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CORRESPONDENCE

GETTING THE STORY STRAIGHT IN HEALTH NEWS REPORTING

I want to congratulate David Ropeik for his insightful story about the state of health care media coverage in America ("Fear factor," *CW*, Health Care Extra 2004). As a freelance health care writer, I am appalled at the inflated, often false, information perpetuated by the media.

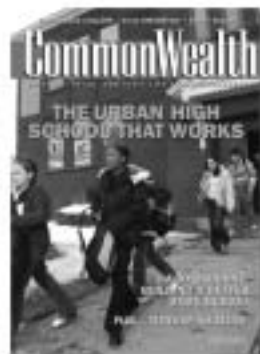
Recently, I wrote a story about a noise study issued by the Mayo Clinic that received quite a bit of press play. Stories in *USA Today*, Fox News, and other media outlets compared nighttime decibel levels in St. Mary's Hospital (sister hospital to the Mayo Clinic) to a jackhammer, a comparison never drawn in the study itself. In fact, the study's lead author told me

in writing that the Environmental Protection Agency decibel levels cited as a benchmark in the study "are similar in noise level to the hum of a computer."

While the study makes no comparison to jackhammers, the press release promoting it does. This throws water on the claim by reporters that they research their stories and don't "rip and read" from the wire because, had they done their homework, they would have learned firsthand that no such loud noises existed. These sensational stories must be a PR person's dream, because they can make any

unsubstantiated claim they want and it will be reported as fact.

*Sherree Geyer
Orland Park, IL*



OTHER URBAN HIGH SCHOOLS THAT MAKE THE HONOR ROLL

Congrats on another great issue. As a Worcester county resident I am happy



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to see the story on University Park ("Worcester's Wonder," *CW*, Spring 2004). However, it is not the only non-selective public high school in the state that takes kids by lottery from an impoverished, largely minority urban neighborhood and produces results that are the envy of many a suburban high school. In Boston, I think the Media and Technology Charter High School fits in that category, as would Academy of the Pacific Rim and South Boston Harbor Academy. In addition, Abby Kelly Foster Regional Charter School and Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School also perform quite well serving impoverished neighborhoods.

*Steve Adams
Pioneer Institute
Boston*

HIRE THE DISABLED FOR PUBLIC SAFETY JOBS?

The article "Rank Injustice" (*CW*, Spring, 2004) gave me a lot to think about, and it gave me a better understanding of Massachusetts' culture. Thank you for publishing it.

I was surprised that persons with disabilities are given preferential status in the hiring process for public safety jobs. How disabled can a person be and still function as a police officer or fire fighter or corrections officer?

*Emily Dibble
Medford*

John O'Leary responds: It is likely that the preferences for disabled veterans were primarily intended for non-public safety positions. Though the disabled veteran preference still applies for police and fire jobs, prior to being hired every candidate must pass a physical abilities test, which assesses the candidate's ability to perform demanding physical work.

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Passing judgment

What it will take to make schools constitutionally adequate

BY EDWARD MOSCOVITCH

The coverage in the press gave a misleading picture of the school finance decision handed down by Judge Margot Botsford in April. The judge did not say that the state needed to throw out its current system of funding schools nor did she say that we needed to divert millions of dollars from wealthy districts to poor districts in order to remedy inequalities in school spending. Instead, she said exactly what she should have said—the education in the plaintiff districts (and, by extension, other districts across the state) is not good enough, and does not measure up to the constitutional standard (originally written by John Adams) that Massachusetts must “cherish” the education of its students.

Under the Massachusetts Constitution, it is ultimately the state’s responsibility to ensure that schools are providing a good education to their students. Toward that end, Botsford laid out, in her recommendation to the full Supreme Judicial Court, two requirements:

- that the state determine how much schools would have to spend to meet the educational needs of all their students—particularly those at risk—and then provide the necessary funds; and
- since money alone won’t solve the problem, that the state address the leadership and other non-monetary issues that stand in the way of quality education.

Properly understood and implemented, Judge Botsford’s decision could help us make some long overdue changes in our decade-long education reform effort, changes that could lead to major improvements in the schools.

POOR GRADES

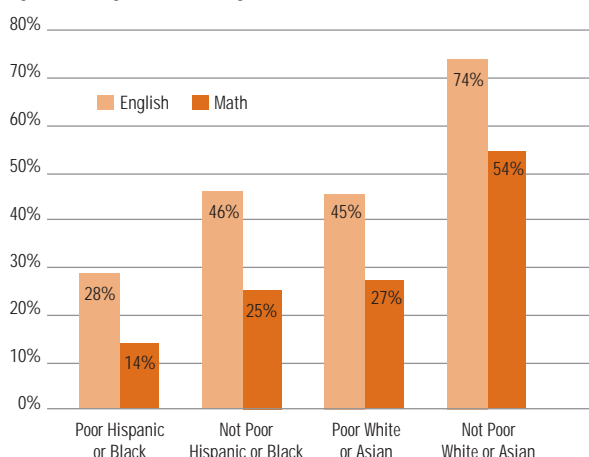
The judge’s findings on school quality come as no surprise to those who follow the MCAS results. Ten years after the 1993 reform law, with the state fully meeting its foundation budget obligations and now spending some \$2 billion a year more on schools than prior to the reform, only 14 percent of Hispanic and black students in poverty meet the goal of proficiency in math and only 28 percent in English (Figure 1). Proficiency rates for non-poor minorities and for poor white or Asian students—virtually identical at 26 percent in math and 46 percent in English

—are also very low. These scores are up somewhat from where we started, particularly in English, and particularly for 10th-graders. We’re looking here at the percent of students who are proficient—that is, those who can function well in the modern world. This is the standard required under the federal No Child Left Behind law, and it is somewhat higher than the “needs improvement” standard required of 10th-graders for high school graduation.

The virtually unanimous assumption a decade ago was that a tripling of state education aid and the adoption of high-quality assessments would produce a sea change in educational achievement—certainly something more impressive than having only one minority student in six proficient in math and only one in three proficient in reading. It hasn’t happened.

Since the disappointing results have come primarily in educating students from minority or low-income families, it is commonly assumed that it is our big-city schools that are failing. In fact, judging by math proficiency rates (see Figure 2, next page), suburban school districts—those with very few low-income students—don’t do much better at teaching minority or impoverished youngsters than do inner-city schools. Conversely, inner-city schools don’t do much worse than the suburbs in educating middle-

FIGURE 1: STUDENT PROFICIENCY RATES
By Ethnicity and Poverty, 2003



and upper-class white or Asian students. (The results in English language arts tell the same story, though the rates are higher.) The difference in overall performance between suburbs and cities is not so much quality of teaching, but the fact that the suburban schools have relatively few minority students and inner-city schools have relatively few well-off students.

One of the major virtues of the No Child Left Behind federal education law is that it requires that we look at data separately for minority and low-income students. When we do so, it becomes clear that virtually all schools have failed to educate properly the students who are most at risk.

RAISING THE FOUNDATION

Contrary to the headlines, Judge Botsford does not call for dismantling the state's funding system. What she does say is that one of the key elements in that system—the foundation budget—is set too low. The foundation budget is the amount (higher per pupil in high-poverty districts) that the state requires each district to spend. Botsford would require the state to determine how much money is needed to provide an adequate education, and then to appropriate it. The question is, how much too low is the foundation budget? And how much will it cost to raise it to a level sufficient to provide an adequate education to all students?

Botsford observes that districts performing at high levels spend, on average, 130 percent of their foundation budget amounts. One possible statistical inference, then, is that we'd have to raise the foundation budget by 30 percent. Still looking at the problem statistically, I'd suggest that a 10 percent increase is just as plausible. It's true that the *average* spending of high-performing districts is 30 percent above the foundation. But it's also true that the likelihood of success is no greater at 130 percent of foun-

ation than at 110 percent.

Figure 3 compares student performance (vertical axis) with per-pupil spending (horizontal axis) for all high-poverty elementary schools in Massachusetts. Comparable value is the difference between what each student actually scored and the average score for that subject and grade of all students in the state with the same gender, poverty status, and ethnicity. Schools with positive comparable values are those where students outperform their demographic peers. Among high-poverty schools, there is a wide range of performance at every spending level. The higher performing of these schools are not necessarily the highest spending; once spending reaches about \$7,000 per pupil, higher expenditure amounts do not increase the likelihood of success. The foundation budget for an elementary school with 20 percent poverty is about \$7,200 per student today; it was about \$6,400 in the year for which the chart is constructed, so that this \$7,000 threshold is roughly 10 percent above the foundation budget.

These numbers give us a very rough idea of how much the judge's decision could cost. The foundation budget is supported in part by the state and in part by local tax effort. Although the details of the state's aid formula are complex, the basic idea is straightforward—for each district, the state makes up the difference between what it is required to spend (the foundation budget) and what it is expected to raise itself. This portion of state aid—the money needed to get all districts up to foundation-level spending—amounts to all but \$240 million of the aid scheduled to go to school districts for the 2004–05 school year (fiscal year 2005). The remainder, which goes mainly to wealthier towns, is “extra” aid left over from when there was additional money distributed to all districts even when it was not needed to get them to foundation-budget level.

Raising the foundation budget by 10 percent would require an increase of \$530 million in aid; a 30 percent increase would cost almost \$2 billion more. If carried out in the 2004–05 school year, this higher adjustment would mean total state school aid of \$5.04 billion, instead of the \$3.18 billion currently scheduled, an overall increase of 58 percent. As the foundation budget is raised, the state's obligation to school districts also rises, increasing required state aid. For most towns, required local support of schools is set in relation to prior year effort, new property added to the tax rolls, and overall tax wealth, and is not affected by the increase in the foundation budget. Most of the increased foundation budget, then, is the financial responsibility of the state.

At the same time, as the foundation budget increases, some of the aid that was previously “extra” becomes necessary to help even wealthier towns get to foundation. Thus, with a 10 percent increase in the foundation budget, the amount of “extra” aid statewide declines to \$100

FIGURE 2: MATH PROFICIENCY RATES
By Demographics and Poverty Rate of District

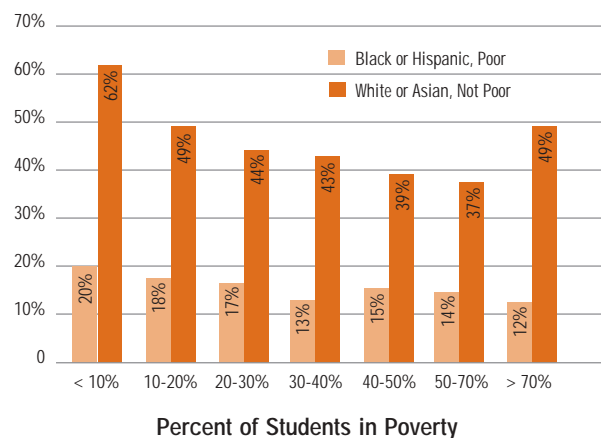
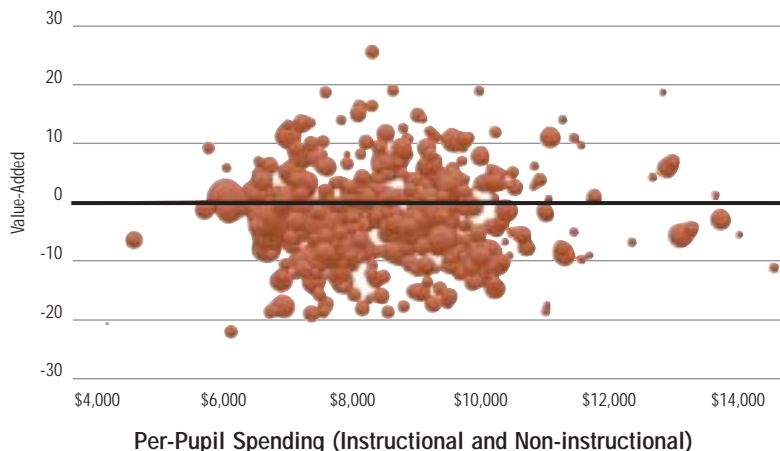


FIGURE 3: VALUE-ADDED VS. PER-PUPIL SPENDING, ELEMENTARY High-Poverty Elementary Schools, 2001–02

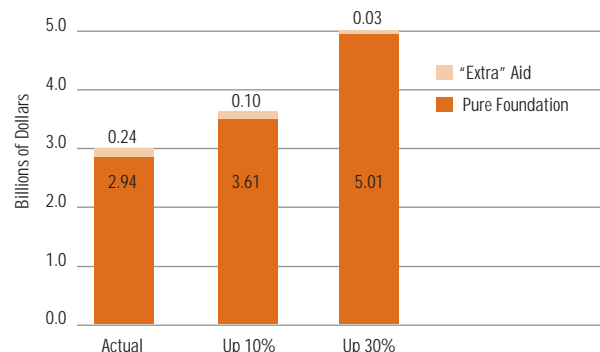


million; with foundation increased by 30 percent, only \$30 million of extra aid remains. In other words, at a higher level of foundation budget, more districts with relatively high property wealth would need state aid to reach the spending requirement—which means that there is little room to finance increased aid to poorer districts by cutting aid to wealthier districts. This is illustrated in Figure 4, where the darker portion of each bar shows pure foundation aid and the lighter portion the amount of “extra” aid.

MONEY IS NOT ENOUGH

The aid projections above are back-of-the-envelope estimates based on statistical observations. We can’t, in fact, know in advance how much Judge Botsford’s decision might cost to implement because her ruling placed the emphasis on improving education, not on increasing appropriations per se. Instead of a formulaic approach, she recommended to the Supreme Judicial Court requiring the state to consider carefully what communities would need to spend to meet the constitutional standard of educational excellence, and then to incorporate these find-

FIGURE 4: STATE EDUCATION AID, FY 05



ings into the foundation budget. The elements to be costed out include, in Botsford’s view, adequate funding of special education; adequate teaching of all seven state-approved curriculum frameworks to every student; adequate school facilities; and a public preschool program for 3- and 4-year-old children.

This is an imposing, and potentially costly, list of items to be recalculated or incorporated for the first time into school funding. But the judge’s insistence that the state must budget for the kind of education state law (and court rulings) require should also be viewed in light of her other key finding—that money alone won’t solve the problem. After ruling that the foundation budget

is inadequate, Botsford continued: “This is not to say, however, that increases in the foundation budget alone will produce an adequate educational program in these districts. There is also a need to enhance the managerial, administrative, and leadership capacities of the districts.” This finding is consistent with the data in Figure 3 above: Once spending reaches a certain level, further increases do not increase the likelihood of success. Beyond that point, what matters is the ability to spend that money in ways that improve education.

Judge Botsford’s finding that underperforming school districts lack not just money but also the capacity to use it effectively is a very important development in the ongoing debate about educational improvement in Massachusetts. To date, the state has set higher standards, spent more money, and introduced school choice and charter schools. The comfortable assumption that these steps alone would bring dramatic improvement has not been realized; the judge’s findings underscore this. In response, however, the debate has consisted of various parties suggesting that we need more of the same—more money, or more charter schools. Paradoxically, what the debate has lacked so far is a discussion of how schools improve. The most constructive response to Botsford’s decision would be first to understand how schools improve, and only then to put together a funding and school improvement plan.

HOW SCHOOLS IMPROVE

A good place to start the discussion of school improvement is to understand why more money doesn’t necessarily mean better education. A medical metaphor may help: Until recently, the standard treatment for severely clogged arteries was bypass surgery, which is invasive, painful, expensive, and risky. In the last few years, medical researchers have discovered that stents—particularly medicated stents—



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are more cost-effective ways to keep arteries open. They produce similar or better results, involve less risk to the patient, allow a speedier recovery—and cost less.

As in medicine, the key to effective school change is to use rigorous assessment to determine the problem and research-based interventions to address it. Because of my work evaluating the Alabama Reading Initiative—perhaps the largest school improvement effort in the country, with more than 425 participating schools and thousands of teachers trained—I am most familiar with literacy instruction, but the virtuous circle of data-driven instruction really applies across all of education:

1. Frequent assessments are made of individual student progress and of the particular deficiencies that are holding each student back.

2. Teachers learn classroom-management skills that enable them to work with a small group of students while other students are constructively engaged in independent or small-group activities.

3. Teachers use research-based interventions to address the deficiencies they identified in step 1, and are able to do so in the small group settings they learned to manage in step 2.

4. Progress of struggling students is monitored frequently—weekly, for those farthest behind—and this monitoring is used to determine whether the interventions in step 3 are working. If not, the teacher needs to try something else and—with help from coaches knowledgeable in the subject—look for new strategies.

There are four other elements that contribute to the success of this kind of program: support and inspiration from the principal; leadership roles for teachers in monitoring student progress, devising new curricula, and helping each other implement change; consistently high expectations from the faculty and principal as to what their students can accomplish; and support from outside coaches who lay out a vision of change and insist that the school stick with it.

The other day I received a letter from the intermediate school (Grades 4–6) in Coosada, Ala. In response to the in-depth training they received this fall, teachers held a series of discussions on what was working in their school and what was not. They've totally revamped their reading program, adopted a new school schedule for next fall, and doubled the time available for interventions with struggling readers. They've also begun a shared teaching program—two teachers from different grades and/or subjects teaching a class together—breaking down the isolation in which most teachers work. This is the kind of dramatic change we need to see here in Massachusetts.

In rural Pine Apple, I walked through the local school

(all black, all poor) with the principal. As we entered each classroom, I asked him to point out the struggling readers—and he knew exactly who they were. He meets with his teachers twice a month to discuss the strategies they're using with each one, and he couldn't wait to share with me the progress-monitoring results that showed the gains they're making.

We don't need to go to Alabama to see how this can work. As part of the federally funded Reading First program, Massachusetts requires participating schools to administer a reading assessment to all students at least

Teachers are buying into data-driven instruction.

three times a year. At an inner-city school south of Boston, the Reading First coach used these test results to show teachers that 75 percent of their students couldn't decode—that is, they couldn't automatically and fluently translate symbols on the page not just into sounds but also into words, sentences, and paragraphs.

I'm sure those teachers already knew that most of their students were struggling. But they hadn't previously known

that decoding was the specific problem. If you don't know the problem, you can't fix it. Particularly in literacy, there's extensive research on the kinds of interventions to use for most of the difficulties teachers encounter. The coach helped the school pick out and purchase intervention materials specifically designed for decoding problems and helped the teachers learn to use them. As they begin to see their progress-monitoring results improve, teachers are buying into the whole notion of data-driven, research-based instruction.

Chicopee schools are moving aggressively to improve reading instruction. Outside coaches are showing teachers where their students' specific needs are. They are purchasing specific intervention materials tailored to the kinds of deficiencies they're finding. Many of these are 30-minute, highly structured lessons prepared by leading researchers in the field and designed to work on a specific skill. Title I teachers, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals are trained to give these lessons to the students who need them. For example, a key remedy for fluency difficulties is to have a passage read aloud by a fluent reader, then to have the student re-read the passage—perhaps several times. This can be done by paraprofessionals or adult volunteers who get a little training. As teachers see their students

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progress, they get interested and want to learn more.

The principal at Chicopee's Bow School has put together a kind of primer, documenting some of the most frequent reading deficiencies, as identified by the reading assessment, along with a set of suggestions for how to address them. One of the key features here is that results of these assessments are instantly available to teachers, so they can immediately see progress and begin to use assessments to measure whether their interventions are working. This empowers teachers and gives them a tool they've never had before.

It's impossible to overstate how far behind children from non-literate homes are when they come to school. By one account, the typical kindergartener from suburbia knows four times as many words as her inner-city counterpart. So minority and low-income students will need extra time to work on vocabulary, language structure, and grammar if they are to have any hope of reading with comprehension—or of mastering science, math, or history. But the Chicopee principal has the right idea—assess progress, identify student deficiencies, and offer appropriate interventions.

It's commonplace in some circles to argue that unions present a critical obstacle to success. That is not my expe-

rience, at least with the kind of program I've suggested here. To be sure, teachers expect to be paid for the extra time they put in, but this is not unreasonable. As long as their extra effort is recognized, they are generally happy to participate and not to watch the clock. In schools I've visited in Alabama and in Pennsylvania, I've found local union leaders who have been the strongest proponents of this kind of change.

PRESCRIPTION FOR IMPROVEMENT

If the SJC accepts Judge Botsford's recommendations, the high court will order the state to calculate the cost of providing an adequate education, and also to propose "measures...that will provide meaningful improvement in the capacity of these local districts" to provide that education. I suggest that we put aside for a few months discussion of how much more we need to spend or how to restructure the Department of Education. Instead, let's start by developing a shared vision of what it takes to turn around schools in large numbers. Once we do this, the funding and the structure will follow logically.

Everyone knows that you can turn around almost any school by hiring an outstanding principal. But, except in Lake Wobegon, you can't insist that all principals be

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above average! Any plan for improving the educational outcomes of large numbers of poor children has to be able to work in any school, by engaging the interest and enhancing the skills of typical principals and teachers.

The power of the assessment/small group/intervention model—as our Department of Education is beginning to apply in Reading First and as my clients in Alabama are using—is that it has already turned around dozens of schools. To accomplish turnaround on a wide scale, we need to practice prescriptive intervention—that is, the department has to have a well-conceived model of school change, and has to insist that participating schools follow that model.

This is not how we've typically done business in education. Until now, we've believed in local autonomy, with individual schools and school districts free to conduct their programs with as little guidance as possible from the state's Department of Education. But teachers and principals don't know what they don't know. If they didn't know their students couldn't decode, and didn't know the research on decoding interventions, and didn't know about assessments and small-group instruction, they couldn't improve reading results—even with more money.

The great majority of teachers and principals went into education because they want to help kids. They may grumble at first about having to follow a prescription they didn't write, but when they see it work they'll become strong supporters. That's what happened in Alabama. The ARI just received \$40 million in state money for next year, up from only \$12 million—this in a state that's practically broke. It wouldn't have happened without overwhelming support from teachers, who are thrilled with the improvement they're seeing.

BACK TO MONEY

Once we get behind this kind of prescriptive model, the implications for funding will be readily apparent. The Department of Education will need additional funds for outside coaches, development of instructional materials, and teacher training academies. Schools will need money for assessments, teacher training, common planning time, structured intervention materials and instructional programs, and school-based coaches.

How much will it cost? A detailed answer should follow, not precede, adoption of a change model. But a very crude calculation shows that the model I've suggested here would cost something like \$200,000 for a school of 400 students—or roughly \$500 million statewide. To work properly, this kind of program requires reasonably small classes, particularly in the primary grades in high-poverty schools, and to that end we'd have to restore perhaps \$50 million to \$100 million of cuts made in recent years. In total, this is roughly equal to a 10 percent in-



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crease in the foundation budget. In addition to this boost in operating budgets, it's clear from Judge Botsford's ruling that the state will need to address overcrowding and lack of adequate facilities in some schools across the state. Both the governor and the legislative leadership have made proposals to accelerate school building construction; as this is written, these proposals are being debated in the Legislature.

It's not clear whether \$600 million or \$700 million spent on structured intervention and reducing class sizes in high-poverty schools, as I've laid out here, would satisfy Judge Botsford's requirement that schools work toward excellence in all of the subject areas encompassed by the state's curriculum frameworks. But anyone who knows schools understands that there's only so much you can change at any given time. A program of comprehensive school change, based on the virtuous circle of assessment, small-group instruction, research-based interventions, and feedback from assessment to instruction, will fully absorb the energies of faculty and principal alike and, even in the most capable of schools, will take three or four years to accomplish.

Since reading is central to all other learning, such an effort should initially be focused on reading. (One of the most interesting of my findings from the Alabama Reading Initiative is that by fifth grade, ARI schools outperform nonparticipating schools not only in reading but also in math.) When schools are successful at teaching all students to read, fewer students are referred to special education and many difficult behaviors disappear (older students who can't read often act out to hide the fact that they can't follow the lesson).

In light of all this, it would make sense for the state to make an interim response to the Botsford order—a response that says we'll spend three or four years focusing on data-driven instruction, primarily in literacy. At the end of that time, teachers will be ready to move on to other areas, and we can determine whether schools are then able to meet constitutional standards across the board or whether additional resources and training are needed. Paradoxically, we'll make more progress in the long run with an incremental approach paced to the realities of today's students and to the difficulties of the task we're undertaking.

There is no doubt in my mind that prescriptive intervention programs can work. It takes longer than we'd like, because kids from disadvantaged homes start so far behind. Along the way, we'll uncover new problems and have to figure out how to address them. But we'll also generate a wave of enthusiasm and energy from teachers who will be thrilled to see their kids moving forward. ■

Edward Moscovitch is principal of Cape Ann Economics.



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Easy as ABC

Did the Big Dig give birth to a new civic model?

BY DAVID LUBEROFF

By the beginning of summer, the last remnants of the elevated Central Artery were being taken down, the green steel superstructure that walled off the financial district from the waterfront for decades torn into scraps and hauled away by the truckload. As the subterranean construction project known simply as the Big Dig turned into the Big Demo, the sky opened up over what will become, in its wake, the Rose Kennedy Greenway. This being Boston, just what the new land will look like, who will pay for it, and who will look after it is still being debated. While these are significant and important questions, they also remind us that the Big Dig—which had the potential to turn downtown into an impassable construction zone and later had cost overruns that seemed to threaten the state's fiscal health—is almost done.

Officially known as the Central Artery/Tunnel project, the Big Dig will significantly alter regional transportation patterns and transform the character of downtown Boston. Perhaps as significant, it also gave rise to the Artery Business Committee (ABC), a business-backed group that filled a major civic void. Founded in late 1988 by businessmen who were worried that the influence of the city's existing business groups was in decline at a time when the state was about to launch one of the world's largest construction projects in the heart of Boston, ABC has made sure that the city did not close while the Big Dig was being built; helped head off a variety of political and legal controversies that might have derailed the project; and ensured not only that the finished project provides highway access to downtown Boston but also that the new land is developed in ways that strengthen the urban core.

It would seem that ABC was the right organization in the right place at the right time. The question is: Is it a model for corporate civic leadership in the future—or a single-issue flash in the pan?

THE BIG DREAD

The Artery Business Committee was born of necessity. In late 1988, Norman Leventhal and Edwin Sidman, the chairman and president of the Beacon Cos., which owned many major buildings near the Central Artery, met with

developer Robert Beal, attorney and former city councilor Lawrence DiCara, and planner Catherine Donaher at Beacon's newly developed Rowe's Wharf to discuss what would happen when the state began construction on the Big Dig. They reached three important conclusions.

First, the city's major property owners and employers needed to pay closer attention to the project's short- and long-term impacts on downtown Boston. In particular, they had to make sure that downtown continued to function while the project was being built and that downtown was well served when the project was done.

Second, none of the city's longtime business groups were up to job. The Coordinating Committee (also known as the Vault), which had been the city's leading business group for more than two decades, was on the wane. Deregulation was thinning the ranks of the local banks, which

None of the old business groups were up to the job.

had been the group's core members, while the 1986 federal tax reform act made it imprudent for banks to buy local tax-exempt debt. That took the remaining banks largely out of the local political game. Dick Hill, a former head of both Bank of Boston and the Vault, explained the loss of influence this way to Leventhal: "It's very simple. When the city or the state wanted to raise money they had to go to the Bank of Boston. Now they go to Wall Street."

Over the next decade, the Vault's member base continued to shrink as almost all the locally owned banks, insurance companies, and utilities that had provided about half its members were bought up by other entities. The Vault stopped meeting in 1997.

The Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce was also in a weakened state. The retailers that once made up its core membership drew an increasingly large share of sales from outside the center city and, in some cases, were now owned by out-of-state firms. Even worse, Chamber president James Sullivan had criticized the CA/T plan when it was announced and openly questioned whether the state actually could afford to build the project. To put it



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bluntly, Sullivan and state Secretary of Transportation Frederick Salvucci, the Big Dig's most ardent champion, did not get along.

The first two assessments led to the third conclusion: Property owners and major downtown employers needed to create a new group focused solely on Big Dig-related concerns. To ensure that the group had access and resources, its board (like the Vault) would be comprised of the CEOs of its member firms. Unlike the Vault, the new group would also have relatively high dues—about \$25,000 a year—sufficient to provide the resources needed to hire a professional staff and expert consultants. Leventhal, who was well known and well regarded by the city's business leaders, took the lead in recruiting members. By April 1989, he convinced the chief executives of about 20 firms to join. Over the next 15 years, ABC became one of the region's most effective and influential business groups. Today, it has about 60 members and an operating budget of almost \$1 million a year.

ABC has grown and thrived as a civic group because its staff, board, and committees (chaired by its members and volunteers—who include both the executives from within member firms and the attorneys, builders, architects, planners, engineers, and others who worked for member firms) have achieved most of its founders' goals. In particular:

ABC protected downtown Boston from project construction. In the early 1990s, a committee chaired by George Macomber, scion of one of the region's leading construction firms, critiqued the project's construction management plans, leading to substantial changes. Another ABC committee—whose members included representatives of the city's major utilities, employers, and property owners—got the state to ensure that the city's electrical and telecommunications systems continued to function during construction. Yet another group worked with the project officials to make sure that downtown traffic did not come to a halt. Still another helped develop plans to mitigate the impact on those who worked in or visited downtown Boston, and closely monitored whether contractors followed through.

ABC shaped the project to strengthen the downtown urban core. ABC's staff, members, and committees worked with state and city officials to ensure that the project provide access to and egress from downtown Boston. In recent years, ABC has also focused on the 27 acres of land that will be created when the existing elevated roadway is torn down, to mixed results. The project's key environmental permit, which was issued in 1990 just before the Dukakis administration left office, required that the state set aside 75 percent of the new land for open space, most of it located between Quincy Market and Rowe's Wharf. (In contrast, the permit allowed a mix of buildings and

open space on parcels near the North End and Chinatown.)

Several years later, ABC's leaders became worried that project officials had not developed more-detailed plans for the land; that there was not enough money set aside to build the new parks; and that no one had decided who would own the parks, how much it would cost to maintain them, and where that money would come from. They also came to believe that banning most buildings between Quincy Market and Rows Wharf was a planning mistake of the highest order.

"Norman Leventhal came back from Florida one day and said, 'You know, we've got this all wrong,'" recalls Harold Hestnes, a downtown lawyer who has been on ABC's board since the group was founded. "'It would be crazy to just spread grass seeds and trees there. It's just going to collect litter. You've got to have reasons for people to go there. You don't need office buildings. But you've got to have retail space and you've got to have cultural aspects so that people have a reason to go there and not just drive their cars through or across.' It's the first time I really thought about it."

