

The Boston Globe

Founded 1872

P. STEVEN AINSLEY Publisher

MARTIN BARON Editor RENÉE LOTH Editor, Editorial Page

HELEN W. DONOVAN Executive Editor

Let drivers pay for roads

GOVERNOR PATRICK says he wants to use much of the revenue from his casino plan to fix decrepit highways and bridges. But he's ignoring factors that ought to give him pause:

- He hasn't got any of the money yet.
- He has other priorities, such as healthcare and education.

- The money expected to be raised from casinos won't fill the 20-year funding gap, estimated at a minimum of \$15 billion by the special Transportation Finance Commission.

- Earlier this week, that same commission provided a menu of financing and efficiency options that should be considered first.

The commission issued its report on Monday — the same day the governor announced that he favors casino gambling in three locations yet to be selected. Some of the gambling revenue should go to defray the impact of the local property tax, as he suggested. But why not reserve the rest for his education initiatives, or for the expansion of health insurance coverage, now underway? Highways and bridges are best financed through user fees, such as the gasoline tax.

Casino money simply won't be enough. But the promise of that money fairly guarantees that lawmakers won't make the tough choices needed to put the transportation system on a proper footing.

The commission recommended an immediate 11.5-cent increase in the 23.5-cent-a-gallon tax, which will just make up for

inflation since 1991, the last time it was raised to generate more transportation money (2½ cents of the tax is reserved to pay for the disposal of underground gasoline tanks). Almost everything has grown more costly since then. Gasoline and highway work certainly have.

The commission also proposes policy changes to increase the efficiency of the state transportation system, including the MBTA. Among the most controversial are the replacement of police details with flagmen at construction projects, and restrictions on the growth of MBTA workers' fringe benefits. The Legislature is loath to touch the prerogatives of the unionized state workforce, but both are reasonable steps that ought to be taken before taxes or MBTA fares are raised.

Even then, major infusions of money will still be needed to reduce a backlog of essential repair projects and defray expenses that were imposed on the MBTA when it had more money. At the least, the state should assume the cost of the \$1.8 billion in transit projects it ordered the MBTA to build as mitigation for the Big Dig.

The Legislature knew when it created the special commission in 2004 that the state's transportation infrastructure was in trouble. Now that these tough recommendations are out, the House-Senate Transportation Committee ought to hold hearings to consider them at length. Allowing this report to gather dust is a gamble the governor and Legislature shouldn't take.

Poison Ivy aspirations

THINGS ARE getting ugly in the scenic Upper Connecticut River Valley town of Hanover, N.H., where as many as 50 high school students are suspected of playing some role in a cheating scandal that began with the theft of math and chemistry tests shortly before June final exams. Residents of the affluent town, which is also the host community of Dartmouth College, are now searching for answers of their own about the students' motives and what consequences they should face.

The stakes are highest for four students charged with criminal trespass and five others charged with being accessories to the crime based on their alleged role as lookouts. If convicted of the misdemeanor charges, students could be assessed a maximum fine of \$1,200. Some parents and supporters of the accused students are stunned that the incidents led to criminal charges. Others suspect that parental pressure on high school students to attend selective, top-tier colleges may be at the root of the scandal.

It's bad enough that, in a recent survey by the nonprofit Josephson Institute of Ethics, 60 percent of high school students report they have cheated on an exam. It's the job of the schools, not the police, to deal with crib notes and the like. But 17-year-old students who break into a school for the purpose of cheating or any other reason must expect that po-

lice will respond and investigate. Stealing a test may be different from stealing a computer. But the initial breach looks the same.

This case would be especially pathetic if the motive indeed turns out to be an effort to cheat one's way into a prestigious college. Big names aren't everything. A PhD glut that began in the late 1960s means that professors with extraordinary commitments to scholarship might turn up anywhere. Perhaps families are really paying \$45,000 a year for the quality of the student body at top-ranked colleges? An Ivy-worthy combined SAT score of 1450 may be impressive, but it's not a character reference — especially when wealthy parents are laying out \$160 per hour for private test-prep tutors.

The accused students and their families have choices to make. In New Hampshire, misdemeanor convictions can be annulled three years after a person fulfills all of the conditions of a sentence. That beneficent provision could give these students an opportunity to wipe the slate clean before they enter the workforce. A guilty plea, therefore, could make a lot more sense than sparring with prosecutor Christopher O'Connor, who could elevate the charges to felonies.

O'Connor holds the cards. And he, incidentally, attended Southern Vermont College, where students are admitted with an average SAT score of 970. That's a lesson in itself for students at Hanover High.

