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SERIOUS BUSINESS

By Radio Marte

AGIRRIO — The effect of an estimated $200 million annual budget shortfall in ambitious plans to expand funding for education, health care and prescription drugs will dominate the 120th legislative session, members of the House and Senate said Thursday, the first working day of the new session.

House Speaker Michael Colwell said the legislators “the best Maine has to offer” and welcomed them to the “new” State House and State Office Building, which have undergone a massive $80 million renovation. For the first time, both buildings are handicap accessible and provide a healthy work environment for lawmakers and state employees, he said.

The $200 million revenue gap is serious, but “not insurmountable” when compared to the billion dollar shortfall of just 16 years ago, he said. Legislators will have to combine creative thinking, hard work and a level of commitment to bridge the gap, he said.

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Legislature faces tough budgeting task

By Emma Mozer

W. Virginia jury will assess parents’ role in child’s death

By John Tittle

Fifty percent of the downtown parking spaces are already occupied, so businesses are looking to find more. The downtown parking garage is one such area, and a new garage is planned for the crowded downtown parking situation.

A new garage will be needed to accommodate the growing number of downtown businesses and residents. The project will cost $20 million and increase the number of parking spaces by 600. The garage will be completed in the spring of 2002.

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Smokers seek exams

By Vicki Smith

B. Bingo and a Big TOBACCO

By Bob DeLong

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