ABC helped protect the project from political and legal controversies. Even worse than the project itself, from the downtown interests' perspective, was the possibility that the project would be abandoned midstream. In early 1990, public anger at the outgoing Dukakis administration and the sharp regional recession, along with growing criticism of the project by some environmental and community groups, convinced ABC's members that they had to keep the project from becoming political cannon fodder. In the 1996 race between US Sen. John Kerry and his challenger, Gov. William Weld, ABC honchos urged Kerry not to question the Weld administration's assertions

ABC kept the Big Dig from being a political football.

that the project was under control, in cost and schedule.

"To the extent political candidates choose to see the Artery/Tunnel project as a kind of political football, it will not help the project," explained former Boston transportation commissioner Richard Dimino, who became ABC's president and CEO in the mid-1990s. "We need the full consensus of public officials to keep this project moving forward."

ABC worked to protect the project in many other ways. In August 1990, when John DeVillars, then the state's secretary of environmental affairs, said he would impose stringent requirements before he issued an important environmental permit for the project, Leventhal met with Dukakis and urged him to fire DeVillars. Dukakis refused to do so, but told Leventhal that he would "take care of it,"



Leventhal recalls. DeVillars's final ruling turned out to be far more temperate. Similarly, in the mid 1990s, ABC successfully mounted a legal challenge to a proposed referendum that would have rolled back increased tolls on the Massachusetts Turnpike, which were needed to help fund the project. Two years later, ABC led a successful ballot campaign against a modified version of the same measure.

ABC's leaders have also tried to portray the project in a favorable light. Over the years, for example, it worked directly with major newspapers and television stations on forums to discuss issues related to the surface restoration. In late 1990, when project-related controversies seemed to dominate *The Boston Globe's* coverage of the Big Dig, ABC engineered a two-hour meeting with the paper's publisher, its top editors, and several of the reporters and columnists who had written about the project.

ABC helped state officials secure public funds to build the project. A 1987 law made most of the Big Dig eligible for funding from the federal Interstate Highway program and provided funding based on the project's then-estimated cost of about \$3 billion. When project costs rose, ABC lobbied for additional funds in subsequent multi-year transportation acts. In 1991, when the project was estimated to cost about \$5 billion, this lobbying helped secure significant additional funding for the project. In 1998, when the project's estimated cost had risen to more than \$10 billion, ABC could not prevent Congress from cutting the state's federal highway aid but contributed to a last-minute effort

that prevented even deeper cuts. ABC also worked to minimize the fallout in 2000 when the project was found to be \$2 billion over budget and helped convince state legislators to provide significant additional resources.

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

The Artery Business Committee has had a major, and largely constructive, impact on a major public project affecting both transportation and commerce in the city of Boston. Is it a model—or a fluke? Here are the key elements of ABC's success:

A unique project. ABC was focused on a project that was so large, so visible, and possibly so damaging—as well as potentially so beneficial—that the heads of major downtown firms immediately understood why it was important that they get involved in protecting and advancing their interests.

Significant resources. ABC hired talented individuals as staff and consultants and tapped a wide network of volunteer experts. Board member Harold Hestnes, who has been an active member of the city's business-backed groups for more than three decades, calls this “the greatest loaned-talent effort of any business community effort that I have ever seen.” In addition, making sure that member firms were

represented by their CEOs gave the group access to, and credibility with, senior elected and appointed officials. “When we walk in, the political leadership takes note,” says Robert Beal, an ABC founder who later chaired the group.

Responsiveness and staying power. Because ABC had knowledgeable staff, well-informed committees, and leaders who were well connected and highly motivated, it could respond quickly when important issues arose—and, notes Sidman, “stay involved with really knotty questions...until they are resolved.”

Multifaceted focus. ABC's staff and key leaders understood that accomplishing the mission required that they focus on the full range of issues—from seemingly mundane questions of mitigation to highly technical questions about construction management to very broad questions of political authorization and public support. While ABC is best known for its political lobbying, project planning and implementation receive more resources than any of ABC's other activities.

Flexible tactics. In traditional business-group fashion, ABC has been adept at arguing that problems are technical rather than political and in using their access to senior officials to advance their agendas. Unlike the Vault or the Chamber, however, ABC also raised and devoted signifi-



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cant resources to analyzing thorny issues that were impeding the project, then using those analyses to broker agreements between warring parties. ABC also proved able to work collaboratively with an unusually wide range of stakeholders—including environmental groups—to achieve their aims.

In all this, ABC's leaders never denied that they were advancing their own interests, but insisted that their efforts represented "enlightened self-interest" because they would produce significant benefits for the city and the region, not just for themselves. "We started this because we had a need to protect our interests," says Sidman. "But we also wanted to see something good done for the city."

It's hard to assess this claim. No plausible cost-benefit analysis ever showed the CA/T project's benefits, and there are many, exceeding its \$14.6 billion cost. In addition, many benefits, especially in access to the central city, will be capitalized in the value of downtown buildings and land, the owners of which are paying no significant portion of the project's costs. Thus it could be argued—and some ABC

Out-of-town firms now need to take up the slack.

critics have done so—that the group succeeded in protecting and enhancing the value of its members' holdings at the expense of those from outside downtown Boston.

On the other hand, ABC came together in response to questions of *how* the project would be built, not *whether* it should be built. By the time of ABC's founding, the Big Dig was an inevitability; only its impact—in disruption and in outcome—was in play. The ABC's members had a great stake in the matter but so did the city and the region. To the extent that ABC made sure the project was built expeditiously and in ways that benefited the city's core business district, the group's leaders can legitimately claim to have advanced the larger public good.

BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE?

There is much to be learned from ABC's approach. That ABC is a model for future civic leadership—in Boston or elsewhere—from the business community is less than clear, however.

First and foremost, the CA/T project is unique in its scale and its potential to harm a major commercial district. Without such a singular concern, business leaders are unlikely to provide either the money or their own presence, two elements that made ABC particularly effective.

Second, the economic base that gave ABC its muscle is, like the banking base of the Vault a generation ago, slipping away. National firms have bought many of the locally owned real estate companies that gave rise to ABC in



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the late 1980s. Most notably, the Chicago-based Equity Office Trust purchased the Beacon Cos. in the late 1990s. While the number of ABC board members drawn from the development community has not changed substantially, the share of those members from firms based outside of Boston has risen from about a third in 1989 to almost half today. And out-of-towners play a different role in ABC.

"The people who represent national firms typically attend our meetings because they need to get firsthand information to communicate back to their headquarters," says developer John Drew, ABC's current chairman. "The local members tend to take a much more active and participatory role." Only two out-of-town firms are represented on ABC's 20-member executive committee; of the 14 people who chair or co-chair one of ABC's substantive committees, only two are local representatives of non-Boston firms.

The question is whether the representatives of the out-of-town firms can and will take up the slack. On the one hand, regardless of ownership, the value of buildings is linked in large measure to public policies for investment, maintenance, and land-use regulation. This suggests that local representatives of out-of-town firms have a reason to become more involved in local issues. On the other

hand, ABC's efforts to involve such out-of-town owners suggest that people who manage local properties (like those in charge of the regional offices of national banks and power companies) have less interest or less capacity to be involved in city and state affairs than their local counterparts. Moreover, those in charge of major real estate firms, like those in charge of many other industries, may decide to concentrate their efforts in public policy on national regulatory and tax issues that could benefit all their holdings rather than on local controversies that could affect only a handful of their properties.

Whether or not ABC is a harbinger of business leadership in the 21st century, its history offers one important but easily overlooked lesson. Effective civic leadership requires a core group of people who have a rationale for getting actively involved, the ability to mobilize significant institutional resources to achieve their goals, the skills and networks to succeed, and, ultimately, the willingness to undertake difficult and time-consuming work. ■

David Luberoff, executive director of the Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, is author of Civic Leadership and the Big Dig, a recently published Rappaport Institute working paper.



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Playing defense

Officials and business leaders team up to save military posts

BY SHAWN ZELLER

The nation is engaged in a tenuous campaign to rebuild and democratize Iraq. In Afghanistan, US soldiers continue to hunt for Al Qaeda terrorists. But back in Washington, the military is gearing up for another kind of battle. Less than a year from now, the Department of Defense will recommend to Congress that as many as 100 of the nation's 425 military bases be eliminated.

The Defense Department says the base-closing initiative is necessary to transform the military from the powerful but plodding force that fought the Cold War into the nimble, high-tech army needed to destroy international terrorism. But Massachusetts, like many other states, has launched a campaign to convince the Pentagon that its military outposts should be preserved.

Four previous rounds of closings, in 1988, 1991, 1993, and 1995, shuttered 97 bases, with Congress giving its approval even as state delegations fought to preserve their own facilities. In Massachusetts, these closings included Fort Devens, northwest of Boston, and the South Weymouth Naval Air Station. Two Massachusetts facilities narrowly escaped closure and are now the focus of attention: Hanscom Air Force Base, in Bedford, and the US Army Soldier Systems Center, in Natick. In defending these two military sites, state leaders and representatives in Congress have found themselves with some surprising allies: the high-tech industry and

the research universities.

The threat of these base closings is the "single most important economic development challenge currently facing the Commonwealth," says Christopher Anderson, president of the Massachusetts High Technology Council, who, last February, took on a second job, heading the Massachusetts Defense Technology Initiative, a coalition of private and public-sector leaders fighting to preserve the bases. Hanscom and Natick pump \$3.5 billion into the state economy each year and support about 30,000 jobs, he says. The two bases farm out millions of dollars in research and development work to local technology companies, as well as to the Bay State's academic institutions.

To keep them open, the advocates will have to convince Pentagon officials that the unique missions of Natick and Hanscom merit their preservation. That could be a tough sell. The bases don't house many soldiers or much hardware, and neither offers much room to grow, serious shortcomings in the minds of Pentagon evaluators. But both are crucial to the military's efforts to develop technology, their defenders say.

"If they want our forces to be cutting-edge, if they are serious about that, these bases will be preserved," says US Rep. John Tierney, whose district includes the Hanscom facility. Tierney says that the delegation has been working feverishly to make its argument to Pentagon decision-makers. In February, when the Defense Technology Initiative came together,



US Sen. Edward Kennedy and Gov. Mitt Romney agreed to co-chair the group, with the remaining members of the state's congressional delegation, including senator and soon-to-be Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry, serving on the initiative's leadership committee.

The pitch is simple. "Hanscom and Natick are making an outstanding contribution to our modern, high-tech military," explains Kennedy in a written statement. "And that contribution depends heavily [on] the close proximity of these two bases to the [state's] pre-eminent research and development community."

After all, the Massachusetts military boosters say, these facilities are not your garden-variety army camps. Hanscom managed the development of the military's airborne warning and control system, which coordinates the movement of fighter planes and bombers in battle, as well as the joint surveillance and target attack radar system, which provides information on targets on the ground. Natick, US Rep. Edward Markey explained last year in a letter to Michael Wynne, undersecretary of defense for acquisition, technology, and logistics, is the "epicenter in developing equipment, technology, and life-saving gear for the soldier of the future." The base develops the military's modern-day

food rations and uses a climate-controlled chamber to develop clothing for soldiers facing every type of weather condition. Currently under development at Natick is "smart clothing" that will monitor the vital signs of soldiers on the battlefield.

Anderson says the initiative's members are taking this message to Pentagon decision-makers wherever and whenever possible. Already this year, Romney and members of the congressional delegation have met separately with Ray DuBois, deputy undersecretary of defense for installations and environment. Kennedy has toured Hanscom with Wynne, while Anderson and congressmen Marty Meehan, Barney Frank, and Markey submitted comments on the Defense Department's criteria for selecting bases to be closed, arguing that bases with a research focus near private sector and academic research centers

should be preserved. Meehan also raised the issue with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld during a House Armed Services Committee hearing.

In Washington, the state has retained a group of well-connected lobbyists to transmit that message as well. These include former US senator Alan Dixon, an Illinois Democrat who chaired the 1995 base closing commission; former Air Force general Ronald Fogleman; former Kennedy defense aide Steven Wolfe; and Steven "Spike" Karalekas, an expert on the base-closing process and a onetime aide to former Massachusetts Republican congressman Paul Cronin. Back home, the initiative's leadership committee includes two former generals who now reside in Massachusetts, Sheila Widnall and Jimmy Dishner; numerous corporate leaders; Jack Wilson, the newly installed president of the University of Massa-

chusetts; and Kevin Casey, top lobbyist for Harvard University. In March, the state Legislature appropriated \$500,000 to support the cause, and Anderson says he hopes to raise about \$3 million from private and public sources.

To save Hanscom and Natick from extinction will take more than a show of muscle, however. The Pentagon will have to change the way it sizes up the merits of existing facilities. In past base-closing exercises, the Pentagon has grouped research facilities such as Hanscom alongside bases like Andrews Air Force Base, in Prince George's County, Md., which garrisons hundreds of planes and thousands of troops. Early on, Massachusetts boosters lobbied for new criteria that would recognize the importance of bases that focus on

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technology. The Bay State also joined forces with other regions that host research facilities, such as San Diego, Calif., home to the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command.

Despite these efforts, the criteria released in February were nearly identical to those of previous base-closing rounds. The Pentagon did, however, commit to setting up an evaluation team to appraise the military's technical facilities. Now, Anderson says, the Massachusetts delegation is leaning on the Pentagon to release the more-detailed sub-criteria it will use to make its base-closing decisions. In past rounds, those sub-criteria were not released until after the process was complete, but this time the Pentagon's DuBois has pledged to release them earlier.

"If we get to the end of this process and find out technical facilities were not evaluated in an appropriate way, then the whole process will have been a sham," Anderson says.

Even if the Pentagon gives more credit to research facilities, Massachusetts may still have a problem. During the 1995 base-closing round, the military considered a plan to consolidate its technical sites into one "super" facility. Anderson argues that by adopting that plan, the Pentagon would weaken its ability to tap into the various technology hubs around the country. "You have to be in proximity. The best minds have to be in the same room," he says. Still, consolidating multiple sites that currently serve only one branch of the services into a single facility is a major theme of the Pentagon-released criteria—and a major danger for Massachusetts's small outposts.

And finally, there is the politics. When the base-closing procedure was designed in the late 1980s, Congress recognized that in order to successfully close any bases it would have to insulate the process from politics. The system now in place has Defense Department analysts make

initial recommendations, a bipartisan commission appointed by the president review those recommendations, and Congress vote the final recommendations up or down, but not amend them.

To some degree, it's worked. But David Sorenson, a professor at the Air War College, in Alabama, and author of a book on base closings, says politics always plays some role.

will make base-closing recommendations, whereas in the past each service made its own recommendations. Similarly, a super-majority of seven of the nine base-closing commissioners will have to agree on any bases to be recommended for closure. In the past, a simple majority was enough. And Sorenson says Massachusetts makes a strong case that Hanscom and Natick are unique facilities that

TROOP STRENGTH

Not every state has lost military personnel in the four previous rounds of base closings in 1988, 1991, 1993, and 1995. Indeed, some states have gained personnel, as the Pentagon realigned its forces. Massachusetts is among those states that have lost personnel, though other states have fared worse.

JOB LOSSES

1. California	93,456
2. Pennsylvania	16,008
3. Florida	11,758
4. New York	9,196
5. Indiana	8,508
6. Tennessee	7,814
7. Colorado	7,312
8. Arkansas	7,051
9. New Jersey	6,750
10. Alabama	5,918
18. Massachusetts	3,408

JOB GAINS

1. Washington	17,865
2. North Carolina	7,831
3. Oklahoma	4,787
4. New Mexico	3,307
5. Georgia	2,861
6. Utah	2,406
7. Idaho	2,075
8. Hawaii	1,792
9. Maryland	1,662
10. Mississippi	1,592

Source: Northeast-Midwest Institute

Sorenson points out that prominent military critics such as former Democratic representatives Ronald Dellums of California and Patricia Schroeder of Colorado both lost major bases in previous base-closing rounds, whereas military advocates such as former Georgia Democratic senator Sam Nunn lost none.

That may bode ill for Massachusetts, he says. "Clearly, Sen. Kennedy has been a thorn in the side of the military since he has been in office," says Sorenson.

Still, Sorenson says that the military has taken steps to tighten controls on this round to keep politics out of the process. For example, this year, a cross-service working group

will be difficult to duplicate elsewhere.

Of course, one big wild card remains: the presidential election. Last March, John Kerry criticized the Bush administration's handling of the base-closing process, telling the *Portsmouth (NH) Herald* that the plans should be put on hold.

"We need to conduct a long-range review of the nation's military force structure needs that is honest about the challenges we face," he said, adding that the current process "is driven more by ideology than by careful planning." Anderson doesn't come out and say it, but a Kerry victory in November would likely go a long way toward saving Hanscom and Natick. ■

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An outbreak of democracy?

BY ROBERT KEOUGH

For the first time in its history, Boston is about to play host for one of the great spectacles of partisan politics, a national party convention. How fitting that this ritual event of the nation's two-party system should take place just as we are about to find out whether it is possible to revive two-party competition in Massachusetts.

One of the peculiarities of recent Massachusetts politics is that we have managed to maintain a stubbornly divided state government, with Republicans occupying the executive branch and Democrats controlling the Legislature for more than a dozen years, even though we have only one functioning political party, the Democrats. As a result, we've all but lost our native ability to use any but the most high-profile elections to hold meaningful conversations on where the Commonwealth is—or should be—heading.

To be sure, we've had spirited gubernatorial contests every four years from 1990 on, and a couple of vigorous races for the US Senate along the way. In those half-dozen marquee events, Republican nominees have acquitted themselves stunningly well, considering the odds against them, emerging with a solid 4-2 won-lost record; William Weld posted a 2-1 record personally, Mitt Romney 1-1, and Paul Cellucci 1-0. In other signs of life in the GOP, Joe Malone won two statewide elections for treasurer in the 1990s, while Republicans Peter Blute and Peter Torkildsen held congressional seats for two terms apiece.

Despite this performance, the Republican Party has never moved off the dime in party registration, holding at roughly 13 percent of the electorate. And the GOP's presence in the state Legislature has continued to slide throughout this period, making the party ever more top-heavy politically. At the start of Weld's two terms, Republican ranks in the state Senate were sufficient to sustain a gubernatorial veto, but that leverage vanished with the first midterm election, in 1992, and the party's caucus in the General Court has dwindled further since.

Even worse, the GOP seemed to lose interest in even competing for legislative offices. In 2002, electoral competition reached a nadir in the Bay State, with just 31 percent of seats in the House contested by candidates from both major parties, the lowest rate since the body was reduced from 240 members to 160 in 1978. Among the 50 states, only South Carolina had fewer competitive elections for

its lower legislative body that year (see *State of the States*, CW, Fall 2002). In the Senate, only 12 of 40 seats had Republicans facing off against Democrats that November. As a result, the Senate began the current session with just six Republican members, the same as last session. (In a show of largesse appropriate to a body that prides itself on collegiality, the Democratic leadership agreed at the start of the 2001-02 session to change its rules so that the merry band of GOP senators could at least force a roll-call vote.)

But this year, that's all changed—well, some of it, anyway. Gov. Mitt Romney, working with his hand-picked party chairman, Darrell Crate, has accomplished what his predecessors never bothered to do (Weld) or were unable to pull off (Cellucci): field a slate of candidates capable of vying for most, though still not all, of the seats in the state Legislature. Compared with past showings, the party's candidates for 125 House and Senate seats, packaged under Romney's banner of Team Reform, are nothing short of a bonanza. To aid his cause of party revival, Romney has not only promised fundraising help but also assistance in the form of party-funded “governor's fellows”—21 young people given training, a \$2,000 stipend, and free housing in exchange for staffing key state rep and Senate campaigns.

This evidence of democracy breaking out all over has not exactly been met with universal acclaim. That Democrats would not celebrate the return of two-party politics is understandable, though the level of hostility to Romney's attempt to gain some ballast in the Legislature has been a reminder of just how foreign a notion electoral competition has become here. “He wants to have a war with the Legislature,” state Democratic Party chairman Philip Johnston declared to *The Boston Globe*, “and if that's the case, in John Kerry's words, bring it on.”

The legislative leadership has also taken this holding of an actual election as a personal and institutional affront, with House and Senate leaders rallying to the aid of their members. In May, House Speaker Thomas Finneran's “Victory Fund” sought to undercut Romney's “reform” credentials—and, by extension, those of his team of candidates—by means of a glossy flier comparing “Mitt's Myths” with “Reality,” as House Ways and Means chairman

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John Rogers dissected the governor's budget proposals, including the abolition of the Inspector General's office, the Turnpike merger, and pension overhaul.

Still, at this point, it's hard to know whether this burst of political vitality is going to amount to much. It's not clear that cutting the income tax rate by 0.3 percent and merging the Turnpike with MassHighway will make enough of a "reform" platform to propel GOP newcomers (only 14 of the Republican non-incumbent candidates have held or run for office before) past incumbent Democrats. "They did a good job recruiting those folks," Democratic Party chief Johnston told *Globe* columnist Scot Lehigh. "And now we have to do a good job of beating them." It's hard not to see most of Team Reform's initial contests turning out just that way.

Though the Republicans picked up one state Senate seat when Scott Brown won the special election to replace Sen. Cheryl Jacques earlier this year, bringing their number to seven, party officials acknowledge they are unlikely to reach the veto-sustaining goal of 14 in one election cycle. How many Team Reform neophytes, drawn into the fray this year by the Romney charm, are going to have the stomach to come back for a second try in two years, let alone work their way up the political career ladder from school committee to selectman, from city councilor to state rep, from state rep to state senator, as the Democrats are used to doing? In the long run, the most promising development of 2004 for the Republicans may not be Team Romney at all, but Charlie Baker, boy wonder of the Weld administration and current CEO of Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, becoming top vote-getter for selectman in his hometown of Swampscott.

A viable two-party system up and down the political food chain may devoutly to be wished for in Massachusetts, but it could be a long time in the making. In the meantime, the Democrats remain this state's big-tent party, encompassing fiscal conservatives and tax-and-spenders, pro-choicers and pro-lifers, gay marriage supporters and gay marriage opponents. Divisions among Democrats have more than once spilled over into the electoral arena, as in the Dukakis-King grudge matches of 1978 and '82, and in the McGee-Keeverian House leadership battle, which played out in state-rep primary contests all across the state in 1984. But in recent years, the very idea of challenging an incumbent, for any office, has been taken as a sign of bad manners.

The national Democrats are gathering in the Fleet-Center to build party unity for November's election. But to make elections meaningful in Massachusetts, what we could use from the state's Democrats is a bit more factionalism. ■

Flush point

Septic-tank rules roil the waters in Orleans

BY TIMOTHY J. WOOD

ORLEANS—Twenty years ago, Augusta McKusick could step outside of her home on Ares Pond in Orleans and dig up as many clams as she liked. But no more. “They’re not there now,” she says. “They’re gone. The eelgrass is gone. In the summer there are big mats of scummy green algae floating in the pond.” Orleans, like most Cape Cod towns, is struggling to find ways to arrest and, ultimately, reverse the degradation of its coastal waterways. But when health board members tried to convey the seriousness of the situation to homeowners, they learned that short-term economic considerations often win out over long-term environmental protection.

Although the primary issue is ecological health, cleaning up waterways is also a matter of economic survival. The Cape’s economy, dependent on tourism and second-homeowners, is inexorably tied to its environment.

“We are a water-based economy,” says McKusick, a member of the Orleans Board of Health. Ares Pond is part of the 9,000-acre Pleasant Bay Estuary, a state-designated “area of critical environmental concern” that’s popular with boaters; it’s also important as a fish and shellfish spawning area. “If that goes,” McKusick says of Pleasant Bay, “the economy goes.”

For several years now, Cape officials have been working feverishly to develop long-term wastewater treatment plans as well as short-term reg-

ulations that deal with the chief cause of water degradation: nitrogen. Excess nitrogen in drinking water can cause health problems for infants (“blue baby syndrome”), the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems. And even small amounts of nitrogen can be devastating for marine life. It can cause excessive algae growth, choke off oxygen, kill eelgrass, and degrade fragile habitats such as fish-spawning grounds and shellfish beds.

Some 90 percent of the nitrogen build-up comes from septic systems, with the rest from fertilizers or natural sources. Virtually all of the Cape’s wastewater is disposed of through on-site septic systems, which do little to reduce harmful levels of nitrogen. For years now, that nitrogen has been spreading inexorably toward the

ocean, where it can become trapped in poorly flushed bays and inlets. The problem began to reach a critical level in the 1990s, as the nitrogen from three decades of development began reaching estuaries.

Cape towns face massive expenditures to get the problem under control. In Chatham, a figure of \$30 million to expand and upgrade the town’s 1970s-era sewage treatment system has been floated. Orleans, with a year-round population of 6,652 that swells to 22,000 in the summer, currently has no municipal sewer system. But officials know that in the most impaired watersheds, homeowners will need to abandon on-site septic systems in favor of municipal sewers or small neighborhood treatment facilities.

The town is in the process of developing a comprehensive wastewater plan that could take two years. In the meantime, the Orleans health board found itself with two choices for regulating sewage disposal in areas of town where traditional septic systems were not up to task. According to Orleans health agent Robert Canning, the town could employ traditional land use controls, perhaps increasing the minimum-square-footage requirements triggered by each additional bedroom (nitrogen levels are computed based on the number of bedrooms in a dwelling); or mandate that all new and upgraded septic systems incorporate nitrogen-removing technology. Innovative alternative systems, as they are called under the state’s septic-system regu-

lations, cost \$5,000 to \$10,000 more than a traditional system. They also require regular monitoring and maintenance, and since they require a consistent volume of wastewater to be effective, they generally don't work well in seasonal homes. But Orleans officials also knew that the comprehensive plan could trump whatever interim standards they set.

"[The board of health] didn't want to be premature, but we were uncomfortable issuing permits and not notifying people that something else may be down the road," says Canning, noting that a property owner might install an expensive, cutting-edge system only to have to abandon it if required to do so under the eventual wastewater plan.

After extensive discussions at public meetings, the board chose a third option. To ensure that homeowners knew about the pending wastewater plan, permits for new or upgraded septic systems would require a deed rider. Enacted through a covenant signed by the property owner, the rider stipulated that the owner must bring the septic system into full compliance with the town's wastewater management plan within 24 months of notification by the town.

The regulation, which went into effect February 23, caused an uproar, but not at first. Only 180 permits for new or upgraded septic systems were issued last year, so the regulation didn't immediately affect many of the town's 5,160 single-family homes. And, with the real estate and construction industries enjoying boom times, it took more than a month for new homebuyers to realize they were being asked to commit to an unknown expense that could be imposed at any time. When they caught on, the effluent hit the fan.

"I heard from the real estate market and the mortgage originators," says Kyle Hinkle, executive director of the Orleans Chamber of Commerce. "There were people who were back-

stepping on their plans and thinking of not going through with purchases."

"We did lose a sale," says James Trainor, a real estate agent with the Orleans office of Kinlin Grover Real Estate. The property was a condominium, and the covenant would have committed all of the owners to an unknown future cost, he says. "The seller didn't want to put his neighbors in that position."

Although approved by the town attorney, the regulation took local

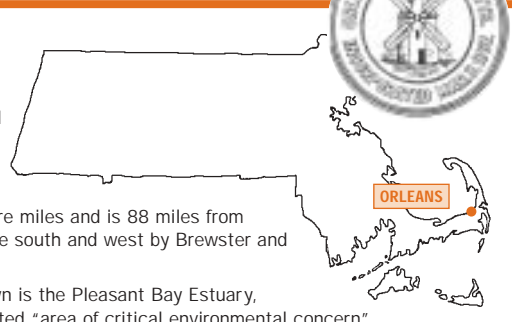
School of Marine Science and Technology at the University of Massachusetts–Dartmouth. The program aims to help communities determine the level of nutrients flowing into 89 estuaries across the region. The studies will result in a set of numbers known as total maximum daily loads—a federal Environmental Protection Agency-imposed limit on the amount of nitrogen and other nutrients that a watershed can contribute to an estu-

ORLEANS

Incorporated: 1797
Population: 6,652 year-round
Town Meeting: Open

FACTS:

- ◆ Orleans covers 13.94 square miles and is 88 miles from Boston. It's bordered on the south and west by Brewster and on the north by Eastham.
- ◆ On the eastern edge of town is the Pleasant Bay Estuary, a 9,000-acre state-designated "area of critical environmental concern" shared with Harwich, Brewster, and Chatham.
- ◆ There are 5,160 homes in Orleans with a median assessed value of \$475,000 and an average sale price of \$640,000. Orleans has 23 real estate companies and more than 500 brokers and real estate agents registered with the state.



officials by surprise. "None of the selectmen were aware of the covenant," says Margie Fulcher, chairman of the board of selectmen, who suddenly found her ear bent by more than a few constituents angry at the health board's new requirement. "I was extremely upset."

Before April was over, the regulation was suspended.

The Orleans sewage issue has been percolating for some time. In 2000, the town's wastewater management steering committee began laying the foundation for a townwide solution to the nitrogen problem. Like 39 other communities in southeastern Massachusetts, Orleans is working with the state's Estuaries Project, a collaboration between the Department of Environmental Protection and the

ary before the water quality begins to degrade.

Orleans has been promised those figures next June, says McKusick. Only then can the town look at solutions. The final implementation plan must then be approved by the state DEP and endorsed and funded by town meeting. Orleans has spent about \$375,000 on the study to date—only a fraction of the more than \$1 million spent on a wastewater study by its neighbor Chatham, which is two years further along in the process.

Because the requirements will be watershed-specific, a homeowner might be forced to upgrade an existing septic system, connect to a town sewer—or do nothing, if he or she is lucky enough to live in an area that doesn't have high nitrogen levels. But there is no way of knowing before the studies are complete and a plan is put

into place. The deed rider was intended to ensure that new owners know about their obligation to comply with the pending wastewater plan, says McKusick.

But the public process the board of health went through turned out not to be public enough. Despite three public hearings and a legal notice published in the local newspaper, "the message never got out in a clear and rational fashion," McKusick concedes. On April 1, the *Cape Cod Times* printed a front-page story on the growing outrage in the real estate and development community. By that time, the regulation had been in effect for more than a month; 25 covenants had been approved and signed, but only one recorded at the registry of deeds, according to Canning.

Opponents of the regulation acknowledge they were caught napping, but they also fault the board for

pulling a fast one. "Communications is the issue," says the Chamber of Commerce's Hinkle. "They knew it wasn't going to be well-received, so they just snuck it under the rug."

"When you have something of this magnitude, you can't rely on a two-inch legal ad," says selectman Fulcher, who says she agrees with the goal of the regulation. "This is too big of an issue."

