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CommonWealth MassINC

EDITOR

Robert Keough

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Michael Jonas, Robert David Sullivan

ART DIRECTOR

Heather Kramer Hartshorn

DESIGN CONSULTANT

Ken Silva

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Mary Carey, Christopher Daly,
Richard A. Hogarty, Jeffrey Klineman,
John E. McDonough, Neil Miller,
Laura Pappano, Robert Preer,
Phil Primack, B.J. Roche, Ralph Whitehead Jr.,
Katharine Whittemore

WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT

Shawn Zeller

PROOFREADER

Jessica Murphy

ISSUESOURCE.ORG COORDINATOR

Jacquelyn Benson

EDITORIAL ADVISORS

Mickey Edwards, Ed Fouhy,
Alex S. Jones, Mary Jo Meisner,
Ellen Ruppel Shell, Alan Wolfe

PUBLISHER

Ian Bowles

SPONSORSHIP AND ADVERTISING

Rob Zaccardi

CIRCULATION

Emily Wood

INTERNS

Ben Koski, Phil Lamere, Eric Wagner,
Catherine Watkins

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In 2004, the *CommonWealth* Health Care Extra helped frame this year's debates over cost, quality, and coverage in Massachusetts. For 2006, count on *CommonWealth* to tackle the complex and challenging issues of growth and development in the Bay State.

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CommonWealth

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CORRESPONDENCE

UMASS ALUM WONDERS WHERE TO SEND HIS CHILD

I wish you had also addressed the tuition costs (and, of course, fees) at our state university in comparison with other states (“Is it higher-ed’s turn?” *CW*, Spring ’05). Perhaps then we might examine how much money it would take to help make the schools more accessible and affordable.

We might also undertake the ugly task of getting a better picture of why students do not graduate. We would discover the heartbreaking reality that too many students do not return for another semester after a trip to the bursar’s office, where they realize there is no way to make up for the shortfall in what financial aid (including loans) will cover. Ask UMass students about coming back after Christmas break to find empty dorm rooms down the hall — where “Billy” decided to “take a semester off” and save up.

As a new parent, I already am wondering if I might be better off sending my child to state schools in North Carolina, Wisconsin, Virginia, et al. — where their out-of-state tuition may match Massachusetts’s in-state tuition yet offer a higher quality, more stable education. How many times must we hear about UMass–Amherst’s library being threatened with loss of accreditation or about distinguished members of the faculty leaving to accept tenured positions elsewhere?

I have lost all confidence in my alma mater’s ability to successfully lobby for funding in order to maintain a commitment to excellence. In fact, they hesitate to summon a call to arms to the alumni — for fear that any distress call will encourage the alumni to send their own children elsewhere.

David Oliveira
UMass–Amherst
Class of ’90
New Bedford

TRANSFORMED BRAUDE MAKES OUR COMMUNITY RICHER

If the presidents of the United States and Russia can go joyriding together, and if Hanoi can become the new “in” tourist destination, I suppose anything is possible. So why are we surprised to see, in *CommonWealth*’s profile of Jim Braude (“All talk”), how the former firebrand radical has transformed himself into a respected talk-show host? In business circles not long ago, a positive article on Braude would have been met with a demand for a retraction. And for good reason: Through his left-leaning underpinnings he had been branded an “activist” on good days and a “communist” on others.

What a change a few years can make. I have to admit that today I not only have come to appreciate this old nemesis but have actually grown to like him. While I still do not embrace most of his political beliefs, I share the profile’s observations about him: that whether as a poverty lawyer, community activist, city councilor, or multimedia host, we are a richer community for having Jim Braude in our midst.

Robert K. Sheridan
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LETTER WRITER GETS PROPOSITION 2½ WRONG

In his letter about towns raising taxes (“Towns know how to raise taxes without overrides,” Correspondence), Anthony Guaquier misstates the effect of raising the property tax rate on businesses. He cites increasing the tax rate on businesses as an income-generating source. It is not. Proposition 2½ limits the total amount that a town can raise in real estate and personal property taxes — i.e., the tax levy. While a community can adopt a split tax rate to



shift a greater portion of the tax burden onto businesses (and reduce the tax burden for residential property owners), doing so does not generate a single dollar of new revenue for the town. Adopting a split tax rate (i.e., a higher rate for commercial, industrial, and personal property than for residential property) does not change the levy limit.

Guaquier also lists increasing assessments as an income-generating source. It is not. When assessments rise, there is a corresponding decrease in the tax rate. Prop. 2½ limits the total amount of tax dollars a community can raise from one year to the next — 2.5 percent more than the year before, with adjustments for new growth and overrides and debt exemptions. The increase in assessments that Guaquier observes is a factor of the real rise of property values, not a political tactic. Prop. 2½ requires that towns assess property at 100 percent of fair cash value. (See www.dls.state.ma.us for lots of good info on municipal finance.)

I value *CommonWealth* magazine for its accurate, insightful, and in-depth analysis of policy issues. Printing a letter chock full of misinformation is inconsistent with the quality of your wonderful magazine.

Peter Johnson-Staub
Assistant town administrator
Yarmouth

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Growing pains

Along about June, the “housing bubble” became big news nationally. In the same week, a cover story in *Time* (HOME \$WEET HOME) focused attention on the “blistering” US real estate market and a *New York Times* Week in Review piece took the story global, noting the run-up of housing prices in coastal cities and tourist hubs (like Boston) around the world, inflated by competition among the affluent and fueled by low interest rates. The new concern is not about affordability but about the economy. If it’s a bubble, will it burst? And if it does, what will happen to an economy driven by the (paper) worth of homeowners who are overextended on mortgages that are looking increasingly risky?

None of this comes as news to us in the Bay State. The sky-high and ever-rising cost of housing in eastern Massachusetts, a phenomenon spreading from Boston ever outward, has been a central concern in the state—and here at MassINC—for years now. Homeownership is a cornerstone of the American Dream, and rising real estate prices are putting that piece of the dream increasingly out of reach for many families. The cost of housing has also become an economic development issue, as business expansion in a range of industries is threatened by the difficulty of recruiting skilled labor, professional and otherwise, to an unaffordable real estate market.

These are reasons enough for concern. But housing prices are intertwined with all sorts of questions about how our state manages—or doesn’t manage—growth and development. Our 2003 survey, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, pointed not only to affordability of housing but also roads and traffic (above the availability of good paying jobs) as sources of dissatisfaction and worry for Massachusetts residents.

In some ways, little seems to have changed since Michael Jonas’s “Anti-family values” (*CW*, Spring ’02). As Jonas reported, towns have little incentive to zone for starter homes to attract young families and their kids. Generating more property taxes and sending fewer children to school, higher-end houses on large lots look better on the municipal balance sheet. Last year, the state began offering one-time funding for “smart growth” development—more densely packed housing in city and town centers around existing means of transportation—but that does not seem to have been enough to counteract local opposition to housing construction, at least not yet.

“It’s almost as if children are toxic,” Secretary of Commonwealth Development Doug Foy told lawmakers at a hearing this spring. There is now talk on Beacon Hill of com-

binning smart-growth incentives with additional education aid—just as envisioned by the Commonwealth Housing Task Force, a coalition of leaders convened by the Boston Foundation—to offset local concerns about the costs of middle-class family housing. Whether even richer carrots will overcome home rule traditions, opaque zoning regulations, and our historic village sensibilities remains to be seen.

But housing is just one of the variables families consider when deciding where to live. Our research into commuting patterns, *Mass.Commuting*, suggests that many families have chosen to live farther away from their place of work in order to get the basket of goods they seek. Indeed, the number of long commuters—those who spend at least an hour and half commuting each day—has doubled since 1980. That’s time lost from family, friends, and community.

A series of maps we have published in conjunction with the *Boston Globe*’s Ideas section underscores these trends. With maps on housing affordability, the ratio of older to younger residents, commuting distance, and town population growth, *CommonWealth* associate editor Robert David Sullivan and MassINC research associate Greg Leiserson have shown the middle-class frontier—the towns where young families are choosing to live—moving ever farther out from Boston, past the I-495 belt and into formerly rural communities. Even with minimal population growth—not to mention an estimated decline last year—Massachusetts is gobbling up land, clogging roads and highways, and burdening families with staggering amounts of mortgage debt. Can’t we do better?

CommonWealth will be diving into these issues in the coming year. The editors are beginning work on a special extra issue—the third in our history—on growth and development in Massachusetts. With the backing of more than two dozen sponsors ranging from the New England Regional Council of Carpenters and major environmental foundations to the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties and the Homebuilders Association of Massachusetts, *CommonWealth* will give extensive coverage to the daunting challenges of growth and development in early 2006 just as it did health care in 2004 and education reform in 2002. How our state grapples with its growing pains now will have an impact for generations to come. ■



Ian Bowles

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Preservation Act strikes a balance as it hits its stride

BY MICHAEL JONAS

Despite early worries that the Community Preservation Act was funding a land grab by suburban communities eager to lock in open space at the expense of the affordable housing law was also designed to support, new spending data show that communities are pursuing the balance of uses envisioned five years ago when the measure was adopted by the Legislature.

From the start, the act had a built-in conflict. The law provides state matching funds to cities and towns that approve a property tax surcharge of up to 3 percent dedicated to spending in three areas: open space, affordable housing, and historic preservation. But, by definition, preserving open space removes land from the market, potentially making it harder to build housing. And it was no surprise that many towns jumped on the CPA bandwagon specifically to buy land and head off development. With communities that adopt the CPA mandated to spend at least 10 percent of the money in each of the three categories, the first round of funding saw towns approve millions of dollars to acquire and preserve open space, while setting aside just the bare minimum for affordable housing.

But data released in June by the Community Preservation Coalition, a statewide organization supported by advocacy groups for each of the law's three funding areas, show that

overall spending on housing is now almost equal to that spent on open space.

Of the \$170 million appropriated since the act was approved, 38 percent has gone to open space acquisitions, while 35 percent has been earmarked for affordable housing. Historic preservation projects have received 19 percent of the funding. (The remaining 7 percent has gone to recreation projects, a category designed to allow spending on park improvements in communities where there is little remaining open space to buy.)

"There was a lot of skepticism initially, with people saying the CPA was only perpetuating buying up open space and locking out housing development," says Dorrie Pizzella, executive director of the preservation coalition, an umbrella group that includes conservation, housing, and historic preservation advocacy organizations. Pizzella says a lot of towns had open-space acquisitions already on the drawing board, so it's not surprising that early spending reflected this bent. "But you now see a lot of suburban communities who've never spent money on housing before using the CPA to do so," she says.

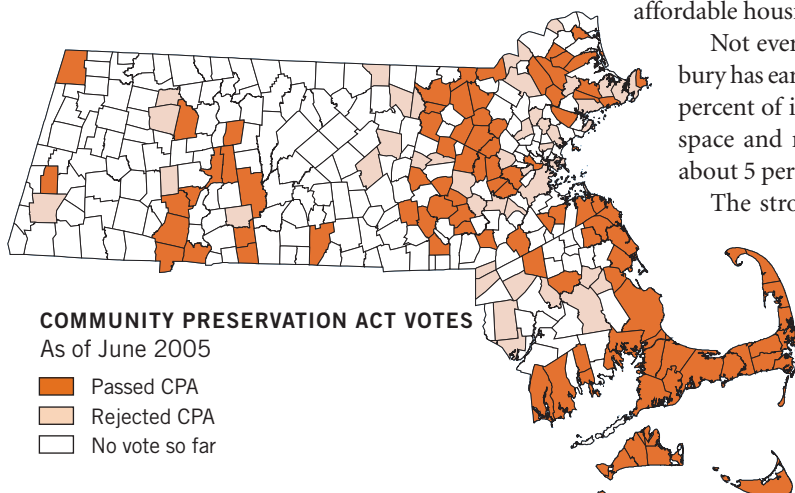
Stow, a small MetroWest town of 5,900 that was among the first communities to approve the CPA, has awarded \$350,000 to fund a deed restriction on a 37-unit apartment complex. The funding—about one-third of Stow's total CPA spending thus far—will ensure that the units remain a source of affordable rental housing in a community where, like every place in the state, home prices and rents have soared in recent years.

"We acknowledged that we had an increasing need for affordable housing, and yet [Stow] is a small town that we wanted to keep a small town," says Bob Wilbur, chairman of the town's community preservation committee. "We did not drive additional construction, but we advanced affordable housing in the community."

Not every town has struck the same balance. Sudbury has earmarked about \$5.8 million—more than 90 percent of its authorized spending to date—for open space and recreation projects, while allocating only about 5 percent for affordable housing.

The strong interest in land preservation and the need for affordable housing is "an internal tension" of the law, says Doug Foy, the state's chief development official. Though Foy was among those expressing concerns about the early pattern of CPA spending, he says the results after five years are "pretty encouraging."

This spring, the preservation coali-



tion celebrated the 100th community to approve the CPA (see map, previous page) when voters in Marion approved a 2 percent tax surcharge by a 71-29 margin. "What has happened over time is success has bred success," says Pizzella. "Communities look at their neighbors and the fact that they have gotten state matching money."

That has also started to change the profile of communities adopting the CPA, which has proven most popular in well-heeled suburbs where voters are willing—and financially able—to vote themselves a tax increase. Among towns approving the CPA this spring were Randolph, where median household income is just above the statewide figure, and Fairhaven, where it is slightly below the statewide median.

"People looked around and saw other communities were starting to spend the money from the CPA," says Juan Carlos Serna, who chaired the CPA campaign committee in Randolph. "People were saying, how did Braintree renovate the town hall, or how did some other town do bike paths, or another one, senior housing?"

Even with the municipal peer pressure, victory in Randolph did not come easily. The measure passed by just 36 votes out of nearly 4,440 ballots cast. Serna says it took the support of everyone from several prominent business leaders—not always a tax-friendly constituency—to a member of the local historical commission who recorded a pro-CPA phone message that went out to all voters the night before the election.

Even in a more blue-collar community like Randolph, where plenty of residents are likely to be feeling the housing-cost crunch, CPA advocates played up the idea of targeting housing aid to lower-income senior citizens, not families with children. And, like Stow, Randolph seems more interested in underwriting costs for those in existing homes than in adding to its housing stock. "People don't want new construction," says Serna, a refrain heard often in suburbs across the state.

The state matching funds come from a \$20 fee assessed statewide on all mortgages recorded through the registry of deeds. That means homebuyers and those refinancing mortgages across the state are underwriting projects in towns that have approved the CPA, giving a Robin-Hood-in-reverse dynamic to funding for a program more popular among voters in affluent communities.

"The best response," says Foy, "is to try to get more cities into the mix." But some mayors have complained that it's tough to win tax approvals in urban centers, despite exemptions from the CPA surcharge for lower-income homeowners.

Tom Callahan, executive director of the Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance, has a simple explanation for why so few cities have adopted the act. "Not many have tried," he says.

Seven cities have approved the preservation act: Agawam, Cambridge, Easthampton, Newton, Newburyport, Peabody, and Westfield. A 2001 campaign to pass the CPA in Boston was defeated after meeting with fierce opposition from some business groups and winning only 11th-hour support from Mayor Thomas Menino. Five other cities have tried, but failed, to adopt the CPA: Beverly, Gloucester, Malden, Methuen, and Waltham.

Each year since the law's passage, supporters have also had to contend with various proposals to divert money from the state matching fund for other purposes. The latest came this year, when Gov. Mitt Romney's budget proposed transferring \$10 million of the approximately \$100 million in the Community Preservation Fund into a separate fund established last year to reward communities for adopting zoning changes that allow for denser development near town centers, part of the administration's smart-growth strategy.

Every effort to raid the fund has been turned back, and with nearly one-third of the state's communities now having adopted the CPA, the constituency for the preservation act is only growing bigger and stronger.

"Towns that got involved early are the ones benefiting the most," says Wilbur, the Stow preservation committee chairman. "But the secret is out." ■

Tilting at wind mills in the Berkshires, as well as the Cape

BY STACIE N. GALANG

Wind turbines may be a source of renewable energy, but they also generate strong feelings. That's what William Hubbard learned from his two-year fight to build a 12-megawatt wind farm—small by industry standards—in Fitchburg. The Applied Wind Technology developer says that in December the city took him to district court, forcing him to remove a portable 170-foot crane needed for wind testing. While he could appeal, Hubbard says his detractors would stop at



William Hubbard says “hysteria” doomed his Fitchburg wind farm.

nothing and slowly drain him dry. He estimates having spent about \$1 million, counting lawyers’ and contractors’ fees, for an eight-turbine wind farm that will never be. Hubbard describes it as a war of attrition.

“It only takes one person,” he says. “All they have to do is whip up a bunch of hysteria.”

The Fitchburg proposal was never as controversial as Cape Wind’s plan to build a 430-megawatt wind farm in Cape Cod’s Horseshoe Shoal, which—although opposed by Gov. Mitt Romney and other powerful officials, including US Sen. Edward Kennedy—recently cleared a regulatory hurdle by winning approval from the state’s Energy Facilities Siting Board. But it may be more typical of battles to come.

In his case, Hubbard complains that the state failed to abide by its own alternative energy plan, specifically the renewable portfolio standard (RPS) established as part of the Electric Utility Restructuring Act, passed by the Legislature in 1997. That standard requires that by 2009, 4 percent of electric energy will come from solar, wind, and other forms of renewable energy.

Hubbard says that if the state lawmakers were really interested in getting wind technology off the ground, they would streamline zoning laws to make it easier to build wind farms. He suggests a “rational” solution, one that favors the overall good over local resistance—much like zoning rules that govern the placement of cell phone towers. And he says there will always be resistance.

“All they see is the great big tower,” he says. “In their mind, everything is going to hell.”

Seth Kaplan, director of the nonprofit Conservation Law Foundation’s clean energy and climate change pro-

gram, agrees that the state has not been as aggressive as it could be about meeting the RPS mandate.

“Unless we get a lot more serious about building real renewable energy facilities, we’re not going to be able to reach our goals,” Kaplan says. The Cape Wind Project could help meet those standards, he says. “We need a project of that size, scale, and type.” But smaller wind power projects have their place, too, he says, as long as the barriers to building them—legal or otherwise—don’t make the cost prohibitive. “They’re a very important piece in the puzzle,” says Kaplan.

David Cash, director of air policy for the state’s Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, says the state has in fact been working to reach those standards. In recent months, Cash has been meeting with wind technology stakeholders in brainstorming sessions across the state. While still in the early stages, he says, such meetings could help in the creation of performance standards for wind farms and model bylaws for communities.

“We’re hoping to make it easier in the future for projects like that,” he says, referring to the Fitchburg wind farm.

The best way to beat the not-in-my backyard mentality is education, says Greg Watson, vice president for sustainable development at the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, a quasi-public agency. MTC, which is charged with developing renewable energy in the context of helping to boost the state’s “innovation economy,” runs a program called Community Wind that provides technical help to municipalities. Watson says the major obstacle to wind technology is finding a receptive place for them.

“Wind technology is a victim of the fact that you can see [it],” he says. “With wind, you’ve got to place it where the wind blows. You don’t have a choice.” If other energy generators were held to the same standards as wind farms are, says Watson, people wouldn’t be able to turn on their lights.

But Eleanor Tillinghast, president of the conservation group Green Berkshires, says that research finds very little value in wind technology. She started out in favor of wind technology, she says, but after more investigation decided it wasn’t worth it. “It produces very, very little power and causes tremendous damage,” she says, adding that there are better and cheaper ways to produce renewable energy.

According to Tillinghast, wind farm turbines—typically about 340 feet, or 34 stories, high—can eat up hundreds of acres, destroy local plant species, and disrupt bird migration. They can also create safety hazards such as ice hurl—ice that forms on turbine blades and is shot outward. Tillinghast also fears that the lion’s share of wind farms other than Cape Wind will end up in the Berkshires, resulting in more than

200 turbines dotting the horizon.

"That's why we're concerned out here," she says. "We're not a lot of voters. We don't have a lot of power."

Some Berkshire residents are not so worried. Florida town administrator Sue Brown describes the Hoosac Wind Power Project, one of the earliest proposed after the 1997 reform law, as a learn-as-you-go experience. The project, which straddles the border between Florida and Monroe, is set to include 20 wind turbines. The town signed a lease with wind technology company enXco so that it could start construction this year, Brown says. The strongest remaining opponents seem to be an organization called the Group of 10, which has expressed concern that enXco has not taken enough precautions to protect certain plant species.

Still, residents seem to have taken to Hoosac Wind. Two years ago, the town had a nonbinding ballot question that returned a 75 percent vote in favor of the project.

"I think the biggest thing people need to be is as honest with the public as they can," says Brown. "Provide as much information as possible so everybody is informed." ■

Stacie N. Galang is a writer living in West Newton.

Will DNA tests solve more crimes or add to state lab woes?

BY GABRIELLE GURLEY

Even crime has its growth sector, and in the Bay State, it's burglary. The only violent or property crime category to increase between 2002 and 2003, burglary rose 1.3 percent, according to the latest State Police figures.

Trace DNA evidence from blood, perspiration, or saliva can help to solve those crimes, as well as more serious ones, according to a 2004 National Institute of Justice study. In Florida and New York, where forensic investigators have, thanks to NIJ funding, collected biological evidence in high-volume property crimes as well as in violent ones, samples from murder scenes have often matched with biological evidence from burglaries in an FBI-distributed

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DNA database.

In New York, several “pattern” burglaries were uncovered this way, and in three cases burglars’ DNA was linked to violent crimes such as sexual assault and robbery. The state of Florida reported that 52 percent of DNA matches in violent crimes identified individuals also in the database for burglary or drug convictions. In Miami-Dade County, bloodstains left at four burglary scenes led to a previously convicted burglar.

Bristol County District Attorney Paul Walsh says he would love to take advantage of DNA evidence in minor crimes. Seven Massachusetts counties experienced jumps in burglaries, but the southeast region had the largest increase, from 3,150 burglaries in 2002 to nearly 3,900 a year later.

“By solving one [burglary] you may solve six,” says Walsh. “If we could have the luxury of DNA evidence in those types of cases, it would be a godsend for us.”

But a luxury is what it would be, he adds. “I can’t get the state lab to do DNA evidence on murder cases, so forget about property crimes,” says Walsh.

Prosecutors have complained about delays in DNA testing at the State Police Crime Laboratory in Sudbury for years now, and that’s just for major crimes of violence, such as murder and rape. (See “Crime labs failing to make the case,” CW, Summer ’02.) Funding shortfalls, short staffing, and inadequate laboratory facilities continue to hamper timely DNA testing, say public safety officials.

‘I CAN’T GET...DNA EVIDENCE ON MURDER CASES, SO FORGET ABOUT PROPERTY CRIMES.’

Change is underway, but not necessarily fast enough to keep pace with the expanding use of DNA testing in law enforcement. The state reorganized the state crime lab, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, and certain other law enforcement departments into a single agency in 2004, two years after a National Forensic Science Technology Center study described the state’s forensic services as “woefully inadequate.”

At a recent Beacon Hill hearing, Dr. Carl Selavka, the crime lab’s director, testified that hundreds of cases go unattended due to the lab’s inability to keep up with the volume. State officials acknowledge that analyzing biological evidence can take up to a year, while district attorneys insist that samples languish in the lab for as long as 18 months.

Case backlogs, especially in DNA testing, challenge crime

labs nationwide. A Bureau of Justice Statistics study of the country’s 50 largest publicly funded forensic crime labs in 2002 found 93,000 backlogged cases, including about 270,000 pending requests for forensic services at the year’s end, more than twice as many as at the beginning of the year. (A single criminal case may include multiple requests for forensic services.) Researchers discovered for every completed DNA analysis request, another estimated 1.7 were pending.

In Massachusetts, 12 chemists currently process DNA evidence. To meet the national average processing time of 30 days, the state would have to employ about 80 chemists, according to the Massachusetts District Attorneys Association.

Public safety officials and lawmakers agree the state crime lab needs additional staff and space. Gov. Mitt Romney proposed to double the crime lab’s budget for next year, to \$12 million, and the Legislature granted the funding increase.

The crime lab hopes to bring up to 10 new DNA scientists on board next year, according to Major Mark Delaney, commander of the Department of Forensic Services for the State Police. Delaney says the crime lab also wants to expand into two satellite facilities, an additional location in North Sudbury and one in Devens, the former Army base. In addition, designs for a new facility will move forward if the Legislature approves the Romney administration’s \$125 million bond request.

Under a federal grant, the crime lab has dipped its toe into this new application of DNA analysis, according to Joanne Sgueglia, technical manager for forensic biology. Last year, the crime lab was able to evaluate evidence from 75 crimes out of 485 breaking-and-entering cases submitted, yielding DNA samples in 27 instances. Those cases were outsourced to a private Maryland facility for analysis. Since 2002, DNA analysis of breaking-and-entering scenes has yielded 10 matches in the federal database.

Without funds from Washington, the crime lab would probably not be able to analyze minor crime scene evidence at current staffing levels, says Delaney. But, with further legislative support and funding, Delaney hopes to have 80 to 90 DNA chemists in five to six years. With a full roster of scientists, he says, the state lab will be able to process evidence from all crimes, including minor ones.

“Twenty-first-century prosecutions should be able to use 21st-century science to get a conviction,” says Sen. Jarrett Barrios, the Cambridge Democrat who co-chairs the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security. (Barrios is also a candidate for Middlesex County district attorney.) “If you’ve got the evidence to nab [burglars] on the burglary, but for the fact that you haven’t processed the

DNA, it's a tremendous loss to all of us."

But James Alan Fox, a criminal justice professor at Northeastern University, worries that a bigger workload could mean more problems at the crime lab, including greater possibility of error. "If you expand to a wider range of offenses, the workloads are going to increase substantially, particularly if you [include] property offenses, because they are much more frequent," says Fox. "My personal preference would be to get our act straight with major crimes before we expand."

That walk-before-you-run advice will have to contend

with growing enthusiasm for this new application of forensic science. Dr. Cecelia Crouse, supervisor of the serology/DNA section of the sheriff's office in Palm Beach County, Florida, recently conducted a survey of county investigators and found that police believe minor crime scene DNA analysis is "absolutely" worth the effort.

"They just really feel that if you get these people when they are committing these crimes at a minor level, the major crimes are going to go down," says Crouse. ■

Gabrielle Gurley is a freelance writer in Arlington.

MASS TRANSIT PROJECTS AFTER THE BIG DIG

The state's plan to extend the MBTA's Green Line to West Medford does not promise enough environmental benefits to justify its cost, according to one panelist at the latest Commonwealth Forum, but public-transit advocates responded that the project is only one of many needed to improve transportation and stimulate economic growth in the Boston area. "End of the Line? Big Dig-Related Transit Projects and the Future of Public Transportation" was held on May 26 at the Omni Parker House Hotel in Boston. *Commonwealth* editor Robert Keough moderated the discussion.

David Luberoff, executive director of the Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston, restated his argument (see "Dug In," *CW*, Spring '05) that the state should reconsider commitments, made in 1990 to head off opposition to the Big Dig from the Conservation Law Foundation, to extend the Green Line, restore trolley service on the Arborway branch of the Green Line, and connect the Red and Blue lines. "We have gotten so much more pollution reduction out of cleaner cars than you will ever get from the entire combination of the transit projects," he said.

"The only way we can get out of what the data tells us are probably not great choices is for the advocates of those choices to say, 'We acted on the best information at the time, and in retrospect

we might be wrong,'" said Luberoff, who called per-rider costs of the three projects "awesomely bad."

But other panelists—all of them contributors to an online forum in response to Luberoff's article, posted at www.massinc.org—were by no means willing to say that. Fred Salvucci, former state secretary of transportation and now a lecturer at MIT, said the state would be setting a bad precedent by pulling a "bait and switch" and reneging on its commitments. (This spring the state announced plans to go forward with the Green Line extension but not the two other projects in question.) "This is a deal between the Commonwealth and the [Conservation Law Foundation] over three successive administrations," he said. "The Commonwealth got its part of the deal. The Big Dig proceeded into construction and it is largely built at this point."

Salvucci added that the debate over the value of public transit should not be limited to air quality estimates. "If we only expand highways and fail to address public transportation," he said, the Boston metropolitan area would face gridlock conditions as least as bad as those before the Big Dig.

Philip Warburg, president of the Conservation Law Foundation, also objected to the idea that the terms of the 1990 agreement should be revisited. "The Commonwealth has collapsed a debate that

should be about all the outstanding transit commitments, which amount to about \$1.8 billion, to a debate about which of three projects should be taken off the table," he said. Warburg pointed out that other terms of the agreement—including additional trains on the Blue and Orange lines—have already been delayed.

Stephen Burrington, undersecretary of the state Office of Commonwealth Development, agreed that more than clean air is at stake, saying that the state was most concerned with getting "the best bang for the buck from the overall transportation and development point of view."

Ellin Reisner, president of the Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership, said that her city, which is the most densely populated in the state, had "really lousy service," despite its heavy reliance on public transit. "We have eight rail lines going through Somerville," she pointed out, but they mostly serve commuter-rail branches that don't stop in the city. The Green Line extension to West Medford would serve several Somerville neighborhoods, and Reisner said it would help address "pent-up demand" for public transportation.

A detailed summary of the forum provided by State House News Service can be found at www.massinc.org.

—ERIC WAGNER

Your tired, your poor, your biochemists

In immigration battles, Massachusetts has a lot at stake

BY SHAWN ZELLER

It isn't a typical day in Washington when that liberal lion Sen. Edward Kennedy joins forces with a conservative Republican from Idaho, especially to take up a cause of prime importance to farmers. But that was the scene in April, as Kennedy and Sen. Larry Craig proposed an amendment to a defense spending bill that would have allowed illegal immigrant farm workers to win permanent residence and eventually apply for US citizenship.

Kennedy and Craig lost that fight, but the state's senior senator has a new immigration bill—and a new Republican partner. Kennedy has teamed up with Sen. John McCain of Arizona on legislation pushing a set of reforms that would offer the possibility of citizenship to many more illegal immigrants.

"It's long past time to put the underground economy above ground and recognize the reality of immigrants in our workforce," Kennedy said at a May press briefing on the bill.

In the post-September 11 era, much of the immigration debate has centered on border security and ferreting out potential threats among the hundreds of thousands of foreigners entering the US each year. But as the cast of strange political bedfellows advocating on behalf of immigration makes clear, there are still many who view immigrants as a crucial ingredient in the American melting pot.

Nowhere is that more true than in Massachusetts, which, according to a recent MassINC report, *The Changing Face of Massachusetts*, has relied on

immigrants for virtually all of its net population growth over the past two decades. Massachusetts now has the 10th highest proportion of foreign-born residents among the 50 states, with one in seven Bay State residents born in another country and immigrants accounting for 17 percent of the state's workforce.

The impact of immigration cuts across the state's economic spectrum, from seasonal labor needs on Cape Cod and in the lower-skill service sector to the science and technology firms that are the state's economic future, not to mention the cottage industry of Massachusetts colleges and universities, where foreign students matriculate—and often pay full tuition—by the thousands.

The Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition has pushed for stronger protections for lower-paid immigrant workers and is behind legislation on Beacon Hill that would provide in-state tuition rates

for illegal immigrants who are admitted to public universities. Those may not be the top priorities of the state's business community. But MIRA's executive director, Ali Noorani, says businesses, universities, and advocates for poorer immigrants are finding common ground these days, since they all agree on one thing: The benefits of immigration to the state, and country, should not be forgone because of



security concerns.

"In the past, there has been a rift" between immigration advocates, says Noorani. "Student or professional immigrants may not see the undocumented immigrant janitor as a partner in the fight. That's changing."

Meanwhile, there is plenty to unite them. Anti-immigration members of Congress pushed through the Real ID Act in May. It requires states to check for immigration status when issuing drivers' licenses. Currently, 11 states provide licenses to illegal immigrants, and Massachusetts is considering legislation to do so. Under the Real ID Act, states could continue to offer licenses to illegal workers, but they would have to state the immi-

The issue affects seasonal labor on Cape Cod as well as tech workers.

grant's status on the card. That means an immigrant could not use the card as a federal ID to board an airplane, for example. Another bill, the Clear Law Enforcement for Criminal Alien Removal Act, is pending. It would deputize local and state police to detain illegal immigrants—something that, with few exceptions, only agents of the federal Homeland Security Department can now do.

