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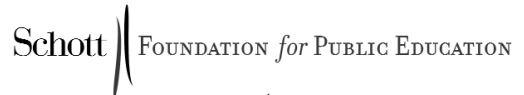


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CommonWealth

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COMING EARLY IN 2006

A special issue of *CommonWealth* on **Growth and Development: the Future of Massachusetts**



Issues of growth and development and their impact on quality of life and cost of living are rising to the top of the state's agenda. This extra edition — the third in the magazine's history — will apply *CommonWealth's* unique brand of in-depth, nonpartisan journalism to the broad range of growth and development issues, including zoning, regulation, environmental quality, transportation, housing, and jobs.

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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SUPERINTENDENT NEEDS TO GET FACTS STRAIGHT ON CHARTERS

While your magazine is, of course, justified in providing wide latitude to Argument authors to spin numbers as they see fit (“How to reform the charter school program,” Argument & Counterpoint, *CW*, Summer ’05), that’s no excuse for allowing obvious misstatements of fact.

1) Sheldon Berman’s *jihad* on charter schools claims: “In fact, charter schools have been protected from the recent cuts that almost all school districts have had to endure.” This is false and can’t be argued otherwise. Charters get exactly the same percentage cuts as their sending districts, by law. Berman’s debate tactic is taken from the anti-homosexual lobby—falsely claim that your opponent wants or receives “special privileges.”

2) He also argues: “Only a few Massachusetts charter schools appear to outperform their community’s public schools.” Again, this is simply untrue. In Boston alone, on the 2004 MCAS, the five charter high schools ranked Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 9 among the city’s 30 open-admission public schools. In fact, in all of the urban areas, the *majority* of charters outperform their sending districts.

This brings me to my main concern with Berman’s column: The school district of which he is superintendent is 96 percent white, and few children are poor. The Massachusetts charter schools he attacks are 44 percent students of color and 36 percent from poor families. Is he really in a position to deny school choice to these families?

And with all due respect to Berman, despite Hudson’s comparative advantages, the district is not distinguishing itself. On MCAS in 2004, 60 percent of Massachusetts districts outperformed Hudson in English, and 70 percent outperformed Hudson in math (ac-

cording to Standard and Poor’s Web site Schoolmatters.com). Meanwhile, he can’t blame his district’s performance on charter schools, as there are none in his district, and just a few Hudson kids attend regional charters.

Charter public schools are not perfect, nor have their advocates ever claimed that they are. Each and every school has a lot of room for improvement. I hope Berman feels the same way about his district.

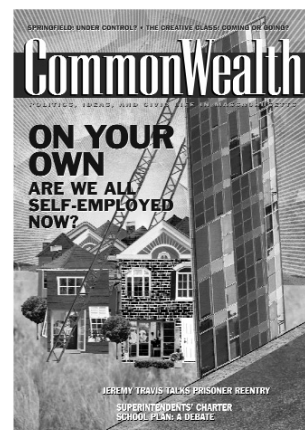
Michael Goldstein

*Boston Charter Public School Alliance
Boston*

CHARTERS AND DISTRICTS NEED TO SHARE INNOVATION

While all of the commentaries on charter schools in some way speak to the need for better understanding and sharing of successful educational practices, the authors fall into the trap of defending their own camps. “Charters are a success” vs. “charters are a failed experiment” doesn’t get us any closer to asking the essential questions of “What are the best practices being implemented?” and “How can we best share them for the purpose of making all schools better regardless of their status as charter or district schools?”

The Project for School Innovation, which Marc Kenan cites in his essay, is doing just that. A five-year-old nonprofit organization founded as an initiative of the Neighborhood House Charter School, PSI was created to cultivate professional networks of teachers (and principals) in order for them to learn from one another, building professionalism and leadership among individuals and ultimately in schools. We do this by building bridges of communication between educators and nurturing professional support networks that include teachers from all kinds of schools. From PSI’s vantage point, innovation is taking place in



both charter and district schools, but it is not being shared, documented, or replicated enough to reach its greatest potential. Our goal is to create a functional “cross border” forum in which that can happen.

Even as she calls for a moratorium on establishment of new charter schools until their academic performance gets evaluated independently (“Charter system needs scrutiny, reform before further expansion”), Catherine Boudreau says that innovation within existing public school districts can and should continue to flourish. While professional development programs for district schools do exist, they tend to be in silos within a school, or within a district, and are generally led by external experts who may or may not have in-the-trenches experience. PSI exists to support teachers (in various configurations of charter and district teachers coming together) in developing their own space for dialogue and peer coaching, so they can share more widely what works well and how best to innovate within a school.

We at PSI will continue to seek out those educators who want to learn, share, and grow regardless of the administrative orientation of their school. We will offer support, collaboration, and our By Teachers For Teachers publication series. PSI exists in order to effect change in education and believes that this important work can, and must, be done with whichever school

has something to share or something to learn. There isn't just one answer to school reform, there are thousands, and PSI works to seek them out and share them for the benefit of all educators, everywhere.

*Ruth Feldman
Executive Director
Project for School Innovation
Dorchester*

HEADLINE DOESN'T TELL THE WHOLE BEST STORY

I was dismayed by the title of the Considered Opinion column ("BEST-laid plans: Training initiative was unrealistic about employers and employees alike"). However, upon reading the article by Erin Flynn, the program evaluator, I found compelling implications for future education-and-training efforts regarding the importance of addressing workers' basic skill needs to ensure that more advanced training

can be effective. Having been a contributor to the interagency team from the Massachusetts Department of Education (a partner in the BEST initiative), I was heartened to see this emphasis.

The analysis is correct, too, about the need for the meaningful engagement of employers for such initiatives to achieve positive results. Their understanding of workers' needs for industry-based training must be accompanied by a willingness to support an investigation of their basic skill needs and a commitment to support more intensive education-and-training strategies to address both issues. Employers often understand that their workers have deficits in basic skills; however, they rarely understand (nor should they) what educational services are required to address them. Adult basic educators know that quick fixes do not do justice to Massachusetts's workers. In workplace education programs funded by

DOE, a planning process is required where employers, educators, and workers collaborate to identify both the needs for education and training within the workforce, and also the employer commitment to in-house efforts to address them. We find that good planning supports good practice.

Flynn's conclusions imply that broader and deeper conversations must occur about the wide range of workers' skill needs and the best (no pun intended) ways to meet them. Dialogue should include ABE providers, employers, training providers, workers, and government representatives. BEST began such discussions, MassINC and the Workforce Solutions Group are continuing them, and the evaluation of the BEST initiative by FutureWorks suggests that even more opportunities are needed. With informed and invested stakeholders, education-and-training efforts can be successful.



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I recognize that the article does inform the reader about some of the benefits of the BEST initiative, but I fear that the overall impression from the title is that the state wasted resources. As a former active participant, I believe that this is far from true. Making such an implication seems risky in a climate where the public distrusts government to manage resources wisely. Through BEST, interagency collaborations were started, industry-based education and training efforts were piloted, and significant goodwill resulted from the mutual understanding built among a wide variety of partners. (I'm already aware of one successful effort spawned by a BEST collaboration.) These outcomes should not be minimized; they are critical first steps in the long-term process of preparing Massachusetts's workers for the future.

I hope that state leaders, especially employers, will see the importance of investing in the Commonwealth's workforce, and that the lessons learned from BEST about gaining employer buy-in and addressing workers' basic skills needs will be instructive to any new education-and-training efforts that might emerge.

*Andrea Perrault
Lynn*

REPLICA OF HANCOCK HOUSE CAN BE FOUND IN NEW YORK

Readers intrigued by James Horrigan's article about John Hancock's demolished 1737 mansion ("Homeless on Beacon Hill," Two Bits) might be interested to learn that a replica of this imposing Georgian mansion is owned and operated as a museum by the Ticonderoga (New York) Historical Society. Faithfully executed in 1926 from measured drawings made before the Boston original was destroyed, this replica is constructed, as was the original, of Weymouth granite, and two interior rooms and the main hall duplicate those in the original Hancock house.

The Changing FACE of Massachusetts

DID YOU KNOW:

- The share of immigrants in the Massachusetts workforce has nearly doubled over the past 25 years?
- Between 1980 and 2000, the number of immigrants with limited English skills in the Bay State increased by more than 90,000?
- Between 2000 and 2003, nearly 1 out of every 5 immigrants entering Massachusetts was Brazilian?

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Closer to home, the ornate paneled interior of the Isaac Royall mansion in Medford, a National Historic Landmark managed by the nonprofit Royall House Association, is believed to have been carved by Shem Drowne, the same Colonial woodcarver and sculptor responsible for both the Hancock house interior and Faneuil Hall's beloved grasshopper weathervane. Originally a simple farmhouse on the property of the Commonwealth's first governor, John Winthrop, the Royall House was enlarged and enhanced in the 1730s by Isaac Royall Sr., a wealthy plantation owner, businessman, and slave trader. The mansion is considered one of Massachusetts's best remaining examples of mid-Georgian architecture. The Royall House property, which includes the only extant freestanding slave-quarters in the northern United States, is open to the public from May 1 to October 1, Wednesday through Sun-

day, from 2 to 5 p.m. Private spring or fall tours can also be arranged. More information can be found on the www.RoyallHouse.org Web site.

*Gracelaw Simmons Durney
Board Member
Royall House Association
Medford*

BETTER TO GROOM FUTURE LEADERS THAN MOURN PAST

Your article on "Corporate Citizens" (Roundtable, CW, Spring '05) was timely and raises important issues for the future of our city and region. We will be looking to health care, education, and finance for future leaders. I also want to suggest that we needn't sit back when it comes to developing the next generation of leaders. The Greater Boston area needs a more inclusive and collaborative leadership model for the future, and we can have just such a model if we look to the out-

standing young professionals emerging in our current corporate and nonprofit sectors. There is a great deal of talent already there. Our job now is to bring that talent to the table and make sure they are groomed and ready for significant leadership positions in the very near future.

The next generation of leaders must reflect that we now live in a majority minority city. Our program has worked with 158 such individuals over the last four years. Almost half of them (74) are people of color—two thirds are from our major corporate entities—and they are ready to practice inclusive and collaborative leadership. Let's not mourn the past; let's embrace the future and its opportunities for positive change.

*Sherry H. Penney
Professor of Leadership and
founding director
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A Better MCAS Multiple Choice Question...

- Q. Why does the Massachusetts Department of Education ignore 9-11th grade drop outs and determine the state's graduation rate only on those students who make it to 12th grade?
- a) The math is easier.
 - b) The Department of Education tells half of the story.
 - c) Massachusetts likes having one of the top graduation rates in the country.
 - d) Massachusetts does not care if the data is accurate.
 - e) All of the above.



High School Graduation Rates

GROUP	MASS DEPT. EDUCATION*	US DEPT. OF EDUCATION**
Hispanic	74%	46%
Black	79%	60%
White	90%	79%
Asian	90%	84%
All Students	87%	74%



The soon-to-be released **MA Department of Education Annual Report**, boasts of a 3% state drop-out rate in 2003/4, as in 2002/3. But the Department's own statistics show a drop-out rate of 13%.* The U. S. Department of Education statistics show a Massachusetts drop-out rate for all students of 26% with drop-out rates as high as 58% for Hispanic males and 47% for Black males.**

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** National Center for Education Statistics, based on estimated grade 9 cohorts.

Counting on new pilgrims

Of all the media coverage generated in the wake of MassINC's recent research on immigration, *The Changing Face of Massachusetts*, none was more poignant than an editorial by the *Old Colony Memorial* in Plymouth entitled "New Pilgrims." The editors reminded readers of the Cordage Co., a local rope manufacturer, which a century ago provided foreign-born workers a library of 3,000 books (written in German, Portuguese, and Italian) and hosted classes in English and American history. These immigrants worked hard for a shot at the American Dream, enriching their new homeland at the same time. Though not arguing for "handsome wood-paneled libraries" to be built at employers' expense, the editors did urge that we all look at today's immigrants in a similar way: "Today's new pilgrims are critical to the state's future success, just as critical as some of its earlier arrivals."

What a breath of fresh air. The debate about immigration tends to focus on numbers (how many immigrants should we allow?), control (how do we enforce whatever limit we set?) and benefits (which immigrants should receive what entitlements?).

Currently, the question of in-state tuition benefits for illegal immigrants is front and center on Beacon Hill. Young people, brought here illegally by their parents but raised in Massachusetts communities, don't have the right to pay in-state tuition rates for public higher education. Proponents say we should give them the same price break as their lifelong classmates. But extending a state-funded benefit to individuals whose very residency here is a violation of federal law raises issues of equity for other Bay Staters. And from the economic standpoint, what good does it do the state to help people gain skills attractive to companies who cannot hire them because of their immigration status? So this remains a thorny question.

What troubles me most, however, about the in-state tuition debate—as well as the general debate over illegal immigration—is its narrowness. Yes, in Massachusetts, we have illegal immigrants, but unlike the case in border states, they are hardly the main immigration story here.

Shouldn't we be having a much broader discussion about immigrants, the vast bulk of whom come here legally, and how they can contribute to our state's prosperity?

Massachusetts has the dubious distinction of being the only state to lose population in the last year. We would have a much more rapidly shrinking population without the influx of new immigrants. Our research, *Mass.Migration*,

showed that we lost some 213,000 residents net to other states from 1990 to 2002. Combine outmigration with aging—we are the 12th oldest state in the nation—and demographic changes in the Bay State point to population loss and a shrinking labor force. The nation, and especially border states, may worry about immigration getting out of hand. But in Massachusetts, immigration may be our best hope.

So what would a pro-immigration state policy look like? Unlike so many other areas of public policy—health care, the judiciary, zoning, etc.—states lack much authority to address immigration. There is no federalism when it comes to national borders. But what can we do to increase the positive impact of immigration here?

In part, this is a matter of getting the best and brightest from around the world to come here. "If we cream off the first-round intellectual draft choices from around the world, it will always end up a net plus for America," writes Thomas Friedman, in his book *The World Is Flat*. On the state level, perhaps we need to think about trade missions anew, keeping in mind Friedman's draft picks, not just trade and investment. In years long past, manufacturers recruited employees on the streets of Europe; more recently, high-tech firms did the same thing, offering H-1B visas for higher skilled immigrants. Maybe it's time for the Commonwealth to do some recruiting of its own. Perhaps we also need to broaden the mandate of the state's Office of Refugees and Immigrants, which now focuses on support services for refugees.

At the local level, forward-thinking municipal leaders in the old mill cities where so many new immigrants are making their first Bay State homes are looking at skill development for newcomers and quality public education for their children. This is a vital set of investments that will pay dividends in skilled workers. Even in suburban communities like Sharon local leaders have seen the data on immigration and are creating new English language programs.

Given constitutional arrangements, we'll leave it to the federal government to sort out illegal immigration. Massachusetts needs to focus on the rest—attracting, supporting, and retaining the next generation of new pilgrims to build our Commonwealth. ■



Ian Bowles

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Can voting become a duty—or a party?

BY NED BRISTOL

When the soccer moms showed up, James Glaser of Tufts University and his two colleagues knew their political science experiment was going to be a success. It was May 10, Election Day in Hooksett, NH, and Glaser and company had set up a tent outside the town's single polling place in hopes of attracting voters. Among the offerings were sandwiches, drinks, chips, and cotton candy. Those who took the bait, he says, included mothers and fathers who were able to get their kids supper—free, at that—while doing their civic duty. Then the families piled back into their minivans and SUVs and headed off to the ball fields.

"There were loads of kids there," says Glaser.

The idea was to see whether making Election Day more of a festive event would boost voter participation. The initial findings—by Glaser, Yale political scientist Donald Green, and Yale doctoral student Elizabeth Addonizio—are that it did. Based on a statistical comparison with nearby Hanover, which had just 401 voters come to the polls, Hooksett's turnout should have been just 433. Instead, 1,498 cast ballots that day.

In Massachusetts, the Legislature's Joint Committee on Election Laws plans to report out a package of voting enhancements this fall in hopes of increasing participation, according to Sen. Edward Augustus Jr. (D-Worcester), who is Senate chairman of the committee. Getting a close look are proposals to allow voter registration on Election Day and to ensure that workers get time off for voting without loss of pay. (The Tufts and Yale researchers chose to conduct their experiment in New Hampshire because same-day voter registration is allowed there.) Augustus and the committee's House chairman, Rep. Anthony Petrucci (D-East Boston), are also sponsoring a constitutional amendment championed by the League of Women Voters to remove restrictions on absentee voting and allow early voting by mail.

But what if removing obstacles to voting is not enough? What if voters need enticements to go to the polls, or even sanctions for not casting their ballots? Does the Commonwealth need a carrot-and-stick approach to Election Day?

Daniel Winslow thinks so. A former state District Court judge and former legal counsel to Gov. Mitt Romney,



Voters in Hooksett were enticed by balloons and cotton candy.

Winslow has been pushing a plan to make voting pay, or at least make it costly not to vote. The Norfolk lawyer came across a little-known provision in the state Constitution that provides for compulsory voting, with the Legislature's approval. (Article LXI states: "The general court shall have authority to provide for compulsory voting at elections, but the right of secret voting shall be preserved.") Though there is no such thing anywhere in the US, a number of countries, including Australia, Brazil, and Belgium, actually require their citizens to cast ballots.

Winslow is also on the board of overseers of the University College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts, in Medford. Attending a dinner there shortly after last November's presidential election, he mentioned his discovery to Glaser, an assistant political science professor and dean of undergraduate studies. Glaser brought in Green and the two academics and the lawyer did some brainstorming. Then they set out to test the carrot-and-stick approach to voter turnout, with the academics pushing the carrots and Winslow carrying the stick.

Winslow approached the Norfolk board of selectmen in April with a proposal to charge citizens who don't vote in local elections higher fees for municipal services. Under his plan, fees would be raised to the maximum allowable by law (that is, the actual cost of providing a particular service), but voters, who would be given a receipt upon leaving the polls, would automatically qualify for the old, lower rate.

"The failure to participate in civic life at the local level has costs," says Winslow. "Usually they're hidden costs. This approach would make those costs apparent."

But it was no sale in Winslow's hometown, where just 15 percent of voters participated in this year's town election. "I don't see the average citizen of Norfolk viewing it as a great thing," says chairman Ramesh Advani. "They might think they're being forced to vote." Winslow also approached

the Massachusetts Municipal Association, but the MMA decided not to submit the idea to its policy committee for review, according to executive director Geoffrey Beckwith.

Legal concerns have also been raised about making people pay a financial penalty for not voting. Winslow's proposal "has the smell of a poll tax," says Heather Gerken, a Harvard Law School professor and election law specialist. "Some people might argue it sullies the right to vote." The US Department of Justice put up a red flag not only for Winslow's idea but also for one put forward by state Sen. Brian Joyce to provide a \$25 tax credit for voting in state elections.

"Federal law makes it a crime to pay for a vote," says Eric Holland, a Justice Department spokesman. "The receipt of anything of value, including a tax incentive, could potentially violate federal law."

But cotton candy for kids is a different matter. In addition to the free food, the Hooksett poll party featured raffles and a DJ, at a cost of \$3,500 covered by the Yale Institution for Social and Policy Studies, of which Green is the director. Addonizio, the Yale graduate student, says that in planning and promoting the Hooksett festival she aimed "to recreate the 19th-century excitement of elections."

For analytical purposes, Hooksett was paired with Hanover. The two New Hampshire towns were of similar size (less than 10,000 in the 2000 Census), had similar voting rates in last year's town elections, and held elections on the same date. A coin flip determined which town got the poll party—and a tripled voter turnout.

Hooksett town officials are not so convinced that the tent produced the turnout. The festival "may have helped some, but there is no hard way of linking the data to what the turnout was," says Moni Sharma, interim town administrator at the time of the vote. Town clerk Leslie Nepveu, who supervises elections, attributed the turnout to get-out-the-vote campaigns conducted by backers of ballot proposals to fund a new air-conditioning system for the town library and to rebuild a playground, both of which passed.

Green and Glaser admit that the Hooksett experience was just a first take in looking at poll-party impact. The researchers are seeking approval to conduct experiments this fall—in Boston and Marlborough—that will compare precincts within the same city, so that ballots and issues will be similar, if not identical. But Green says it's clear to him that the poll party made the difference in Hooksett's turnout.



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"I don't think there was a GOTV effort in Hooksett on a scale sufficient to generate even 200 votes," says Green, who also says the civic celebration got a warm reception from voters. "The reaction I heard most was we ought to try to do this again." ■

Former Attleboro Sun Chronicle editor Ned Bristol is a freelance writer and Boston Globe correspondent.

Shelter visit puts Healey in middle of an old dispute

BY NOAH SCHAFER

The tour of the PIP Shelter on Main Street in Worcester on July 26 starts out as a routine, almost ceremonial, visit by Lt. Gov. Kerry Healey, who chairs the state's Interagency Council to End Homelessness. Healey is there by invitation of officials from the Framingham-based South Middlesex Opportunity Council, which took over the shelter's operations last year.

