



The LEADER

CORNING | NEW YORK

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50 CENTS

INSIDE:



WEST SEEKS FIRST CLASS A TITLE SINCE 1999

FOOTBALL | 1B



JACKALS COME BACK ON CYCLONES

ECHL | 1B

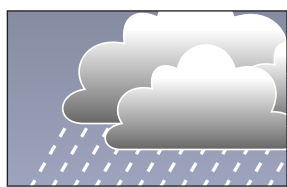


SORRY, HEF... 'GIRL NEXT DOOR' ENGAGED | 1C

YOUR GUIDE TO TODAY'S LEADER

- Advice — 3C
- Business — 5C
- Calendar — 8C
- Classifieds — 6B
- Comics — 4C
- Crossword — 4C
- Horoscope — 3C
- Etc. — 1C
- Local — 3A
- Lotteries — 2A
- Obituaries — 5A
- Opinion — 4A
- Police — 2A
- Sports — 1B
- TV listings — 3C
- Weather — 8A

TODAY'S LOCAL WEATHER



EARLY RAIN, THEN SHOWERS
WETM 18 Storm Team
seven-day forecast | 8A



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Steuben County

Tax hike in proposed budget

BY MARY PERHAM
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BATH | Property taxes in Steuben County will increase an average of 3.9 percent next year even though spending is down in the proposed 2009 budget, if approved by the county Legislature later this month.

The Legislature's Finance Committee has crafted a \$179.4 million budget for next year, about \$1.5 million less than what the county currently spends.

However, the amount of taxes the county will levy on residents goes from \$42.6 million to \$44.2 million.

"At this point, we believe this is a reasonable budget," said county Administrator Mark Alger. "We've got the major bases covered, we're funding public works construction which is always important. But there are a whole lot of unknowns still out there."

The unknown element for county budgets across New York is what the state Legislature will do when it

meets Nov. 18. Gov. David Paterson has called state legislators to meet and deal with the current \$1.5 billion state deficit. The deficit is projected to reach nearly \$12.5 billion next year.

Local officials are concerned the state will reduce its deficit by forcing counties to pay a larger share for state mandated programs. The so-called "cost shift" could mean an increase in property taxes or a reduction in local services.

Much of the reduced spending in

the proposed county budget come with the opening of the county's new Health Care Facility and a cost-savings measure in the county Public Defender's Office.

Finance Committee members remained concerned about consistent cost overruns in the county Office of Community Services, which provides mental health services. This year program costs outpaced anticipated revenues by \$400,000.

SEE HIKE | 8A



PROVIDED TO THE LEADER

This photo, provided by Bryan Jamison, shows the results after Jamison's Texaco Station in Campbell sustained more than \$10,000 worth of damage when a pickup truck crashed through its front door early Friday morning.

2 men drive away with ATM in Campbell robbery

BY JOHN ZICK
jzick@the-leader.com

CAMPBELL | Two men smashed a stolen pickup truck through the entrance of a Campbell gas station Friday and stole the ATM sitting inside, a crime remarkably similar to one last month in Big Flats.

Both the pickup truck and the empty ATM were later found engulfed in flames on a rural road in the town of Erwin.

The store's surveillance footage shows two men using a stolen truck - a 1995 Dodge

pickup taken from a residence in Erwin, according to state police - to smash through the front entrance of Jamison's Sunoco around 1:30 a.m. Friday, station co-owner Bryan Jamison said.

Once inside, the men loaded

SEE ROBBERY | 8A

JASON COX | THE LEADER

A crew works Friday to replace the entrance to Jamison's Texaco Station after a pickup truck smashed into the building.



Absentee ballots to be tallied Nov. 17

THE LEADER STAFF

CORNING | Representatives from the campaigns of incumbent John R. "Randy" Kuhl Jr., R-Hammondsport, and Democratic challenger Eric Massa have agreed to rules for determining the winner of the Nov. 4 election, including a Nov. 17 date for counting absentee ballots.

The four-page document, released by Hornell law firm Pulos and Rosell LLP, lays out procedures for going forward with the final vote tallies, including the counting of absentee and military ballots.

The Nov. 17 date coincides with the deadline for military ballots, allowing all outstanding ballots to be counted at one time, in a single location.

Although reports on election day projected a Massa win, the margin was only 4,000 votes, far less than the reported 16,900 absentee ballots returned in the district.

Jobless rate at 25-year record high

BY JEANNINE AVERSA
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON | A quarter of a million pink slips, just before the holidays.

Assembly line workers, construction crews, sales clerks, hotel employees, mortgage brokers and temps. All hard hit last month, the government said Friday.

"Main Street knew well before the Beltway people that there are problems out there," said Brian Bethune, economist at IHS Global Insight.

The nation's ranks of unemployed zoomed past 10 million, the most in

SEE JOBLESS | 8A

Wegmans plans cuts in food prices

BY BEN DOBBIN
Associated Press Writer

ROCHESTER | Wegmans Food Markets Inc., a stylish grocery store chain with 72 outlets in five states, is rolling back prices on many high-turnover foods by 10 percent to 30 percent as the economy weakens.

The 93-year-old, family owned business credited with helping pioneer "one-stop shopping" said lower price tags appearing this week on hundreds of bakery, meat, produce, deli and other grocery items will save an average family of shoppers as much as \$40 to \$60 a month.

Wegmans operates stores in Corning, Elmira, Ithaca and Hornell.

The move was triggered in part by expectations that its own costs will drop in 2009, Wegmans spokeswoman Jo

Natale said Friday. "Our costs have not yet come down, but we expect that they will, so we are making the move now instead of waiting," she said.

Heightened competition from other chains, Natale added, "was not the driving factor in making this decision by any means but it's absolutely true that we operate in a very competitive business and it's competitive in every market where we have stores."

Grocery prices have risen this year, including those of many products now being reduced. But drops in fuel, grain and other wholesale costs in recent months is helping to lower the cost of doing business.

"I can't tell you where this brings us relative to where prices were a year ago,"

SEE WEGMANS | 8A

MITCHELLSVILLE FIRE



ROB PRICE | STEUBEN COURIER-ADVOCATE

Bath firefighters respond to a house fire at 8439 county Rt. 13 Friday afternoon. The owner of the house, identified as Terry Long, was not home at the time, and there were no injuries. Firefighters were dispatched to the scene at about 1:30 p.m. after a UPS driver reported the fire to 911. The house sustained smoke, heat and water damage. Firefighters from Hammondsport and Prattsburgh, Bath Ambulance and the Red Cross also responded.