Republican senators John Cornyn of Texas and Jon Kyl of Arizona are sponsoring legislation that would attempt to boost border security while also granting more temporary work visas. Unlike the Kennedy-McCain bill, however, it does not offer more immigrants a chance at naturalization. A Cornyn spokesman told the Associated Press in May that the Kennedy-McCain bill was a "work and stay" program, while the Texas senator "prefers a work and return program."

Meanwhile, the State Department has slowed the flow of both business travelers and university students by tightening up on visas since the September 11 attacks, prompting protests from business and university leaders. Harvard President Lawrence Summers was among them, warning in a letter last year to the State Department, "If the visa process remains

complicated and filled with delays, we risk losing some of our most talented scientists."

Kennedy and McCain say that immigration foes must recognize the reality that US border security is weak, and efforts to improve it have failed in the face of strong economic forces driving Central and South American workers over the border. Every year, about 400,000 illegal immigrants enter the country, despite huge increases in the Border Patrol budget, while another 800,000 are admitted legally.

The lawmakers have teamed with a bipartisan group of House and Senate colleagues to introduce legislation, dubbed the 2005 Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act, which they hope will stem the flow of illegal immigrants. The bill would

fine illegal immigrants at least \$2,000 but also allow those already here who otherwise have abided by US laws and paid taxes to eventually apply for citizenship. Illegal immigrants first would apply for visas and then, after six years, for permanent residence, and, ultimately, citizenship. Low-skilled foreign workers who have jobs lined up in the United States could apply for three-year, renewable visas that could ultimately lead to citizenship. Immigrants would be required to take English and civics lessons and pass medical and background checks.

The Kennedy-McCain bill has won the backing of the US Chamber of Commerce, the nation's largest business advocacy group, as well as the AFL-CIO. Labor unions, once a powerful anti-immigration voice within the Democratic Party, have changed tacks in recent years, as labor looks to the immigrant-rich service industries



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as the best hope for union growth.

The Bay State's congressional delegation is in lockstep with immigration proponents on most issues. Kennedy has already notched some smaller victories, helping push through legislation in May that will allow Massachusetts businesses to hire more low-skilled, seasonal workers from abroad. The H2-B visa program hit its cap of 66,000 workers in January, but the new law exempts foreign workers who have taken seasonal jobs in the past. US Rep. William Delahunt, a Quincy Democrat whose district includes Cape Cod, was a key player backing the measure on the House side. And last year Kennedy was a leader in pushing through an exemption from the annual cap (recently reduced to 65,000) on H1-B visas, which are granted to foreign high-tech workers, for 20,000 foreign workers who hold advanced degrees from US universities.

But even in such an immigrant-friendly state, there are some who say job opportunities for native-born workers have suffered because of immigration. High-tech workers who lost jobs during the recent recession have complained of abuses in the H1-B program, which is supposed to admit only skilled foreigners who take positions for which there is no supply of qualified American workers.

Meanwhile, Paul Harrington, associate director of Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies, told a congressional panel in May that job losses since 2000 among teenagers, black males, and young adults without college degrees make it "clear that native-born workers have been displaced." Harrington says that the 36 percent national employment rate among teenagers in 2004 was the lowest since the Labor Department started tracking the number in 1948.

Nonetheless, the view of immigrants as indispensable to the state's fortunes clearly has the upper hand. The Greater Boston Chamber of

Commerce has reached out to its university members and lobbied the Massachusetts delegation on the issue of visa delays for foreign students. Jim Klocke, executive vice president of the chamber, says he was "stunned" to learn that Massachusetts universities rely on foreign students to fill at least 30 percent of their graduate student slots.

"We've imported a lot of talent from overseas," says Klocke. "If the overseas pipeline gets turned down or shut off, it's a big long-term threat to our economy."

Overall, matriculation of foreign students at Massachusetts institutions dropped by nearly 5 percent to 28,600 last year. It's not a crisis yet, says Urbain De Winter, associate provost for international programs at Boston University, which has continued to enroll about 4,500 foreign students each year. But he worries about damage to "the perception of the United States" among international students. De Winter says he met recently with officials from the State Department, who expressed their commitment to reducing unnecessary barriers to student visas.

Far less certain, however, are the prospects for far-reaching immigration reform along the lines proposed by Kennedy and McCain. Their bill faces intense opposition from some Republicans and from anti-immigration groups. Already, both senators have been pilloried for supporting "amnesty" for illegal immigrants. Upon taking office, President Bush seemed likely to push reforms like those proposed by Kennedy and McCain. But the September 11 attacks changed all that, and it's unclear whether Bush will be willing to cross members of his own party.

For Kennedy—and for a broad range of voices in Massachusetts—these and other pro-immigration reforms may make a lot of sense. Winning majority support in Congress could be a tougher matter. ■

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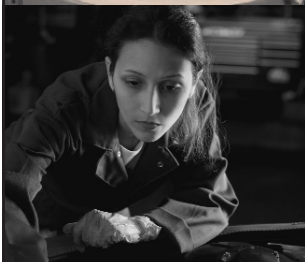
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Teacher training in core subjects needs firm grounding in liberal arts

BY SANDRA STOTSKY

Two different kinds of problems point to the urgent need to rethink our entire system of teacher education in Massachusetts, and in the country as a whole. On one hand, the system supplies far too many teachers whose academic background in the subjects they are licensed to teach is inadequate. When one school district central-office administrator examined her teachers' college transcripts in order to prepare a grant proposal for the teaching of American history, she discovered that "fully one-third of our middle school social studies teachers had zero hours in college history courses." Another 53 percent had fewer than 10 hours of credit in college history, and most of them, she guessed, were from "survey courses, freshman level." Many school districts have found that most of their elementary and middle school teachers need continuous and costly professional development in the subject matter they teach. This is remediation, not enrichment or updating—which is what professional development is in other professions.

On the other hand, those with the academic background to teach the subjects that need to be taught in secondary school have little interest in subjecting themselves to a traditional program in teacher education. A majority of the state's new secondary mathematics teachers from 1999 until at least 2003 came through an accelerated training program funded by the Legislature for career changers and academically strong college graduates. In an evaluation of this program for the Massachusetts Department of Education by the Center for Education Policy at the University of Massachusetts—Amherst, most of these new teachers said they would not have considered going into teaching if they had had to enroll in a traditional teacher training program.

Recent education reform efforts reflect a rethinking of the requirements for licensing prospective teachers and evaluating current teachers, here and around the country. The Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 included provisions intended to enhance the academic competence of new teachers. And the federal No Child Left Behind law has, for the first time in our national history, defined teacher quality with academic criteria and linked teacher

quality to student achievement, compelling states to pay even more attention to teachers' academic qualifications. In March, a highly critical report by the president of Teachers College, Columbia University, on the preparation of school administrators in master's and doctoral programs burst onto the scene. His report on teacher education is due for release in the fall and is expected to be equally critical. It is thus timely to push the envelope of systemic reform of teacher education even farther in the Bay State.

In this essay, I suggest how to restructure the entire system to eliminate two key problems in traditional teacher education programs: too little academic study and too much time spent in empty education courses. These suggestions are based on my work in the state Department of

There's too much time spent in empty education courses.

Education from 1999 to 2003 revising state regulations for teacher licensure and program approval, upgrading the state's teacher tests, and supervising the department's professional development initiatives. State legislators and other citizens need to learn why important reforms in the Education Reform Act, whose provisions I helped to administer, did not go deep enough into the system to give us the academically stronger teachers our schools desperately need.

RENEWING LICENSURE

The Education Reform Act targeted teacher quality in three ways. First, it required that, from 1994 on, all teachers would have to hold a BA or BS degree from an accredited institution of higher education with a major in the arts or sciences appropriate to the instructional field. A second major, in education, was still allowed, but the primary major had to be in the liberal arts. In this way, reform-minded legislators tried to ensure that prospective teachers would take some demanding upper-level courses in an academic discipline. They also hoped that requiring a liberal arts major would curb the number of education

courses prospective teachers could take in order to satisfy degree requirements.

Second, prospective teachers were required to pass two tests: a test of reading and writing skills and a test of the academic knowledge appropriate to the license sought. The legislators hoped that the prospect of taking a subject matter test for licensure would also strengthen future teachers' academic course-taking. The law required neither a test of pedagogical knowledge nor a performance assessment. Accountability for pedagogical skills was expected to take place through the department's approval of licensure programs in the state's teacher training institutions, a review that assesses the quality of the pedagogical coursework and other components of the training programs every five to seven years.

Third, under the Education Reform Act teachers were no longer allowed to get licenses for life. An initial license, good for five years, could be obtained upon completion of an approved licensure program; the second license required completion of a master's degree program or its equivalent. (The law did not specify the type of master's degree teachers had to earn, it should be noted.) This license could be renewed every five years upon accumulation of a specific number of professional development points.

Though well intentioned, these provisions had unintended consequences. Since undergraduate students who aimed to teach a core subject in K-12 already tended to have a major in the liberal arts, the requirement of a liberal arts major chiefly affected those wanting to become pre-school, kindergarten, elementary, or special education teachers—those who traditionally would have majored in education. Many of these undergraduates sought the easiest major available—psychology, sociology, or a cobbled-together “liberal studies” major, rather than a subject they would teach, such as science, mathematics, English, or history. Largely because many colleges continued to require an education major or did not change course requirements for their licensure programs, these undergraduates were compelled to take as many education courses as before. Ironically, they had even less time for academic electives and probably began their teaching careers with a weaker academic background than they would have gotten under the old regulations.

In an effort to strengthen the academic preparation of future elementary teachers, a revision of the teacher licensure regulations in 2000 required 36 academic credits in the basic subjects they would teach (a requirement later extended to future special education teachers). Even though



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these regulations did lead to a decrease in double majors and in the number of prospective elementary teachers majoring in psychology, the 36 academic credits were and still are a compromise measure. The state's private and public colleges have spoken out strongly against requiring undergraduates to choose from a pre-selected list of appropriate liberal arts majors, as Colorado has recently done.

Nor have teacher tests necessarily led to academically stronger teachers. The tests began in 1998, with about 60 percent of prospective teachers failing them and the Board of Education refusing to lower the cut score. Although education schools resented having their graduates take the

Two-stage licensure has done little to strengthen skills.

licensure tests at all, they began to institute test prep sessions, and the pass rates improved somewhat. In 2000, the department strengthened the tests by removing questions on pedagogy and adding more difficult content questions. However, pass rates for most licenses did not decline, in part because peer review groups set lower cut scores for the revised tests, meaning that test-takers didn't need to answer as many items correctly to pass.

Moreover, the colleges began using these tests, which were supposed to be for licensure, as entrance tests for teacher training programs or for student teaching. This did keep the weakest students out of their licensure programs. But there is no clear evidence that they forced improvement of the academic courses future teachers would have to take, even if the review teams doing program approval did find the required academic topics seemingly covered in their syllabi.

Finally, the Board of Education held education schools accountable, via program approval, for pass rates on the subject matter tests as well as the reading and writing tests. The Board ruled that if less than 80 percent of an institution's test-takers passed the tests, its licensure programs could be put on probation and, if no improvement took place, phased out. But the Board of Education could not hold arts and sciences faculty responsible for pass rates on the subject matter tests, even though they were responsible for the academic coursework future teachers took. Thus, the arts and sciences faculty was essentially let off the hook, especially since nothing in the Education Reform Act required colleges to strengthen their academic courses or to curb grade inflation. In sum, there is no evidence that these tests have strengthened the academic coursework that future teachers take or even increased the number of academic courses they take—one goal of the original legislation mandating teacher tests.

What happened to the second stage of the two-stage

teacher license is yet another example of where the best intentions may lead. Requiring new teachers to earn a master's degree or its equivalent for a second-stage license seemed a reasonable way to strengthen their academic background. But given how difficult it is for new teachers to take authentic graduate-level courses while teaching full-time, this requirement ended up creating a captive audience for academically empty M.Ed. degree programs, whose chief, if not only, value to this day lies in qualifying a teacher for a salary increase.

Worse yet, the second stage of licensure bore almost no relationship to the content of the first stage and did little or nothing to strengthen the new teacher's academic knowledge or pedagogical skills. To meet the master's degree requirement, education schools were able to offer any collection of education courses that added up to the requisite number of credits for a master's degree program, or a specific master's program they wished to promote—e.g., “creativity” or “peace studies.” In 2000, the regulations were revised to spell out the need for a connection between the two stages through coursework content. A simple matter of logic, one might think. But the teachers' unions obtained a delay until 2006 in the implementation of this particular requirement for teachers “caught in the cracks” and still seek to avoid making the second stage of licensure a content-related sequel to the initial stage.

SCHOLARS AND TEACHERS

The root of the problem, philosopher Sidney Hook suggested in his 1958 essay “Modern Education and its Critics,” lies in the institutional separation, in the early 20th century, of teacher training programs from the scholars and researchers in the discipline the prospective teacher is training to teach. In Hook's eyes, scholars and researchers abandoned the training of public school teachers and forsook grappling with the problems of “mass education in a democratic society.” These problems were left to the (then) new schools of education, in which prospective teachers and teacher educators alike could shape training programs and school curricula without benefit of contact with the scholarly fields whose foundations lie in the core curriculum of K-12 education.

If we want academically stronger teachers coming into our public schools, accountability for their academic preparation must be transferred from education schools or departments to the academic disciplines they need to master. Before they enter the classroom, prospective teachers of fifth grade and higher should be expected to complete a master's degree in their discipline—a not-uncommon requirement in Europe—followed by an apprenticeship in the schools, or a one-year MAT degree program in the discipline. For this basic reform to work, undergraduate education courses could not be counted toward either an

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undergraduate or graduate degree program—thus eliminating a loophole that has watered down the five-year teacher-training programs that were supposed to provide a traditional liberal arts education followed by a master's degree in education for licensure. To maintain the integrity of their academic content, these graduate programs would need to be accredited not by a professional educational organization but by a subcommittee of a professional organization for the discipline, such as the American Mathematical Society.

Restructuring accountability and requiring a graduate degree for the initial license would kill several birds with the same stone. First, it would guarantee that all new core-subject teachers have a strong background in the subjects they teach. Since undergraduate licensure programs tend to attract the weakest undergraduate students to teaching careers, requiring a master's degree would put an end to that.

Eliminating undergraduate licensure programs for core subjects would also free future teachers to spend all four years on academic coursework rather than spending one-fifth to one-half of their college careers on intellectually empty education courses. In a survey of the state's undergraduate licensure programs in 2002, the Department of Education found that the proportion of credits required in education coursework (including student teaching) for a bachelor's degree ranged from 16 percent to 39 percent of total credits in foreign languages, 13 percent to 39 percent in science, 22 percent to 51 percent in elementary education, and 25 percent to 59 percent in special education. The loss of this much time from academic study undoubtedly helps to account for many teachers' weak content knowledge today.

Finally, requiring a master's degree for entry into the profession would free new teachers from the need to work on a master's degree in education while working full-time—thus allowing them to concentrate on improving their classroom management skills during their first years in the classroom. Whatever the MA, MS, or MAT degree cost would be offset by not having to incur the cost of a M.Ed. degree while teaching. The federal or state government might also give stipends to graduate students in a MA, MS, or MAT programs who commit themselves to teach for five years, especially in hard-to-staff schools.

In exchange for these more-rigorous prerequisites, new teachers could be eligible for full licensure and tenure after three years of satisfactory evaluations by a school supervisor. There would be no need for coursework of any kind, just frequent observations by a school supervisor. Such a process would be similar to the one used in British schools today. And for license renewal every five years, what could be more relevant than requiring a core subject teacher to take at least one relevant course in the

arts and sciences during the five-year cycle?

Voilà! Accountability for academic preparation is placed where it belongs, in academic departments. New teachers begin their careers with master's degrees and the academic knowledge they need, and with student teaching experience to ease the shock of being on their own in a classroom.

ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

But I can hear the voices clamoring, "Where is the pedagogical training?" In the apprenticeship model, it would take place in the best of all possible worlds: the classroom. It would take place under the auspices of veteran teachers, the local school board, and parents—rather than education faculty who are as out-of-touch with schoolhouse reality as they are with academic rigor. From its ivory tower, this last group is still preparing teachers with such pseudo-teaching strategies as cooperative learning groups, "reader response" in the literature class, and "invent-your-own-algorithms" in the mathematics class.

However, the MAT program is likely to be the most popular model of teacher preparation. This program might consist of four graduate courses in the subject the teacher will teach, covering content needed for teaching

to the state's K-12 standards; no more than one "methods" course (to cover lesson planning, classroom organization, and teaching methods for that subject); and a semester of student teaching accompanied by late afternoon seminars. Restricting methods courses to specific subject areas would all but eliminate generic strategies like the "workshop model" that are applied inappropriately to all subjects and grade levels. It is in schools where classroom teachers are required to teach to the whole class most of the time that student teachers will learn how to teach.

The intellectual benefits for teacher educators attached to academic departments as discipline-specific pedagogical faculty for the MAT program would be enormous. Their home base would be the academic department, not an education school. They would attend graduate courses that future teachers of the discipline take, in order to keep up-to-date in the intellectual field. Pedagogical faculty would also report to the department on the teaching or learning problems they see in secondary school classrooms on that subject, enlisting the help of scholars to work out content-relevant ways to address these problems.

What about prospective teachers of pre-K to grade four? They should continue to complete an approved program

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in an education school, whether as undergraduates or graduate students. But their education courses should focus on beginning reading and writing pedagogy guided by the research framework for Reading First, the K-3 reading initiative that is part of No Child Left Behind. And they should be expected to pass a separate test of arithmetic knowledge as well as a separate test of beginning reading pedagogy for licensure. To date, no state, not even Massachusetts, has been bold enough to require all prospective teachers of elementary-age children to pass a separate test of arithmetic knowledge—a requirement that is long overdue. However, there is no reason teachers of lower grades should have to complete a four-year undergraduate education. In many countries around the world, preschool and primary grade teachers receive their training in three-year pedagogical institutes.

Massachusetts, like other states, is now struggling to upgrade the diverse staff who work in day care centers and preschools. Strong consideration should be given to moving teachers' aides or day care workers with an associate's degree or less into a three-year program (possibly offered through a community college) culminating in a pre-school, kindergarten, or primary grade license, instead of a four-year BA program. Restructuring education schools as pedagogical institutes for pre-K-4 teachers, accountable for children's achievement in literacy and numeracy, might well be the most productive use of the current faculty in our education schools and an effective way to address the shortage of well-trained teachers in the all-important beginning years of a child's education.

The national mood is clear. State and federal legislators, as well as parents, want academically stronger teachers in our public schools. For the public schools to attract and retain more academically competent teachers than they now do, it is also clear that we need to restore teachers' moral authority, raise the ceiling for veteran teachers' salaries, and improve professional working conditions. But these measures will not matter much if we do not first strengthen the academic preparation of core-subject teachers for grade five and up, and align their pedagogical training to the subjects they plan to teach.

Past efforts to reform our system of teacher preparation in Massachusetts have been well intended but, to a large extent, have created even deeper obstacles to reform. It is time to forget half measures and go the whole way. The state needs to hold the right faculty in higher education accountable for the academic preparation of our core-subject teachers and restructure the entire system. ■

Sandra Stotsky is a visiting research scholar at Northeastern University and co-director of We the People Summer Institute, co-sponsored by the Lincoln and Therese Filene Foundation and the Center for Civic Education in California.

Flying solo

The self-employment sector is often depicted as a haven for nonconformists, so maybe it's appropriate that there seems to be an infinite number of ways to count Americans working on their own. Our chart uses data from the Social Security Administration, which offers the advantages of exact figures (rather than estimates from a survey) and a state-by-state breakdown. The totals here may be skewed, however, because they include individuals who get only a small part of their income from self-employment, and also because they exclude the owners of incorporated businesses, even if those businesses have no other employees. Within these parameters, Massachusetts ranks 11th in the share of its workforce who work for themselves. However, the state is a lowly 30th when ranked by the growth of this sector from 1997 to 2002, even as next-door Connecticut just misses the top 10.

The SSA does not offer data on the type of jobs held by the self-employed, but Census Bureau data on "nonemployers" (i.e., "businesses with no paid employees") showed a large increase in the number of freelancers working in real estate in Massachusetts (from 33,000 to 44,000 between 1997 and 2002) and a drop in the number working in "professional, scientific, and technical services" (from 90,000 to 87,000 during the same period). Connecticut showed similar patterns but, unlike Massachusetts, registered significant gains in construction, health care, and arts and recreation.

For a longer-range view, there's *Self-Employed Business Ownership Rates in the United States: 1979-2003*, a report commissioned by the Office of Advocacy at the US Small Business Administration. Author Robert Fairlie used data from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey and calculated that there were about 12.2 million self-employed workers nationwide in 2003. The estimate is significantly lower than the Social Security total because it does not include agricultural workers or individuals who spend less than 15 hours per week on self-employment ventures. (It does include the incorporated self-employed, however.) Fairlie's bottom line is that 9.8 percent of the workforce is self-employed—almost identical to the Social Security figure and up only slightly from 9.3 percent in 1979.

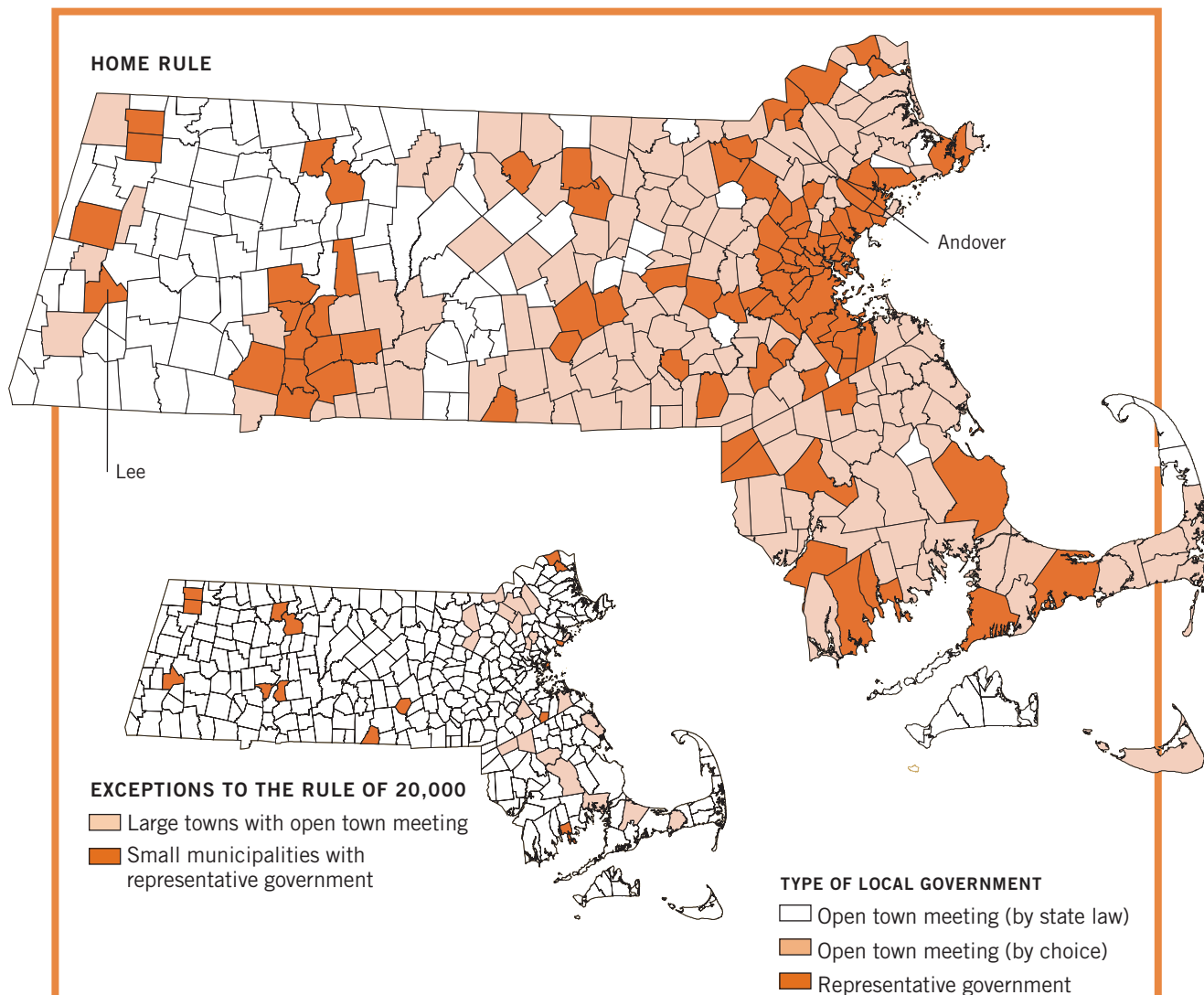
—ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN
Additional research by Eric Wagner

THE SELF-EMPLOYED SECTOR

| RANK/STATE | SELF-EMPLOYED WORKERS, 2002 | % OF ALL SOCIAL SECURITY CONTRIBUTORS, 2002 | % CHANGE SINCE 1997 (RANK) |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| 1. MONTANA | 72,774 | 14.29 | -0.56 (36) |
| 2. NORTH DAKOTA | 48,982 | 13.35 | -9.16 (48) |
| 3. SOUTH DAKOTA | 57,810 | 12.89 | -7.35 (45) |
| 4. MAINE | 91,183 | 12.70 | 1.04 (31) |
| 5. VERMONT | 47,368 | 12.54 | 12.68 (4) |
| 6. CALIFORNIA | 2,046,928 | 12.34 | 10.26 (8) |
| 7. WYOMING | 34,449 | 11.62 | -2.18 (38) |
| 8. COLORADO | 277,424 | 11.57 | 8.57 (12) |
| 9. IOWA | 190,116 | 11.26 | -8.40 (47) |
| 10. TEXAS | 1,171,703 | 11.15 | 10.31 (7) |
| 11. MASSACHUSETTS | 372,697 | 10.90 | 1.55 (30) |
| 12. NEW HAMPSHIRE | 83,109 | 10.83 | -0.24 (34) |
| 13. TENNESSEE | 337,494 | 10.82 | 8.56 (13) |
| 14. FLORIDA | 916,564 | 10.71 | 17.07 (2) |
| 15. IDAHO | 75,250 | 10.71 | 3.92 (21) |
| 16. CONNECTICUT | 206,049 | 10.65 | 9.43 (11) |
| 17. NEBRASKA | 107,331 | 10.59 | -7.38 (46) |
| 18. ARKANSAS | 145,871 | 10.55 | 4.62 (20) |
| 19. ALASKA | 38,863 | 10.53 | -9.22 (49) |
| 20. NEW YORK | 1,039,182 | 10.53 | 14.26 (3) |
| 21. OKLAHOMA | 191,516 | 10.51 | -5.83 (44) |
| 22. MINNESOTA | 304,660 | 10.15 | 3.57 (23) |
| 23. KENTUCKY | 215,846 | 10.12 | -2.57 (40) |
| 24. LOUISIANA | 212,293 | 10.07 | 7.83 (14) |
| 25. OREGON | 186,241 | 9.91 | -5.56 (43) |
| 26. MISSISSIPPI | 134,352 | 9.74 | 3.64 (22) |
| 27. KANSAS | 150,392 | 9.70 | -13.07 (50) |
| 28. MISSOURI | 297,447 | 9.70 | 0.85 (32) |
| 29. NEW MEXICO | 86,661 | 9.57 | -4.32 (42) |
| 30. NORTH CAROLINA | 424,371 | 9.51 | 1.75 (28) |
| 31. HAWAII | 64,054 | 9.51 | -1.85 (37) |
| 32. GEORGIA | 420,495 | 9.44 | 11.30 (5) |
| 33. ILLINOIS | 610,612 | 9.35 | 2.79 (24) |
| 34. ALABAMA | 208,741 | 9.27 | 4.68 (19) |
| 35. OHIO | 548,711 | 9.20 | 2.28 (26) |
| 36. RHODE ISLAND | 55,549 | 9.13 | -4.04 (41) |
| 37. WEST VIRGINIA | 79,125 | 9.13 | -0.55 (35) |
| 38. WASHINGTON | 287,543 | 8.80 | -2.21 (39) |
| 39. NEW JERSEY | 407,577 | 8.62 | 9.67 (9) |
| 40. MARYLAND | 264,182 | 8.55 | 10.47 (6) |
| 41. INDIANA | 295,725 | 8.53 | 1.79 (27) |
| 42. ARIZONA | 224,458 | 8.44 | 5.24 (17) |
| 43. PENNSYLVANIA | 564,321 | 8.43 | 0.74 (33) |
| 44. SOUTH CAROLINA | 180,751 | 8.41 | 1.70 (29) |
| 45. UTAH | 101,840 | 8.39 | 4.92 (18) |
| 46. VIRGINIA | 341,585 | 8.29 | 9.45 (10) |
| 47. WISCONSIN | 261,921 | 8.19 | 2.50 (25) |
| 48. MICHIGAN | 445,040 | 8.09 | 7.81 (15) |
| 49. NEVADA | 86,338 | 7.86 | 26.74 (1) |
| 50. DELAWARE | 30,466 | 6.33 | 6.89 (16) |
| US TOTAL | 15,150,000 | 9.85 | 5.94 |

NOTE: "Self-employed" totals do not include single-employee incorporations. Workers with earnings from both "wage and salary" employment and self-employment are included in the self-employed category, accounting for about 6.21 million of the 15.15 million in the US total.

HEAD COUNT



Open government

With a population just shy of 32,000, Andover is the largest community in the state with an open town meeting form of government—meaning that any voter can be a legislator if he or she shows up for the proceedings. State law allows any town with a population above 6,000 to adopt a representative form of government, in which citizens elect a manageable number of their neighbors to pass budgets and bylaws, but few suburbs have taken advantage of this option lately.

Still, size seems to be the principal determinant for form of local government. Based on 316 of the state's 351 municipalities, one could posit a simple rule of thumb: Once population rises above 20,000, open town meeting gives way to the representative variant, if not to the city form of government. But there are exceptions, including several outer suburbs of Boston, most of them

relatively affluent. (After Andover, the largest to maintain open town meetings are Tewksbury, Dracut, and North Andover.) In some cases, the town may simply have grown so fast recently that the form of government hasn't caught up, but that doesn't explain the survival of open town meeting in Stoneham and Wakefield, both of which passed 20,000 several decades ago and are now declining in population.

The other exceptions—smaller communities that have adopted representative forms of government—are most common in the west. The smallest is Lee, which switched to a representative model when it passed the 6,000 resident mark in the mid-1960s and has kept it even though its population has since fallen below this threshold. (State law says nothing about having to switch back.)

—ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN

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* These high schools were identified as higher performing by the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy at Mass INC in "Head of the Class: Characteristics of Higher Performing Urban High Schools in Massachusetts" (2003).

STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT

BY ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN

GREEN CARS MAY HIT GLASS CEILING

Hybrid cars, which are partly powered by electric batteries and thus burn less gasoline, are surging in popularity, according to automotive industry analyst R.L. Polk & Co. The number of hybrid cars registered last year was 83,153, an annual increase of 81 percent. Massachusetts ranked ninth in new registrations, with 2,520; the rate of increase was about one percentage point higher than the national average.

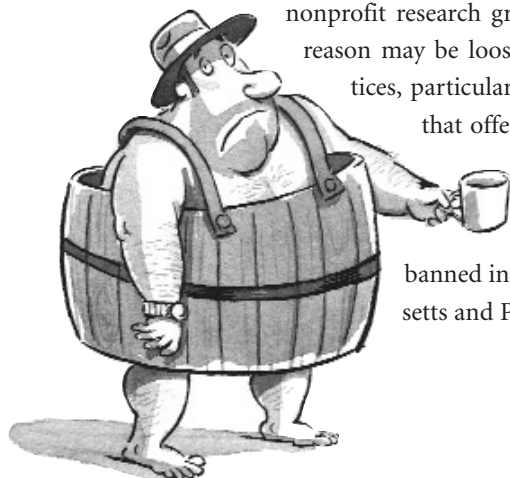
But this rapid growth may not last. There were an impressive 5,613 hybrid registrations in Virginia (second only to California), but the annual increase there was only 57 percent, suggesting that hybrid auto manufacturers are approaching a ceiling in the “green” market there. (The early popularity of such cars in Virginia may have also been fueled by a law permitting hybrids with single occupants in carpool lanes, at least through mid-2006.) According to the University of Michigan’s Office for the Study of Automotive Transportation, hybrid growth is expected to cool down to about 33 percent a year by 2011—at which point the environmentally friendly cars will account for barely more than 2 percent of all cars in use.

