

UP TO \$906 IN COUPON SAVINGS TODAY



Daily Record

Return of a Jersey girl

Janis Ian back home for special concerts with Tom Paxton. **Sunday Best**

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Divorce heads in new direction



Aaron Welt, a psychologist who works in Morris County and environs as a "divorce coach," is on a collaborative team of experts that helps a couple negotiate a divorce.

PHOTOS BY BOB KARP/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Collaborative method called gentler, speedier, cheaper

LORRAINE ASH @LORRAINEVASH

There's a new kinder, gentler way to be divorced in New Jersey called collaborative divorce.

Last fall, Gov. Chris Christie signed the New Jersey Family Collaborative Law Act, making New Jersey the ninth state to legitimize a practice touted by proponents as more speedy and less costly than traditional divorce.

The method, which aims to envelope the spouses and their lawyers in a team of experts and a cooperative spirit, has been used here for a decade. With the passage of the law, however, it has become the fourth official way to become divorced in New Jersey, where the options are to litigate, mediate, arbitrate or collaborate.

The divorce rate in the Garden State is 6.9 per 1,000 women and 6.6 per 1,000

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Anne Vogt (left) of Mount Tabor, a former client who underwent a collaborative divorce, talks with family lawyer Denise Wennogle.

BOB KARP/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

"The challenge is getting the word out to the world that your divorce does not have to be a 'War of the Roses.'"

DENISE WENNOGLE, MORRISTOWN FAMILY LAW ATTORNEY

Huge issues threaten N.J. budget

MICHAEL SYMONS @MICHAELSYMONS_

TRENTON — Gov. Chris Christie is working in a highly flammable environment, with highly combustible materials, as he assembles the state budget plan that he will roll out Tuesday.

Health care costs for public workers could explode by \$410 million. Pension contributions might be a \$2.5 billion accelerant, depending how a judge rules. The mythical school-aid formula is being shorted by \$1 billion. Towns are pushing for \$320 million in diverted state funds to be restored. There's no money for continuing a transportation program costing \$1.6 billion a year.

And the looming Christie run for president could color all that he does — or does not. His blueprint will be picked apart both at home and nationally as pundits try to read between the lines.

That's one explosive situation, making this one important speech.

"The state is facing as big a budget challenge as it's faced in a very long time," said Sam Crane, a former state treasurer under Democratic Gov. James Florio, who is part of the nonpartisan Facing Our Future group that issues reports about the state's fiscal situation.

"There are not a lot of easy decisions here, whether it be on the part of the governor or the Legislature," Crane said. "Some of these are problems that are decades long in the making so they will not be easy to unwind and fix. Everyone is probably struggling with the complexity of what it will take to work out of the spot that the state is in."

Adding to Christie's challenge, fiscally and politically, is that New Jersey's job

See **BUDGET**, Page A10

Budget address

Gov. Chris Christie will deliver his annual budget speech Tuesday at 2 p.m. Watch it live on **DailyRecord.com**.



FILE PHOTO

The aging West Front Street Bridge, which links Middletown and Red Bank, is being replaced.

Funding for N.J. roads is at risk

Federal spending remains up in air

MICHAEL SYMONS @MICHAELSYMONS_

TRENTON — Billions of dollars are spent each year building and maintaining a New Jersey road system that's nevertheless riddled with congestion, poor surfaces and outdated designs. Now policymakers in both Trenton and Washington are at a "Y" in the road, with big implications for our pocket-books.

At both the state and federal level, such infrastructure investments face uncertainty, with major spending programs expiring by early summer. A possible change in federal direction — the White House in recent days has been touting a new spending scheme — comes at a delicate juncture for New Jersey.

New Jersey, which is considering increasing its gasoline tax, traditionally has fared poorer than most states in securing money through the Federal Highway Trust Fund. In recent years, however, only a handful of states have done better than New Jersey in retaining or even boosting such Washington support.

A few state lawmakers have suggested that New Jersey lean more on federal aid to bankroll road and rail construction, rather than pursue a state-based solution that could include raising the 14.5-cents-a-gallon gasoline tax. Skeptics of that approach say there is little chance that Congress is going to open the spigot.

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"Washington isn't going to do anything. ... So that leaves us."

STATE SENATE PRESIDENT STEPHEN SWEENEY, D-GLOUCESTER

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