



ACCOMPLISHMENTS
6 medals for Nashoba Tech at SkillsUSA competition
Local » A3



COLLEGE CHEER
Falcons soar on mats in Daytona Beach
Sports » B1



EYE ON ART
Visit museum and step into glorious gardens
Lifestyles » B4

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LEOMINSTER

Local business owner talks tech policy with lawmakers

By Danielle Ray
dray@sentinelandenterprise.com

LEOMINSTER » Small business owner Neil Abramson recently met with federal lawmakers in Washington, D.C. to advocate for business-friendly tech policies. The visit came ahead of National Small Business Week May 3–9, where the CFO of Leominster-based ECJ Stores called for balanced policies that promote small business success, according to a press release.

During the meeting with U.S. Rep. Jim McGovern's office, Abramson advocated for balanced tech policies that help small businesses like his succeed in the current uncertain economic climate, specifically raising concerns that

proposals to restrict the use of data, AI, and digital tools could make it harder for small businesses to reach customers, operate efficiently, and grow. "I appreciated the opportunity to meet with Representative McGovern's staff to share how small businesses like mine use digital



Senior Legislative Assistant for Congressman Jim McGovern Ryan Early, left, is seen with Leominster small business owner Neil Abramson, who recently traveled down to Washington, D.C., to meet with federal lawmakers to advocate for business-friendly tech policies.

TECH » PAGE 4

FITCHBURG

'Creating extraordinary impact'

Local Luminaries Gala honors North Central MA entrepreneurs



Local Luminaries Gala founder and entrepreneur Tuyen Nguyen speaks to the hundreds of attendees of event held on May 8 at Great Wolf Lodge New England in her hometown of Fitchburg that was in her own words "created to recognize and celebrate the entrepreneurs, creators, and community leaders who are quietly shaping the culture and economy of North Central Massachusetts."

By Danielle Ray
dray@sentinelandenterprise.com

FITCHBURG » The inaugural Local Luminaries Gala drew hundreds of people from all over the region dressed in their finest, channeling Hollywood red carpet style to celebrate leadership, innovation, and community impact.

Lifelong city resident Tuyen Nguyen organized the special event held on May 8 at Great Wolf Lodge New England that she said was "created to recognize and celebrate the entrepreneurs, creators, and community leaders who are quietly shaping the culture and economy of North Central Massachusetts."

"While many prestigious awards honor nationally recognized figures, countless local business owners are creating extraordinary impact every day without receiving the visibility they deserve," she said.

LUMINARIES » PAGE 8



Leominster City Councilor Eladia Romero, right, presented lifelong Fitchburg resident Tuyen Nguyen with a citation from Rep. Jim McGovern, whose office Romero is the regional manager for, at the inaugural Local Luminaries Gala held on May 8 at Great Wolf Lodge New England that Nguyen put together to recognize fellow business leaders and entrepreneurs.



Cie Morin, owner of Aesthetics by Cie inside Manestream Day Spa in Fitchburg, was thrilled to take home a community impact award at the Local Luminaries Gala held on May 8 at Great Wolf Lodge New England. She's pictured here with her friend Lindsey English, right, who serves as the president of Fostering Change, Inc., a Leominster based nonprofit English founded in 2018 that Morin is deeply involved with.

STATE HOUSE

Balancing state budget will be 'tight' exercise, says Gorzkowicz

Budget chief working through series of decisions about closing out fiscal 2026

By Sam Drysdale
State House News Service

BOSTON » State budget chief Matthew Gorzkowicz warned municipal officials Tuesday that despite strong tax collections, Massachusetts faces another tight exercise closing out this year's state budget because of slower growth in general tax receipts.

Speaking to the Local Government Advisory Commission, the administration and finance secretary said April tax receipts of \$7.3 billion were 77% higher than April 2025 and \$923 million above benchmark expectations.