KEEPING AHEAD OF THE BILL COLLECTORS

Bay State families are doing a relatively good job of managing their debts, at least according to a study by the American Bankruptcy Institute. The study—based on data from the yearlong period ending March 31, 2004—ranked Massachusetts third from the bottom in the number of bankruptcy filings adjusted for the state’s population. There was one such filing for every 144 households here, compared with one bankruptcy for every 37 households in first-place Utah. Only Alaska and Vermont had fewer incidences of bankruptcy; near the top of the list were Tennessee, Georgia, and Nevada.

For the most part, bankruptcies were most common in the South and West, but Ohio placed a rather startling eighth, even as next-door Pennsylvania, which has similar economic conditions, was 31st. According to the

nonprofit research group Policy Matters Ohio, one reason may be looser regulation of lending practices, particularly of “payday loan” businesses that offer consumers advances on their paychecks but carry annual interest rates of as much as 400 percent. Payday loans are banned in 15 states, including Massachusetts and Pennsylvania.



RACCOONS AND SKUNKS ARE TOPS IN RABIES

According to state Department of Public Health, August is the biggest month in terms of animals tested for rabies. The positive rate for all animals tested was about 10 percent in 2004, up by a point or so over the previous year, and almost all of the infected animals were skunks and raccoons. The highest positive rate (19 percent) was in Barnstable County, which has seen an uptick in rabid raccoons.

From 1992 through 2002, some 3,900 animals tested positive for rabies—again, almost all of them skunks and raccoons. Only four of 4,349 dogs tested positive over that time, but the “cleanest” animal seems to be the squirrel, with no positive results out of 1,167 tested animals.

OWNING UP

Homeownership is rising in the Bay State, but not as quickly as it is nationally. The share of households in the US who own the roofs over their heads has passed the two-thirds mark, from 64.5 percent in 1984 to 69.0 percent in 2004, according to the US Census Bureau. Over the same period, the homeownership rate in Massachusetts rose more slowly, from 61.7 percent to 63.8 percent. As a result, we fell from 44th to 46th place in a ranking of all states, with Alaska and Nevada passing us by. California, Hawaii, New York, and Rhode Island still have lower homeownership rates.

FEWER BABIES, STILL PLENTY OF MICHAELS

Some 80,000 infants were born in Massachusetts in 2003, according to figures released this spring by the state Department of Public Health—about the same as in the previous year but down 13 percent since 1990. The birth rate was 56.2 per 1,000 women ages 15 through 44, compared with 66.1 for the national rate.

The state registered the second lowest infant mortality rate in its history (4.8 deaths per 1,000 live births) and continued to post a teenage birth rate well below the national average (22.6 births per 1,000 women aged 15 through 19, versus 41.7 births nationally). But the share of infants who weigh less than 5.5 pounds has been steadily rising (7.6 percent, up from 5.8 percent in 1990), partly because of an increase in multiple births and a rise in the average age of women giving birth (now a record high 29.8 years).

Among the 30 largest municipalities, the birth rate was highest in Lawrence, Lynn, and Lowell, and lowest in Newton, Barnstable, and Medford. (Teen birth rates, with a slightly different geographic pattern, were highest in Lawrence, Springfield, and New Bedford.)

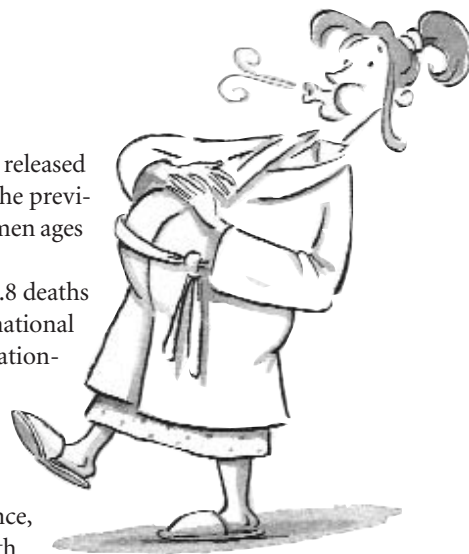
The report noted several shifts in cultural attitudes in recent years. For example, 78 percent of new mothers reported that they intended to breastfeed their infants, up from 57 percent in 1990. (But the rate varied widely among ethnic groups, with 95 percent of mothers of Brazilian ancestry saying they would breastfeed but only 50 percent of mothers of Cambodian ancestry saying the same.) Seven percent of all mothers reported they smoked cigarettes during their pregnancies, down from 19 percent in 1990. And cesarean sections accounted for a record 29 percent of all deliveries in 2003.

According to data released this spring by the US Social Security Administration, the most popular baby names in Massachusetts in 2004 were Michael, Matthew, and Ryan for boys (with Daniel replacing Joshua in the top 10), and Emily, Emma, and Olivia for girls (with Ava and Madison replacing Samantha and Hannah in the top 10). The most popular boy's name in the country, Jacob, continued to be noticeably less common in the Northeast; it finished ninth in the Bay State.

HOT DAYS, SHORT FUSES

The latest edition of the FBI's annual report *Crime in the United States* confirms that July and August are consistently the most violent months of the year throughout the US (though burglary season can last much longer, continuing through October). Not much new there, but the FBI did note some changes in the motives for homicide. From 1999 to 2003, the number of murders associated with "narcotic drug laws" rose from 581 to 666, and the number associated with "juvenile gang killings" increased from 580 to 819. At the same time, the number associated with a "brawl due to influence of alcohol" fell from 203 to 128, and the number associated with a "romantic triangle" slipped from 137 to 98.

Violent crime rates were lowest in the Northeast in 2003, but Massachusetts had a startlingly high rate of aggravated assault (343 incidents per 100,000 people vs. the national rate of 310) even as it boasted one of the lowest rates of murder (2.7 incidents per 100,000 vs. the national rate of 5.6). Perhaps Bay Staters are quicker to brawl than are residents of other states, but another possible explanation is that local police departments here are likelier to categorize fisticuffs as a crime.



GIVING MORE THAN OUR SHARE

John Kerry's home state retained its status as an ATM machine for the Democratic Party last year. According to www.opensecrets.org, Massachusetts ranked eighth overall in contributions to presidential and congressional candidates during the 2004 election cycle. More precisely, the state ranked fifth in contributions to Democrats (\$45.4 million) and 20th in contributions to Republicans (\$15.9 million). That 74-26 ratio was tied with Vermont as the most lopsided in favor of the Democrats, and it was up from the 66 percent of Bay State contributions captured by the Democratic Party in 2002 and 63 percent in 2000.

The Top 40 zip codes, measured by the amount of cash given to federal candidates, included one from the Bay State: Cambridge's 02138. (The top five were all in Manhattan.) About 89 percent of that zip code's \$4.0 million in contributions went to Democrats.

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Hot buttons

Football bleachers and the Patriot Act liven up town meeting

BY RAY HAINER

WALPOLE—"I know some people don't want to hear this, but I just don't see the greater benefit to the entire population of the town," says Lee Ann Bruno, a lifelong Walpole resident and a thirtysomething mother of two, on a Tuesday evening in early May. She's talking about new bleachers for Walpole High School's Turco Field, and her bluntness provides a break from nearly an hour of talk about building codes, attendance at football games, and other relevant but mundane data. Most of the articles on this year's town meeting warrant are noncontroversial—a new coat of paint for the water tower, the correction of a few typographical errors in the town bylaws—and are passed with unanimous or near-unanimous votes after little discussion. But two issues stand out for the passion they engender among Walpole town meeting representatives. One is a proposal for new bleachers; the other, a move to register opposition to the USA Patriot Act, concerns national security and civil rights. Though very different, they each say something about the town's priorities—and its identity.

The bleachers at Turco Field were obtained from a now-defunct Norwood racetrack in the early 1970s, and were assembled by football boosters, high school students, and other residents. They have become something of a landmark, but after 30 years of football games and graduations, they have also become a safety hazard; four children have been injured on them during the past few years. After a year of research, a special committee recommended last fall that the town spend \$310,000 from its stabilization fund on a new set of bleachers. But the town finance committee, demurring at the expense and the town's long list of looming capital projects

(including a new police station, library, and senior center), instead recommended razing the bleachers for \$10,000 and postponing their replacement. That suggestion was quickly withdrawn amid an outcry from residents, including some on the finance committee.

"We cannot have a football team without stands," said one member at a meeting in late April. "That's not Walpole."

So the bleachers ended up on the warrant for the annual town meeting held at the high-school auditorium, which this year has an especially crowded agenda (80 articles instead of the usual 50 or so). Indeed, the issue doesn't even come up for discussion until the second night, May 4, which

begins with a unanimous vote to separate the bleachers from the rest of the capital budget. With the bleachers set aside, that spending plan is presented, debated, and passed in all of 15 minutes.

Then comes a set of parliamentary moves that leaves everyone confused, including town moderator Jon Rockwood. The upshot is that two substitute motions are filed to replace the recommendation of the finance committee that the town take no action on the bleachers. Two selectmen resurrect the special committee's proposal for new bleachers, but two members of that committee introduce a second proposal, to renovate the existing bleachers at a cost of \$298,000.

A wireless microphone makes its way around the auditorium as the debate begins. The first few speakers ask straightforward questions: What will happen to the press box? Will the stands on the visitors' side be replaced as well? But the discussion soon expands to include more than just the bleachers. Some town meeting members, the finance committee's misgivings notwithstanding, suggest an even bigger project. "Has anyone looked into the total cost of bleachers, a track, and an all-weather field?" asks Pat Grant, a resident of 25 years who joined town meeting a decade ago, when his children were in the school system. In a wide-ranging monologue, Grant notes that Walpole has "a great tradition that runs out of Turco Field," one that includes "one of the best football programs" and "the worst

track in the Bay State League.” He suggests that the town could save money in the long run by grouping those three projects together and concludes, “I’m not sure I can vote for this [new bleachers] if it isn’t part of a total program.” (He does, ultimately.)

On the opposite end of the spectrum is town meeting member Doris Foley. “We’re talking about what the people want,” she says tersely. “How about a referendum question in June?”

who turns the floor over to special committee member Terri Thornton.

Thornton, the sponsor of the motion to renovate the bleachers, delivers a lengthy speech, complete with PowerPoint presentation. The main argument against renovation, she acknowledges, is that any repairs in excess of \$45,000 (equal to one-third of the assessed value of the existing structure) would require full compliance with current state building codes and the Americans

—putting them together—“and they really are passionate about keeping them.”

The discussion goes on to cover what seems like every conceivable issue: the width of each bleacher seat, building codes and variances, the space required for a new track, and revenue brought in by football games. Finally, Lee Ann Bruno weighs in with her opinion.

“Sure, the townspeople would probably be embarrassed if we don’t have bleachers,” she says, “but we don’t have a lot of things. We have a police station that’s been leaking for how many years?” Bruno acknowledges that the condition of the bleachers is an important issue—but not to everyone in Walpole. “I do think it’s a safety issue, and it’s unfortunate, but I don’t see that it affects the entire population. If you put it to an override question, I think that’s the result you would get.”

The replacement-or-renovation debate carries on, until Louis Hoegler, a respected town meeting elder and former town clerk, stands to speak for the first time—and to put an end to the discussion. “I move the question,” he says wearily, eliciting sympathetic chuckles.

After some more parliamentary confusion, the first substitute motion, in favor of new bleachers, is put to a vote. It requires a two-thirds majority to succeed, and gets four votes to spare (79 to 34).

By now, it’s 10:30 p.m. The bleachers debate has taken more than 90 minutes, not including a 25-minute recess. The chairman of the board of selectmen, the town administrator, the chairman of the finance committee, the athletic director, the superintendent of schools, and more than a dozen town meeting members have participated.

As important as the bleachers are to the town, some are left feeling that the time and attention taken by the discussion was all out of proportion

WALPOLE

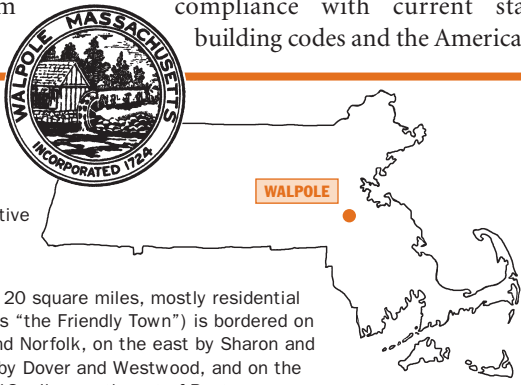
Incorporated: 1724

Population: 23,225

Town Meeting: Representative

FACTS:

- ◆ Covering approximately 20 square miles, mostly residential Walpole (whose motto is “the Friendly Town”) is bordered on the west by Medfield and Norfolk, on the east by Sharon and Norwood, on the north by Dover and Westwood, and on the south by Foxboro. It is 18 miles southwest of Boston.
- ◆ In 2000, the median household income in Walpole was \$74,757. The median price of a single-family home recently passed \$500,000.
- ◆ MCI-Walpole, a maximum-security prison, opened here in 1955. In the mid-1980s, its name was changed to MCI-Cedar Junction.



That would mean an override vote. In the weeks leading up to town meeting, the finance committee discussed the possibility of an override to finance the bleachers with a property tax increase above the limit imposed by Proposition 2½, but decided against it. An override for new bleachers would have little chance of passing, they reasoned, and if it failed the committee and town meeting would be back where they started.

“Override,” moreover, is an especially charged word in Walpole, as the town has experienced several heated override debates in the past decade. Two overrides were voted down in the early 1990s, but a \$3.1 million measure was approved narrowly on September 11, 2001, of all days. When Foley raises the possibility of an override this time around, Rockwood looks at finance committee chairman Ron Ardine, who looks at Rockwood,

with Disabilities Act, making restoration an admittedly costly and complicated proposition. But Thornton maintains that new bleachers would be inadequate, since they would have only half the seats of the existing bleachers (about 2,000 as compared with about 4,000 today). Attendance at football games is down from the 1970s and ’80s, she admits, but Walpole’s population and high school enrollment are increasing rapidly. The new, smaller bleachers would not accommodate big football games or graduation ceremonies, she says. More significantly, perhaps, Thornton invokes the bleachers’ sentimental value.

“The townspeople feel an ownership of the current stands,” she says. “They remind the town of the great things we can accomplish when we work together for the common good. Many people worked on those stands”

to what was at stake. Sounding more resigned than exasperated, Hoegler points out that on the previous night town meeting had approved Walpole's operating budget with relatively little debate.

"On Monday, we spent \$54 million dollars in three-quarters of an hour," he says. "On Wednesday, it took us two and a half hours to spend \$310,000."

Involvement as it was, the bleacher debate was at least civil. That hasn't always been the case at Walpole town meeting. Beginning in the 1990s, a series of overrides tied to the school budget bitterly polarized town meeting, pitting residents with school-age children (often relatively recent arrivals to town) against longtime residents who did not care to see property taxes rise. Some of the

words town meeting members use to describe town meeting during those years include "ugly," "personal," and "vicious." The unpleasant tone of these debates was memorable enough for Lee Ann Bruno to remark that, as of this spring, "There haven't been any insults for a couple of years, which is really nice."

The override battles may have been symptomatic of Walpole's changing character. Once centered on agriculture and small industry, Walpole became more of a bedroom community as young professionals moved in. And the trend has shown signs of speeding up. Walpole's population has increased by some 15 percent since 1990, to about 23,000, making it one of the fastest-growing communities in the area.

The insults at town meeting have ceased, but the rifts that the town's changes have brought into relief—

"pro-school" vs. "anti-school," young vs. old, townies vs. newcomers—are now widely accepted as facts of town life, and of town meeting. Although new bleachers do not inspire the same level of passion in town meeting that multi-million-dollar overrides do, some town meeting members see the town's underlying cultural divides present in the debate all the same. As Hoegler says of the proposal for new bleachers, "I looked around, and we old guys voted against it."

The only issue to rival the bleachers in generating interest at this year's town meeting is a departure from the usual fare. The article, which in advance provoked debate in committee meetings and the opinion pages of the *Walpole Times*, calls for Walpole's congressional delegation (i.e., the state's two



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US senators and US Rep. Stephen Lynch) to seek the repeal of certain sections of the USA Patriot Act, the federal anti-terrorism legislation passed in October 2001, on the grounds that they violate civil liberties. As of early May, 49 cities and towns in Massachusetts, from Cambridge to tiny Heath (pop. 716), have passed similar resolutions.

The sponsors of the article, veteran town meeting members Philip Czacharowski and Paul Peckham, have a long history of involvement in social justice causes and are active members of the Walpole Peace and Justice Group. They brought a similar article concerning the Patriot Act before town meeting last fall, when it was defeated handily, 79-36.

The latest version of the anti-Patriot Act article is the first order of business on the third night of town meeting. Following the Pledge of

Allegiance, selectmen Bill Ryan and Joe Denneen—the same men who filed the substitute motion for new bleachers—move to limit debate on the article to 20 minutes. The motion passes unanimously.

The vice-chairman of the finance committee then gives the routine explanation of the committee's rec-

Patriot Act. "We deleted these sections," he explains, "because we thought it would take some of the emotion out of this."

From his seat on stage, the chairman of the board of selectmen announces the board's vote on the new version of the article, five for and none against. A hand in the audience

Clifton Snuffer—known for his rhetorical flair—strides to the podium.

ommendation. It had voted nine to three, with one abstention, to recommend favorable action—but only after revising the article to exclude statements that the government's anti-terrorism efforts should not infringe on the civil liberties of US citizens and that civil liberties are threatened by "other associated executive orders and rules," not just the

shoots up, and a microphone is brought to selectman Bill Ryan. "The report that was just given by the chairman of the board of selectmen is incorrect," Ryan says, pausing meaningfully. "Would you care to elaborate?" Rockwood asks. "The vote was four in favor, one against," Ryan replies.

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ing, Czacharowski and Peckham walk to a podium at the front of the auditorium. Czacharowski enumerates the sections of the Patriot Act that, to his mind, violate the Bill of Rights, and he reads a quote from Thurgood Marshall. Peckham follows with examples of people who have been detained under the act, then introduces a guest speaker: a Bridgewater resident and college professor named Ray Ajemian who argued successfully for an anti-Patriot Act article at his own town meeting. Ajemian's time at the podium is limited to a few rushed minutes, in which he manages to note that he is an Army veteran, that members of his mother's family were victims of the Armenian genocide, and that Bridgewater is an evolving working-class town much like Walpole.

After Ajemian finishes, town meeting member Clifton Snuffer—known, according to several residents, for his rhetorical flair—strides down the aisle to the podium. (Czacharowski and Peckham, sitting nearby, might be having flashbacks at this point. At the fall town meeting, Snuffer waved aloft a thick stack of paper, which he said represented just a fraction of the Patriot Act's size, to illustrate what he argued was town meeting's inability to appraise the law's merits.)

"Just a few short minutes ago," Snuffer begins, "we were privileged to turn to this flag and to address our patriotism. How many of you can now reflect on the fact that even that is under attack? What type of a country are we becoming? Do we have... terrorists from within as well as the obvious terrorists from without?"

Snuffer, shifting gears, then turns to the moderator and questions whether the article is even valid. When the town counsel affirms that it is, Snuffer resumes his remarks and praises the efficacy of the Patriot Act as a law-enforcement tool. Some town meeting members clap as he returns to his seat.

Czacharowski, who had grown visibly annoyed as Snuffer's speech progressed, steps behind the podium to respond. "I take that as a personal affront," he says. "I think Mr. Snuffer is questioning our patriotism, and I'm actually appalled by that. I believe as citizens that we all have the right to question government policy. No one is questioning our country." By way of a rebuttal, Czacharowski says that adequate laws for fighting terrorism already exist and launches into a comparison of the Patriot Act with the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act—but he is gently cut off by Rockwood, who has his eye on the clock.

A voice vote is held, and the nays seem to have it. But then again, the nays seem to have been shouted with more zeal than the ayes—one town meeting member sitting in the second row cupped his hands around his mouth—so Czacharowski asks for a standing count. The ayes stand, look around nonchalantly, and are replaced by the nays, clearly the larger camp.

The final tally is 63 to 45 against the anti-Patriot Act measure. As soon as the moderator announces the result, photos of potholes and asphalt appear on the projection screen above the stage. Without further ado, the chairman of the capital budget committee begins a presentation on street and sidewalk repairs.

The Patriot Act debate over, town meeting resumes its measured pace, which carries over to a fourth and final night. Attendance declines from night to night, as it usually does, but falls sharply the night after the Patriot Act debate. About 115 town meeting members showed up on the first night, but only about 85 are there on the last night, which is dominated by tedious bylaw changes. Those things need to be done, but they aren't much of a draw. ■

Ray Hainer is a freelance writer living in Roslindale.

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Numbers game

Can reducing quorum requirements boost attendance?

BY ERIC WAGNER

LYNNFIELD—It's Monday, May 2, the second night of town meeting, and residents are gathered in the auditorium of Lynnfield Middle School to consider two articles left over from the previous week. Things are supposed to start at 7:30 p.m., but 10 minutes later there are only 139 people in the room, far short of the 175 needed to make a quorum. Town moderator John Redman sends out a plea, via community access cable, for more citizens to show up. By 7:54, the count is up to 153. With nearly a half an hour already wasted, Harry Le Cours, chairman of the board of selectmen, makes a motion to adjourn town meeting *sine die*, with no date for reconvening. Groans fill the room and Le Cours is asked to withdraw his motion. At 8:15, persistence pays off when several people are retrieved from a meeting of the Capital Facilities Maintenance Committee at Town Hall. With 176 voters in attendance, town meeting is finally ready to begin. But if the town hadn't changed its rules a few weeks before, it would still be about 60 people short of a quorum. As Lynnfield and other towns are discovering, even with a lower bar it's a struggle to round up enough voters to conduct business.

Until recently, participation in Lynnfield had been high enough for the town to maintain one of the toughest quorum requirements in the state: 3 percent of the voting population, a figure that fluctuated between 230 and 260 people. (Most towns with quorums use constant numbers rather than percentages of the electorate, and few of them set the bar above 100.) While declining attendance spurred other towns to lower their quorums—or eliminate them altogether—the citizens of Lynnfield had, until this spring, repeatedly voted down proposals to follow suit. The turning point may have been a rel-

atively new argument: that a lowered quorum is not necessarily an admission of defeat but instead a means to boost participation.

"We talked to a lot of different communities that had lowered their quorum requirement, and found that town meeting attendance actually improved," says town administrator William Gustus. "People were afraid of the very thing that could possibly happen, which is for only 10 people to show up and make the decisions for all of us."

According to the Massachusetts Municipal Association, 263 communities in the Bay State hold open town meetings (see Head Count, page 28), and many have had to adjust their rules

as a result of declining participation.

"[Over] the past five years or so, there have been a number of communities that have continued to lower their quorum levels," says Victor DeSantis, director of the Institute for Regional Development at Bridgewater State College, who has published several studies on town meeting procedures. "We now have quite a number of communities across the Commonwealth that have no quorum whatsoever."

Those towns include Andover, Concord, Groton, and North Reading, according to local officials—and Lynnfield itself had no quorum until it was included in the town charter adopted in 1971.

"Nobody would want to have all the business of town conducted by one or two single neighbors," DeSantis says. "That is the proponent argument for the no-quorum level." Still, as a tool for motivating attendance, he says, it could be viewed as a "scare tactic."

Tinkering with quorums is not the only way to attack the problem of declining participation. Some say more could be done to make town meeting fit people's busy schedules, and a few towns, including Andover and Concord, have instituted free or low-cost baby-sitting services to make attendance easier for families with small children.

But if there's a silver bullet for boosting attendance, not even towns with crowded town meetings know what it is. Take Uxbridge, where town meeting is often packed and voters sometimes have to sit in other rooms to watch the meeting on closed-circuit television.

"I don't know, I guess maybe it's

just issue-driven,” says town clerk Holly Gallerani. “We’re just pretty well attended.”

In Clinton, town clerk Phillip Boyce has seen town meeting attendance go up and down over the years. “It depends on what’s on the articles,” he says.

Lynnfield has seen spikes of interest in town meeting, but in recent years, it had become more and more difficult to gather a quorum, and the frequent late starts and reschedulings began to wear on citizens—and on town treasuries.

“It costs money if you have to come back a second or third time,” says Phillip Boyce, town clerk of Clinton, who favors a zero quorum but hasn’t yet gotten one in his town. “Towns were spending an awful lot of money to put on events that they were having to continually reschedule,” agrees DeSantis.

“With a lower quorum level, it’s more likely that the business of town government would be conducted.”

The first attempt to lower the quorum requirement in Lynnfield came in 1971, just months after the 3 percent rule was put into place. Four years later, a proposal to eliminate the quorum altogether lost a townwide vote by a margin of 1,429 to 584. Two more attempts to lower the quorum failed during the 1990s. Then the problem got worse: Town meetings were postponed or canceled due to the lack of a quorum at least once every year from 2000 through 2004. And even when there were enough voters to get things started, people would stream out of town meeting as it wore on, forcing early adjournments.

“I think it was at that point that people finally understood that we [had] to do something,” says Gustus.

The board of selectmen leaned to-

ward doing away with the quorum entirely, but that proposal didn’t seem to have popular support.

“I think the voters were just shocked from such a radical change,” says Lynnfield moderator John Redman. “It was finally agreed upon to go to 175.”

The lower quorum was put on the ballot for the April 11 town election and passed by a margin of 300-263. It took effect in time for the annual town meeting two weeks later.

Redman speculates that voters finally saw the high quorum as working against those who were doing their civic duty. “It was unfair to the people that showed up to stick around for a half an hour or 40 minutes and then be sent home,” he says.

There have been only two sessions of town meeting since the quorum change, so it may be premature to say whether it has helped to boost turnout. According to Town Clerk Pam Carakat-

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LYNNFIELD

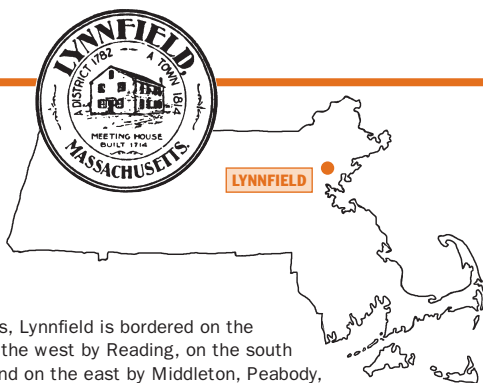
Incorporated: 1814

Population: 11,542
(2000 census)

Town Meeting: Open

FACTS:

- ◆ Covering 10.49 square miles, Lynnfield is bordered on the north by North Reading, on the west by Reading, on the south by Saugus and Wakefield, and on the east by Middleton, Peabody, and Lynn. It is 15 miles north of Boston.
- ◆ The median sales price for a single-family home in 2004 was \$497,000.
- ◆ Almost entirely residential, Lynnfield was largely settled during the post-World War II boom years. Its population rose from 3,925 in 1950 to 8,500 by 1960.



participation problem, but if town meetings continue to be postponed or cancelled, the idea of further reducing the quorum, or doing away with it entirely, is sure to arise again. And that bothers some defenders of a centuries-old New England institution.

"We arguably have the grandest form of democratic structure with town meeting, and yet because of lack of participation, we keep having to lower the quorum levels," says DeSantis. "You're basically admitting that the town meeting's single virtue—that is, its openness to all—"is not a virtue at all."

"I think it's going to continue to be a challenge," says Gustus. "People's lives are very busy. Town meeting is a somewhat cumbersome way to do business, but I think, at least for this town, that the best decisions get made from town meeting. I think that's the consensus in the community." ■

sane, there were 584 people at the April 25 meeting, but Redman attributes this high turnout to the issues on the agenda.

"There was a controversial article about 'feeing' the trash, so that brought out a lot of people," he says. "Typically, we've not had a problem with attendance if there's something that gets the

voters' appetites whetted."

Gustus agrees. "What brings people to town meeting are articles that interest them," he says. "If there are important issues that are being decided, you are not going to have any problem getting a sizeable number of people to show up."

Perhaps Lynnfield has solved its



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Making connections

In Lawrence, a CDC builds more than homes and businesses

BY ROBERT PREER

On most evenings, the offices of Lawrence CommunityWorks bustle with activity. The sprawling former mill building that houses the nonprofit community development corporation is divided into many small spaces, which get steady use for meetings of all kinds.

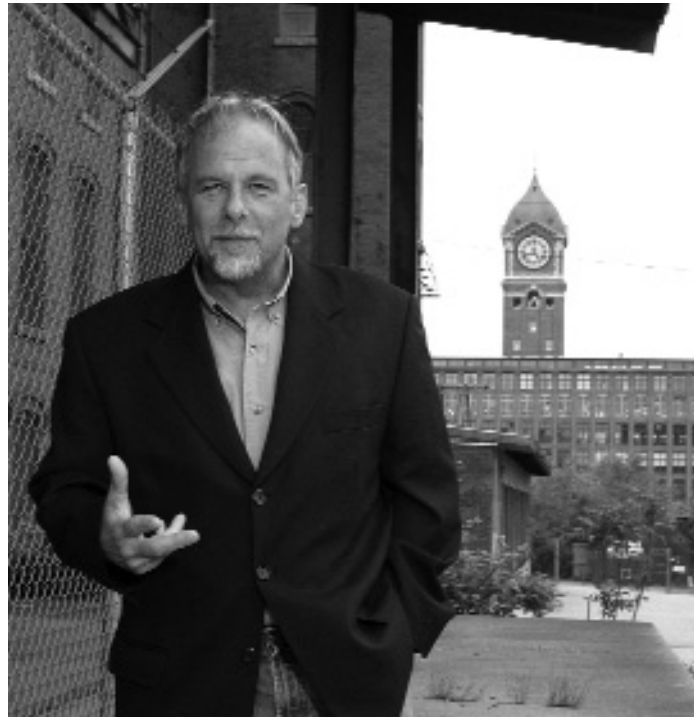
In one room, a group could be meeting to talk about a new zoning plan that is supposed to attract development to the city. In another, a group of activists could be analyzing the city budget. Elsewhere in the building are classes in computers and in English. A sewing club meets regularly, as do seminars in managing personal finances and buying a home. For teens, programs include SAT preparation, essay writing, and fashion design. Day care is always available for younger children. Outside the building, in the adjacent North Common neighborhood, volunteers for Lawrence CommunityWorks host community suppers three times a month, inviting eight to 10 families to their homes for food and conversation.

"There are basically people bumping into each other a lot," says Bill Traynor, the president, founder, and guiding light of Lawrence CommunityWorks.

The more encounters the better. To Traynor, the most important thing CommunityWorks can do for Lawrence is not building homes or jump-starting businesses or even creating jobs. It is fostering connections among people in the community.

Thus, all of these meetings and classes and other get-togethers taking place under the Lawrence CommunityWorks roof have a not-so-hidden agenda. Traynor wants a person taking a language class to find out about the city budget review. He wants someone at a community supper to find out about the homeownership class. He wants a mother who is taking a computer course to bring along her teenager, who will find out about how to apply to college.

"In other places, you take a computer class downtown and then you go home," says Traynor, 48, a Lawrence High grad who received degrees from the University of Massachusetts–Lowell and Brandeis University and earned a fellowship at Harvard. "We look at all of these things as doors into the network." And the network—a structure of residents sufficiently connected to each other



CommunityWorks's Bill Traynor has a not-so-hidden agenda.

and to the powers-that-be to make a difference in the old mill city—is, more than anything else, what Traynor and his six-year-old organization are building.

DOING GOOD WORKS

Lawrence CommunityWorks was created in 1999 by Traynor and three young women who were graduating from a master's program in urban studies and planning at MIT. The organization has grown rapidly and now has a staff of 21, a governing board of 17, and a rank-and-file membership of about a thousand. And the development-through-networking approach preached by Traynor and practiced by CommunityWorks has won over many community leaders.