Down the road in Chatham, a similar, though less forceful, covenant provision has been in place for several years. Unlike the Orleans regulation, the Chatham covenant applies only to upgraded septic systems that need a variance from the board of health, but, like Orleans, it requires homeowners to comply with the town's comprehensive wastewater management plan, whatever it recommends for the particular neighborhood, says Dr. Robert Duncanson, Chatham's

director of health and the environment.

"Based on my experience, I think the development community understands the reason for it," says Duncanson. "I don't want to say it was completely accepted, but we hear very little argument over it."

The Chatham board of health has worked to reduce nitrogen levels for nearly a decade, contemplating everything from a moratorium on new construction to drastic increases in lot size. But as the board tightened regulations—by, for example, limiting the number of bedrooms allowed in new homes—the effect was the opposite of what officials hoped to achieve. Development actually increased.

"When they talked about a moratorium, a lot of people were coming in expressly saying they wanted to take out permits before [the regulations]

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changed,” says Kevin McDonald, Chatham’s director of community development and building commissioner. Land surveyor Terry Eldredge had a client who had no plans to develop an 11-lot subdivision in South Chatham, but upon hearing the board might limit the number of bedrooms allowed on parcels, the owner decided to get septic permits and put the lots on the market.

“They were gone in six months,” says Eldredge. The board’s actions “certainly accelerated development, just the opposite of what they wanted to achieve. People were afraid they were going to lose whatever value they had in their property.”

One of the problems with approaches taken in Chatham and Orleans is that they target new construction and home expansion, while the majority of the nitrogen flowing into estuaries comes from existing homes. “The impact of a new system is miniscule,” says Chatham land use attorney William Riley. “The board of health is trying to do this one house at a time, when this is a problem that should be dealt with by the body politic. The town as a whole should be dealing with it.”

Some believe even that isn’t good enough; wastewater should be dealt with on a countywide level. Last year, the Cape Cod Business Roundtable, a group of 28 business and civic leaders, recommended a regional approach to wastewater infrastructure. The group concluded that because the problem was so significant and reached across municipal boundaries, cooperation was the only way the Cape’s 15 towns could make meaningful progress. But some towns, especially those with wastewater plans underway, are balking at the regional idea.

“The better a job the town is doing, the more they saw this as a

threat to their sovereignty,” says Elliot Carr, president of the Cape Cod Five Cents Savings Bank and the roundtable’s moderator.

To explore the concept further, the Barnstable County Assembly of Delegates—a county legislative body that is unique in the state—named a blue-ribbon panel to study the idea of attacking the problem regionally. Meanwhile, the Barnstable County Commissioners established a wastewater implementation committee (WIC) as a regional forum where towns could share wastewater information and coordinate treatment approaches. Working with grants from the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and the county, the WIC and the Cape Cod Commission, the county’s land-use regulatory agency, hired engineers Wright-Pierce to do four case studies. The results will demonstrate the application of different wastewater management tools that towns could adopt while waiting to implement wastewater plans. That report, entitled *No Free Flush* and scheduled for release in late June, was expected to recommend that towns adopt regulations like those in Chatham and Orleans to warn residents who are upgrading or installing new septic systems that more may be required of them in the future.

The rules in Chatham inadvertently led to increased home development.

“It’s really intended to help people make sensible investments now about wastewater infrastructure,” says Margo Fenn, executive director of the Cape Cod Commission. “Because, absent that, they could invest a lot of money and be required later, when a wastewater plan is adopted, to make further improvements that will cost them even more money.” Orleans was right on track, she adds. “I think people overreacted.”

Nonetheless, on April 20, the

Orleans health board suspended enforcement of the deed rider regulation. Although it remains on the books, for the time being those getting new septic system permits don’t have to record a deed rider at the registry of deeds. Instead, they’ll be asked to sign a disclosure form confirming they’ve been told about the pending wastewater management plan.

Real estate agent Trainor thinks the health board did the right thing in response to the outcry. But he doesn’t think that, in the long run, the threat of future septic upgrades will do much to dampen what remains a hot real estate market. Carr, president of one of the Cape’s largest residential mortgage lenders, agrees. “Bankers are much more concerned with long-range value,” he says. “Anything that improves the wastewater system removes one of the bigger clouds over the future value of some properties.”

But in Orleans, future board of health meetings are likely to be better attended. “I think we all should pay closer attention” to the regulatory process, Trainor admits.

“It was a big learning curve” for both the public and town officials, Fulcher says of the episode. And the education isn’t over yet. With tourists

flocking to Pleasant Bay and the town’s other beaches and waterways, the health board is determined to protect the town’s coastal environment and plans to revisit the regulation this summer.

“It’s taken us a long time to get here,” says health agent McKusick. “We’re not going to turn it around overnight.” ■

Timothy J. Wood is editor of The Cape Cod Chronicle, a weekly based in Chatham.

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Lawmakers balk at a bailout for a city on the financial edge

BY MICHAEL JONAS

In the drama that was the city of Springfield's attempt to avoid going broke this spring, the theme on Beacon Hill turned out to be less helping hand than tough love.

Charles Ryan, the 76-year-old patriarch of Springfield's best known political family who won election to the mayor's office last fall, practically camped out on Beacon Hill in an effort to secure a state-funded bailout for his beleaguered city ("Down But Not Out," *CW*, Winter 2004). In early June, Gov. Mitt Romney filed legislation that would have provided Springfield with \$20 million to cover its deficit for the fiscal year about to end, extended a \$30 million line of credit, and suspended provisions of state law governing municipal collective bargaining rights, freeing the city's hand to rein in personnel costs.

At first, the battle for Springfield seemed to shape up as a classic clash between Romney and the Legislature over public employees. The move to suspend collective bargaining drew instant opposition from organized labor and Democratic lawmakers, a reaction no doubt compounded by Administration and Finance Secretary Eric Kriss's outspoken criticism of public-sector unions (see "No more public-sector union monopoly," *Argument*, p. 92). In a PowerPoint presentation to legislators, Kriss made the case for cracking down on overly generous benefits by citing the 60 sick days a year granted Springfield police officers, a number the administration claimed to be three times higher than the national average. Kriss also rejected complaints that the city had been shortchanged on local aid, claiming that Springfield's net state aid per capita in 2004 was 34 percent higher than the average of 10 other Massachusetts "peer group" cities.

But the standoff took a surprising turn when lawmakers, including some from Springfield, rebelled at the prospect of a bailout, saying it's time for the city to take its medicine. "It's a problem that has been self-inflicted," says state Rep. Thomas Petrolati, a Ludlow Democrat who represents a corner of Springfield. "It's a fiscal management issue."

Resistance to covering the shortfall in Springfield's \$437 million budget was particularly acute among representatives

of other cities and towns that have struggled through fiscal difficulties without special state assistance. "Massachusetts cannot be left to underwrite every community's financial problems," says state Rep. Peter Larkin, a Pittsfield Democrat whose hometown has been operating under a financial advisory board, working its way out of a \$6 million budget gap on its own. "To start just opens up a Pandora's box that we'll never be able to close."

Not only that, but covering Springfield's bills would send the wrong message to the city about putting its fiscal house in order, Larkin says. "It's too early to say the city of Springfield can't manage their way out of this."

Hopes of a state handout did seem to discourage talk of municipal economizing. In mid-June, according to the *Springfield Republican*, Ryan complained that two city councilors were jeopardizing the then-pending bailout bill by calling for additional cuts in city spending.

The bill that, at press time, seemed poised to pass the Legislature preserved union rights but limited state financial help to interest-free loans (the House approved \$52 million, the Senate \$22 million). It would also establish a five-member financial advisory board to oversee city spending. The board will include Ryan, the president of the city council, and three members appointed by Kriss.

STATE TO SPRINGFIELD: DROP RED

That board will have its hands full, according to Michael Widmer, president of the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, a business-funded watchdog group. "The loans may help in the short term, but they don't change the underlying fundamentals," says Widmer. Springfield needs to find "new revenue sources or make significant cuts in spending in order to bring things into long-term balance," he says.

Springfield's fiscal crisis is the most serious to hit a Massachusetts municipality since the city of Chelsea was forced into state receivership in 1991. James Carlin, a former state transportation secretary, was tapped by Gov. William Weld to serve as receiver for Chelsea, which faced a \$10 million deficit on an annual city budget of just \$40 million. A \$5 million appropriation from Massport, which was termed an extra "mitigation payment" for the impact of the Tobin Bridge, was the closest thing Chelsea got to a bailout.

Carlin had his battles, including one with the city's firefighters, who challenged in court his authority to make work rules (Carlin prevailed). But overall, he says, there was broad

support for his efforts, as long as his actions were seen as spreading the budget-tightening burden fairly. "You can do unpopular things, but you cannot do irrational things," he says.

That "everybody wanted the receivership to succeed," Carlin says, was his biggest asset. Springfield will need a similar reservoir of good will, he says, and to fill it up, the city will have to make some big moves and show some results—quickly. "It's like the Red Sox," says Carlin. "You get some momentum, the fans get behind you." ■

For security firms, anxiety translates into opportunity

BY PHIL PRIMACK

Whether the Democratic National Convention will be an economic boon or bust for the city of Boston is still a matter of dispute. But for one rapidly growing sector of the Massachusetts economy, the mega-event is a guaranteed boost.

"The DNC will be huge for us," says Gerard Boniello, co-owner of Corporate Resources Group, which, despite its plain vanilla name, provides high-level security and other protective services to corporate executives and other clients. Founded four years ago with just 10 employees, the Cambridge-based firm now employs 75 people and has seen its revenues double every year, he says.

Judging by Boniello and the roughly 75 other exhibitors at Security Expo 2004, business is booming in the private security sector. The trade show was held at the Sheraton Ferncroft Resort in Danvers April 15, sponsored by the local chapter of ASIS International, an association of security firms and professionals. The Boston chapter has about 800 members, and nearly all of them seem to be at the Expo, checking out the displays and attending the workshops ("Preparing for the Next Anthrax Attack: Managing Biochem Threats in the Workplace," in the North Shore Ballroom at 8 a.m.; "Identity Theft — What You Don't Know Can Hurt You" at 11:30 in the Marblehead Room).

"We've been growing every year," says Security Expo co-chair Bonnie Michelman, who is director of police, security,

and outside services at Massachusetts General Hospital. "This year, I'm seeing a lot more integrated security systems and a lot more sophisticated electronic technology for surveillance."

The attendees—mostly corporate and institutional security managers from all over New England, according to Michelman—wander from booth to booth, checking out such products as laminated ID badges, X-ray screening devices, and software that allows remote access to alarm information. Many stop to pat Elvin, a bomb-sniffing black Labrador retriever. Elvin works for New York-based Michael Stapleton Associates, a firm that offers an array of protective services against bombs and other security hazards. Jason Rose, who mans Stapleton's Boston office, says many of the firm's financial services and other clients have come to realize they need to upgrade all their safeguards, hardware and human alike.

"After 9/11, everyone goes out and buys an X-ray machine because they think that's the magic bullet," says Rose. "But then they hire people to watch those machines who may not be properly trained." That's where Stapleton comes in: When the luggage screener isn't quite sure whether that fuzzy shape on the X-ray screen is a hair dryer or something more sinister, the image is sent, via video stream, to Stapleton's New York headquarters, where experts assess the risk.

For Rose, who spent 12 years as an Air Force specialist in explosive ordnance disposal, homeland security has meant job security. "We're a small company, but we grew on a hockey stick curve after 9/11," he says.

The same is true for Quincy-based South Shore Security, a family-run business since 1960 that has seen its employment nearly double to 300 people over the past five years, according to Anthony Froio, the firm's director of operations. "When companies hit hard times, it used to be that they'd cut back on security," he says. "That's not an option any more."

Richard LaPlante hopes the fast-growing security sector can get him back into the technology field lean times forced him out of. "I've been a software engineer for a long time," says LaPlante. "But I ran out of work. I was basically starving." Desperate for a job, LaPlante signed on as a sales representative for a New Hampshire security device company.

Taking a break from his own booth, LaPlante talks technology with Romie Jones, a sales consultant with Chelmsford-based Biscom, which is promoting its WebEyeAlert at the Expo (the next generation of digital video security technologies is here today, announces a Biscom brochure). "I see a lot of crossover between security sales and software development," says LaPlante. "I see



Security expert Gerard Boniello: The Democratic National Convention “will be huge for us.”

real opportunities in this area.” Jones, who comes out of the telecom industry, agrees.

At the Security Expo, anyway, opportunity seems to be in the air. Halfway through the day, Jones has already collected an inch-thick stack of business cards. “We’re the technology behind all those [surveillance] cameras,” says Jones. “And these are our end users.” ■

South Coast railing gets commuter line on track—sort of

BY MICHAEL JONAS

When Gov. Mitt Romney laid out a policy for better coordination of transportation projects across the state, this was not what he had in mind. This spring, a group of South Coast legislators held up a land-taking bill necessary for the proposed “flyover” that will bypass the Sagamore Rotary to Cape

summer homes.”

In mid-June, the logjam seemed to break. The Romney administration agreed to fund a growth-management study of the proposed commuter line’s effects and to free up \$6.6 million for environmental permitting. The administration also agreed to begin discussions with CSX Corp., which owns 32 miles of the track right-of-way needed to restore service to the two South Coast cities, which came to a halt in 1958. In return, the region’s House members dropped their opposition to the Sagamore land-taking bill, which the Legislature promptly approved—with language directing the state and the MBTA to pursue permitting and right-of-way negotiations for the South Coast rail line.

State Rep. Robert Correia, a Fall River Democrat and dean of the South Coast legislative delegation, calls the rail-flyover deal a “win-win.” But while the \$58 million flyover project is now on course to completion within several years, there’s no telling when, if ever, trains will be rolling into New Bedford and Fall River.

Running commuter rail service to the two Bristol County cities won’t come cheap—\$850 million is the current estimate. And the environmental issues—the rail line would pass through the Hockomock Swamp in Easton, the largest freshwater wetland in the state—could derail the whole project.

But the biggest hurdle of all may be the Romney admin-

Cod until they received commitments that the long-promised extension of commuter rail service to New Bedford and Fall River would move forward. Romney called the move “blackmail,” but lawmakers say it was the only way they could get the rail project, to which the Romney administration has been lukewarm, back on track.

State Rep. Michael Rodrigues, a Westport Democrat, accused Romney of pushing his pet project to deal with Cape traffic ahead of other long-planned initiatives, including the South Coast rail line, telling the *New Bedford Standard-Times* that the flyover seemed to be the governor’s gift to “rich friends with

istration itself, which is reluctant to sink nearly \$1 billion into a new commuter rail line. Although the administration agreed to fund the permitting and growth studies, Doug Foy, the state's chief development official, says the state is not ready to commit to bringing commuter trains to New Bedford and Fall River.

"It's certainly an interesting project," says Foy, noncommittally. "It's one of a number of big transit projects that are on the list of aspirations for the T."

Several other big-ticket transit projects appear to be in line ahead of this one. Some of those are enhancements to Boston-area MBTA lines mandated under mitigation agreements

without commuter rail service to Boston. "At some point, there's an economic justice issue," says Fall River Mayor Edward Lambert.

Lambert and others say the rail line would not only meet transit needs, but also serve as a catalyst for economic development. It could make the region's relatively affordable housing stock more attractive to those priced out of the Boston market, as well.

"This is an economic development project as much, if not more, than a transit project," says Lambert. Without rail service, he says, "I'm at a disadvantage as the CEO of this city when I try to lure businesses here."

If South Coast leaders feel they're getting the cold shoulder, it's because the Romney team is being more candid than past administrations, which voiced support for the project without actually being committed to its completion, Foy says. "I think they are suffering from an overdose of honesty."

But while Foy stresses the state's fiscal limitations, South Coast leaders point out that the state is pouring millions of dollars into extension of the Greenbush commuter rail line to Scituate, and is preparing to spend millions more on enhancement or extension of other MBTA lines. They say the New Bedford/Fall River rail line seems to meet many



Will political maneuvers get commuter trains moving to New Bedford and Fall River?

related to the Central Artery project—mandates that Foy played a role in securing when he was head of the Conservation Law Foundation. South Coast officials say those mandates could be revisited and revised, if there were the will to do so. Meanwhile, they say the administration's "fix it first" policy of ensuring that existing roads and transit lines are in good repair before embarking on new projects is inherently unfair.

"Romney's out there saying, 'fix it first,'" says David Tibbetts, a former state economic affairs director who is working with South Coast communities on economic development initiatives. "That's great if you have it first."

South Coast officials point out that New Bedford and Fall River are the only major cities in eastern Massachusetts

of the criteria established by the administration for funding transit projects, particularly its potential to relieve adjacent roadways of congestion, not to mention the goal of

'AT SOME POINT, THERE'S AN ECONOMIC JUSTICE ISSUE.'

regional equity in transit funding.

Meanwhile, the South Coast reps make no apologies for playing hardball. Three months ago, the rail line was "a dead project," says Correia. With the permitting and growth-management studies now on track, at least "it's on the board, and it's moving ahead." ■

State gets benefit from drug benefit

BY MICHAEL JONAS

While many senior citizens are still trying to figure out whether they'll come out ahead under the complicated Medicare prescription drug benefit passed by Congress, the new law will yield a big windfall for at least one drug buyer: the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

By signing up lower-income Massachusetts seniors for new Medicare-sponsored drug discount cards, state officials think they may save the state-run Prescription Advantage program up to \$15 million. The drug discount cards, which went into effect June 1, provide a \$600 annual subsidy for seniors with income below 135 percent of the federal poverty level (\$12,569 for an individual; \$16,862 for a married couple).

Of the 88,000 seniors enrolled in Prescription Advantage, state officials say about 35,000 qualify for the federal drug subsidy. In May, the Legislature approved a bill to automatically enroll income-eligible Prescription Advantage members in the drug discount card program. That means the federal government, not the state program, will now pick up the tab for their first \$600 of annual drug costs. Once seniors have used the \$600 subsidy, coverage under Prescription Advantage will kick in.

Piggybacking the state program onto the new federal drug assistance is both good news for the state "and good

THE QUESTION IS, WHAT HAPPENS NEXT YEAR?

news for seniors," says Jennifer Davis Carey, the state's secretary of elder affairs. Because of the savings Massachusetts will reap, state officials plan to designate a one-month open enrollment period for Prescription Advantage, beginning September 1, allowing more seniors to sign up for the state program.

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The drug discount cards are only a stopgap measure, designed to provide some drug-cost relief to seniors until the actual Medicare drug coverage program begins January 1, 2006. The big question, say senior advocates, is what happens to Prescription Advantage once the federal program is up and running. "My hope would be that Massachusetts do everything permissible to fill in the gaps around the federal benefit," says Deborah Thomson, a Boston elder law attorney.

But senior advocates aren't holding their breath. When he took office last year, Gov. Mitt Romney proposed ending Prescription Advantage entirely unless federal funds came through to help support its costs. The state wound up receiving a one-time infusion of federal money to help

continue the program, but the new Medicare coverage may provide a fresh opening for Romney to end an expensive state program, slated to receive \$110 million in the 2005 budget.

"Gov. Romney has pretty much straight out said [that] when the federal benefit comes in, he wants to end Prescription Advantage," says Jack Boesen, executive director of Massachusetts Senior Action. "And I think it's indisputable that the federal benefit is much poorer coverage than the state program."

Carey insists that no decisions have been made about what happens to state drug coverage after the Medicare benefit takes effect. "We need a full look at what our options are," she says. ■

RACIAL INEQUALITY FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT

"Asset inequality" is a major reason why African-Americans continue to lag behind white Americans in terms of homeownership and education, agreed several speakers at the latest *CommonWealth* forum, though there was less agreement on the causes and cures of this condition. "With a Little Help From Our Friends (and Families): Assets, Race, and Social Mobility," was held on May 14 at the Omni Parker House Hotel in Boston. Robert Keough, editor of *CommonWealth*, moderated the forum. "We think about mobility as a way to get to wealth," said Keough, but we don't always appreciate "what an obstacle to mobility a lack of assets can be."

Thomas Shapiro, author of *The Hidden Cost of Being African American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality* (see "To Have and Have Not," *CW*, Spring 2004), opened the discussion by arguing that "Wealth is a major axis along which racial inequality is passed on in the United States."

He noted that getting financial help at critical stages of life, like buying a home or paying for college, has implications for social advancement. "That is a good part of the notion I call transformative assets," said Shapiro. The vast difference in inherited wealth between white Americans and African-Americans "needs to be on the civil rights agenda in the 21st century," Shapiro said.

But Stephan Thernstrom, a history professor at Harvard University and co-author of *America in Black and White: One Nation, Indivisible*, warned that any attempt to "eliminate any correlation between parental resources and the success of their children" would be extremely unpopular. "The immigrant saga is one of intergenerational social mobility," he said. "Helping children do better in life is fun-

damental to the American story." Thernstrom said that it would be better to address the differences in family stability between the white and African-American communities: "One group is made up predominantly of two-parent, two-paycheck families and one dominated by single parents. You would expect significant disparities [in wealth]."

The importance of homeownership was affirmed by Robert Cooper, senior counsel at OneUnited Bank, the largest interstate bank in the US owned by African-Americans. "[The home] is the single most important investment by a family, especially African-American families. It can be used as collateral to start a business, for education, or retirement." Cooper noted that "blacks are twice as likely as whites to be rejected for mortgages, even when adjusted for income."

Kathleen McDermott, executive director of the Montachusett Opportunity Council, talked about the positive effects that only a few thousand dollars in assets can generate. The council, an antipoverty community action agency serving the Fitchburg and Leominster area, uses federal grants and other funds to match low-income families' contributions to individual development accounts, awarding \$4,000 for a family's savings of \$1,333 to buy a home, start a business, or pay for further education. "We see increased self-confidence and self-esteem and more of a feeling of control over their lives," she said of program participants. "It is the different way of thinking that makes the difference."

A transcript of this forum provided by State House News Service can be found on the Internet at www.massinc.org.

—ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN

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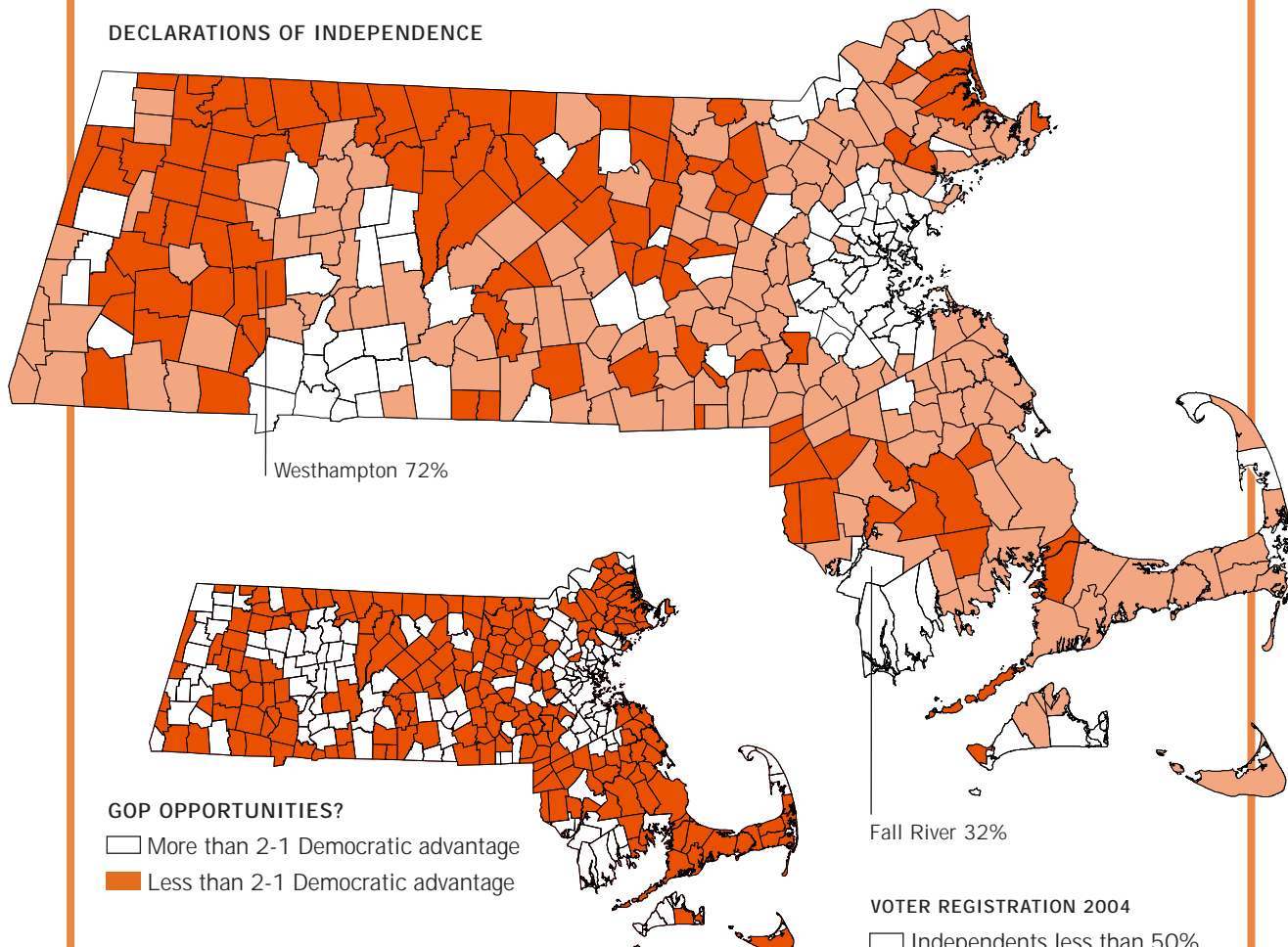
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DECLARATIONS OF INDEPENDENCE



GOP OPPORTUNITIES?

- More than 2-1 Democratic advantage
- Less than 2-1 Democratic advantage

VOTER REGISTRATION 2004

- Independents less than 50%
- Independents 50%-60%
- Independents more than 60%

No-party animals


As of February, 49.8 percent of Massachusetts voters were unenrolled in any party—a slight drop from the February 2000 high point of 50.3 for the independence movement (or non-movement), which has come back from a low of 35.3 percent in 1968. Going into this election year, the Democratic Party claims 36.1 percent of the Massachusetts electorate, its lowest share since 1962. The Republican Party, which has been in the low teens since Ronald Reagan became president in 1981, accounts for 13.1 percent. The remaining half of Massachusetts voters consider themselves to be playing the political field.

The town of Monroe has the highest share of independents, with 81 percent—56 voters out of 69. Among towns with at least 1,000 voters, Westhampton is the most independent, with 72 percent unenrolled. More

significant is the unenrolled bloc in the far suburbs of Boston. This bloc was essential to the election of three Republican governors since 1990.

In 292 of the state's 351 cities and towns, independents make up at least half of the electorate; Framingham is the biggest of these. Attleboro is the largest where 60 percent of voters or more are unenrolled. The state's major cities have more party loyalty (overwhelmingly Democratic), with only 38 percent unenrolled in Boston, 37 percent in Springfield, and 32 percent in Fall River. But in 204 Bay State communities, the Republicans have at least half as many loyalists as the Democrats do (see smaller map). These appear to be the places where the GOP might find the candidates and the voters to increase their numbers in the state Legislature. ■

—ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN



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STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT

BY ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN

WHEN THERE'S SMOKE

Burn injuries peak in Massachusetts in July and August, according to the latest annual report by the state fire marshal. In 2002, there were 84 reported injuries during those two months, representing about one-quarter of the 368 cases reported over the entire year. Cooking- or barbecue-related injuries accounted for 19 of the incidents in July and August, but there were also seven injuries blamed on hot beverages, six on hot tap water, five on car radiators, and one on "asphalt."

The fire marshal's office has not yet released its 2002 report on incidents that did not cause injury, but it reported 85 accidents involving cooking grills throughout 2001—down from 104 the previous year. As a cautionary tale, the 2001 report spotlights a blaze that caused \$5,000 in damage in Somerville, caused by a gas grill being used on a second-story balcony. It also reminds us that liquid propane grills are illegal on any porch or balcony above the first floor. Because liquid propane is heavier than air, it can sink toward the ground and, in the words of the fire marshal, "affect an unexpected neighbor."

DAY TRIPPING

According to the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism, the total number of "domestic person trips" to the Bay State rose to 25.7 million during the past calendar year, after slipping from 26.1 million in 2001 to 24.3 million in 2002.

But that gain came entirely from Massachusetts residents making sight-seeing trips to other parts of their own state. The number of trips made by Bay Staters rose from 4.8 million to 6.6 million last year. (The number of trips from New York, New Jersey, Florida, and California all fell slightly.) And as a seasonal activity, tourism in Massachusetts shifted from fall to summer: The percentage of trips made in July, August, and September increased from 34 percent to 38 percent of the annual total, while those made in the last three months of the year fell from 25 percent to 22 percent. Seventy-eight percent of the trips were made by car or recreational vehicle, up from 76 percent in 2002.

Visiting friends and relatives was the primary reason given for 42 percent of all trips to Massachusetts in 2003, the same percentage as in the previous year. All reasons involving business (including conventions and the mixing of "business and pleasure") added up to only 16 percent of the trips, with entertainment and recreation accounting for most of the rest. Shopping is the most popular activity among all visitors: 34 percent said that they shopped here, compared with 15 percent who said they visited a historic site or museum, 6 percent who visited an art gallery or museum, 6 percent who said they attended a sporting event, and 5 percent who attended a performing-arts event.



FINICKY DRINKERS

Democratic Party conventioners shouldn't have any trouble finding drinking companions in Boston. According to 2002 figures from the Centers for Disease Control, 49 percent of Massachusetts adults who drink alcohol do so at least six days per month. That's the fourth-highest percentage in the US, just slightly behind New Hampshire, Oregon, and Vermont. But out-of-towners should be careful about buying the first round, since there may not be another: 42 percent of Bay State imbibers claim to stop at one drink on the average, which is the 15th highest percentage in the US. Vermont has the most restrained citizenry, with 48 percent saying "no" to refills.

One explanation for the figures above is that the Bay State has a lot of drinkers who prefer wine or cocktails to six-packs. That theory is supported by a 2003 beverage industry survey that ranked Massachusetts fourth in the annual consumption of wine per capita,

ninth in the intake of American beer, and 11th in the downing of "distilled spirits"—but a lowly 45th in the chugging of domestic beer. (New York, where the Republicans will hold their quadrennial party, was dead last.)