After a briefing by SMOC officials on their plans to reduce crowding at the shelter by moving clients to scattered locations around the region, Healey is led around the four-story shelter, where she looks at sleeping quarters, the medical area, and the women's facilities. Though PIP puts up more than 100 persons a night, there is hardly a homeless person to be seen, apart from a small recovery group meeting.

"This is my workday," says Healey, when asked about the timing of her visit. "This is the time I could spend talking to the directors." Healey adds that she is there mainly to learn about what SMOC is doing to reduce the number of people on the street. "That [population] causes a great drain on the health care system. We need to be able to create stable environments."

There is nothing stable about the environment she had walked into, however. Some three dozen nearby residents are standing outside holding signs decrying what one of them calls the influx of "derelicts" that the shelter brings into Main South, a low-income neighborhood where open drug use and prostitution are ongoing nuisances.



Lt. Gov. Healey at the controversial PIP Shelter in Worcester.

"Things have just gotten worse since SMOC took over," says William Breault, a neighborhood activist and president of the Main South Alliance for Public Safety, who has long fought for closing the PIP. "There are three sex offenders who are registered with the PIP Shelter's address." He hands Healey a thick packet of his grievances.

State Rep. John Fresolo, a Worcester Democrat who is going along on the tour, corners Healey and asks her to return to meet with the shelter's neighbors. (Healey agrees, and City Councilor Barbara Haller, who represents the district in City Hall, reports that Healey's office has promised a meeting in October. "What Healey got was a very narrow, one-sided perspective [about] a shelter that wasn't even operating when she was there," says Haller.)

The PIP Shelter is a longstanding sore point in the state's second-largest city. The shelter was founded as the Public Inebriate Program, a place for drunks to come in out of the cold and sleep it off. In a public relations move, the name was changed to the People in Peril Shelter in 1999, but the program's policy has remained the same: Any homeless person can receive overnight accommodations, even those who are actively intoxicated or high.

This makes PIP something of a rarity, as other shelters in the region require their guests to be sober. Only a handful of other shelters across the state accept intoxicated clients. Boston's Pine Street Inn is a "wet" shelter, and SMOC also operates such a program in Framingham. Wet shelters exist in Gloucester and Lawrence as well, according to the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless.

This tolerance of the Achilles' heel of many homeless adults has made the PIP a constant source of controversy. It has long been seen as a magnet for drunks and addicts, much to the chagrin of activists working to rid Main South

of drugs and crime. Indeed, shelter director Carlos Cunningham explains the scarcity of homeless people during Healey's visit as evidence of the shelter's responsiveness to neighborhood concerns.

"We recognize the safety and security concerns about seeing people loitering out here during the day and preying on our clients," says Cunningham. "So we have a policy that only those committed to furthering their recovery can be here during the day. After 4 p.m. is when anyone is able to come in."

In fact, the very plans to disburse PIP clients to other sites that SMOC officials are touting to Healey have already gotten the agency into more hot water. A few weeks earlier, SMOC had raised a commotion in Worcester's affluent West Side when it purchased a house to be used for a women's shelter. Soon after, Democratic state Sen. Harriette Chandler saw to it that \$200,000 was cut from SMOC's state funding.

Did Healey know she was walking into the middle of one city's war over how to treat the homeless? "I read the papers," she says. "I know what's going on." ■

Noah Schaffer is news editor for Worcester Magazine.

Barriers fall for disabled voters

BY GABRIELLE GURLEY

“**E**verything these days is regulation, regulation, regulation, penalty, fine, threats.” That’s Medfield town administrator Mike Sullivan’s take on the Help America Vote Act, which is requiring municipalities to make all their polling places accessible to people with disabilities as of next year.

Sullivan, who has been Medfield’s administrator for 30 years, says it’s not the idea that the disabled need to be accommodated at the polls that bothers him. “We’ve always been very focused on the handicapped,” he says, and he praises the state’s disabilities office as “very helpful” in evaluating access concerns at Medfield’s lone polling site, the Ralph Wheelock School. But he bristles at the imposition of yet another “mandate,” which he calls “just one more little thing that the federal and state governments keep dropping

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By January 1, 2006, under a provision of the four-year-old federal election reform law, all polling places must provide people with disabilities the same access and independence that other voters expect. Among other requirements, this means that every polling station must have at least one “touch screen” voting machine or similarly accessible system.

Often located in decades-old municipal buildings, schools, and churches, polling stations continue to present obstacles to voters with disabilities despite an array of federal and state regulations. An estimated 1.5 million Massachusetts residents have disabilities, according to the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD), and many municipalities have lagged in ensuring accessibility for this group of voters.

A 2004 MOD study found that most of the state’s 1,488 polling stations were effectively off limits to people with disabilities. Only 67 of the state’s 351 cities and towns had fully accessible polling locations. Sixty percent of sites had at least one feature that did not conform to state regulations. At slightly more than half of them, parking spaces designated as accessible still had problems such as a lack of “access aisles” or appropriate signs; and 29 percent of the sites had ramps

that lacked handrails or had excessively steep slopes.

Local officials are currently being notified about deficiencies that must be corrected before a municipality’s first scheduled 2006 election, according to Brian McNiff, spokesman for Secretary of State William Galvin. In some cases, McNiff says, these deficiencies should have already been corrected to bring public buildings into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

That landmark civil rights legislation, now 15 years old, contains a broad range of mandates, such as equal access to public facilities and reasonable modifications for voters with physical or mental disabilities. Massachusetts regulations are even more stringent, according to MOD director Myra Berloff. For example, the state prohibits “curbside voting”—that is, voting from a car or on the sidewalk—even though federal law permits it.

Stan Eichner, director of litigation for the Disability Law Center, a legal advocacy group with offices in Boston and Northampton, says that most cities and towns want to do the right thing. On Election Day last year, shortly after the MOD polling place accessibility study was released, the DLC and nine of the state’s 11 Independent Living Centers, which

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provide services for the disabled, conducted site surveys to determine how officials had responded to the state's findings. Visiting 22 polling places in 13 municipalities, surveyors discovered that two-thirds of identified problems had been corrected.

Federal directives also have a way of capturing the attention of local officials. The city of Springfield has been under scrutiny for access issues since March 2002, when the US Justice Department filed a lawsuit against the city alleging that a task force created in 1998 to "investigate and review" ADA accessibility standards had failed to act. Last February, the city settled the lawsuit, agreeing to upgrade physical access to polling places and other city facilities, as well as tackle other issues in voting, employment, law enforcement, and emergency preparedness.

After evaluating five bids from voting machine vendors, and reviewing tests of different machines during this fall's municipal elections, the state will purchase and deliver new accessible machines to towns and cities, one for each precinct, later this year. Municipalities will have to pick up the regular maintenance tab, according to the Secretary of State's Elections Division.

In Medfield, the lone polling station needs "very minor" modifications to a ramp and parking spaces, according to Sullivan, but he's still irked by the ongoing costs his town will have to bear for the maintenance and re-programming of accessible voting machines. Eichner, in turn, has little sympathy for pleas of hardship from local officials.

"The truth is that [providing accessibility] is the cost of doing business," says Eichner. "Cities and towns have had democracy on the cheap, because not to include [accessibility] as a cost of running your business means that the rights of people with disability came at a discount."

Dartmouth is one town that has few worries about new regulations, having completed renovation of its eight polling stations "years ago," says town clerk Eleanor White. When the MOD evaluated Dartmouth's polling locations in 2003, the surveyor told White that, of the towns he'd visited up to that point, Dartmouth was "the only town that was up to par," says White.

For MOD director Berloff, removing polling place barriers is an important step for getting people with disabilities to exercise their rights. "If you build it, folks will come," she says. ■



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Congressional club

LNG fight shows that, even for Democrats, membership has its privileges

BY SHAWN ZELLER

When the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission approved plans to construct a liquefied natural gas facility in Fall River in June, no one was more outraged than the city's mayor, Edward Lambert, who has campaigned vigorously against the plant, which he views as a bull's-eye for terrorists. So Lambert did what any savvy local politician would do when stonewalled by a Washington regulatory agency: Call his congressman.

Within weeks of the FERC decision, Lambert was celebrating provisions in two bills that make life difficult for Weaver's Cove Energy, the company trying to build the LNG terminal, and its owner, New York energy firm Amerada Hess.

For four years Weaver's Cove has been planning to build a terminal off the Taunton River in the North End of Fall River where the company will be able to offload LNG brought on tankers from overseas. It has hardly been greeted by the welcome wagon.

The first legislative obstacle, included in a water resources bill that passed the House on July 14, bars dredging beyond a depth of 35 feet in Fall River Harbor, a restriction that may make the waters impassable for huge LNG tankers.

Then, on July 29, Congress passed a long-awaited highway bill. Tucked into the legislation was a provision that bars the use of federal funding to remove the Brightman Street Bridge over the Taunton River. A replacement span has been under construction

since the late 1990s, and plans called for the older bridge to be torn down once the new one was complete. However, the transportation bill, which President Bush signed in August, directs that the existing span, a drawbridge whose opening is not big enough for LNG tankers to pass through, be kept in place and used as a pedestrian path across the river.

In both cases, US Rep. James McGovern worked quietly behind the scenes to ensure the provisions' passage, discussing them publicly only after they were approved. And he says there will be more impediments thrown in the way of Weaver's Cove later this year. "The company may think this battle is over, but it's just beginning," says McGovern, a Worcester Democrat whose district includes Fall River.

James Grasso, a Needham-based consultant who is acting as a spokesman for the developers, says the McGovern-sponsored roadblocks are



Washington's great pork barrels, stuffed with projects included at the behest of individual members of Congress. The 2005 legislation included 6,500 such earmarks, at a total cost of \$24 billion. McGovern's proposals may have been easier sells because they were cost-savers, barring the use of federal funds for projects that, not coincidentally, would have made the LNG facility possible.

McGovern may have found sympathetic ears in the House because the number of proposed new LNG plants is rising and hitting all areas of the country. Almost everyone agrees that more energy is a good thing, but few want the potentially dangerous LNG facilities in their own backyard.

The efforts to block LNG terminals

McGovern worked quietly behind the scenes to block a terminal in Fall River.

unfortunate, and, ultimately, make for bad energy policy. "If every state and every municipality had the authority to veto or refuse the construction of a facility like we are proposing, nothing would get built," he says.

But parochial preferences are more the rule than the exception in huge spending bills. The federal transportation spending plan, typically reauthorized every five years or so, is one of

have frustrated the Bush administration, which argues that such facilities are crucial to national energy policy. The administration won a temporary victory in June, when it prevailed on the Senate to reject a provision in an energy bill supported by Massachusetts senators Edward Kennedy and John Kerry that would have given states veto power over LNG siting.

But McGovern's subsequent suc-

cess demonstrates how the concerns of a single Democratic congressman—even a liberal one from the bluest of blue states—can still carry the day in a Republican-dominated House. Relations between the parties are regarded as more poisoned than ever, but when it comes to the pet projects of members of Congress, bipartisan back scratching endures.

“There is a tradition of it,” says Larry Sabato, director of the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia. “When the Democrats were in charge, they let Republicans get something. You don’t get as much,” he says of those in the minority party, “but you get something.”

The extending of such courtesies is driven by personal relationships, and by the knowledge that a good turn may be repaid “when there is a tough committee hearing or vote on a controversial matter,” says Sabato.

McGovern is well positioned in that regard, holding a coveted seat on the powerful House Rules Committee, which sets the terms of debate under which all bills are considered on the House floor. It was because of his position as the second-ranking Democrat on Rules that McGovern was able to win a position on the conference committee that reconciled competing House and Senate drafts of the transportation bill. And it didn’t hurt that McGovern had previously served on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, which shepherded the legislation through Congress. McGovern used his connections with Rep. Jim Oberstar of Minnesota, the top Democrat on that panel, to insert the provision in the House version of the transportation bill barring destruction of the old Brightman Street Bridge.

Lambert sees McGovern’s efforts

as the first victories in a larger war. “We continue to apply public pressure, political pressure, hoping there is enough weight that might tip the scales,” says Lambert, who has argued vociferously that the LNG tankers pose a grave safety danger. A recent report by Sandia National Laboratories determined that an attack on an LNG tanker could cause a flaming cloud that would burn every person within a mile.

Weaver’s Cove spokesman Grasso argues that members of Congress should allow FERC, and related federal and state permitting authorities, to proceed without political interference. Four years of study by the company and two years by FERC have demonstrated that “this project can be constructed and operated safely and will bring much needed energy to this region,” says Grasso, adding that there has not been a major LNG

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disaster anywhere in the world in at least 60 years.

He says Weaver's Cove hopes to begin construction of the facility next summer. If built, he adds, it will help lower natural gas prices in New England, provide thousands of construction jobs, and pay \$3 million in local taxes each year.

But throwing yet another wrench into Weaver's Cove's plans—this one a move in which McGovern had no role—in August, the Navy asked FERC to reconsider its siting decision because the proposed plant would interfere with Navy training exercises in Narragansett Bay.

Fall River now has filed a petition with FERC asking it to reconsider its decision in light of the bridge provision and the Navy's opposition. The June FERC vote was 3-1 in favor of the project, but because one of the three commissioners who voted "yes" has resigned and has not yet been replaced, advocates for Fall River hope they will only need to convince one commissioner to change his vote.

The city has hired Washington lawyer Lester Hyman, a former chairman of the Massachusetts Democratic Party, to make its case. Hyman recently represented Rhode Island's attorney general in his successful effort to stave off an LNG facility in Providence.

"There definitely is hope" that the FERC decision can be overturned, says Hyman. But if that fails, Hyman says, the city will take the case to the US District Court in either Washington or Boston.

Weaver's Cove has lined up an army of lawyers, plus environmental and safety consultants, to defend its plan. "What [Weaver's Cove] has done is take the best of anyone in the LNG industry and made them a team," says Grasso. But even if Weaver's Cove comes up with countermoves, the opponents say they're ready.

The dredging and bridge provisions are just the first of "many obsta-

cles that will be thrown in their path," says McGovern, coyly declining to elaborate on further legislative tricks he may have up his sleeve. "If they think we are going away, they are mistaken."

WATCHING HIS LANGUAGE

McGovern wasn't the only member of the state's all-Democratic congressional delegation who came away from the transportation bill with something to brag about. Rep. Michael Capuano of Somerville, the state's lone representative on the House committee that oversees transportation, brought home more than \$870 million per year in federal dollars to be spent on local highway and transit projects. The new money, which funds projects through 2009, will create 8,500 jobs in road construction each year. It will also fund construction of a new Lechmere MBTA stop and a new National Park Service visitor's center for the Boston Harbor Islands, among other projects, and it authorizes an engineering study of commuter rail service from Boston to New Bedford and Fall River.

"I have no doubt that Republicans got a bigger slice of the pie than Democrats did," says Capuano. But he is hardly complaining about the Bay State's take, which represents a significant reversal in the state's transportation fortunes. In the last round of funding, approved in 1998, Massachusetts secured only about \$550 million per year, and it was the only state in the country to see its funding drop. From 1991 to 1998, Massachusetts had received \$830 million annually, thanks to a steady infusion of cash for the Big Dig.

How did Capuano help the Bay State bounce back? Lots of glad-handing and horse-trading with other members who were seeking earmarked funding for their own special projects. That, he says, and "by never saying 'big' and 'dig' in the same sentence." ■

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Scientific method

High stakes are no excuse for dumbing down science education

BY MILLICENT LAWTON

It was hardly a surprise when the state Board of Education voted in June to require high school students to pass one of several new MCAS tests in science in order to graduate. Pressure had been building for such a move, not only within the state but also in Washington, DC.

In January, Gov. Mitt Romney called on the board to add science to the current mandatory exit exams (in English language arts and mathematics) sooner rather than later. And the federal No Child Left Behind law requires states to test students in science at least once during the third to fifth grades, sixth to ninth grades, and 10th to 12th grades, respectively, by 2007-08. In addition is the growing recognition that science has become, along with math, a critical educational challenge for the Commonwealth's, as well as the nation's, economic future. So, beginning with the Class of 2010, this year's eighth-graders, students will have to pass any one of four end-of-course exams offered in biology, chemistry, introductory physics, or technology/engineering in order to receive their diplomas.

For science educators in any school district where time and resources have been shifted to the MCAS-priority areas, the new exam may be a blessing. Finally, science is going to be a priority rather than an afterthought. But after three years as a graduation requirement, MCAS remains controversial. Extending it to a third subject area—one that, at lower grade levels and in high school pilot tests, has yielded mediocre scores—has revived many of the old objections to high-stakes testing.

Inclusion in the graduation-test requirement is not the only reason that science education is at a crossroads in Massachusetts. In November, the state Board of Education is expected to vote on proposed revisions to curriculum content standards for each of the high school science disciplines. Thus, not only are these science courses to take on high-stakes significance, but what is to be taught in those courses is in flux as well.

The proposed revisions to the high school science standards, posted online for public comment this past summer, are not radical. But certain changes raise questions about what kind of science education the Commonwealth is prescribing. Taken together with preliminary versions

of the science tests, it seems that the state may be departing from its own stated desire to have students do science the way scientists do it. What's at stake is whether the science that's taught, under the new pressure of MCAS, will help Massachusetts, with its knowledge-and-innovation-based economy, grow its own high-quality technicians, scientists, and engineers—otherwise known as today's schoolchildren.

LEARNING BY INQUIRY

Over the past 10 to 15 years, the emphasis in elementary and secondary science education has shifted toward the belief that science is important for every student, not just those who plan careers in science or engineering. Thus, the goal of pre-K–12 science education today is science literacy for all.

To be science literate, according to the *National Science Education Standards* issued in 1996 by the National Research Council, students must have content knowledge in all of the traditional science domains as well as understand science as a specific way of knowing. This way of knowing is called scientific inquiry. The idea is for students not only to understand inquiry as a concept but also to acquire the set of skills associated with doing it. The inquiry process and science subject matter go together inextricably. To teach one without the other is simply not teaching science.

**Students must do more
than simply parrot facts.**

Cognitive research says students won't fully comprehend the science content—won't be able to do more than simply parrot facts—unless they come to it the way scientists do, through inquiry. (Not every scientific topic can be arrived at through investigation, but many fundamental principles should be.) And students can't or won't use the critical thinking skills of scientists unless they practice them. As one of my colleagues put it recently, "This requires *doing* science instead of just *hearing* about it."

Among other things, scientific inquiry involves asking questions, making predictions, designing and carrying out



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investigations (often working with other students), making sense of data, and communicating findings. Doing inquiry in school need not involve elaborate materials. Tops and yo-yos allow middle schoolers, for example, to explore the concepts of force, motion, and momentum; at the high school level, students can use commonly available dialysis tubing to investigate the passage of nutrients and waste to and from cells through their membranes.

Inquiry-based science experiences can help not only with skills needed in other subject areas—such as writing—but with workplace skills, as well. The communication and collaboration skills that students use in the process of scientific investigation are the very skills employers say they don't see enough of. And the higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills involved in inquiry lessons are also the ones that, in adult life, matter more than keeping straight a list of scientific vocabulary words.

MCAS pilot tests are disappointingly basic.

If students are science literate, the hope is that they'll be less intimidated by science and more able to use the habits of mind they developed in science class in their everyday lives. They should find it easier, for example, to talk about health issues with their doctors or decide how to vote on an environmental policy issue.

Science through inquiry can be challenging and engaging, but doing it right depends on strong teacher preparation and professional development. Teachers need to understand inquiry-based teaching methods as well as science content. In addition, they (and their administrators) need to believe that teaching science concepts by means of inquiry complies with state curriculum standards. It is just that belief that may be undermined by the proposed revisions to the state science standards, which seem to back away from the Board of Education's past commitment to inquiry.

On the current list of scientific inquiry skills for students in high school biology, chemistry, and introductory physics, approved in 2001, the first item calls for students to "pose questions and state hypotheses based on prior scientific observations, experiments, and knowledge." In the proposed revised list, the first skill is "follow procedures to replicate an experiment"—in other words, carry out a cookbook-style lab protocol. The "pose questions" item is still there, but it has been demoted to No. 4 on the 10-item list.

Preliminary versions of the end-of-course tests also seem to be out of step with the Commonwealth's own goals for science assessment, as currently stated. My colleagues and I studied the released items from pilot tests in

biology and introductory physics, which represent two of the four tested disciplines. The material covered is disappointingly basic. More important, the questions are not trying to get at much more than the ability to regurgitate facts.

On the 2005 pilot test in biology, the science subject most high school students take, some of the multiple-choice items attempt to measure conceptual understanding, but others require only memorization of facts or vocabulary. A typical example: "Many animals have internal or external skeletons that provide support and structure. Which of the following parts of plant cells play a similar role? A) cell membranes, B) cell walls, C) chloroplasts, D) cytoplasm." (The answer is B.)