"Instead of doing things to people and for people, they do things with people," says state Sen. Susan Tucker, an Andover Democrat who represents Lawrence.

"You can't get any more grass-roots than what Lawrence CommunityWorks is doing," says Lawrence native and

BankNorth vice president Pedro Arce.

What Lawrence CommunityWorks is doing covers quite a range. The organization crafted a mixed-use zoning plan for the historic mill district and North Common neighborhood, then lobbied the City Council and won its passage last year. The group has taken on litter, organizing neighborhood cleanups and a march for better trash collection. The Poder (“power” in Spanish) Leadership Institute trains individuals for roles as leaders in the community. One recent graduate is planning a bid for city council this fall. Several hundred people have taken advantage of the training, education, and life skills programs.

And, like community development organizations all

“Everybody won,” says McManus. “We retained a great employee, and she gained ownership of a home in a new building.”

THEORY AND PRACTICE

Network theory is a hot topic in many fields, from computer science and mathematics to business and politics. The basic idea is that networks, no matter what they are made out of—molecules, e-mail addresses, people—obey certain rules of structure and growth.

The power of human networks was brought home on September 11, 2001, when a shadowy group known as Al Qaeda stunned America with its attacks. Social scientists

rushed to uncover the secrets of this loosely organized yet devastating assemblage of terrorists. A spate of books on networks soon followed.

Network theories found further expression in Moveon.org’s electronic network of activists in the 2004 presidential election and in groups, both political and nonpolitical, organized through Meetup.com. Businesses also began using these principles. But nonprofit organizations working in poor neighborhoods were slow to catch on, some observers say.

“Thinking about networks intentionally hasn’t really filtered down to the nonprofit sector,” says Marion Kane, executive director of the Boston-based Barr Foundation. She finds this odd. “If you are dealing with low-income people, everyone knows that what they have been missing all along is access to networks,” she says.

Traynor created his blueprint for Lawrence CommunityWorks partly from network theory and partly from two decades of experience as a community organizer. At one point in his career, he was working as a consultant to a community group in St. Paul, Minn. A woman who had



Ana Rodriguez, Tamar Kotelchuk, and Jessica Andors of CommunityWorks.

across Massachusetts, CommunityWorks has built some things too. A distressed block on Summer Street in the North Common neighborhood has been transformed with four new two-family homes and a playground. Elsewhere in the North Common area, the organization built 17 units of rental housing, which it now leases to low-income residents, and it is in the process of converting a long-closed elementary school into a community center. The organization is eyeing other properties to develop in the North Common section, a neighborhood particularly beset by the poverty that Lawrence has become known for.

Joseph McManus, president of Lawrence General Hospital, relates how a Lawrence CommunityWorks housing initiative helped his institution. A nursing assistant employed by the hospital recently was on the verge of leaving her job and the city when she won a lottery to buy one of the CommunityWorks homes. She decided to stay.

Traynor had a revelation about the power of networks.

been a leader in the group dropped out and was working as a distributor for Amway, which markets its products through individuals who sell to people they either know or have connections to. He went to see her in her apartment and had a revelation about the power of networks.

“She had two phones and all these lists of people—family, friends—and a spreadsheet up on the wall,”

Traynor recalls. The woman was using her ordinary connections to become a success in business. "I was really struck by it," says Traynor. "I had been reading about network theory, and things just clicked. It made me think about how ill-equipped and poorly set up our community groups are."

It was by a circuitous route that Traynor eventually got to apply his network theory for community organizations in his hometown. The son of a house painter, Traynor grew up during a time of traumatic change in Lawrence. During his youth, the mills were closing and jobs were disappearing. Much of the white population fled and was replaced by Latinos and other minorities.

"There was a lot of tension," says Traynor of Lawrence High School in the 1970s. "We had scuffles in the high school. Some people called them riots. It's a little melodramatic, but there was a lot of prejudice and hatred in the air."

Even then, he sensed a void in the city's leadership. "I always had this feeling there was something fundamentally wrong. No one was in charge. 'Who is leading us? Where are the adults?'"

After graduating from college, Traynor did a stint as an organizer for Massachusetts Fair Share, the now-defunct

community organization that had chapters around the state at that time, then went to Brandeis, where he received a master's degree in management of human services. He worked for six years for a Lowell community development corporation, where he met his wife, Debra Fox. They eventually formed a consulting firm, Neighborhood Partners, offering their expertise to nonprofit organizations across the country.

In 1998, Traynor won a two-year, expenses-paid fellowship at Harvard's Graduate School of Design. One day, while attending a symposium at MIT, he met Tamar Kotelchuck, one of three women who had been doing field work in Lawrence as part of their master's studies at MIT, which they were finishing up.

He talked to Kotelchuck about his ideas on networking and community development. They talked about Lawrence, her experiences in the city, and his hopes for his childhood home. "I always wanted to come back," he says. "I always kept my eye on things there."

Soon, he met with the other two students, Kristen Harol and Jessica Andors. All three of the women spoke Spanish and voiced an interest in working in Lawrence.

"We had fallen in love with Lawrence, but we didn't really know anything about it," says Harol.

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A NETWORK TAKES ROOT

Traynor did. Lawrence was then the poorest city in Massachusetts, battered by crime, violence, and drugs. Two economic booms had bypassed the city even though it was right off I-495, a short hop away from the state's high-tech heartland. In the heavily Latino North Common neighborhood, between 30 and 40 percent of properties were vacant. The homeownership rate was 9 percent, and per-capita income was \$11,000.

Traynor and the three graduate students hatched a plan to take over a failing community development corporation, Lawrence Planning and Neighborhood Development Corp., which by that time had only one employee and had lost its state and city funding. They presented their plan to the CDC's board of directors, offering their services at no cost until they could secure funding. The board took the deal.

Traynor provided the blueprint and directed the operation, while the three women fanned out across the city, knocking on doors, meeting with community people, and doing anything else they could think of to turn their plan into action. Traynor helped them overcome their insecurities about being white, privileged academics in a gritty urban neighborhood.

"I would say, 'You guys are who you are. Just go out and be yourself,'" says Traynor. "And of course, the people loved them. Who wouldn't? They were energetic, joyful, and very respectful."

Their initial goal was to do something about the vacant lots and buildings that scarred the neighborhood and were magnets for drugs and other criminal activities—classic community-organizing targets. Yet, in their conversations in the neighborhoods, the women found little enthusiasm for tackling the vacant lots.

"People kept saying—and we finally heard it—"There is nothing for our kids to do," Harol recalls. So the MIT-trained community planners put their original plans aside and organized a full slate of summer youth activities.

"We spent the summer going to the zoo, playing baseball on [the] vacant lots," says Harol. "We got people from MIT to come up and play ball with us."

And the networks started to grow. Parents, wary of leaving their kids alone with these strangers from MIT, started coming along for field trips or joining in the games. The neighborhood residents did finally agree to a building plan for a vacant lot—not housing, but a small playground for young children.

Meanwhile, Traynor was rustling up money to keep

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the operation going. With Sen. Tucker by his side, he went to the state Department of Housing and Community Development and convinced officials there to restore the organization's funding. Grants from private foundations started to come in, and, as the organization gained a track record, more funding arrived. Last year, the Bank of America Foundation awarded Lawrence CommunityWorks a \$200,000 grant.

"There was something about Bill that made me believe in him," says Tucker. "I didn't know him, but I felt Lawrence needed another shot."

SOME LIKE IT HOT

About 20 people, young and old, mostly Latino with a few white faces, are gathered in a conference room at Lawrence CommunityWorks one Friday night in the spring. Architect Bruce Hampton and Kotelchuck explain their proposed plan in general terms: Take a shuttered Catholic elementary school that had been a blight in the neighborhood and turn it into a community center. The architect and the planner then throw the meeting open to discussion about how the building should be designed, including layout of rooms



Admirers in the business sector include BankNorth's Pedro Arce.

and configuration of the grounds.

A young man suggests a basketball hoop in the parking lot, an idea that is met with widespread approval, as long as sufficient parking spaces can be found elsewhere. When Hampton suggests an atrium on the first floor,



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Koavanny Holguin, a young woman, says, "It's pretty cool, but what kind of glass is it going to be? Is it bulletproof? Is it brickproof?"

"It's a good question," says Kotelchuck. "Can you have a glass wall on the ground floor in a neighborhood in Lawrence?"

Mary Young, a long-time resident of the neighborhood, opines that the glass would make the room nice and cozy for senior citizens who might gather there. "We want it hot," she says.

The discussion lasts two hours. A consensus is reached on having rooms that are versatile enough to be used by different groups for classes, performances, or meetings. The question of an atrium will be explored by the architect and discussed further at the next gathering.

Kotelchuck is pleased. She acknowledges that the process would go a lot faster if the architect and staff made these decisions themselves, but that would defeat the purpose.

"Our idea is that if you only build a building, you are shortchanging yourself," says Kotelchuck. "We are not just building a building. We are building a community."

Success could make CommunityWorks a little less necessary in the future.

At times, Lawrence CommunityWorks seems to speak a language of its own. The classes it offers, whether in computers or language skills, are called "adult learning clubs." The dinner discussions are NeighborCircles. The volunteers who run the NeighborCircles are called "weavers." The language is about empowerment as well as connections—connections that could make CommunityWorks a little less necessary in the future.

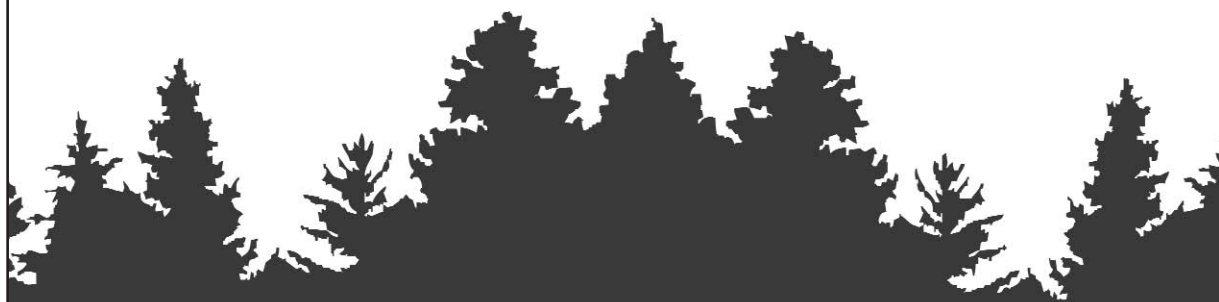
"Bill is absolutely clear about what he wants, which is to be on the sidelines cheering while [Lawrence residents] take charge of their own lives," says one of Traynor's mentors, Jim Stockard, curator of the Loeb Fellowship at Harvard's Graduate School of Design. "It's a little like parenting. The best parents know when to let their kids go."

"We're a good organization. We're effective," says Traynor. "But we are not going to turn the city around. The city is going to turn around when there are thousands of people involved in this city and asking questions."

That has already started to happen, according to Ana Rodriguez, a longtime Lawrence activist and chairman of the board of Lawrence CommunityWorks. "I see people really having ownership of what they want to see happen," she says. "It's not only the North Common area but all over Lawrence." ■

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Under control?



Nearly bankrupt,
Springfield struggles
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Will the city ever again
stand on its own two feet?

BY B.J. ROCHE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
PAUL SHOUL

IT WAS NEARLY A YEAR AFTER the city of Springfield, on the brink of bankruptcy, received a \$52 million state loan, and the five-member Finance Control Board imposed by the state in return for the bailout to oversee city operations was making progress. Back taxes were being collected, and the city's poorly performing retirement fund had been rolled into the state retirement fund. City departments had been reorganized, accounting procedures streamlined. There was a sense in City Hall that maybe, just maybe, things were turning around in the state's third largest city.

Then came what one western Massachusetts legislator called "the ultimatum." In mid-June, state Administration and Finance Secretary Eric Kriss told the city's State House delegation that unless the board got more "tools" to do its work, the finance board and state loan fund would be withdrawn, and the city would be on its own. One such "tool": appointment of a single arbitrator with the power to impose the terms of settlement in 29 labor contracts with the city's unions. The finance board had previously rejected a proposal from the City Council for a panel of three arbitrators—one chosen by the union, one by the finance board, and one by both—to settle the contract with the teachers' union, the city's largest.

"This would be perhaps the greatest assault [on] unions that we know of in the state," says state Sen. Stephen Buoniconti, a Democrat from West Springfield, who attended the meeting. "The intent of the legislation [instituting the Finance Control Board] was never to give the governor's office this alternative, [that] either we accept the conditions imposed or the state was going to pull out of the city. That was never contemplated."

City officials were also caught off guard, and they were knocked back further a week later when Romney, at a press



Consultant Carroll Buracker (left, at microphone) gives the Springfield Finance Control Board his grade of the police department: “Dysfunctional with a capital ‘D.’”

conference announcing local workforce training grants, called Springfield the state’s “problem child,” one that would either learn independence or be forever supported by the state’s taxpayers. According to the *Springfield Republican*, Romney said, “The question is whether the unions here will conform to the kind of pay and work rules that are necessary for Springfield to break even or whether, instead, the state will provide an even larger subsidy to the city than it currently does.”

Mayor Charles Ryan, who has been largely supportive of the Finance Control Board, on which he sits, declines to say whether the saber rattling by Romney and Kriss has undermined Springfield’s fragile rebuilding process. But he cites approvingly a June 17 *Boston Globe* editorial, headlined STRAPPED IN SPRINGFIELD, which said a “flogging” from Romney’s budget chief “won’t eliminate a structural budget deficit, especially one rooted in a region’s economic downturn and weak residential tax base.”

This episode was the latest act in the ongoing drama Springfield has become, and it may ultimately be the finale. As the control board’s chairman, state revenue commissioner Alan LeBovidge, puts it, “There are two issues [in Spring-

field], labor contracts and everything else.”

The contracts—all expired, some as long as four years ago—cover a workforce whose payroll accounts for 70 percent of the city’s \$442 million budget. How, and when, they are settled will be a test of whether Springfield can ever become fiscally independent from the state. But it will also be a test of whether the Romney administration can impose on city and town halls its view of municipal budget woes—here and elsewhere—as a function of local officials giving away the store to public sector unions. It may even be a preview of municipal morality plays to come.

KEYSTONE KOPS

As meetings of the Springfield Finance Control Board go, the one held on a Friday morning in May is tame. At a previous “public speakout,” board members got an earful from municipal retirees who were angry about changes in their health care coverage that increased their co-payments. This time, decorum is the order of the day, but that doesn’t mean the subject matter is noncontroversial.

The agenda features an assessment of the police department by public safety management consultant Carroll



Police Chief Paula Meara (left photo), Mayor Charles Ryan and City Council President Timothy Rooke, and Buracker (opposite).

Buracker. The rank and file is well educated and up to the job, Buracker says, but there are big problems. Lack of accountability. Friction among the top staff. Too many cops doing desk jobs. Record keeping so lax that the department doesn't even know how many crimes it has solved. A labor contract that provides for 12 weeks of sick time. That last one took Buracker, whose firm has worked on more than 200 police department studies, by surprise.

"When we first heard that, we thought they'd misspoke," Buracker tells the board. "We said, 'Days?' 'No,' they said, 'weeks.'"

But the quote heard 'round the state comes later, when chairman LeBovidge asks Buracker to grade the management of the department under Chief Paula Meara, who has been in office since 1996.

"I would have to say dysfunctional, with a capital 'D,'" Buracker replies.

Buracker recommends removing the chief's position from civil service, with all of its job protections, and putting it under the mayor's control—an idea favored by Mayor Charles Ryan but rejected by the City Council on an 8-1 vote a few weeks later. With the Romney administration vowing to pursue the change on its own, however, Meara agreed in late June to retire with a buyout worth nearly \$350,000, clearing the way for Ryan to hire a police commissioner, with a time-limited contract, as her replacement.

It is one more sign of politics as unusual in Springfield, illustrating that the powers once vested in City Hall now reside in the Springfield offices of the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, which serves as headquarters for the Finance Control Board. The oversight board was created last summer, a condition of the legislation that provided loans for the struggling city.

The board has wasted little time, cutting the city's 2005

budget deficit in half, to \$21 million. A private company has been hired to recover millions in unpaid taxes. The board has changed health insurers and restructured 27 departments into 11 divisions to streamline operations. And it has launched studies, similar to Buracker's, of the operations of the public works, schools, fire, and parking departments.

In ordinary times, such outside interference would be regarded as a violation of the hallowed Massachusetts tradition of home rule. But in Springfield, these are no ordinary times. (See "Down But Not Out," CW, Winter '04.) The city sits at the center of a perfect storm of a lackluster econ-

There are two issues in Springfield: 'labor contracts and everything else.'

omy, a decade of mismanagement, and a legacy of public corruption that makes Buddy Cianci's Providence look like John Winthrop's City on a Hill.

It's hard to know which came first, the graft or the incompetence; either way, the impact is profound. The city with a budget of \$442 million in fiscal 2005 lacks an integrated accounting system, and officials don't even know how many employees are on the city payroll. Some \$43 million in back taxes was owed last year, with scofflaws including prominent politicians and bar owners. Hundreds of thousands of federal dollars earmarked for housing and economic development went into the pockets of local officials. A year ago, there was much angst about outsiders coming in to run the city, but now it's hard to see how a cleanup could have happened any other way.




“We had a situation, where, frankly, we were looking at a collapsible government,” says Mayor Ryan, who serves with City Council President Timothy Rooke as the local representatives on the five-member board. “It wasn’t just around the margins. It was a government that lost its way. You name it, there are problems. In some cases, gross problems.”

For an unelected body, the Finance Control Board has extraordinary powers: to hire and fire, borrow and spend, change the salaries of elected officials, and sell off assets. The board can change the structures of city government, consolidating, reorganizing, or abolishing departments if it sees fit. But not everything can be done by fiat: The board has to negotiate contracts with those 29 different bargaining units of municipal employees.


The board is comprised of two local representatives, Ryan and Rooke, and three members appointed by Kriss: LeBovidge, commissioner of the state Department of Revenue, who serves as chairman; Michael Jacobson, an expert in corporate turnarounds; and former deputy state treasurer Thomas Trimarco, who has experience in retirement fund management.

The board may be powerful, but the task before it is daunting. If the city could be compared to a drunk who has hit rock bottom, the police study represents the first of what Ryan and others hope will be more than a few proverbial moments of clarity. The \$170,000 study, for which the city has to pick up the tab, was part of the board’s top-to-bottom assessment of how Springfield municipal government works—or, in more cases than previously thought, doesn’t.

City services have been reorganized and several department heads have been changed in the past year, as the board has set about rebuilding city government, if not from the foundations, says LeBovidge, “then certainly from the basement up.”



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DIGGING OUT

Only in Springfield could the report of a \$21 million deficit for the coming year be considered good news; earlier this year, the estimate was in the range of \$40 million to \$60 million. Meanwhile, other bad news abounds: The city's retirement fund is among the lowest ranked of the 31 biggest funds in the state. Many of its schools have been dubbed failing by the state, and last September the Finance Control Board found that at least \$10 million in school building funds had been "inappropriately" used to pay for municipal operating expenses. Following a crime spurt this spring, state troopers were called in to patrol the city, and are there still. At one point, even the streetlights had been turned off in some places.

In a report to the Legislature shortly after the board began its work last September, LeBovidge reported that conditions were "significantly worse" than previously known. He cited an information technology system firmly rooted in the 1950s: manual record keeping of a more than \$400 million budget, with ledgers in the offices of the city's treasurer, assessor, and auditor kept by hand; some property tax records still on index cards in file cabinets. There is still no integrated accounting software in place.

The accounting problems were compounded by layoffs

over the past decade in the city's finance department, says chief financial officer Mary Tzambazakis, who served as assistant CFO in the 1990s and returned to City Hall from the private sector in March 2004. But the measures necessary to get Springfield's house—and books—in order required the intervention of something like the Finance Control Board, she says.

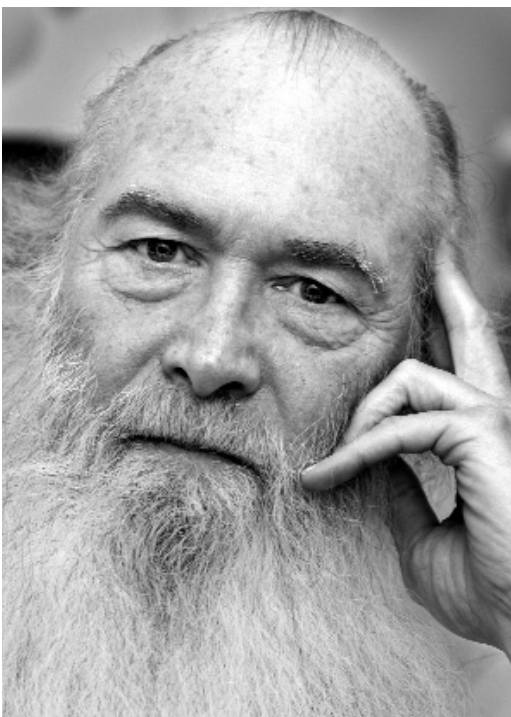
"The transformation that needs to take place to stabilize the city's financial operations could not be done without them being here," says Tzambazakis. "The tough decisions to implement long-term solutions are not always the popular decisions. They take the politics out of my job."

Not everyone appreciates the board's efforts. Some city councilors complain about the loss of local control and the cost of the board's operations—in essence, an additional layer of government that has to be paid for by the city. But more than anyone else, municipal employees and union leaders are angry about frozen wages, stalled contract negotiations, and the board's inclination to see private contractors as the means to save money on services.

Timothy Collins, who heads the city's teachers' union, says the board is using the city's misfortune to carry out a Romney-administration agenda of union busting and privatization.



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Labor and management: teachers' union head Timothy Collins (left) and Finance Control Board executive director Philip Puccia.

"The things that are being done [to improve municipal administration] would have been done if Charlie Ryan had been in by himself," says Collins. But the board is going well beyond what is needed, he says, based on marching orders from the State House corner office. "Romney has been traveling around the state saying, 'The problem is not the cuts I've made, it's that you're paying your employees too much.' And he, through the control board, is trying to implement that in the city of Springfield."

But Ryan admits that something drastic needed to be done. "The hole that was dug for Springfield is a deep, deep hole," he told reporter Jim Madigan in a recent appearance on the WGBY public television show called, appropriately enough, *The State We're In*, shortly before the Kriss dust-up. "Are we better off now? Sure we are. This is a city that had more than its share of corruption and more than its share of incompetence."

LABOR PAINS

Executive director Philip Puccia handles the day-to-day administration of the control board, which now includes a to-do list of 200 initiatives, "from the small to the big," designed to increase revenue or get better control of spending. "It's not overnight work, but we're getting there," he says. Helping them get there is a \$52 million no-interest loan fund from the state. As the city needs money to pay its bills, it borrows from the state fund, then pays the money back. Over the course of fiscal 2005, says Puccia, the city borrowed about \$100 million and repaid about \$80 million.

Already the board has gotten some results. A private company has recovered nearly \$8 million in unpaid prop-

erty taxes. A New Jersey company has been hired to automate and consolidate payroll services. Switching from Blue Cross to Cigna for health insurance coverage for the city's roughly 2,000 retirees and 6,000 employees and their families has resulted in savings of \$20 million. (For employees, it has also meant an increase in co-payments from \$5 to \$15.) Then there are the studies of city departments, which promise changes that will provide better services at lower cost.

The city has had 'more than its share of corruption and... incompetence,' says Ryan.

"Right now, five different city offices are involved in parking management," says Puccia. "The police study showed that there are 48 police officers whose jobs really ought to be civilianized. That will have a material effect, to move those [officers] out of the station and onto the streets."

Puccia says it took a while just to get a handle on how bad things were. "I was amazed that it was so difficult to get normal financial reporting information," he says. "There were no systems; managers were not empowered to have information to make decisions. There was no modern payroll system. It was, from my viewpoint, dysfunctional."

When the board was named last year, there were complaints, from city councilors and then-state Sen. Linda Melconian, about "three white guys from Boston" overseeing a community that is 50 percent black and Hispanic. Puccia was a particular target: The former head of the MBTA

was sued in the 1990s for sexual and racial discrimination, but that case was thrown out.

Even today, online chat rooms and message boards are full of suspicions about the board's intentions and ulterior motives. "The composition of the board shows the determination of powerful financial and political interests to protect their interests in the city," wrote Bryan Pfeifer on the left-wing Web site www.workers.org.

There's also grumbling about the extensive use of private consultants and how much the control board itself is costing the near-bankrupt city. The board reported expenditures of \$319,000 for the third quarter of fiscal 2005; Puccia, who commutes from his home in Andover each day, is being paid \$130,000 a year; and the Buracker report cost \$170,000. But complaints about these costs are likely to go unheeded.

"That was the best \$170,000 we ever spent," says Puccia of the Buracker report. "It gives us a very detailed roadmap to improve public safety in the city, and it will actually save us money when we civilianize some positions. We couldn't have gotten it any other way."

Ryan acknowledges some friction and suspicion early in

the game. But he says he's developed a good working relationship with the board.

"We've had passionate disagreements, but they've been handled in the way they should be," says Ryan, adding that the board's outsiders have proved their mettle. "I'm not sure Springfield was even on their radar screen before this, but they've passed the fundamental test, and that is that they care about the city."

But even before the recent standoff, the city's unions dissented from this view. The day after Ryan made those comments, city workers rallied against the board at the State House. First up in the 29 labor contracts to be negotiated by the board is the Springfield Education Association, the city's largest, with more than 2,400 workers. Even before Kriss's provocations, the talks had not been going well.



CORRUPTION, INCOMPETENCE WEIGH HEAVILY ON SPRINGFIELD

Four years ago, Michael O'Reilly took over as supervisor of the western Massachusetts office of the FBI, fresh from Sopranos country of northern New Jersey. Eleven convictions later, O'Reilly, who specializes in organized crime and public corruption, says even he was surprised at what he found in Springfield.

"I haven't seen anything like this," he says. "It's similar to situations I investigated in north Jersey, where there was a mob influence in some areas, but I don't know anything that measured up to this level. It's the way business has been done here for years, and we're still working our way through it."

Springfield has long been thought to be home to a branch of the Genovese crime family. Its alleged boss, Adolfo "Big Al" Bruno, was gunned down in 2003 in front of the social club where he played poker; his murder remains unsolved.

Anywhere there's organized crime, says O'Reilly, public corruption follows. But what intrigues O'Reilly is the number of his public corruption cases with no links to the mob.

"They were just people in a position of trust, either by election or appointment, who were violating that trust for personal gain," he says. "You had people out there who perhaps felt there were no checks and balances, no accountability. There were lots of political appointments of people who had no background for the position they were placed in. Not only were they incompetent, a lot of times they had crime on their minds

versus the welfare of the citizens."

Those convicted in the last year and a half include:

- James Asselin, former director of the Hampden County Employment and Training Consortium and co-administrator of the Greater Springfield Entrepreneurial Fund, a federal loan program. Asselin and GSEF co-administrator James Krzystofik pled guilty in March 2004 to conspiracy and money laundering. Their indictment charged that they had embezzled more than \$300,000 and spent another \$170,000 on "unauthorized and extravagant travel at the government's expense." Cornell Lewis, a director of the GSEF fund, and Salvatore Anzalotti, its auditor, were found guilty of embezzling \$590,000 from GSEF.
- Gerald Phillips, former chairman of the city's police commission and director of the Massachusetts Careers Development Institute, a federally funded job training program for low-income residents. Phillips was convicted in February of conspiracy and wire fraud in connection with several no-show jobs, including one provided in exchange for sexual favors.
- Chester Ardolino, a former Springfield police officer, was convicted in December for fraud and money laundering in a real estate scheme. Ardolino is the brother of Anthony Ardolino, chief of staff to former mayor Michael Albano and also a target of an FBI investigation.

Still pending is a case alleging that nine members of the politically connected Asselin family, including former state

The board is using the teachers' contract to impose changes on a school district that is among the lowest performing in the state. According to a report by Mass Insight Education, 11 of the city's 44 schools have been ranked underperforming or chronically underperforming by the state Department of Education, and the high school dropout rate is more than double the state's of 3.3 percent. (The student body in Springfield public schools is 78 percent black and Hispanic, compared with a statewide average of 21 percent, and its proportion of low-income students is nearly triple that of the state.)

More than 200 teachers have left the district in the past year, says Collins. Teachers have been working under a wage freeze since July 2003, and state budget cuts have resulted in the loss of 300 teaching positions and 200 paraprofessional posts. There's no money for books, Collins says, and teachers often have to use one set of texts for five classes.

In the schools, the board is pushing for a "performance-based" contract, which would reward better teachers and pump up salaries for math and science instructors, who are in high demand. "We're convinced that if we tie teacher pay to student performance, we'll get a better system," says Puccia.

Rep. Christopher Asselin and his father, Raymond Asselin Sr., former head of the Springfield Housing Authority, embezzled more than \$1 million in cash and gifts. Also, Francis Keough, former City Council president and head of the city's homeless shelter for a decade, was convicted of state charges of extorting \$29,000 from a contractor.

For some people, the five-figure corruption rankles nearly as much as the million-dollar kind. The usually unflappable Assistant US Attorney William Welch II was so disgusted at the behavior of 32-year-old Alfonso Carrano, who was convicted this year of stealing nearly \$10,000 from soda machines in the city's schools, that he asked US District Court Judge Michael Ponsor to order Carrano to stand outside school department headquarters wearing a sandwich board confessing his crime. Ponsor went a more traditional route, sentencing the former school lunch manager to four months in prison and a \$5,000 fine.

O'Reilly can't estimate the cost of public corruption in Springfield, but he says the city might be in better economic shape if the federal dollars had been used as intended: in housing, economic development, and job training.

"If the federal money had come in from Washington and gotten to the places Congress had intended as the beneficiaries, the city would be in much better condition," O'Reilly says. "Those monies were earmarked to street-level improvements, and they never made it."

—B.J. ROCHE



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“So, if the average teacher got a 2.5 percent [pay raise], someone else might get 4 percent.” But Puccia says the union is resisting the idea. “We don’t think at this point they’ve embraced this concept.”

“They’re saying that the reason why the kids are not doing well is because of the teachers,” says union head Collins. “They are absolutely trying to put in an ideological perspective into the school system.” By mid-June, an independent mediator was conducting what Collins called “shuttle diplomacy” between the board and the union.



CFO Mary Tzambazkis says it took the finance board to get the books in order.

CREEPING CORRUPTION

This is Charlie Ryan’s second go-round in the mayor’s office; he served four two-year terms in the 1960s. This time the role is less power broker and more reformer, diplomat, and cheerleader. At age 77, and with 34 grandchildren, Ryan has lots of other things he could be doing right now. But because he’s at the end of his political career, instead of the beginning, many think he is the best person in

the city to hold the office.

Ryan recently announced that he’s running this fall for one more term (he’s being challenged by Thomas Ashe, a school committee member who wants to abolish the control board), and he hopes that things will be cleaned up enough by the end of his second term to give the city a fresh start—though he thinks that will require a fresh infusion of funds from the state.

“This is tragic, what’s happened here, absolutely tragic,”

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he says. "Our job right now is to clean it up, make it work, determine what the cost is, present it to the Legislature and say, 'Here's what we need for municipal government.' We've gotten the aid in education, but we need it in municipal government, too."

Part of the problem, Ryan admits, is public corruption. Once known as the City of Homes for its tree-lined streets and good quality of life, Springfield now has a reputation for crime and malfeasance, which seem to have seeped into virtually every facet of municipal life (See "Corruption, Incompetence," page 56).

Federal investigators have been looking into public corruption for nearly five years. Since early 2004, 12 people have been convicted and nine more indicted in a catalogue of gifts ranging from the cheesy (the looting of public school vending machines) to the reprehensible (sexual favors for a no-show job, and the embezzlement of hundreds of thousands of federal dollars). In June, Ryan announced that a city investigation had found a "significant number" of city employees, mostly in school buildings, using city telephones to spend time on a sex chat line.

Equally damaging is the murky intersection between dishonesty and ineptitude—the illegal tax agreements, the lost records. And records are easy to lose when nothing is

automated. Many of the delinquent property tax bills date back to 1990. Several bar and strip joint owners, some with alleged mob connections and most operating in the downtown "entertainment district" much touted by former mayor Albano, routinely failed to pay property taxes or repay economic development loans, yet they somehow held onto their liquor licenses.

