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## 'The State of the State' forum to address top issues

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By Cherise Madigan, Bennington Banner

MANCHESTER — What are the biggest issues facing the state of Vermont?

On Nov. 13, a panel of local leaders will congregate to discuss those issues at the "The State of the State" forum organized by the Bennington County Republican Party. The meeting takes place at 7 p.m. in Burr and Burton Academy's Riley Center for the Arts.

Local legislators Cynthia Browning, Linda Joy Sullivan and Brian Keefe will be joined by Manchester police Chief Michael Hall to discuss current issues in Montpelier and hear input from residents.

"It's very important for the community to really know what's going on in the state, and have it broken down in simple terms to be as well-informed as they possibly can be," said organizer Carol DuPont. "Right now, there are struggles going on to balance the budget that we have questions about, and then we'll go into taxes, education, and opiates."

Throughout the forum, moderated by Andrew McKeever of GNAT-TV, panelists will work to shed light on these issues from an insider's perspective.

"I just consider it part of my public responsibility to engage on substantive topics of interest to the community," said Sullivan, a democratic legislator representing Dorset, Danby, Mount Tabor, Peru, and

Landgrove. "The only way we as legislators can gauge how best to serve our communities is to engage and get feedback from voters — Republican, Democrat, and Progressive."

"The idea is to give people a chance to raise concerns in a non-election year, and in advance of the second session of the legislature, so that we can take responsible action," added Keefe, a republican representative for Manchester.

While Manchester's chief of police may seem out of place on a panel full of legislators, Hall hopes to represent the interests of municipalities impacted by legislative action.

"It would appear that the state legislature is getting more and more into policy setting and operational concerns, which I think is outside the bounds of legislative duties," he said. "Quite frankly, they're mandating a lot of things that are essentially becoming a burden to the communities."

Issues relating to the state budget and economy will be prominent in the discussion according to panelists, and democratic Rep. Cynthia Browning is well prepared for the discussion.

"I'm now on the House Ways and Means Committee, and anything having to do with taxes or fees comes before this committee," said Browning, who holds a Ph.D. in economics. "This gives me the ability to have a direct impact on those policy issues."

While Keefe will be providing an update on the progress of the Minimum Wage Study Committee that he was appointed to this past summer, Sullivan hopes to shed light on economic issues — including affordable housing, poor cell phone service, and the minimum wage — that are "symptoms of a larger problem that the State has been unwilling or unable to squarely address."

"There is a need for Vermont to undertake a comprehensive economic development strategy that will attract Vermont-compatible businesses to the state, and with it greater economic opportunities and increased prosperity for Vermonters," Sullivan said.

"The question of economic development and the state budget — particularly taxes — those are some of the issues that people ask me about all of the time," Browning added. "That's one of the reasons that the State of the State is oriented around those issues."

Panelists urge local citizens to attend the forum, which will provide valuable insight on the issues faced by the state and how they are being addressed by local leaders.

"I suspect there's a good number of people out there who don't have the time to really keep abreast of what's going on at the State House," Hall said. "Unfortunately for the people of our state, certain people are taking advantage of that. I think a forum like this is a good opportunity to let people know what's really going on."

"There is no prerequisite to attend," Keefe said. "Come with questions, or without, to learn more about the biggest issues we face in this region and as a state."

According to the legislators, that input is invaluable in their work to represent the region in the State Legislature.

"These events can often be quite rich and rewarding, because you have multiple perspectives at the table," Browning said. "This is a chance for people to learn more about what's going on in Montpelier so that they can make better decisions, and also give us the input we need to represent them."

Reach Cherise Madigan at [cmadigan@manchesterjournal.com](mailto:cmadigan@manchesterjournal.com), or by phone at 802-490-6471.



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**Select Board wants more time to weigh charter options (</stories/select-board-wants-more-time-to-weigh-charter-options,528054>)**

**After doubling people served, Coalition must still do more, says director (</stories/after-doubling-people-served-coalition-must-still-do-more-says-director,528053>)**

**Year in Review: Act 46 brought big changes in 2017 (</stories/year-in-review-act-46-brought-big-changes-in-2017,528052>)**

**Christmas Eve fire displaces two (</stories/christmas-eve-fire-displaces-two,527953>)**

**SVSU districts reduce spending in tough budget year (</stories/svsu-districts-reduce-spending-in-tough-budget-year,527952>)**

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# Puzzles Palace



Classic Sudoku



Conceptis Pic-a-Pix



Ice Cream Blast

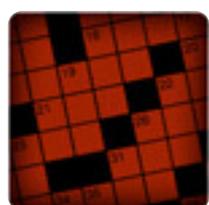


Junior Sudoku



Number Pyramid

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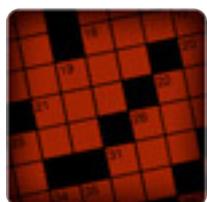