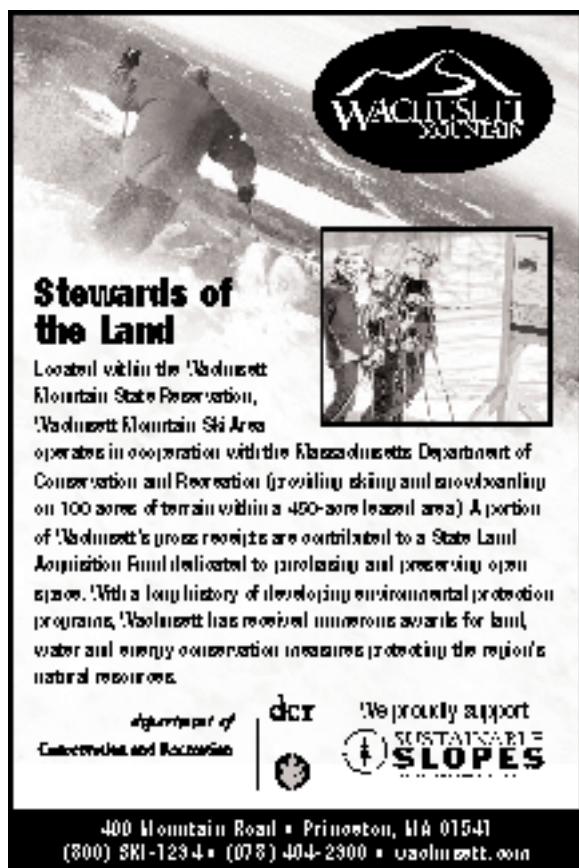
The state plans a 60-40 mix of multiple-choice and open-response questions, respectively, on the science tests for 10th-graders. The open-response questions are where one might expect to see scientific inquiry tested. But none of the open-response questions released from the 2004 and 2005 pilot tests in biology (four items total) attempted to measure the problem-solving and higher-order thinking skills inherent in scientific inquiry.

One of the open-response questions from the 2005 test could have done so had it been tweaked just a bit. The

item presents students with four stoppered flasks, each filled with the same amount of water containing a chemical indicator that turns from blue to yellow as the level of carbon dioxide in the solution increases. One of the flasks contains a water plant, another contains two fish, the third contains two fish and a plant, and the last one has only the water/indicator solution. The question asks the student to predict the color of the water after a few hours and to explain how the processes that have occurred in each flask cause the observed color.

Formulated this way, the test item is asking only for content knowledge about respiration and photosynthesis. It ignores the scientific process of inquiry. Using the same list of materials, it could have, for example, asked students *how* they would try to find out where the levels of carbon dioxide would be the greatest in a few hours.

Probably no paper-and-pencil test can adequately measure students' understanding of scientific inquiry. But some states, including New York and Michigan, have tests that are more ambitious about measuring this vital aspect of science education. In Connecticut, for instance, 10th-graders perform a state-issued science investigation in their classrooms up to a month before their state test (which is not a graduation test). The task asks students to



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design and conduct an experiment around a certain problem, then write about the results. In 2004, for example, they were asked to test the effectiveness of a model fire extinguisher. Connecticut students are not graded on the activity at the state level, but the state exam includes open-ended questions about that particular investigation.

As currently written, Massachusetts's science framework seems to call for something along the same lines. The curriculum framework says, in part, that scientific inquiry and experimentation "should be assessed...so that it is clear to students that in science, *what* is known does not stand separate from *how* it is known" (emphasis in original).

Tests can be endlessly quibbled with, but as end-of-course exams, the science MCAS tests have particular power to influence what goes on in the classroom. The state Department of Education already plans to help high schools use the MCAS tests as the final exams in their science courses if they want to. That would result in an unprecedented level of influence by state testing directly on classroom curriculum and instruction.

Why would the state water down its demands for inquiry skills? It could be that Board of Education members think that following procedures or replicating the work of others is more important for science students than being able to pose questions or design an investigation. If so, that's a major and deeply unfortunate shift in educational philosophy.

But there may be a more prosaic, though no less disturbing, reason for that change. In giving priority to the skill of being able to copy an existing experiment, the state may be trying to give schools that don't do a lot of inquiry teaching an "out"—a way to feel their current classroom practice, however limited, is good enough to get their kids to pass the MCAS in science.

In a similar way, putting all the MCAS pressure on these end-of-course exams places the onus of accountability squarely on the shoulders of high school teachers. Off the hook are elementary and middle grades teachers, who are often less familiar with science content and pedagogy. That is unfortunate, because science, like reading and math, is learned cumulatively, building on prior knowledge and skills. One of the dangers of poor science teaching in the lower grades lies in the development of misconceptions (for example, that summer occurs because Earth is closer to the sun), which can be difficult for students to unlearn in the upper grades.

A TRUE SCIENCE EXPERIMENT

There is no question that, by adding science to the roster of MCAS exit exams, Massachusetts is raising the profile of science education. The question now is: How can the state ensure that students experience high quality teaching and learning in science? Here are some suggestions:

Remove the replication of experiments from the revised high school standards. Students are bored when they follow experiments like recipes. It's not acceptable to separate science content from the habits of mind involved in the scientific process, especially when these tests are likely to drive classroom practice.

Improve the items on the MCAS tests. One way to do that is to formulate groups of questions around a science concept and let students choose to answer two out of three or three out of five of them. That way, students are less bound by their ability to recall certain facts and more by their ability to understand a concept. Better yet would be to add questions that ask students to describe how and why they would devise an investigation.

Tighten the science requirements for teacher licensure. Under No Child Left Behind, states must ensure by the end of this school year that teachers are "highly qualified" in the subjects they teach. Beyond content knowledge, Massachusetts should ask teachers at all levels to demonstrate an understanding of science-specific pedagogy and assessment, as well as how to help students with scientific misconceptions, collaboration, and communication.

Include administrators in professional development in science. Principals and district leaders don't need to be science experts, but they do need to understand the national standards' emphasis on inquiry and be familiar with current ways of teaching. That would help them make decisions about curriculum, judge the quality of professional development and the need to release teachers for it, and become familiar with the existing networks of teacher leaders across the Bay State who could train and mentor their teachers.

Urge parents to think about and advocate for their kids' science education. Business leaders, scientists, and those in higher education are making their voices heard, but parents need to see science as a subject that's important for their children and speak up about how much and how well it's taught.

As Massachusetts begins to hold high schools and their students accountable for their performance in science, state officials should not surrender to the limitations of the existing educational system. Right now, each of the more than 350 local districts does science education differently—and some do it not very well at all. What the state must do is lead teachers, principals, superintendents, and parents in a process that will help them give students a thorough grounding in the concepts, skills, and habits of mind of science. ■

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STATE OF THE STATES

Falling fortunes

If the German company Adidas goes through with its buyout of Canton-based sneaker rival Reebok, the Bay State will be the home of just nine Fortune 500 companies, down from 17 in 1998. While Massachusetts remains a hub for nonprofit institutions, it is quickly becoming a minor player in the world of big business. The state ranked 17th on this year's Fortune 500 list (19th in the number of public companies headquartered here per capita), but that tally did not take into account the departures of Reebok or shaving-product giant Gillette, which is being taken over by Cincinnati-based Procter & Gamble. Gillette's departure means that only two Fortune 500 companies will be based in the city of Boston—compared with seven in Milwaukee and eight in Charlotte, NC, two cities of comparable size.

The state lost two other Fortune 500 mainstays, Fleet Financial and John Hancock Financial, last year. That leaves Mass Mutual Insurance (83rd), defense contractor Raytheon (103rd), Liberty Mutual Insurance (111th), and retailer TJX Companies (141st) as our highest ranked companies on the list, which is based on annual revenue, assets, and market value.

Massachusetts does much better on the *Chronicle of Philanthropy's* list of the 400 largest nonprofit organizations in the US (which are ranked by the amount of donations they receive from private individuals), but some fear that our rapidly dwindling number of corporate headquarters will eventually affect the level of charitable giving here. For now, the Bay State has the fourth-largest contingent on the *Chronicle's* list, headed by the Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund (7th) and Harvard University (10th).

But while we rank ninth in number of residents on *Forbes* magazine's list of the 400 wealthiest Americans—with Abigail Johnson (12th) and father Edward Crosby Johnson (28th), who run Fidelity Investments, ensconced near the top—the Bay State is not so impressive in the category of major philanthropic donations. The *Chronicle of Philanthropy* reported that in fiscal year 2004, the nation's 60 largest donations to charitable causes added up to more than \$10 billion, but not a single Massachusetts resident is found on that list of donors.

—ERIC WAGNER

RANK/STATE	NUMBER OF FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES (PER CAPITA RANK)*		NUMBER OF PHILANTHROPIC 400 NONPROFITS (PER CAPITA RANK)**		FORBES 400 RICHEST AMERICANS (PER CAPITA RANK)***	
1. New York	54	(3)	72	(1)	49	(2)
2. California	51	(24)	47	(13)	98	(1)
3. Texas	47	(14)	17	(27)	34	(15)
4. Illinois	33	(6)	16	(14)	21	(12)
5. Ohio	30	(5)	14	(15)	7	(31)
6. Pennsylvania	27	(11)	14	(17)	12	(22)
7. New Jersey	24	(4)	3	(38)	5	(33)
8. Michigan	22	(12)	6	(32)	13	(18)
9. Virginia	18	(7)	24	(3)	5	(30)
10. Georgia	17	(16)	18	(6)	4	(37)
Minnesota	17	(2)	5	(21)	11	(5)
12. Connecticut	14	(1)	5	(10)	6	(11)
Florida	14	(30)	11	(31)	21	(20)
North Carolina	14	(20)	7	(26)	5	(32)
15. Missouri	12	(15)	8	(12)	6	(21)
Wisconsin	12	(10)	2	(37)	9	(13)
17. Massachusetts	11	(19)	21	(2)	9	(16)
18. Colorado	10	(13)	9	(7)	9	(7)
19. Washington	9	(21)	6	(22)	10	(14)
20. Indiana	6	(28)	11	(7)	3	(36)
Kentucky	6	(22)	4	(23)	0	(NA)
Tennessee	6	(27)	6	(20)	4	(29)
23. Arkansas	5	(18)	2	(28)	7	(3)
Maryland	5	(29)	13	(5)	4	(27)
Oklahoma	5	(25)	6	(8)	2	(34)
26. Arizona	4	(32)	6	(19)	5	(24)
Nebraska	4	9	2	(16)	3	(9)
28. Alabama	3	34	2	(36)	1	(40)
Nevada	3	26	0	(NA)	4	(10)
30. Delaware	2	8	2	(4)	0	(NA)
Idaho	2	23	0	(NA)	1	(28)
Iowa	2	33	2	(30)	0	(NA)
Rhode Island	2	17	1	(24)	1	(23)
34. Kansas	1	36	3	(18)	5	(8)
Louisiana	1	39	1	(39)	1	(39)
New Hampshire	1	31	2	(9)	1	(26)
Oregon	1	37	5	(11)	2	(35)
South Carolina	1	38	2	(35)	1	(38)
Utah	1	35	2	(25)	3	(19)
40. Alaska	0	NA	0	(NA)	0	(NA)
Hawaii	0	NA	0	(NA)	1	(25)
Maine	0	NA	0	(NA)	0	(NA)
Mississippi	0	NA	2	(29)	0	(NA)
Montana	0	NA	0	(NA)	2	(4)
New Mexico	0	NA	1	(34)	0	(NA)
North Dakota	0	NA	0	(NA)	0	(NA)
South Dakota	0	NA	0	(NA)	1	(17)
Vermont	0	NA	0	(NA)	0	(NA)
West Virginia	0	NA	1	(33)	0	(NA)
Wyoming	0	NA	0	(NA)	1	(6)

*Two Fortune 500 companies are headquartered in the District of Columbia.

**Nineteen Philanthropic 400 organizations are headquartered in the District of Columbia.

***Two of the Forbes 400 currently live in the District of Columbia, and 11 live abroad.

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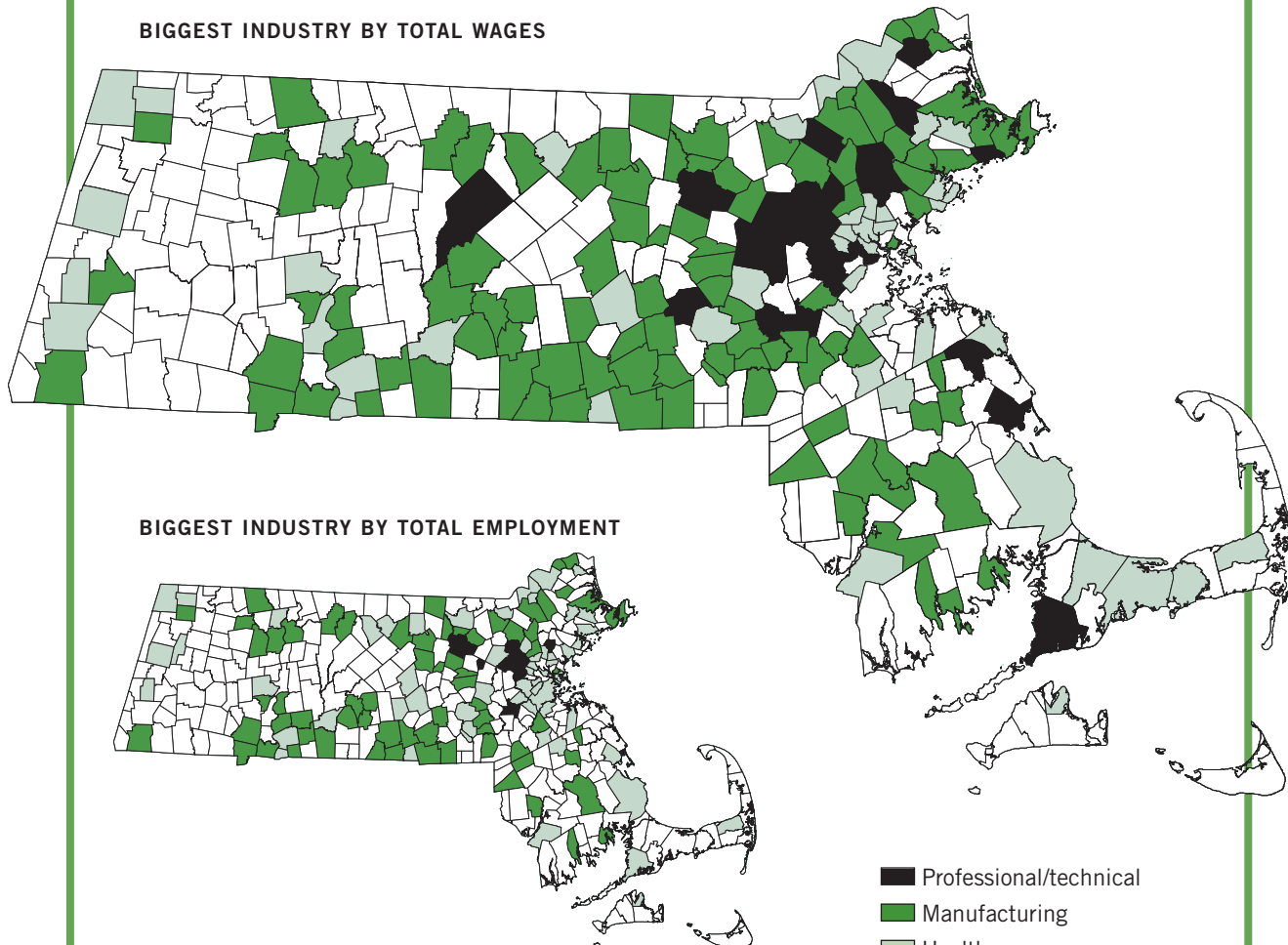


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HEAD COUNT

BIGGEST INDUSTRY BY TOTAL WAGES



BIGGEST INDUSTRY BY TOTAL EMPLOYMENT

Bread winners

The business of making things is still strong in much of central Massachusetts, as well as parts of the Merrimack Valley and the southeastern region of the state. But curing other people is how more Bay State residents earn a living. The larger map above shows which economic sector is predominant among workers (not residents) in each city and town as measured by total wages paid in 2004. Statewide, manufacturing is still number one, with some \$19.1 billion paid out in 2004. But manufacturing ranks third in terms of total employees, with a monthly average of 313,000. The sector still provides “good jobs at good wages”—the average weekly paycheck last year was \$1,171, compared with \$947 for the state’s entire private-sector workforce—but increasingly fewer of them.

In terms of bodies, the biggest industry is health care, and the smaller map shows that it is the dominant employer in most of the state’s major cities—including

Boston, Worcester, Springfield, Lowell, Fall River, and Brockton. (New Bedford and Chicopee are the largest communities where manufacturing still rules, and Cambridge is the biggest community where education is on top.) But average weekly pay for health care workers is only \$793. That’s still better than wages in the retail sector (\$520) or the accommodation/food sector (\$333), which dominates in much of Cape Cod and the Berkshires. However, it’s not as good as the construction industry (\$1,002), which is strongest in many of the state’s smallest towns.

As for the state’s vaunted “creative class,” it dominates the payroll in Boston, Everett, and Quincy (where financial services is No. 1) and in many northern and western suburbs (where the professional/technical sector leads). But even in many of these places, more people actually work in health care.

—ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN



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STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT

BY ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN

CURBS ON TEEN DRIVING PAY OFF

More restrictions on driving by 15- to 17-year-olds have significantly reduced traffic deaths in that age group, according to a recent study by a Swarthmore College economics professor. Thomas Dee concluded that “graduated driver licensing,” which imposes restrictions on new drivers such as nighttime curfews and a limit on the number of passengers allowed in a car, was largely responsible for a nationwide 5.6 percent drop in the number of fatalities among mid-teens between 1992 and 2002. Almost every state enacted new restrictions on teen driving during that period, and Dee includes Massachusetts (where such rules took effect in 1998) as among those with the toughest rules.

If the current restrictions aren’t enough, the Legislature might want to consider clamping down on teens using cell phones behind the wheel. According to a study from the University of Utah released earlier this year, 18-to-25-year-olds talking on cell phones reacted as slowly to brake lights on a car in front of them as did 65-to-74-year-olds without cell phones. (Don’t worry; researchers used driving simulators, not actual cars.) Cell phones are “instantly aging a large number of drivers,” said UU psychology professor David Strayer, a co-author of the study.

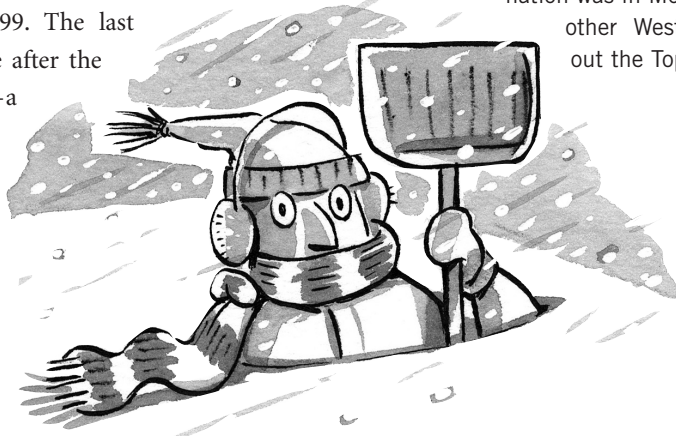
AN AVALANCHE OF DISASTERS

There have been 16 states of emergency declared by Bay State governors over the past 30 years, compared with only five during the previous 30 years. Either we’re getting softer or we’re getting unluckier. Writing in *City & Town* earlier this year, Peter Judge of the state’s Emergency Management Agency noted that a tornado, two hurricanes, a drought with accompanying forest fires, and a public-transit strike accounted for the handful of declared disasters from 1953 through 1977. But the Blizzard of ’78 began a long string of emergencies (at least as seen from the Corner Office), including the MBTA being placed in receivership in 1979, a natural gas shortage in 1981, a series of floods in 1984, the Malden Mills fire in 1995, and the Worcester warehouse fire in 1999. The last gubernatorial proclamation came after the worst snowstorm of 2004-05—a benchmark that few would want to match this coming winter.



CARS (RELATIVELY) SAFE ON THE CAPE

Is gridlock on the Sagamore Bridge a deterrent to crime? The Barnstable-Yarmouth area, connected to the rest of the state by only two roads, has one of the lowest auto theft rates in the US, according to 2004 figures released by the National Insurance Crime Bureau. The nonprofit industry group ranked Cape Cod 307th among 336 metropolitan areas, with 114 vehicle thefts per 100,000 people. Boston was about in the middle, at 141st place (New York City, less easily accessible by its bridges and tunnels, was 191st), and Springfield took top dishonors among Bay State regions, finishing 53rd with a theft rate of 565 per 100,000. Lawrence ranked 183rd, a considerable improvement from 66th just two years before. The highest rate in the nation was in Modesto, Calif., with other Western cities filling out the Top 10.



SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES FOR SINGLE-MINDED PEOPLE

How can we have a housing shortage when our population is shrinking? Because it's now the norm to live alone. The Census Bureau announced in August that the most common type of household in 2000 consisted of a single person (26 percent of all households), overtaking the traditional model of a married couple with at least one "natural" child (22 percent). After consolidating some of the 24,722 possible "relationship combinations," we find that 32 percent of all households have no partners or children of any kind. That is, there may be roommates, but there are no spouses, no unmarried or same-sex partners, and no adopted children or stepchildren. That category is followed by households with a partner and children (31 percent), with a partner but no children (26 percent), and with children but no partner (12 percent.)

Unfortunately, the data says nothing about whether Americans are happy with their solitude. Maybe single-person households agree with vaudeville-era singer Sophie Tucker, who used to boast: "I'm a one-ticket gal, free as the breeze/I go where I like, I do as I please/When I lock up my apartment, I've got all the keys/I'm living alone and I like it." But then there's 1970s pop singer Eric Carmen's take on the situation: "All by myself/Don't wanna be/All by myself anymore."



DEPARTMENT OF DUBIOUS RANKINGS: LIBERAL CITIES

Local observers were startled to see Cambridge ranked 8th, and Boston a lowly 24th, on a recent study of "America's Most Liberal Cities"—with Detroit and Gary, Ind., taking the top two slots. But it turns out that the nonpartisan Bay Area Center for Voting Research used nothing more than partisan voting results from the 2004 presidential election in ranking 237 cities with populations of more than 100,000. A more accurate title would have been "America's Most Democratic Cities," and the loyalty to that party among African-American voters explains why Baltimore, St. Louis, and Birmingham, Ala. (in a county that voted overwhelmingly against gay marriage last year), finished higher than the Hub in this study.

With less fanfare, the Web site ePodunk.com did its own ranking of the most liberal communities in the US last year, and Boston finished on top among large cities, with Cambridge edging out Berkeley, Calif., for second place. The state also took the top four slots among medium-sized cities (Northampton, Somerville, Arlington, and Watertown) and first place among small cities (Provincetown). Our higher showings here are attributable to ePodunk's consideration of individual contributions to left-leaning political action committees; the number of "gay households," as deduced from Census figures; and the voting records of US representatives. While the ePodunk study is more nuanced, it can still be criticized for equating gayness with leftyness and for not giving enough weight to taxation and other economic issues.

BACK BEHIND BARS

According to recently released figures from the Department of Correction, 2,912 inmates were released from state prisons in 1999, and 39 percent of them (or 1,126) were back in prison within three years. The three-year recidivism rate was almost identical for men and women: 848 of 2,171 male inmates and 278 of 741 female inmates. It was also similar among major racial groups (37 percent for whites, 41 percent for African-Americans, and 39 percent for Hispanics), but single people were somewhat more likely to return to prison than married people (41 percent vs. 31 percent). Most released prisoners were between 25 and 40 years old, and the recidivism rate for 25-to-29-year-olds (40 percent) was actually a bit lower than that for 35-to-39-year-olds (43 percent), but the rate drops off significantly for older groups.

Persons convicted of property crimes had the highest recidivism rate (52 percent), while sex offenders had the lowest (28 percent). The rate among released inmates whose last known address was Fall River was 49 percent, the highest of any major city in the Bay State; the lowest rate was in Cambridge (29 percent).

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Wire cutters

As towns get cheaper Internet access, telecom companies get worried

BY RAY HAINER

PEPPERELL—This small, hilly town along the New Hampshire border is rural enough to boast that it doesn't have a single traffic light (town officials don't count the ones that constantly flash red), but this summer Pepperell quietly became the second municipality in the state to link all of its government buildings by means of a wireless computer network. By making the switch to wireless, Pepperell officials expect eventually to reap savings of up to \$30,000 a year on Internet access and cell phone bills, or about 60 percent of their annual communications budget. That money is coming out of the pockets of the cable and phone companies that serve the town, but they would barely notice if not for a larger issue. What grabs their attention is the prospect of municipalities providing wireless broadband to residents and businesses as a public utility, like water. Though Pepperell officials insist that's not on the horizon, the telecom industry is keeping a watchful eye on its turf.

Den Connors, the town's systems administrator, believes that Pepperell is on the forefront of an accelerating trend in the state. "You are probably going to see a flood of [wireless] systems going in," he says. "We're just on the cusp, I think, of something that's going to happen very quickly."

Before deploying the new network, Pepperell purchased broadband service from the town's only licensed cable company, Charter Communications, as well as DSL service over standard telephone lines from Verizon, the state's largest phone company. But Bob Spain, director of government relations for Charter Communications, says he isn't worried about everybody going wireless.

"Every technology has its limita-

tions," says Spain. "There are natural limitations to a radio signal, and that's all we're talking about here, a radio signal. There is no technology that can change nature—that's just the laws of physics."

Spain argues that Charter's landline service is more practical, and more reliable, than wireless technology. And due to topography, size, and many other variables, he says, a wireless network may not be a viable solution for every municipality. "What works in Pepperell may not work in, say, Groton," says Spain, referring to the town next door.

Wireless proponents acknowledge that the technology, which uses low-power radio waves, is marginally less sound than landline systems, in the same way that cell phones are subject to occasional blips in service even in

the best coverage areas. But in the same breath they profess a belief that wireless, whatever its shortcomings, is the next great leap in telecommunications. They say that the advantages of wireless networks—their affordability, and their adaptability to areas large and small, urban and rural—will soon become self-evident. Connors, who moonlights as a wireless consultant for other towns, predicts that within three years, 30 to 50 municipalities in Massachusetts will deploy wireless networks for government use.

The skeleton of Pepperell's new network consists of more than 30 diamond-shaped boxes attached to the roof of each municipal building. One box is roughly the size of a baseball base and contains an antenna and radio transmitter. Most sit atop slender 30-foot poles, akin to cell phone towers, but there is also one in the belfry of the historic town hall.

The signals bouncing among these boxes provide Internet access to all the buildings, at speeds ranging from 10 to 100 times faster than cable- or phone-based access. Among other features, the network includes an automatic data backup system and a telephone system, known as Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP), that has replaced landlines at some buildings. Video cameras and alarm systems that can be used to monitor buildings from a remote location will be added in a second phase, and will simplify the duties of the town's public safety and public works departments—for example, by free-

ing personnel from having to make regular trips to check on unstaffed facilities.

Though this may sound futuristic, the network is essentially an off-the-shelf, do-it-yourself project. The town purchased much of the hardware from a company in Littleton, and Connors and other town employees were able to perform most of the installation themselves. The only part of the job they can't do is climb any tower taller than 100 feet, which requires special certification and insurance.

Although the network has made life easier for town employees, it was installed primarily to save money. Late last year Connors was in the process of buying cable (that is, wired) modems for the town, and he began comparing the price of that service to the wireless hardware available from various vendors on the Internet. "It became very obvious that it would simply be cheaper for a town the size of Pepperell to go out and install this gear in one shot," Connors recalls.

Each of the 30-plus radio installations costs about \$1,500. Add the various other network components, and the total cost of the hardware is roughly \$120,000 to \$130,000, an investment Connors expects the town to recover in about three years. Even allowing for the occasional lightning strike, repair and maintenance costs are expected to be fairly low. The primary maintenance expense will be upgrading certain network components when they become obsolete—that is, when newly available equipment works even faster—in five or six years. But Connors seems confident that the network as a whole will have a long life.

While they have yet to catch on in Massachusetts, wireless networks for municipal use are up and running in more than 50 locales across the United States, ranging in size from Las Vegas to towns with just a few thousand residents. Large states like California, Michigan, and Florida are each home

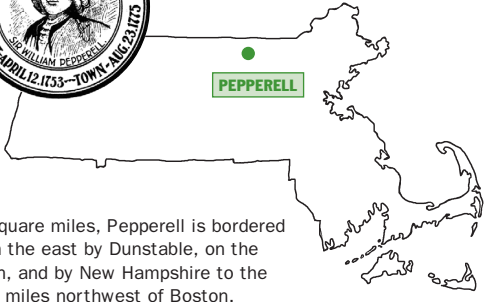

to several cities, towns, or counties with municipal wireless networks, and even Vermont boasts half a dozen communities that have or are planning to deploy them.

Massachusetts has been fashionably late to the municipal wireless party, with the notable exception of Malden. With no fanfare, that city installed a wireless network for municipal use about 18 months ago, making it the first municipality in the state to do so. Pepperell, roughly five times smaller than Malden, is only the second municipality in Massachusetts to go wireless, and is leading a small pack of towns and cities also considering the switch.

In addition, some towns are considering the idea of providing wireless service to all residents, not just town employees, and that is not welcome news for providers of broadband and cable Internet access. In a town blanketed with a public wireless network, residents would no longer be teth-

ubiquitous networks, and several more are planned, most notably in Philadelphia. Pepperell has no plans to add a public network any time soon—town officials are emphatic on that point—but several other Bay State municipalities are thinking about it. Brookline is studying the feasibility of deploying a public townwide network and a municipal network simultaneously, an option Newton has also looked into, and Nantucket hopes to have a network up by early fall that will cover the entire island. Malden, ahead of the curve once again, has already launched a citywide network that allows all residents with computers and PDA devices to access municipal and community Web sites, even those who otherwise have no access to the Internet. The municipal sites may not reach a lot of new people—how many computer owners don't have Internet access these days?—but in terms of hardware, Malden is most of the way toward being able to provide complete wireless service for all residents.

A number of the communities



PEPPERELL

Incorporated: 1775
Population: 10,955
Town Meeting: Open

FACTS:

- ◆ Covering approximately 23 square miles, Pepperell is bordered on the west by Townsend, on the east by Dunstable, on the southeast and east by Groton, and by New Hampshire to the north. It is approximately 45 miles northwest of Boston.
- ◆ The median sales price for a single-family home in 2004 was \$335,000, according to the Warren Group. In 2000, the median household income was \$65,163.
- ◆ Once a thriving agricultural and industrial town, Pepperell has a few large working farms and two paper mills even as it becomes more of a bedroom community.

ered to an Internet connection in their home. They could log onto the Web at high speeds anywhere and anytime, via laptop computers, personal digital assistants, and other wireless devices.

Many towns and cities across the country already feature these so-called

nationwide that have deployed wireless networks for public access have done so in conjunction with private companies, but most operate the service as a public utility. Residents pay subscription fees, often at below-market rates, directly to the municipality instead of a phone or cable

company. This model brings in revenue for the municipality, but public officials also hold it up as a tool for economic development and a way of bridging what is referred to as the “digital divide”—the different rates of Internet access in urban vs. rural areas, and in high- vs. low-income households.

Officially, the phone and cable companies are not concerned about the arrival of municipalities in the broadband business. “We are confident in our ability to compete,” says Jack Hoey, a spokesman for Verizon in Massachusetts. “There is a lot of competition out there, and we would take very seriously competition from a municipality. But this is something we do for a living. We would compete vigorously, and offer what we think would be a better service.”

Still, the telecom industry is not sitting on its hands. With varying suc-

cess, phone and cable companies have been lobbying legislators on both the state and national level to pass laws limiting municipal telecommunications services. In Pennsylvania, Verizon and Comcast led a lobbying effort that resulted in the passage of a law last December that gives telecom companies the right of first refusal to provide broadband in any municipality that wants to offer the service—essentially limiting municipal wireless networks to sparsely settled areas where it is not profitable for telecom companies to install cable. (Philadelphia was exempted from the law through a grandfather clause.) Since then, at least three other states have passed laws effectively curtailing municipal broadband.

At the federal level, US Rep. Pete Sessions, a Republican from Dallas and a former phone company executive, introduced a bill in May that

would prohibit municipalities from selling telecommunications services in any area where a private company provides a comparable service. Less than a month later, senators Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) and John McCain (R-Ariz.) countered with a bill that preserves the right of municipalities to offer broadband. (Both bills were still pending as of early September.)

So far, no legislation on municipal wireless service has been proposed in Massachusetts. State legislators and telecom company spokesmen both say that they are waiting to see what happens. In the meantime, the pending showdown in Congress and the somewhat uncertain regulatory landscape has led to mutual wariness on the part of private companies and local governments.

That wariness is certainly present in Pepperell. The town administrator, Robert Hanson, downplays the

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significance of the town's new network and chooses his words carefully when discussing it. Shortly after an article in *The Boston Globe* raised the possibility of a townwide network—and after Hanson subsequently received what he described as a “cautious” phone call from Charter Communications—Hanson and Connors stressed that they have no intention of adding a public network. Hanson all but dismisses the idea outright, as a matter of fact, and is quick to point out the potential legal issues involved.

“Under the current state of the law, there is not even a proven right on the part of a municipality to do that, even if we wanted to,” Hanson says. “I’m not sure there’s anything that says you can’t do it. On the other hand, there isn’t anything that says you can. It’s my understanding that the issue is still unsettled.”

The sudden affordability and accessibility of wireless technology has upended the discussion to some extent, but there is a precedent in Massachusetts for municipalities to offer broadband. State law explicitly allows the 40 or so towns that provide electricity to their residents as a public utility also to sell telecommunications services. A handful of the towns with these so-called municipal lighting plants, such as Braintree, do sell cable broadband, but it is unclear how the law might translate to wireless service. When the law was passed in 2000, wireless network technology was in its infancy, and few people could have foreseen that any and every town would be in a position to sell Internet access through the air.

Though technologically feasible, a public wireless network might still be a long way off for a small town like

Pepperell. A small network for municipal use offers considerable savings for a local government, but the customer service and other administrative tasks required to run a public network might prove prohibitive.

That said, Den Connors will tell you that whatever logistical and regulatory hurdles stand between towns like Pepperell and public wireless networks are no match for the momentum of the technology and the growing importance of broadband. In time, Connors predicts, municipalities will recognize that high-speed Internet access is as essential as any other public utility.

“It’s just so much a part of everyday life nowadays,” he says. “It’s like electricity, it’s like the telephone. You’ve got to provide it.” ■

Ray Hainer is a freelance writer based in Boston.

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Setting an Agenda

MetroWest Daily News tries to rally the western suburbs

BY JEFFREY KLINEMAN

“We’ve always styled ourselves as the voice of the region,” says Rick Holmes, the opinion editor for *The MetroWest Daily News*. “Heck, we invented the term MetroWest.” Indeed, the newspaper can proudly take credit for the term now used to describe the expanse of cities and towns west of Boston, having sponsored a contest in the early 1980s to give the growing swath of suburbia a name. Getting people to accept a regional label, however, may be easier than convincing them to embrace common regional goals. But that’s exactly what the *Daily News* is out to do. In perhaps its boldest move since christening the area with a new name more than two decades ago, the newspaper has embarked on an agenda-setting campaign to convince a sprawling collection of suburban cities and towns that there is a broad range of issues that unites them.

Through a six-part, six-month series running from January to June dubbed “MetroWest Agenda,” the paper tried to cast some of the region’s broadest concerns under a spotlight, and lay out steps to seize some control over them. The series ran entirely in the opinion section, but was paired with related news stories on the front page.

MetroWest Agenda attempted to explore the roots of some of the region’s biggest problems. It tackled the lack of regional public transportation and the heavy burden Turnpike tolls place on MetroWest commuters, a pair of issues at the head of any list of the region’s concerns. Also highlighted were rising health care costs, the region’s growing lack of affordable housing—both for middle-class and working-class families—immigration laws, which have a strong impact on both Framingham’s immigrant-rich population and the MetroWest workforce, and proposals to reshape Massachusetts’s high schools.

Holmes confesses that a motivating factor behind the series was his impatience with MetroWest’s delegation in the Legislature. Its members work hard, he says, but “they tend to get outflanked by the folks from Boston.” The 54-year-old news veteran has never been one to pull punches in his regularly commentaries, which still manage to maintain a civil tone. “We get do get angry on some fronts,” he



Big thinkers: columnist Paul Andrew and opinion editor Rick Holmes.

says, warming to a favorite topic. “I’ve been working for this newspaper for 20 years, and for 20 years we have seen the interests of Mass Turnpike tollpayers ignored because the political power resides in Boston. We’ve been screwed left and right.”

While Holmes hasn’t been shy about expressing such sentiments on the paper’s editorial page, MetroWest Agenda represented an effort to channel that editorial indignation into more probing examinations of important challenges facing the region—and possible paths to solutions. “We cover 30 communities and sometimes more, and we always try to find themes of common interest,” says Holmes. “If we don’t express the regional agenda, who will?”

A STAKE IN THE GROUND

The 108-year-old, 30,000-plus circulation paper has changed its name four times in an effort to define itself and its readership area. It’s been bought and sold three times in the last 25 years, most recently in the deal that turned the paper and its Community Newspaper Co. compatriots, which had been owned by Fidelity Investments, over to Pat Purcell’s Herald Media.

The *Daily News* has never won the Pulitzers of the Lawrence *Eagle-Tribune*, and it hasn’t had to wrestle with the same hard urban questions facing the *Lowell Sun* or The

sional local columnist who contacted him with the idea of writing broad public policy pieces. Many of the issues the series addressed are regularly covered by the paper, but mainly in the context of daily news developments. There was a need to “move beyond sound bites,” says Andrew, who worked for Tony Blair, among others, before settling in Boston with Hattaway Communications, run by former Al Gore spokesman Doug Hattaway.

Rather than simply send out a team of reporters to gather stories on these topics, the series combined analytical lead stories with editorials and illustrations by cartoonist Dave Granlund. It added to that op-eds solicited from multiple sides of each issue (they had a local representative of the border-patrolling Minutemen as well as the head of the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition address immigration policy, for example). And rather than simply taking pokes with his editorial prod, Holmes punctuated his pieces with a “to-do list for leaders”—civic homework assignments mostly for public officials, but occasionally also for residents, like calls for civility in discussions of immigration and an end to reflexive NIMBYism in the face of proposals for new housing.

For Holmes, the series worked as what he called a “stake in the ground” for the newspaper and for the region.

“Every couple of years we sit down and do editorial boards with candidates for the state Legislature and other offices, and we tend to have pretty cordial conversations,” Holmes says. “People tend to say the right things. But then we find ourselves two years later having the same conversations with the same people, and thinking, ‘I hear what you’re saying about health care, I hear what you’re saying about school financing. But what have you done?’”

MEASURES OF SUCCESS?

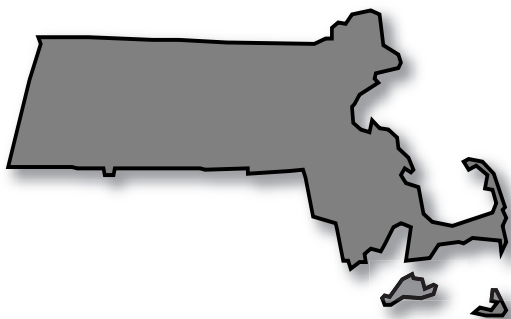
While the reaction to the series among the general populace has been slow—and with a sprawling circulation that reaches only about five percent of the regional population, that might be expected—the paper’s willingness to grapple with sweeping topics that often defy quick fixes has been largely applauded by the region’s leaders.

“They could continue to pound out the daily stories and the sports and the business wire and probably be successful,” says John Palanowicz, the CEO of Marlborough Hospital. “But I give them credit for the fact that they took the bull by the horns, and pulled together individuals from the community...and threw out these issues for public consumption.”

The MetroWest Agenda series was met by MetroWest

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politicians with a mixture of eagerness and apprehension. Many of them participated in the stories and helped frame the issues for the paper during a series of discussions that took place on each topic. In many cases—such as the need for MetroWest to be able to develop its own regional transportation authority, an idea that has gained momentum on Beacon Hill—the suggestions involved initiatives on which local officials were already working.

“I thought it was a very good idea to take these issues and go more in-depth,” says state Sen. Pam Resor, an Acton Democrat, who heads the MetroWest Caucus in the Senate. “We’re always struggling with new ways to get those ideas out to people.”

“It was superb and very helpful, particularly the transportation series,” says Rep. David Linsky, Democrat of Natick, who heads the MetroWest Caucus on the House side. “It gave me more of a regional MetroWest perspective rather than just looking at transportation as it affects my three towns.”

But those same legislators weren’t quite as thrilled with the idea that the series could be used as a yardstick to gauge their performance down the road.

“In terms of setting up some kind of measurement that the populace is supposed to use for its officials, it’s kind of a stretch,” says Resor. “There are so many things we’re working on at one time other than the ones that they covered. And I think most citizens recognize there’s a broader range of issues that we’re dealing with.”

If elected officials are less than enthused about turning the spotlight on their own effectiveness, so be it, says Holmes. “We needed to do a better job of holding people accountable” and “turning vague goals into concrete achievements,” he says.