A recognizably wicked world

IN THE OPENING number of "Wicked," which returned to Boston last week, the citizens of Oz, along with Glinda the Good Witch, are celebrating the death of the Wicked Witch of the West. In the play — and in the 1995 Gregory Maguire novel on which it was based — Glinda and the Wicked Witch were once best friends. Glinda's face registers her discomfort over the celebration, but still plays down her connection to the vanquished witch.

To watch novelist Gregory Maguire and producer David Stone respond to questions from the Globe opinion staff, please visit boston.com/opinion

The play pretends to tell the story behind "The Wizard of Oz." By taking the Wicked Witch's point of view, it reminds us that one person's villain is another's hero. Yet works of art mean different things at different times. In the present context, the most chilling lesson in this cheerful musical concerns the price of loyalty and the temptations of power.

In this version of Oz, dissent is stifled. This Oz is a dead ringer, to liberal "Wicked" fans, for George W. Bush's America — though the Wizard acts more like a comic version of Kim Jong Il. His plan to keep Oz happy involves muting all the animals. This radicalizes sardonic, green-skinned Elphaba, whom the Wizard's propaganda machine demonizes as the Wicked Witch. Glinda lacks her friend's

tolerance for solitude, and becomes a wand-waving functionary of the Wizard regime.

Her choice isn't surprising. Humans are social animals, and one person can only achieve so much on her own. But "Wicked" reminds us how the need to belong can push an individual, inch by inch, into doing things that might once have seemed repugnant.

In the real world, some people have the spine to resist. Lawyer Jack Goldsmith quit the Bush administration after being pushed to rubber-stamp policies he thought unwise. But compare this with the now-infamous 2004 incident in which then White House counsel Alberto Gonzales and chief of staff Andrew Card rushed to see a hospitalized John Ashcroft, hoping to get his OK for a supposed antiterrorism effort. Going along to get along, Gonzales and Card were prodding a bedridden man to authorize secret surveillance on US soil.

Some scholars see L. Frank Baum's book "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" as a parable about late-19th-century economic policy. In an interview with the Globe, Maguire said it's not clear Oz's creator meant to sow messages for adults, but suggested themes of Baum's time might have bubbled into his story.

Oz as depicted in "Wicked" shares some features with modern American politics — a tendency to brush past moral ambiguities, a sharpening of the political debate into reductive extremes. Poor Glinda needs room to think, and she doesn't get it. She's not the only one.



LETTERS to the EDITOR

Whose role is it to save gamblers from themselves?

I AM an attorney who accepts court appointments in the Cambridge and Boston juvenile courts. I feel compelled to express my disillusionment with the governor and Legislature for not addressing in a timely manner the funding for the critically important work that public counsel performs. We have not been paid since July. Meanwhile, the governor promotes the purported economic benefits of casino gambling regardless of the havoc that legalized gambling would wreak on poor and underserved families.

While the failure to pass the bills that fund the public counsel program does not make the headlines, I should note the irony of the government's willingness to

fertilize the environment in which grows our client base — largely families broken by alcohol, drugs, and, soon perhaps, gambling.

I voted for Governor Patrick on the basis of his promises of justice for all citizens of the state. Now I am reminded of the words of Johnny Rotten of the Sex Pistols: "Ever get the feeling you've been had?"

ANDREW D. MAZZONE
Cambridge

IN YOUR article "Liberal gaming critics feel betrayed by Patrick plan" (Page A9, Sept. 19), you describe the disappointment of many of Deval Patrick's earliest supporters. As another early Patrick supporter, let me say bravo, governor.

This move would lower property taxes and create jobs by legalizing something that already exists.

I'm sick of the attitude that we have to "save" people from themselves. Some people will ruin their lives, regardless of what we do to stop it.

Do critics of casino gambling really think that gambling addicts don't already exist in Massachusetts? Do they not realize that you can gamble from your computer, from your home, and from bookmakers everywhere?

People do things that are bad for them. We can pretend that it doesn't happen, or we can regulate and profit from it.

KAREN VAN DYNE
Somerville

Where to now: Tolls or taxes?

YOUR SEPT. 19 editorial "For whom the Turnpike tolls" says, "State government needs to show turnpike users that it is working cooperatively to spread the burden of the Central Artery." As a long-time toll payer on the Tobin Bridge, I say amen to that. The burden must be spread, not to all Massachusetts taxpayers but to all users of the new artery. This means, yes, new tolls for those who have never paid directly into the system: drivers coming into Boston from the north and south on I-93. The interstate and the Southeast Expressway bring an enormous volume of traffic into the city, and their users certainly benefit from the Big Dig as much as we toll payers do. Why shouldn't they put in their fair share?