THE NON-TIPPING POINT

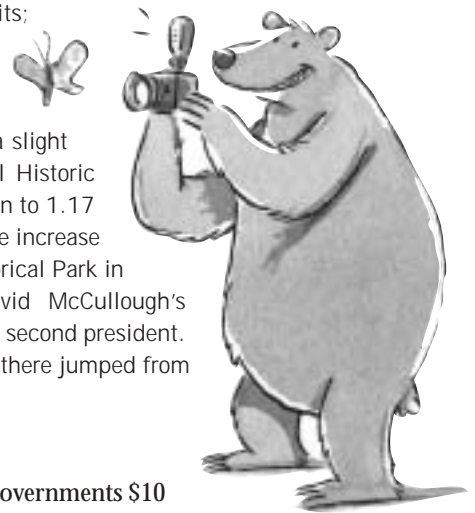
Boston may be the Hub of the Universe, but Natick is the fulcrum of the state. That's according to the US Census Bureau, which recently named Memorial Field, at Natick High School, as the population center of Massachusetts. In other words, if the Bay State were a flat plane and all its residents had the same weight (and were standing in their living rooms), it could balance perfectly upon a pole at Memorial Field. The *MetroWest Daily News* reported that a brass plaque was unveiled on June 1 at the spot, with Natick High School students on hand to celebrate. It did not report whether weight lifters were given special prominence among the attendees.

By the way, the geographic center of the state is on the north side of the city of Worcester. The geographic center of the 48 continental states is in Kansas, a relatively short distance from the population center in Missouri. But if the entire American citizenry were distributed geographically the same way they are in Massachusetts, the center of population would be just a few miles west of Washington, DC—where it was in 1810, before the country's great western expansion.

FEWER SHUTTERBUGS ON THE FREEDOM TRAIL

By at least one measure, tourism in Massachusetts still hasn't recovered from the aftereffects of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Data from the National Park Service show a major drop in visits to its sites in Boston over the past two years, while there's been a smaller rise in visits to sites outside the capital city. The Park Service tallied 1.6 million visits to the Boston National Historical Park in 2003, down from 2.2 million two years before, and the Boston African American National Historical Site hosted 230,000 visits, down from 390,000. The Cape Cod National Seashore, the most popular site in the state managed by the Park Service, saw a dip from 4.5 million to 4.0 million visits; the Salem Maritime National Historic Site's attendance fell from 810,000 to 620,000.

The Park Service did register a slight gain at the Minute Man National Historic Park, in Concord, from 1.06 million to 1.17 million. But the biggest percentage increase came at the Adams National Historical Park in Quincy—probably aided by David McCullough's hugely successful biography of our second president. In two years, the number of visits there jumped from 150,000 to 220,000.



INSULT TO ECONOMIC INJURY

The federal government was both extravagant and inefficient in giving state governments \$10 billion last year to help solve their fiscal problems, according to a report by the General Accounting Office, a watchdog group that reports to the US Congress. As reported in stateline.org, the GAO criticized Congress for distributing the money solely on the basis of population, ignoring the differences among states in the severity of the most recent economic recession and in the local costs of providing government services.

Massachusetts was doubly hurt by the formula. According to the GAO, it was one of the states hit hardest by the recession, which was defined as lasting from March to November of 2001 (from the peak of economic activity to the bottom of the economic downturn). The report noted that the Bay State tied with North Carolina for the biggest loss in nonfarming jobs during that period—and thus suffered a bigger hit to its tax base than most states did. The GAO also cited Massachusetts as one of five states that spend more per capita than the national average to fund “an average basket of public services,” meaning that a dollar of aid from the federal government doesn't go as far here. (The other high-cost states are California, New Jersey, New York, and Texas.) Despite the greater fiscal pressure on Massachusetts, it got the same \$34.01 per capita in federal aid that 37 other states did—amounting, in our case, to \$216 million. And because each state got a minimum of \$50 million, 12 of them ended up with a higher amount per capita. Wyoming, which was one of only five states to *gain* nonfarming jobs during the recession, ended up with \$101.26 in aid per resident.

The upside for Massachusetts, if one can call it that, is that the GAO doesn't think the federal bailout was a good idea anyway, since the national economy was already recovering when the money was disbursed.

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Massachusetts General Hospital and Brigham and Women's Hospital have been the sites of many important medical breakthroughs. Essential work in the fight against disease and to improve the quality of medicine continues to this day.

1846 First public demonstration of ether use during surgery
— *Massachusetts General Hospital*

1883 First use in North America of antiseptic during childbirth to protect mothers and newborns from deadly infections
— *Brigham and Women's Hospital*

1896 First use of X-ray image for diagnosis in U.S.
— *Massachusetts General Hospital*

1929 First use of iron lung to save polio victim
— *Brigham and Women's Hospital*



1947 First artificial kidney machine in U.S. perfected
— *Brigham and Women's Hospital*

1954 First successful human organ transplant
— *Brigham and Women's Hospital*

1962 First successful surgical reattachment of severed limb
— *Massachusetts General Hospital*

2000 AIDS researchers at Mass General make groundbreaking discovery in treatment of early detected HIV.
— *Massachusetts General Hospital*

BRIGHAM AND
WOMEN'S HOSPITAL


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MASSACHUSETTS
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Givers and takers

The Big Dig notwithstanding, Massachusetts is one of the biggest losers in the tax-and-spend game run by the federal government. According to the Washington, DC-based Tax Foundation, in fiscal year 2002 the state got only 75 cents in federal expenditures in return for every tax dollar Bay State residents sent to the nation's capital. Since 1990, when the state got \$1.08 back for every dollar, Massachusetts has fallen from 25th to 46th in the ratio of federal benefits to federal taxes. We've fallen seven places since fiscal year 2000, when we ranked 39th and got 86 cents back for every dollar. (See *State of the States*, CW, Spring 2002.) Only Colorado, whose federal spending per tax dollar slid from \$1.16 to 78 cents, suffered a bigger decline since 1990.

The biggest factor pushing Massachusetts down the list may be the state's high personal income, which means that a relatively large number of citizens have high tax bills and a relatively small number qualify for federal programs based on income eligibility. Based on 2001 income tax returns, the IRS estimated that only two states have higher average personal incomes: Connecticut and New Jersey, which fare even worse than Massachusetts in getting their federal tax dollars back. The only high-income states to enjoy a "profit" in federal spending were Maryland and Virginia.

Of course, if one looks only at the money coming in to the state, and not the tax dollars going out, Massachusetts does much better. According to the Tax Foundation, the Bay State received \$6,933 in federal expenditures per capita in fiscal year 2002, significantly higher than the \$6,326 spent per capita nationwide. How do we come out ahead? Looking at fiscal year 2001 spending per-capita, the Northeast-Midwest Institute (www.nemw.org) noted that Massachusetts got far more than the national norm for transit improvement, refugee aid, and energy assistance for low-income families. Among the 10 largest federal formula grant programs, Massachusetts got more than the norm in just three areas: temporary assistance for needy families, Medicaid grants, and special education grants. But it got far less for school lunch and supplemental nutrition programs, as well as Head Start and foster care.

—ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN

STATE RETURN ON FEDERAL TAXES

STATE	SPENDING PER TAX DOLLAR, 1990	STATE	SPENDING PER TAX DOLLAR, 2002
1. New Mexico	\$2.05	1. New Mexico	\$2.37
2. Mississippi	\$1.66	2. North Dakota	\$2.07
3. North Dakota	\$1.52	3. Alaska	\$1.91
4. Montana	\$1.44	4. Mississippi	\$1.89
Virginia	\$1.44	5. West Virginia	\$1.82
6. Alabama	\$1.43	6. Montana	\$1.67
7. West Virginia	\$1.39	7. Alabama	\$1.64
8. Missouri	\$1.36	8. South Dakota	\$1.61
9. South Dakota	\$1.35	9. Hawaii	\$1.57
10. Utah	\$1.34	10. Arkansas	\$1.55
11. South Carolina	\$1.32	11. Oklahoma	\$1.52
12. Arkansas	\$1.31	12. Kentucky	\$1.50
13. Louisiana	\$1.30	Virginia	\$1.50
14. Idaho	\$1.28	14. Louisiana	\$1.48
15. Kentucky	\$1.27	15. Maine	\$1.34
16. Arizona	\$1.25	Missouri	\$1.34
17. Oklahoma	\$1.24	South Carolina	\$1.34
18. Maryland	\$1.23	18. Idaho	\$1.31
19. Maine	\$1.22	19. Tennessee	\$1.26
20. Alaska	\$1.20	20. Iowa	\$1.23
21. Colorado	\$1.16	21. Maryland	\$1.22
22. Tennessee	\$1.14	22. Arizona	\$1.21
23. Hawaii	\$1.13	23. Nebraska	\$1.19
24. Nebraska	\$1.12	24. Utah	\$1.14
25. Iowa	\$1.08	25. Kansas	\$1.13
Massachusetts	\$1.08	Vermont	\$1.13
27. Wyoming	\$1.07	27. Pennsylvania	\$1.09
28. Kansas	\$1.06	28. Rhode Island	\$1.08
Rhode Island	\$1.06	29. North Carolina	\$1.07
30. Ohio	\$0.99	30. Wyoming	\$1.06
31. Texas	\$0.97	31. Ohio	\$1.03
32. Florida	\$0.96	32. Florida	\$1.01
Pennsylvania	\$0.96	Georgia	\$1.01
Washington	\$0.96	34. Indiana	\$1.00
35. Oregon	\$0.95	35. Oregon	\$0.98
36. Georgia	\$0.94	36. Texas	\$0.92
37. North Carolina	\$0.93	37. Michigan	\$0.88
38. California	\$0.89	Wisconsin	\$0.88
39. Indiana	\$0.88	39. Washington	\$0.87
40. Vermont	\$0.87	40. Delaware	\$0.85
41. Minnesota	\$0.86	New York	\$0.85
Wisconsin	\$0.86	42. Colorado	\$0.78
43. New York	\$0.83	43. Illinois	\$0.77
44. Michigan	\$0.82	Minnesota	\$0.77
45. Connecticut	\$0.78	45. California	\$0.76
46. Nevada	\$0.77	46. Massachusetts	\$0.75
47. Delaware	\$0.75	Nevada	\$0.74
Illinois	\$0.75	48. New Hampshire	\$0.66
49. New Hampshire	\$0.74	49. Connecticut	\$0.65
50. New Jersey	\$0.68	50. New Jersey	\$0.62

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Capital campaign

Creating social wealth in Woburn, SCI is ready to grow

BY ROBERT PREER

Many people at one time or another have read a book or article so engaging and compelling they vowed that once they finished it, they would get up and do something—volunteer for a cause, send money to a charity, or go on a diet. Cross-country flights, with their minimal distractions and rarefied air, tend to encourage such inner calls to action. But when the plane touches down, life intrudes. Obligations arise. Soon, all those good intentions are overwhelmed, the ambitious plans placed on a shelf along with the book that inspired them.

Unless you're David Crowley. In the fall of 2000, Crowley, then the head of the Boston nonprofit Generations Inc., was flying to San Francisco for a conference. He became absorbed in Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone*, a now-classic book on America's frayed social fabric and the decline in what Putnam and other academics call "social capital"—the value of connections among individuals in society. The title refers to the demise of bowling leagues at a time when the number of bowlers was on the rise—paralleling the demise of so many community-based organizations. As the plane began to land, Crowley devoured the final chapter, which offers a set of prescriptions for curing the country's social ills.

"I said, 'By golly, I have to do something about this,'" Crowley recalls. "I wanted to jump out of the plane and get to work."

When he returned home to Woburn a few days later, his fervor over the book, which had been published earlier in the year, was still strong. He talked about it with his wife, Jodi, who was then working for the National Conference for Community and Justice, an organization that promotes racial and religious understanding. She was skeptical at first. "She would say, 'Give it a rest,'" Crowley says.

While he couldn't give it a rest, neither did he know precisely what to do. After what he describes as "a few months

of agitation," Crowley finally hit on an idea. He would create an organization in Woburn—his boyhood home to which he had recently returned—that would connect hitherto isolated individuals and community groups.

"I had been trying to make connections in Woburn, but when you went on the Internet and used a search engine, all you got was people trying to sell you things. At some point, a light bulb went on in my head about what was needed," Crowley says.



*SCI founder David Crowley couldn't stand still after reading *Bowling Alone*.*

Thus was born Social Capital Inc. The name is taken from the concept that is at the heart of Putnam's thesis—that connections among people add value to a society in much the same way that financial capital does. SCI Woburn, as it is known in the city, is connecting citizens to information, through its Web site (www.sciwoburn.org) and "Civic Welcome Wagon" booklets, and to each other, through volunteer beautification efforts and summer concerts in the downtown area. SCI also runs training programs for emerging community leaders and promotes

civic engagement through its Woburn Youth Council, a collaboration with the local Boys and Girls Club and YMCA.

Now, after two years of community building in Woburn, Crowley is ready to spread his civic gospel—and model—to other cities in the Boston area. First stop: Dorchester.

YOU CAN GO HOME AGAIN

Crowley got serious about putting Putnam's ideas into practice in early 2001, when he made the rounds of Boston philanthropies. (He did not seek out Putnam, who is on the faculty at Harvard University, but the two have met several times since SCI was up and running, and they exchange e-mail occasionally.) He then approached key individuals in Woburn—leaders in city government and established community organizations. Thanks to Crowley's own ability to connect with people, he made quick progress.

"You feel he really wants the input from people," says Fel Medeiros, founder of the Woburn Residents' Environmental Network. "Then they have a stake in things. He's a terrific coach."

Crowley is ready to spread his civic gospel to other cities.

After stirring up interest in SCI, Crowley called an open meeting. Louise Nolan, an assistant superintendent of schools in Woburn, agreed to co-host, lending the get-together respectability in the community. About 35 people came to that first gathering, in early 2002. They included the chief of police, school officials, and leaders of the Boys and Girls Club and YMCA. Roughly half the attendees were people who were not known as community leaders but had read about the meeting in the local newspaper, the *Daily Times Chronicle*.

"The idea I was pitching to folks was, 'Here is a problem. We have to do something about it,'" Crowley says. Those attending the meeting took the pitch, and encouraged Crowley to go forward. With a few small grants, mostly from local businesses, Crowley was able to start some initiatives, rolling out the SCI Woburn Web site that

summer. Crowley quit his job at Generations Inc., a Boston-based organization that runs community service programs involving youths and seniors. He wouldn't be able to pay himself a salary from SCI for another six months, but by that time his wife had switched careers; as a real estate broker, she was making enough money to support the two of them.

Crowley, 33, is soft-spoken and engaging. In conversation, he throws in the phrase "by golly," underscoring his earnestness. He says that his choice of occupation—community builder—was no accident. His father was an administrator for the state Department of Youth Services, and his mother taught first grade at St. Charles Elementary School in Woburn. "With both of my parents involved in what you might call the helping professions, I had a genetic predisposition to be in this field," he says.

The eldest of three children, Crow-



SCI boosters: Boston Globe Foundation director Leah Bailey (left) and Woburn alderman-at-large Joanna Gonsalves.

ley graduated in 1987 from Woburn High School, where he was senior class president and a member of the varsity baseball team. He went to Harvard University the next year, at a time when volunteerism was becoming one of the hottest trends on college campuses, especially in the Boston area. City Year, the youth service program launched in Boston in 1988, drew national attention. For his part, Crowley volunteered at a homeless shelter in Cambridge and tutored disadvantaged children in Dorchester. As an

upperclassman, he started a program that made Harvard students mentors to Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School students.

After graduation in 1991, Crowley received a grant from Harvard to do outreach with disadvantaged youth in rural Kentucky. Based at Berea College, his volunteer initiative grew into a regional program, and when Congress and President Clinton established the AmeriCorps volunteer service program, Crowley was tapped to head the organization in Kentucky.

After five years in Kentucky, Crowley and his wife, who was a student at Berea College when they met, decided to move to the Boston area. They rented an apartment in Everett, but soon began looking for a house. Woburn, a small city where real estate prices had not yet soared out of reach, was a logical choice for a young couple working for social service agencies, even if Crowley hadn't grown up there.

"It wasn't so much going back to my roots," Crowley says. "But we looked at the prices of homes and saw this was a place we could afford."

Located 10 miles northwest of Boston, at the crossroads of I-93 and Route 128, Woburn is a middle-class bedroom community of 37,000 people, with suburban subdivisions

and an old downtown. The city is just over 90 percent white, but with growing Asian, Latino, and African-American populations.

SCI Woburn is located in a business park on the east side of the city, near Route 128. Crowley says he would have preferred an office in Woburn's downtown, but the space near the highway was available for the right price. Crowley's staff consists of a part-time administrative aide and an AmeriCorps fellow, who works with young people.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

On Sept. 11, 2002, SCI had something of a public coming-out. To mark the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks, volunteers organized by SCI planted daffodil bulbs at Woburn's Horn Pond. They held a community forum and candlelight ceremonies, undaunted by high winds. People in Woburn began to notice the fledgling organization.

"In one week we showed in a lot of ways that we were doing things to add value to the community," Crowley says. That fall, SCI set up a 20-member youth council, drawn from members of established service organizations. SCI trains middle and high school students on the council to be civic leaders, then puts them in charge of



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roughly \$7,000 in state grant money to other youth groups involved in community service. The funds have gone to environmental cleanups, recycling initiatives, and a rock concert to raise money for charity. In 2003, the youth council organized a debate at Woburn High School between the two contenders in the mayoral election.

SCI has also launched an adult leadership training program. Crowley notes that one of the reasons Putnam identified for the demise of community-based organizations was the dearth of new leaders to replace those who leave.

"You have this same group of people who do everything, and over time, the group gets smaller and smaller as people get burned out," he says. The leadership trainees in Woburn meet regularly and get instruction on public speaking, running meetings, and understanding local government.

Another SCI initiative is a summer concert series. While the city has had summer concerts in the past featuring pop standards, last year's three concerts featured Brazilian jazz, doo-wop, and contemporary rock. Six concerts are scheduled for this summer.

Early this year, SCI Woburn launched the Civic Welcome Wagon. Volunteers contact every new resident to the city and deliver to them—in person, when possible—a 30-page booklet with such information as phone numbers for city departments, contacts for youth sports, and child care options. (The booklet is delivered with a free coffee mug.) Tucked in the back is a voter registration form.

Joanna Gonsalves, a Woburn alderman at-large and a psychology professor at Salem State College, is a Civic Welcome Wagon volunteer, and she says about half of those contacted ask for the home visit. "What I've found is when I show up, people have a pot of coffee made, and there are cookies on the table. It becomes a social thing," she says.

The visits might also bring new recruits to other community programs. "What I like about SCI is that it has brought new people to the table," says Sandy Morander, district vice president for the YMCA of Greater Boston and head of the Woburn Y.

Gonsalves agrees. "For the September 11 events, there were three generations working together," she notes. "I don't know of any other group that does that."

TRANSPLANTING THE CIVIC SEED

After subsisting for two years on small grants from a variety of sources, last fall SCI won a grant that would give it much-needed financial stability—and a launching pad for expansion. Crowley had approached the Boston Globe Foundation, the charitable arm of the newspaper, which was especially interested in programs that promote civic participation.

"We wanted to find groups we could partner with and





Doreen Treacy, director of the Health Services Partnership in Dorchester, sees a vital need for SCI in her neighborhood.

make a deep investment in and bring the group to the next level,” says Leah Bailey, director of the foundation. “It was a perfect fit for what David was doing.”

Even better, the Globe Foundation wanted to support a program within the city of Boston and Crowley wanted to bring the SCI model to a Boston neighborhood. In October, the foundation awarded SCI \$60,000, with the understanding that more support would be forthcoming if the organization continued to thrive. Counting other grants, SCI has a budget of \$150,000 for 2004.

Crowley hopes SCI Dorchester will do for Boston’s largest residential neighborhood what SCI Woburn has

‘I think we have had a catalytic effect in Woburn.’

done for his hometown—build an infrastructure for community involvement. The new group will work with the Health Services Partnership of Dorchester, which is itself a joint venture of the Codman Square Health Center and the Dorchester House Multi-Service Center. The partnership is giving SCI office space in the Codman Square agency.

Dorchester already has a multitude of community-based organizations, but Doreen Treacy, director of the health partnership, says SCI will perform a vital function. “What our community has historically lacked that SCI

can provide is a central convener, a place where conversations can occur and connections [can be] made across boundaries,” says Treacy.

Crowley plans a six-month startup period, during which a Web site will be constructed and the framework for a youth council established. SCI Dorchester initially will focus on the neighborhoods around Codman Square and Fields Corner. The area is racially mixed, with significant numbers of whites, African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Haitians.

“We have to be careful about not making assumptions that what worked in Woburn will work in Dorchester,” says Crowley. “But we do think we have some concepts that are transferable.”

Crowley also hopes that Dorchester won’t be the end of SCI’s proliferation. Over the next three years, he plans to open sites in four other communities—one more in Boston, one in a bedroom community similar to Woburn, and two in an older, medium-sized city, such as Lowell or Brockton.

But Crowley does not see himself expanding SCI across the country. Rather, his fondest hope is that Social Capital Inc. will serve as a model that will help groups elsewhere build home-grown social capital-creating initiatives.

“I think we have had a catalytic effect in Woburn. We’ve helped to make things happen,” he says. “We like to see ways we can work with a relatively small number of people to have ripple effects.” ■



Programmers at work at a software firm in Bangalore, India.

OFFSHORE LEAVE

As white-collar jobs head overseas,
can middle-class workers here reinvent
themselves fast enough to stay afloat?

BY MICHAEL JONAS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK MORELLI

The 4th Congressional District, represented by 12-term Democrat Barney Frank, snakes its way from the pricey Boston suburbs of Newton and Wellesley more than 50 miles south to the blue-collar city of New Bedford on Buzzards Bay. A product of various redistricting maneuvers over the years, it is probably the oddest shaped of the 10 Massachusetts House seats. The twists and turns of political mapmaking, however, have provided Frank with one unintended benefit: They have given him a perfect window into American attitudes on economic globalization.

In 1993, Congress was in the throes of debate over the North American Free Trade Agreement. The treaty promised expanded trade with Mexico and Canada but was viewed by labor leaders as

a grave threat to US manufacturing jobs. "I got a lot of mail," says Frank. "I could look at the envelope and, like Karnac, tell you if it was pro- or anti-NAFTA." Letters that were formally addressed and in typed envelopes almost always came from the northern end of his district and urged him to support the trade agreement. Envelopes addressed by hand, he says, were invariably from blue-collar communities at the district's southern end, and their writers implored Frank to vote against NAFTA, which he ultimately did.

Today, it's clear from the 4th District mailbag that something big has happened. Frank is again hearing from constituents fretting over the potential impact of free trade. But suddenly it is

the white-collar world at the northern end of his district that is wondering whether a borderless, global economy is such a good thing after all.

"These are not relatively uneducated industrial workers,"

Frank says of the constituents writing to him these days. "These are among the most articulate members of society." And they aren't happy with what they see.

At the center of the new economic unease is "offshoring," the newfangled term for moving US jobs to lower-cost overseas locations. Whether they involve back-office accountants in Bangalore or programmers in Pune, stories of US firms pulling up stakes in this country and shipping thousands of jobs to India and other countries have dominated the business news. The trend is, in many ways, no different from the steady emigration of manufacturing jobs over the past few decades. However, the jobs now heading overseas include skilled work done by college-educated workers, the kind of work that was supposed to be export-proof. That fact, some say, makes this stage of globalization fundamentally different from earlier ones, and potentially much more troubling for the future economic security of Americans.

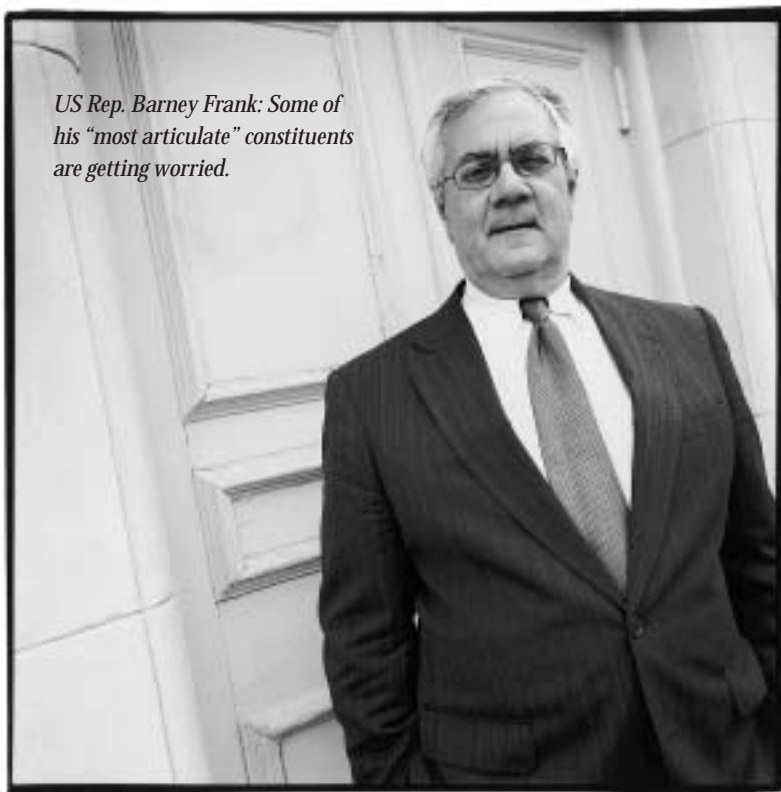
"In the past, it was thought that if you went to college, your economic well-being was more or less guaranteed," says Alan Clayton-Matthews, an economist at the University of Massachusetts–Boston. "Now it's no longer the case."

The offshoring of white-collar jobs "breaks the promise of what I call the globalization cheerleaders," says Alan Tonelson, a research fellow at the US Business & Industry Council and author of *Race to the Bottom: Why a Worldwide Worker Surplus and Uncontrolled Free Trade Are Sinking American Living Standards*. That promise, says Tonelson, was that "workers can achieve economic security if only they would retrain themselves with the skills needed to cross that bridge to the 21st century, in Bill Clinton's phrase. Now we see that's no guarantee of anything."

There are plenty of people who say the warning bells being sounded over offshoring are false alarms. In fact, most leading economists and business leaders say the trend is just the latest manifestation of a long-running dynamic of economic change. Offshoring, they say, is part of a new era that will draw billions of players into an expanding global economy, one in which the US will continue to thrive as the leader of innovation—and home to the high-value jobs that will ride the wave of expansion.

Despite such assurances, offshoring has hit a raw nerve in the US body politic. In February, when the chairman of

the White House Council of Economic Advisors, Gregory Mankiw, called offshoring "a good thing" that simply represents "a new way of doing international trade," an uproar ensued, with some of the harshest criticism coming from



US Rep. Barney Frank: Some of his "most articulate" constituents are getting worried.

Jobs for skilled college graduates were supposed to be export-proof.

Republican members of Congress who represent states that suffered large job losses in the recent recession. Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry jumped on the issue, branding corporate leaders who send jobs overseas "Benedict Arnold CEOs."

That debate has migrated from cable news talk shows to business school classrooms. In response to student demand, MIT's Sloan School of Management recently began offering a course on offshoring. With formal texts and firm data hard to come by, most sessions consist of guest lectures. Among the parade of speakers who came through the class this spring was former US labor secretary Robert Reich. According to a *Boston Globe* account of his appearance,

Reich dismissed the offshoring ruckus as much ado about not much. "A year from now we will not hear about outsourcing," he told the class. "This is business-cycle related."

But not all the voices of doom and gloom are coming from the anti-corporate agitators who brought chaos to the World Trade Organization meetings in Seattle five years ago. Among those sounding the offshoring alarm, for example, is economist Paul Craig Roberts, a former assistant treasury secretary in the Reagan administration and a one-time avid free-trade proponent. Asked what he sees as the future for the US middle class, Roberts says, "There won't be one. All the avenues for upward mobility are being shut off by outsourcing and offshoring."

If Roberts can be accused of overstating the potential for cataclysm, Reich's assessment may be too glib. The truth, if it can be found, probably lies somewhere in between. But there's an awful lot riding on which view is closer to the mark.



Former high-tech executive Vin Maietta: "What's going to be left?"

OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF JOB

The furor over jobs heading overseas has been described using two related, but distinct, terms. Many stories refer to the practice as "outsourcing," a term that is accurate, but incomplete, in characterizing the job-shifting phenomenon. Outsourcing is a common business practice, which entails contracting with another firm to perform a particular task rather than retaining the work in-house. The use of clean-

ing companies to service the janitorial needs of office buildings is an example of widespread outsourcing in the US.

"Offshoring" denotes moving a particular job function to another country. Although offshoring often also involves outsourcing—that is, contracting with an overseas firm to provide the service—some US companies are establishing their own offshore affiliates or subsidiaries to employ overseas workers. In either case, the principle behind offshoring is no different from the one that leads firms to engage in domestic outsourcing: the belief that it can obtain a desired service or task at a lower cost.

If the anti-offshoring movement has an elder statesman, it is probably Ross Perot. It was the billionaire Texas businessman who, in his 1992 campaign for president, warned of the "giant sucking sound" that would emanate from Mexico as thousands of US jobs moved over the border if NAFTA were passed. At the same time, Perot could easily be crowned with a second title: the granddaddy of outsourcing. The company Perot founded in 1962, Electronic Data Systems, has been one of the most successful outsourcing firms in US business, handling payroll accounting for thousands of US employers.

That irony would hardly be lost on today's business leaders, who find themselves in the crosshairs of the growing outcry over offshoring. In a global economy with competitors near and far, they say, the same business imperative that leads firms to outsource tasks to other firms in this country compels them to seek such advantages abroad.

"We have no other choice," says John McEleney, CEO of SolidWorks, a Concord-based software firm that specializes in computer-assisted design and has operations in India. "This is the thing people have to get their heads around. It's happening. The genie is out."

That view is certainly the predominant one in the air on a balmy day in May, as 175 of New England's leading technology entrepreneurs and investors gather for the fifth annual Nantucket Conference on the tony resort island off Cape Cod. These high-level skull sessions have become an important venue for free-flowing discussions among the captains of the Massachusetts high-tech industry. This year, the conference organizers have put offshoring on the agenda, and they've got the perfect man to moderate a panel discussion on the topic.

"For the last three years I've been ground zero of the offshore debate, because I made the mistake of putting some numbers around it," says John McCarthy to the group. Many of the news stories on offshoring over the past two

years have relied on a 2002 report by McCarthy, an analyst at Cambridge-based Forrester Research, estimating that as many as 3.3 million US service-sector jobs will be moved offshore between 2000 and 2015.

The Forrester report has been followed by other efforts to project the extent of offshoring into the future. Last year, University of California–Berkeley researchers declared that approximately 14 million Americans, or 11 percent of the US workforce, hold jobs in occupations that are at risk of offshoring. Then, in May, Forrester revised its estimate, projecting a slight uptick in total jobs offshored to 3.4 million, but, more significantly, forecasting that the pace of offshoring would accelerate. The new report estimates that 830,000 service sector jobs will be moved offshore by 2005, a sizeable increase from the estimate of 588,000 jobs offshored by that time in the earlier report.