Though reviews were largely favorable, the series did not come in for universal praise. One critique, offered by Kris Allen, a former co-chair of the 495/MetroWest Partnership (which works to promote economic vitality and preserve natural resources in the fast-growing area), is that some of the issues Holmes and Andrew chose to look at were either applicable only to certain parts of MetroWest, such as immigration, or were more global in scope, such as education reform. Meanwhile, she says, other topics more unique to the region as a whole were ignored [Editor’s note: Allen’s identification has been corrected].

“They tried to define the region on its issues, but they might have missed with some,” says Allen, citing open space and water resources and usage as two examples.

Tying everything together on a regional basis can be difficult, agrees Richard Lodge, the editor of the *Daily News*. But he says trying to do so is worth the effort.

“The issues in Dedham aren’t the issues in Hudson,” says Lodge. “But the issue of affordable housing is an issue in many communities, and so is illegal immigration and

its impact on economy, on policing, and on equal treatment. There are some common issues that I do think affect people in all of eastern Massachusetts and what they have to deal with."

Allen's critique also points to a larger problem with addressing regional concerns in MetroWest—that it's often hard to figure out just where the region begins and ends. Split, rather than bounded, by I-495 and routes 128 and 9, the vaguely defined area spreads over three different counties, is fed by different watersheds, and is part of multiple congressional districts. That's been a problem

The suburban region 'hasn't been exerting its clout.'

for the newspaper in the past, as well, as it has tried to make incursions into towns as close to Boston as Wellesley and as far out as Bellingham. But Holmes says an even bigger problem for local papers can be the continuous thrum of disparate issues, lacking a larger context.

"It's 'this day I'm writing about Framingham's selectmen, and the next I'm writing about the death of the King of Saudi Arabia,'" he says of his dilemma as an editorialist.

"That's great, that's what you want. But what you worry about is having this broad range without enough depth."

For that problem MetroWest Agenda was the antidote. "By forcing ourselves to pick six topics that are going to be more important than those others, then you really become an expert," he says. "I've gone deeper. I've increased my understanding."

And for critics who say those six topics missed some big issues Holmes has an answer: The 2006 version of MetroWest Agenda. The kickoff will be a reprint of the full 2005 Agenda in October as a newspaper insert, which will also be sent to community leaders. After that will come a process of solicitation, with readers encouraged to send reaction by e-mail. The idea, says Holmes, is to get more "front-end input" for the next round of topics, with publication of the first new Agenda package in January.

Though not straying from the main goals of sharpening understanding of regional issues and strengthening the hand of the area's legislative delegation, MetroWest Agenda 2006 will also be published in an election year, a fact that has not escaped Holmes's notice.

"A lot of political clout lies between [routes] 128 and 495," says Holmes. "I'm not sure what we're getting for our political clout." ■

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In need of a RENAISSANCE

A year of
tumult at the
state's largest
charter school
leaves a besieged
leader in
place, but the
future uncertain



BY MICHAEL JONAS

ON JUNE 30, Roger Harris was not fired from his position as headmaster and CEO of the Boston Renaissance Charter School by the school's governing board. Whether that non-event marks a turning point in the troubled history of the state's largest autonomous public school—one that has become a popular alternative to the Boston public schools, especially for African-American families, but that gets academic results state education officials see as unacceptably poor—remains to be seen.

In fact, the school and its leader each dodged a bullet in recent months. The state Board of Education renewed the school's five-year charter despite damning reports and only under strict conditions, while Harris fought off repeated attempts to remove him from his job in the course of the year—in part, thanks to the intervention of state legislators and, most questionably, the state education commissioner himself. In the end, Harris remained, and a majority of board members resigned.

From the start, Renaissance was the biggest gamble of the new charter school movement in Massachusetts. Opening in 1995 with 630 students in kindergarten to fifth grade and later expanding through eighth grade and enrolling 1,400 students, the school's founders deliberately set out to challenge the status quo on a grand scale.

"We decided to go for the big one," Renaissance cofounder Robert Gaudet told *The Boston Globe* on the eve of the school's opening in September 1995. "For better or worse, we are going to get noticed." Renaissance is certainly getting noticed, but hardly in the way Gaudet and his fellow founders had hoped.

Is Renaissance, now starting its 11th year of operation, ready to begin a renaissance of its own? If it is not, the consequences could be severe for the more than 1,000 students enrolled in the school, and for the broader charter school movement in Massachusetts, which was supposed to produce schools not just of choice but of excellence—or shut them down.

Charter schools, which are publicly funded but operate free of union contract rules and other bureaucratic strictures common to district schools, were supposed to use their managerial independence to devise academic programs that produce learning at high levels, regardless of the challenges students arrive with. But after a decade of operation, the Renaissance School continues to perform at or below the level of the Boston public schools as a whole on standardized tests in most areas. Convinced that new leadership was needed, members of the Renaissance board of trustees—which consisted of prominent business leaders but also several members with backgrounds in education, including an elementary school principal, a school psychologist, and a college administrator—last fall told headmaster Roger Harris, then starting his seventh year leading the school, that he had lost the confidence of the school's governing body.

Despite months of negotiation, Harris and board members could not reach an agreement under which the headmaster, who is paid \$166,000 a year, would leave his posi-

tion. So the board voted last December 20 to fire him, effective at the end of the school year. The vote was 9-2, with the only dissent coming from the two parent representatives on the board.

"The beginning and end of the issue was the lack of adequate academic progress on the part of our students," says former board member John Gilmartin, the ex-CEO of Millipore Corp., who was among the most vociferous in arguing to fire Harris.

But removing the 58-year-old Harris, a prominent black educator who had been wooed to Renaissance from the Timilty School in Roxbury, a Boston middle school that had earned high marks under his leadership, was not as easy as it seemed. The school's demographics (as of last year, the student body was 84 percent black and 13 percent Hispanic), along with its large size, show that Renaissance has become an educational mainstay for black families in Boston—and a natural focus of concern for their elected representatives.

In early January, after hearing from Harris that he had been fired, Sen. Dianne Wilkerson, the only black member of the state Senate, contacted members of the board and asked them to attend a meeting in her State House office to explain their actions. Along with Wilkerson, two other black lawmakers, state representatives Gloria Fox of Roxbury and Marie St. Fleur of Dorchester, were present for a meeting with members of the Renaissance board in early January that stretched well into the night.

"In a sentence, it didn't make sense," Wilkerson says of the board's move to fire Harris. Regardless of the school's academic performance, she says, the board failed miserably in communicating its concerns to parents and to a broader school community in which support for Harris is strong.

"It's not about going to the mat for Roger," insists Wilkerson. "But everything I know is that he has a real plan to raise scores, and a level of support from parents that other charter and public school leaders would die for." Less than a week after the tense meeting in Wilkerson's office, the Renaissance board voted unanimously at its monthly meeting to rescind the termination vote.

Full explanations of the board's actions are hard to come by. Although a charter school board of trustees effectively operates as the school committee for a publicly funded school, none of the three board members remaining from the December vote to fire Harris—and sudden reversal of that move a month later—would discuss the school's plight on the record. These members include Nicholas Paleologos, a former Woburn state representative who, as House chairman of the Legislature's education committee in the 1980s, was an early advocate of greater public school accountabil-

*The Renaissance
School performs at
or below the level of
Boston public schools
on standardized
tests in most areas.*

ity. According to the Renaissance board's minutes, it was Paleologos who made the motion in December to terminate Harris, and then three weeks later moved to rescind the vote. Paleologos did not respond to several telephone and e-mail messages. Also unwilling to speak on the record were board members Monroe "Bud" Moseley, vice president of a Boston executive search firm, and parent trustee Jackie Sinclair.

Of the nine Renaissance board members who resigned this spring, the only two who agreed to speak on the record, Gilmartin and former University of Massachusetts president David Knapp, did not attend the January board meeting where Harris's termination was rescinded.

"In my opinion, it was a very odd reversal for the board to take," says Gilmartin. He says explanations he received from board members who were there suggested that the move was designed to "relieve the pressure [in order] to permit the negotiations for a friendly exit" on Harris's part—even though such negotiations had failed to bear fruit for months.

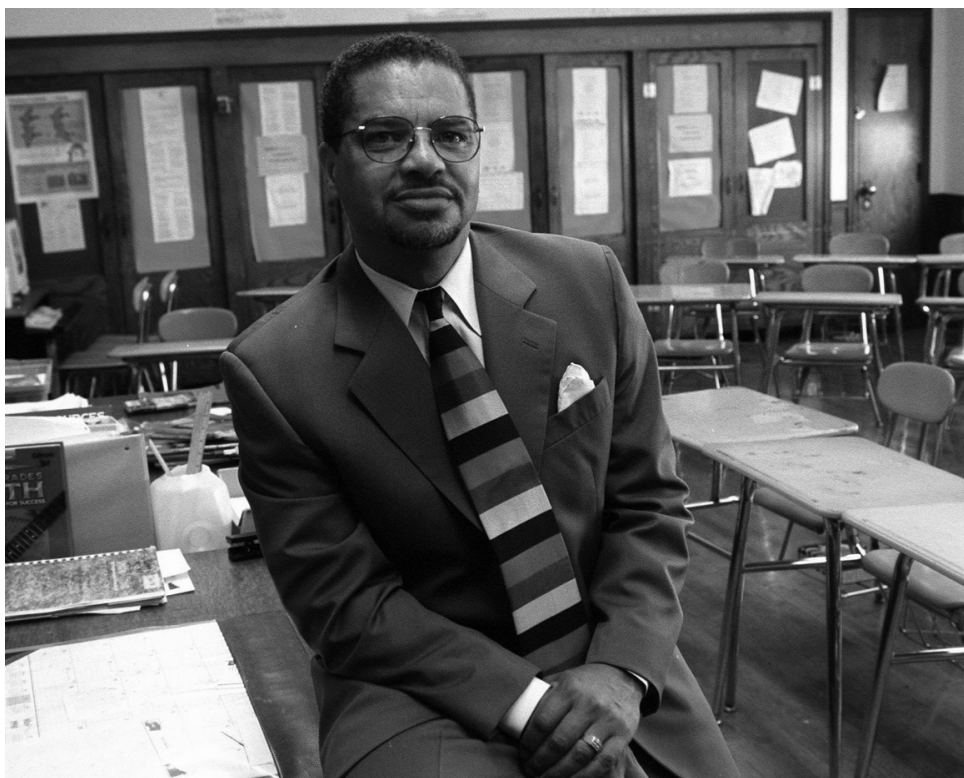
For his part, Harris brushes off the whole attempt to unseat him. "I attribute that to growing pains and misunderstanding," says Harris. If so, there were more growing pains and misunderstanding to come.

Complicating the wrangling over school leadership was the school's application for renewal of its charter, a process all Massachusetts charter schools must undergo every five years, which was then pending. Gilmartin and Knapp say the charter renewal was very much on the mind of Renaissance board members, who felt it was imperative to make a change.

"We started out with a school that was going to be better than the Boston public schools, and on the exam scores, we aren't, and it's not doing justice to the kids' potential," says Knapp.

"Its performance fairly resembles that of a Boston public school," says Gilmartin. "As a charter school, that's not acceptable."

That charter schools are expected to be superior, not just an alternative, to district schools was the clear view taken by James Peyser, chairman of the state Board of Education,



Headmaster Roger Harris was fired in December, then "unfired" in January.

when he spoke at the board's February 15 meeting.

"If charter schools serve only to expand parental choice without significantly raising the bar of student achievement, this innovative and ambitious reform will have little or no impact on the wider landscape of public education," Peyser declared, according to minutes of the meeting. "Charter schools need to be about excellence, and specifically about proving that excellence is possible and achievable even under difficult circumstances, and even with students whom others may have given up on."

Peyser's comments were not directed at Renaissance, however, but rather at the Frederick Douglass Charter School in Roxbury, one of two Boston charter schools that the state board ordered closed last winter because of poor academic performance or financial instability.

Asked whether applying his standard to Renaissance ought to have closed that school as well, Peyser says it was a "fairly close call," but that there enough was hope for improvement at Renaissance, especially in the school's lower grades, for the state board to renew its charter. Citing particularly poor scores among its middle school students, however, the state board ordered the elimination of the school's seventh and eighth grades, and—in a highly unusual move, given that charters are typically renewed or revoked, rather than extended provisionally—said full five-year renewal of the Renaissance charter would be contingent on the school meeting certain benchmarks in academic performance by

February 2007.

If Peyser and the state board saw hope for improvement at Renaissance, these signs of life escaped the notice of a consulting team that prepared the renewal inspection report for the board of education after conducting a three-day site visit at the school last fall.

"There has not been any significant increase in overall student performance [at the Renaissance School] during the course of its charter," said the report. There were a few bright spots in the school's scores—the fourth-grade English scores on MCAS rose considerably from 2003 to 2004—but a majority of students remained in the lower "needs improvement" or "warning" categories. In the math test, only 9 percent of Renaissance fourth-graders scored in the advanced or proficient categories, compared with 24 percent of students in the Boston school system and 42 percent of students statewide.

David Driscoll, the state commissioner of education, says Renaissance escaped the fate of the two other Boston schools whose charters were revoked, but only barely. "Whereas the other two were Fs, you could say Renaissance was a D-minus, particularly in the area of student achievement," says Driscoll. "It's clearly not a success story."

Some observers suggest that Renaissance's size and prominence as one of the first charter schools in the state may have given it some insulation as it faced renewal, a view with which Peyser does not entirely disagree. "There's no question that the prospect of closing a school of 1,400 students raises the stakes a little bit and makes you swallow a little bit harder," he says. Peyser says the strong level of parent support for the school and its track record of "financial and organizational stability" also weighed in the board's action.

Nevertheless, Rep. Fox says the close call on the Renaissance renewal—combined with the closure of the other Boston charter schools—is troubling. "Some people saw it as an attack on black parents trying to get the best educational opportunity for their kids," she says. "All three of the schools that were in question happened to be predominantly African-American or African-American and Latino."

Her charge hits at the heart of a key debate over charter schools: Is their purpose primarily to provide greater educational choice to families whose children are often otherwise stuck with troubled big-city public schools, or to set the bar for academic achievement higher than that of struggling school districts in which charters tend to be concentrated?

Harris suggests that parents are good arbiters of a charter school's effectiveness, and he points to the 1,700 children on the waiting list for a slot at the Renaissance. "Critics can criticize, but the parents, who are the customers, like the



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product,” says Harris. “I think charter schools should be measured by the demand.”

He adds that MCAS scores don’t capture the school’s rich arts and music curriculum or the “character development” that is emphasized at the school. “Our kids are respectful,” he says. “That’s not reflected on MCAS scores, but parents understand and they respect that.”

“The school is bigger than MCAS,” says Theresa Latson, co-chair of the school’s parent advisory board, whose daughter is in sixth grade. “I watch him amongst the male students in the school,” she says of Harris, “and it’s very important to me as a black parent that the male students in our school have a positive role model. I’ve seen him reprimand them when they need that, but I’ve also seen him encourage them and tell them they can do anything they want if they put their mind to it. Our children, especially the male children, don’t get that enough.”

Asked why Renaissance students generally perform at or below the average for the Boston public schools, one of the lowest performing districts in the state, Harris replies, “They’re Boston kids.”

He adds, “That business about outperforming [the district public schools], that’s somebody else’s argument. If you talk to educators, people at the grassroots, in classrooms, they’re interested in meeting the needs of kids, they’re not interested in competing with other schools.”

But Harris’s views are at sharp odds with policy-makers as well as with the leading voices of the charter school movement itself. A report issued in August by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools addressed many of these issues head on. “We’re concerned about attitudes and beliefs that have crept into some quarters of our movement,” the report said. “For example, that our job simply is to offer a different choice, and the market will sort out what parents want. Or...worst of all—that we can’t succeed because ‘you don’t know our kids.’... Those are the kinds of excuses we’ve heard for years from failing schools in traditional districts, and they have no place in the charter movement.”

Marc Kenan, executive director of the Massachusetts Charter School Association, says that through the establishment of statewide standards and the national No Child

‘It’s very important to me as a black parent that the male students in our school have a positive role model.’



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Left Behind law, “the state and federal government have very clearly come down on the side of academic performance over choice.”

The Renaissance school has been told by the state that it must show significant progress by February 2007 toward meeting the federal No Child Left Behind goal of all students being “proficient” in math and English by 2014 or risk the loss of its charter. With little time to lose—and only three members left on the school’s board of trustees—Driscoll, the state education commissioner, took the unusual step this spring of moving in to shore up Renaissance, enlisting the aid of two consultants to help the school with academic programming and financial administration until new board members are brought on.

Driscoll’s move came in the wake of yet another twist in the Renaissance saga. Led by Gilmartin—who was absent from the January trustees meeting when Harris’s termination was rescinded—the Renaissance board signaled once again that it was prepared to take up the question of Harris’s tenure at a board meeting scheduled just after the end of the school year. The move provoked outrage among parents, and Driscoll intervened personally, per-

suading board members to drop the issue and let the school move ahead under its current leadership.

The June 30 meeting was packed with parents supportive of Harris, and no vote was taken on his removal as principal. Instead, in the wake of the meeting, nine Renaissance board members resigned. Quitting the board in addition to Gilmartin and Knapp were Rick Holden, the CEO of J.L. Hammett Co.; Faye Sampson-Russell, an administrator at MassBay Community College; Tony Helies, a venture capital executive; Patricia Kelly, the principal of the Bowen Elementary School in Newton; Olivia Moorehead-Slaughter, a psychologist at The Park School; Anne Hyde, former chairman of Bunker Hill Community College’s board; and Joseph Wheeler, a former Renaissance School parent.

Driscoll defends his actions, arguing that if the Renaissance board had been convinced that a change in leadership was necessary, it should have stuck with its decision to fire Harris back in December. By the end of June, however, with a new school year only two months away, he says dismissing the headmaster without a plan for the school’s management would have only compounded Renaissance’s problems.

Still, Driscoll acknowledges that, as the accountability agent charged with evaluating charter schools’ performance, he should not be telling a charter school board what to do

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or involving himself in efforts to stabilize the school.

"Very clearly by statute I don't need to be involved, nor should my office be involved," says Driscoll. "But I felt I had to step in because the situation was such a disaster. My interest is to get the place stable and turn it back over to the board of trustees."

For his part, Gilmartin concedes that the board made plenty of missteps in its handling of the issue of Harris's leadership. But, he says, "the reality of the educational effectiveness of the school, unfortunately, remains unaltered by all of this."

A decade after the school's auspicious opening, Gaudet, one of its cofounders, sounds a note of resignation, calling the Renaissance a "lost opportunity."

"I used to say it's a public school in Boston but not a Boston public school, but I would say it's morphed into the latter," he says of the lackluster academic achievement. "It's tragic for the kids of Boston—simple as that."

Driscoll strikes a more neutral posture, but makes it clear that the state's patience is wearing thin.

"The parents have won, so to speak," he says of the battle to save Harris's job. "Now he's got an opportunity. We expect results."

Such a crucible is nothing new for the Renaissance School, nor are assurances that dramatic improvements in academic outcomes are in the offing. In 1999, as Renaissance prepared for the school's first charter review, school leaders braced themselves for tough questions about disappointing test scores. "In another three, four or five years, I'd be willing to have our kids compared to any other school in this city or across the state," Harris told the *Boston Herald* at the time.

Speaking in mid-August of this year, Harris says it won't be fair to judge Renaissance on the spring 2005 MCAS scores that will come out this fall, because "there was so much distraction" at the school from the turmoil over his tenure. But big improvement in the school's academic results, he says, is just around the corner.

"A year from now," he says, "you and other people will be calling me saying, 'How did you do it?'" ■

'I don't need to be involved,' says Driscoll. 'But I felt I had to step in because the situation was such a disaster.'

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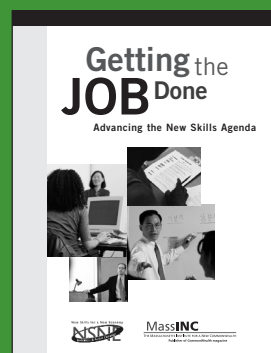
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Rooting *for the* HOME TEAM

Minor-league baseball
is making fans across
the Commonwealth

BY MARK MURPHY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK MORELLI



In this sport, even the soil, marbled with red clay, is sacred. And that's just how Rich Gedman treats it as he wields a wooden rake as broad as his bullish shoulders, grading the dirt in circular strokes and erasing the divots and scuff marks around home plate. His strokes fan out symmetrically in a network of small grooves. He's so meticulous, Gedman could be brushing a fresco on the wall of a Tuscan chapel. He could be smoothing out the ceremonial last five yards of cement on the Big Dig.

It's a technique Gedman may have picked up from the Fenway Park grounds crew during his 10 seasons as catcher for the Red Sox. And it's come in handy since he became manager of the Worcester Tornadoes early this year for the team's first season. That's because, when workouts at the practice field at Quinsigamond Community College are over, Gedman becomes chief groundskeeper.

"This is the grass roots," says Gedman, in the same hesitant, reflective voice that earned him a reputation as an introspective sort during his 13-season major-league career. "I have some help, though," he adds, nodding in the direction of an assistant coach who is watering the pitcher's mound. "It's not bad."