MIKE DYER
Essex

THE LAST thing Massachusetts drivers need is tolls on I-93. If funds are needed to maintain our roads and bridges, then let's do the sensible thing and raise the gas tax. Tolls on I-93 would waste time, money, and energy. Tolls create pollution and the expense of energy as drivers wait in idling vehicles. Moreover, we'd need to set up a toll-taking infrastructure of plazas and collectors, so some chunk of our tolls would go to pay for that infrastructure instead of for roads and bridges.

The gas tax would be a much more efficient way to raise funds,



MARGARET SCOTT ILLUSTRATION

and it would treat all roads equally instead of targeting certain ones and the drivers who use them. And unlike tolls, a gas tax would encourage drivers to choose more fuel-efficient vehicles.

CHRIS GOOTKIND
Winchester

DURING MY 75-minute commute from Reading to Charlestown the other morning, I had ample time to collect data on my traveling companions. Perhaps 30 percent of the vehicles bore registrations from our good neighbors to the north, New Hampshire. With all the talk of increasing existing tolls on the Mass. Pike and some tunnels in Boston, I wonder whether now might be an appropriate time for the many Granite State residents that enjoy working in the Boston area to contribute to the maintenance of the roads, bridges, and highways they use every day. Live free or drive?

CHUCK SHAIRS
Reading

Drum up a little school spirit

COLLEGES MUST doubtless take the lead in improving town-gown relations by creating on-campus housing and building community ties ("Off-campus harmony," Editorial, Sept. 16). But the town also has a job to do: support colleges that construct new campus facilities that either house more students or encourage students to spend more time on campus.

As a Boston College alumna, I have noted the early opposition to plans for the former Archdiocese of Boston land abutting Lake Street. But my alma mater is not the only institution confronting

these issues. As soon as plans are released, the same group that complains about noise, trash, and other effects of students on neighborhoods speaks out against the height, design, and use of campus buildings.

All of the area's colleges and universities add jobs, trained employees, and culture to Boston. Without supporting their efforts to build new student facilities, we have no grounds for whining about the off-campus impact of students.

DIANA C. PISCIOTTA
Boston

Letters should be written exclusively to the Globe and include name, address, and daytime number. They should be 200 words or fewer; all are subject to editing. Letters to the Editor, The Boston Globe, PO Box 55819, Boston, MA 02205-5819; letter@globe.com; fax: 617-929-2098. For a week's worth of letters, go to boston.com/opinion/letters.

Cheating and consequences

I READ "School cheating scandal divides N.H. town" with shock and dismay (Page A1, Sept. 19). If, as alleged, these students entered Hanover High in the evening and used stolen keys to steal one set of exams and then, days later, stole yet another set of tests (not to mention the actual cheating), then to say, as one parent says of his son, that they committed "one little mistake" goes well beyond glossing over the facts. They could have put all that time and effort into studying for their exams, and then getting good grades on the tests wouldn't have been an issue.

But what I found more troubling was that parents were furious at police and school officials. If these kids believe that this is the sort of behavior that is necessary for success, then their parents have failed them. These kids need to learn that their actions have consequences before they move on in life to commit even more grand, Enron-like abuses and wreck more lives than just their own.

STEVE DELANEY
Roslindale

The Boston Globe

MANAGING EDITOR
Mary Jane Wilkinson/Administration

DEPUTY MANAGING EDITORS
Michael J. Larkin/News Operations

Peter S. Canellos/Washington

John Yemma/Multimedia

Mark S. Morrow/Projects

Ellen Clegg/Sunday

Dante Ramos/Editorial Page

Brian McGrory/Local News

Caleb Solomon/Page One

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
Alfred S. Larkin, Jr.

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENTS
Gregory L. Thornton/Employee Relations and Operations

Susan Hunt Stevens/Circulation and Marketing

Samuel P. Martin/Chief Advertising Officer

Robert F. Burns/Production Operations

Christopher Pirco/Chief Financial Officer

Christopher M. Mayer/Chief Information Officer

VICE PRESIDENTS
Harriet E. Gould/Employee Relations

Nicki F. Roth/Human Resources

Lisa DeSisto/Advertising

Patricia L. Knight/Circulation and Business Marketing

Jay Fogarty/Strategic Planning

Jill B. Kremins/Circulation and Brand Marketing

Peter Ockerblom/Advertising

MANAGING DIRECTOR
Lucy C. Bartholomaj/Product Innovation

Charles H. Taylor
Founder & Publisher 1873-1921

William O. Taylor/Publisher 1921-1955

Wm. Davis Taylor/Publisher 1955-1977

William O. Taylor/Publisher 1978-1997

Benjamin B. Taylor/Publisher 1997-1999

Richard H. Gilman/Publisher 1999-2006

Laurence L. Winship/Editor 1955-1965

Thomas Winship/Editor 1965-1984

A NEW YORK TIMES COMPANY
NEWSPAPER