"We had \$2.5 million in back taxes owed by bar owners who, for six, seven years, didn't pay their taxes," says Ryan, adding that one was \$700,000 in arrears. "Only two or three didn't get their licenses renewed."

Still, there are tentative signs of turnaround in Springfield. Renovation of the Civic Center is nearly complete, with the dull brick eyesore on Main Street becoming a sleek new convention center. The great silver orb of the new Basketball Hall of Fame lights up its site along the Connecticut River. (So what if its 14,000 square feet of retail space still lies empty? It's a start.) Up the hill—near the city's crown jewel, the Springfield Museum and Library complex—space has been cleared for a new federal courthouse. Some \$113 million in federal funds are expected to come into the area to fund the courthouse construction, the renovation of Union Station, and improvements to State Street through the Mason Square area.

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Home prices are on the rise, but as you drive downtown from the gleaming Baystate Medical Center you'll still pass blighted, abandoned, even half-burned-out houses in the city's North End, a minority neighborhood. Street crime is still a problem.

The city needs jobs, says Ryan. But no business wants to set up shop in a dysfunctional city. City CFO Tzambazakis says the groundwork being laid now will allow economic development to take hold.

"This is an environment of phenomenal opportunity," she says. "We're working with the state at a level that most communities don't get to. Right now we have the opportunity to put in place long-term, good solutions that can turn the community around in the long run."

The control board's mandate expires in 2007, but even when the city gets back on its feet, Ryan cautions that Springfield, which has traditionally relied on state aid for 60 percent of its operating budget, will need still more financial help. He thinks there's a case for more state help for third-tier cities like Springfield—the Lowells, the Lawrences, the Brocktons—whose more affluent residents have long since departed for the suburbs but which still provide services for large minority and immigrant populations.

"There's a lot of tumult in our urban centers, and everyone else is a spectator," says Ryan. "People have abdicated any sense of responsibility for making things better."

State Sen. Buoniconti agrees that the city will be hard-pressed to do it on its own. Springfield, he says, is different from the state's previous "problem child," Chelsea, which went into receivership in the 1980s but is now free of outside supervision.

"The real factor in putting Chelsea back was the real estate boom that took place in the early 1990s, with the Boston market exploding," he says. "There was investment by Massport and a couple of office buildings. That brought more of a tax base and jobs to the city. Chelsea saw a huge financial boom." These, he says, were "fortuitous events."

But Springfield can't count on fortuitous events. So, at press time, Buoniconti was working on a compromise proposal, the language of which would please neither the unions nor the governor, that he hopes will move negotiations forward.

"First and foremost, any union resolutions have to start with conversations, and they haven't started any negotiations with 28 of those unions. That should have been done six months ago," he says. "We need to get something done sooner rather than later. And when it comes to presidential politics, the last thing you want is a headache in your own backyard. I hope the governor is more interested in resolving it than [in maintaining] a standoff." ■

B.J. Roche teaches journalism at the University of Massachusetts—Amherst.



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LONE RANGERS

Are those in the free-agent economy just getting to the future ahead of everyone else?

BY MICHAEL JONAS

AT FIRST GLANCE, Rick Hill and Lauren Dragon seem to have little in common. Hill, 60, has worked for the past decade as a high-paid software engineer, much of the time for Fidelity Investments. He and his wife, who works in marketing and communications, are empty-nesters who own a condo in Boston's trendy South End, where they enjoy the bustling restaurant scene when not indulging their taste for travel. Dragon, who lives in Haverhill, spends her days assembling circuit boards for \$10.45 per hour at Celestica, a multinational contract manufacturer that operates a plant just over the



border in Salem, NH. The 48-year-old single mother struggles to cover the rent on the house she shares with two of her four children and worries about getting sick, having been without health insurance coverage for four years.

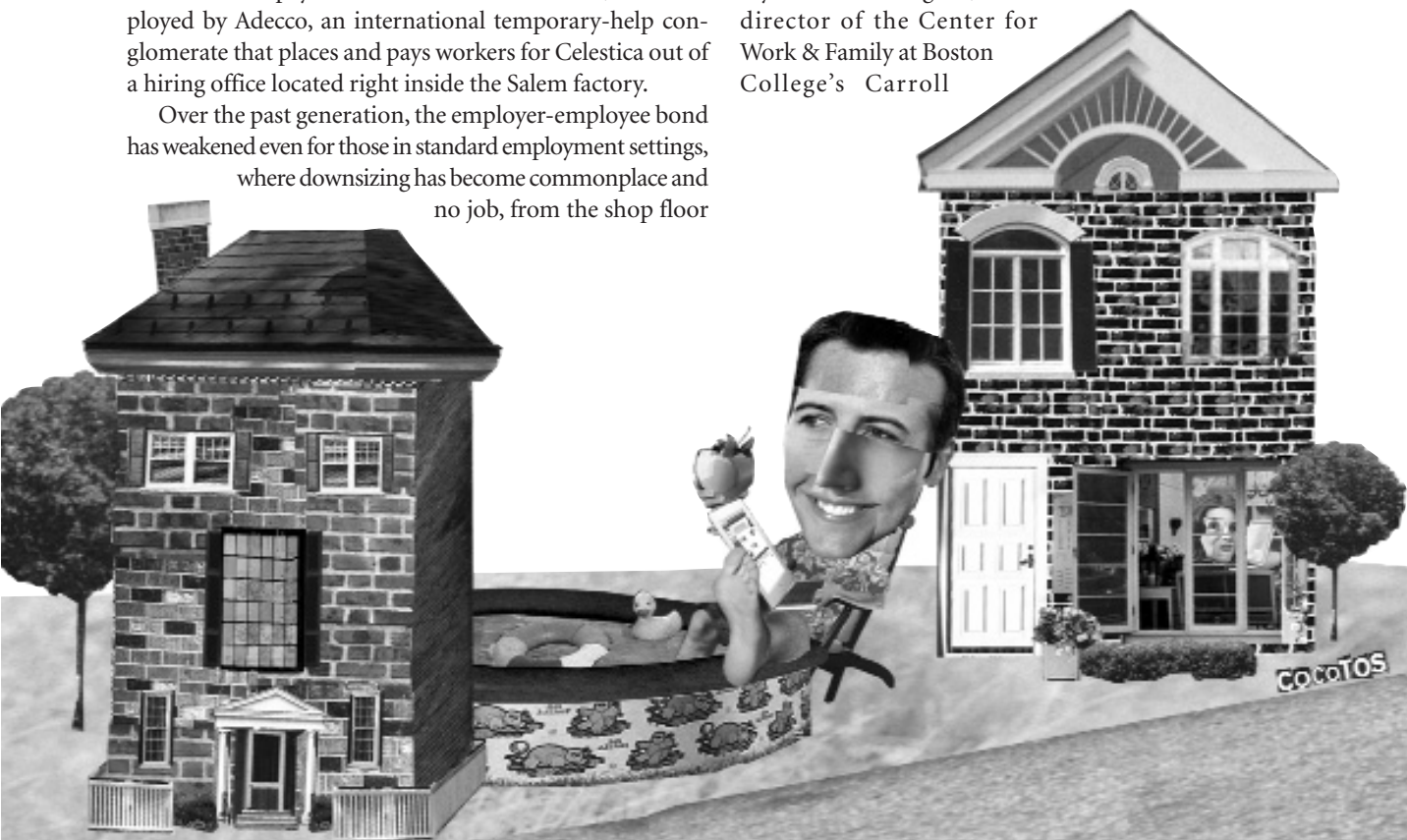
As much as their lives are worlds apart, Hill and Dragon are linked by a common thread. They are both part of a growing sector of the workforce that operates outside the world of permanent employment. Though he does most of his work for Fidelity, Hill is paid by Veritude, a temporary staffing firm owned by Fidelity, which the mutual funds company uses to fill its own in-house needs for temporary workers as well those of other firms. Meanwhile, the circuit boards Dragon assembles at Celestica are bound for Cisco Systems and other firms that contract with Celestica for production. That already puts workers like Dragon one step removed from the company actually using the fruits of their labor. But Dragon, who had a permanent, full-time job at Andover-based Lucent Technologies until layoffs cast her out during the telecom industry implosion in 2001, doesn't even draw her paycheck from Celestica. Instead, she's employed by Adecco, an international temporary-help conglomerate that places and pays workers for Celestica out of a hiring office located right inside the Salem factory.

Over the past generation, the employer-employee bond has weakened even for those in standard employment settings, where downsizing has become commonplace and no job, from the shop floor

to the management suite, comes with a lifetime guarantee. For others, like Hill and Dragon, it's a new game entirely, with millions of Americans turned loose and now fending for themselves. Those in this category go by different names—consultants and contractors, temps and contingent workers—that conjure up very different images: They are either masters of their own universe or interchangeable inputs in a brutal new economic order. What they have in common is that, to a far greater degree than for those in the standard world of work, they are on their own.

Life in this world of conditional employment has been good for Hill, who has found steady demand and good pay for his skills while enjoying freedom from the constraints of regular employment. But for Dragon, it has meant a life of low-paid contingent labor, where one warm body is as good as the next, and where the decent wages and reliable benefits that used to give working-class families a modicum of economic security are nowhere to be seen.

"Insecurity and flexibility are two sides of the same coin," says Brad Harrington, executive director of the Center for Work & Family at Boston College's Carroll



School of Management.

This flexibility is welcomed by many workers who seek more control over their lives—a quest that has dovetailed with changes in telecommunications that have made it easier for high-skilled workers to find work arrangements that suit them. Daniel Pink, author of *Free Agent Nation*, the 2001 bible of the New Economy careerist, calls these changes a liberating force, freeing workers from lives as wage slaves at faceless corporations so they can instead find their inner career selves. He describes a decentralized 21st-century workforce in which it will increasingly be possible to sell one's services in a vast marketplace that pays well for valuable talent, and to exert control over how and where one works.

But the same change in employer-employee relationships is playing itself out very differently at the lower rungs of the skill ladder, where people like Lauren Dragon have little leverage with which to barter with employers. Meanwhile, the free-agent economy can be tough going even for those with college degrees, marketable skills, and a penchant for working on their own, as they struggle to provide for themselves the same safety-net scaffolding—health insurance, retirement savings—that is eroding in the corporate world as well.

With Americans forced to come to grips with the instability brought on by an increasingly global economy and a corporate culture looking for new ways to boost the bottom line, contract workers represent the “vanguard of insecurity,” says Dallas Salisbury, president of the Employee Benefit Research Institute, a nonprofit Washington, DC-based policy center. He and many others are dubious that the relatively small ranks of “contractor nation” will explode in coming years, as Pink and others have predicted. But nearly everyone agrees they represent the forward battalion of the changing world of work, the shock troops on the new employment terrain where it is growing harder for everyone to find safe cover. “Their experience is an extreme form of what many more Americans are experiencing,” says Yale political scientist Jacob Hacker.

SECURITY BREACH

The rise of contractors underlines “how our economy is changing toward more individual risk and reliance,” says



Contract laborers such as Lauren Dragon of Haverhill have little leverage with which to barter with employers.

Hacker, author of *The Great Risk Shift*, a forthcoming book that examines the offloading of economic responsibility and risk from employers onto individual workers. “But it’s not the sum of the transformation by any means.” Indeed, it is only part of broader changes that are fundamentally reshaping the way most Americans work.

The period from the Great Depression through the 1960s was marked by the rise of a remarkable set of social and financial institutions that stabilized American life. Social Security provided a base of retirement income for all workers, and the advent of Medicare meant health needs in old age were also taken care of. Employers set up comprehensive health insurance plans for their workers and offered generous pensions, which provided monthly retirement payments for life. Big firms like IBM established a paternalistic culture of employment security, with “no layoff” provisions embedded in corporate policy.

Over the past 25 years, all that has changed. Talk of privatizing some portion of Social Security is center stage in Washington, while so-called “defined benefit” pension plans have been replaced by “defined contribution” plans—essentially tax-deferred savings which are, at best, partially matched by companies and left to employees to invest as

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK MORELLI

they wish. In the decade from 1992 to 2001, the percentage of US households with defined benefit pensions fell by half, from 40 percent to 20 percent.

Firms are also looking to escape spiraling health care costs. The percentage of the working-age population covered by employer health plans fell from 70 percent in 1987 to 63 percent in 2003. What's more, "even within that 63 percent, the type of coverage they have has changed radically," says Salisbury, pointing to steady increases in the employee-paid share of health insurance premiums and the introduction of plans with high deductibles.

But perhaps the biggest change of all is the recognition that virtually no job is secure. "To some extent, every job has become more temporary," says Chris Tilly, an economist at the University of Massachusetts—Lowell. Or, as former US labor secretary Robert Reich says, "Increasingly, what we earn depends on a spot auction for our services."

In *The New Deal at Work*, published in 1999, University of Pennsylvania economist Peter Cappelli described the change this way: "If the traditional, lifetime employment relationship was like a marriage, then the new employment relationship is like a lifetime of divorces and remarriages."

"What's driving it is the employers' reluctance to engage in anything that looks long-term or looks like a fixed cost," says Cappelli, in an interview. "Employers broke the old deal because they didn't want long-term commitments. But increasingly they don't want employees at all," preferring to use temporary-help firms and independent contractors to carry out tasks formerly handled by employees.

Americans working in these increasingly arm's-length

a company of one. Moreover, there is plenty of other evidence to suggest that more people are working either full- or part-time under nontraditional terms. The number of tax returns reporting self-employed income doubled from 1970 to 1993, according to Pink. Meanwhile, the temporary-staffing industry accounted for 10 percent of the country's job growth in the 1990s, despite accounting for only about 2 percent of total jobs, according to MIT economist David Autor.

Though the use of independent contractors is growing, there may be built-in limits. "You get flexibility, but you lose predictability," says Cappelli. You also lose the accumulated knowledge of systems and procedures in complex corporations—the very reason fixed employment arose in the first place, he says.

Autor is a skeptic of the free agent economy, at least Pink's futuristic projection of it as a high-tech, project-based bazaar in which the Internet helps buyers and sellers of labor match up and negotiate deals. "I don't think there's really an eBay for labor, and I don't think there's going to be one," says Autor. ("Matching buyers and sellers in the labor market is obviously much more difficult than in other less, er, human markets," Pink admits, in an e-mail.) But Autor does see as significant the growth of labor-market intermediaries, such as temporary staffing firms, that give companies the flexibility of non-employee help. Such firms serve as the employer of record, carrying out screening and human resource functions for their corporate clientele. The share of the workforce in the temporary-help sector increased fivefold from 1983 to 2000, though it still only accounts for 2.6 percent of all workers.

*Perhaps the biggest change is the recognition
that virtually no job is secure: 'To some
extent, every job has become more temporary.'*

employment situations remain a relatively small proportion of the workforce, though there is disagreement over their true numbers and their rate of their growth. Approximately one-third of US workers are considered to be in some type of "nontraditional" work setting, but most are part-timers. About 10 percent of all workers are categorized as "independent contractors" by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and another 2 percent to 4 percent are considered "fixed-term workers," because their jobs have definite termination dates.

These figures have their limitations, and Pink says they greatly undercount the free agent economy. He claims that some people working as contractors report being employees of a firm they are working for, while others who have incorporated in order to limit certain legal liabilities are counted as wage and salary workers, even if they work for

The overall size of staffing agency employment "doesn't blow anyone out of the water," says Matt Carlin, the owner of a Needham staffing firm and president of the Massachusetts chapter of the American Staffing Association, a national trade organization. "But when you see it's 100 percent higher than it was 10 years ago, now you're talking about a trend."

Carlin, whose Resource Options Inc. specializes in civil engineering and construction placements, says that companies are reluctant to add permanent positions after the recent recession and they are turning instead to staffing companies for temporary help. "Flexible work staff" is becoming "a real buzzword," he says.

In another trend, often referred to as "try-buy," staffing firms are increasingly used not only by companies unsure of their long-range workforce needs, but also by businesses



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Even if the overall numbers remain small, the temp-and-staffing agency approach to employment has penetrated nearly every sector of the economy and every rung of the occupational ladder, from the manual labor jobs and clerical help for which the industry was once mainly known to CFOs, attorneys, and accountants. That has contributed to workers' sense of insecurity, says Paul Osterman, of MIT's Sloan School of Management.

"The psychological impact has spread beyond the numbers," he says.

CONTRACTOR NATION

But for Rick Hill, life as a contract worker has become something to be favored, not feared. When Hill gave up a secure university position in financial administration 10 years ago to pursue a new career in computers, he took temporary programming assignments through a staffing company while looking for a position in his newly chosen field. A decade later, Hill has yet to land a traditional job, but he's hardly complaining.

"The more I did it, the more comfortable I became," he says of the project-based computer work he has done, primarily for Fidelity Investments. With an itch for travel and an aversion to "office politics, the annual review, and the 'what do you want to be when you grow up' discussions that come with traditional jobs, Hill and his wife, who is also self-employed, have carved out a comfortable life that suits them well.

"I've always been able to hop from one lily pad to the next," Hill says. "As conscious a decision as there ever is in life, it just felt like a way to lead my life." Leading his life that way means that he has to be more self-reliant in planning his financial future, Hill says. "You try to build your own little safety net, financial and emotional. Basically, it's on me." But he's not so sure that's much different than what's happening in many traditional jobs.

"I'm glad I don't work for United Airlines," he says, referring to news this spring that the struggling air carrier was dumping \$10 billion of pension obligations. "Those lines, they're moving closer together," he says of standard and free-agent employment tracks.

For Jim Howard, the contracting life is "almost turning into a career," though not of his own choosing. Two years ago, after leaving an engineering position with a Fortune 50 company, the 30-year-old Weymouth resident says he got "tons of calls" from recruiters. "But they weren't direct hire positions; they were for contractors."

He's now on his second such job. Howard says he gets



Staffing agency owner Matt Carlin:
Companies want a "flexible" workforce.

paid very well, loves the work, and has "earned a tremendous amount of professional capital." Still, he wouldn't mind the stability of a permanent position. He's getting health insurance coverage through his wife's employer, but he would like her to be able to stay home for a while when they start a family.

Managers at his current placement say they would like to hire him, says Howard, but they can't get approval from their superiors. Meanwhile, Howard keeps running into people who are now working as contractors for firms they were once employees of, sometimes for decades. It's a common phenomenon, according to labor researchers, who say that, particularly for public companies sensitive to stock-price dynamics, there is pressure to move labor from fixed costs to variable costs, even if the workload hasn't changed. "They can't afford to lose the manpower, but they have to clean up the books," says Howard.

This pressure to outsource work, rather than hire in staff, creates opportunities for independent operators with savvy and entrepreneurial spirit, however. Lyn Murphy, a Norwell training and human resources manager, left her position with Fleet Bank in 2001 to set up her own consulting business. A year and a half ago, she and five other women who knew each other through the banking industry started meeting informally to share tips, referrals, and other wis-

dom. Since they all have different areas of expertise, the group serves as a something of a clearinghouse for potential jobs, and it can sometimes help a bank find the help it needs on a specific project. "The idea was that we could leverage one another's lines of business if a client wanted one-stop shopping," says Murphy. "We didn't have to be siloed in our business."

Amy Zuckerman has taken the idea of networking among contractors a step further. In 1990, the former Worcester newspaper reporter decided to trade the rat race of the news business for a go at life as a soloist, focusing on research and writing on global economic issues and strategic marketing services. In the past, that might have meant making a move east to Boston or south to New York, but Zuckerman, who was always drawn to rural living, went west instead, settling first in Belchertown, then in neighboring Amherst. Although long a mecca for college students and twenty-

somethings just out of school, the Pioneer Valley had previously not offered a lot of employment options for college-educated professionals.

"Academics and acupuncturists," says Zuckerman, describing the range of viable professions in the area.

There is pressure to move labor from fixed costs to variable costs, even if the workload is the same.

But innovations in technology have changed that. "I moved out here with a PC and a fax," says Zuckerman, 51. Today, she coordinates marketing reports and other economic forecasting projects via e-mail with a far-flung cast of other consultants. "I'm working with five people as we speak, but I'm alone in my [home] office in Amherst."

Affordable housing and a comfortable quality of life have drawn hundreds of others to the Pioneer Valley, where a bustling industry of wired workers has quietly taken root, largely in home offices. In 2002, Zuckerman founded Hidden-Tech, a business networking organization geared toward the area's home-based businesses, which range from marketing, public relations, and editing to software and telecommunications development. In April, Zuckerman was

named the US Small Business Administration's 2005 New England Home-Based Business Champion for her work in forming the group, which now claims some 800 members.

While others fret about the decentralization of work and contracting out of projects, Zuckerman says, "The more the trend is to subcontract, the happier we are, because we're the ones already doing it."

CLASSIFIED INFORMATION

While Zuckerman and others have seized on the changes in technology and in the global economy to chart their own course in a more freewheeling world of work, the flip side has been increased efforts by some businesses to shirk employer responsibilities by calling those who do work for them independent contractors, even if they aren't.

In a study issued last December, researchers from the University of Massachusetts-Boston and the Center for Construction Policy Research at Harvard Law School and Harvard School of Public Health estimated that, from 2001 to 2003, at least one out of every seven construction industry employers in Massachusetts had misclassified workers as "independent contractors" who should properly have been treated as employees. Those firms engaging in the practice had misclassified four out of every 10 workers, the researchers estimated, while at least one of every 20 construction workers overall was improperly treated as an independent contractor.

"It is very hard to argue that someone who operates a large piece of equipment that belongs to a general contractor should be identified as an independent contractor," says Francoise Carre, of the Center for Social Policy at UMass-Boston, a co-author of the study.

The prevalence of misclassification among Massachusetts construction employers increased nearly 50 percent from the period 1995-97 to 1998-2000, according to the report. Because firms do not pay unemployment insurance and worker's compensation insurance for independent contractors, this increase has significant implications for those funds, with the UMass-Boston report estimating that the state loses \$12.6 million to \$35 million annually in unemployment insurance taxes. And because independent contractors tend to underreport their income, the researchers contend both the state and federal governments also lose income tax revenue.

The misclassification problem in the construction industry is far worse in Southern and Western states, says Mark Erlich, business representative for Carpenters Local 40.

Nevertheless, he points to a broader pattern marked by the increased use of undocumented immigrants and the flowering of an underground economy. "These employment trends are all melding into one employment perspective, which is simply, 'We're going to operate outside the realm of traditional employment relations,'" says Erlich. Employment-avoiding practices in construction, he says, range



Hidden-Tech's Amy Zuckerman charts her own course in the Pioneer Valley.

from "guys who pay in \$20 bills from paper bags" to more sophisticated operators who are "all lawyered up" and get workers to sign detailed agreements intended to insulate firms from their obligations as employers.

"It's not just the ma-and-pa store that's breaking the law," says UMass researcher Carre.

Indeed, the most well-known battle over the improper classification of workers took place at software giant Microsoft, where a group of long-term technical workers filed suit in 1992, alleging they were improperly being treated as independent contractors despite meeting the legal tests for what constitutes an employee. The case dragged on for years, but in 2000 the company agreed to settle the case by paying \$97 million to the Microsoft "permatemps" who argued, among other things, that they had been improperly denied access to stock options and other benefits accorded to company employees.

A more recent legal fight involves workers who thought they were heading into the entrepreneurial world of independent contractors. Instead, they say, they got the headaches and worries of a small-business owner without the control

timing of their deliveries to the maintenance schedule of their trucks—a degree of control that should make them employees, not independent agents.

FedEx has “treated their delivery drivers as independent contractors despite the fact that they are employees under a multitude of legal tests,” says Shannon Liss-Riordan, a Boston attorney who filed a class-action suit in federal court in May on behalf of Azzato and the 17,000 FedEx Ground drivers in the US and Canada.

“They tell you when the truck needs painting, they tell you where the decals go, they tell you when to wash it,” says Azzato, one of four current or former drivers who are acting as plaintiffs in the suit. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, a state court in California ruled last year that FedEx Ground drivers there were, in fact, employees, and state officials have made similar determinations in Montana and New Jersey.

FedEx Ground spokesman David Westrick insists that the drivers “are not employees” and have “independence to serve their customers in the manner and means that they choose.” He says FedEx plans to appeal the California ruling and will vigorously defend its position in the federal suit

Microsoft ‘permatemps’ argued in court that they had been improperly denied benefits.

and freedom that is supposed to be part of the bargain.

After moving from Virginia to Cape Cod three years ago, Randy Azzato donned the uniform of a FedEx delivery driver and steered a truck bearing the company’s familiar logo along a route through the towns of Middleborough, Carver, and West Bridgewater. But he was not a FedEx employee. For \$30,000, Azzato purchased the truck and the right to handle package deliveries in southeastern Massachusetts as an independent contractor for FedEx Ground, the parcel post unit of the giant express delivery company. Azzato and other FedEx Ground drivers are now contending that the company directs everything from the precise

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filed in Boston.

Meanwhile, Liss-Riordan, an employment law specialist who has zeroed in on the worker classification issue, has sent notice to a Florida-based company that sells office-cleaning accounts to janitorial workers that she intends to file a similar suit on behalf of 13 of its “franchisees.” For franchise fees ranging from \$6,000 to \$32,000, Coverall Cleaning Concepts promises to set up janitors with accounts that will generate a specified monthly income, depending on the franchise fee paid.

Sandra Vaz Lisboa, a Brazilian immigrant who lives in Everett, was supposed to get accounts grossing \$2,000 a month, but she says the most she ever earned in any month was \$1,230. Liss-Riordan says her clients allege the company took away accounts from workers for no reason, often shortly after they had finished paying their franchise fees, which Coverall offers financing for. In one case, Liss-Riordan says, the company passed the same account, for the cleaning of two medical clinics, through three different workers, collecting their franchise fees but then declaring the work done by each of them to be unsatisfactory and subsequently taking away the account.

Jacqueline Vlaming, vice president and general counsel of Coverall, says the company does not shortchange franchisees on accounts or take away jobs without cause. “You only lose an account if you do poor service,” says Vlaming, who says such a move is made only if a customer lodges a complaint. “We don’t take accounts away for the fun of it, and we do not churn accounts.” Lisboa, who Vlaming says was offered but refused accounts “well in excess of her package,” is “a very articulate woman. She’s also a very unreasonable woman.”

HIRING WITHOUT RISK

For contractors with skills to offer, like software engineer Rick Hill, banking consultant Lyn Murphy, or Hidden-Tech networker Amy Zuckerman, work untethered from a standard job offers rewards along with risks. There are risks as well for those firms who hire them, since contract workers owe their putative employers nothing, including (perhaps especially) loyalty.

Mark DiSalvo, CEO of Semaphore, a Methuen-based venture capital and management consulting firm, says that businesses must weigh the advantages of hiring a contractor for a discrete period of time against the risk that they could suddenly make their “high intellectual capacity and skill available to other people,” including business competitors.

But for companies hiring temporary workers at the bottom end of the skill ladder, the equation is very different. “There’s no risk,” says DiSalvo.

As Lauren Dragon well knows. After earning \$13 to \$14 a hour as a union worker at Lucent, where she received company-paid health coverage, vacation, and sick days, she does

the same work for \$10.45 an hour at Celestica, with no benefits or job security.

"I haven't had medical insurance since Lucent," says Dragon, who has let a knee injury she suffered in February go untreated. "I probably should have gone to the doctor and probably should have surgery."

The job at Celestica was better than nothing, however—that is, until the company announced this spring that it was

10,000 (see "Out of Order," *CW*, Winter, '02), has watched the brutal efficiencies of a globalized labor market wreak havoc on families in the Merrimack Valley. "The change isn't good for anybody, unless you're the CEO," says Nilsson (though Lucent itself has not fared so well). For companies like Celestica, using a temp firm to staff the production line means "you don't have to absorb all the so-called headaches that permanent employees bring with them—like benefits, health care, vacation, sick time."

It's much the same story for workers at the industrial park on the site of the former Fort Devens military base in Ayer who spend their days packaging Gillette razors and other personal care products. The largely Hispanic workforce doesn't toil directly for Gillette, but rather for two packaging firms, South Carolina-based Sonoco and New Jersey-based Markson Rosenthal, which operate on the site. And, like Lauren Dragon and other workers at Celestica, many at Devens don't actually work for Sonoco or Markson Rosenthal, but are hired by temp firms.

Gillette's "just-in-time" fulfillment system for shipping products to retailers, which it calls "postponement packaging," earned the company a Supplier of the Year award in 2002 from Wal-Mart, which is famous for the efficiency demands it puts on suppliers. But all that efficiency means that working as a packager of Gillette razors is not nearly as smooth as using them.

"[It] enables [Gillette] to only pay for employees for the demand there is for that week," says Loren McArthur, an organizer with the Merrimack Valley Project, a community organization leading a

campaign for better conditions, including more permanent positions with benefits, for workers in the Gillette supply chain. "Some of the folks don't know...if they're going to work the next day," he says. "That's not flexibility for the worker, that's flexibility for the company."

NEW NEW DEAL?

Whether for good or ill, employment relations have changed—at the margins, perhaps, but working toward the middle. If those on the front line of the free agent economy—some enjoying life there, others not—have found themselves without a safety net, the rest of us are not far behind.

"We've got to update our institutions to account for this new reality," says MIT economist Thomas Kochan. For decades, we relied on employers to provide a range of benefits that help make up the social safety net. "Today we've



Union rep Mark Erlich: Many construction workers are misclassified as independent.

closing the Salem facility because of cost pressures from overseas manufacturing. (At that time, Dragon was told her last day would be September 30, but then one Friday in June she was told, with no warning, that it was her last day.)

"It just seems like I'm always looking for work," she says. "I really don't see how I'm ever going to find a job with medical benefits and anything like that. The days like that are gone."

That she has little leverage in today's "spot auction" for labor, as Robert Reich describes it, has become clear to Dragon, even if it pains her to say so. "They can get anybody off the street to come in and do what I do," she says. "I don't like to think of it that way, because I try to do a good job."

Gary Nilsson, president of the Communications Workers of America Local 1365, which today represents less than 200 workers at the Lucent plant that once employed more than

said, 'Well, the employer may not necessarily have to do this.' But we haven't substituted any other institutions."

That void is what Sara Horowitz is hoping to fill. Ten years ago, the Brooklyn-born lawyer founded Working Today, a New York-based organization promoting the interests of independent workers. Horowitz comes from a long line of labor union leaders—her grandfather was a vice president in the garment workers' unions, her father a labor lawyer—and she worked as a labor lawyer and organizer for the Service Employees International Union. But as she saw more and more people working without formal ties to large employers, Horowitz recognized a need to think differently about the challenges facing less job-bound workers.

"I really wanted to figure out what would be the next form of unionism beyond craft and industrial models," says Horowitz. "Just as the nature of employment changed, from craft to industrial to computer-based, workforce organizations have to change."

Unlike some members of the union movement, she's not trying to hold back the tide of change in the structure of work; she's trying to recreate the safety net to take account of that change. Horowitz wants to force onto the public

agenda a wholesale reexamination of how to offer protections to workers while allowing for the flexibility and nimble movement that global competition demands of business—and that some workers are embracing.

Working Today has helped to develop health insurance for independent workers. About 6,500 New Yorkers are now covered through health plans offered through the organi-

'Health insurance makes no sense. That private employees deliver it—it's ludicrous.'

zation, with single people able to obtain coverage for less than \$200 per month—a benefit that seems to loom above everything else in the minds of independent workers.

"It's huge," says Lyn Murphy, the bank training manager who started her own consulting business in 2001. She says many people—including herself—are able to work independently only because they have coverage through the health plan of a spouse with employment-based insurance.

Hidden-Tech founder Amy Zuckerman says the \$400 per

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month she pays in health insurance premiums is part of why she's tightening her belt and trading her Amherst house for a condo. "Just to carry me is \$5,000 a year. That takes a toll," she says.

"Welcome to middle-class poverty," says Horowitz, reprising the line used by her group in New York City subway ads designed to call attention to the plight of professionals working outside the structure of standard employment. "So many people, if formally educated, feel they are middle class, but their economic life isn't," says Horowitz. "Health insurance makes no sense. That private employers deliver it—it's ludicrous. The way we set up pensions is crazy, that you can't lump people together for pensions unless [through] an employer."