Despite the reports and studies, the fact is no one has a good handle on how much offshoring has taken place, let alone what the future holds. The Forrester report estimates that approximately 300,000 information technology jobs have moved offshore over the past three years. But in June, for the first time, the US Labor Department issued a report on job offshoring. According to its survey of layoffs at companies employing 50 workers or more, just 4,633 US workers were laid off during the first three months of 2004 due to their jobs moving overseas, representing a mere 2 percent of all private-sector layoffs during that period.

The reliability of such self-reported figures from companies is not clear. But neither is that of any other offshoring statistic. Still, few dispute which direction the numbers are heading.

“Whatever the level of outsourcing is today, it will clearly continue to grow,” says Barbara Berke, director of the state Department of Business and Technology.

Addressing the Nantucket Conference attendees, McCarthy explains that overseas outsourcing has become so vital to IT firms that Silicon Valley business leaders say “the offshoring plan is now more important than the business plan, in terms of attracting venture capital.”

OPEN MARKETS, OPEN SEASON

The sudden embrace of white-collar offshoring as a business strategy is driven by the confluence of several factors. Three huge countries that together are home to more than 2 billion people—China, India, and Russia—have within a short period of time opened their borders far wider to trade. Each country also has a segment of highly educated, skilled workers. Meanwhile, the rapid advance of Internet and other

telecommunication technologies allowing high-speed transmission of data at low cost has made the location of certain types of work less critical. Thus, computer programming, back-office accounting, medical transcription, and legal research—even the reading of X-rays and other medical tests—can, in theory, be done practically anywhere. And with wage scales in developing countries sometimes just 20 percent of that paid for comparable work in the US, the business case for offshoring is irrefutable.

“If what you do can be described in a manual, like software manufacturing, then there’s worldwide competition for your job,” says UMass economist Clayton-Matthews. While routinized white-collar jobs, like software coders or call-center operators, have been pegged as the most immediately vulnerable, the type of work that firms could ship overseas seems destined to move up the skill ladder. Using the Forrester Research projections on job offshoring over the next decade, the Washington, DC-based Progressive Policy Institute estimates that nearly half of those will be jobs paying more than \$33,000 a year; more than one-third will pay

more than \$46,000. For people working those jobs today, that could be bad news.

“We sent textiles and some labor-intensive jobs overseas and we said, ‘OK, people are going to get better white-collar jobs,’” says Weston resident Vin Maietta, a former high-tech logistics and manufacturing vice president

who was laid off last November. If white-collar jobs are shipped overseas, he asks, “What’s going to be left?”

That is the \$64,000 question sending shudders through the US workforce. The answer will be particularly important to the Massachusetts economy, one of the most technology-centered of any US state. In the recent UC–Berkeley report on offshoring, the outlook for Massachusetts appeared potentially ominous. While the researchers estimated that 11 percent of all US jobs could be vulnerable to offshoring, a bar graph of jobs at risk by large metropolitan area shows Boston rising higher than nearly every other, with 15 percent of jobs deemed at risk. Only San Francisco and Silicon Valley capital San Jose were shown as more vulnerable.

“Boston sticks up pretty high,” says report co-author Cynthia Kroll. But Kroll, a senior regional economist at Berkeley’s Center for Real Estate and Urban Economics, calls the report a “broad brush-type look at things” based on employment categories, and says that, in the end, Boston may prove more resilient than places like Sioux Falls, South Dakota, which has bet its future on back-office support jobs—the type of lower-skilled, white-collar work that seems most easily offshored.

That’s certainly the view of the Progressive Policy Institute.

More than 3 million
US service-sector
jobs may be moved
offshore by 2015.



CEO Brian Keane: Innovation means "millions of new jobs" in the US.

In its report, PPI vice president Robert Atkinson suggests that the US is now going through, on a global scale, the same shift in jobs that took place domestically in the 1960s, when the South and West experienced rapid growth from the movement of industries and jobs out of the Northeast and Midwest. The report points to Boston as one of the regions that, in the earlier era, was able to reinvent its economy based on "higher value-added jobs and services," while areas like upstate New York went into a long decline. As the pace of globalization increases and moves increasingly into white-collar occupations, the question for the US economy as a whole, writes Atkinson, is, "Will we follow the Boston region's path or upstate New York's?"

Berke, the state's business and technology director, says Massachusetts will undoubtedly feel the effects of offshoring, and the fact that more knowledge-based jobs are now vulnerable understandably "strikes fear" into workers who had thought their jobs safe from competition. But she echoes Atkinson's view that the state is better positioned than most to compete in the new global order. With the state's lead in cutting-edge industries ranging from biotechnology to precision manufacturing, Berke says, we should be redoubling efforts to capture research and development dollars and attract high-value-added industries, not bemoaning the inevitable loss of lower-skilled work.

"Massachusetts has a 300-year history of being in a global

economy, and we have, more than any other place in America, worked through the outflows and inflows," says Berke. "We lost cotton a long time ago. We lost shoes. We were 'it' in mini-computers." After each chapter, she says, the state's economy redirected itself toward new pursuits that created wealth and jobs, and today is no different.

GLOBAL REACH

The high-tech honchos gathered on Nantucket are more focused on the ultimate promise of technology-driven job shifts, not their potential peril. "I think it's a natural evolution," says panelist Brian Keane, CEO of Keane Inc., an information technology consulting and outsourcing company based in Boston. "More and more IT and business services jobs will move offshore," he says, in a later interview. "But at the same time, I think there will be millions of new jobs that are created on the front end of innovation."

Also on the offshoring panel is Desh Deshpande, chairman of Chelmsford-based Sycamore Networks and one of the heavy hitters of the Massachusetts high-tech industry.

Deshpande tells the audience that he thinks about the issue through the prism created by University of Michigan business professor C.K. Prahalad, author of *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid: Eradicating Poverty Through Profits*.

"There are 6 billion people in the world," says Deshpande. "There's about a billion who make more than \$2,000 a year. So far, economic activity has all been focused on those [1] billion people, ignoring the other 5 billion." As the economic pyramid gets broader and taller, Deshpande says, "There's going to be opportunities for everybody, and I think the US is probably best suited to get a big chunk of that."

In other words, globalization will not only provide lower cost avenues of production for firms in developed countries but, by lifting billions of people out of poverty, it will also create vast new markets, markets that will require lots of high-skilled US workers to manage and service.

Representing wary US tech workers on the Nantucket panel is Henry Fitek. The 58-year-old Harvard father of three spent 36 years in the IT world but has been out of work for a year and a half. Fitek worries that, far from having a dynamic effect in boosting the US economy, offshoring will do just the opposite. "Young people are changing their major away from computer science to other fields, so we're perpetuating the change," says Fitek, a leader of the 495 Network Support Group, an organization for displaced tech

workers. "We will be forced to outsource IT work because eventually we won't have the workforce here. Our skills will be *teaching* outsourcing and offshoring."

Fitek's gallows humor notwithstanding, the offshoring business is indeed booming. In the 1990s, Amit Maheshwari spent six years with General Electric and IBM Global Services, establishing software development centers in India for them. But seeing an opportunity to cast his own line into the offshoring waters, he struck out on his own four years ago. Just 26 at the time, and with only \$17,000 on hand, he set up i-Vantage, a Cambridge-based company that helps firms establish and run offshore operations in India. Unlike some companies that help companies to contract with Indian technology companies to provide offshore services, the company's model calls for US firms to hire Indian workers and put them on their payrolls. i-Vantage provides human resource assistance with hiring and helps find office space.

With 15 employees in the US and 300 in India who service the firm's international clients, Maheshwari says i-Vantage recorded \$4.3 million in revenue last year, a figure he expects to grow by at least 30 percent this year. "In the long run it will help with competitiveness, which is the fuel for growth," says Maheshwari of the impact offshoring will have in the US.

A case in point, he says, is the experience of St. Croix Systems, an i-Vantage client that sells software used by hospitals to track equipment. The company recently updated its main software product using offshore programming in India that would have cost two to three times as much in the US. The savings meant St. Croix could begin work on updates to other products, while getting the main software update out the door to their clients more rapidly.

"It's made a very big difference," says Troy Kenyon, CEO of St. Croix Systems. "The next phase of growth will be onshore as we ramp up additional sales and marketing. We will actually end up hiring more folks here than we would have."

That's an example of the virtuous cycle that offshoring boosters say an increasingly global economy will yield. But that is certainly not how the offshoring storyline is playing out these days.

In 1999, when US high-tech firms were facing a shortage of qualified workers, Atul Vashistha also heard offshoring opportunity knocking. The Indian-born entrepreneur founded neo-IT, an offshoring consulting firm based in San Ramon, Calif. Having helped clients "globalize" about \$1 billion of labor last year, Vashistha is having a pretty good run.

But the 38-year-old businessman, speaking by telephone from his West Coast office in late April, is not having such a great day. His picture is on the front-page of that morning's *Los Angeles Times*, and the paper might as well have added a bull's-eye onto the image. *he'll take your job and ship it*, blared the headline over a long profile of Vashistha, described in the story as "one of the leading practitioners of 'offshoring.'"

"As the sun started coming up, the volume of e-mail



State Sen. Jack Hart wants to ban the state from buying services offshore.

started going up," says Vashistha, describing the avalanche of angry messages he was receiving.

Not surprisingly, Vashistha says he would have put a very different headline on the story. "I would have said, *keeping america competitive or saving america*," says the native of Jaipur, in northwest India, who now boasts of being a proud US citizen. "I believe globalization is good for America, and I think it's great for the long-term future of our country."

NOT SO SHORE

In early March, Barney Frank took to the floor of the US House of Representatives to address the issue of jobs and the US economy. Federal Reserve Bank chairman Alan Greenspan frequently invokes economist Joseph Schumpeter and

his theory of “creative destruction,” Frank said. According to Schumpeter’s theory, which dates to the 1940s, in the long run, the economic churn that does away with certain jobs will yield better-paying, higher value-added positions in their place.

“As I have told Mr. Greenspan,” Frank said in his floor speech, “there is another economist whom people believe much more instinctively, John Maynard Keynes,” who famously remarked, “in the long run, we shall all be dead.”

In an interview, Frank says the backlash brewing against offshoring is being driven by a feeling that, no matter what its long-range benefits, most Americans are not enjoying the fruits of the globalization bounty. The US economy has rolled up record gains in productivity in recent years, driven by a mix of factors, including huge advances in technological innovation, as well as the offshoring of jobs. But unlike the period following previous recessions, US workers are getting little bounce from the rebound, Frank says. The recession officially ended in November 2001, only seven months after it began. Following the past five US recessions, Frank says, the real growth in wages and salaries over two years was 10 percent, 12 percent, 9 percent, 11 percent, and 3.6 percent, respectively. In the two-year period since the recent recession officially ended, wages and salaries have grown just 0.4 percent.

“You cannot argue for things that increase productivity if the majority of the people in the country are convinced, with good reason, that very little of that productivity will come to them,” says Frank.

Paul Harrington, of the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, says when the growth in national income in the two years following the end of a recession is considered, the share that went to wages in the two years following the 2001 recession was the smallest of any post-recession period in 50 years. Meanwhile, corporate profits have never represented a bigger share of the post-recession income growth. In the first two years after a recession, the corporate profits typically account for about 16 percent of national income growth, says Harrington, with 19 percent being the 50-year high before the 2001 recession. “This time around it’s 41 percent,” he says. “It’s just way out of line.”

The worry that offshoring may be good for business but bad for many families’ bottom line is translating into a raft of legislation at the state and federal level to ban or curtail the use of taxpayer funds to purchase offshore services. Legislation has been passed or is pending in 31 states to curb the use of public dollars on offshore services, and there are eight bills pending in Congress to address offshoring at the federal level.

In Massachusetts, state Sen. Jack Hart attached an amendment to the state budget to ban state purchasing of offshore services after learning that a portion of a \$200,000-a-month contract to handle customer service calls from food stamp recipients is handled at a call center in India. “I am appalled that we have taxpayer-supported services that are being shifted to a Third World country,” says Hart. Romney vetoed the budget rider in June; at press time, the Legislature had yet to take up overrides.

Last year, the state of Indiana reversed course on a contract to offshore welfare services that would have saved the state \$8.1 million. According to the US Chamber of Commerce, the decision to scrap the contract will cost Indiana taxpayers \$162,000 per job saved. Meanwhile, North Carolina agreed to spend an extra \$1.2 million to save 34 in-state call center jobs that had been slated for elimination, with the work to be handled offshore.

Blocking federal or state service contractors from offshoring will hardly stop job emigration. And many would argue that lower-skilled call-center jobs or routine back-

office processing positions are not the jobs we should be fighting to retain anyway, especially when it involves forsaking savings in public spending that might otherwise be available for other needed services.

What’s clear, however, is that offshoring has become the touchstone for Americans’ growing sense of economic insecurity—and, for some, moral outrage. Jeff Crosby is president of Local 201 of the International Union of Electrical Workers/Communication Workers of America, which represents workers at General Electric’s turbine manufacturing plant in Lynn. Defense manufacturing has hardly been immune from offshoring, a fact that strikes Crosby and other labor leaders as a bitter irony. Among those hit by layoffs at the Lynn plant caused by a shifting of defense work to a GE facility in Mexico was a worker whose son is serving in Iraq.

“Nobody thinks you should have to send your kid to Iraq and your job to Mexico in the same day,” says Crosby. “The whole concept of ‘public good’ is under attack.”

Compounding the unease is the fact that even among the most ardent globalization advocates there are hints of uncertainty as to whether the newest chapter in the free-trade story will stay on script. “If foreign countries specialize in high-skilled areas where we have an advantage, we could be worse off,” Harvard economist Robert Lawrence, a member of the Council of Economic Advisors during the Clinton administration, told *Business Week* last year. “I still have faith that globalization will make us better off, but it’s no more than faith.”

There are hints of
uncertainty even
among advocates
of globalization.

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GLOBALIZATION WARMING

At the Nantucket Conference panel discussion, CEO Brian Keane was brimming with faith in globalization, but worried about talk of reining in its reach. When asked what the appropriate response of the federal government should be to concerns over offshoring, he had a straightforward answer: “Stay out of the way.”

Although his reply might be sound economic theory and sound business strategy, it may not be viable public policy. Barney Frank says the offshoring issue is poisoning the political environment for all trade treaties. For example, he says, Republican leaders in Congress are holding back a treaty to expand trade with Central American countries because they worry that it would face rough going. “If equity is not enough, self-interest ought to persuade” free-trade advocates that mitigating measures are needed, he says.

One way to temper the budding backlash against offshoring, and to address important needs in education, environmental protection, and health care, says Frank, would be to capture some of the huge productivity gains of the past several years on behalf of average Americans. “Let’s take a part of the wealth we’re generating and put it to public uses,” he says.

“Taking” that wealth means taxing it, something there appears to be little appetite for in the current Congress. But Frank insists that policy-makers may have to do something in order to gain public support for economic globalization—support that is, if anything, eroding as the offshoring job cycle speeds up. “Fifteen years ago, [free traders] told me to tell garment workers [in my district] to retrain to be programmers,” Frank points out; now, programmers are the ones fearing for their jobs.

But Daniel Drezner, a University of Chicago political scientist who is writing a book on globalization, turns that observation on its head. “A lot of the jobs that are under threat now didn’t even exist 15 years ago,” he says.

That doesn’t make the new white-collar job dislocations any easier. In the 1980s, Karen Schneider worked as a secretary at General Electric’s ordnance facility in Pittsfield. After getting laid off, she went back to school and received a bachelor’s degree in computer information systems in 1990 from Westfield State College.

“You do all the right things,” she says. “I went to state college, I got my degree. Tech was the field to be in.” But after a decade in the high-tech industry, she got laid off again, in February 2003, this time from a computer consulting firm in Lynn. She has been looking for a new job ever since, but to no avail. “I’m kind of lost as to what I’m supposed to do now,” she says. “I’m a little bit tired of going back to school. And it’s not cheap.”

Clayton-Matthews, the UMass-Boston economist, says there remains a huge pay premium for those with college degrees. “The mantra is still the same: Go to college,” he says.

But Clayton-Matthews says that old mantra now comes with an added stanza: "Be prepared not to have a single job in your career, or even a single career."

Some experts say what we need are not restrictions on trade and offshoring but ways to provide support for a workforce that will have to put up with far more volatility than ever before. Among the ideas that have been floated is "wage insurance." In 2001, Brookings Institution scholar Robert Litan and Lori Kletzer, an economist at the University of California–Santa Cruz, outlined the concept, whereby states would provide, for up to two years, some fraction of the wages lost by workers who are laid off. Unlike traditional unemployment insurance, however, workers would collect

"Unless policy-makers get out ahead of the offshoring debate, they will find themselves reacting to a host of Band-Aid proposals that do more harm than good," Brainard and Litan wrote in a recent policy brief.

THE ELEPHANT AND THE PENTIUM

While various policy approaches might help a white-collar workforce navigate the new reality of increasingly turbulent economic times, Massachusetts government and business leaders say the most important thing the state can do is maintain its standing at the top of the skills ladder.

"We can't afford to do [here] what people can do for \$5,000 [a year] somewhere else in the world, because it's not sustainable," says Deshpande, the Sycamore Networks chairman, who donated \$20 million to MIT two years ago to found the Deshpande Center for Technological Innovation.

Maintaining the state's edge as a center of research and development, not lashing out at offshoring, is the key to remaining competitive as globalization extends to higher-skilled work, says Berke, the state director of business and technology. If anxiety over offshoring "inspires people to pursue education, then it's not misplaced," she says. "But it should not be used by the Chicken Littles. The sky is not falling."

Deshpande echoes that sentiment, and points out that places like India and China are still overwhelmingly poor countries that are a long way from competing with the US on an even footing. "Thirty years ago, when I came here from India, people always used to say, 'Do you have an elephant at home?'" Deshpande said at the Nantucket conference of tech leaders, laughing at the distorted image Americans held of his native country. "Now it's the other way around. They all

think that everybody in India has a computer. Neither one of them is true."

That may help to keep some of the offshoring angst in perspective. And robust job growth over the coming months would surely dampen the offshoring debate. But there's no doubt that the growth trend line in India is for PCs, not pachyderms, just as there will be millions more people with college-level skills in China and other parts of the world. With that in mind, even if they heed the call to continue reaching ever higher on the skills ladder, it's hard to blame American workers for keeping one eye over their shoulder. ■



Laid-off worker Karen Schneider: "Tech was the field to be in"—until it wasn't.

payments only after securing a new job. The payments would supplement the income of those able to secure new employment only at a lower wage.

Others have proposed wage insurance specifically targeted to workers affected by offshoring, as well as expanding the benefits of the federal Trade Adjustment Assistance program, which assists displaced manufacturing workers, to include service-sector workers.

Litan and fellow Brookings scholar Lael Brainard have also called for tax reform in order to eliminate incentives to send work offshore, incentives that include allowing companies to defer taxes on foreign earnings but not domestic.

TECHNOLOGY UPGRADE



*A biotech lab at Transkaryotic
Therapies, in Cambridge.*

Will displaced IT workers find a place
in the industries of the future?

On a sunny April morning, three dozen people drift into a sterile white conference room at the University of Phoenix job-training center in Westborough and collect in small groups, making idle conversation. Most are male, and most are white. Virtually all are age 45 or older. To a person, they have experience in electronics or technology. They are mechanical engineers, software programmers, support technicians, operations managers. As they go around the room introducing themselves, the places they say they've worked make up a who's who of high tech—EMC Corp., Electronic Data Services, Digital Equipment Corp., Hewlett-Packard.

It is 9:45 a.m. on a Wednesday. Everyone should be at work. But these people are not. Instead, they are attending a meeting of the 495 Networking Support Group, a nonprofit organization established three years ago to help unemployed professionals from the state's high-tech belt help each other find jobs.

You could call these jobless techies the new face of unemployment in Massachusetts, except that "new" wouldn't be entirely accurate. Many have been unemployed for a year or more. They are highly skilled, well educated veterans of the state's formerly burgeoning technology sector. But they find themselves and their qualifications out of sync with today's labor market. They are, in the latest lingo, "out of alignment."

Take Michael Gallagher. At age 46, Gallagher is coming off of eight years as a quality-assurance engineer, checking software to make sure it operates properly. His last full-time job, which paid \$65,000 a year, was with a company that managed billing for Internet service providers. Like many others, it failed after the telecommunications sector collapsed in 2001. Now the bespectacled father of three has been out of work for more than a year, and he's well aware that the work he used to do could now be done anywhere in the world.

"My job definitely can go," he says. "They can send it overseas easily. I don't blame them. I would, too, if I had my own company."

In theory, Gallagher could get his skills back into alignment by retraining. The question is, for what? Drug-making giant Novartis needs hundreds of people

BY MATT KELLY | PHOTOGRAPHS BY FLINT BORN

in its new Cambridge research center, and it is only one of several pharmaceutical companies coming here to reap the harvest of Massachusetts's biotech incubator. Dozens of Bay State companies are doing pioneering work in micro-electronics and nanotechnology (the science of building devices only a few billionths of a meter in size), industries that barely existed five years ago. Demand for wireless networking equipment has breathed new life into the previously dead telecommunications sector.

But such a career leap is easier said than done, especially for out-of-work workers who are middle-aged and have mortgages, families, and expenses coming from all sides. The know-how they trained for, and in, the high-tech world of the 1990s does not necessarily equip them for the new technologies of the 21st century. It's not so easy to make the leap from IT to DNA, or from building modems to building nano-electronics. For those looking to revive a career at the leading edge of technology, the process of retraining—indeed, re-education—could be complicated, uncertain, and expensive.

"It's the big issue of our time," says economist Michael Best, director of the Center for Industrial Competitiveness at the University of Massachusetts–Lowell. He sees a "tectonic shift" in the state's industrial structure, away from a few large companies that developed new research *and* turned them into new industries—and toward many small companies that mostly develop new research.

But in a discordant symphony of small companies, it's harder to know how to fill the chairs. A host of start-ups are looking for workers who can play many tunes, some of them in the key of hard science. In contrast to the days when Wang Computers and DEC defined the industry for job seekers, "nobody knows how to characterize demand in this new system," says Best. And nobody knows how, exactly, to help displaced workers get into it.

TECH BOOMS AND BUSTS

It should surprise no one that Massachusetts has experienced painful contortions in its employment picture in the past three years. It is part of our fate as an epicenter of innovation: We develop new industries, reap economic benefits as they grow, and then endure the inevitable slump as the industries mature and their jobs are shipped elsewhere. Agriculture gave way to manufacturing, which gave way to mini-computers, which gave way to the Internet. That much we know. The question is what comes next—and how to get the dislocated workers of today to fill the jobs of tomorrow.

"It is a very complex problem that faces the Commonwealth," says Jane Edmonds, director of the Department of

Workforce Development. "When you have unemployed skilled workers, when you think about the time that might be required to retrain a person in that category for a significantly different career, that becomes a considerable challenge."

In truth, the state's unemployment problem is not so much epidemic as it is chronic. The state lost 6.2 percent of its jobs from January 2001 to January 2004—a painfully high proportion, but still far less than the 10 percent that disappeared in the last recession. Unemployment in March



Lou Frissore, laid off after 13 years at EDS, is looking for a new career.

stood at 5.1 percent, well below the 9.7 percent mark we hit at the end of 1990. And the joblessness rate dropped to 4.8 percent in April, with the state gaining jobs for the second month in a row.

The troubling statistic is long-term unemployment. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2002 the percentage of Massachusetts's jobless who had been out of work six months or longer stood at 21.6 percent, up from 8.1 percent two years earlier. In other words, as the total number of unemployed in Massachusetts more than

doubled (from 86,000 in 2000 to 185,000 in 2002), an ever-growing portion of that group found itself jobless for longer and longer.

Paul Harrington, associate director of the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, has coined a phrase for this new pool of long-term unemployed: permanent job-losers. "It's a pretty serious problem," says Harrington. "Nobody knows how to handle this."

While the government does not track duration of unemployment for particular fields, anecdotal evidence and job-loss numbers tracked by occupation support the assertion that the new permanent job-losers include large numbers of white-collar workers. The New England Economic Partnership lists a dizzying number of industries where employment levels are down: computer design, telecommunications sales, software publishing, financial services. Which are holding up? Food service, leisure and hospitality, auto repair, health care, and teaching.

Harrington says one unfortunate byproduct of the Internet bubble of the 1990s is a lot of people who never should have gone into information-technology jobs in the first place, and are unlikely to find their way back to them now. "We have a huge gap" between an abundant labor supply in these fields and modest future demand, Harrington says. "It's gigantic."

That is not the sort of news that Lou Frissore wants to hear. Frissore, 55, has spent most of his career in IT services;

dustries have percolated in local universities for years and are just now starting to approach commercial payoff.

But as those sectors pivot from science project to science business, a new dynamic is emerging. Aside from creating a new type of *industry*, they are also creating a new type of *job*: research. Research jobs have fared well even during the recession, rising from 32,100 positions three years ago to 34,000 today.

Consider Novartis, one of the biggest players in Massachusetts's burgeoning biotech industry. Two years ago, the company announced that it would locate its research headquarters in Cambridge, bringing 1,000 jobs to the area. The pharmaceutical giant is fast approaching its goal. The company had 543 employees in Kendall Square as of April; it expects to have the full complement of 1,000 on the payroll by January. Lynne Cannon, head of human resources for the Novartis research operation, says she could not be more pleased with hiring so far.

But IT castoffs are not likely to be among those hired. Of those 1,000 new jobs, nearly 800 will be researchers. Of the 800 researchers, about one-third will have doctoral degrees; the standard ratio is two associates for every one PhD. The associates generally have at least an undergraduate degree in one of the life sciences, and most have master's degrees, plus experience in the lab setting.

"We look for people who can carry the ball," says Cannon. "They are scientific experts" who know the rigors of man-

A lot of people never should have gone into IT jobs in the first place.

the Ashland native worked for 13 years at EDS Corp. running data centers until he was laid off in June 2002—after training foreign workers to do his job back at their overseas offices, he claims. He has not found full-time employment since, instead working part-time as a photographer. And Frissore considers himself one of the luckier ones: His salary peaked at \$100,000 a year, so he had healthy savings to carry him through the past 18 months.

Still, "it's frustrating," Frissore says. He paid \$2,200 to take a project management course, "but that hasn't done much for me yet," he says. He figures he's got another 10 years of work in him, but doing what, he doesn't know.

"Somebody tell me what those new jobs are," Frissore says. "Nobody has any clue."

SHOCK OF THE NEW

Actually, economic development officials do have some idea what industries will be big in the Bay State's future: genomics, nanotechnology, wireless networks. Those in-

aging an experiment, publishing papers, and developing new science. Only about 20 percent of Novartis's hiring will be support staff without a strong scientific background. "It's very few non-researchers," she says.

Novartis is one example, but it is not alone:

- Nantero, in Woburn, one of the state's pioneering nanotech companies, is trying to design powerful new computer chips that use ultra-small strands of carbon rather than silicon. The three-year-old business has 21 employees; 10 hold doctorates in chemical engineering or similar fields, another five have master's degrees.

- SurfaceLogix, in Boston, is another nanotech startup, developing ways to manipulate drug molecules so they work more effectively. Of its 50 employees, 37 are scientists.

- Eikos, in Franklin, makes coatings for aircraft, computer screens, and other industries. In the past two years the company has gained a reputation, as well as contracts, with Japanese manufacturers. It has 15 employees, five of them with advanced degrees and another five with bachelor's

degrees in scientific fields.

As these businesses grow and develop, they will certainly create some jobs outside of the lab. Millennium Pharmaceuticals, for example, has hired 300 sales employees in the past six months to sell its first two commercial drug products. Even nanotech and wireless networking companies need IT staff and administrative support.

But sales and support jobs in these brave new industries are unlikely to pick up the slack from the 2001–03 recession. The software industry alone, for example, lost more jobs than the entire biotech industry here employs. Nanotech is so new that nobody really knows how many jobs it has created here, let alone how many it will create.

Martin Silverstein, a senior vice president at the Boston Consulting Group, co-authored a detailed study of the state's biotech industry two years ago. He predicted that the sector could generate 95,000 jobs by 2010, about 30,000 specifically in biotech companies and the remainder in service industries such as law, accounting, or printing. Of the 30,000 jobs in biotech proper, about half would be research scientists peering into test tubes; the rest would be split between bio-manufacturing and sales, administration, IT, and similar non-research functions.

Whether that happens depends in large part on biotech

firms deciding to locate manufacturing operations here. "It depends on the type of company that will continue to thrive in Massachusetts," Silverstein says. Manufacturing plants "don't have to be in Cambridge. Massachusetts is a big state." Genzyme, he notes, has a plant in Fall River.

The question is, are these jobs that dislocated white-collar workers want—and will be able to get? Salaries for bio-manufacturing jobs can start as low as \$30,000, although many escalate to \$50,000 or \$60,000. For all these jobs, biotech know-how is essential.

Cannon, who has hired personnel for pharmaceutical companies for 25 years, admits that biotech can be a difficult field to penetrate mid-career. Particularly, farther back "in the pipeline"—that is, closer to research than to product—companies like Novartis mostly need scientists, not technicians. "We really need highly skilled people," Cannon says. Can someone without advanced science degrees crack the biotech workforce? "It's possible," she says. "Not easy, but possible."

RE-EDUCATION CAMP

In February, the Division of Employment and Training split into two new agencies: the Division of Unemployment Assistance and the Division of Career Services. Recasting

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unemployment as a time for upgrading skills and redirecting careers is a cornerstone of the Romney administration's approach to the problem of economic adjustment. Unemployment benefits help out in the short term, but training for new skills is the solution to remain employable in the long term.

Edmonds admits that the state is still trying to catch up with the emerging problem of dislocated white-collar workers. Most state (and federal) assistance is targeted to low-income or low-skilled workers. For example, the state offers Access Grants to reduce the cost of attending community colleges, but only to households with annual incomes below \$36,000; federally funded Hope Scholarships apply only to undergraduate education, not to those who suddenly find they need an advanced degree to switch occupational gears. For an IT worker with a college degree and a spouse making white-collar wages, many subsidized financing avenues are unavailable.

"The system isn't appropriately geared to meet the needs of high-skilled workers now in the position of permanent job-losers," says Edmonds. "We must do something about that aggressively and quickly."



Susan Baust is trying to move into project management, but the training doesn't come cheap.

