

## Gov used \$45G of rec funds for Pats rally

By Franci Richardson and Michele McPhee/ HERALD EXCLUSIVE

Sunday, February 6, 2005

Despite opposition from the state's Conservation and Recreation chief, Gov. Mitt Romney [[related](http://news.bostonherald.com/search/?searchSite=recent&keyword=Mitt%20Romney) [bio](http://news.bostonherald.com/election2004/candidates.bg?articleid=465)] used \$45,000 from her agency's coffers for last week's Patriots send-off - days before firing her for inadequately plowing streets.

"They forced DCR to spend that money," a source told the Herald. "She didn't want to spend that much."

A spokesman for Romney, who fired DCR head Katherine Abbott Friday, admitted money from the DCR budget was used, but denied Abbott protested. "That never happened," Eric Fehrstrom said after speaking with staff who organized the rally, where Romney was featured.

On Friday, Romney called for Abbott's resignation, blaming her for the injuries four West Roxbury High School students suffered earlier in the day after they were hit by a pickup truck on the VFW Parkway.

Police said the teens were walking to school in the right-hand travel lane of the VFW Parkway.

Some kids complained that the sidewalks weren't shoveled and the school's headmaster, Donald Pellegrini, sent a letter to the state complaining about the plowing.

"If they hadn't spent (so much on) the Patriots fans, those sidewalks would been cleared," said one unnamed city official.

Yesterday, the Herald found that the sidewalk across the street from the school was not shoveled, but the sidewalk just feet away from where the students were walking was cleared of snow.

Fehrstrom said he didn't know the cost of the rally, but said DCR was one of several state agencies that used taxpayer dollars to put on last week's fest for 2,500 fans.

Meanwhile, police are investigating whether they will bring charges against the driver of the pickup truck, Brian Sheehan, 45, of West Roxbury. One of the students, Roseanne Williams, 17, was sent home Friday night. Katherine Bonilla, 14, and Dennis Nunez, 17, remained in good condition while Natasha Nunez, 15, was still listed in serious condition.

Romney held Abbott accountable for the accident, attributing it to what he deemed poor shoveling. Police have not determined the cause of the accident.

State Sen. Jarrett Barrios (D-Cambridge), head of the public safety committee, is planning to hold an oversight hearing on the matter.

"I'm as concerned as the governor for these children's safety, but how does firing the commissioner without investigating the problem go to the root cause of the problem and make us safer?" asked Barrios yesterday.