There is "no vision of how to have a competitive economy that protects its workers from the unilateral restructuring that management claims is necessary. I think that's the dilemma," says Cappelli, the University of Pennsylvania economist.

For a time in the late 1990s, says carpenters' union official Erlich, people saw the trend toward contract work as an "opportunity to write their own ticket, drink Starbucks in their bathrobe" while working from home. "You didn't worry about benefits because you were going to make so much money." With an economy that has soured, health care costs that have soared, and companies offloading more and more economic risk onto workers, "the chickens have come to roost," says Erlich.

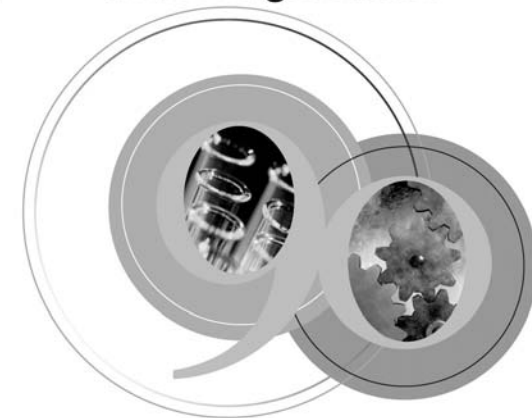
Take the *Business Week* headline of May 16: SAFETY NET NATION: WHY SO MANY AMERICANS AREN'T BUYING INTO BUSH'S OWNERSHIP SOCIETY. So much for the go-it-alone ethos driving the policy mill in Washington.

The tension underneath the debate over our economic angst, says Reich, is between the flexible workforce that has driven the productivity advances of recent years and the economic backstop that would provide assurance to workers and their families. "In the trade-off between dynamism and security, we still opt for dynamism more than, say, Europe or Japan," Reich says of Americans. "But we want more security than we have now."

Nationally, neither the Republicans nor the Democrats seem to have it right, says Horowitz. She bemoans the Democratic inclination to reach back to the traditional structure of work-based benefits that is increasingly a poor fit for the economy—and the workers—of today. Meanwhile, she thinks the Republicans have it right in embracing a more portable, individual-based system of health care and retirement provision, but wrong in their reluctance to provide reasonable safeguards for all. For Horowitz, the more things change, the more there will be a need for a new kind of safety-net structure—though what it will be is still unclear.

"The New Deal didn't come out of a vacuum," she says, "and neither will this." ■


A Proud Past and A Bright Future

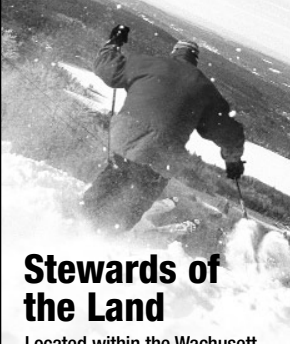



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Approaching REENTRY

Crime expert Jeremy Travis—researcher, practitioner, now college president—is responsible for drawing national attention to the return of inmates to the community in record numbers. Can a focus on reintegration reduce the chances they will return to a life of crime?

As candidate for governor in 1990, Bill Weld put it in the most stark terms—pledging to “reacquaint felons with the joys of busting rocks”—but the general sentiment was widely shared here and across the country: Rampant urban crime in the 1980s and early ’90s called for an approach to criminal justice that was more swift and certain than traditional indeterminate sentences with early (sometimes very early, given generous “good conduct” credits) release on parole. In Massachusetts, that sentiment led to mandatory-minimum drug sentences and 1993’s “truth in sentencing” law, which did away with most sentence reductions and narrowed parole eligibility periods. For most of the ’90s, release on parole was granted more parsimoniously than before, especially for state prison inmates. Before long (as documented by Harvard researcher Anne Morrison Piehl, in the 2002 MassINC report *From Cell to Street*), a growing proportion of inmates began to turn down a chance for parole, prefer-

ring to wrap up their sentences behind bars and avoid supervision after release. Crime rates fell (though the reasons for that fall remain subject to dispute), but prison populations swelled, here and nationally, to unprecedented levels.

It was less widely recognized that, over time, more people sent to prison would mean more people coming out—by the late ’90s, more than 20,000 per year from state prisons and county houses of correction in Massachusetts alone. But the ex-offenders on the way out are starting to get some attention, in large part thanks to Jeremy Travis. His new book, *But They All Come Back: Facing the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry*, is the capstone of more than five years of work—academic and programmatic—on the subject, at the National Institute of Justice and at the Urban Institute’s Justice Policy Center.

Travis, who turns 57 shortly after this issue appears, is a Yale- and New York University-educated lawyer who has



worked at many levels of the criminal justice system in his long professional career in New York City and Washington, DC. Starting out as a legal-services assistant, Travis promoted bail reform and victim/witness assistance at the Vera Institute of Justice, directed the New York City Criminal Justice Agency (a research-and-development shop for criminal justice programs), and was a consultant to the New York City Board of Correction. After he received his law degree, Travis clerked for then-US Appeals Court Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg and served as legal counsel to four different New York City police commissioners, from Benjamin Ward to Bill Bratton. Along the way, he was an advisor to Mayor Ed Koch and chief counsel to a US House of Representatives criminal justice subcommittee.

From 1994 to 2000, Travis was director of the National Institute of Justice, the research arm of the US Department of Justice. It was toward the end of his tenure that he directed

his attention to what happens at the end of a prison sentence. He carried that focus with him to the Urban Institute, where, as a senior fellow, he designed the first multi-state, longitudinal study of prisoner reentry. He also convened a series of “reentry roundtables,” which involved nationally prominent researchers, practitioners, and ex-offenders in rethinking the return of former prisoners to society.

Then, a year ago, Travis was named president of John Jay College of Criminal Justice, a division of City University of New York now 40 years old. A liberal arts college with an enrollment of 12,000 undergraduates and 2,000 graduate students, John Jay is one of the leading institutions of teaching and research in public safety—and a perfect perch for Jeremy Travis.

“I have always straddled the boundary between research and practice with a focus on criminal justice policy, particularly trying to understand why things work the way they

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILLIAM MOREE

do and how to make things better,” says Travis by phone from his campus office on Manhattan’s West Side. At John Jay, what Travis is trying to make better is the college’s research capacity and its forensic science offerings, the former by bringing in new scholars from throughout the country—including David Kennedy, one of the architects of Boston’s renowned anti-crime program in the 1990s (see “Scene of the Crime,” *CW*, Winter ’03), whom he lured away from Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government—and the latter by developing the country’s first doctoral program in the field. In addition, says Travis, “we’re developing what will be a very robust international studies program to recognize that, particularly in the world after 9/11, but certainly before then as well, any conversation about crime must recognize its transnational nature.”

But the focus of our conversation is the political, social, and public safety challenge of ex-offenders returning home. What follows is an edited transcript of our discussion.

—ROBERT KEOUGH

CommonWealth: Let’s talk about reentry.

Travis: Yes, my favorite topic.

CommonWealth: It’s the new buzzword in criminal justice circles, the thing that people are talking about and thinking about. It seems to me that you are as responsible as anyone for making that the case. Tell me how prisoner reentry got on your radar screen, and more important, how it has become a focus of a system that, since the 1980s, has been otherwise focused on putting criminals away.

Travis: Well, it started with a simple question. In a meeting in 1999, [US Attorney General] Janet Reno asked me and another colleague what we were doing about all the people coming out of prison. I didn’t have an adequate answer. She asked me to get a better answer in two weeks. It took me five years.

CommonWealth: A little trouble with deadlines, huh?

Travis: That’s right. I became fascinated with the reentry phenomenon and the policy implications of this focus on people coming out of prison. When we started working on... the attorney general’s question, the first thing we realized was that the number of people coming out of prison was just shocking. At the time, it was 585,000; now it’s 630,000 a year coming out of state and federal prison—1,700 people a day. This number was four times greater than the number of people who had come out of prison 20 years earlier. The number caught all of us—I can’t say by surprise, because we shouldn’t have been surprised—but it sort of hit us over the head. What we realized then and what the nation,

to some extent, is realizing now is that, while we were debating sentencing policy—how tough should we be, should we have mandatory minimums, “three strikes,” and the like—we were forgetting what I call the iron law of imprisonment, which is that everybody we put into prison comes back. Except for those who die of natural causes or by execution, they all come back, hence the title of the book.



So, as a policy proposition, the national conversation around prisoner reentry starts with the realization of the inevitable return home of those we send to prison. That very pragmatic focus means that we can set aside some of the ideological debates that have divided us and focus on a bottom-line concern, which is: How do we improve outcomes for people coming back so that they are more likely to be reintegrated and less likely to be rearrested?

CommonWealth: As you say, reentry is now coming to the forefront after almost a generation of argument over the purposes and methods of criminal punishment. But I take it from your book that the focus on reentry is new now, but it hasn’t always been ignored. In fact, the question of release and what happens to people on the way out used to be a much more central part of the criminal justice process.

Travis: Much more prominent. We basically lost our focus on a very important attribute of imprisonment, which is the

return home. For a period in our nation's history, for 50 years, there was a national consensus that we should follow a sentencing system called indeterminate sentencing. Although one can debate it—and we've had many debates about the wisdom of indeterminate sentencing—at its core it recognized the inevitability of reentry by focusing on preparation for release, on rehabilitation (which is also coming back into vogue these days), on supervision and reintegration on the outside. And on creating incentives for prisoners to take the courses and the programs and do the mental and emotional work needed to get ready for returning home. The indeterminate sentencing model provided a framework for thinking about and preparing for the inevitable return home. The policy question, then, that we need to face is whether, in this cacophony of sentencing policy where there's no national consensus, we can resurrect a policy focus on the reality of reentry so that the 630,000 people [a year] coming out now, many more than ever before, are more likely to succeed on the outside.

CommonWealth: Now in the simplest of terms, what's wrong with the reentry process we've got now? On the face of it, the shift toward more determinate sentencing makes for a simpler notion of what it means to reenter society from prison. It means, "You do your time, then you're released." That's the bargain.

Travis: Yes, but released in what shape? Indeterminate sentencing created an incentive for people to prepare for their release by allowing them to have the option of a reduction of their sentence if they could show that they had made progress while they were in prison and they had housing and a job ready for them when they get out. The parole decision is about lots of things, and I don't agree with all the things that have been loaded on to the parole decision, but one of the attributes, a baby that we've thrown out with the bath-

cause they declined to go before parole boards. What an interesting sentencing policy. To me, it's beyond ironic, it is madness, that we allow people to determine themselves whether they are supervised when they get out.

Finally, our system allows people to be in solitary confinement on a Monday and released without supervision on a Tuesday. When it comes to the reality of reentry, we don't have a systematic approach. In the book, I argue for universal supervision. Everybody should be supervised when they get out. And I know there's a debate within Massachusetts on that right now.

CommonWealth: A bizarre thing, indeed. That report by Anne Piehl, and its call for mandatory post-release supervision, have some legs within the political establishment here. The proposal got stalled because it would be a costly thing to supervise every released inmate—though not everyone admits it would be costly—and we've had several years of budget crisis that put it off the table. But there is considerable interest in the administration, especially Lt. Gov. Kerry Healey, and the Legislature for creating a system of mandatory post-release supervision. Would this proposal put Massachusetts in the right direction on the reentry issue?

Travis: Yes, with two caveats. I always have two caveats when I spin out the argument for mandatory supervision. One is that there should be incentives created for parolees to reduce their period of supervision. If somebody's doing well, we don't need them on supervision for three years, five years, whatever. There needs to be a way, in legislation, for that part of the sentence to be shortened. Second, there has to be a rethinking of the conditions of supervision and particularly the approach to revocation of someone's parole—that is, sending them back. A little segue here: We've created, nationally, a system of what I've termed back-end sentencing that has grown enormously over 20 years. We now send as

'It is madness [to] allow people to determine themselves whether they are supervised when they get out.'

water, is that it created incentives for prisoners themselves to get ready, and to get their external networks of support ready for their release. Now, when somebody gets released automatically, there's no incentive.

Secondly, we have allowed—and this is both with indeterminate sentencing and determinate sentencing—for the possibility of people being released with no supervision. This is particularly true in Massachusetts. I hope you noted, I cite—I think it's in a footnote somewhere—Anne Piehl's study [*From Cell to Street*] that showed the increase in the number of people serving their entire sentence in prison be-

many people to prison through the back door, over 200,000 each year, as we sent to prison through the front door 20 years ago. It doesn't make sense to supervise lots of people very stringently and enforce things very rigidly with the sanction of a return to prison because—guess what?—*they* all come back, too. It doesn't make sense that for every dirty drug test, you go back to prison, unless you're tying that sanction, as we do in drug courts, to some larger program of trying to get people to modify their behavior. These two caveats to universal supervision are very important so that we just don't extend this reach of supervision mindlessly and think

we've done a good thing. I don't know if you've seen this recent report from the Urban Institute [*Does Parole Work? Analyzing the Impact of Postprison Supervision on Rearrest Outcomes*] that, using national data, compares people under supervision to people not under supervision and finds basically that supervision doesn't reduce crime. This is a stunning finding. I'm not surprised by it, but this is the first study that's really looked at it systematically. So we have to rethink supervision in order for supervision to make sense.

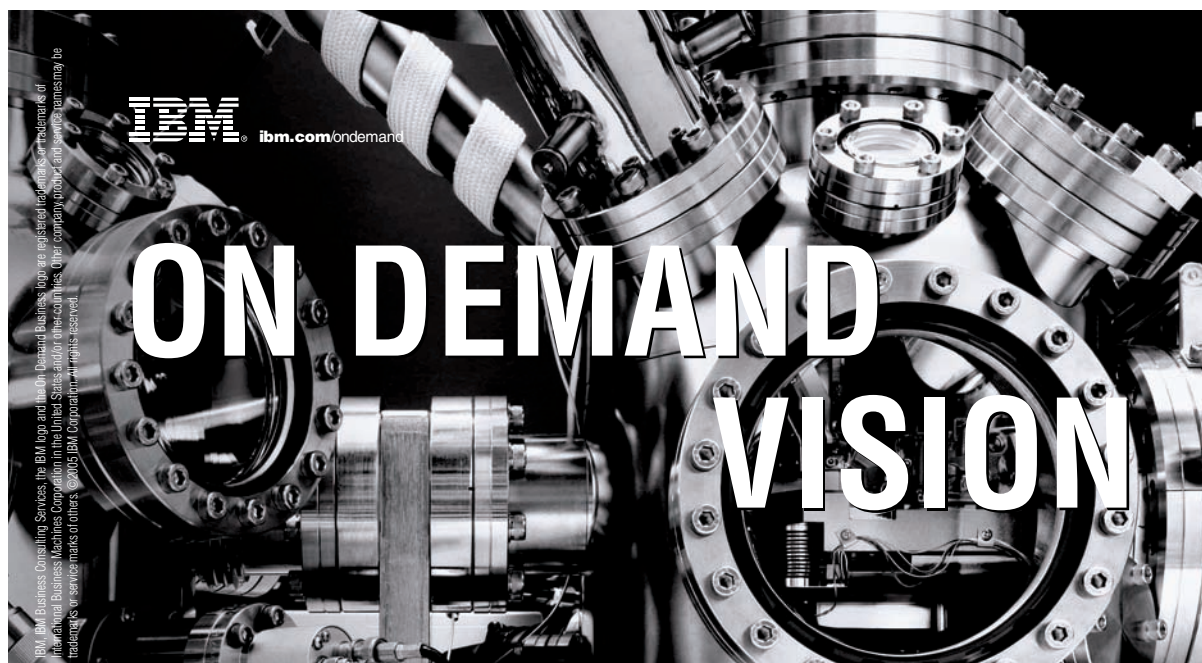
CommonWealth: That seems to me a fairly troubling point. You favor universal supervision, but you note that there is no evidence that supervision, at least by itself, is effective in reducing the return to criminal behavior. What would make supervision more effective?

Travis: Well, I have borrowed a phrase from the welfare reform movement and argued that it's time to end parole as we know it. It's time for us to just go back to basics and ask: What are the outcomes we want, how are we going to get them, and how do we know whether we've gotten them? The first outcome we want is a public safety outcome. We want to see reductions in criminal behavior. In order to achieve that outcome, we have to significantly reorganize existing

resources. I'm not talking here about new resources necessarily. We have to reorganize existing resources so that we apply those resources at the time of greatest risk of failure. The greatest risk of failure is in the first weeks and months after somebody gets out of prison. Having a supervision system that applies resources basically flatly across the time of supervision—office visits and whatever—does not align resources to risk.

CommonWealth: Right.

Travis: If you have high rates of failure in the first weeks and months after getting out of prison, that's where the public should want the resources devoted to reduce those rates of failure. And resources devoted then and there, at that point in the process, will be very different from traditional supervision. There will be resources needed to keep people sober, to keep people off the streets—we have high rates of homelessness among released prisoners—to make sure that those who are mentally ill get their medication, and to work to resolve family conflicts so people don't get kicked out of their homes because Mom doesn't want the son back after prison. We need to rethink both when we apply resources—and the answer there is they should be when the



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that sort of supervision. In most states, including Massachusetts, we have parallel agencies doing that, the probation department and the state parole board.

Travis: Here's a crazy idea. In the same family, you can have an older brother supervised by parole, a younger brother supervised by juvenile probation, and a sister who is involved in some other sort of criminal justice supervision, like pre-trial release, all with different legal obligations and reporting to different supervision agencies. So the idea I put forward is to create a community justice corporation that would be responsible for justice-related supervision of all sorts within a community....It's inefficient to have people on the same block reporting to different agencies when the functions are basically the same. Why not create an entity, what I called a [justice] intermediary, that does this work on behalf of the justice system and is not constrained by these arbitrary legal definitions?

CommonWealth: Now, backing up in the criminal-justice pipeline for a minute, you make the point—and I think this

'We need to reconnect people to the world of work, to family, to civic institutions, to churches.'

risk is greatest—and what resources are applied in order to reduce the risk. So the first outcome we want is a public safety outcome. For that we need a fundamental rethinking of the nature of supervision and support. And we have to put the resources where the risk is highest.

The second outcome we want is reintegration. We want people to be reconnected to the institutions of our society that are likely to help them become productive citizens. We need to reconnect people to the world of work, to family, to civic institutions, to churches—and that's not seen as a traditional imperative during the reentry process.

I argue in the book that both of these functions, the risk reduction and the reintegration enhancement functions, are best performed at the community level with community resources. We need to devolve supervision to the local level and create a different way of managing these resources with a community organization, what I call a justice intermediary, that manages the questions of where's the job, what's going on with the family, what do we know about risks of relapse to drug addiction, and how do we help individuals go on the right track and stay away from people and places of risk. Asking someone to come to a downtown office for a meeting with their parole officer doesn't do that.

CommonWealth: You also argue that, if you do supervision locally, you shouldn't have two different agencies providing

is one point the correctional establishment is coming to understand—that reentry doesn't begin the moment a prisoner leaves the institution. Rather, it needs to be planned for, prepared for, really for the entire time that someone is incarcerated. That adjustment would seem to be pretty difficult for an institution that, certainly for the last 20 years, has taken as its overriding mission one of security, of providing public safety on the shortest-term basis possible, by simply keeping an offender off the street. How do you reorient an establishment like this to take a different view of what its mission is?

Travis: This is one of the most exciting developments in the field, the profound shift in corrections philosophy that we're seeing today. We have correctional leaders who are redefining the mission of their agencies as being the successful reentry of the people held in their institutions. This is a profound change. It is a recognition of a larger social obligation of this profession that we have entrusted a lot of responsibility to—an obligation, basically, to the people on the outside to assure them that the people on the inside return home to become productive citizens. It is analogous to the shift that we saw in policing 15 years ago, when police departments and police leaders began to articulate a different obligation to the community, which is to work with the community to prevent crime, not just respond to crime when it happens.

The next impetus for change we're now starting to see is the governors who are asking their corrections agencies to embrace the larger mission of successful reentry. So we have, in California, Gov. [Arnold] Schwarzenegger, who is—how ironic—one of the leading prison reform advocates in the country, talking about the responsibility of his Department of Corrections for successful reentry. They've even renamed the department as the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. We have Gov. [Robert] Ehrlich in Maryland—another Republican, which is interesting—who is transforming that corrections department to take on the reentry mission. Just as mayors started to hire police chiefs who were committed to the philosophy of community policing because it was good for their communities, so, too, governors are now starting to ask their corrections directors to recognize their larger responsibility for successful reentry. This will take another decade, but I think this will be an irreversible change.

CommonWealth: Your book is a product of more than five years of work at the National Institute of Justice, and at the Urban Institute. During that time you were both leading research projects and also promoting experimentation in this field. From that five years of experience, what inklings do you have

about what works and what doesn't?

Travis: I think it's understandable, but premature, to ask what works on reentry.... We have a number of programs, and individual programs can be evaluated on their effectiveness, but what the field is ready for now are some demonstration projects to test fundamentally new ways of approaching the reentry process. If you look around the country, you can see the pieces of what those demonstration projects might look like. For example, in Baltimore, there's an initiative called the Reentry Partnership, which is a community-based initiative, where a coalition of community organizations, working with the Maryland Corrections Department, goes into prison to speak with every prisoner returning to their community to talk about the support the community will provide for successful reentry and the expectations the community has for the returning prisoner. They are providing transitional housing for everybody coming out of prison. They are working to make sure that health care connections have been established before release. They are meeting with family members to ensure that the returning prisoner will be welcome at home. They are creating support networks of former prisoners to help newly released individuals make a safe transition. This is all now

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sponsored by the Department of Correction. The police and the parole officer have a seat at this table, but they are decidedly behind-the-scenes partners, with the community taking the lead. That's a very, very interesting model because it recognizes the importance of these community connections and it's not just about legal supervision.

There's another model that I talk about a lot in the book, which is the reentry court. Reentry courts, like drug courts, provide a forum for the application of both incentives and sanctions for people coming out of prison. The judge sitting in a reentry court can marshal resources and conduct a conversation with a former prisoner quite different from what a parole officer can do. A judge in a reentry court can

area of employment. This is an area that ex-offenders are particularly ill-equipped to navigate on their own, and it's also an area where they're particularly subject to what you call "invisible" or "collateral" punishment. Prisoners, as a group, are low skilled, they're poorly educated, they have spotty work records, and a criminal record to boot. Meanwhile, we're expanding access to those criminal records, and we're expanding the number of jobs for which record checks are mandatory (see "Job (dis)qualifications," *CW*, Fall '03). The blue-collar manufacturing jobs that might be easiest for ex-offenders to slip into are declining, while the jobs that are growing are in health care, financial services, and retail, where employers and the public could have legitimate concerns

'The national challenge is, to me, very similar to the challenge that we faced on welfare reform.'

say, "If you're failing to meet an important obligation, then we'll increase the level of supervision or maybe even put you in jail for a weekend." The idea of a more open process with a goal of successful reintegration, managed by judges, with the high respect that they're accorded by our communities, is another very interesting model. In the book, I put all of these together to say, imagine a world in which we have a true community-level system of devolved supervision, like we see in Baltimore, and a corrections agency that is committed to reentry from the first day of admission into prison, like we see in Ohio, and a reentry court where the back end of the process is managed in a very different way and the goal is successful reintegration. Then you start to see the pieces of a very different jurisprudence of reintegration.

CommonWealth: Is this reentry court up and running anywhere?

Travis: Yes, my favorite is in Ohio, in Richland County. But there are maybe a couple dozen of them around the country. Ohio is the state that is thinking about them most systematically, but there are some in Nevada, there's one in New York. I don't know of any in Massachusetts.

CommonWealth: No, I'm not aware of any either.

Travis: The last chapter of the book is on jurisprudence of integration, directed to the Legislature, because this is not a program, this is a structural change in who is responsible for the reentry process. I'm proposing a pretty ambitious rethinking of things.

CommonWealth: Yes, absolutely. One area of challenge that, it seems to me, is particularly discouraging, frankly, is the

about known lawbreakers being put to work there. What do you do with that constellation of difficulties?

Travis: Yes, this is very tough. The challenge here is to take a population that shows very low skill levels, that is further disadvantaged by this criminal-justice involvement, and that finds it very difficult to connect to jobs when they come out of prison, and make an affirmative program of reconnecting prisoners to work. This is important for two reasons: One, to be connected to work is associated with lower levels of crime. But secondly, we want people to be productive citizens and taxpayers and provide for their families. The research finding that is most discouraging here is that people who have been imprisoned have a 10 percent to 30 percent diminution of earnings over their lifetimes....Our high rates of incarceration in a small number of communities have had the effect of depressing the earning power of the men—it's mostly men—in those communities. This should be for the country, particularly for urban America, a real cause for alarm. I propose we do a number of things. First, prepare people better while they're in prison, and we don't do that well. But more importantly, I think, is to find opportunities for individuals to start work once they come out. First preference should be given to private sector work, but if private sector work is not available, [we should] create in the public sector a program of short-term or transitional employment. The model... is one here in New York City called the Center for Employment Opportunities. Basically, it provides jobs for the prison returnee population on a contract basis. They virtually pay for themselves doing government service or community service work. [The program] recognizes that this population is in a transitional state, and they'll need counseling and they'll need other things at the same time.

The national challenge is, to me, very similar to the chal-

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lenge that we faced on welfare reform. Here we have, as we did with welfare, a large population of people who are outside of the labor market, whose skills are not being used for their families or, in a macro sense, for the national economy, where the government and the private sector should work together to provide the transitional supports to bring this segment of our population back into the labor market. It's going to take some creativity, but I think the welfare reform model offers lots of useful lessons. The public in general needs to be persuaded of the importance of this, as has happened with welfare reform, but long term it's going to be really, really beneficial, both to the individuals and to the economies of these communities and to the national economy.

CommonWealth: To wrap up, let's take a step back philosophically. You say that, despite the shift toward more punitive philosophies of criminal justice over the last generation, you see it possible to superimpose a goal of promoting reintegration on all the existing sentencing frameworks that we've got cobbled together in this country now.

Travis: Right.

CommonWealth: How is that possible? How do you, with the varying interests and goals that are involved in a criminal justice system, put together a jurisprudence of reintegration, as you call it, that can be broadly embraced?

Travis: I think there are examples in our history, in crime policy and social policy generally, where we've been able to set aside ideological differences to find a common purpose. I mentioned welfare reform, community policing, the interest in crime prevention. There are a number of areas like these where we as a country have focused on very pragmatic, bottom-line, non-ideological outcomes that would benefit our society. So my hope is the interest in reentry will translate into a legislative agenda that will promote some of these fundamental reforms, that we will have tested these ideas in communities around the country, so that legislatures will be able to have confidence that they're going in the right direction. And that we can, over the next several years, see some reductions in the national recidivism rates and promote some more successful outcomes, such as increased employment, increased family reunification, reductions in homelessness, and reductions in mental illness and drug addiction among a population where all of those indicators are now very high. We're at the point now where, as you said at the outset of our conversation, reentry is the buzzword. That means something, in terms of there being a lot of ferment around the country. Over the next several years that ferment should translate into a legislative reform agenda that will be based on some real experiences in real communities about how to do things fundamentally differently. ■

BEST-laid plans

Training initiative was unrealistic about employers and employees alike

BY ERIN FLYNN

The Commonwealth has an impending workforce crisis on its hands, but it's one that's paradoxical. As a percentage of population, Massachusetts has more college-educated residents than any other state in the country. At the same time, with a slow-growing workforce fueled largely by foreign immigrants, a larger and larger share of our adult population is unprepared to perform successfully in the state's increasingly knowledge-based economy. The Massachusetts economy is propelled by industries that place a premium on high skills and credentials—information technology, biotechnology, higher education, and health care. To move beyond entry-level, low-wage jobs in these industries, employees typically need higher education leading to certification and/or formal degrees.

In 2001, MassINC's *New Skills for a New Economy* highlighted the state's skills gap, documenting that fully one-third of current workers (1.1 million) had deficiencies in basic math, reading, writing, language, and analytic skills. *New Skills* put these individuals into three categories: immigrants with poor English language skills, high school dropouts, and high school graduates functioning at low levels in the labor force. The report underscored the need for innovative approaches to workforce development in order to maintain the state's competitive edge and provide meaningful economic opportunities for those at the margins of the Massachusetts economy.

This message was all the more powerful because *New Skills* was released at a time when the state's economy was booming and the labor market was extremely tight. Acting Gov. Jane Swift formed a multi-agency task force to reform adult education and worker training, which made its recommendations in July 2001. One result was the Building Essential Skills through Training Initiative (BEST)—a new, employer-driven workforce training program designed to increase opportunity for entry-level workers and meet employer demand for skilled labor at the same time.

Since 2001, the economy has taken a turn for the worse and labor markets have slackened, decreasing our sense of urgency regarding skills upgrading. But the issues that drove the labor shortages of the late 1990s have not gone away and will undoubtedly resurface. There are still far

too many people in our state who lack the basic skills required to enter post-secondary education, let alone obtain industry-recognized credentials. A report issued recently by the Massachusetts Family Economic Self Sufficiency project found that 40 percent of Massachusetts adults have poor literacy skills and that 50 percent of community college students require remedial education in order to qualify for college courses. These numbers all but ensure that Massachusetts companies will once again be challenged to fill skilled jobs with the workers available.

In a continuing effort to address the state's skills gap, a coalition of advocacy and public policy organizations

**Because of low skill levels,
real progress can take years.**

introduced the Workforce Solutions Act of 2005 to the Massachusetts Legislature earlier this year. The bill would direct approximately \$40 million in new funding to employer- and community-based workforce development activities that increase the competitiveness of Massachusetts companies and improve worker skills and productivity. The bulk of this funding would support multi-year, employer-led initiatives in various economic sectors.

This would be a step in the right direction. But lessons from the BEST Initiative—a two-year demonstration program that concluded in spring of 2004—suggest that employer will and capacity to lead workforce initiatives are woefully undeveloped. In addition, the low skill levels of many adult workers mean that the payoff in terms of career advancement can take years to realize. Based on a two-year evaluation of BEST by FutureWorks, under contract to Commonwealth Corp., it appears that future workforce development initiatives will need to take a more realistic approach to employers and employees alike.

SKILLS MISMATCH

BEST was designed by a partnership of Massachusetts state agencies and managed by the Commonwealth Corp., a quasi-public agency responsible for rolling out and evaluating workforce development initiatives and partnerships.

In the parlance of the field, BEST was intended to serve “dual customers”—i.e., employees *and* employers. On the employee side, BEST sought to provide relevant training and develop industry-specific career plans that would enable entry-level workers to navigate their way up internal job ladders. On the employer side, BEST was designed to be closely aligned with real labor market demand. In an effort to be industry-driven, the initiative included employers in the earliest stages of program design. BEST funds were reserved for newly formed Regional Industry Teams (RITs) representing critical Massachusetts industries through public-private partnerships of employers, education and training providers, workforce investment boards, and (where applicable) unions. The idea was that employers would provide detailed information on skill shortages and internal labor markets to enable community-based organizations, community colleges, and workforce investment boards to develop and deliver appropriate education and training to workers.

Out of the 26 proposals from across the state submitted to Commonwealth Corp., six RITs were selected for funding (see below). Four RITs were managed by workforce investment boards, the other two by a community development corporation and an industry association, respectively. Grants ranged from \$350,000 to \$700,000.

Through the six RITs, BEST delivered some form of training to more than 2,600 individuals. Lots of people gained confidence and upgraded skills, good curricula were developed, career pathways were charted, participating employers learned how the public workforce system operates, and workforce professionals deepened their knowledge of specific industries. But the impact of this training on employees and employers in terms of wages, career advancement, and productivity fell far short of expectations. Wage increases across the initiative were quite modest, and very few promotions were reported. In other words, at a fundamental level, BEST did little to alter how employers provide training to entry-level workers, nor did it transform the career trajectories of low-skill workers.

Why did BEST fall so short of expectations? One reason had to do with employers. RITs were supposed to be “industry-driven” but, truth be told, most RITs did not originate with employers. Instead, public and non-profit agencies designed programs and then secured employer participation. With some notable exceptions, participating employers exhibited limited understanding of and commitment to the program, and they devoted limited time and resources to implementation.