The state has made some moves in that direction. The unemployed can apply for a so-called Section 30 waiver, which extends benefits for up to 18 additional weeks and waives the usual requirement of searching for work if the applicant enrolls in an approved, full-time job-training class. The number of such waivers is up sharply, from 4,300 in 2000 to nearly 6,950 in 2002, with 3,120 so far in the first nine months of fiscal 2004.

Another effort was launched in April by the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority. Anyone can apply for up to \$10,000 in Education Rewards loans, regardless of household income, for any part-time course at

POST-RECESSION, A CHANGING JOB MIX IN MASSACHUSETTS

OCCUPATION	JANUARY 2001	JANUARY 2002	JANUARY 2003	JANUARY 2004
Computer systems design	66,900	52,000	48,800	41,820
Telecommunications manufacturing	16,600	11,800	8,400	7,470
Telecommunications sales	29,400	27,600	24,900	23,520
Software publishing	26,100	22,500	20,300	18,830
Financial services	229,900	231,600	226,000	223,200
Professional scientific & technical	250,100	233,300	221,900	212,120
Scientific R&D	32,100	34,500	34,500	33,960
Higher education	100,200	102,800	103,500	105,850
Health care	404,000	415,000	424,500	426,880
Leisure & hospitality	279,600	279,100	288,000	288,900
Manufacturing (total)	409,100	361,400	335,600	321,300
Professional services (total)	505,700	460,000	444,900	429,500
TOTAL	3,371,800	3,271,000	3,212,000	3,162,000

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics and New England Economic Partnership

a community college or other approved training center. MEFA also allows a 10-year repayment period with low interest rates, 6.1 percent as of this spring.

Displaced workers could use the help. Project management, for example, is a skill much touted as a way to boost employability (so you can manage all those offshore workers from a central location). Many colleges and universities offer such programs, but they don't come cheap.

Susan Baust, an unemployed software developer in Southborough, enrolled in a project-management class last fall at Boston University. Baust, 56, had been making more than \$100,000 annually at Hewlett-Packard before she lost her job in June 2002. But she took the retraining course only because she could get her \$6,000 tuition bill covered by a federal grant program to help former HP workers. Otherwise, "I would've needed more assurance that it was worth it," she says. "I had \$6,000, but I need to pay the bills."

Larry Elle, a career counselor and director of WIND East, an unemployment support group in Cambridge, says Baust is not alone. His group is trying to create a professional development cooperative, in which unemployed people train other unemployed people in low-cost job-training sessions underwritten by state or corporate sponsors. The idea came from WIND members who cannot afford the sometimes eye-popping price of continuing education, he says.

"The impetus is coming from the bottom up," he says. Elle notes that corporations often pay for full-time employees to enroll in training sessions offered through continuing education departments at universities, so the prices for these sessions tend to be high. "The average professional would be hard pressed to afford that on his own."



Career counselor Larry Elle says it's tough to let go of longtime skills.

giving people a certificate, and telling employers those people are ready to come in," says Alan Macdonald, executive director of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable, who nonetheless supports Edmonds's retraining efforts. "I'm

Their instinct is to tread water until the demand for their professions revives.

One crucial question, however, is how much the business community will embrace the idea of workers dislocated from one industry remaking themselves for another. Historically, the state's workforce development programs have taken workers already employed in an industry and helped them get more skills to move up the job ladder. A shift to training people outside the existing workforce is a conceptual leap.

"Those programs [that boost the skills of an industry's current workers] are more successful, in our mind, than training people in a classroom outside the workforce,

much more interested in training people who already have some related skills than people who have not been in the mainstream yet."

ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT

As a group, skilled workers believe in training. After all, the professional success they achieved previously was the result of their earlier investments in job skills. Yet, when layoffs bring their careers to a sudden halt, their instinct is to tread water, finding a way to get by until the demand for their professions revives. To launch into another career

requires a mental commitment most people would rather not make.

"The most difficult kind of job switch is changing your function and your industry," Elle says. He gives the example of one woman he knows, a lawyer who has been unemployed for months. "Does she want to train to be a nurse? No. She wants to use her lawyering skills."

Yet the very definition of a displaced worker is someone whose job will not return. Thanks to the rise of skilled overseas labor and automated technology, many of the jobs in Massachusetts that seemed most promising five years ago are gone, and likely never to return. The workforce that bet its future on the last new thing is going to have to look for the next new thing.

For her part, unemployed software developer Baust is perfectly willing to try her hand in biotech, helping to streamline clinical trials or managing software development projects for drug development. But she's not kidding herself. "I think it will be hard for me," says Baust. "I don't have a biology degree."

Almost everyone believes that Massachusetts's employment scene will revive in the long term, as universities, venture capitalists, and entrepreneurs take their best shots at creating new industries. One glimmer of hope: In April,

the state created 5,500 professional and scientific jobs. Of course, Massachusetts leaked an additional 800 IT jobs in the same month, but even that's an improvement over the preceding five months, when the Bay State lost 8,300 professional and scientific jobs. For the casualties of the IT meltdown, an attitude adjustment may be in order.

"I don't think they will get the same type of jobs, but there will be jobs," says Joyce Plotkin, president of the Massachusetts Software Council. Plotkin knows today's job market is grim; a close friend of hers who made a six-figure salary in software has been jobless for two years. Still, she says, the fundamental structure of this recession is no different than the one that gripped the state in 1990. It just happens to be the first recession these technology workers have ever seen.

But it could also be that the transition to the next generation of technology will be rougher than the last one, as today's surplus labor struggles to align itself, and its skills, with the kind of jobs that will emerge in coming years. "It's really a lot different than anything we've faced," says Macdonald, of the business roundtable. "I don't think the companies know how to deal with it, either." ■

Matt Kelly is a technology writer in Somerville.

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Bay State NATION

What if America were more like us?

When the first President Bush ran for re-election in 1992, he cautioned the electorate against voting for a governor from Arkansas. “We do not want to be the lowest of the low,” Bush said, referring to literacy rates, poverty levels, and other measures that did not reflect well on the Razorback State.

We might hear even worse things said about Massachusetts during this year’s presidential campaign. In February, a *Washington Post* headline called us the “Stigma State,” and writer Mark Leibovich proclaimed, “no state carries as much political baggage as Massachusetts, the perceived liberal outpost and home to several failed presidential candidates of recent vintage”—including Michael Dukakis, repeatedly mocked by the first Bush as a “Massachusetts liberal” in the 1988 campaign.

But just how liberal is John Kerry’s home state? For people who actually live here, the adjective is oversimplified, to say the least. Outsiders may see the Bay State as overprotected, permissive, and complacent—or “soft,” to borrow a concept from Michael Barone’s new book *Hard America, Soft America*. But Bay State natives are more likely to view their state as a tough, competitive place that encourages hardball politics and economic innovation. Indeed, a 1998 study by California State University professor Robert Levine concluded that Boston was the fastest-paced city in the US—based on how quickly people walked, how many people

wore wristwatches, and the speed of interactions with Post Office staffers. Whatever they might think in Texas, few of us in Massachusetts actually spend hours at a time listening to our iPods and reading the latest issue of *The Nation* at Starbucks. Most of us don’t even have the time to read the latest pop sociology findings from David Brooks, supposedly every liberal’s favorite conservative.

Massachusetts is misunderstood. That’s not to say that every preconception is a misconception. But the caricature of the Commonwealth is sufficiently off-base as to require serious adjustment. The question is, how to set the record straight?

Perhaps the best way to define the character of the Bay State, in politics and civic life, is to ask: What if America were more like Massachusetts?

That’s not the same as asking, “What if America were more like Cambridge?” If that were the question, a complicated system of proportional voting would replace American winner-take-all elections, and bike paths would be funded on a par with the interstate highway system. Even the wealth-

BY ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN



BOSTON GOTHIC

iest tenants would enjoy the protection of rent control, and prisoners would be able to cast ballots from their cells. But those two practices were banned by the Massachusetts electorate, over the objections of Cambridge voters—proving that the state does not always follow the lead of the “People’s Republic” on the Charles. Even Boston isn’t much like Cambridge, though it’s no better barometer of the state’s political attitudes: The last three elected governors, all Republicans, lost the capital city by substantial margins. In contrast, the suburbs along I-495, which often act as a brake on the state’s more liberal impulses, have been on the winning side every time.

Massachusetts certainly is different from the rest of the country, but not in ways that neatly fit the liberal stereotype. The most obvious example is same-sex marriage, which is now legal here and nowhere else. Even if voters ban gay marriage in 2006 (which is far from certain, if opinion polls are any indication), they will do so while approving a civil union law that is more comprehensive than Vermont’s. At the same time, it’s hard to imagine community leaders in famously discreet Boston financing an ad campaign to attract gay and lesbian tourists—as the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corp. is now doing. There aren’t any bathhouses (i.e., sex clubs) operating anywhere in Massachusetts, even though they can be found in Georgia, North Carolina, and other states that have no gay-rights laws at all. (They now deny it, but initial reports had it that New York’s delegates to the National Democratic Convention objected to holding their party at the L Street Bathhouse, because of the sexual connotations. The thought would never have crossed a Bostonian’s mind.)

For all its supposed liberalism, Massachusetts isn’t a haven for hedonism. Explaining his opposition to letting out-of-state gay couples get hitched here, Gov. Mitt Romney said that he didn’t want Massachusetts to become “the Las Vegas” of same-sex weddings. He needn’t have worried. If all of America were like Massachusetts, there wouldn’t be a Las Vegas at all. Not only do we ban casinos, we don’t allow bars to offer happy hours or to stay open after 2 a.m. How indulgent is that?

The Bay State’s liberal reputation is often tied to the absence of capital punishment here, and it’s true that only 11 other states decline to put heinous criminals to death. (These include Alaska and West Virginia, “red” states that aren’t commonly characterized as “soft on crime.”) It’s also true that Massachusetts is in the minority in depriving citizens of the right to carry concealed firearms unless given specific permission by local police; only 15 other states have bucked

the National Rifle Association on this issue.

But if all of America were like Massachusetts, there would be more cops on the street. According to the federal Department of Justice, Massachusetts had 32 “sworn” local and state police officers per 10,000 people, as of 2001. If that were the national rate, the number of police officers in the US would swell from 660,000 to 900,000. Of course, there would also be a uniformed police officer assigned to every hole in the sidewalk dug by a utility company—a requirement that currently exists nowhere outside of the Bay State.

And, for the most part, there would be a lot less crime. According to data from the FBI, if our crime rate were applied to the whole nation, there would be less than half as many murders and significantly fewer robberies and burglaries. Despite the image of Massachusetts as a hotbed for

car thefts, the incidence of stolen vehicles would decrease slightly, and it would plummet in such states as Arizona and Nevada. “Aggravated assaults,” however, would rise by about 10 percent, and would more than quadruple in rural states like Maine and North Dakota.

There would be a lot less crime and more cops on the street.

THE BODY POLITICS

If the US were more like Massachusetts, would the Democratic Party garner enough power to make all other parties irrelevant? Probably not. Massachusetts is famous for repeatedly electing

Edward Kennedy, a liberal icon, to the US Senate, and it now sends an all-Democratic delegation to Congress, but it does not march in lockstep with the left wing of the Democratic Party. Half the voters here are registered as independents (see Head Count, page 44), and the 36 percent of the electorate formally enrolled in the Democratic Party has not changed much over the past decade, despite the popularity of Bill Clinton and Al Gore in this state.

Furthermore, the two major parties in Massachusetts do not reflect the ideological divisions so evident in Washington. For example, during the recent debate votes on a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage, dozens of state legislators crossed party lines (in both directions), something that happens less and less frequently on Capitol Hill. After weeks of wrangling, an amendment passed with the support of moderate and conservative Democrats in large numbers; by contrast, a federal amendment banning gay marriage seems to be dead in the US Senate because so few Democrats are willing to support it.

In voting, as well, Massachusetts voters toe the party line far less than the country as a whole. Ticket-splitting has become less common in the United States over the past decade, but it’s still strong in Massachusetts. In part, that’s

because if you vote straight ticket here you can't be certain of what you'll get. US senators John McCain and Olympia Snowe, famous nationally for bucking the Bush White House and the religious right, would barely cause a ripple on Beacon Hill among Republicans like state senators Brian Lees and Richard Tisei. At the same time, a conservative like US Sen. Zell Miller of Georgia would have no need to bolt the Democratic Party if he served in the Massachusetts Legislature, where anti-gay marriage Philip Travis and anti-bilingual education Guy Glodis are members of the Democratic caucus.

While the Republican Party now controls the White House and both houses of Congress (and the Democratic Party controlled all three arms of government from 1993 through 1995), Massachusetts has had a Republican governor and Democratic Legislature since 1991. Furthermore, the longtime Speaker of the House in Massachusetts, Tom Finneran, was elected in 1996 by a coalition of Democrats and Republicans, with a majority of his own party voting against him. If the same dynamics worked at the national level, a McCain or Miller could very well end up in the leadership of Congress.

But who would be in the White House? For the most part, to be sure, the Republicans would be out of luck — Massachusetts displays a strong and consistent antipathy toward conservative politics — but so too would all sorts of candidates. Massachusetts doesn't always support the most liberal candidate, but it does seem to vote against the national grain. Since John F. Kennedy was elected in 1960, the Bay State has voted against the national winner in four general elections, five Democratic nomination contests, and four Republican nomination contests. No other state comes close to having a worse record as a bellwether. If the rest of the nation voted the same as Massachusetts, George McGovern and Gary Hart probably would have become president.

But Massachusetts isn't always contrarian. It did vote for Ronald Reagan twice — the second time with an absolute majority. The Bay State may not have voted Republican in the past two decades, but in that obstinacy it is not alone: 16 states haven't voted Democratic in at least 28 years and Minnesota hasn't voted Republican since 1956, so we're hardly the most extreme in fidelity to one party.

The Bay State electorate is certainly not predictable when it comes to the Commonwealth's highest office. After 16 years of Democratic governors, Massachusetts voters installed a Republican in 1990, and the GOP is now on its way toward 16 years in power. Our current governor, Mitt Romney, is a no-new-taxes fiscal conservative and social moderate with a strong business background and experience managing the Olympics. Given that, if America resembled Massachusetts, Los Angeles Olympics manager Peter Ueberroth might have been more successful against fellow Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger in California's gubernatorial election —



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and would have his eye on the White House.

As for congressional races, more people would vote (48 percent of the voting-eligible population participated in the Bay State's 2002 elections, versus the national figure of 39 percent), but even fewer of them would find real choices on the ballot than they do now. In 2002, one or the other of the two major parties failed to nominate a candidate in 82 congressional districts, or almost one-fifth of the total numbers of seats at stake nationwide. That number was a source of distress to many political commentators, but that same year in Massachusetts, more than two-thirds of the seats in the state Legislature went uncontested by one of the major parties—a higher percentage than in any state outside of South Carolina.

With so little action in legislative races, Bay State voters often express their political sentiments through referenda. Sometimes the liberal side wins, as when voters approved a hike in the cigarette tax in 1992 to fund anti-smoking programs, or when the environmentally minded electorate upheld the law mandating returnable bottles and cans in 1982. But the left wing has lost most of the recent contests, failing to save rent control in 1994 or prisoners' voting rights in 2000. It's not really fair to measure the state's liberalism based on referenda results, since some of the failed

initiatives probably wouldn't even make the ballot in most states—such as a 1988 proposal mandating the humane treatment of farm animals and a 2000 proposal to take the proceeds from drug-crime fines and forfeitures away from police departments and give them to drug dependency treatment programs. (In that same year, California voters passed an initiative mandating probation and drug-treatment programs, as opposed to jail time, for individuals convicted of “personal use” of drugs, but that initiative didn't specify that treatment programs would be financed by drug-crime fines and forfeitures.) But it's telling that a real right-wing initiative in 2002—seeking to abolish the state income tax—got 45 percent in Massachusetts, which was a better showing than most of the liberal proposals made.

DON'T CALL US TAXACHUSETTS

The nickname “Taxachusetts” will never disappear completely, but it hasn't been a perfect tag for the Bay State since 1980, when voters approved one of the country's toughest restrictions on hikes in local property taxes (Proposition 2½). If all of America paid taxes the way we do in Massachusetts, it might not be such a shock to the bank account after all.

Massachusetts residents do have high tax bills, but that's

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mostly because we have big paychecks. The Tax Foundation, a nonpartisan but hardly tax-friendly research group, calculates that state government took in \$2,310 in taxes per capita in 2002, the sixth-highest rate in the country. But the same group noted that tax revenues equaled only \$58.19 per \$1,000 of income earned in the state, and by that measure we rank 31st in tax burden (which is lower than such high-income states as California, Connecticut, and New York). The Tax Foundation also notes that average annual income in Massachusetts grew by 3.4 percent from 1992 through 2002, while average annual tax growth grew by only 2.2 percent; only three states had a bigger gap in favor of the taxpayers. And though property tax bills are higher in Massachusetts than in most states, they're also commensurate with our incomes. This spring the Tax Foundation calculated our combined state and local tax burden at 9.4 percent of annual income, giving us a rank of 36th—down from our second-place showing in 1980, when our taxes amounted to 11.5 percent of annual income.

So, if all Americans paid taxes Massachusetts-style, most would pay higher taxes, but less of their income, and the latter would be growing faster than the former. Not such a bad deal.

And despite our Puritan heritage, “sin” taxes in Massachusetts aren’t much harsher than the national norm. Our 21-cent gasoline tax would be a hardship to 29 states (nearly tripling Georgia’s current rate), but it would be greeted with relief in 20 others (especially New York, now at 32.7 cents). It’s true that cigarettes would become more expensive in every state but New Jersey and Rhode Island: At \$1.51 a pack, our tax dwarfs the 2.5 cents levied on every pack in Virginia. On the other hand, in 40 states beer would flow more freely if they adopted our tax of 11 cents per gallon.

Whether we’ve gotten less greedy or less effective, Massachusetts is off the national pace in tapping the national treasury. The Washington, DC-based watchdog group Citizens Against Government Waste recently ranked the Bay State 39th in “pork per capita.” Massachusetts won only \$18.77 per person in federal pork for fiscal year 2004, far below the \$31.17 per person in the nation as a whole. (Supposedly frugal New Hampshire ranked 3rd on the CAGW list, getting a staggering \$216.34 worth of pork per person—including \$1 million for the Mount Washington Observatory and \$500,000 for the New England Weather Technology Initiative.) But it’s debatable how much of our pork is real fat, anyway. The CAGW didn’t include anything from Massachusetts in its list of the most dubious expenditures, which included \$2 million for the First Tee Program in Florida (which provides “golf and character education” to

youngsters); \$500,000 for Anaheim Resort Transit (i.e., buses to Disneyland) in California; and \$200,000 for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland. Our projects, such as \$1.2 million for the Holyoke Canalwalk, seem more run-of-the-mill.

WE THE PEOPLE

To some political analysts, demographics are destiny. If the US were more like Massachusetts, it would be a lot more urbanized and densely populated, but it wouldn’t be getting more so. Our annual birth rate (12.7 births per 1,000 people) is lower than the national rate (14.1 births per 1,000 people). That would mean a drop from 4.03 million to 3.63 million births nationwide in 2001.

If the Bay State’s immigration patterns prevailed at the national level, the number of foreign-born residents would

be almost the same as it is now (31 million, or 11 percent of the population), but where they come from would change dramatically. The number of immigrants from Mexico would drop from 9.2 million to 340,000; the number from the Philippines would drop from 1.4 million to just under 340,000; and the number from Cuba would drop from 870,000 to 170,000. But immigrants from Portugal would soar from 200,000 to 3 million; the number from China would rise from 1.5 million to 2.4 million; and the

number from Haiti would jump from 420,000 to 1.5 million. There would also be almost eight times as many immigrants from Brazil (to 1.6 million), five times as many from Ireland (to 780,000), three times as many from the Dominican Republic (to 2.1 million), and more than twice as many from Canada (to 1.8 million).

Thus, we would have dramatically fewer Spanish speakers but many more who speak Portuguese and French. In that area where foreign policy intersects with electoral politics, Haiti would loom much larger than Cuba. Presidential candidates would likely ignore Fidel Castro and pay more attention to the goings-on in Port-au-Prince.

If the entire country mirrored the Bay State’s religious beliefs (measured by a national survey conducted by the City University of New York in 2001), there would be almost twice as many Catholics—44 percent of the population as opposed to 25 percent. Only Rhode Island would become slightly less Catholic, while Mississippi would end up with nine times as many followers of the faith. At the same time, the number of Baptists would be cut by 75 percent (4 percent vs. 16 percent), and Mississippi would lose 93 percent of its current Baptist population.

But despite the Bay State’s reputation for secularism,

We do have
high taxes,
but that’s
because of
high incomes.

only a few more people would eschew religion altogether. In Massachusetts, 16 percent of poll respondents said that they belong to “no religion”—only slightly above the national average of 14 percent and below Utah’s 17 percent. Washington state actually ranked first in the number of people with no professed faith, followed by Vermont. North Dakota ranked last; if the Massachusetts figure were applied to that state, it would end up with more than five times as many nonbelievers as it has now.

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

As politics increasingly intersects with pop culture (think Gov. Schwarzenegger), one can’t help but wonder how much of a state’s political character can be seen in its entertainment preferences. For the record, a comparison of national *New York Times* best-seller lists with the local lists that appear in *The Boston Globe* suggests that Massachusetts readers love liberal gadflies Al Franken and Michael Moore, books about baseball (especially the Red Sox, e.g. Leigh Montville’s Ted Williams biography), and literate-sounding novels (Karen Joy Fowler’s *The Jane Austen Book Club*). What they don’t like are evangelical-themed novels (e.g., the “Left Behind” series) and the most extreme right-wing commentators. (Bill O’Reilly and Sean Hannity have good sales here, but the

state is a weak spot for Ann Coulter and Michael Savage.)

Looking at the electronic media, if everyone emulated Massachusetts, a lot more people would be watching cable TV. Eighty-seven percent of homes in the Bay State with television sets subscribe to cable, the third highest rate in the nation (behind Connecticut and Hawaii) and well above the 67 percent nationally. And according to Amazon.com, violence-and-sex-laden HBO programs (*Six Feet Under*, *Sex and the City*, *Oz*) are especially popular in DVD form here, while more nostalgic series such as *M*A*S*H* sell better nationally. The Bay State’s taste in movies on DVD runs to art-house dramas like *Lost in Translation* and foreign films like the French classic *The Rules of the Game*, but college-oriented comedies like *School of Rock* also rule here. *The Lord of the Rings* films were blockbusters here as in the rest of the country, but sales of the ultra-violent *Kill Bill* were not up to par.

On the radio dial, America would have a lot fewer country-music and religious stations and considerably more “adult contemporary” stations, but talk radio would still be big, accounting for about 15 percent of all stations either way. And Amazon.com indicates that, while Norah Jones CDs are top sellers both nationally and in the Bay State, local favorites include Sarah McLachlan, the Indigo Girls,

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and Harry Connick Jr., while we're not quite as enamored with Loretta Lynn, Los Lonely Boys, and Prince.

Speaking of music, the Bay State has 38 member orchestras in the American Symphony Orchestra League. If all of America had as many orchestras per capita as the Bay State (more than any state except Alaska and Wyoming), there would be 1,684 members nationwide, instead of the current 888. The number in Texas alone would jump from 46 to 125, and even culture-rich New York would get 49 more.

But a more down-home type of diversion, the square dance, wouldn't necessarily be more scarce. A look at the Western Square Dancing Web site (dosado.com) shows that square dances are as plentiful here as anywhere.

LIBERAL IS AS LIBERAL DOES

So just how liberal a state is Massachusetts? As liberal as any, probably. After all, in no state do voters hope for tax increases and complain that not enough criminals are going free. If you're measuring mainstream liberalism, not "loony left" ideas, it's tough to come up with any state that outflanks Massachusetts.

But perhaps another classification is more apt. American composer Ned Rorem (1923-) postulates that everyplace and everything in the world is divided into two categories: German or French. "German means extravagance and beating your breast and repetition and thickness and heaviness," he told *ASCAP Playback* magazine in 1998. "French means continuity and transparency and say what you have to say, then shut up." One can argue that the US is German (big-thinking and boisterous and ready to charge ahead) and Massachusetts is French (obsessed with history and manners and giving everyone a say).

Rorem's theory is actually a refinement of another dichotomy, popularized by philosopher Isaiah Berlin, that divided the world into hedgehogs and foxes. According to this theory, hedgehogs are single-minded and persistent—somewhat like our two major parties at the national level, with their hardened ideologies. Foxes have more catholic (small "c") interests, displaying the kind of curiosity that hedgehogs would consider a hindrance.

The Massachusetts economy has certainly been fox-like, finding a new focus every couple of decades (from textiles to computers to biotechnology). Our politics have also been anything but single-minded. New Hampshire may be famous for its extreme aversion to taxes, and Alabama may be known for defending the Ten Commandments, but Massachusetts really isn't guided by one Big Idea. Our "liberal" label doesn't come from a reflexive support of any left-wing notion but from a willingness to consider new ways of doing things as the world around us changes. Viewed this way, gay marriage and biotechnology are both best understood as the latest innovations. Massachusetts may be liberal. Or maybe it's just ahead of the curve. ■

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Flunking



"I feel like our self-esteem and our community are being tampered with," says Winchendon parent Maureen Provost.

BY LAURA PAPPANO | PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAUL SHOUL

out

WITH MCAS AND
“NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND”
SETTING THE STANDARD,
STATE OFFICIALS ARE SINGLING
OUT SOME SCHOOLS
AND DISTRICTS AS FAILURES.
WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT THEM?

Julie Holly, a Winchendon mom, has put out Snickerdoodles and croissants, muffins and chocolate chip bread. Four other moms are seated around the table, but no one's touching the sweets. Having the label of “underperforming” slapped on your school district—and by extension your town, your teachers, your kids, and yourselves—is, it turns out, a serious appetite suppressant. It's supposed to be the nudge needed to spur an educational renaissance, but all it has done here is give everyone a pit in the stomach.

The women gathered at Holly's house to talk about the schools are natives and relative newcomers; they have children from elementary school to college age; and they have a love-hate relationship with the schools that have let them, and their children, down. The mothers include one school committee candidate, several veteran PTO members, alumni of the schools, and the sister of a Winchendon teacher. Feelings are running high in this Winchendon dining room, and the most intense is the pain of being branded, so publicly, as failures.

“We don't have crumbling buildings and mice in the bathrooms,” says Holly, whose children are entering fourth and ninth grades. “That's what people are thinking: *Ohhh, pooor Winchendon.*”

The town's wounded pride is a theme the moms return to repeatedly in two and a half hours of talk. It all goes back to November, when the district was officially declared underperforming. A few weeks later, Gov. Mitt Romney visited the Murdock Middle High School, where he was greeted by placards of protest, students who refused to shake his hand, and, in a photo-op gone impossibly wrong, a special needs student whose tutor confronted the governor, asking Romney how the student was to pass MCAS, the state's high school exit exam.

The moment was awkward for Romney—a political advance man's worst nightmare—but devastating for Winchendon, a small, low-income rural community near the New Hampshire border, which had suddenly been pinned with the scarlet letter of school dysfunction.

“We did nothing educational for a month after that,” says Superintendent of Schools Robert O'Meara, who was hired in August 2002. Students acted out, he says; teachers were distracted. A shooting threat sent the middle-high school into lockdown, and 15 bomb threats were logged during the fall and winter, all events O'Meara sees as rooted in post-“underperforming” hurt and anger.

All these months later, the pain still seems palpable, but just as conspicuous are the reasons the Winchendon schools ended up with this badge of shame. Concerns raised around Julie Holly's

dining room table—a daughter who can't take biology next year because she's taking the "wrong" math course this year; worry that teachers are spending so much time on MCAS prep that kids won't learn enough algebra to move on to geometry in the fall—paint a system in disarray. How, the parents ask, can schools operate like this? How will kids get an education?

"There are kids who are scared and upset," says Barrie Martins, a candidate for school committee who has sons going into third and ninth grades and one in college.

Just as bad is the uncertainty over what comes next. Rumors tear through town, spread at the IGA supermarket, Family Dollar Store, and sporting events. People whisper that the state wants to take over, but state Education Commissioner David Driscoll dismisses that talk as "paranoia." Kids are pulling out of the 1,800-student district every week (so, too, is O'Meara, who abruptly left his post July 2). O'Meara predicts that hundreds will head to the exits by September.

Ellen DeCoteau's daughter may be next. DeCoteau, who works in the town's planning and development department, is fed up. She may exercise the option of interdistrict school choice and send her daughter, who will be a sophomore in the fall, to next-door Gardner High.

That idea upsets Maureen Provost, mother of four and herself a 1979 Murdock High grad. She says she'd scrub toilets at night to pay for private school before she'd drain money—\$5,500 per pupil—from the school's budget, as happens under choice. Even then, her high-schooler would leave the Winchendon schools kicking and screaming, she says.

"I'm proud my daughter said, as a sophomore, 'I am not leaving and I am going to graduate from Murdock,'" says Provost, her face flush with emotion. "I feel like our self-esteem and our community are being tampered with."

So much for the pain. What about the gain? Months after Winchendon and Holyoke became the first two entire districts in Massachusetts branded as underperforming, O'Meara was still begging for state help, he says. Driscoll says Winchendon should quit whining and "start figuring out a plan."

Nearly a dozen years after Massachusetts embraced education reform and two years into the federal No Child Left Behind law, the fervor for gathering and tabulating test score data has led to the not-so-surprising news flash that some schools and districts aren't measuring up. Though



Superintendent O'Meara predicted an exodus—then left himself.

the state's school accountability system has so far cited only two districts as underperformers, four more are on "watch," along with two dozen individual schools. A great many more schools and districts are likely not to measure up under NCLB's more demanding requirements of annual "progress." So the educational-failure suspects are being lined up. What now?

A TALE OF TWO FAILURES

In Winchendon and Holyoke alike, the path to underperformance has been long, straight, and immutable. One could argue these districts have always been underperforming. Only now they sport the official label—and the voluminous state reports to go with it.

The two districts are very different. Winchendon is an

old manufacturing town of less than 10,000 people with a median family income of \$50,086, some \$11,000 below the state average. Almost 95 percent of students are white; almost one-fourth receive free or reduced-price lunches, a sign of poverty; and nearly one in five are designated as having “special needs.”

While such demographics set Winchendon apart from wealthy suburban systems, the district lacks the usual excuses for poor performance: urban, minority, or immigrant populations. In a state review of district performance from 1999 to 2002, the basis for the state’s underperformance label, the district earned “unsatisfactory” or “poor” grades in all five key areas: assessment and evaluation, curriculum and instruction, student academic support, leadership, and finance.

