmakers to go much further in overhauling a system in which public entities have long profited off a vulnerable population.

"Why would you leave more than half of the people behind?" said Rachel Roth, a member of the Keeping Families Connected/No Cost Calls Coalition. There are 5,038 people in Department of Correction facilities, according to state data, but even more — 6,029 — are in county facilities.

"It's a burden on families, no matter what, and any amount of time in jail or prison is very, very challenging," she said. "We regard this [proposal] as just a first step."

Currently, those incarcerated and their families are charged anywhere from 12 cents a minute for in-state calls at state facilities to 14 cents at most county jails, according to state and county data compiled by Katrina Wilkerson for the coalition.

The state and sheriff departments then earn commissions that officials say are funneled back into programming, such as for GED testing or vocational workshops. The Department of Correction alone collects \$2.5 million a year in commissions.

The state last year set aside \$22 million to cover the cost of providing the calls for free, in case the legislative proposal became law.

At roughly \$2 for a 15-minute call, the current costs not only quickly add up for families, advocates argue, but also the expense falls disproportionately on people of color in what amounts to a subsidy for jails and prisons. Black and Latino people alone account for 54 percent of the state's prison population.

Romilda Pereira, the founder of an organization that works with formerly incarcerated people, said she spends more than \$400 a month on prison calls, mostly to connect her 16-year-old daughter with her father, who is incarcerated, and to speak with other services who help finding re-entry services.



PHOTOGRAPH BY GLOBE STAFF

Governor Maureen Healey said she included only state facilities to "deal with the entities within our control."

"In most cases, you need a part-time job just to pay for phone calls and commissary to help support your loved ones," said Pereira, whose organization is called Project Turnaround. How often someone incarcerated uses the phone can vary widely, she said, but many are not just trying to connect with family but also their lawyers. "The minutes can go up really fast."

Healey has supported no-cost calls because, she said, she understands "the importance of helping build those connections between those who are incarcerated and family." She told reporters last week that she included only state facilities — and the 1,000-minute cap — because she thought it best to "deal with the entities within our control" given the existing funding available.

"We think it's probably about right," Healey said. "We'll see."

A more expansive proposal was on the cusp of becoming law last year. The House and Senate each approved language within the annual state budget that would have required both the Department of Correction and county sheriffs to provide phone calls free of charge, with no limits.

But then-governor Charlie Baker sent the measure back to the Legislature, weaving in elements of a separate proposal to expand the list of crimes for which someone could be held for under the state's so-called dangerousness statute.

That ultimately set up the free call proposal's demise. The chambers disagreed on how to handle Baker's changes — the House rejected them and the Senate adopted them in the

waning hours of its final formal session — leaving the entire measure in limbo as the legislative session ended.

"There were people in the Senate who took a vote that was going to kill this without realizing it," said Senate majority leader Cynthia S. Green, who has sponsored legislation making calls free.

Yet, in an unusual twist, other elements survived. Language creating the trust fund to cover the cost of calls remains in law, as does the \$20 million the Legislature already set aside. House officials last year estimated that those in jails and prison, as well as their families, were paying roughly \$14 million a year for calls.

"The governor is smart enough to know we can do all this, without limiting access," said Bonnie Tencerello, senior

attorney at Prisoners' Legal Services of Massachusetts, who is bullish on a bill passing in some form. "[Lawmakers] have already done it, they will do it, and now, of course, we have a governor with a very different mindset."

County sheriffs, who oversee the county houses of correction and jails, have argued that the state would likely need to spend more to cover what the facilities currently collect, should jails also be included.

Hampton County Sheriff Nicholas Cocchi said those in his county facilities pay 12 cents per minute — the lowest in the state — with the department collecting roughly \$800,000 from calls each year. The department, he said, puts that money back into programs and to cover other costs, such as the \$125,000 it pays the Pioneer Valley Trans-

portation Authority to weave a bus route to the Ludlow jail, giving families a direct line to the facility.

"We're not opposed to [no-cost calls]. But there should be a discussion," said Cocchi, a Ludlow Democrat and the president of the Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association. "It's not as simple as saying, 'Every inmate gets 30 minutes a day. Go figure it out.' That's a big lift."

Some advocates are also receptive to building in parameters. Michael Cox, executive director of the advocacy group Black and Pink Massachusetts, called the 1,000-limit "more than sufficient." His fear, he said, was allowing the sheriffs or Department of Correction leeway in setting their own rules for implementing a program, potentially limiting access even further than what Healey is proposing.