"That was relatively good news," Gorzkowicz said, adding that the state is about \$1.5 billion above benchmark for the fiscal year with two months remaining. But he emphasized that the headline numbers obscure underlying budget pressures heading into fiscal 2027.

"What we know to be true is that most of this over-benchmark performance is in both surtax and capital gains," he said. "There's not a lot of room for error."

Supplemental spending to shore up underfunded accounts adds to budget pressures when revenues are tight.

Gorzkowicz compared the outlook to fiscal 2025, when taxes ran more than \$2 billion above benchmark largely due to surtax and capital gains revenues that are restricted on how they're spent. After adjustments, he said, the state ended the year about \$52 million above benchmark on a budget exceeding \$60 billion.

"So it's not as though we won't have to make some decisions about how we close out the year," he said, describing, "what we know will be a tight budget despite the fact that revenues are performing quite well."

Municipal leaders who had been at the meeting also rallied outside the State House against

BUDGET » PAGE 8

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Luminaries

FROM PAGE 1

"The gala was designed to change that."

The female entrepreneur, leadership speaker, and business owner went on to say that the elegant evening was designed to bring together "entrepreneurs and professionals from diverse industries to celebrate the people who are helping our communities thrive."

"Behind every successful business is a story of sacrifice," Nguyen said. "Many entrepreneurs begin with uncertainty, limited resources, and tremendous personal responsibility. They work long hours, carry financial risk, and continue showing up even when recognition is absent. The Local Luminaries Gala exists to say we see you. Your work matters. Your impact deserves to be celebrated."

Dozens of small business owners and entrepreneurs from around the region were recognized at the event, with over 200 local businesses nominated and tens of thousands of votes cast — a staggering 10,000 within the first 24 hours — which Nguyen said, "really speaks to how much this event is resonating."

"We had an incredible response from the community," she relayed. "It's truly become a celebration of the small business and entrepreneurial spirit in our area, especially within the beauty, wellness, and service industries that are often overlooked."

When Nguyen thanked everyone for coming, she urged people not to leave "without connecting. That's what this is all about."

Fitchburg State University alum Christian Lopez spoke to the attendees about his company Autom8, which works directly with founders and small teams to implement AI-powered systems, helping them scale and operate like larger companies. He praised Nguyen for her determination in putting together the event that highlighted so many hardworking people in the greater community.

"Shoot for the stars and land on the moon, that's what she did," Lopez said of the gala that sold 250 tickets.



COURTESY KELSEA LOPEZ

Hundreds of people from all over the region gathered at Great Wolf Lodge New England in Fitchburg on May 8 for the inaugural Local Luminaries Gala, which was designed to celebrate leadership, innovation, and community impact.

He went on to say that while AI and other tech services can certainly enhance how people do business, it will never replace the human aspect.

"You all are service providers," Lopez said. "That's one thing AI can't provide."

Eladia Romero, the first Latina elected to Leominster City Council, presented Nguyen with a citation from U.S. Rep. Jim McGovern, for whose office Romero is the regional manager.

"Community has always been at the heart of what she does," Romero said of Nguyen, calling the gala a "lovely and beautiful event."

All the award recipients were given glass Local Luminaries awards in the shape of a flame, people nominated in all kinds of different categories. The Inferno Hot Yoga & Pilates Studio Manager and instructor Anjum Virostko accepted the glow up award on behalf of the Fitchburg studio owned by Kate McMillion and Cie Morin, owner of Aesthetics by Cie inside Manestream Day Spa in Fitchburg, was thrilled to take home an award from the community impact category.

"Winning filled me with joy, especially to be able

to accept the award with Lindsey English by my side," the lifelong city resident said of the woman who serves as the president of Fostering Change, Inc., a Leominster-based nonprofit English founded in 2018 that Morin is deeply involved with. "This accolade brings so much awareness to the work we do in supporting our children of the community who live in foster care. It was a beautiful moment for us as friends, celebrating over 20 years of affecting our community in a positive way."