The other reason related to employees. Across the board, RITs overestimated the skill levels of entry-level workers and underestimated the obstacles to workers pursuing education and training. As a result, the goals established for wage gains and career advancement proved unrealistic. Since they had not yet mastered the basics, most workers participating in BEST did not engage in or complete the higher-level skills training that would make them eligible for promotions and/or significant wage increases.

Each problem—limited employer buy-in and lower than anticipated skill levels—was significant on its own, but the combination was a double whammy. For BEST to

Employers devoted little time to implementation.

gain deep employer support, it needed to solve real labor market problems. But due to the very low skill levels of participating employees, BEST was unable to validate its key hypothesis: that entry-level employees armed with sufficient education and training could move up the career ladder to become the kind of skilled workers employers found in short supply. As a result, most employers—and employees, for that matter—utilized BEST simply for short-term training and shunned the more complex and difficult task of career path development.

BEST CASE SCENARIO

What is to be learned from BEST? Let’s begin with the premises.

BEST was predicated on the idea that employers experiencing chronic labor and skills shortages could be enticed to participate in a long-term process that would solve their labor-supply problem. For the most part, however, this proved not to be the case.

Employer interest waned, in part, because the economy slowed. BEST was designed to address critical industry labor shortages in an overheated economy. But by the time the program was implemented, many participating firms

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| Southeast Massachusetts Manufacturing Consortium | Bristol Workforce Investment Board |
| Health Care Works | Metro Southwest Regional Employment Board |
| Boston Health Care and Research Institute | Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation |
| North East Hospital Initiative | Lower Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board |

had seen turnover rates decrease, and some had placed a freeze on hiring. One large biotechnology company pledged its support for BEST only to drop out shortly after the program began. The Boston Financial Services program struggled as its industry experienced a wave of mergers and acquisitions. Six participating banks became three when Citizens Bank acquired two of the smaller ones. In addition, Fleet Bank—the largest participating employer—was acquired by Bank of America toward the end of BEST. In the wake of this industry restructuring, employers were distracted, contributing less time and fewer resources to BEST than originally anticipated. One participating bank scaled back its training commitment dramatically, while others changed the focus of their involvement in BEST from career advancement to job retention.

Even apart from these changes in economic and institutional context, BEST suffered from a disconnect between company executives and the individuals responsible for day-to-day program implementation. Commitments from corporate executives didn't always translate to department managers and supervisors. This was a particular problem in the HealthCare Works program administered by the Metro Southwest Regional Employment Board, which secured support from top executives at three area hospi-

tals but failed to gain the support of line staff responsible for implementation. As a result, hospital staff consistently failed to show up at RIT meetings, forcing Metro Southwest staff to meet individually with employer partners at each hospital to discuss program goals and design.

In an interview for the evaluation, a clinical nurse at a participating hospital said, "Staff didn't understand the program. We spent months not knowing what our role was. [The program] was just pushed through by HR." At another hospital, the vice president of human resources expressed commitment, but the staff person responsible displayed "little understanding of the program and almost no commitment to it," according to an RIT partner. Often the tension came down to an issue of resources. Staff responsible for the training programs on site typically did not receive additional staff or budget but were expected to implement BEST on top of their regular duties.

Despite limited institutional commitment, employers reported that they found the training provided under BEST valuable. They said training improved job performance and increased self-confidence among workers. But the career-path concept did not take hold among employers. Some had a hard time visualizing their entry-level employees occupying higher positions within the organi-

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zation; others simply lacked the inclination or capacity to develop career path supports.

One food services manager clearly articulated his hospital's interest in the English-language courses offered through BEST. "We offer the courses as an employee benefit, not career enhancement," he said. "The classes are perceived as a benefit, due to split time. This helps us reduce turnover and contributes to a stable workforce, which has a long-term residual value for the hospital."

Even where BEST came close to living up to its industry-driven ideal, employer interest in developing career paths for their entry-level workers was weak. The Southeast Massachusetts Manufacturing Consortium enjoyed strong industry support, as evidenced by the active and enthusiastic participation of 10 employers, and it provided more training to more employees than the other five RITs combined. Employers also drove the program design, reflecting a real sense of urgency about the skills of entry-level manufacturing workers. But the education and training aspect of the program they designed was made up of discreet, short-term training, with the vast majority of participants receiving only four to eight hours of introductory computer training.

NOT READY FOR TAKEOFF

In terms of employees, BEST assumed that, with training and support, entry-level workers could begin to work their way up the job ladder at their place of employment, transforming their job from entry-level to career path while solving their employer's labor-supply problems. To that end, workers were eligible to participate in training with their supervisor's permission and, in most of the programs, could also receive career counseling and/or coaching to help establish career goals and corresponding educational and career pathways. Completion of training courses leading to certification would enable employees to advance to higher-level positions and earn higher wages.

But this theory did not take into account how far behind employees were starting out. BEST found itself putting more resources than anticipated into basic skills, and few employees completed courses that led to promotion. The Southeast Manufacturing Consortium, for instance, expected the bulk of training to be industry-specific—e.g., computerized machine process. Initial testing, however, revealed that a majority of entry-level manufacturing workers lacked basic familiarity with computers and required adult basic education before they could qualify for higher-level training. ABE, GED, and introductory computer courses swelled while enrollment in industry-specific courses was far lower than expected.

Boston Health Care got caught up in a similar dynamic. The program design called for a continuum of courses beginning with ABE/GED that would lead to pre-college

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courses and college instruction. But many employees were at fourth- and fifth-grade reading levels. Instead of offering college courses, the program had to focus on academic and skill preparation for certificate and degree programs.

Not only were most BEST participants ill-prepared educationally to start on a true career pathway, many were ill-prepared psychologically as well. The average age of trainees in BEST was 40. Shifting into “career” mode is a big and intimidating step for people who have not entered a classroom in more than 20 years. Service providers delivering career coaching and counseling through BEST reported that low self-esteem and self-confidence combined with family responsibilities held many entry-level workers back from pursuing career plans.

A number of RITs found that the greatest demand for training was in ESOL and basic skills, and several industry supervisors reported that employees enrolled in these classes not to advance their career but to improve their overall quality of life. This was particularly the case in the health care programs, where demand for ESOL was very high. As one supervisor put it, “Rosa is 55 years old. She doesn’t

Workers were ill-prepared for a career pathway.

want a career path. She’s taking ESOL classes so she can help her grandchildren with their homework.”

The BEST program revealed that, because of lower than anticipated skill levels and psychological barriers to career-path development, labor market mobility for low-income workers is a complex, long-term process that requires multiple levels of support. “These employees,” said one RIT project manager, “have never thought of themselves as people who could have careers. Just returning to the classroom is a big step for them.”

BETTER THAN BEST

The challenges revealed through BEST were more complicated than anyone involved in designing or implementing the program had imagined. But having revealed them, BEST makes it possible to draw certain lessons about how to close the state’s skills gap.

At a basic level, what legislators, service providers, workforce development professionals, and employers ought to learn from BEST is that closing the state’s skills gap is, by its very nature, a long-term process that requires steady commitment, funding, and innovation to succeed. There are no quick fixes, and policy-makers need to stop looking for them. Career-path development for entry-level workers is in its infancy, in terms of both employer support and institutional capacity.

Growing recognition of the long-term nature of this

work is reflected in two important developments since BEST. In 2004, SkillWorks, a partnership of philanthropic and public investors, was launched with plans to use nearly \$15 million over five years to create a system for Boston that helps low-skill, low-income residents move to family-sustaining jobs while helping employers find and retain skilled workers. Like BEST, SkillWorks invests in industry sectors or occupationally based intermediaries to develop and offer a broad range of resources to create advancement opportunities for low-income individuals. In addition, the Workforce Solutions Act of 2005 calls for multi-year funding of projects through the formation of a Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund.

As policy-makers and stakeholders continue to retool the workforce development system through such initiatives and legislation, they should consider the following suggestions derived from the BEST experience:

Cultivate employer buy-in, support, and capacity for long-term career development based on a realistic picture of what’s required. Advancement for low-income workers won’t happen at anything approaching scale unless lots of employers have bought into the concept. BEST revealed that there is a tremendous amount of work to do in employer outreach and education. But it is critical not to oversell what training programs can accomplish in the short term. Employers must understand that upgrading the skills of entry-level employees will bear fruit over the course of years, not months. Going forward, employers need to be recruited into the workforce development system based on industry-specific programs that: 1) paint the workforce picture in vivid terms; 2) demonstrate how the career-path concept works in practice, including the timeframe for results; 3) articulate the benefits of involvement and commitment; 4) illustrate career mapping and career ladders for entry-level employees; and 5) provide realistic estimates regarding employer time commitment and cost. While public sector and community-based partners may be responsible for developing employer outreach campaigns and materials, private sector champions—industry associations, Chambers of Commerce, and corporate leaders—must also be identified and cultivated to stimulate interest among employers.

Don’t settle for short-term training in exchange for employer participation. BEST revealed that many employers will say “yes” to subsidized, short-term training but back away from the tougher challenges associated with career-path development for entry-level workers. If the state’s goal is to put entry-level workers on a career track, it will need to hold participating employers to a higher standard. Public training funds should leverage employer engagement in long-term efforts to address the skills gap, not subsidize short-term training.

Use ABE and ESOL to build a foundation for career-

path development. BEST revealed widespread demand for adult basic education and English-language instruction across industry sectors and also substantial employer benefit, through improved morale and job performance, in providing these services at the worksite. Workplace-based education services also provide a positive basis for dialogue about career path development for entry-level workers. Increased state support for workplace-based ABE and ESOL would provide a firmer foundation—and a tangible incentive—for employers to engage in longer-term efforts at skill upgrading.

Be realistic in setting the time frame for results. Under the BEST program, RITs were under pressure to organize their programs and show results in less than two years. That's no way to develop programming that truly solves complex labor-supply problems and remedies deep education and skill deficits. Time and focus are necessary to investigate industry labor market dynamics, define viable programs, and establish realistic outcome goals. These steps, conducted thoughtfully, lead to trustworthy relationships, which are the foundation of any successful public-private partnership. This process should not be rushed in order to fulfill funding deadlines. Rather, funding should respond to the formation of thoughtful, well

designed programs that demonstrate genuine commitment and understanding between public and private partners.

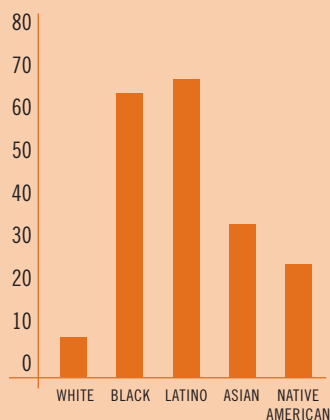
Provide ongoing financial support to partnerships that are getting the job done. The learning curve for RITs was steep, and many were just hitting their stride when their funding ran out. A few secured further funding, but several simply disbanded. Intermediary organizations facilitating workforce partnerships require continuity and steady funding to maintain momentum—and credibility with employers and employees. Reinventing the workforce development wheel again and again is wasteful and confirms private-sector stereotypes about government. Intermediary organizations that demonstrate deep commitment and produce positive results warrant ongoing state support.

The Commonwealth's workforce dynamics are certainly challenging. But until we figure out how to successfully upgrade the skills of individuals—be they immigrants or native-born—who are ill equipped to fill jobs in the high-skilled industries that are Massachusetts's future, we will not realize our full potential as an economy or as a state. ■

Erin Flynn is vice president of FutureWorks, a consulting and policy development firm based in Arlington.

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How to reform the charter school program

BY SHELDON BERMAN AND THOMAS SCOTT

Since Massachusetts launched its experiment with charter schools in 1993, tensions between Commonwealth charter schools and public school districts have steadily intensified. Proposed as laboratories of innovation that, by suspending bureaucratic and union rules, would produce exceptional results for children and provide examples of innovation that could be replicated, charter schools have not met these high expectations, here or around the country. Only a few Massachusetts charter schools appear to outperform their community's public schools while some have been declared "in need of improvement" or "underperforming." Four have closed—after expending \$37 million in public funds. Meanwhile, resentment has grown in the school districts that lose precious dollars to charter schools of dubious quality, and in the communities that have charter schools imposed on them against their will.

What's wrong with the Massachusetts charter school program? Four things: 1) a funding mechanism that drains valuable resources from school districts; 2) a lack of financial accountability; 3) an application and approval process that fails to ensure local input, unbiased review, and quality programming for all, particularly for special education students and English language learners; and 4) no comprehensive and independent research documenting the value of the state's investment in charter schools.

The Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents convened a group of more than 20 superintendents to thoroughly review charter funding, policy, and performance. Despite the tensions, we concluded that a workable charter school experiment could succeed alongside the existing public school system, but only if charter funding is restructured and the policies that guide their approval, development, and implementation are reformed. Here is how the four major problems should be addressed:

FUNDING: Since 1993, Massachusetts has invested more than \$1 billion to fund the charter school experiment. In fiscal year 2005, the charter school program cost the state and school districts \$171.2 million to serve 17,733 students, or \$9,655 per student. The Department of Education has projected that it will cost over \$200 million to support charter schools in 2006. As a group, charter schools are now equivalent to the fourth largest school district in the state, with per-pupil expenditure higher than the state average.

Why are charter costs so high? The current funding formula requires that sending districts pay the charter school the entire tuition, based on the per-pupil foundation cost of a similar student in a district school, plus a per-pupil assessment for capital costs. Sending districts also compensate charter schools for students' transportation costs.

Charter advocates often say that dollars simply follow the students. But this hides two important facts. First, the creation of the 48 existing charter schools has added layers of administrative, bureaucratic, and operational cost. If the charter experiment were to end tomorrow, the state and local districts could save over \$100 million.

Second, and most important, sending school districts only realize marginal savings, not the full cost of a student who attends a charter school. When students leave the dis-

Only a few charters have outperformed district schools.

trict, expenditures for capital projects, maintenance, administration, utilities, and other teaching and administrative costs remain constant. But the formula does not recognize this. As a result, for every four to five students who attend a charter school, the sending district loses the equivalent of one teaching position. (Last year's formula change adjusted how the tuition was calculated, but not who paid the tuition. Though a positive step, for most districts the cost of charter tuition increased as a result.)

Currently, the state provides districts with relief funds, in declining amounts, over three years. This is not a long-term solution. Eventually, the district assumes the entire tuition burden, as well as those teaching, administrative, and infrastructure costs that are not reduced when students transfer to charters. In the long term, funds lost to charter schools force districts to reduce staffing and programming. Instead of stimulating reform and innovation in public education, the funding formula undermines improvement efforts and compromises the education of children remaining in district schools.

There is a well-tested alternative—the school choice formula. Currently, if a student transfers through inter-district school choice, the sending district is charged a maximum of \$5,000, representing the marginal savings to the sending district and the marginal cost to the receiving district. This

also would be a fair way to handle charter tuitions. The state would then have to pay the difference between the district's \$5,000 and the actual charter school tuition. (If the charter school tuition is \$9,500, the district would pay \$5,000 and the state would pay \$4,500.) Thus, the state would share the financial burden of its educational experiment.

The cost of this change would be modest. In fiscal year 2006, the state will spend \$70 million to fully fund tuition relief and facilities aid for charters under current rules. To reduce district cost to the school-choice level of \$5,000 per student, it would cost the state only an additional \$8 million to \$14 million. But it would significantly improve relations between charter and district schools over funding.

Charter advocates have been reluctant to accept this formula, arguing that it would make charter schools vulnerable to state funding cuts. In fact, charter schools have been protected from the recent cuts that almost all school districts have had to endure. Direct state funding of a portion of charter tuition would enhance public and legislative accountability for this experiment.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY: Charter schools must provide an audited financial report every year, but they are not required to use a consistent reporting format or to complete the same financial report that school districts submit. In June 2004, the state auditor found that charter schools used four different types of financial reports, making comparisons among charter schools and between charters and sending districts difficult, if not impossible.

In addition, charters do not have to comply with the state's Chapter 30B procurement law, opening up the potential for financial abuse, such as giving contracts to favored vendors. Given that charters will expend over \$200 million next year, and that a number of charter schools have failed for financial reasons, all charter schools should be required to spend their public dollars in more publicly accountable ways.

Finally, charters are now provided a per-pupil allocation for capital costs—\$745 per student next year. But, unlike school districts, which have to justify and document their capital expenditures to city and town authorities or to the state School Building Assistance program, charters are not accountable for this spending. They don't even have to expend these funds on capital costs.

To enhance their financial accountability, charter schools should have to submit the same financial reports as all

school districts, comply with state procurement laws, and utilize the School Building Assistance program to access resources for capital expenditures.

APPLICATION AND APPROVAL: The Education Reform Act gave charter schools a particular mission in public education—to provide replicable models of innovation. To demonstrate their effectiveness, charters were required to draw a student population representative of the sending schools and not discriminate on the basis of academic performance. In addition, the process dictated local input to ensure there was community need for the charter school. Serious failures to live up to these principles exacerbate tensions between district and charter schools.

Often, the first time a community learns about a charter school is when an application has already been formally filed. Although the local school committee is given the opportunity to respond, there is no requirement that charter applicants seek to build collaboration from the inception of the proposal. In addition, local support is often documented only through vague petitions garnered by proponents standing outside supermarkets and malls. The names on these petitions are rarely checked to verify community residence, children in school, or sincere interest in the charter school.

After they are approved, charters are free to arbitrarily change the areas from which they draw students. For example, one regional charter school proposed to draw students from four lower-wealth communities and based its proposal on the performance in those communities. Once the charter was approved, however, the school attempted to attract students from over 40 communities, many of them high-wealth communities. In other cases, charters simply moved from one community to another, with the new one getting little input into the decision.

Educational experimentation was such a fundamental rationale for launching charters that lawmakers made replication of innovation central to charter renewal. But many charter schools lack innovative programs that don't already exist in a local district school, while very few, if any, charters have created replicable models. Nevertheless, when renewing charters, the state Board of Education appears to have ignored the requirement that they provide models of best practice for replication.

Indeed, many observers believe that charters fail to draw

a representative sample of students from sending school districts, instead skimming the students who are easiest to educate. Most charters enroll far fewer English language learners and special education students than the districts from which their students are drawn. In many cases, the proposals submitted by charter schools do not adequately detail how the school will address the needs of such children.

Finally, there are concerns about the Department of Education's review process, which is supposed to be unbiased and fair. To date, the review panels that assess charter proposals have included only charter school educators and advocates. The Board of Education itself is heavily biased in favor of charters, with one member serving on the board of a charter school and the chairman working for a charter advocacy organization. In contrast, public school educators and school committee members are legally prohibited from serving on the Board of Education.

To help charter schools achieve their original mission, and reduce conflict with district schools, the charter school program must reestablish the centrality of replicable innovation; provide for local engagement from the inception of the proposal; create an appropriate process for changes in a charter's recruitment area; ensure that charters recruit, retain, and address the needs of special education students and English language learners; and enhance fairness, transparency, and accountability throughout the review process.

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION: Finally, a reform experiment on such a large scale deserves thorough scrutiny to ensure it is worthy of scarce taxpayer dollars. Many have raised concerns about high attrition rates among students, teachers, and administrators; student performance; diversity of enrollment; qualifications of teachers and administrators; spending patterns in comparison to public schools; and overall effectiveness. Before issuing additional charters, the state needs to conduct a full and independent review of the effectiveness of charter school policies, practices, and performance. A comprehensive and independent study could provide policy recommendations to improve the success rate for future charter schools and assure citizens that their tax dollars are being spent wisely.

If charter schools are to be a successful experiment, if school districts are to live with and learn from charter successes, and if the state is to provide policy guidance that will advance reform and improve student performance, now is the time to correct the flaws in the current funding formula and policies. With these changes we can resolve the discord and level the playing field so that a workable charter school experiment can coexist with the existing public school system. ■

Sheldon Berman is superintendent of the Hudson public schools and past president of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, of which Thomas Scott is executive director.

COUNTERPOINTS

Popular, accountable, and fairly funded, charters are a success

BY DAVID DRISCOLL

Yes, charter schools have been controversial, but then again, so has just about everything we've done to improve public education. Curriculum frameworks, graduation requirements, teacher testing, you name it, and it's been controversial. If it disrupts the status quo, someone's against it.

So I am heartened to read in Shelley Berman and Tom Scott's article an explicit acknowledgment—and acceptance—that charter schools are here to stay. And the questions they ask are reasonable ones: How many should we have? How can we improve the process by which they are approved and funded? And most importantly, what can we learn from them?

But first, let's put this in perspective. There are currently about 17,700 students attending charter schools in Massachusetts, less than 2 percent of the state's total student enrollment. Charter tuition payments this year are also less than 2 percent of total K-12 expenditures.

And if you're under the impression that the "heavily biased" state Board of Education (as Berman and Scott characterize it) is handing out charters willy nilly, the facts say otherwise. Charter schools were first authorized in 1994, in the same education reform law that brought billions of dollars of new state aid to local districts. Since that time, the Board of Education has granted less than half of the 120 charters allowed by law. This past year, eight applications for new charters were submitted, and only two were granted.

It is true that a few charter schools have been closed, due to mismanagement, poor academic performance, or simply low enrollment. Nobody likes to see that happen. It is painful and disruptive for the students and the staff. But in a larger sense, that is one of the great strengths of our charter school program. The schools must succeed, or they go out of business. To say that charter schools are not accountable is to miss the point entirely. They are accountable for results, in a manner that goes far beyond what we expect of most of our public schools.

At their best, charter schools are jewels in our public education system, far outperforming other schools in their

areas. If you want to criticize charter schools, that is your right, but do not do so until you have visited Neighborhood House Charter School, Roxbury Preparatory Charter School, Media and Technology Charter High School, or the Academy of the Pacific Rim. In these and other charter schools, you will see that public education can work, even in urban areas with high percentages of disadvantaged students. For example, Mass Insight Education recently reported that Roxbury Prep's "minority, largely low-income population exceeded state MCAS averages in every grade and in every subject" and that "100 percent of students passed both the seventh grade ELA and eighth grade math exams, with 89 percent and 73 percent, respectively, in the Advanced and Proficient categories."

The ways in which charter schools succeed are almost as numerous as the schools themselves. Some use model curricula that have proven successful in other states, such as the Knowledge is Power Program at the Kipp Academy Lynn Charter School or the Core Knowledge Program at the Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School. Others, such as the Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter School or the Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter School, offer specialized programs. Some serve special populations, such as the program for at-risk high school students at the Lowell

Middlesex Academy Charter School. Some experiment with alternative schedules and longer school days and years. If this is not replicable innovation, I don't know what is.

In most successful charter schools, we see a high level of parental involvement. Parents are able to meet and interact with school leaders, and school leaders are able to quickly respond to parental concerns. In this regard, Massachusetts charter schools mirror a national trend toward site-based school management, with greater decision-making authority granted to those closest to student learning.

Another common characteristic of successful charter schools is close cooperation between the school's leadership and faculty. Teachers are treated as professionals, rather than being forced to comply with the rigid work rules of many union contracts. If that is one of the advantages that charter schools have, it is one that we should try to replicate in every school district.

Berman and Scott express concern with the approval and recruitment process for charter schools. The approval process is a lengthy one, with opportunity for both local officials and the public at large to weigh in. But the law distinguishes between local input and local veto. Commonwealth charter schools were established to be independent of the local districts, so there is no local veto.



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The rules governing student recruitment and enrollment are also often misunderstood. Charter schools are not only permitted to enroll students from anywhere in Massachusetts, but are required to do so if space is available. Preference must be given to the town or towns comprising the charter school's "region," but any remaining seats can and must go to any student wishing to enroll. Only the town in which the school is located is obligated to provide transportation, on the same basis as it is provided to other local students. In most cases, students enrolling from other towns must arrange transportation themselves.

We do not require, nor do we expect, the demographic make-up of charter schools to exactly reflect the make-up of their host districts. Charter schools are schools of choice, and their enrollment reflects those families who choose them. And yet, to their credit, most charter schools have chosen to locate in urban areas, where the need for quality educational programs is greatest.

Of course, the real argument with charter schools has to do with money. The original funding formula reflected a long-standing belief that educational dollars don't "belong" to the local school district, but should go to where the students are being educated. For decades, local communities

have made tuition payments to regional schools, vocational schools, agricultural schools, out-of-district schools, and even some private schools for students with special needs. Charter schools are no different.

Still, the original tuition formula for charters was a bit of a one-size-fits-all affair. Last summer, the governor and the Legislature changed the formula, based in large part on recommendations from Worcester Superintendent James Caradonio and his staff. The new formula recognizes that different students have different costs, so now a charter school's tuition varies based on the demographics of the students it enrolls. The new formula also recognized that facilities costs are relatively fixed with respect to enrollment, so the state now reimburses districts, for the first time, for that piece of charter tuition. This is on top of the existing program of transitional reimbursements for three years following any increase in charter tuition payments.

The authors claim that per pupil spending in charter schools is higher than the state average. Our data do not support that assertion, but the comparison is misleading anyway, because charter schools are concentrated in urban districts, where spending exceeds the state average. An apples-to-apples comparison gives an unambiguous result:

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Charter tuitions are now about 8 percent below the average spending in districts where the charters are located. This is a direct result of the formula change that calculates tuition based on the actual student rather than the district average.

Berman and Scott contend that local districts are short-changed by the charter formula, but the data do not support this conclusion either. Of the \$8,463 average tuition paid by districts (net of facilities reimbursements), the state this year is reimbursing districts \$1,900 under the transitional reimbursement program. The rest of tuition is funded out of a combination of the district's Chapter 70 state aid (averaging \$3,152 per pupil) and local revenues (averaging \$3,411 per pupil). By comparison, local funding for non-charter students in these districts is almost half again higher, at \$4,918.

Last year's formula reforms were based on solid analysis, and they were enacted with the support of many superintendents. I think it's premature to start tinkering again. Let's give the formula some time to work.

Yes, charter schools are a nontraditional approach to public education. There is much we can learn from them, and much we can do to make them even better. Should we have independent evaluations to learn what works and what doesn't? Absolutely, as we should have for all of our education programs. But the opportunities for improvement should not be used as an excuse for a moratorium. We should never close the door on new and different ideas. ■

David Driscoll is commissioner of education for the Commonwealth.

Superintendents' plan would harm charters, not improve program

BY MARC KENEN

We applaud the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents for concluding that "a workable charter school experiment [can] succeed alongside the existing public school system." A decade after the first charter public school opened in Massachusetts, we are long past the "experiment" stage, and we hope their stance signals that district public schools are moving away from treating charters as adversaries and toward the cooperative relationship we have always favored.

In the past, districts have distributed anti-charter school petitions in class and used PTO meetings to spread misin-



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formation about the impact charters would have on district programs. It is our hope that we can move past this counterproductive behavior and focus our energies on providing students with high-quality educational opportunities. Unfortunately, what the superintendents propose would do little to improve the Massachusetts charter school program, and potentially do much to harm it.

Contrary to the superintendents' assertions, charter public schools do not subtract from public education; they add to it. Our schools provide educational choice for poor and working class parents and educational opportunity for their children. Choice is a powerful tool for parents seeking equal access to educational opportunity for their children. Choice also acts as a powerful catalyst for change in district schools.

Since the first charter public school opened in 1995, demand has remained strong. More than 21,000 children attend the 61 charter public schools, while 15,000 more sit on wait lists. In many of the state's lowest performing districts, there are more children on wait lists than in our classrooms. In Boston, more than 5,000 students are enrolled, while 7,000 wait for openings; in Lawrence, 839 attend, 974 wait; in Springfield, 1,684 attend, 3,169 wait.

Despite the superintendents' claim that they have not met "high expectations," charter public schools have built an impressive record of academic success. State Department of Education 2004 MCAS data show that nearly two-thirds of charter public schools placed a higher percentage of students in proficient and advanced categories compared to their sending districts; and a higher percentage of charter public students scored proficient or advanced on nine of the 10 MCAS tests compared to district averages.

The performance gap is particularly apparent in urban districts that serve a high percentage of disadvantaged children. A *Boston Globe* study published in January found that charter public schools "in the state's largest and most troubled school systems score higher than students in [district] public schools on the vast majority of standardized math and English tests." In Boston, an average of 20 percent more students who took the English MCAS and 9 percent who took the math scored proficient or advanced compared to district averages. Excluding the city's prestigious exam schools, which have highly selective admissions, all five charter high schools and four of the six charter middle schools ranked in the top 10 citywide.

In Springfield, 27 percent more students who took the English MCAS and 14 percent more who took the math scored proficient or advanced compared to city averages; in Lawrence, 25 percent more scored proficient or advanced in English and 27 percent more in math. Community Day Charter Public School in Lawrence ranked first in the district on every test.

The tired old argument (which the superintendents trot out once again) that charter public schools "skim" the best

and brightest students is simply not true. Statewide, charters enroll twice as many poor and minority students as district schools and an equivalent percentage of special needs students, according to state figures. In reality, parents are the determining factor in our enrollment. When applications outnumber available spots, admission is determined by lottery.

Still, the superintendents would prefer to hamstring charter schools with additional regulation and red tape and cut off our financial lifeline by changing the funding formula—again. As to their specific proposals:

ACCOUNTABILITY: Claims that charter public schools are unaccountable are unfounded and untrue. We may not be accountable to local schools boards and superintendents, but that's the point. Charters were designed to be independent public schools that bypass local bureaucratic controls and report directly to the state. We are audited every year by the state auditor, inspected annually by the Department of Education, and must be renewed every five years by the state Board of Education. In a 2003 study of 23 states, Massachusetts earned the highest rating in the country for its charter approval, oversight, and accountability procedures. During the last decade, four Massachusetts charter public schools did not live up to the terms of their charter and were closed. That's the accountability that matters. Meanwhile, failing district schools continue to operate.

The superintendents imply that our expenditures cannot be tracked because different charter schools use various financial reporting forms. This is not true. Every charter

Charter schools do not 'skim' the best and the brightest.

school is required to file an end of the year report with the Department of Education. In addition, we are required by law to undergo an independent audit. Charter schools are the most closely examined and evaluated public schools in the state. We follow the public bidding process when the law requires it and must employ good business practices in all purchases and contracts.

Since the beginning of the charter school movement, our schools have been denied school building assistance funds. This was at the insistence of superintendents and school committees. To deal with this lack of public facilities funding, charter schools have developed innovative ways of funding school facilities through public/private partnerships that use federal loan guarantees to access private financing. This means that charter schools have saved the state millions of dollars on facilities costs.

APPLICATION AND APPROVAL: The superintendents would also like to put further constraints on the charter

school application and approval process. We agree with some of their concerns, and we support the changes the Department of Education has already made in response to them. We encourage the superintendents to examine these changes before embarking on uninformed efforts to modify them further.

The process guarantees local input, not local control. The state—not the district—is the judge of whether there is a need for a charter school and whether the particular application is viable. We strongly disagree that only “vague” evidence of local support needs to be shown before charters are awarded. Charters are proposed by parents and community leaders and are operated by local boards made up of people who live in the community.

Charter schools are also fulfilling our mission to serve as laboratories of innovation. We share our best practices on a school-to-school and teacher-to-teacher level with other charter schools and with district public schools. As part of these efforts we host an annual best practice showcase inviting teachers and administrators from all public schools. The state Department of Education also awards annual best practice dissemination grants. One charter public school—Neighborhood House in Boston—founded The Project for School Innovation, a teacher-to-teacher network that brings educators together from charter public schools and district public schools to share successes, address challenges, and drive school change. Other charter schools are providing similar opportunities for collaboration between charter and district public schools.

FUNDING: Much of the debate over charter public schools has focused on money. The fact is there is no loss of public school funding because charter schools are public schools. They are funded by reallocating a portion of total education spending between districts and charters based on where parents choose to enroll their children. Charters are by no means protected from local aid cuts, because our funding is directly linked to district spending. It rises when local aid increases and falls when it's cut.

The superintendents claim charter public schools cost Massachusetts taxpayers more than \$170 million during the last fiscal year. In reality, the only new expenditures go to school districts, reimbursing them for the students they lose to charter public schools—100 percent the first year, 60 percent the second, 40 percent the third, giving them three years to adjust.

Last September, at the urging of the superintendents, the Legislature and governor approved a new formula ensuring that the tuition money charters receive from districts reflects the demographics and grade levels of students enrolled in them. The new formula reduced tuition payments by about 8 percent, but also for the first time provided funding for a portion of capital expenses.