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**College Football**  
**(<http://collegefootball.ap.org/berkshireeagle/articles>)**

No. 20 Northwestern looking for history at Music City Bowl

(<http://collegefootball.ap.org/berkshireeagle/article/no-20-northwestern-looking-history-music-city-bowl>)

Florida State closes book on Fisher, moves on to Taggart era

(<http://collegefootball.ap.org/berkshireeagle/article/florida-state-closes-book-fisher-moves-taggart-era>)

NC State standout Chubb likely next to sit for Sun Bowl

(<http://collegefootball.ap.org/berkshireeagle/article/nc-state-standout-chubb-likely-next-sit-sun-bowl>)

Iowa finishes up-and-down year on a high note

(<http://collegefootball.ap.org/berkshireeagle/article/iowa-finishes-and-down-year-high-note>)

New Mexico St ends drought, faces Utah St in Arizona Bowl

(<http://collegefootball.ap.org/berkshireeagle/article/new-mexico-st-ends-drought-faces-utah-st-arizona-bowl>)

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Ode to Sports: A year of anthems, Astros, Bama and Brady

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Hay day: Wyoming rancher has big impact on Olympic downhill

(<https://wintergames.ap.org/berkshireeagle/article/hay-day-wyoming-rancher-has-big-impact-olympic-downhill>)

2018 World Cup chief Mutko quits; still involved in planning

(<https://wintergames.ap.org/berkshireeagle/article/2018-world-cup-chief-mutko-quits-still-involved-planning>)

Katie Ledecky swims to AP Female Athlete of the Year honors

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From Malta to Minneapolis, a look at where to go in 2018

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Pyeongchang 2018

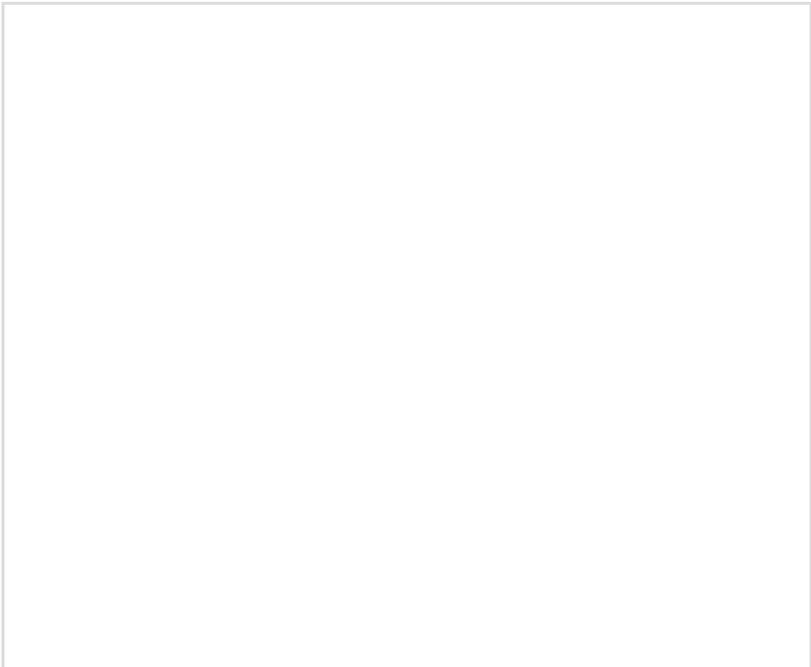
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**Year in Review: Greene's walk-off a Hollywood moment for Patriots (/stories/year-in-review-greenes-walk-off-a-hollywood-moment-for-patriots,528076)**

**No. 1 Lake George holds on to beat H.F. (/stories/no-1-lake-george-holds-on-to-beat-hf,528075)**

**Burr and Burton baseball rides wave to first D-I title (/stories/burr-and-burton-baseball-rides-wave-to-first-d-i-title,528035)**

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[Christmas Eve fire displaces two \(/stories/christmas-eve-fire-displaces-two,527953\)](/stories/christmas-eve-fire-displaces-two,527953)

[After doubling people served, Coalition must still do more, says director \(/stories/after-doubling-people-served-coalition-must-still-do-more-says-director,528053\)](/stories/after-doubling-people-served-coalition-must-still-do-more-says-director,528053)

**Bill would increase regulation of rail car storage (/stories/bill-would-increase-regulation-of-rail-car-storage,527949)**

**2017 in review: Progress for Putnam Block developers, then uncertainty (/stories/2017-in-review-progress-for-putnam-block-developers-then-uncertainty,527948)**

**Police: Man fled traffic stop, crashed car (/stories/police-man-fled-traffic-stop-crashed-car,527743)**



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