The panel of reviewers, agents of the state’s Office for Educational Quality and Accountability, gave particularly poor grades for assessment and evaluation (the district received “unsatisfactory” marks in 11 out of 11 categories),

‘WE STILL HAVE TEXTBOOKS GOING BACK TO THE 1960S.’

noting that schools simply failed to use MCAS test results to improve instruction. The district also scored poorly in administration and finance. The list of specific ills is long—“ineffectual leadership,” and “did not maintain adequate accounting and financial reporting procedures,” among others—and paints a portrait of a system in disarray.

The state report also takes note of Winchendon’s low math scores on MCAS. In 2003, 73 percent of 10th-graders earned “failing” or “needs improvement,” mirroring similarly poor math scores in grades four, six, and eight—a trend that has persisted over time. One explanation for this phenomenon is the absence of any effort to line up what’s taught in classrooms with what’s tested on the MCAS. When students begin using the Everyday Math program in September, O’Meara says, it will mark the first time a district math program meets state standards.

Poor leadership has been compounded by money woes. Even as the state sent more cash to districts like Winchendon, the town put up so little that O’Meara says the new budget is the first in a decade to include money for pencils and textbooks. “We still have textbooks going back to the 1960s,” he notes.

Whereas Winchendon is a small, white, rural town where

students speak English, Holyoke is a declining industrial city of 40,000 with a median family income of \$36,130 and a large Hispanic population. More than 70 percent of the district’s students are Hispanic, and nearly 27 percent have limited English proficiency. Holyoke’s dropout rate is more than double the state average. Superintendent Eduardo Carballo says kids enter kindergarten speaking Spanglish, a sloppy mix of languages that teachers have to untangle. The level of poverty is much higher, with 72 percent of children receiving free or reduced-price lunches. One in five receive special education services.

Educational lapses are nothing new in this Pioneer Valley city. The “underperforming” label hurt, but it came as no surprise. After all, Holyoke’s John J. Lynch Middle School was one of the first schools in the state labeled underperforming, in 2000. The Dr. William R. Peck Middle School got slapped with the designation in 2002, and the Maurice A. Donahue Elementary and Magnet Middle School for the Arts joined the club last year.

Among problems observed by the state Office of Educational Quality and Accountability were high absentee rates among students and teachers. A 2003 report noted that 30 percent of students missed more than 11 days, and 18 percent missed more than 20 days. Teachers were absent, on average, more than 10 days per year. In other words, basics like getting teachers and students in a room at the same time have been a problem.

Add to that a haphazard approach to professional development and state questions about “whether or not the District has the capacity to sustain the change that will be necessary for improved student achievement.” The failings in Holyoke—from poor instruction for Spanish-speaking students, stuck for years in bilingual classes with teachers who spoke the language but were weak in core subjects, to the failure to do commonsense things like getting help to struggling students—seem so vast that it’s tough to know where to start.

Perhaps the biggest failure has been the waste of time. A decade after the Education Reform Act of 1993, says Commissioner Driscoll, the Holyoke public schools have changed far too little. “The Education Reform Act said, ‘Send them money, set the standards, but get out of their way,’” says Driscoll. “In that 10-year period there was relatively ineffective implementation [of reform in Holyoke].”

Today, Superintendent Carballo, hired in January 2002, is making improvements, but there is much to do. Carballo cut the budget for substitute teachers in half, from \$1 million last year to \$500,000 this year, insisting that principals crack down on teacher absenteeism. After discovering that some high school students scored poorly on the MCAS because in ninth grade they read at only third- and fourth-grade levels, he changed the district’s reading program. Carballo also increased the time students do math, and he’s

partnering with the University of Massachusetts's education school to lure new teachers to the district, where the average teacher salary is \$9,000 below the state average.

Carballo wants to revamp education in the district, but can he do it? He says he'd be glad to have some help from the state, even someone in his office full time. So far, he says, the "underperforming" label has yielded little except shame — no money, no turnaround team, no clear process or partnership for change. Says Carballo, a Cuban immigrant who started life in America in an orphanage, "Believe me, I look calm to you, but I am in a rage inside when I think of the things agencies do in the name of helping kids."

EDUCATIONAL ENFORCERS

For years, people in the know — educators, state officials — have had some idea about which districts were low performers. In the past, information was camouflaged by Massachusetts Education Assessment Program tests, which compared similarly situated districts, making socioeconomics a ready excuse for poor results and allowing superintendents to boast about test scores even when they were mediocre.

With the Education Reform Act of 1993, the state tried to address funding inequities between rich and poor districts but also to set the same high standards for all schools, through state curriculum frameworks and Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System tests. If state funding, which was directed particularly to poor districts, provided the means of improvement, the major prod, especially at first, was publication of test results. The cold facts of who was — and wasn't — measuring up were there for all to see. But there were no serious consequences for failure.

In 1999, the state created a School and District Accountability System, which involved the "performance rating" of schools on core academic subjects, administered by the Department of Education. A year later, in 2000, the state Legislature created the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA), an independent office that works with the Department of Education and the Education Management Audit Council, EQA's oversight board.

In monitoring and judging educational performance, the state has pursued a dual track of identifying struggling schools and — more recently — struggling districts. Since 2000, the state Board of Education has identified 26 schools as underperforming, mostly because of consistently low test scores. The state requires these schools to produce improvement plans, but it also offers training to help principals and staff view their schools with fresh eyes. State advisors diagnose weakness and show teachers how to use test scores to target student needs.

When Mt. Pleasant School, in New Bedford, was declared underperforming in 2002, Eileen Kenny, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, was leery of the intrusion, but she came to appreciate the help from state

officials. "I was a naysayer, and now I am one of their biggest advocates," she says.

Kenny described state workshops as "intense" and says the toughest part was having local educators accept that they — and not the kids — were the ones failing. "In the early stages, your tendency is to say, 'Well, the students can't do this, the students can't do that,'" she recalls, adding that when the teachers finally gathered together, everyone was willing to admit mistakes. It was therapeutic, Kenny says, even if she and other administrators had to sometimes bite their tongues. "I heard it from a teacher that, 'I don't feel

SO FAR, THE STATE'S LABEL HAS YIELDED ONLY SHAME.

comfortable doing that math concept and I sort of skip over it.' As much as you want to say, 'What!,' you don't."

Mt. Pleasant's test scores are still far from exemplary — on the 2003 MCAS, 36 percent of fourth-graders received the lowest score of "warning" in English, while 57 percent earned "warning" scores in math. But they are an improvement over the past, when up to 74 percent earned "warning" scores in English and 86 percent in math.

REDISTRICTING

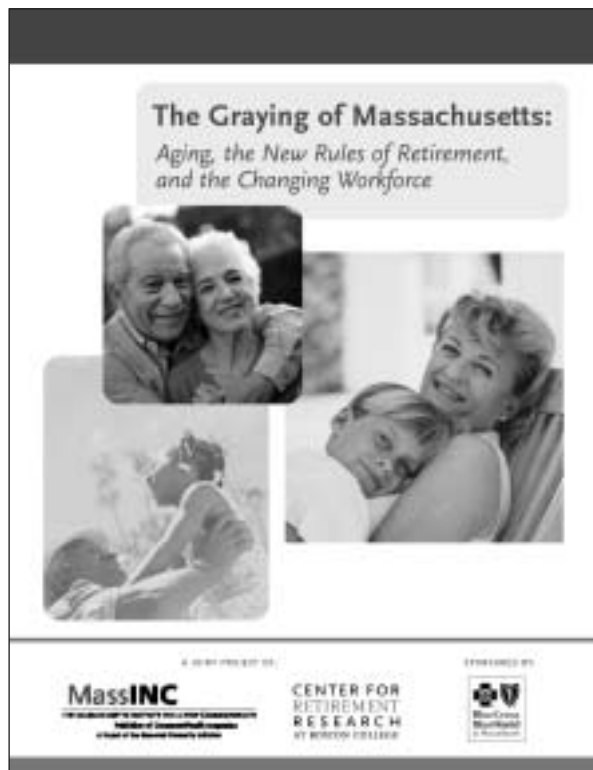
It is one thing to help a single school, and another to take on an entire struggling school system. Under the state accountability system, the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability analyzes data, including MCAS scores, from districts each year, selecting some for closer study — even top districts like Needham, which was recently reviewed. All districts across the state are supposed to be examined every five years, but Board of Education chairman James Peyser acknowledges, "There is not the capacity to do that."

The Educational Management Audit Council looks at review results and may recommend a district for the "underperforming" label. The Board of Education then votes on the recommendation. The grounds for deeming a district underperforming include low test scores, poor leadership or management, and a curriculum that doesn't match state standards. Once a district is labeled underperforming, a fact-finding team investigates and issues a report. District and state officials are supposed to work together to craft an improvement plan.

This is serious work, but it's something the state has

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little experience doing. In the case of struggling schools, Driscoll feels confident that education officials have a viable action plan. "We really know what we're talking about when we go in," says Driscoll. He's less bullish about districts. "I will admit to you," he says, "we are just starting out in districts, we are finding our way."

At present, if districts don't improve in two to three years, they may be declared "chronically underperforming" and subject to takeover by a state-appointed receiver, who would assume the powers of superintendent and school committee. As the first subjects of the state's district-level intervention, Holyoke and Winchendon do not know what to expect. It took fact-finding teams six months from the time districts were labeled to issue a report, offering assessments just a few weeks before the end of school.

Such a sluggish approach to what amounts to a state-declared educational emergency is problematic, a point the Board of Education wants to address. In May, the board proposed new rules to speed up the process. The new proposal collapses the time between review and fact-finding, more quickly deciding whether local school leaders can handle the challenge of overseeing change. This will shorten the time between the identification of a district as underperforming and the ultimate sanction—state takeover.

"It is [currently] somewhere around a two- to four-year period where we know a district is underperforming, where we are working with them trying to improve," says state board chairman Peyser. "If we know upfront [that improvement is] not going to happen, we should move into receivership and take action in a period that is more like six months. To do otherwise is to protect the adults and sacrifice the children."

INADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

The state's system of accountability for (and intervention in) failing schools is by no means the last word. That's because the federal No Child Left Behind law, signed January 2002, introduced new standards for success—and new sanctions for failure. Indeed, NCLB altered the tone of reform itself. Instead of asking for improvement, the federal law demands it.

Under NCLB, schools and districts are on the hook for having every one of their students reach a state-set level of "proficiency" by 2014. Federal rules require that schools and districts attain "Adequate Yearly Progress," or AYP, toward that goal. And the progress must be uniform: Not only students overall but a host of subgroups—involving race and ethnicity, limited English, poverty, special needs,

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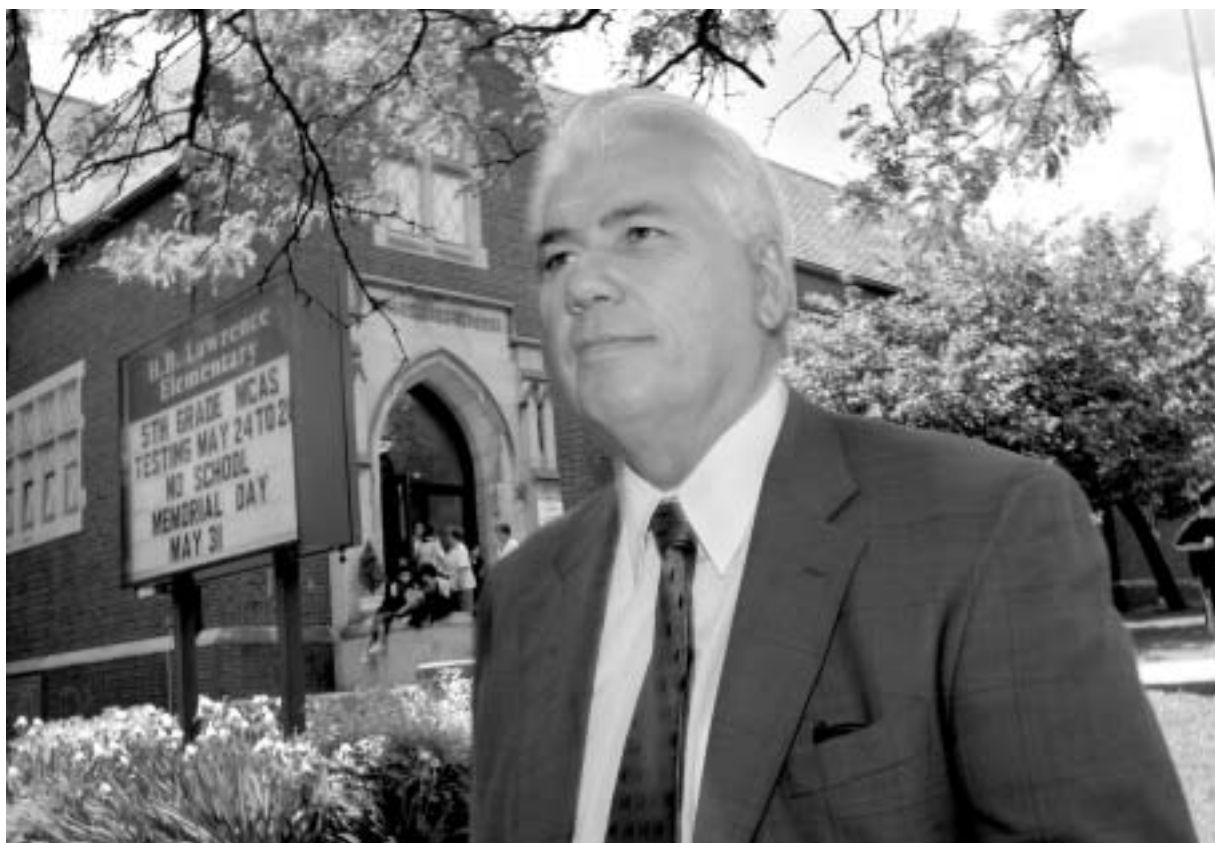
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Holyoke Superintendent Eduardo Carballo is upgrading math and reading programs while cracking down on teacher absenteeism.

etc. — must show educational advancement. Some schools are subject to as many as 18 separate AYP determinations.

On paper, at least, the penalties for failure are stiff. Any school that does not meet its AYP target two years in a row is deemed “in need of improvement.” Such schools are required to notify parents and let them transfer children to a higher-performing school in their district. After three years of inadequate progress, parents have a right to free tutoring or other supplemental services for their children. If the school fails to hit its targets for four years, it becomes subject to “corrective action,” which could include the implementation of a new curriculum and even the replacement of some staff. If, after a year of corrective measures, the school is still not improving, it becomes a candidate for “restructuring.” That could mean wholesale replacement of staff, state takeover, or conversion to a charter school.

All this hold-their-feet-to-the-fire stuff sounds tough-minded, but is fraught with practical problems. For instance, the right to transfer means little if higher-performing schools in the district have no open seats. Paul E. Peterson, director of Harvard’s Program on Education, Policy, and Governance, who favors parent choice as a vehicle for improvement, notes that nationally, of 1.3 million children eligible to transfer out of failing schools, only 17,000 have done so, in part because they lack options.

Then there is the problem of state-by-state definitions of proficiency. In Massachusetts, “proficient” is the second-highest level of scoring on MCAS, after “advanced.” Currently, to receive a high school diploma, students must only score at the lower “needs improvement” level on 10th-grade MCAS. To have every student in every school scoring “proficient” on math and English will require a huge leap in educational attainment, even over a 10-year period. MassPartners for Public Schools, a consortium of school committee, administrator, and teacher groups, says, since Massachusetts’s standards are so high, that goal is “analogous to saying that every Massachusetts student has to be above average (an A- or B+ student).”

What’s more, against that high standard, it’s hard for schools to make their mandated progress for all students. When announcing AYP results in December, the state Department of Education tried to put a positive spin on the news, declaring that “94 percent of districts and 85 percent of schools” met their annual requirements in English and math for students overall. When it came to the subgroups, however, 164 of the 237 districts that operate two or more schools, or 67 percent, failed to make AYP for one or more groups for one subject or both. Just a bare majority—53 percent—of the state’s 1,698 schools made AYP in both subjects for all groups of students; 90 schools did not make

AYP in either subject.

Massachusetts is not alone in struggling with NCLB's strict rules. Bryan Hassel, founder of Public Impact, a Chapel Hill, NC, consulting firm, who has served on presidential education commissions, predicts that 25 to 50 percent of schools nationally will be labeled failing. Jack Jennings, director of the Center on Education Policy in Washington, DC, notes that 30 percent of schools are now on state watch lists; he says some state officials predict that all of their schools will be designated failing—and need to be “fixed.”

“States are saying they don’t have the capacity to deal with schools on the watch list now. How are they going to have the capacity to deal with twice as many?” asks Jennings. “And it’s not just the capacity in terms of personnel. It’s that people don’t know what to do.”

RATTLING SWORDS

Jennings hits on two key issues: the sheer volume of schools that may need help and the thornier question of how to help them. Part of the challenge is getting educators to view what happens in classrooms in a more systematic way. Catch phrases such as “research-based” and “data-driven” carry the message: no more touchy-feely approaches to judging student learning and school effectiveness.

“We used to be very subjective, at least in the area of schools,” says Driscoll. “It’s about time public education was changed from an art into a science.”

But making school improvement a science may be more challenging than it sounds. While the federal government talks mean, there is little detail about how to get results and few blueprints to follow.

“There are no successful models around the country,” says Mark Roosevelt, one of the authors of the Education Reform Act and now managing director of the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, who served on Gov. Mitt Romney’s task force charged with developing an intervention plan.

The state Board of Education has put four other troubled districts—North Adams, Keefe Tech (a vocational high school in Framingham, which is considered a district unto itself),

Webster, and Fitchburg—on “watch,” one step short of finding them underperforming. Webster school superintendent Vincent Simone says he, working with two administrators and three principals, produced two reports for the



Board of Education chairman James Peyser: A slow response to bad schools “sacrifices” children.

state this year, creating a pile of paper that had to be shipped out in boxes. But avoiding the dreaded label was worth it. Being on watch, he says, “is good for the bad things that aren’t going to happen.”

The perception—at least at this point—is that the “underperforming” label triggers chaos, not help. And not only in Massachusetts.

“Most states are struggling with the question of, ‘What do we do with those schools that haven’t hit the benchmark?’” says Todd Ziebarth, policy analyst for the Denver-based Education Commission of the States, who in May led a gathering of state officials struggling with how to intervene in failing schools and districts. He says state takeover, while a popular notion, begs the question, “What are we going to do differently?”

It is at this point in the conversation that some policy experts start talking about extreme measures—not only state takeover but also the vast expansion of charter schools or vouchers. Others see more value in rattling the voucher sword. Rajashri Chakrabarti, a fellow at Harvard’s Kennedy

School, says that, in comparison with Milwaukee and Cleveland, which offer vouchers for students in failing schools, greater improvement comes from Florida's approach, in which schools that earn failing grades one year know a second failure within three years means parents get vouchers to send children elsewhere. Chakrabarti's analysis of student test scores in 66 schools that got one "F" showed that, over eight years, only two received a second "F," while most schools dramatically improved their students' scores.

"When facing the threat of vouchers, schools can actually escape the loss of revenue," she said. "That gives a large incentive for the schools to improve."

The Romney task force, chaired by Paul Grogan, president of The Boston Foundation, offered a 10-point school intervention plan, including a controversial proposal to lower the threshold for firing teachers in low-performing districts from "just cause" to "good cause." That plan has not received a warm reception, with some legislators describing it as an "attack on teachers."

Kathy Kelley, president of the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers and co-chair of the MassPartners for Public Schools, says that teachers should be seen as resources for school change, not as the source of failure. She says so-called reformers "are treating teachers as if they are mere functionaries instead of people with multiple degrees who have been working in classrooms."

The Grogan report, with its demand for a "sense of urgency," made another key proposal: If you declare a district underperforming, then offer a clear course of action—and do it quickly. The task force would give an evaluation

CAN YOU FIX FAILING SCHOOLS SO THEY DON'T 'BACKSLIDE'?

team 30 days to determine if an underperforming district can rebuild itself. If not, a "turnaround partner" ought to be brought in. In Winchendon and Holyoke, which are not subject to the faster timetable now favored by the Board of Education, the schools' troubles are compounded by uncertainty about what's in store for them.

CREATING A FUTURE

How do you fix failure in schools? And can you fix it for good? In Massachusetts, the experience so far involves individual schools. Much of the assistance offered by the

state Department of Education helps schools get focused on doing what they should have been doing all along: use MCAS data to pinpoint what kids didn't know, or align their curriculum with state standards, or develop a school improvement plan that really is a plan for improvement, not just an exercise in bureaucratic compliance.

"Henry Lord was like many other schools," Fall River superintendent Richard Pavao says of the Henry Lord Middle School, declared underperforming in 2002. "The [MCAS] data came in, the principals and teachers looked at it, then put it onto a shelf or into a desk drawer, saying, 'Oh, we'd better do better next time around.'"

Pavao says state help has improved Henry Lord. But test scores remain dismal. On the 2003 math MCAS, 76 percent of eighth-graders scored "warning," and 22 percent "needs improvement." Only 2 percent have earned "proficient." In English, 23 percent earned "proficient"—better, but a long way from the NCLB goal of 100 percent.

Driscoll notes that, at some schools where test scores rose initially, they have since fallen, making him worry about "backsliding." It also raises questions about whether you ever fix a school for good.

At the Lucy Stone School in Dorchester's Codman Square, however, such concerns are in the future. One of eight schools declared underperforming last year, Lucy Stone's focus is getting on track now.

"When you are named as underperforming, the decision is: Are you willing to make the commitment to swallow your pride, be truthful and honest about what you have and have not done?" says principal Elaine Gibson. She now credits the jarring label—and two state grants of \$25,000 to train teachers to analyze test data—as key to improvement. Special-education teacher Sheila Larson says the underperforming label hurt, but reflected reality.

"We had been working really hard, but not smart enough," says Larson. Now, the educators of Lucy Stone try to connect their efforts to real needs. After-school tutoring, for example, is now run by the school, not outsiders. Instead of random homework help, tutoring amplifies lessons; the director is present for some school hours, and checks in with teachers.

The question of fixing failure is, ultimately, not just about finding the right plan or combination of pokes and prods. Education is, after all, a cooperative interpersonal venture—not the work of flash mobs moving in concert for a few well-choreographed moments. It is about a teacher, a student—and a plan that works.

"Can you change the lives of kids who are with you six to 10 hours a day? Yes, you can," insists Julianne Dow, state Department of Education associate commissioner for accountability and targeted assistance. "You can either decide you are just there and they are just there and you will all be safe and you will get your paycheck and they will get their lunch, or you can really create a future." ■

No more public-sector union monopoly

BY ERIC KRISS

In his famous 1776 *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith outlined the philosophical framework for our commercial society. Smith's key insight was that a division of labor—each contributing one's part to a larger whole—propelled economies forward, provided that open exchange occurred in a market free of monopolies. He specifically warned, "The price of monopoly is upon every occasion the highest which can be got."

While the language now seems quaint, Adam Smith's insight remains the foundation of capitalism. Unfortunately, we have strayed from his wisdom and created, at the very heart of our public life, a monopoly so powerful that it should rightly be called the fourth branch of government.

I refer to public employee unions.

For the first 173 years of our constitutional democracy, government employees (referred to as public servants back then) remained non-union even as trade unions became a familiar part of the American labor scene by the early 1900s. In 1962, President Kennedy issued Executive Order 10988, which allowed federal employees to join unions and bargain collectively for the first time.

Although Kennedy's Executive Order did not extend to the state and local level, a rush of new laws rapidly followed suit. In 1973, the Massachusetts Legislature enacted Chapter 150E, expanding union membership to all state and local government employment. Thirty years later, 90 percent of all Massachusetts public employees are unionized, including the entire executive branch, our schools, and our courts. Legislators and their staffs remain one of the few non-union islands.

Since President Kennedy's time, employment conditions have evolved, and private trade unions, once dominant, now represent less than one worker out of every 10. But in the public sector, unions retain a legal monopoly status that inoculates them against the dynamic changes occurring elsewhere in our economy.

What have we wrought? Has the introduction of a union monopoly aided the civic excellence we all desire? Or have we created inherent conflicts of interest at the very core of our public institutions?

I believe it is the latter. Let me outline the mechanics of monopoly that are at work in the public sector:

Step one: Public workers pay mandatory union dues, a pass-through of funds from taxpayers to unions via

public employees.

Step two: Unions fund candidates who strongly back their special interests, and then encourage public employees to attend their political events. Of the 20 political action committees that gave the most to candidates for state and county offices in Massachusetts during the past election cycle, 16 were unions or other labor organizations, according to the Office of Campaign and Political Finance. Given the lack of an organized counterweight, union backing is especially powerful in school committee and other local elections. The winners of these contests then go on to run for the Legislature and other elective offices.

Step three: Union-backed legislators enact laws that differentially benefit unions and thwart attempts to keep union power in check. The cycle is self-perpetuating.

When the mechanics of monopoly fail to produce the desired result, there's always brute political strength. To impede independent appointments by Gov. Romney, for example, a union-backed bill currently making its way through the Legislature would require, for the first time in more than 40 years, approval by the Governor's Council of appointments to the Civil Service and Labor Relations commissions.

One impact of union monopoly is the wage premium public-sector employees enjoy compared with their private-sector counterparts. Public employees earn 12 percent more than private-sector employees for comparable jobs in eastern Massachusetts, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, even before adjusting for the value of generous benefit packages. This premium pay for public labor is a hidden tax paid by all Massachusetts citizens.

But the union monopoly does not just impact state and municipal employment. Public-sector unions influence public policy at every level. For example, public construction—roads, schools, and libraries—must follow union-backed rules that raise costs dramatically even when private contractors do the actual work. Our administration estimates that the construction premium is 20 percent or more. The option of contracting out the delivery of particular services to the private sector is effectively foreclosed by the union-backed Pacheco Law. Massachusetts is the only state in the nation to have such anti-competitive legislation.

Some will argue that this monopoly premium is not such a heavy burden to bear, and that unions provide

insulation from what otherwise would be rampant cronyism and political favoritism. This is a specious argument. Today's employment laws provide ample protection against wrongful dismissal, retribution, and other abuses.

But the burden of this labor monopoly is indeed too heavy to bear. Union clout is the primary reason why government, at every level, seems to deliver less and less in spite of growing resources. Boston's school finances are illustrative.

Since the Education Reform Act of 1993, Boston's educational resources have expanded by almost 80 percent, boosted significantly by state aid contributions. Boston's public schools now spend \$10,000 per student, more than the tuition at many Boston-area private and parochial schools. In fact, Boston's per-pupil spending increased by 13 percent over the past three years—a period marked by difficult contractions in the overall economy.

And yet we read press reports of widespread teacher layoffs. How can this be? The answer is monopoly power. The contract between the city and the Boston Teachers Union awarded average increases of 15 percent—unsustainable if resources grow only 13 percent. The result is teacher layoffs. And not just in Boston. As we struggle to emerge from recession, the average pay for private employees in Massachusetts grew only 1.5 percent last year. But average pay for public school teachers rose 5 percent. The

I believe the best teachers are *underpaid*.

differential—3.5 percent—more than accounts for the statewide loss in teaching positions.

Boston and the BTU recently inked a new deal. While the contract advertises 9-to-13 percent increases over three years, the fine print provides for automatic escalators, or “steps,” in addition to the contracted salary increases. This “double raise” adds another \$5.6 million to the base cost of the contract each year. Many teachers will be guaranteed raises of 25 percent or more over the life of the contract. To make matters worse, the city has deferred some of the cost of the contract to later years, evidently gambling on a strong economic rebound and commensurate growth in state aid.

These comments should *not* be interpreted to mean that all teachers are paid too much. Even though the average Boston teacher's salary is now about \$64,000, I believe the best teachers are *underpaid*. Unfortunately, we are not allowed to differentially reward high-performing teachers. That's because the monopoly forbids it. At the same time, the union has erected significant barriers to the removal of poor teachers, exacting an enormous toll on the overall quality of public education. The result is the

evisceration of management, and a distortion of the labor-management balance.

This is a key point underscored in the Governor's Task Force on Underperforming School Districts, which issued its report in February. This bipartisan commission—chaired by Boston Foundation President Paul Grogan and including such notables as former state representative Mark Roosevelt, co-author of the Education Reform Act, and Boston School Superintendent Thomas Payzant—recommended that administrators be exempt from union membership, that a reasonable standard be set for evaluation and dismissal of teachers, and that there be more management flexibility for troubled schools.

The governor filed legislation in support of these recommendations. But at a subsequent hearing, legislators were reluctant to oppose the teachers unions' and watered down the recommendations.

Today, the hidden tax of union monopoly is so heavy that many municipalities crack under the strain. We need to focus on sustainability at the local level, a projection of costs and resources that goes beyond the simple accounting question of whether the annual budget is strictly balanced or not.

In April, the governor unveiled a new initiative to help cities and towns calculate their own “sustainability factor”—an expected growth rate that should match or surpass any collective bargaining agreement increase. If a contract exceeds the sustainability factor, an impact statement would detail what measures will be taken to ensure that municipal budget sustainability is preserved.

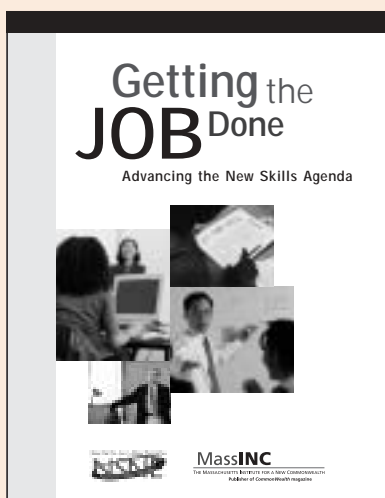
The 31-year experiment with a fourth branch of government has failed. It is time for the Legislature to reform the Commonwealth's collective bargaining laws and take back the labor monopoly granted in 1973. Among the immediate changes should be amending Chapter 150E to exempt from union membership high-level supervisors who would be considered managers in virtually any other workplace, along with repeal of the Pacheco Law. Although controversial in Massachusetts, these changes would simply begin to bring our laws in line with those in most other states. A first step was taken in May, when a special commission of legislators, members of the executive branch, and industry leaders recommended legislation to loosen the union-backed restrictions that drive up the cost of our public construction projects.

Opposition to a labor monopoly is not anti-union, just as opposition to a business monopoly is not anti-business. Massachusetts's failed experiment proves that Adam Smith had it right. The price of monopoly is on every occasion the highest which can be got. ■

Eric Kriss is the Commonwealth's secretary for administration and finance.