Nguyen's own story reflects the same resilience, reinvention, and power of community that was highlighted at the Local Luminaries Gala. Born in Vietnam, she spent part of her early childhood in a refugee camp before immigrating to the United States with her family.

Those formative experiences instilled a profound appreciation for opportunity, perseverance, and the sacrifices required to build a better life and, throughout her career, Nguyen has consistently reinvented herself. She served as an investigator for USIS, later built a successful corporate career, and ultimately became an human resources director



COURTESY KELSEA LOPEZ

The Inferno Hot Yoga & Pilates Studio Manager and instructor Anjum Virostko accepted the glow up award on behalf of the Fitchburg studio owned by Kate McMillion and Cie Morin, owner of Aesthetics by Cie inside Manestream Day Spa in Fitchburg, was thrilled to take home an award from the community impact category.

in manufacturing, where she led initiatives in leadership development, or-

ganizational culture, and employee engagement. Despite her profes-

sional success, Nguyen felt called to create something more deeply aligned with her purpose. She attended esthetics school at night while working full-time and went on to build Flutter Yen Aesthetics, a thriving beauty and wellness business located at 217 State Rd. in Westminster.

Through Nguyen Impact — a leadership and speaking platform dedicated to creating experiences that move people, from inspiration into action — she combines her experience in business, leadership, and personal transformation to inspire entrepreneurs and professionals to turn adversity into purpose.

As an entrepreneur herself, Nguyen said that she "understands what happens behind the scenes before success becomes visible" and "knows what it feels like to question whether the hard work will pay off, to carry responsibilities quietly, and to continue building despite uncertainty."

Her own personal journey and the desire to recognize fellow luminaries in the community were what inspired her to establish the gala, which she said, "was born from a simple but powerful belief — greatness exists in our own communities, and the people creating meaningful impact deserve to be seen."

Core themes of the event that will now be held annually include entrepreneurship and innovation, resilience and perseverance, community impact, leadership and legacy, diversity and representation, and local economic growth — ideas and attributes Nguyen is familiar with and has channeled in her personal and professional life.

"This event was created to shine a light on the people who are building extraordinary things in our own communities," she said. "Many entrepreneurs spend years working quietly behind the scenes. The Local Luminaries Gala is our opportunity to say we see you, and your impact matters. When we celebrate local leaders, we inspire others to believe that success is possible right here in our own communities."

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Budget

FROM PAGE 1

a proposed ballot question that would gradually reduce the state income tax rate from 5% to 4%.

Local officials and municipal advocates said the measure would significantly reduce state revenues and eventually trigger cuts to local aid, one of the largest sources of unrestricted funding for cities and towns.

Adam Chapdelaine, executive director and CEO of the Massachusetts Municipal Association, called the proposal a threat to municipal finances already strained by inflation, work-force shortages and rising

education and infrastructure costs.

"When state revenues decline, local aid becomes vulnerable. This is because there are only small portions of the Commonwealth's budget that are actually discretionary," Chapdelaine said. "This ballot question would change this fiscal forecast from one of a storm to a devastating natural disaster."

Communities rely on state support to fund road maintenance, police and fire departments, public schools and other basic services, while facing limits under Proposition 2½ on how much they can raise annually through local property taxes.

Chapdelaine said local governments historically bear part of the burden when state budgets tighten.

"It wouldn't just tighten the belt, but cut into bone," he said.

Kassandra Gove, the Amesbury mayor and MMA



SHNS

Adam Chapdelaine, executive director and CEO of the Massachusetts Municipal Association, speaks at a rally outside the State House on Tuesday. Fitchburg Mayor Sam Squallia is the second from right.

aid cuts would be inevitable if revenues decline.

"We have the ability to do both," Sweezey said during debate on an amendment closely resembling the ballot proposal.

"Every rebuttal has come back to say that the first

the state could maintain adequate local aid while cutting income tax revenues, Shortleeve said, "I think we have to do it."

When asked how he would meet local budget needs with declining state revenues, Short-

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