Humble surroundings, to be sure, but also, for the Worcester native, a proud return. The five business-

men who pooled resources to bring a minor-league baseball team to Worcester are banking an initial investment of approximately \$7 million on this soft-spoken manager's hometown appeal. So far, they have not been disappointed.

Shortly after tickets went on sale last winter at the team's downtown office, Bradley Michals, the partner who now enthusiastically balances his "civilian" duties as owner of a Newton insurance agency with a new role as the team's director of baseball operations, slipped into a line of ticket buyers—\$6 grandstand, \$18 for "executive" seats directly behind home plate—and introduced himself. The response he got from the group, which appeared to have its share of former den mothers, had the warmth of a church picnic.

"I know Richie's mom," said one woman. Several others claimed to have seen Gedman when he played Little League baseball—a big deal in this youth sports-crazed community, which sent a team of 12-year-olds to the Little League World Series championship game in 2002.

"You could tell that people were so, so excited to have him running their team," says Michals. "This is definitely a city with all of the values that small towns used to be about."

OGLE



Lynn Spirit players take the field.

Michals's enthusiasm for his expensive new hobby built from there. Soon he was accompanying the team on road trips—lugging equipment, overseeing details like boxed meals and dirty towels, and altogether enjoying the life of a small-time Theo Epstein.

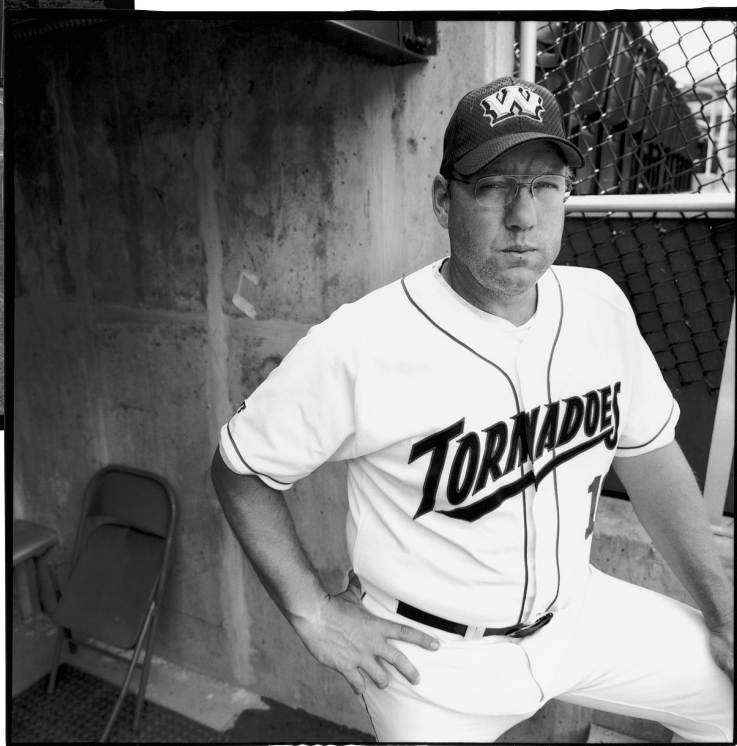
But nothing could beat the June 6 home opener, the team's first sell-out and a vindication of the \$5 million Michals, Brookline businessman Alan Stone, and the rest of the partnership put into converting the College of the Holy Cross's Fitton Field from a small, open ball field in the shadow of the college's 23,500-seat football stadium into the state's latest miniature Fenway Park, seating 3,500. Workers from a local company dragged the base paths, cut the field, and massaged the clay under bright lights as the PA system boomed, "This fifth-inning dirt drag has been brought to you by Landscaping Etc." Fans squealed their appreciation.

Like professional baseball groups that targeted Brockton, Lynn, Lowell, and (with less success) Springfield before them, the Tornadoes owners are convinced they have discovered that sweet slice of Americana—a community ready to fall in love with its minor-league baseball team. And the community itself didn't need any convincing. It was city officials who went looking for a baseball team a year ago, not the other way around.

"You don't get that many engraved open invitations," says Michael Lieberman, the 11-year veteran of independent and affiliated front office management who, upon taking over as the Tornadoes general manager, joined his eighth team (ninth if you include a year with Major League Lacrosse). "But sometimes they come out like [Worcester] Mayor [Timothy] Murray and City Manager [Michael] O'Brien and say, 'We want minor-league baseball. Any takers?'"

HOME RUNS AND WILD PITCHES

Red Sox Nation is still basking in the glow of its first World Championship year since 1918, but baseball fans are find-



Former Sox catcher Rich Gedman: "This is the grass roots."

ing plenty of places other than Fenway Park to take in the national pastime. All over Massachusetts, minor-league baseball is booming. The Tornadoes constitute the third Bay State entry in the eight-team Can-Am League, joining the Brockton Rox and the Lynn Spirit, themselves only a few years old. Then there are the Lowell Spinners, a Single A affiliate of the Boston Red Sox, not to mention the Pawtucket Red Sox (the Sox's Triple A club), which draws plenty of fans across the state line.

There have been many minor-league baseball teams in Massachusetts over the years, but right now the Bay State has a bumper crop. And it seems fair to say that the enthusiasm of their host communities—all of them some distance from the Boston metropolis, as measured by size and prosperity as well as by geography—has never been greater. For small and, in most cases, struggling cities across the Commonwealth, having their own boys of summer has been seen as a boost, providing locals with an affordable night at the ballgame and residents of surrounding suburbs with a reason to venture into the city next door.

"You could always see the potential around here, and the enthusiasm that people have for their own teams in Worcester," says Worcester Mayor Tim Murray. "Around here, you'll get 1,500 or 2,000 people coming out for [an American] Legion baseball game. So the support is there. All they needed was something put together the right way."

But the enthusiasm for small-time pro sports is not universal, and plans to bring a team to town can some-



Ready for play: the Brockton Rox dugout.

times provoke bitter conflict. Pittsfield, whose creaky, splintered Wahconah Park is one of the oldest wooden ballparks in the country—the 1892 facility has just been listed on the National Register of Historic Places—is going without professional baseball of any sort for the first time since 1985. An entry from the New England College Baseball League, run by former Red Sox general manager Dan Duquette, is now Wahconah's sole offering.

Jim Bouton, the former Yankees pitcher whose memoirs *Ball Four* and *I'm Glad You Didn't Take it Personally* put Major League Baseball on its ear, made an attempt to keep minor-league ball in the old ball field, but all he got out of it was another book, *Foul Ball*. When Bouton moved to Pittsfield more than 20 years ago and got his first look at old Wahconah Park, he fell in love. And though there was an independent-league team in the park, owner Jonathan Fleisig was threatening to move his Black Bears if Pittsfield didn't build him a new ballpark. (Fleisig made good on his threat and moved the team—the same Mad Dogs franchise that had played in Lynn in the early 1990s—to New Haven this year.)

Bouton put together his own group (consisting of 85 partners) and came in with an offer to renovate Wahconah, preserve its quaintness, and bring a new team to town. Bouton and partner Donald "Chip" Elitzer each contributed \$125,000 toward the \$1.5 million bid. Their proposal did not include enough funding to upgrade the park to meet minor-league baseball standards, which ruled out any chance of drawing a major-league affiliated team to Pittsfield. But Bouton was undeterred, focusing on Wahconah's historical quirks, including the fact that the park was built backwards, with home plate facing into the sun. At dusk this created all sorts of trouble, with play regularly halted for sun delays. Games resumed once the early evening glare melted into the horizon.

"Oh, so what?" says Bouton. "The trees have grown up so high now that the effect is minimal. It's Mother Nature's delay. Go and get a hamburger."

Foul Ball—an updated edition, complete with 100 extra pages about a second failed attempt to renovate Wahconah, came out late in September—wasn't well received in the community, especially among the politicians Bouton slammed. But Mayor James Ruberto, the object of much of the book's criticism, stresses that not only was Bouton's renovation plan insufficient to merit consideration for an affiliated minor-league team, he was unable to raise adequate funding.

"I've taken the high road every time with Jim," says Ruberto. "He wasn't able to raise enough money through a public offering to make [Wahconah] family-friendly."

Bouton, however, believes that his offer to privately fund a renovation was turned down—with the city instead hoping to build a new ballpark with public money—because of politics and corruption. "It's all about kickbacks," Bouton says. "You have the pols and unions—plenty of them are in it for the kickbacks and graft. Because we wanted to do this with private money, there was no benefit to them. It's been proven that this only works if private capital does the building."

Then there is Springfield, where the city's attempt to build a ballpark in hopes of attracting a minor-league team perished in court just over five years ago. Then-mayor Michael Albano was rewarded for his ill-advised methods—he attempted to take the land by eminent domain, dis-

Plans to bring a team to town can provoke bitter conflict.

placing existing businesses for a ballpark that would be privately owned—with a severe rebuke by a Superior Court judge. "It was a gradual process marked by the mayor's lack of concern regarding separate interest in the stadium project," wrote Hampden Superior Court Judge Constance Sweeney, who also gave the landowners permission to seek damages from the city.

At best, how much of a financial boon small-time pro sports are for the host cities remains an open question. "If this is being promoted as a significant positive for the local economy, then people are likely to be disappointed," says Smith College economist Andrew Zimbalist, a well-known critic of a relationship between cities and teams he sees as intrinsically one-sided, with team owners getting all the benefits. "If things are done perfectly, you might get a small benefit. But if things are not done well, you can have a small loss."

Zimbalist has been particularly critical of publicly funded sports facilities, which he claims never pay off in economic development for the host city. For that reason, the economist actually supported Bouton's Wahconah bid. "I liked the Bouton plan a great deal," says Zimbalist. "My big question was, what kind of sustained interest would there be?"

DON'T BUILD IT AND STILL THEY COME

Worcester city councilor Phil Palmieri sounds winded when he recounts the breakneck speed by which his city landed their minor-league team—taking less than a year from the May 2004 meeting when he and Murray put the item on the city council calendar. In no time, he says, Worcester was looking at bids from seven potential ownership groups.

"The first group wanted to challenge Pawtucket," he says of a proposal to contest the Red Sox affiliate's territorial rights, which the Triple A team shares with the Single A Lowell Spinners and Double A Sea Dogs in Portland, Maine. "Their argument was that Pawtucket shouldn't have a lock on the Red Sox. I was like, 'Oh boy, this isn't realistic,' but the energy in the room was incredible. But I made it clear in my opening remark that we weren't going

to build a stadium."

Various bidders had their eyes on a 17-acre piece of undeveloped downtown park property, but Palmieri, Murray, and city manager Michael O'Brien stood firm.

"I had strong feelings that we could accomplish getting baseball here, but without building the stadium," says Palmieri. "But because Worcester has tried on many occasions to get a team, it was met with some skepticism. You didn't know what had to come first, the chicken or the egg, the team or the field. Why are we going there again? And my response was that this is a different time."

There had been efforts to bring a baseball team to Worcester before, most recently in 2000. And the city has had other pro-sports disappointments. The Worcester Ice Cats, a minor-league hockey team, started with an enthusiastic fan base before attendance leveled off and the team was pulled out this winter. The Ice Cats' parent club, the St. Louis Blues, decided to move its feeder team closer to home.

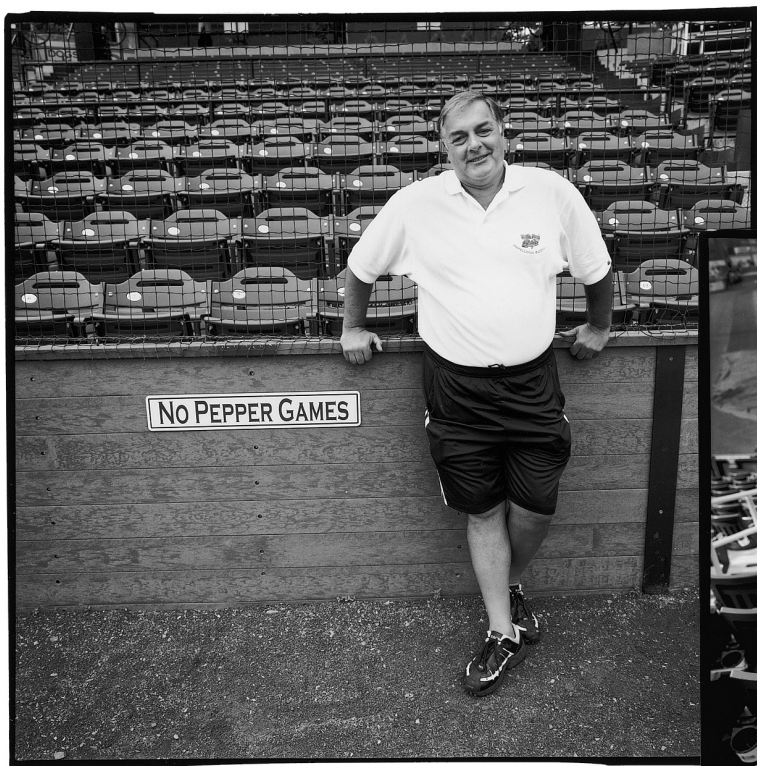
In seeing the timing as right for the baseball move, Palmieri points to Worcester's current development boom, which includes more than \$1 billion in construction projects. The city's expansive academic community also came into play as a major resource, ultimately solving the sta-

Building relationships and stronger communities.

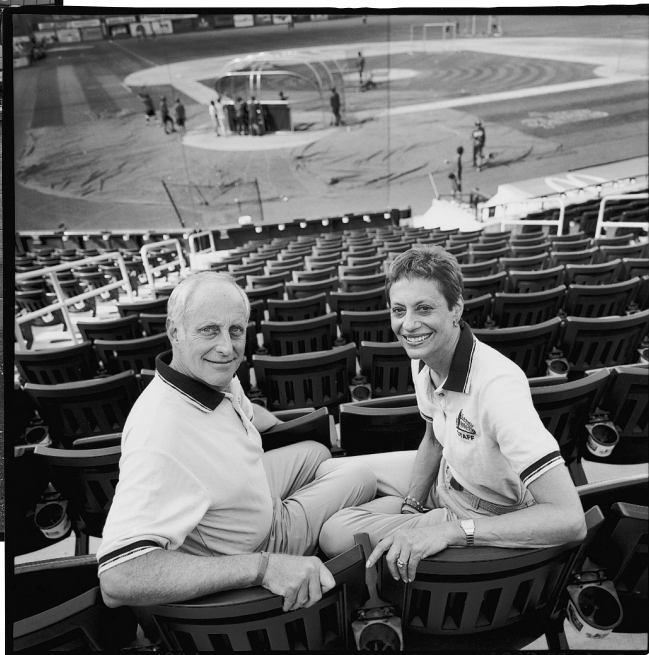
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Pride of ownership: Lynn Spirit's Nick Lopardo (left) and the Lowell Spinners' Drew and Joann Weber (below).



dium problem when Holy Cross president Rev. Michael McFarland, S.J., warmed to the idea of upgrading Fitton Field at the new team owners' expense.

"That kind of partnership is critical for cities like Worcester," says Murray. "We have to see it as an asset. After Alan Stone and his group brought in a team, it was obvious we only had two places to go if we were going to have baseball this year—a public park that was unrealistic, or Holy Cross."

How much Worcester is getting out of its Tornadoes, beyond the entertainment and the bragging rights, is hard to know. But by avoiding the ballpark booby trap, the city is at least not shelling out money in order to have a hometown baseball team. Save for game-night expenses like police details, the arrangement has produced what

Worcester avoided the ballpark booby trap.

O'Brien calls a "budget neutral" arrangement for the city.

"There is no particular item in our budget that says 'Worcester professional baseball,'" says O'Brien. "I'm very pleased by this result."

So far, the only real controversy surrounding Worcester's minor-leaguers came from the name. When the Tornadoes moniker leaked out in March, it set off an uproar, with some Worcesterites seeing it as trading on one of the city's great tragedies, the 1953 tornado that claimed 94 lives.

"Imagine if the city of Los Angeles fielded a new baseball team and called it the Mudslides," wrote *Telegram &*

Gazette columnist Dianne Williamson. "Or if Oklahoma City named its team the Bombers.... Boys, you're striking out before coming to bat."

The team survived the brouhaha, and so did the name, which was picked from among 2,800 submissions in a naming contest. "By choosing the name, we were only looking to capture the positive spirit of the city's reaction and the spunk and the pluck we see every day in Worcester today," said co-owner Alan Stone at the official unveiling of the orange funnel-cloud logo.

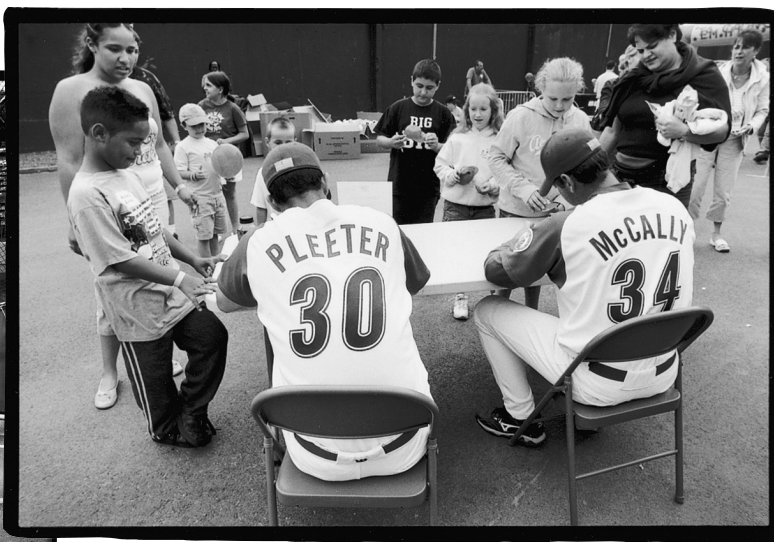
All in all, Worcester has plenty to be proud of in its team and how the city got it, says Palmier. "Other municipalities around the country should look at this as a model. If you really want something to happen, it will happen. We're a baseball town."

SOLD OUT IN LOWELL

But if Worcester is a model for a city getting a team while avoiding the investment in a stadium, the model for running a minor-league baseball team may well be Lowell, where the Spinners have sold out every game since the middle of the 1999 season, earning their owners the admiration of everyone in the business.

"It's a marketing machine up there, and now it's a cultural event," says Nick Lopardo, owner of the Lynn Spirit. "They've done a fantastic job building and marketing that team."

Drew Weber ran a family clothing business with his brothers in Rockville Center, NY, before he and his wife



The Worcester Tornadoes at batting practice (left) and Lynn Spirit players on autograph detail (above).

Joann started a long search for a team and ballpark, culminating in the 1997 debut of the Spinners. Lowell, a city in the midst of a comeback often credited to the late US Sen. Paul Tsongas, had already built LeLachur Park when the Webers won their bid.

"They've sold out a 5,000-seat ballpark almost since it was built," says the Tornadoes' Mike Lieberman. "You hold that up as the standard. Lowell is far enough removed from Major League Baseball to show that most of all it's about the experience. Some people are going to come to the park because they are seeing future major-leaguers. But it becomes the experience that brings them back."

And the Webers do provide an experience.

"Birth Night was probably my favorite promotion," says Drew Weber. "The idea was to find women who were about to give birth—women who were eight-and-a-half to almost nine months pregnant. We had 10 ambulances parked outside, the women all sat in a special section in the stands, and a doctor led the crowd in a Lamaze class. We found someone who was great with voices, and she did an imitation of a baby coming out. She went a little over the edge with it, and I was up in the press box hiding, but we had a great time with it. The [raffle] prize was a year's worth of diapers. We had about 20 women sitting together, and AP took a picture that ran all over the world. That was during the 2000 season. Next year we're going to have all of the kids come back."

The Red Sox connection clearly doesn't hurt the Spinners' drawing power. From Bret Saberhagen's rehabilitation stint in 1997 to the annual debut of hot major-league prospects, there is always an on-field attraction that extends beyond wins and losses.

"The fact it's a Red Sox affiliate is very important," says John Cox, Lowell's city manager. "People will always remember seeing Shea Hillenbrand, and David Eckstein."

Nor do the players forget their time with the Spinners. Drew Weber once met Dave Bergman, the former Detroit Tiger, who made several stops at the Webers' clothing store in New York. "One thing Bergman told me that I never forgot is that a player never forgets his first stop in baseball," said Weber. "It's kind of like your first woman. You never forget."

Take Eckstein, says Weber. "David Eckstein didn't even start for us. He was on the bench. He was on nobody's list of a guy who might make it one day. He was just a fan favorite. When he was with the Angels, he would often meet

The 'Birth Night' prize: one year of diapers.

us for lunch when the team in was town. We have a hot stove dinner each December, and he always comes back."

The crowd gives back, as well, as the Webers discovered when Joann Weber was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer just before the 2004 season.

