

# Cuomo: Weed OK unlikely in budget

BY MICHAEL GORMLEY

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ALBANY — Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo said Monday that he doubts the state will approve recreational use of marijuana in the coming budget, but said it must be done before the legislative session ends in June.

“I’ve been to this show before,” said Cuomo in dealing with the first budget of his third term. “You’re two weeks from a budget ... there is a wide divide on marijuana.”

He said law enforcement concerns, pricing and how much tax revenue the state and local governments can collect are among major issues to work out, which he said could be done after the budget. “We can get there and we must get there,” he said.

Cuomo also said making the local property tax cap permanent and criminal justice reform, including ending cash bail in most cases, will be among his top priorities in the budget talks.

He said he needs to get criminal justice reform in the budget, where state law provides him leverage over the legislature.

“I don’t believe they will do it after the budget because they also have a large divide on criminal justice issues — I believe a wider divide than on marijuana,” Cuomo said.

Cuomo, in an hourlong news conference, presented his lines in the sand, his threats, predictions and his negotiating strategies as he begins talks on a \$175.2 billion state budget in earnest with the legislature. The budget is due April 1.

The State Senate and Assembly are scheduled to release their budget counterproposals this week. The number of closed-door negotiations between Cuomo and Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie will then increase.

The chambers had no immediate comment on Cuomo’s presentation.

Cuomo all but assured that



Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo: “There is a wide divide on marijuana.”

the budget will include a new tax. The pied-à-terre tax, French for “foot on the ground,” would assess a surcharge on apartments and condominiums worth \$5 million or more and mostly owned by residents of other countries who use the apartment as a second or third home. The tax could raise \$9 billion over several years, but Cuomo said he will insist it be used to help fund repairs to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

Cuomo again said he will not budge on his demand to make the six-year-old cap on local tax levies permanent. He said New Yorkers and employers need the assurance of the 2 percent cap, which can only be exceeded by a supermajority vote of local government officials or by school district voters.

“You have to make the tax cap permanent, period,” Cuomo said. In response to three compromises pitched by the legislature, Cuomo said, “No, no, no.”

Kevin Law of the Long Island Association business group predicted that without a permanent cap, Long Island property taxes that now average \$10,000 a year would jump to \$20,000 by 2030.

“That’s not sustainable,” he

said. “We need to send a bold message.”

Cuomo also insisted that the legislature can’t raise spending above his \$175.2 billion proposal without adding revenue to pay for it. If he holds to that, it would be a rarity. In Albany, the legislature traditionally adds about 1 percent or more to a governor’s budget.

Cuomo warned legislators that the budget faces a \$3.8 billion shortfall from the current fiscal year and the next. He also agreed with economists who predict a 40 percent chance of a coming recession.

The Democratic majorities of the Senate and Assembly had projected the budget to have \$900 million more in revenue than Cuomo included in his proposal on Jan. 15.

“It’s a very tight box this year,” he said.

Cuomo said a late budget would still likely cost legislators their \$10,000 raises due in 2020 under a pay raise law adopted in December. That second installment of the raise is leverage to force action on legislators who are in the midst of receiving their first pay raise in 20 years.

“Being right is more important than anything else this year,” Cuomo said.

# TRUMP’S

## Targets safety net programs, boosts wall, military funding

BY LAURA FIGUEROA HERNANDEZ

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WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Monday unveiled a \$4.7 trillion federal spending plan that calls for cuts to domestic programs — including Medicare and Social Security — while boosting military spending and increasing funding for a southern border wall.

The president’s proposed budget sets up another grueling fight between Trump and a divided Congress that has previously rejected his requests for \$5.7 billion in border wall funding. Trump’s new budget calls for \$8.6 billion to build new security barriers along the U.S. and Mexico border.

Trump’s 2020 budget calls for a 5 percent across-the-board cut in domestic spending, though some agencies including the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Agriculture received heftier proposed cuts. The departments of Defense, Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs would all see at least a 5 percent uptick in spending under the plan.

Trump in a letter to Congress said his plan “provides a clear road map for the Congress to bring Federal spending and debt under control,” even as the White House Office of Management and Budget acknowledged the plan would add \$1 trillion per year to the nation’s existing \$22 trillion deficit, through 2022.

The White House budget generally serves as a starting point for negotiations with Congress, providing lawmakers with a wish list of the president’s spending priorities, but the document has rarely been adopted in full by lawmakers as they hash out a budget agreement ahead of an annual Sept. 30 deadline to fund the government.

The proposal makes no mention of funding the Gateway Tunnel project to upgrade rail service between New York and New Jersey, prompting Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo to issue a state-

ment warning Trump that “if the federal government refuses to fund this project, then the President will have to answer to travelers and businesses across the Northeast who rely on this critical transit corridor.”

Congressional Democrats — emboldened by the midterm election that gave them control of the House and eyeing the 2020 presidential race in which a handful of Democratic senators are running to unseat Trump — have vowed to fight Trump’s spending priorities.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said, “House Democrats will reject this toxic, destructive budget request, which would hollow out our national strength and fail to meet the needs of the American people.”

The president, who campaigned on the promise to build a wall along the U.S. and Mexico border, looks to continue pressing the issue heading into the 2020 race. Trump who has changed his campaign pitch to “finish the wall” is seeking additional money to build 722 miles of border barriers after forcing a 35-day government shutdown that resulted in Congress only allocating \$1.4 billion for border security measures.

The president has since declared a national emergency, in an attempt to redirect military construction funding for the wall, but 16 states and a number of advocacy groups have sued in federal court to halt his access to those funds.

The budget would trim \$2.7 trillion from the federal budget with some of the deepest cuts directed to the Environmental Protection Agency, which would receive 31 percent less in funding, the State Department, which would receive 23 percent less in funding, and the budget for the Health and Human Services Department would see a 12 percent dip.

The budget also proposes an overhaul of Medicaid by encouraging states to take up more control of the federal program that provides health care coverage to low-