"I'm afraid they would do something terrible," he said.

In Connecticut, where lawmakers in 2011 were the first to make calls free in prison, the law built in not a limit, but a floor, saying each person is allowed at least 30 minutes of call time per day. In the months after the law went into effect last year, the number of calls more than doubled, as did the time people spent on the phone.

California followed with its own law, also without setting a monthly cap, though the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation said there is a 15-minute limit on each call.

Several counties nationwide have also adopted a no-cost calls policy, but none put any restrictions on how many minutes people can use, said Bianca Byek, executive director of Worth Kids, a criminal justice advocacy group that's pressed for the change across the country.

To now pursue a cap, "we don't think that's a prudent move to make," she said. "We really appreciate that the governor has included this. We know she has supported this type of policy. But we think the language as written does need to be improved."

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Through pieces of the past, memories come flooding back

► QUABBIN HOUSE

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The revelation inspired Palladino to learn more about the home, the family it had housed, and the communities uprooted by the Quabbin project in the 1930s.

Last year, Palladino released a book on her findings called "Lost Towns of the Swift River Valley: Drowned by the Quabbin." It details the history of her home's former owner, Marion Andrews Smith, the surviving member of a wealthy family who ran a mill and had a section of Enfield, known as Smith's Village, named after them.

When the state tried to force residents in Enfield — and Dana, Greenwich, and Prescott — to leave the area to make way for the reservoir, built to provide water for Boston and other municipalities, Smith was among those who fought desperately to stay.

Unlike her neighbors, she refused to sell her land, which the state later took by eminent domain. Smith, who was in her 70s at the time, didn't budge until July 1938, staying at the property down to the town's last moments.

"They all were devastated," Palladino, who grew up in Sturbridge, said of Enfield's last holdouts. "They didn't want to go. It wasn't easy for them to start over, just pick up and build a new home."

When it came time to leave, she said, Smith had hoped to pick up her entire home and move it to higher ground than others had. But that proved impossible, and her house — one of the largest in town — had to be



CALL A REMINISCENT MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES

Marion Andrews Smith had hoped to pick up her entire home (left) and move it, but she had to settle for her favorite pieces, now in the Ware house.

demolished. As a last resort, Smith spared what she could, and took her favorite components with her.

Construction workers removed four boards, mending, doors, and wainscoting, and re-installed them in the new location. In perhaps the most difficult task, they cut out her wooden staircase in one piece, and then hauled it to Ware.

While the new house had a different floor plan, the foyer was built as a replica of the original. That way, Smith would be reminded of her former home every time she crossed the threshold.

Palladino tracked down all of that information in records

from the company Smith hired to move the artifacts. They kept detailed notes on the entire project — and their challenging client.

"She was, in their view, very, very difficult," Palladino said. "But I think it's because she was so determined to have this house be what she wanted."

After spending years poring over records in local archives, special collections, and museums, Palladino has come to cherish the furnishings in her home even more than when she bought it, given the pains its builder took to keep them.

"As I was writing, Marion felt very present to me, because I'm in all these spaces that she inhabited," she said.

The plot thickened in 2018, when she discovered an unmarked envelope in her mailbox that contained black-and-white photos of the home when it was first built. She still doesn't know who put them there — or why — but is thankful they did.

Other treasures have also landed on her doorstep. During her research, she connected with Marian Tryon Waydaka, whose parents were Smith's chauffeur and groundskeeper (and named their daughter after her employer).

Palladino and Waydaka, then in her late 80s, became close and talked for hours about her memories in the home — including how the room Palladino

used as an office was Smith's favorite place to drink tea and gaze out on the lawn.

After she died in 2021, Waydaka's son gave Palladino a collection of Smith's books and a piano bench that once sat in the Enfield home. Both are now prominently displayed in Ware.

He also gave her the pieces of a mantel that once adorned the original home's fireplace, which she plans to restore and install. Palladino, who will discuss her book at the Copley branch of the Boston Public Library on Thursday, said she was initially only somewhat familiar with the history of the reservoir, but living in a "Quabbin house" has made her think more deeply about the displacements re-

quired to create the body of water.

Slow, when she drives past its \$12 billion glacial expanse, or takes her two daughters there to visit, her mind goes back to Smith, and the communities the project washed away.

"It's a beautiful place to walk and hike and enjoy. But there's a feeling of sadness there, too, and a beauty born of the loss of thousands of people who had to leave their homes," Palladino said. "I think they would be devastated to think that their sacrifice was forgotten."

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