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Public employees need their unions

BY KATHLEEN KELLEY

Eric Kriss's description of public employee unions as monopolies that are sucking resources from cities and towns is more than an unfair attack on the hard-working men and women of the Commonwealth. It is a transparent attempt to shift the focus away from the failed policies of the Romney administration. This is, of course, a familiar propaganda technique: create a smoke screen to obscure your own botched record on job creation, public safety, education, management, fiscal prudence, and taxes.

It is no secret that this administration does not like unions and has little respect or regard for those who labor in the public sector. Secretary Kriss has delivered the same public employee-bashing message around the state for months. Gov. Romney and Secretary Kriss have targeted public employees for scorn. They once tried to eliminate health care coverage for their children and spouses. The governor wages an ongoing misinformation campaign regarding public employee pensions. Attacks on civil service and workers' due-process rights are standard fare. And in his article here in *CommonWealth*, Eric Kriss fondly recalls those days when public employees were called civil servants — emphasis on *servants*.

In the face of this all-out assault, it's no wonder public employees want a union!

Clearly, the Romney administration would rather attack public employee unions than confront its own shortcomings. In the brief time they have been in office, the Romney administration has spent an inordinate amount of time ducking responsibility for its failure to create jobs in the Commonwealth, for botched forensic exams at the state crime lab, for fraud throughout the state-mandated auto emission testing program, and for licenses improperly granted by the Office of Public Safety, to name just a few.

Secretary Kriss wants us to believe that public-employee collective bargaining agreements, like the Boston Teachers Union contract, have caused program cuts and layoffs of teachers. That is utter nonsense! Even Sam Tyler, of the business-backed Boston Municipal Research Bureau, described the Boston teachers settlement as fair and reasonable.

Most disingenuous of all, however, is that the Romney administration would really like us to believe that teacher union contracts are hurting the quality of our public schools. If freedom from unions meant better schools, then Mississippi and Alabama would be leaders in public

education. They are not. We are.

In 2003, Massachusetts earned the distinction of being named the "smartest state" in the country by the widely respected *Education State Rankings* reference journal, based on the quality of its public elementary and secondary schools. This distinction was based on a comparison of 21 factors in all 50 states. Our fourth-graders scored first in the country on the 2002 National Assessment of Educational Progress in reading. Massachusetts eighth-graders are second in the nation in writing.

In fact, even by our own statewide measurement, MCAS scores in traditional public schools exceed those of the administration's much beloved charter schools, according to a review by *The Boston Globe*. However, don't expect the Romney administration to tout these figures in their next press release, since their chairman of the state Board of Education, James Peyser, runs a venture capital firm that profits from charter schools.

The crisis in municipal budgets has been caused by the cuts in local aid.

The men and women who work in our public schools deserve praise for their accomplishments, not the constant teacher bashing of this administration. And it is not the contracts that their unions have negotiated for them that have created budget problems at the local level. On the contrary, Secretary Kriss, the crisis in municipal budgets has been created by your administration's \$400 million cut in state aid to cities and towns.

And this crisis is not limited to our public schools. A recent report by the Senate Post Audit and Oversight Committee documented the dramatic impact local aid cuts have had on homeland security. The committee surveyed 98 percent of the state's police chiefs and 96 percent of our fire chiefs. At a time of the most dangerous threat ever to our internal security, the survey's findings are sobering.

Local public safety officials from across the state reported deep cuts in first-responder staffing. Since the September 11 attacks, Massachusetts cities and towns have lost 945 police officers and 798 firefighters. The committee estimates that these cuts exceed 5 percent of public safety per-

sonnel in the state. In some urban areas, it is as high as 16 percent. But in its own 2003 homeland security "report card," the Romney administration falsely pegged the figure at a mere 1 percent.

If Gov. Romney is sincere about the "sustainability factor" confronting local governments, he should keep the promise he made in the last campaign and restore state aid to cities and towns to 2002 levels.

Public employee unions provided the heroes of September 11, 2001.

It's also time for Gov. Romney to live up to his reputation as a savvy businessman. Successful CEOs praise their employees, not bash them.

In closing, let me say that I believe Eric Kriss's quotation from Adam Smith was a highly inappropriate way to open an article on unions, in that Smith's writings not only pre-date the Bill of Rights, but also the industrial revolution and the union movement. A more appropriate and timely context to put public employees in would be the events of

September 11, 2001. The heroes of that fateful day, all members of public employee unions, were the hundreds of fire-fighters who rushed into the World Trade Center towers, the police officers, emergency medical technicians, social workers, and, yes, even the teachers who ushered thousands of children to safety. They have all rightly earned our respect and praise.

Members of public employee unions patrol lonely highways at night to keep us safe; they empty the bedpans and change the sheets for those whom society might otherwise leave behind; they guard us from murderers, rapists, and drug dealers in our prisons; they run into burning buildings to save us; they teach our children, manage our parks, greet our tourists.

In exchange, they demand dignity, a fair wage and livable benefits for their entire family, and the right — protected by a union contract — to perform their duties honestly, without fear of political retribution. I am extremely proud to be a member of a public employee union and to have the opportunity to represent my colleagues as a union officer. ■

Kathleen Kelley is president of the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers and executive vice president of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO.



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Dam shame

In the Shadow of the Dam: The Aftermath of the Mill River Flood of 1874

By Elizabeth M. Sharpe

New York, Free Press, 304 pages

REVIEWED BY ALAN R. EARLS

Although floods still rank as major killers in many parts of the world, here in New England rampaging rivers aren't a source of much worry. But it wasn't always this way. Prior to the massive, region-wide counterattack against nature spearheaded by the Army Corps of Engineers in the middle of the 20th century, New England's rivers and streams could kill—and often did. The worst examples included the 1936 flood along the Connecticut River and, of course, the flooding associated with the great 1938 hurricane. After that, hurricanes Carol in 1954 and Diane in 1955 did their level best to chase the last remnants of New England's textile industry from the region.

These events, frightening as they were, cannot compare in shock, scale, or fury to the calamity along the Mill River in western Massachusetts in 1874, the result of the sudden but not entirely unanticipated failure of a mill reservoir dam. That the flood, which took the lives of 139 people, is not better known today is perhaps due not only to the passage of time but also to the lack of a single coherent account of the event. No contemporaries seriously attempted to tell the story, and a similar but even greater disaster at Johnstown, Pa., just 15 years later, seemingly eclipsed forever the horrendous events along the Mill River. At least, until now.

Elizabeth M. Sharpe, a former director of education at the Smith-

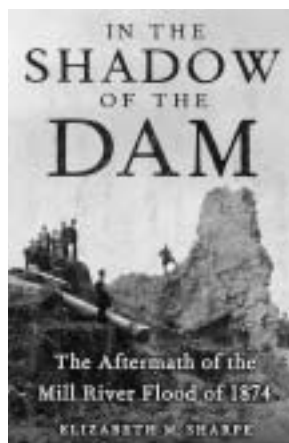
sonian's National Museum of American History and a resident of Amherst, has filled this gap in our regional memory with *In the Shadow of the Dam*. The book draws on contemporary accounts, legal documents, and personal letters to paint a picture of life in a vibrant 19th-century manufacturing community that is swept away in an event as harrowing as any in a modern-day disaster movie.

The stars of the first part of Sharpe's story are the entrepreneurs who harnessed the river, imagined new products and manufacturing methods, and made their fortunes with them. These same men also turn out to be the villains of the piece—blind to their own ignorance of engineering, frightened of spending the money to build the dam properly, and supremely capable of rationalizing their errors, no matter how grievous. As a result, *In the Shadow of the Dam* is both an entertaining bit of historical reporting and a timeless tale of venality getting the best of human nature.

Sharpe largely resists the temptation to moralize over her cast of characters, or even to second-guess them. Thus, even the most culpable are rendered as human beings—familiar, accessible, and not beyond our sympathy even when their actions seem in-

excusable. For condemnation, events provide enough.

Among the local grandees is Joel Hayden of the eponymous Haydensville, a village of Williamsburg, who rose to prominence as a manufacturer and also became lieutenant governor of the state. His brass works, which employed scores of local residents producing plumbing fixtures and other items, was just one of his business interests. But, like many other manufacturers, he prospered to some extent at the whim of nature.



The Mill River, which flows from the Highland Lakes in Goshen to the Connecticut River on Northampton's southern border, sometimes nearly dried up, stopping production and throwing operatives out of work. In 1864, Hayden proposed the creation of a large storage reservoir that could ensure year-round water power for himself and other manufacturers.

Because the project would benefit all the businesses in the valley, Hayden enlisted wide financial and political support. The names of fellow entrepreneurs—Spelman, Skinner, Bodman, and Dimock—filled the roster of dam proprietors. From the start, though, the project flirted with disaster. The budget the proprietors set aside to build the dam ended up a fraction of the cost estimate provided

by the first engineering firm they hired. So, rather than revisit their expectations (or their pocketbooks), the financiers sought out someone who would deliver a “yes” to their request for a massive dam at a bargain price. In the end, they settled on a rough specification rather than a full plan, drawn up by an engineer who specialized in railroads, not dams. And that sketchy blueprint was passed along to a contractor inexperienced in dam construction.

Giving the proprietors what they paid for, the contractor cut corners at almost every step. Rotting tree stumps were left in place under the dam; walls were not sunk to bedrock, or “hardpan”; inferior materials were used; and grouting was done in the dead of winter when it was too cold for the mortar to cure properly. Worst of all, the dam was fitted with a drain culvert smaller than what was specified, allowing the reservoir to drain no faster than it naturally filled up. In short, the dam was a disaster waiting to happen.

Witnesses saw a great, rolling wall of debris, 20 to 40 feet in height.

Villagers expressed concern about the safety of the reservoir from its inception, partly because of stories of Hayden himself riding up to check on the reservoir in the dead of night when there was a heavy rain. But a decade of false alarms lulled them into a false sense of security.

To his credit, Hayden was prudent enough to insist that the rickety reservoir be kept no more than half full. But when Hayden died, in November 1873, those who remained in charge grew bolder. The next spring, the proprietors ignored the numerous and substantial leaks along the dam’s face and, anxious to harness every drop of water, ordered the reservoir filled to capacity. On the morning of May 16, 1874, the dam literally

exploded skyward as millions of tons of reservoir water undercut the dam and lifted it aside.

Sharpe is at her best describing, breathlessly and with earnest fidelity, the deadly minutes that followed. Witnesses saw not a wave of water but a great, rolling wall of debris, between 20 and 40 feet in height, consisting of the thousands of cubic yards of earth and stone of the dam itself, and nearly all the trees, soil, and human-made material it encountered below. Buildings of all sizes were swept from their foundations and pounded to bits. When the flood hit Skinnerville, another Williamsburg mill village, Sharpe tells us, “The torrent reached for the storehouses, dye house, and wood house, consuming them as it smothered the three-story factory and pulled the structure down. In one single swift moment the mill workers saw their homes, their jobs, and all their possessions washed away.”

Fortunately for the thousands of people in its path, a few heroes raced ahead of the flood—Sharpe estimates it traveled about nine miles an hour—in an effort to warn the workers and citizens of the fate that awaited them. A few scoffed; more ran, and most of those who ran survived. Thus, despite nearly erasing several thriving communities, the death toll, initially thought to be as high as 2,000, ended up at only 139. But some entire families were erased, and hundreds more were left homeless.

The proprietors, the designers, and the builders of the dam each got tarred in varying degrees by the formal inquest, though none suffered anything worse than a tarnished reputation. Also put under scrutiny,

albeit more obliquely, was the Commonwealth’s toothless system of oversight. Untrained county commissioners could and did “accept” a dam, as was the case with the Williamsburg structure, more on the reputation of its owner than on the basis of sound engineering.

Sharpe makes much of the influence the Mill River disaster had in encouraging reform, but in this she is not entirely convincing. Even two subsequent dam failures within a matter of months, one of which nearly led to a Mill River-scale calamity, were not enough to force anything more than measured change in Massachusetts and neighboring states. Indeed, Sharpe admits it was not until the start of the 20th century that anything like adequate dam oversight became the norm here.

Aside from attaching more significance to the event than the facts seem to support, Sharpe provides a wonderful account of an awful tragedy. And this long-forgotten episode of Massachusetts history is a reminder of the perpetual challenge of making institutions, both public and private, as responsible as possible without condemning them to strictures that sap their vitality.

In truth, what’s most striking about the aftermath of the Mill River flood is that the valley’s entrepreneurs largely went back to their old ways. One of the mill owners even lost another, smaller dam the very next year. But that story—outrage, followed by return to an almost-unchanged normalcy—is familiar enough today. We are now as scandalized by the shenanigans of the corporate boardroom as we are by government malfeasance. But, also like our 19th-century predecessors, we are slow to make changes that would guard against their recurrence, especially if there is a price to pay in future prosperity. ■

Alan R. Earls is a writer based in Franklin.

Not-so-dirty water

Political Waters: The Long, Dirty, Contentious, Incredibly Expensive but Eventually Triumphant History of Boston Harbor—A Unique Environmental Success Story

By Eric Jay Dolin

University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 356 pages

REVIEWED BY JOHN C. BERG

At a recent Rappaport Institute panel at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, former governor Michael Dukakis called the Boston Harbor cleanup a success "that nobody talks about," and he wished aloud that someone would study it. It turns out that somebody has.

Dukakis should be pleased with *Political Waters*, in which Eric Jay Dolin tells the story of the harbor cleanup, tells why it has been a success, and explains that it is not yet done. As the subtitle suggests, Dolin tells the story as one of heroism and triumph. The Boston Harbor cleanup was an engineering triumph, to be sure. A huge public works project delivered under budget and pretty much on time, it included the largest egg-shaped digesters of raw sewage built in North America and a 7.5-mile tunnel bored under the harbor floor (a feat that caused three deaths during construction). But still more it was a triumph of law and public administration, as a city solicitor, a state judge, a federal judge, and a federal administrator forced the state to take action on the raw sewage being dumped into the harbor. Ultimately, it was a political triumph as well. Political leaders were slow to face up to the problem, but once the courts forced their hand, state and local officials worked hard to settle disputes, solve problems, and meet crises as they arose.

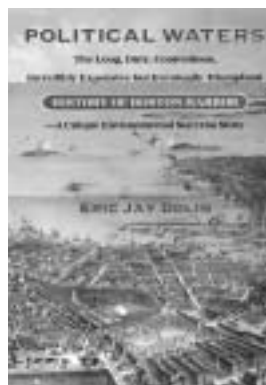
Triumphs need heroes, and Dolin has them, beginning with William Golden, the Quincy city solicitor who sued the state after he found himself running through sewage on Wollaston Beach. Another was Paul Garrity, the Massachusetts Superior Court judge who used Golden's lawsuit, feats of judicial brinksmanship, and occasional grandstanding to force the state to turn water and sewer services for Greater Boston—then in the hands of the politically paralyzed Metropolitan District Commission—over to the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA), a new quasi-public entity with the power to issue its own bonds and raise water rates as needed to cover the costs of the cleanup. Other notable figures include: Mike Deland, the federal district administrator of the Environmental Protection Administration, who filed his own lawsuit to move the case into federal court; David Mazzone, the federal judge who oversaw the construction of the new sewage treatment system with a firm but flexible hand, leaving the practical decisions to those with expertise while using the power of the federal court to ensure that the process kept moving on schedule; and Paul Levy and Douglas MacDonald, the second and third executive direc-

tors of the MWRA, who guided the new agency past a series of major political and engineering obstacles to bring the project to completion.

In the first five (of eight) chapters, Dolin tells the history of Boston's sewage from 1634—when, shockingly, harbor pollution was first seen to be a problem—to 1982. For most of this period, everyone's favorite solution for sewage was to dump it into the harbor, where it was to be washed

away by the tides, but seldom was. With the passage of the federal Clean Water Act in 1972, such dumping was made illegal, but it was not halted in Boston until September 6, 2000, when the new plant came fully online.

Dolin rightly concentrates on the politics more than the engineering, but it was hard to separate the two. The engineering solutions were brilliant, and the project workers justly proud, but the major problem was that elected officials could not see their way to solving what was an increasingly obvious mess. For most of the 20th century, Boston's sewage was given only what is known as "primary" treatment. Basically, this consists of holding raw sewage in containers and letting it stand. The pollutants settle to the bottom as sludge, while the liquid that remains, or "effluent," is drained



off, either for further (“secondary”) treatment, or for release into a body of water, in this case Boston Harbor. Primary treatment made the effluent cleaner, but the polluted sludge remained. At both of Boston’s old treatment plants, on Nut Island and Deer Island, it was disposed of in what Dolin calls a “bizarre and counterproductive” way: The sludge, like the effluent, was deposited into the harbor, an action that “negated most if not all of the benefits of primary sewage treatment.” In other words, after the effluent and the sludge were carefully separated from each other, both were dumped in the same place.

The Clean Water Act required secondary treatment of sewage water (basically, disinfection of the effluent by aeration), but states could apply for a waiver of that requirement when the effluent was to be released into a deep ocean with strong tidal currents.

The waivers were intended for Pacific coast cities with sharp coastal drop-offs, but Massachusetts also applied for one. John Snedeker, commissioner of the Metropolitan District Commission in the late 1970s, argued that secondary treatment was not needed because, in conjunction with primary treatment, an extended outfall—that is, a pipe carrying the effluent past the harbor and into Massachusetts Bay—would allow for “ample water quality in the harbor for at least the next two or three decades.”

There are still experts who believe that secondary treatment was not needed in Boston, and this reviewer is in no position to judge the merits of this technical argument. But Massachusetts’s attempt to avoid secondary treatment cost the state time and the ratepayers’ money. Deland called it “the most expensive public policy mistake in the history of New England.”

The failed quest for a waiver raised the cost of the project by delaying planning and construction as prices rose, and it decreased the federal contribution to those costs because sewage construction grants under the Clean Water Act had expired by the time the MWRA would have been able to apply for them. Dolin argues that the second loss was illusory (Massachusetts got its full allotment of those grants, which simply went to other projects all over the state), but that is little consolation to ratepayers in the MWRA’s service area.

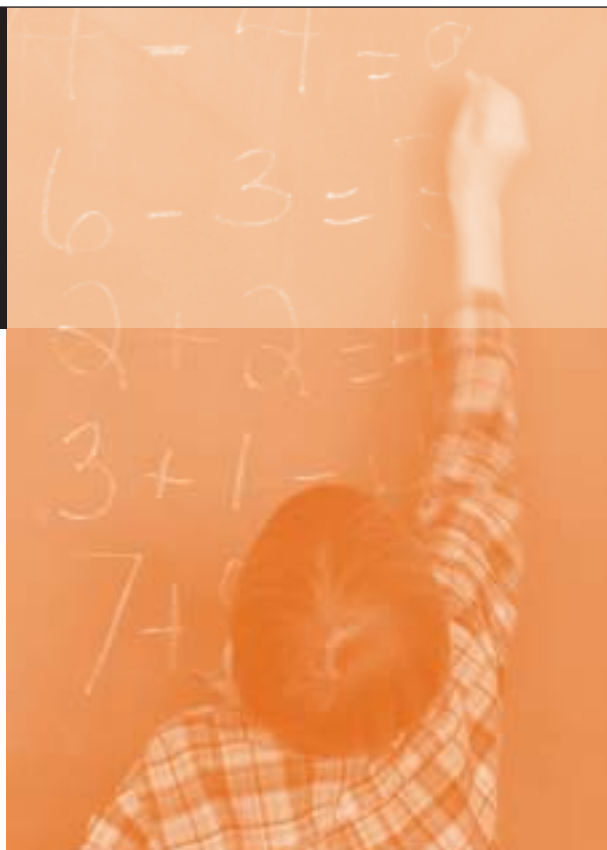
For all its success, the cleanup was not without its problems. Michael Gritzuk, the first executive director of the MWRA, was selected for his engineering skills, but he proved to be politically tone-deaf. In his first few months, he aroused a furor by ordering expensive office furnishings—symbolized by marble ashtrays—for



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the new MWRA headquarters building, just when water rates were rising rapidly. He continued to arouse legislative hostility until he was replaced by Levy. A crisis of a more substantive nature involved the siting of a backup landfill for treated sludge, in the event that it could not be sold for fertilizer. Project managers and federal regulators believed that an out-of-state site was not acceptable, and that the best site was in Walpole. But residents of the town and their neighbors rallied support in the Legislature and from US Rep. Barney Frank, forcing a restudy of the issue and ultimately a deal to dispose of the sludge in North Dakota. Judge Mazzone exerted strong pressure on the parties to reach a settlement while leaving it to them to work out the details; without the judge's active role, Dolin argues, the project might have foundered at this point.

Perhaps the most visible controversy associated with the harbor cleanup did not involve the project at all. During the 1988 presidential campaign, Vice President and Republican nominee George H.W. Bush charged Gov. Michael Dukakis, the Democratic nominee, with failing to clean up

reputation entirely, but it certainly sets the record straight.

The story is not over. The glare of publicity and the scrutiny of the federal court may have faded, but the new Deer Island plant still has to be maintained better than the old one ever was, and the MWRA has not yet solved the problem of combined sewer overflows, or emergency relief outlets that dump sewage into the harbor when heavy rains cause the system to back up. Wollaston Beach, which inspired the Quincy lawsuit, is still too contaminated for swimming several days each month. Some experts continue to believe that secondary treatment was a boondoggle, while others think that the pelletized sludge, now sold as fertilizer, contains dangerous levels of antibiotics. And perhaps someday it will seem just as short-sighted to dump effluent into Massachusetts Bay as dumping raw sewage into Boston Harbor seems to us now. Still, there is no doubt that the cleanup succeeded beyond what anyone dreamed of in the 1970s.

What can be learned from this success? Neither of the two obvious comparisons is quite fair. The city's other mammoth construction project,

That said, Dolin points to several features that contributed to the success of the project: good management (by Levy and MacDonald), the financial capability of the MWRA, the cooperation of the labor unions, and the power of the court. He also mentions the important role of the MWRA Advisory Board, and its director, Joseph Favolaro, in keeping the cost down to \$3.8 billion, and helping maintain the grudging acquiescence of ratepayers.

Two of Dolin's keys to success point out limitations in the politics of democracy. The Legislature created the MWRA explicitly to remove the issue of costs from the political arena, where it was a loser for elected officials if they stood tall for clean water and a loser for the public good if they caved in to the pocketbook pressure of their constituents. The MWRA was able to issue bonds at a higher credit rating (and therefore lower interest) than the state itself would, because it had the ability to set rates to cover its costs. And no legislator would ever have to approve a water-rate increase—and be pilloried for that vote by a future opponent. Similarly, the federal court was able to force agreement on the many controversies that arose; without its intervention, political pressure probably would have driven the parties apart.

We could see the resort to authorities and courts as a failure of civic institutions. But we can also see it as indicating that the public will is best expressed in general principles, rather than on their implementation, a point made more than 200 years ago by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Either way, we have a lot to learn from the Boston Harbor cleanup, and *Political Waters* is worth reading on that count alone. That Dolin tells such a good story is a bonus. ■

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Legislators were happy not to take the blame for water-rate increases.

his own harbor. It was not exactly a cheap shot, but neither was it a clean one. Dukakis was slow to turn his attention to harbor pollution, and the ill-fated secondary-treatment waiver application, though pursued mostly during the Edward King administration, dated back to the end of Dukakis's first term (1975–1979). However, in his second and third terms (1983–91), Dukakis played a leading role in creating the MWRA, and he strongly supported the harbor cleanup. By the time of Bush's attack, the cleanup was firmly in place. This book may not salvage Dukakis's

the Central Artery/Tunnel, was bigger, more complex, and not driven by a court order. Nor did the Turnpike Authority, however much its tolls have been dragooned into serving the Big Dig cause, have the MWRA's capacity to generate funds. In the case of Boston school desegregation, the other big court-ordered policy change, the federal court was forcing Boston to pursue a goal that many in the city—including a majority of the Boston School Committee—opposed, whereas the opposition to the harbor cleanup was not to the principle, but only to the cost.

Identity theft

Multiple JFKs and other name games in Massachusetts politics

BY JAMES V. HARRIGAN

When the Democrats convene in Boston's FleetCenter to nominate US Sen. John F. Kerry of Massachusetts for the presidency, the name John F. Kennedy is sure to be invoked, with no shortage of comparisons between the "old JFK" and the "new JFK." What most of those who make the comparisons won't know is that, in the word play of Massachusetts politics, the matching initials of the 1960 and 2004 Democratic nominees are just the beginning.

As conventioners stroll the Freedom Trail, many who pay a visit to the State House will poke their heads into the House chamber and take note of the plaque affixed to the Speaker's rostrum, where a portion of the speech John F. Kennedy delivered before a joint session of the Legislature on January 11, 1961, is emblazoned in gold. In that speech, the president-elect echoed John Winthrop's famous "City on a Hill" address and commented on the "four stormy years that lie ahead."

There's a photograph from that night, which has circulated around the State House ever since, showing JFK at the rostrum; the president of the Senate and the Speaker of the House sit behind him. The governor and lieutenant governor are to their left and right, flanked by the attorney general, secretary of state, and members of the Massachusetts congressional delegation. The one high-ranking state official not present is the state treasurer, despite The Boston Globe's report that "all constitutional officers" were expected to attend. Why was the treasurer nowhere to be seen? Did he feel unwelcome? Or did he know better than to show his face that night?

Nineteen forty six was a good year for World War II veterans running for office, and many of them campaigned in uniform. Among them was a resident of Boston, a former Navy lieutenant named John Fitzgerald Kennedy. A grandson of former congressman John "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald, Kennedy was elected to the US House of Representatives on his first try and re-elected in 1948 and 1950. But 1952 was even better for JFK. That year, he was elected to the US Senate.

And that wasn't the only statewide office for which John F. Kennedy was a candidate. State Treasurer John E. Hurley, originally a candidate for re-election, resigned his office on

July 5 to accept appointment by the governor as clerk of the Boston Municipal Court. A joint session of the Massachusetts House and Senate nominated US Rep. Foster Furcolo to replace Hurley. But in the Democratic primary that September, Furcolo had to fend off six challengers, including John F. Kennedy, whom Furcolo defeated by more than 80,000 votes. Two years later, Furcolo ran for US Senate, against Leverett Saltonstall. (John F. Kennedy didn't face

JFK insisted that few voters confused him with JFK.

re-election until 1958.) Still, Furcolo's attempt to move up opened the door for John F. Kennedy, who was elected state treasurer in 1954.

If all this seems confusing, it should be noted that the Commonwealth's new bursar was John Francis Kennedy, a high school dropout from South Boston. He worked in a stockroom at Gillette and made \$88.16 per week; the treasurer's job paid \$11,000 annually. This other JFK won his bid for re-election in 1956, but it wasn't easy. He faced four candidates in the Democratic primary. One was a political newcomer who entered the race because he was outraged that someone would pirate the good name of the dynamic young senator from Massachusetts. His name was John M. Kennedy.

In 1958, the two JFKs shared the statewide ballot, and both were re-elected to their respective offices. No one knows how many Massachusetts voters, in that election or the two previous, thought John Fitzgerald Kennedy was doing such a good job in the US Senate that he deserved to be state treasurer as well. John Francis Kennedy admitted that some voters had "been fooled for years," but he maintained that "not more than 5 per cent" of the electorate confused him with JFK. But it's not because the state treasurer had done much to distinguish himself from his down-to-the-middle-initial namesake. He refused to buy radio or television time, rarely campaigned in public, and never spent more than \$200 on any of his campaigns.

In 1960, while John Fitzgerald Kennedy ran for president, the lesser-known JFK sought the Democratic nomination

for governor. But this time, the voters were on to him. Either that or those who thought John F. Kennedy could serve as a US Senator in Washington, DC, at the same time he was state treasurer back in Boston concluded that serving as both president and governor was a little too much—even for their beloved JFK!

John Francis Kennedy's loss for governor might have been an opportunity to restore some credibility to state Democratic politics, except that the JFK name game was not completely over. With no real consensus among the party cognoscenti to replace the ersatz JFK as treasurer, a total of six men sought the Democratic nomination. Among them was John M. Kennedy of Boston; another was a resident of Saugus named John B. Kennedy.

Even the election of John T. Driscoll as treasurer in 1960 did not end the attempts to trade on the Kennedy name by those outside the Boston-turned-Hyannisport clan. In 1962, with JFK in the White House, former treasurer John F. Kennedy and former would-be treasurer John M. Kennedy both sought to wrest the treasurer's office away from the incumbent, but failed to do so. Two years later, Driscoll resigned to become chairman of the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, and a joint session of the state House and Senate chose Robert Q. Crane, a state representative from Brighton, to finish his term.

Crane won election on his own in 1966, but he had to

Massachusetts refused to believe John F. Kennedy could serve as both president of the United States and governor of the Commonwealth, they could hardly expect to elect him as a state treasurer after he'd been dead for three years!

But that's not the end of the story. Re-elected five times and serving until his retirement in 1990, Treasurer Robert Q. Crane was an old-style pol and master of the patronage game. At one point, Bob Crane had baseball great Luis Tiant on his payroll. Another patronage appointment went to a washed-up infielder who ended his unremarkable career with the Red Sox; he now manages the North Shore Spirit, a minor league team in Lynn. His name is John Kennedy.

Is the rampant misappropriation of the name John Kennedy—and the initials JFK—yet another tragedy that has befallen the First Family of Camelot? Perhaps. But the Kennedys themselves are not exactly strangers to the maneuver political scientist Murray Levin, in 1962, termed “the name's the same”—and declared that Massachusetts politicians had turned into an art.

In 1946, when the once-and-future JFK was making his first run for Congress, he was one of many candidates seeking the Democratic nomination. One of his rivals was a Boston city councilor named Joseph M. Russo. Russo wasn't necessarily the favorite, but he was a proven vote-getter. That made old Joe Kennedy uneasy. He scoured the Boston voter list until he found another Joseph M. Russo. With Kennedy money behind him, the janitor from the old West End entered the race, splitting the Joe Russo vote. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Of course, the political art of mistaken identity is not limited to the Kennedys and their name. In 1978, the Democratic and Republican primaries both had gubernatorial candidates named Ed King. One was Edward J. King, the other Edward F. King. Anybody remember who won?

And in 2002, the Democratic primary for—yes—state treasurer proved that mistaken identity can be a hazard today, and even when there is no mischief involved. With two Cahills vying for the nomination, one of them dropped his surname altogether from his slogan, which

proved to be a winner: TIM FOR TREASURER! ■

James V. Horrigan is a writer living in Boston.



As one John F. Kennedy addresses the Legislature, his namesake lays low.

beat three candidates in the Democratic primary to do so. And yes, one of them was John Francis Kennedy, who by now should have known better. If the people of Massa-

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The Court Has Spoken

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Justice Margot Botsford, Hancock vs. Driscoll, April 26, 2004



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