"She was given two months [to live], and that was 13 months ago," her husband says of an ordeal that forced Joann, and often Drew, to stay home from the ballpark last season. Then the letters started to arrive.

"I'd get one that would say, 'From Jo and Bob in Section 108—Get well,'" says Joann. "I go to Sloane-Kettering and Lowell General, and without them I wouldn't be alive. But with all of the prayers that came in from people, how could I not be? We're Jewish, but I have Catholic holy water from a shrine, a Baptist wish list, a little Buddha—all kinds of things. It takes me 20 minutes before I can go to bed, because I have to go to every one."

When Joann attended her first game this season on June 19, she was more of an attraction than the game was. "We don't use an owners box—we sit in the stands—and

it seemed like 50 people at a time were coming over to welcome her back,” says Drew.

“All of these people were saying how glad they were that I was back,” says Joann. “It’s been just the most remarkable give-back.”

That’s just one way the fans and ballclub have bonded in Lowell. Consider the Hinckleys. One night four summers ago 6-year-old Drew Hinckley was hit in the face by a line drive. Steve Hinckley scooped up his son and ran to the nearest EMT station, where both Webers were already waiting for them. Then, when another Hinckley son, Daniel, was in the hospital facing major surgery, two of his favorite former Spinners, Shea Hillenbrand and David Eckstein, both called him. Hillenbrand, traded from the Red Sox to Arizona, was on the road with the Diamondbacks at the time. Eckstein was traveling with the Angels.

“It was better than any medicine,” Jeanne Hinckley says. Hillenbrand “even sent him his dirty old batting glove,” she says. “The nurses couldn’t understand why he would have wanted it, but for [Daniel] it was the dirtier the better.”

Daniel and Drew Hinckley, now 13 and 11 respectively, recently had another thrill, courtesy of the Spinners’ marketing machine. “They were part of a camp-out in the outfield after the game the other night,” says Hinckley.

“They showed two movies”—*Major League* and *Sandlot*—“on the video board.”

It’s all part of the Spinners experience, she says. “We go to Fenway and they are bored out of their minds,” she says, of her two sons. “But this is different. It’s a meeting place for so many people.”

GOPHER AND THE CAN

Campanelli Stadium sits in what looks like a sports theme park, with the concrete sprawl of Brockton High School to the right and Marciano Stadium, where the high school football team plays, to the left. And with seating capacity of 4,800—huge for a small-market unaffiliated team—it could easily be a white elephant, one that cost the City of Champions \$8 million. But Brockton built it, and they did come.

“We sold out eight games last year,” says Brockton Rox general manager David Sachetti. “The key is group sales. We make 70 to 100 cold calls a day, business to business. You can’t rely on walk-up sales.”

Over the team’s first three seasons, Rox average attendance grew from 3,100 to 3,600 and then, last year, 4,000, says Sachetti. “I know Prof. Zimbalist thinks it’s a total waste [for cities] to build stadiums, but it’s worked here.”

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"Oil Can" Boyd: "No one's bigger than the game."

Night Live creator Lorne Michaels. Together, they have owned teams—affiliated and independent—across the country and in six different leagues (Northern, New York–Penn, Northeast, Pioneer, Frontier, Northwest). Their best-known player with the Salt Lake City Trappers was Kevin Millar, the Red Sox first baseman who was the first independent-league player to ever sign a major-league contract.

The result in Brockton is all sorts of promotions and quirks, reflective of Murray's tastes and backed up by the experience of Schley and Sachetti, who made the improbable jump from flight attendant to minor-league baseball in 1995. In the men's room under the right side grandstand, you'll see painted ballplayers facing imaginary urinals, alongside the actual plumbing; a men's room on the luxury-box level features moon-walking astronauts and a lunar landscape on the walls.

In addition to \$8 million from the city and \$6 million from the state, \$2 million came from the family of contractor Alfred Campanelli and \$1 million from the Rox ownership, which is more high-profile than most. The group, led by Van Schley, includes comedian Bill Murray and *Saturday*

Even the Campanelli groundskeeper, Tom Hassett, is something of a Murray creation. Hassett first worked for Schley in Salt Lake City. Everything about Hassett, from his oversized rubber "Wellies" to his floppy hat, reminded



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the crew of Gopher, Murray's character in the film *Caddyshack*. When Schley finally had a chance to point Hassett out to Murray, saying, "Tom is just like Gopher," Murray stopped him short.

"No, Van, that *is* Gopher," said Murray. By the time they reached Brockton four years ago, Hassett was part of the package. And Murray was listed in the team's first program, in 2002, as "director of fun."

It's hard to know if baseball is still fun for Dennis "Oil Can" Boyd, but he can't get it out of his system. At 45, the former Red Sox pitcher joined the Rox this year to give his baseball career a middle-aged revival. Boyd has become quite the promotional tool for the Rox, even in losing his first game on July 9.

But he wasn't the only attraction. Sharing the bill, in a pairing plugged as "Beauty and the Beast," Miss Massachusetts Cristina Nardoizzi and the aging professional wrestler George "The Animal" Steele gave the evening a

Bill Murray was listed as 'director of fun.'

sideshow feel, which is part and parcel of the independent baseball experience. That's fine with Boyd.

"It's the game itself that's so magical for people," says Boyd. "No one's bigger than the game. Someone invented it, but no one owns or controls it. I respect the game, and to continue to do something that brings out the kid in me is just the greatest thing. I don't get too comfortable when I get away from baseball. It's the best therapy I ever had."

Not everything about baseball has been therapeutic for Boyd. He last pitched professionally for the New England Mad Dogs when they were still in Lynn seven years ago, then went home to Meriden, Miss., with the dream of starting a team of his own—affiliated or not, it didn't matter to him. His father, Willie James Boyd Sr., had played for the Meriden White Sox and his uncle, Mike Boyd, for the Hattiesburg Black Sox, so he knew plenty about baseball's roots in his hometown. But his effort ended in failure and bitterness.

"It was real tough, and there are a lot of things that I've been advised not to talk about," says Boyd, his hair now a patchwork of salt and pepper. "I tried very hard to start a team in my hometown, and doors were slammed in my face. It left a bad taste in my mouth, and I'd say that 85 percent of it was racial. People knew us very well, but there's a lot of people down there who don't want to change. It's very heartbreaking to continue, but I'd like to go back there and give it another try."

For now, Boyd is back on the road, with a bus full of young teammates who kid the old-school right-hander

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about not yet being born during his heyday. Boyd can take comfort in the fact that former major-leaguers like him have become quite the marketing tool for independent-league teams like the Rox.

At roughly the same time Boyd made his first exhibition appearance for the Rox, impending Hall of Famer Ricky Henderson signed with an independent team in San Diego—the Surf Dawgs. Two years before, Henderson had signed with Newark of the Northern League, with much the same publicity.

“Guys like Rick and I—a lot of ballplayers—would have loved to keep playing,” says Boyd. “I don’t know what keeps some guys going. But my family wants to be with me on the ballfield. You hear about Julio Franco, Roger Clemens—as long as you can do it, you keep doing it.”

TEAM SPIRIT

After 24 years in the financial management business, most recently in the top position at State Street Global Financial, Nick Lopardo “retired” in 2001 to bring a team to the crumbling concrete structure at Lynn’s Fraser Field.

Baseball had been played in Fraser as far back as the 1930s, when the Red Sox had a farm team there that included two young phenoms named Ted Williams and Johnny Pesky. Banking on the appeal of his famous uncle—Boston multi-sports legend Harry Agganis—an entrepreneur named Mike Agganis brought affiliated baseball back to Lynn in the early 1980s with the Sailors, a farm team of the Seattle Mariners. Agganis pulled out of his native North Shore three years later, moving the team to Burlington, Vt., over what he complained was lack of support from the city. (Agganis now owns the Ohio-based and highly lucrative Akron Aeros, a Double A affiliate of the Cleveland Indians.) After that, the Mad Dogs came and went.

By 2001, when Lopardo came along, Fraser Field was a wreck. In the final days of the Mad Dogs, seating under the ballpark’s canopy was roped off, for fear of falling concrete. But after \$3 million in renovations—out of an overall initial investment of \$9 million in his new ball club—Fraser is all but unrecognizable now, with luxury seating and a video scoreboard in center field, not to mention new locker rooms and training facilities beyond the left field fence. And Lopardo has a home for his Lynn Spirit, even if it’s still owned by the city.

“My preference is that I would like to own my own facility,” says Lopardo, who upon hearing that the nearby Manning Bowl was about to be torn down submitted a plan for a hockey arena but was politely turned down by the city. “You could bring in concerts, lacrosse matches, X-Game events,” he says, though he recognizes that’s what doomed the plan. “The neighborhood probably wouldn’t support it.”

The veteran money manager is still thinking about



The Tornadoes are standing tall in Worcester.

deals, just smaller ones than he did at State Street, and more for personal satisfaction than for profit.

"I didn't get into this to make money," he says. "People used to ask me when I was going to buy the Bruins, but that's a matter of serious money. I still have my own major-league sports fantasies, but that doesn't mean it's in my future."

Meanwhile, Rich Gedman's fantasies are now reserved for his hometown, past and present. Upon retirement from the St. Louis Cardinals in 1992, the catcher returned

to Worcester to coach his sons Michael and Matthew in Little League and Babe Ruth, and nine years ago took over the team at Belmont Hill, a prep school. Before long, summer in Worcester wasn't complete without a series of Rich Gedman clinics.

Only occasionally did his past show itself. Old friend Roger Clemens drove up the Pike with his wife and four sons for a much-publicized visit one day before his start against the Red Sox in Game 3 of the 1999 American League Championship series. Gedman, in that sleepy, heavy-lidded way, smiles at the memory.

"He's a busy guy," says Gedman. "You always have a common bond with someone like that, thanks to baseball, regardless of whether you talk to him daily or not. There's always that respect. Even though the rest of the world spins around you, you'll always have that moment."

Even at the end of a dusty day on a quiet practice field in Worcester. "I couldn't think of a better place to grow up," says Gedman. "It had everything." Once again, thanks to the game, it has him, too. ■

Mark Murphy is a sportswriter for the Boston Herald.

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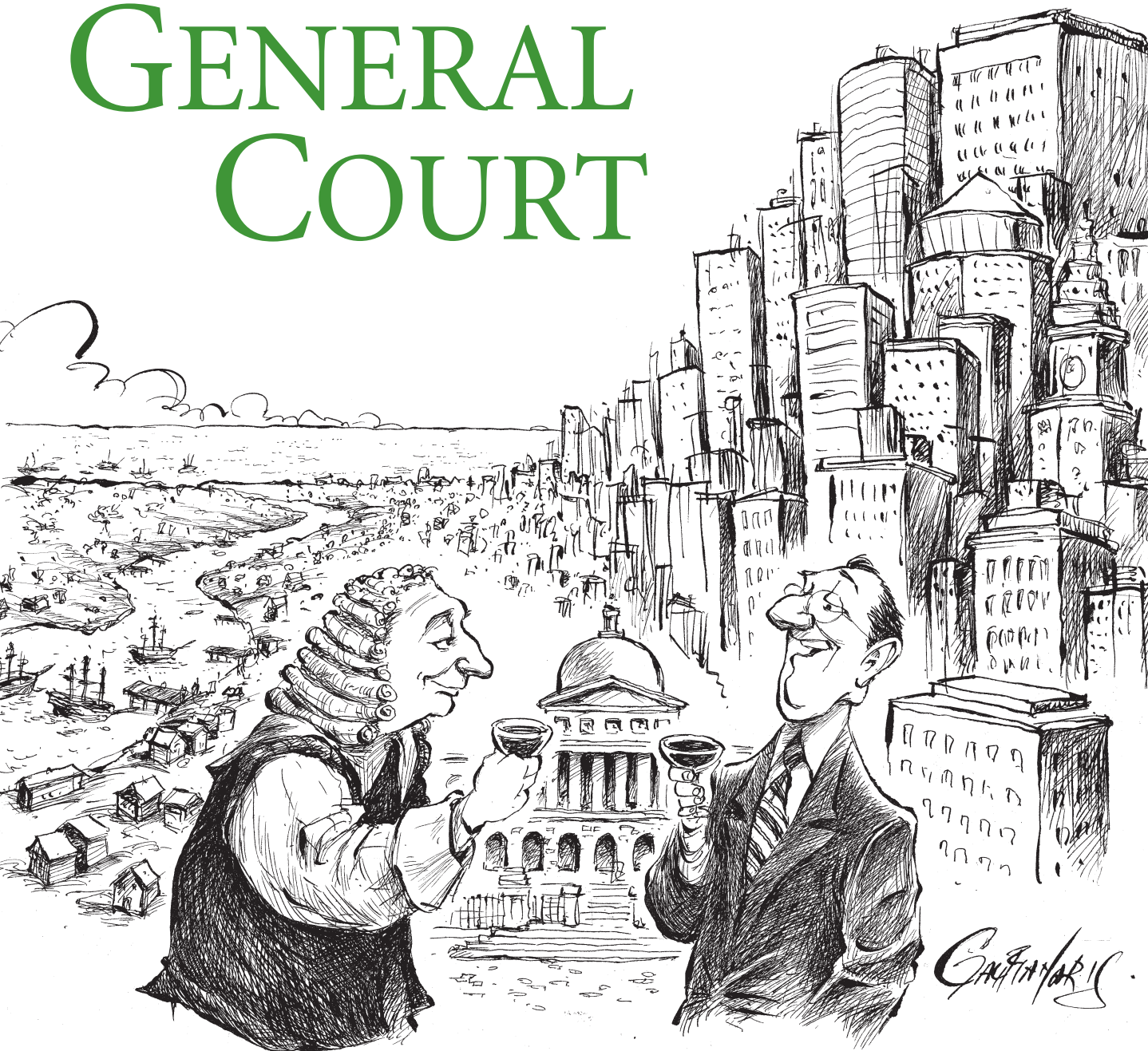


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A Toast to the **GENERAL COURT**



BY ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN

*Through 375 years,
the Legislature has led,
and mirrored, the
Massachusetts body politic.*

*W*e don't know for certain that the Massachusetts Legislature was the state's most exclusive speakeasy during Prohibition. True, contraband liquor was stored in the basement of the State House, but as for the accusation by the Massachusetts Anti-Saloon League that lawmakers celebrated the close of the 1927 session with a drunken party...well, the Legislature itself launched an investigation and found no proof of the charge.

Of course, the Legislature, formally known as the General Court, had developed a tough skin long before that. It was heading into its fourth century and had survived countless attacks by the press and by its own constituents; the rise, fall, and revival of political parties (including a takeover by the now-infamous Know Nothing Party); and even periods of near extinction during the pre-Revolutionary era. As it nears its 375th anniversary, it has even more to toast—or to take the blame for, depending on your point of view.

The precise anniversary, on October 19, will be marked by a joint session of the Senate and House with guest speakers. The celebrants will be able to recite a long list of accomplishments by the General Court, one of the advantages of its having survived so long. For example, Massachusetts enacted the first compulsory education law in the Americas, in 1642. It was the first state to mandate a secret ballot for legislative elections, in 1888; it passed one of the nation's first lobbying registration laws, in the 1890s; and it enacted the first minimum-wage law, in 1912. In 1854, it even anticipated itself with a public works nightmare that makes the Big Dig look like smooth sailing: the “Agony of the Great Bore,” a

trouble-plagued project to build a railroad tunnel through Hoosac Mountain that cost state taxpayers more than \$10 million and took 21 years to complete.

It has also gone through many changes in form and function. As the name suggests, the General Court began life in Boston in 1630 more as a combination of judge and jury than as a legislative body. For a while it was known as “The Great and General Court,” but the longer name, more apt for the government of Oz, was dropped upon independence from Britain. Much later, in 1917, a constitutional convention took up the issue of changing the name from General Court to Legislature, the term used by just about every other state, but tradition won out—not surprisingly, considering we've never even adopted the term “state,” preferring to remain one of four commonwealths.

The first members were called assistants rather than senators and representatives, a term befitting their relationship to Gov. John Winthrop (himself more of a CEO than an elected official), and they were more concerned with keeping order among neighbors than with dreaming up new forms of public policy. As elements of a judicial system slowly fell into place, it moved on to deciding such broader issues as town boundaries and the ownership of rivers and streams. This history may explain why some legislators have antipathy toward “activist judges”: They're still smarting at giving up turf. Indeed, control over the judiciary has been a sore point for the Legislature for centuries. In 1772, British colony administrators enraged the General Court by stepping in to pay judges' salaries, formerly paid by the Legis-

lature. The General Court saw the move as an attempt to buy the loyalty of the judiciary.

But micromanagement has always been characteristic of the Massachusetts Legislature. Until the passage of a constitutional amendment in 1966, cities and towns had to get the approval of Beacon Hill for such matters as granting tenure to certain town employees. Even now, in considering misleadingly named “home rule” petitions, which are not so much assertions of local authority as they are pleadings for it, the Legislature takes a second crack at many small-bore issues already decided by municipal governments. Given its history, that’s hardly surprising.

TOWN MEETING WRIT LARGE

During the formal observance, the General Court’s anniversary will undoubtedly be played as an ode to democracy. But there has always been tension over just how far to take the democratic ideal here, both within the Legislature and in other institutions of government. The question of who could participate in Bay State democracy took a couple of centuries to settle, as the General Court gradually

Even after a reduction in size during the 1970s, Massachusetts has the fifth-largest legislature in the nation, behind New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Minnesota. According to 2004 Census figures, there are 40,103 citizens for each state representative. That’s the 26th-lowest ratio in the nation, putting us almost exactly between New Hampshire, where 400 members of the lower chamber each serve an average 3,249 people; and California, where 80 state representatives each serve an average of 448,672 constituents.

eliminated requirements that voters and candidates be landowners, churchgoers in good standing, and, of course, men. The journey toward near-universal suffrage was slow and erratic: It took until 1877 to repeal a ban against Harvard University faculty serving in the Legislature—a law left over from the pre-Colonial era when the then-public college, like the judiciary, was considered its own branch of government. But there hasn’t been any serious reconsideration of the idea that all adult citizens should have some voice in how the state is run.

Just what form that voice should take has been more of a puzzle, and state leaders have gone back and forth on the merits of representative government vs. “pure” democracy, the latter epitomized by the town meeting cherished in Massachusetts. In 1894, for example, the Supreme Judicial Court ruled that the Commonwealth was a representative democracy and that voters had no authority to make laws,

thus derailing (at least temporarily) the new practice of settling policy questions by public referendum. In its decision, the SJC noted that the Bay State’s famed town meetings may be democracy in its purest form, but “few if any persons seem to have been in favor of such a form of government for the state.” But more and more people seemed to be precisely in favor of such a form of government, and the Legislature finally responded in 1917, approving a constitutional amendment to allow lawmaking through public referenda. Nevertheless, the General Court has tinkered with the initiative process ever since, even this year considering proposals that would make it tougher to put questions on the ballot.

Despite the SJC’s rather snide reference to town meetings, the state Legislature isn’t a completely different political animal—indeed, the two forms of government are closer in practice than romanticizers of direct democracy might want to admit. Jonathan Jackson, a Newburyport merchant and observer of contemporary politics, wrote in 1788 that larger town meetings “must depend upon a few to guide and manage the whole,” a description that rings true today.

For all the complaints about heavy-handed leadership in the Legislature, power is often even more concentrated in town meetings.

City and state government here have not had the hierarchical relationship found elsewhere in the US. On at least one occasion, the two forms of government have been interchangeable: When the British-appointed governor blocked the General Court from meeting in 1768, out of fear that it would incite passions against

British troops occupying Boston, a “convention of towns” met to air the colonists’ grievances instead—an idea suggested by Boston’s own town meeting. And when the state was without a Constitution—from the Declaration of Independence in 1776 through 1780—town governments kept Massachusetts from falling into anarchy. (“Every town seemed to have its own constitution, written in the minds of its inhabitants and preserved in the multitude of precedents contained in the town records,” write Richard Brown and Jack Tager in *Massachusetts: A Concise History*.) Occasionally, the Legislature has been led by the towns instead of the reverse, as when temperance forces failed to get alcohol banned at the state level in the 1840s and instead turned to municipal government, making almost the entire Commonwealth “dry” within a few years.

In its early years, the Legislature had to deal with some of the same problems that still plague town meetings, most

notably erratic attendance levels. “Out of a total of 204 towns listed in a 1761 tax list, only about 120 were represented in the legislature in any year in the late provincial period,” writes historian Stephen Patterson in *Political Parties in Revolutionary Massachusetts*. “The average number of towns responding in each of six roll call votes taken between 1757 and 1764 was 84...[and] a high rate of absenteeism after the first few days of a new session cut the numbers actively engaged in legislative work even further.”

