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HAND: Against the tide

State Rep. Steve D'Amico is the first to admit he is not real good at the political game.

If he was a slicker politician, he would not have spent a lot of his first term in office fighting his own party leadership over one of its pet projects, tax credits for the movie industry.

And if he was better at the game, he would have played to an angry crowd at an Attleboro hearing on a proposed gasoline tax increase Monday night.

Instead, he tried to explain to voters in the crowd how the state's transportation system has gotten into so much trouble and how all the reforms they were calling for would not save enough money to fix the problem.

D'Amico said much of the problem can be attributed to the state mismanaging the Big Dig project and borrowing billions to pay for it without finding a way to fund the bonds.

He held up graphs showing how previous governors scheduled the debt so payments would balloon after they left office.

He read off numbers showing that over the years the state has foolishly paid the salaries of highway workers with borrowing.

Nobody was very interested in his information, especially the Republican legislators who organized the event and blamed all the problems on Democrats.

D'Amico, D-Seekonk, said he knows he is on the unpopular side of the issue.

He said he knows his bucking the popular trend could cost him his job come next election.

But, D'Amico said he did not run for office to pander to people and will not lie to them.

When the next election comes around in 2010, we will see if voters appreciate his stand against the tide.

Reform surgeIn an effort to defuse some of the anger over the gasoline tax, the Legislature will debate and vote next week on several reforms on the transportation system, such as Gov. Deval Patrick's idea to eliminate the Turnpike Authority and combine several agencies.

Consideration of a tax increase will come later, after the public has been shown the state is serious about reforms. Some lawmakers believe a 6 cent increase will be approved - a far cry from the 19 cents Patrick wants.

Politics is local Sources say one of the candidates who has been suggested to Gov. Deval Patrick for appointment to the Attleboro Redevelopment Authority is current authority member Nancy Maguire Heath.

While some want Heath to be reappointed, Mayor Kevin Dumas has recommended that former Mayor Judith Robbins get the post. The decision is strictly up to the governor.

The appointment may be a relatively minor decision for a governor struggling with a \$1 billion budget deficit and an economic free fall, but it has major implications for local politics.

Dumas is trying to wrest control over an industrial park project from the redevelopment authority, but the reappointment of Heath would maintain the status quo on the board.

Frank will visit city U.S. Rep. Barney Frank, one of the major players in the role of Congress in dealing with the world financial crisis, will be in Attleboro next Saturday for the annual Democratic unity breakfast. Frank, D-Newton, is scheduled to be one of the speakers at the 9 a.m. event at the Moose Cabin in Attleboro.

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