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Now the superintendents say that the formula they designed is inequitable. Instead, they want charter funding to be modeled on the school choice program. But school choice allows for transfer between existing schools, with existing facilities; it does not finance new schools. Their proposal would cut charter funding by close to 50 percent, leaving the remainder of per-pupil costs to the state budget process—where it would be vulnerable to the political clout of the teachers unions and other powerful opponents.

As educators, none of us would allow our students to engage in the attacks and squabbling that have marked the decade-long relationship between district and charter public schools. We agree that we can co-exist; that has been our intention from the beginning. But we won't sacrifice the future viability of our schools to achieve it. A funding proposal that would cripple charters is clearly unacceptable, as are regulatory requirements intended only to undermine our effectiveness—and our existence. ■

Marc Kenen is executive director of the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association.

Charter system needs scrutiny, reform before further expansion

BY CATHERINE BOUDREAU

The Massachusetts charter school program is long overdue for reform, as Sheldon Berman and Thomas Scott lay out cogently. Massachusetts public school teachers have witnessed the downside of the charter school system firsthand.

When a charter school opens in a community, often over the objection of a majority of local residents and elected officials, the financial impact is felt within a few short years. Local school districts often must reduce art, music, physical education, foreign language courses, counseling services, and innovative electives and programs. For students in the district schools, the benefits of having a charter school nearby are illusory, while the costs are very real.

Fortunately, there is a better way.

We support a moratorium on new charter schools until the state has addressed the funding and governance concerns and commissioned an independent evaluation of the academic benefits of charter schools. An honest study will compare performance of similar populations, since even charter school

boosters at the state Department of Education acknowledge that these schools enroll far fewer English language learners and special education students than their sending districts.

Additionally, the study should closely examine whether charter school gains, where they exist, are being replicated in other schools. So far, we've seen little evidence of this occurring, though it was a key selling point when the charter school law was approved.

While that study is taking place, innovation within existing public school districts can and should continue to flourish.

Many districts in Massachusetts already have choice programs in place, meaning parents may send their children to any public school in the district—and sometimes across district lines—as long as there is room in the receiving school.

Many also have alternative schools within the public school system, such as magnet schools and Horace Mann charter schools, which operate under a different set of rules with union and school committee approval.

Alternatives like these can be implemented by local school committees now, without hurting educational opportunities for any child. Here are just a few examples of alternatives that already exist:

The Unidos program in the East Somerville Community

School is a two-way bilingual program in which English- and Spanish-speaking students are taught in both languages. Students in this program not only become fluent in both languages, but they also consistently do well on the MCAS tests.

Brookline has several alternative programs within its high school that students may choose. One is School Within a School, a small program in which students actively participate in decision-making through weekly Town Meetings.

Boston Arts Academy, which emphasizes the visual and performing arts, is one of several pilot schools—which are similar to Horace Mann charter schools—in the city. The talented students in this program come from 15 different neighborhoods and reflect the city's diversity.

One of the most successful schools in Worcester is the **University Park Campus School**, which has a strong relationship with Clark University. *Newsweek* recently named it one of the top 100 schools in the country. Most of the students enrolled there speak English as a second language, and 73 percent are low-income. Nonetheless, 100 percent of its graduates go to college, and 63 percent of the 10th graders scored at the “advanced” level on the MCAS mathematics test last year, compared with 29 percent statewide.

Worcester provides a good illustration of how the

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Commonwealth charter school funding system can actually hurt innovation within the regular public schools. Funding constraints caused in part by the cost of sending students to nearby charter schools forced the district to suspend the extended day programs at University Park and other district schools three years ago. The school day there now ends at 2:23 p.m. instead of 4 p.m.

One of the selling points for many charter schools is that they offer a longer school day, so it is ironic that the existence of charter schools impairs the ability of the district schools to do the same.

Some would argue that charter schools are worth their high cost because they provide students with a superior education. But is that true? While some charter schools do indeed do well, performance on the whole has been disappointing, according to the biggest and most reliable studies conducted to date.

One of the most notable of these was commissioned by the US Department of Education, which strongly supports charter schools. It was released to the public in June 2004 only after *The New York Times* filed a Freedom of Information Act request demanding to see the results.

Conducted by California research firm SRI International, the report is based on case studies in five states that have made significant investments in charter schools: Massachusetts, Texas, Colorado, Illinois, and North Carolina.

The researchers found that students attending charter schools were less likely to meet state performance standards compared to students in the traditional public schools, even when the results were adjusted for race and income.

Performance notwithstanding, charter school supporters argue that parents should be able to choose a charter school if that is what they want for their children. Choice is important, but not without limits. A motorist may not choose to drive faster than the speed limit because that endangers others. Similarly, there is no reason parents should be entitled to send their children to a charter school if doing so endangers the resources and quality of education provided to other children.

Communities also deserve to have choices. The voters and taxpayers in a community ought to have the final say over whether a charter school—which they ultimately have to fund—is allowed to operate in their community.

If these funding and governance issues are resolved, charter schools could be a worthy experiment. As long as those issues remain, however, the development of new charter schools should be put on hold. The money saved should be funneled into proven strategies for improving achievement, such as reducing class sizes and providing all public school children with a rich, varied, and rigorous curriculum. ■

Catherine Boudreau is president of the Massachusetts Teacher Association, the state affiliate of the National Education Association.

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Is the Creative Class coming or going?

BY ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN

In *The Rise of the Creative Class*, economist Richard Florida wrote that gays are good for a region's economy. In his new book, *The Flight of the Creative Class*, he tells us that immigrants are even better—and America is in danger of getting a lot fewer of them.

The point of Florida's first book was not that cities benefit from a high number of gays and lesbians *per se*, but that tolerant attitudes and a diverse population attract well-educated, highly skilled workers in "creative" occupations (not just artists but also scientists, engineers, and entrepreneurs of all types). According to this theory, Indianapolis does not necessarily have to be as bohemian as San Francisco to make it in the New Economy, but it cannot be perceived as hostile to gays or other minorities. *Flight of the Creative Class*, by contrast, suggests that it is not enough to be perceived as tolerant of immigrants; a region must actually attract them in large numbers. And Florida warns that a combination of factors, some of our own making, are pushing highly skilled workers away from America.

"Terrorism is less of a threat to US society than the possibility that creative and talented people will stop wanting to live within its borders," he writes. For those still celebrating the end of the Cold War, confident that no rival can match America's economic might, Florida adds, "no one country or one region needs to trump us; the more likely scenario is a death by a thousand cuts as a series of competitors collectively combine to erode our lead."

Rise, published in 2002, gave hope to Massachusetts, which boasts the best-educated workforce in the nation and is one of the most diverse states in the US. *Flight* is more likely to cause night sweats. It tells us that we're in danger of losing our best and brightest to not only Austin but also Australia. And it raises the possibility that, after a century or two of sending many of its hardest-working natives to Boston, Dublin may finally get its revenge.

Much of *The Flight of the Creative Class* is a defense of Florida's first book, in which he argued against the widespread belief that sunshine, cheap land, and low taxes would determine which

regions of the US would prosper over the next few decades. More important, he wrote, are the "three Ts" of technology, talent, and tolerance, characterized by the presence of high-tech industry, a highly educated workforce, and a diverse population (measured by, among other things, the number of same-sex "unmarried partners" counted by the US Census). That book also included the cautionary note that, even if some American cities do better than others at maintaining an attractive atmosphere for creative workers, the nation as a whole may be falling behind some underestimated rivals. (Referring to Toronto's inte-

Reduced immigration could hobble all regions in the US.

gration of ethnic groups and economic classes, Florida wrote, "true intermixing of this nature is very hard to find in the United States.") In *Flight*, he explicitly states that certain factors, particularly immigration laws, could hobble *all* regions—which would make all those surveys on the best cities in the US to live or start a business seem beside the point.

Though Florida acknowledges that immigration is of particular benefit to America's creative professions (he quotes *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, who has written that "one of America's greatest assets [has been] its ability to skim the cream off the first-round intellectual draft choices from around the world"), he stresses the value of newcomers from all economic and educational levels. "Low-skilled immigrants have helped to propel the American economy," he writes, in part because some of them turn out to be successful entrepreneurs (or the parents of entrepreneurs, such as the Cuban-born father of Amazon.com founder Jeff Bezos) and in part because immigrants at all educational levels can have different skills than those of their American counterparts and thus fill different employer needs. His conclusion is that a slow trickle of immigration is not enough; there is strength in numbers.

If this is so, the US has been heading in the wrong direction since the terrorist attacks of 9/11. According to



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Florida, the rejection rate for H-1B visas, which allow non-citizens to work in the US for up to six years, rose from 9.5 percent to 17.8 percent between 2001 and 2003. He also notes that the total number of applications for all US visas fell from 6.3 million in 2000 to 3.7 million in 2003. In addition, Florida provides anecdotes about scientists, scholars, and entertainers finding it more difficult to gain entry into the US for even a short visit, as well as conference organizers now boycotting the US because of increased restrictions on international travelers. Even more alarming are Florida's stories about people who are already ensconced in America but want to get out—from film director Peter Jackson, who relocated his operations from Los Angeles to his native New Zealand, to an English as a Second Language instructor in Houston, who complains in an e-mail, "The people here focus on nothing else but sports. The city keeps building stadiums, we have four new ones."

Florida's point is that the US can't count on being the mecca for the highly educated forever, especially as people of talent around the world gain more options to choose from. "The elite of any society have...always been highly mobile," he writes. "What's distinct about our times is the extent to which more and more people are developing the cultural, political, and economic freedom to choose where to live and work globally."

But it may be tough to get political leaders to share Florida's concerns about a "reverse brain drain" in the US. For one thing, there's something less-than-patriotic about the idea that America doesn't have enough homegrown talent to maintain its economic edge. (I can hear the calls to improve our educational system rather than let in more foreign-born workers, though in the short term that strategy may not keep impatient employers from relocating abroad.) Then there are national security concerns, fears that native-born Americans will face increased competition for jobs, and worries about overcrowding and strain on social services in the cities and regions that attract the most immigrants. There will be a temptation to restrict immigration to a select group of highly skilled workers, precisely what Florida warns against.

Immigration has been a relatively little-discussed issue in recent elections, but that may be changing. On the Republican side, US Rep. Tom Tancredo, of Colorado, has organized a 70-member Congressional Immigration Reform Caucus (with only two Democrats and no members from the Northeast) and called for a "time out," or a major reduction in legal immigration, though this view doesn't seem to have support within the Bush administration.

As for Democrats, Dave "Mudcat" Saunders, a political consultant best known for helping to elect Gov. Mark Warner of Virginia, says that a hard line against "illegal aliens"—and he stresses that phrase instead of the softer "illegal immigrants"—could greatly improve his party's

standing among rural voters. “If the Democrats put illegal aliens in their bait can,” he told *CQ Weekly* columnist Craig Crawford this spring, “we’re going to come home with a bunch of white males in the boat.” Saunders may be talking about “illegals” rather than immigrants who go through the proper legal channels, but that distinction may not mean much to creative types trying to decide whether Boston or Melbourne has a more welcoming atmosphere.

Of course, xenophobia is not a uniquely American phenomenon. Florida cites a 2004 survey showing that, in addition to a majority of Americans, most people in Britain, France, Germany, Japan, and several other

nations also saw immigrants as a “bad influence” on their respective societies. “Only Canada, of the nine nations surveyed, had a generally positive view of immigrants,” he notes.

Unfortunately, this survey was limited to a few large nations with advanced economies. It would be

interesting to see whether India and South Korea, which include cities that Florida identifies as “regions on the rise,” are any more tolerant of immigrants. For the most part, these countries have developed high-tech hot spots by keeping their own skilled workers at home, not by importing large numbers of skilled workers from abroad. Do they need to increase immigration in order to remain players in creative economy, as Florida says is the case with the US, and are they likely to do so? If immigration is restricted in countries all over the world, perhaps as a backlash to uncertainties of the global economy, the US may not be at such a disadvantage after all.

But the Bay State would clearly suffer from reduced immigration. If not for immigrants, Massachusetts would have registered population losses during the 1990s and perhaps during the 1980s as well. In 2004, Massachusetts ranked 10th in the share of its population—14.3 percent—that was foreign-born or born in Puerto Rico, according to Northeastern University’s Center for Labor Market Studies. (See the MassINC report *The Changing Face of Massachusetts*.) From 2000 through 2004, according to Census figures, the Bay State had a net gain of 137,000 people from international immigration; dur-

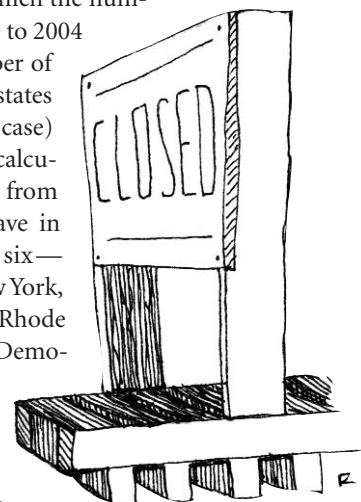
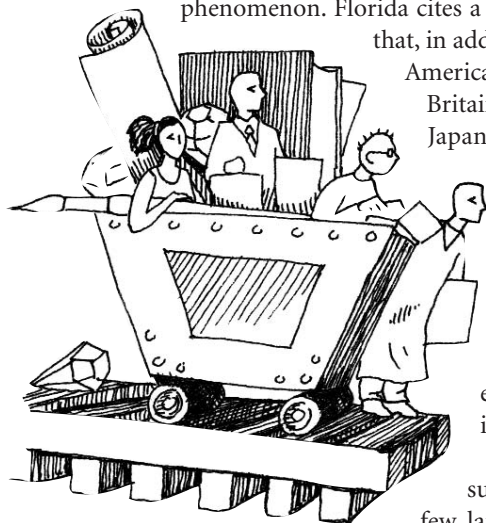
ing the same period it suffered a net loss of 173,000 as a result of migration to and from other states.

This dependence on foreign-born workers is nothing new for Massachusetts. Indeed, the immigrant share of total population in the 1890 Census is a rough guide to the placement of Florida’s creative class more than a century later. Among states that were mostly settled before the end of the 19th century, those with high immigrant shares (including Massachusetts at 29 percent, Minnesota at 36 percent, New York at 26 percent, and Rhode Island at 31 percent) now have high concentrations of creative jobs, while those with lower shares (Indiana at 7 percent, Ohio at 13 percent, and Pennsylvania at 16 percent) still lag in the development of a creative sector.

Though fewer in number, immigrants have become more important for Massachusetts today. The Bay State is one of only seven states in which the number of immigrants from 2000 to 2004 is larger than both the number of newcomers from other US states (a negative number, in our case) and the “natural increase” calculated by subtracting deaths from births. Another thing we have in common with the other six—Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island—is a habit of voting Democratic in an era of Republican dominance of national politics, which doesn’t bode well for our ability to shape national immigration laws in a way that benefits our state’s economy.

In a worst-case scenario, *Flight of the Creative Class* could cancel out all the good news for Massachusetts found in *Rise of the Creative Class*, since the “non-creative” regions in the US have the political power to force all regions to comply with laws based on their own attitudes toward the foreign-born—even if they fail to force the entire country to adopt their attitudes toward gays and lesbians, non-Christians, and other minorities. “Whatever country manages to attract...highly mobile students,” Florida writes, “will have a huge long-run advantage in the burgeoning global competition for talent.” Massachusetts leaders may wish that they could replace “country” with “state” in that sentence.

Florida does not say that the worst-case scenario is inevitable, but even if there is continued growth in America’s creative class, it is not likely that the growth will occur evenly among individual cities and



regions. So he restates his central idea from *Rise of the Creative Class*—a book that has inspired the governor of Michigan to attempt the development of “cool cities” in her state—even as he hedges on its practicality. “Courting divergent ideas and inputs isn’t about political correctness; it’s an economic growth imperative,” he writes in his second book. “My research finds a strong correlation between, on the one hand, places open to immigrants, artists, gays, bohemians, and socio-economic and racial integration, and, on the other, places that experience high-quality economic growth.”

Note that word “correlation.” Florida is not bold enough to say the relationship is one of causation, and some of his critics argue that job growth leads to a diverse population, not the other way around. One of his most persistent critics is urban historian Joel Kotkin, who before debating Florida at a conference in Colorado this spring told the *Denver Post* that “his whole shtick is based on arts and creativity as the center of everything. There’s something very narcissistic about [it].”

At about the same time that *Flight of the Creative Class* was released, Kotkin authored a piece for *Inc.* magazine on “The Best Places for Doing Businesses in America 2005,” and Massachusetts cities didn’t make a good showing at all. Among the 274 metro areas that Kotkin considered, Brockton ranked 109th, Worcester 151st, Springfield 164th, Lowell 187th, Boston 203rd, Pittsfield 249th, and New Bedford 253rd. Top honors went to Reno, Nevada (a mere half-hour by air from arts-oriented San Francisco, and boasting “cheap and reliable electrical power”); Boise, Idaho (“pro-business political climate”); and Casper, Wyo. (“no state income tax...and cheap living”).

“These smaller cities are proving ideal places for doing business,” Kotkin writes, “especially in a globalized economy in which companies operate under relentless pressure to keep costs low and quality high.”

Perhaps with Richard Florida in mind, he profiles an entrepreneur (born in Finland) who relocated a software company to Reno while keeping a “diverse, multicultural workforce.” In contrast, Kotkin writes that Philadelphia may have succeeded in attracting “a growing community of singles, gays, and childless couples,” but it’s still hampered by high taxes and “crummy public schools.” He then quotes a professor of real estate: “Philadelphia can’t adjust to a high-mobility world where people can simply go somewhere else.” That’s a pretty neat trick: Kotkin uses the thesis of Florida’s second book to discredit the thesis of his first one.

Florida himself muddies the waters in defending his first book. “Certain critics...blanch at the connection between gays and bohemians and growth,” he writes, and he cites Kotkin as an example of someone who implies “that a place must either be family-friendly or gay-and-bohemian-

friendly, suburbs-driven or city-oriented.” But he’s attacking a straw man here. I can’t find any evidence of Kotkin, or any prominent economist or sociologist, arguing that a large gay population hurts a region, only that such a population is of little use in reviving an economy. In a recent article on *The New Republic’s* Web site, Kotkin does argue that cities such as Boston are putting too much faith in demographic groups that won’t necessarily stick around, including recent college graduates (“many educated people come to the cities for a relatively brief period of their lives, notably their twenties”) and immigrants (who head “out of town” and into the suburbs as they accumulate wealth), but he never says that such groups are pushing families or native-born Americans away. And Kotkin does not argue that economically healthy regions *must* be driven by suburban growth, but that such a phenomenon *is* occurring—like it or not—as we search for a long-term strategy on how to revive our central cities.

And Florida only makes Kotkin’s case when he points out that McAllen, Texas, and the California cities of Fresno

Critics say job growth leads to diversity, not the reverse.

and Riverside—all areas cited by Kotkin as high-growth areas—may be “family-friendly” but also rank highly in the percentage of households with children headed by gay parents. Since there are no data on the number of gay-headed households in these places 20 or 30 years ago (the US Census began counting “same-sex unmarried partners” in 1990 and has never counted gay singles), one has to wonder whether, as Kotkin and others suggest, job growth leads to a diverse population rather than the other way around. It’s possible that, notwithstanding all the lists of “America’s best cities” (including Kotkin’s) in popular magazines, people do not make entirely rational decisions on where to live and do not carefully weigh such factors as the average price-per-square-foot of housing or the number of whole-food groceries per capita. Perhaps they simply go to the first city they encounter with enough jobs, a short enough commute, enough affordable housing, and just enough of a bohemian atmosphere for their own needs. (As Florida admits, “The creative age is giving rise to a whole host of...externalities, running the gamut from growing housing inaffordability and worsening traffic congestion to mounting stress and anxiety.”)

Florida may be correct that *intolerance* is bad for business. There was evidence of this during the civil rights movement, when Atlanta, which called itself “the city too busy to hate,” amassed economic power at the expense of more defiantly segregationist Southern cities. But it doesn’t necessarily follow that each step upward in tolerance and

diversity brings a new economic advantage. There may be a tipping point, past which a metro area has enough to offer—enough Thai restaurants, art galleries, and gay bars—for young creative types to move there. It's also possible that cultural liberalism in the US is advancing to the point where just about every metro area has a core city that qualifies as “cool,” even if the surrounding suburbs remain strongholds of traditional values. (In recent visits to Charlotte, NC, and Roanoke, Va., I talked with several creative workers, some of them gay and some of them transplanted Northerners, who were satisfied with the diversity and arts scene within the city limits—and quite enthusiastic about the warm climate and relatively low housing prices.)

Let's assume that the three Ts of technology, talent, and tolerance determine which regions will prosper in the future, and even that a limited number of regions in the US will meet Florida's criteria—in other words, that tolerance and diversity will not take root in all urban areas, and thus will provide advantages to some regions that outweigh the low cost of living in others. How would Massachusetts do under these conditions?

Though Massachusetts is famously liberal in terms of national politics, there is a lingering perception of provincialism and racism here—and, ironically in view of Florida's first book, the state has a reputation among gays and lesbians as being frosty toward newcomers. And even overcoming this perception may not be enough, for tolerance is not necessarily the same as openness to new ideas.

Consider Florida's knock on his native Pennsylvania in *The Flight of the Creative Class*. Explaining why the Digital Revolution took place in California rather than in the Midwest, he writes: “Imagine the long-haired, bearded, sandal-wearing [Steve] Jobs and [Steve] Wozniak, à la 1972, showing up at Mellon Bank in Pittsburgh with their new invention, the personal computer, in tow; would they have made it past the security guards at the front door?” Probably not, but how far would they make it into a Boston bank in 2005?

At another point, Florida turns to Jane Jacobs to help describe the energy in creative cities: “What distinguishes thriving cities from those that stagnate and decline is a group of people she calls the ‘squelchers.’ Squelchers, she explains, are those political, business, and civic leaders who divert and derail human creative energy by posing roadblocks, acting as gatekeepers, and saying no to new ideas,

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regardless of their merit.” I don’t know how many squelchers there are here—they’re a lot harder to count than college graduates or same-sex couples—but that description sounds familiar enough from an earlier, stodgier era of Boston’s history. How much we’ve put that behind us is an open question. Besides, there is more than a touch of elitism in the idea that cities with well-educated, diverse populations could not be run by arrogant know-it-alls.

Florida never considers the possibility that places like Massachusetts could be tolerant and close-minded at the same time, but he does talk about one form of exclusivity that seems to be worst in the coolest cities: the cost of living in them. “Places like Silicon Valley...; Cambridge, Massachusetts; and even New York City used to be places where young creatives, new immigrant families, social and economic outcasts, and intrepid entrepreneurs could go to get a start,” he writes. “But these places now number among the nation’s least affordable housing markets.”

Referring to the older metropolitan areas that he cited, in *Rise of the Creative Class*, as having growth potential, he warns, “There are those who own property, and those who can’t buy into the system. Caught somewhere in between are the young but not yet established scientists, engineers, and other creative types these cities will need for

long-term growth.” Many creative cities outside of the US are facing a similar dilemma (notably London), but Florida suggests that many other metro areas (such as Dublin, Sydney, and Toronto) may be able to capture American-born workers priced out of housing markets here. A reader in the Bay State is left with the uneasy feeling that it might be easier to raise tolerance levels in Fresno and Oklahoma City than to lower housing costs in Boston and San Francisco.

Indeed, Florida all but says that creative types in these

Maybe Massachusetts is both tolerant and close-minded.

expensive cities should get ready to move elsewhere—notwithstanding his praise of the Boston region as a “Leading Creative Center” in his first book. One way to address income inequality and housing inaffordability in high-tech regions is “to invest more in other cities around the country,” he writes. “Bringing a wider number of regions into the creative economy will help to take the pressure off the leading creative centers.” One has to ask: How much “pressure” can be taken off a city like Boston and still have it be



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Florida says that “older cities are the perfect places to build further extensions of the creative economy,” owing to their ample supply of vacated factories and warehouses. This thought might cheer civic leaders in Pittsfield and New Bedford, much as *Rise of the Creative Class* gave a friendly pat on the back to Boston. But it’s hard not to worry that entrepreneurs are more likely to take Kotkin’s advice that they start from scratch in Reno or Boise. Even Florida, despite his general approval of the Jane Jacobs belief that tightly packed cities are good for the creative process, cites film director Peter Jackson’s insistence on working in New Zealand rather than Los Angeles and warns, “Density and spontaneous interaction are important elements of creative development, but not if they are tethered to too many complications—especially basic safety concerns such as unusable nighttime streets and crime.”

Quoting the late economist Mancur Olson, Florida warns that “hegemonic” nations such as the current-day US can “become so dominant that they get fooled into thinking they know best.” Fairly or not, that phrase—“thinking they know best”—evokes a certain stereotype of Massachusetts. If the state does suffer from a smug sense of superiority, *The Rise of the Creative Class* did nothing to discourage it. Citing the advantages of a well-educated population and a wide variety of ethnic restaurants, Florida’s first book may have led some people to think that the Boston area has a charmed existence. We’ll always have Harvard and MIT, the reasoning goes, and we’ve got possibly the best-educated and most culturally liberal population in the country, so how can we lose? *The Flight of the Creative Class* tells us exactly how we can lose, both to other American regions and to fast-developing (and increasingly cosmopolitan) nations all over the globe.

On the other hand, buying into the arguments of Florida’s fiercest critics would send Bay Staters from complacency to defeatism. After all, if good weather and cheap living are the only keys to economic growth, we can’t possibly win. The theory of the three Ts, though battered somewhat since Florida introduced it three years ago, may still represent our best hope for long-term prosperity. The problem is that our ability to maintain a talented, diverse, and creative population depends on some factors over which we have limited control (housing costs, traffic congestion) and others over which we have virtually none (immigration laws, the global reputation of the US). Solving these complications is a lot trickier than putting out the welcome mat for gay college graduates and computer programmers from Asia. ■



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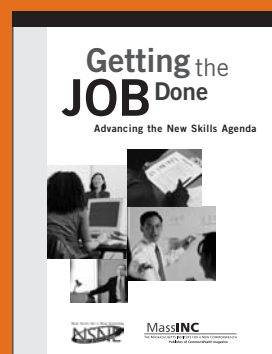


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Homeless on Beacon Hill

Would the Hancock house have made the best governor's mansion?

BY JAMES V. HARRIGAN

What does Massachusetts have in common with Idaho? Hint: the same thing Arizona has with Vermont, and Rhode Island with California. The distinction is a governor's mansion—or rather, the lack thereof, despite efforts over the years to establish one in Dedham, Roxbury, and Boston (see “Where the heck is the governor's mansion,” and “What might have been,” *CW*, Fall '99). “It's a distinction,” says William Fowler, president of the Massachusetts Historical Society, “to hold on to.”

Yet another effort to give the governor a home of his own (other than his own) is underway, this time intending to make Brookwood Farm, the estate of Henry Saltonstall Howe, the residence of future Bay State governors. Sen. Brian Joyce, the Milton Democrat who spearheads the effort, knows the issue is controversial, so much so that no governor, certainly, would want his fingerprints on the move.

“We could make it effective one or two administrations forward,” says Joyce. “Nobody has to touch it.”

Howe, who died in 1994, left his house, on 70 acres, nestled at the foot of the Blue Hills, to the state. Joyce feels that the state has “ignored” Howe's wish that it serve as

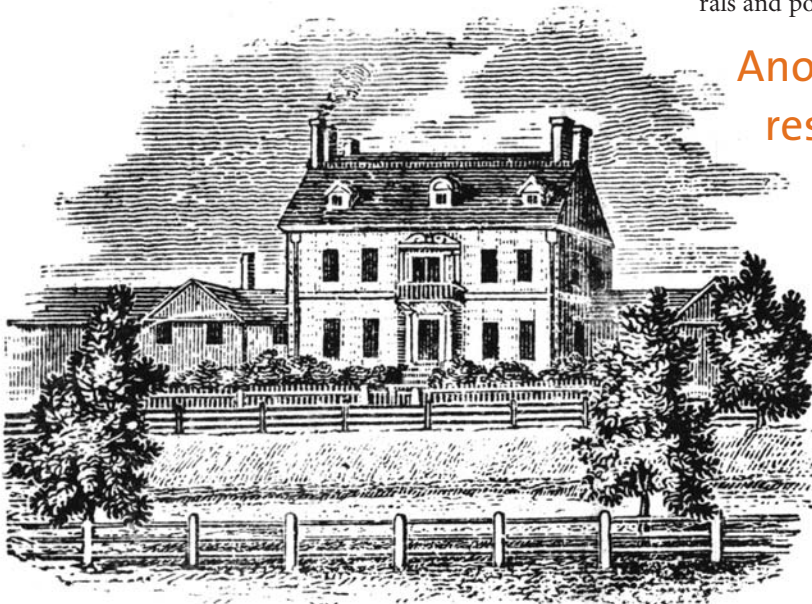
the “official residence” of the Commonwealth's chief executive. “I cringe when people call it a governor's mansion,” Joyce says. “It's a governor's residence, or an official residence, and it's really fairly modest.”

Although the Special Commission for the Purpose of Considering a Governor's Residence at Brookwood Farm, a body created by the Legislature in 2003, was due to report in February, the deadline was extended indefinitely. In the meantime, Brookwood Farm is, in effect, a ward of the state, which took possession a decade ago. “We're already maintaining the property,” says Joyce. “We have a park ranger living in the house.”

“I don't see any evidence the administration of the Commonwealth has been hampered by the lack of a governor's mansion,” says Fowler. But the historian does look back fondly upon the original governor's mansion: the home of John Hancock.

“In its heyday,” the two-and-a-half-story Georgian mansion on Beacon Street, overlooking the Boston Common, “was the social and political capital of the Commonwealth,” says Fowler, author of *The Baron of Beacon Hill*, a 1979 biography of Hancock. “This is the place that saw the constant comings and goings of generals and admirals and politicians. It was a magnificent home; everyone

Another try for an ‘official residence’ is underway.



wanted to pay homage to the great man, John Hancock.”

And much homage was paid, to the place and to the man. During the State House centennial in 1898, a Worcester legislator, Alfred Seelye Roe, recounted a story abolitionist Wendell Phillips told about an old Southerner he brought, decades before, beneath the house's “ancient roof-tree.”

“As the gentleman stepped upon the slab worn by thousands of passing feet, and reflected that through that very doorway had gone so many times the President of the Con-

tinental Congress, overcome by his emotions, he said, "You must excuse me, but the presence of so much recalling the venerable past quite unmans me, and I must sit for a moment to recover myself."

Jane Holtz Kay, author of *Lost Boston*, quotes an unnamed 19th-century Bostonian as saying, "no stranger who felt the patriotic impulse failed to pay [the Hancock house] a visit."

The city sold Hancock's house for \$125,000 in 1863.

As venerated as it was, in 1863 the city sold Hancock's house for \$125,000 to a pair of Bostonians who demolished it and erected a row of French Second Empire brownstones in its place. Boston had lost a landmark and a piece of its history, although nobody seemed to notice at the time.

"It was an age before historic preservation," Fowler says. "It was in the midst of the Civil War; the public's attention was riveted upon other things."

Only 30 years later, however, the people of Massachusetts knew what they had in the Hancock house, even if only in memory. At the Columbian Exposition in Chicago

in 1893, when states constructed pavilions showcasing their history and industry, Massachusetts spent \$50,000 to build a full-scale replica of the Hancock house, which was, Roe observed, "by common consent, the most visited state building there."

In 1917, Gov. Samuel W. McCall proposed a replica of the Hancock house in its original footprint, on Beacon Street in front of the State House. "Nearly 30 states now have houses for their governor," he said to the Legislature on January 21, 1918. "A restored Hancock house would furnish an inexpensive and dignified residence for future governors." If it wasn't "used as a Governor's House," he said, "it could be availed of for the State's business."

McCall's proposal to resurrect the Hancock place as a governor's residence went nowhere, as has every other attempt to provide a governor's mansion. But it does raise the question: If it hadn't been destroyed in the first place, might a preserved or restored Hancock house, in the shadow of the State House, have served as the official residence to this day?

"It probably would," says Fowler. "Although I wonder why anyone would want to live over the store." ■

James V. Horrigan is a writer living in Boston.



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