Given that context, the General Court’s long and cumbersome process for enacting legislation—see, for example, the requirement that bills stop at each chamber’s Committee on Bills in the Third Reading, which is empowered to “examine and correct” them before senators or representatives can cast final votes—has entirely sensible origins. It made it more difficult, though certainly not impossible, for a small slice of the membership to pass sweeping laws while most of their colleagues were tending their farmlands. Such a scenario was hardly far-fetched, given that in 1780 the Massachusetts Constitution established a quorum of 60 in the House to do business—even though the membership, which fluctuated according to town populations, would eventually exceed 700.

EAST VS. WEST

Before modern methods of transportation, absenteeism was especially high among legislators from the western part of the state. “It would take two or three days on horseback to get to Boston, and then you would have to find a place to stay,” noted Jack Tager at a 2002 Commonwealth Forum. (For more on the subject, see the transcript of “East Meets West: Bridging the Politics, Economics and Histories of Eastern and Western Massachusetts,” at www.massinc.org.) And so the first great split in the General Court was not between political parties but between larger eastern communities, with growing economies based on trade, and agrarian towns with stagnant or slowly growing populations. That the east has always had an edge in this fight is underscored by the fact that the Legislature sits in coastal Boston, by far the largest city in the state. (In most other states, including California, New York, Pennsylvania, and Illinois, the capital is located some distance from the biggest urban area.)

Even so, small towns had far more power during the Legislature’s first century, when representation was based more on geography than on population size. Until 1776, each town with more than 30 voters was given a seat in the House of Representatives, while towns many times larger received only one to three additional seats. For example,

Ipswich had a voting population equal to eight western towns put together, but those towns sent 10 members to the House of Representatives to Ipswich’s two. Boston’s delegation, meanwhile, was capped at four seats.

That year a group of Essex County towns sent a petition

According to 2003 figures from the National Conference on State Legislatures, the Bay State has 935 full-time legislative staffers, the eighth-largest contingent in the nation. That’s one staffer for every 6,863 citizens, or the seventh-lowest ratio in the nation. Alaskans get the most personalized service, with one staffer for every 2,135 people, while North Carolinians may wait the longest for attention, with one staffer for every 29,452 people.

to the General Court complaining that, as Patterson puts it, “a majority in the House...could be obtained from the representatives of towns that paid not more than one-quarter of the public tax.” The solution was to keep increasing the size of the House, giving a town with 220 voters three representatives, a town with 320 voters four representatives, and so on. (The House roster was eventually capped at 240, and it is now down to 160 members as a result of a constitutional amendment passed by voters in 1974—arguably a triumph of efficient lawmaking over a more “pure” democracy in which almost every town had its own voice in the Legislature.) The expansion of the House was one piece of legislation that that passed very quickly—within four days of its introduction at the very end of a General Court session, when many representatives from the “frontier” towns to the west had likely gone home. According to Patterson, the battle over representation even overshadowed the drive for American independence. While most other towns passed resolutions in favor of independence earlier that spring, most Essex County towns waited until they had won more General Court seats before they joined the cause.

Since then, there have been repeated flare-ups of the great east vs. west battle, beginning with Shay’s Rebellion in 1786, in which western farmers seeking debt relief seized courthouses in Northampton and Worcester. Instead, they inadvertently pushed the state Legislature toward ratification of the US Constitution, as representatives from eastern communities suddenly saw the benefit of a strong federal government that could suppress such uprisings. More recently, complaints from the west have centered on spending priorities, especially when the state backs the Big Dig and other massive transportation projects that benefit Boston and its suburbs but do little for the Pioneer Valley and the

Berkshires.

The balance of power is not likely to shift anytime soon. No one from west of Framingham has headed either legislative chamber since Senate President Maurice Donahue (1964-70) and House Speaker David Bartley (1969-75), both of whom were from Holyoke. One reason may be that we have no political equivalent of upstate New York or downstate Illinois, two regions that have often served as Republican counterweights to heavily Democratic New York City and Chicago, respectively. In this state, even most suburbs and small towns have generally cast their lot with the Democratic Party.

IRISH VS. YANKEES

As the eastern part of the state grew more and more powerful, first from a maritime economy and then from manufacturing, Bay State politics became a matter of Boston vs. everyone else. In other words, Irish Catholics vs. Yankee Protestants.

The Yankees enjoyed numerical superiority through most of the 19th century. Their political power hit a peak in the 1850s thanks to the American Party, more popularly known as the Know Nothing Party (because its members were initially sworn to secrecy about the workings of the party). Both anti-slavery and anti-immigration, the Know-Nothings won all 40 state Senate seats and all but three of the 379 state House seats in 1854, in addition to the governorship and the entire congressional delegation. Once in power, the Know-Nothings passed legislation to deport poor or mentally ill Irish residents; to “inspect” Catholic schools and convents; and to order daily readings from the Protestant Bible in public schools. The party also tried, but failed, to deny Catholics the right to vote or hold office.

At the same time, the Know-Nothing Legislature abolished debtors’ prisons; forbade state officials from assisting in the return of fugitive slaves to Southern states; and voted to desegregate the Boston public schools. This schizophrenic philosophy, mixing opposition to slavery with the most extreme kind of xenophobia, established a link between racial tolerance and anti-Catholicism among many Massachusetts residents for decades to come. However, the Know-Nothings in other states were much less progressive on racial issues, and the party was quickly superseded in Bay State politics by the more steadfastly anti-slavery, and more subtly anti-immigration, Republican Party. The state GOP, of course, inherited the enmity of Catholic voters but, like the Know-

Nothings, would eventually be seen as more liberal than its national counterpart.

When the city of Boston became predominantly Catholic, the Republican-controlled Legislature devised ways to keep control over the capital city, in much the same way that the US Congress has always restricted the local government in majority-black Washington, DC. An 1891 constitutional amendment mandating that a majority of members in each chamber be present to conduct business—an idea that had been kicked around for more than 100 years—was passed in part out of fear that the Boston delegation could dominate a lightly attended session. The Legislature also gave the governor the right to appoint the police commissioner of the capital city. (In 1962, with the Democrats in control of both the State House and City Hall, that power was transferred to the mayor.) And in 1909, the Legislature passed a new charter for Boston that reduced the size and power of the city council and also mandated nonpartisan mayoral elections—both attempts to undermine the Democratic Party machine in the city. This did not prevent the populist Democrat James Michael Curley from assembling his own “nonpartisan” machine after being elected mayor in 1913

Massachusetts is one of 10 states in which one party controls more than two-thirds of the seats in both chambers of the Legislature. In Arkansas, Hawaii, Maryland, and Rhode Island, as in Massachusetts, the Democrats have overwhelming majorities—and voters in all five states installed Republican governors in 2002. Republicans are in charge in Idaho, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming, but only in Wyoming did voters feel the need to put a member of the opposition party in the governor’s office.

and re-elected twice after that. So the GOP-run Legislature amended the charter again to ban anyone from serving consecutive terms as mayor of Boston (and only Boston). When Curley tried to recapture City Hall in 1941, the Republicans changed the charter back, allowing the less objectionable incumbent, Maurice Tobin, to run and win again.

The hostility of the state Legislature toward the city lessened as many Boston natives moved to the fast-growing suburbs, and as those suburbs became increasingly Catholic—and Democratic. The first Boston Democrat to lead a legislative chamber was Senate President Chester Dolan, in 1949. Since then, the city’s population has dropped considerably, but as if making up for lost time, it has continued to dominate leadership positions in the Legislature: The past three Senate presidents and the past two House Speakers have all been from districts at least partially in Boston. This

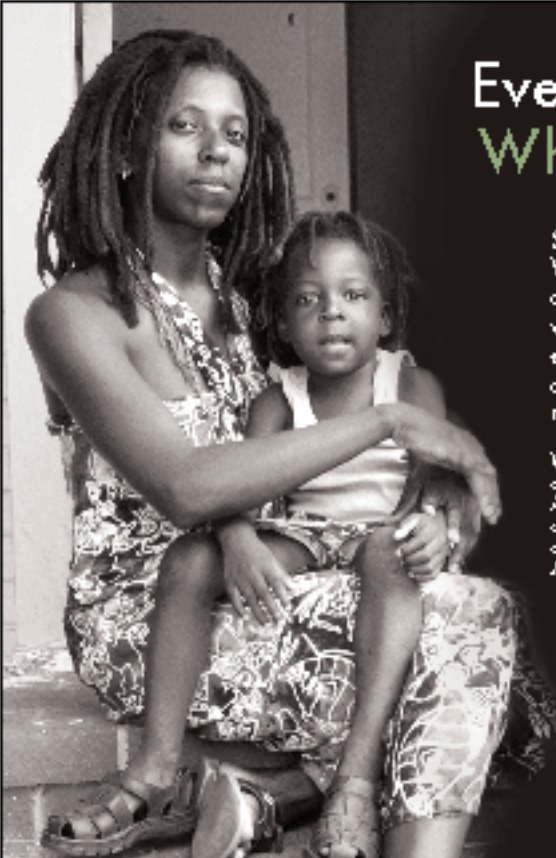
is in sharp contrast to the unwritten rule that no one can get elected governor from a Boston base; there hasn't been a chief executive from Suffolk County since Republican Christian Herter left office in 1957. (It seems axiomatic that only Republicans can be elected governor after heading a legislative chamber. Currently, all four governors with such experience—in Georgia, Minnesota, South Dakota, and Vermont—are from the GOP. In Massachusetts, the last Senate president to become governor was Republican Frank Allen in 1929; the last House Speaker to become governor was Herter in 1953.) But that doesn't mean Boston wins all its battles at the State House. Proposals allowing the city to impose a tax on commuters—an example of Boston *wanting* to be different from all the other cities in the Commonwealth—have repeatedly died in the Legislature.

DEMOCRATS VS. REPUBLICANS

Aside from geography and ethnicity, there haven't been too many long-lasting schisms in the General Court. During the mid-18th century, the membership split into three factions, but loyalists to England and "moderates" (wanting to preserve some kind of relationship with the mother country, on terms more favorable to the colonies) eventually lost out to proponents of complete independence, led

by Samuel Adams and James Otis. It was Otis who, addressing his fellow legislators in 1768, referred to the British House of Commons as a bunch of "horse jockey gamblers, pensioners, pimps, and whoremasters." A few days later, the House voted 92-17 to defy the Townshend Act, by which the British government imposed new taxes on the colonies, and the loyalists never had much power in the General Court after that.


Such lopsided margins have been the norm in the Legislature. In particular, during the past two centuries there have been only brief periods of real two-party competition. For most of that time, one or the other party has controlled both chambers by margins of more than 2-to-1, meaning that few Election Days have carried even a glimmer of doubt about the outcome. Except for two sessions in which the parties were tied in the number of seats they held, the Republicans controlled the Senate from the Civil War (by which the current two-party system was cemented in place) through 1959, and the Democrats have held it ever since. Similarly, the Republicans held the House through 1949 and, except for the 1953-54 session, the Democrats have been in control ever since. The Democrats' first Speaker of the House, Thomas "Tip" O'Neill of Cambridge, was one of the most beloved figures in Bay State politics, with great appeal among



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both “town” and “gown,” or traditionalist and reformist, voters. With legions of Democratic legislative candidates aping his style (typified by his motto “All politics is local”), it’s not surprising that his party held onto power long after he left the General Court and rose to become Speaker of the US House of Representatives.

Even if the two major parties have rarely fought on a level playing field, there have frequently been bitter struggles within the party in power. In 1957, the Republicans controlled the Senate but were split over the question of who would become Senate president. Democrats saw an opportunity and backed the candidate with minority support within the GOP. Thus, Republican Newland Holmes became majority leader on a secret ballot with the votes of 15 Democrats and only five Republicans. (House members have used an open roll call to elect its leaders since 1914, when Republicans suspected that some of their own might vote for a Democratic Speaker if given the chance to do so secretly; Senate Republicans tried to switch to an open ballot for the same reason when they realized there was a plot to install Holmes but didn’t have enough votes to change the voting rules.) The next year, Democrats won enough seats to take control of the chamber and dump Holmes in favor of one of their own. Nearly 40 years later, Republicans returned the

favor by giving Thomas Finneran enough votes to become Speaker of the Democratic-controlled House, even though a majority of Democrats voted against him.

The two bitterest fights of the past half-century over who would control a legislative chamber have both been between Democrats. Democratic Gov. Endicott Peabody tried to oust Democratic Speaker John “Iron Duke” Thompson in 1963, but ran through several candidates before Thompson was elected with the support of 118 of 240 members (with 15 abstentions) on the sixth ballot. And in 1983, majority leader George Keverian began a successful campaign to unseat Speaker and fellow Democrat Thomas McGee, winning support from rank-and-file members who chafed under McGee’s highly centralized style of governing. “Over 14 months, the House of Representatives waged bitter civil war, with every legislative battle colored by the leadership fight,” wrote former state representative John McDonough (“The Speaker who believed in democracy,” *CW*, Winter ’02).

The history of the Senate has not been quite so raucous, perhaps because its smaller membership is mindful of its status, however symbolic, as the “upper chamber.” Shortly after Keverian left the House, having achieved mixed success in opening up the legislative process to rank-and-file

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members, state Sen. Patricia McGovern argued against a proposed rules change in her body by saying, “the House was in absolute meltdown because of rules changes we all know in our hearts made little sense.” At that time, the Senate was led by William Bulger of South Boston, whose tenure (1978-96) was by far the longest of any Senate president or House Speaker in Bay State history. Yet even the Bulger regime was far from peaceful, with reformist members loudly protesting his centralized rule even if they never amassed enough votes to oust him.

The power struggles within the Democratic Party have fascinated State House reporters and political junkies, but they may not be as satisfying to voters, who are often left on the sidelines with uncontested legislative races.

“The combined effect of a factionalized ‘majority’ party and an opposition party of little force is that responsible party government in Massachusetts has all but disappeared,” wrote Boston University professors Murray Levin and George Blackwood in their book *The Compleat Politician: Political Strategy in Massachusetts*—published way back in 1962.

BIG GOVERNMENT, THEN AND NOW

The General Court has seen some epic battles—from east vs. west to Democrats vs. Democrats—but none has slowed the output of the Legislature for very long. From its very start, the Bay State has been blessed, or cursed, with highly productive lawmakers. Nearly a century ago, Albert Pillsbury, then the state attorney general, complained, “probably there is not a community on the face of the earth that is so over-legislated for as this Commonwealth of Massachusetts, nor a community anywhere which tolerates such petty, inconsequential, and unnecessary legislation.”

What constitutes “unnecessary legislation” is clearly in the eye of the beholder, but the Bay State has never been known for libertarian leanings. In 1981, the General Court overrode the veto of Gov. Edward King to make Massachusetts one of the first states to encourage recycling, and cut down on litter, by requiring deposits on soda and beer containers—even though voters had narrowly rejected this idea in a statewide referendum five years earlier. And in 2004, it enacted one of the toughest smoking bans in the US, covering workplaces, restaurants, and bars across the state (many of which were already smoke-free as a result of local legislation). Bills pending in the current session include a ban on caging pregnant pigs “in a manner that prevents the pig from turning around freely” and a requirement that school lunch

menus published in newspapers include “a nutritional report listing fat grams, vitamins, minerals, and calories.”

These are recent examples, but they are not inconsistent with Bay State history. As the authors of *Leading the Way*:

Outside of the South, salaries for state legislators are roughly proportionate to the population size (and, presumably, the complexity) of the state.

According to the *Book of the States 2005*, Massachusetts ranks seventh in annual compensation, with a base pay of \$53,380 for state senators and representatives. California tops the list with a base salary of \$99,000, followed by Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Ohio. Though many times larger than the Bay State, Texas offers an annual salary of \$7,200; in Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia, all states that have passed Massachusetts in population over the past few decades, legislative salaries remain under \$20,000.

A History of the Massachusetts General Court 1629-1980 note, with more diplomatic language than Pillsbury used, “Any existing myth regarding an earlier age free from government control is unsubstantiated by fact. If there was ‘less government’ visible in nineteenth century Massachusetts, it was because of problems of enforcement.”

Enforcement was not such a problem in the 1630s, when the General Court, imposing order on a small and homogeneous population, prescribed dress codes for citizens (with an emphasis on simplicity), and imposed wage and price controls along Christian principles of charity. The mandatory observance of Puritan principles gradually fell by the wayside, but attempts to ensure a conformist population continued for centuries. In 1935, the General Court, with overwhelming support from Catholic lawmakers, passed a bill requiring all teachers to take a “loyalty oath.” The bill’s sponsor, Thomas Dorgan of Dorchester, warned of “Reds” at Harvard and MIT and later said that “obedience to authority should be the motto of this country.” But the oath was narrowly repealed just two years later, and a key opponent was freshman legislator—and devout Catholic—Tip O’Neill.

The repeal of the loyalty oath was one sign that the General Court had shifted its energies from simply policing its citizens to protecting them, even if not everyone agreed that they *needed* protecting. Once an experiment in dour Puritanism, the Bay State became a “nanny state” well before the term was born. For example, in 1894, preceding



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the automobile, Massachusetts implemented an array of restrictions on bicycle riding, including a speed limit of 10 miles per hour on public roads and mandatory “alarm bells” on all pedal vehicles. And long before Prohibition (or the abolition of “happy hour” in the 1980s), the state banned the sale of liquor to anyone receiving public assistance and gave local officials the power to close down package stores when there was a threat of “riots.”

Of perhaps more lasting consequence, the General Court was ahead of the US Congress in setting what would come to be known as a progressive agenda in the early 1900s. As early as 1820, the Legislature established a well-publicized commission, headed by future Senate president Josiah Quincy, on the best way to provide relief for the state’s poor population. A few decades later, Massachusetts was the first state to pass substantial laws protecting factory workers. The flood of legislation also included the Factory Inspection Act of 1866; a 10-hour limit on workdays for women and children, passed in 1874; and the recognition of Labor Day in 1887. These laws made life at least marginally better for the working class; they also probably hastened the shift of the textile industry to less-regulated, cheaper-labor states in the South.

They also lifted the General Court to what may be its high-water mark in public esteem. *Leading the Way* quotes the assessment of political scientist Paul Reinsch, who surveyed state governments in 1907 and concluded, “The General Court of Massachusetts is in all respects nearest to the people, and most responsive of any American legislature to intelligent public opinion.”

It’s hard to imagine a contemporary political scholar lavishing such praise on the Massachusetts Legislature. Perhaps that’s because our reverence for government of any kind has dimmed after the great struggles, from the War for Independence through World War II, that determined whether Massachusetts and the entire US would continue to exist. Perhaps the race toward “smaller government,” which has dominated American politics since Ronald Reagan

A NOTE ON SOURCES

The most comprehensive source of information on the General Court may be Cornelius Dalton, John Wirkkala, and Anne Thomas’s *Leading the Way: A History of the Massachusetts General Court 1629-1980*, which was published by the Secretary of State’s Office in 1984 and is, sadly, now out of print. Also invaluable in researching this piece was Richard Brown and Jack Tager’s *Massachusetts: A Concise History*, a revised edition of which was published by the University of Massachusetts Press in 2000. And Stephen Patterson’s *Political Parties in Revolutionary Massachusetts* (University of Wisconsin, 1973) provides a good overview of state politics at the time of American Independence.

Through most of the 19th century, the Legislature met in the first week of January and adjourned by early spring. It wasn't until 1883 that a session went past July 1, and as late as 1961 lawmakers were done by May 27. In 1965, however, the Legislature set a record by staying in session all the way past the next New Year's Day; it was dissolved on January 4 only so that the 1966 session could begin two days later. Since then, several sessions have bumped up against the first Wednesday of the following year, when the Legislature is constitutionally required to begin anew.

became president, is a competition that Massachusetts just can't win, and our Legislature will rise in stature only if and when the pendulum swings back toward state activism.

Or maybe we're just more clear-eyed about the limitations of the people who govern us. One turning point in how the public views the General Court came in 1933, when Harvard University students stole the "sacred cod"—a wooden fish commemorating one of the mainstays of the state's economy during the Colonial era—that had been

hanging in the House chamber since 1784. (Was this in revenge for the earlier ban on legislators from Harvard?) The sacred cod was returned within a few days, and it still hangs in the House (the Senate has a smaller "holy mackerel" incorporated into its chandelier), but the prank may have made the Legislature seem a bit less exalted. It probably didn't help that members of the House declared that they couldn't do the state's business without the cod in its place, or that the state police were so caught up in the hyste-

ria that they dredged the Charles River looking for the wooden talisman. The fish on the wall, like the liquor in the basement during the 1920s (both reminiscent of college-dorm décor), may have made the General Court seem less like a history museum and more like one of our famed town meetings: noisy and unpredictable and full of characters. ■

Additional research by Eric Wagner.

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GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS



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BY MATT KELLY | PHOTOGRAPHS BY FLINT BORN

Romney and the Legislature want to stimulate the state's economy. What about the costs of living and doing business here?

ON JULY 19, Massachusetts businesses stormed the State House. But this was no palace coup, nor even a “lobby day,” the kind of event that features pinstriped suits roaming the hallways to pigeonhole state representatives and senators for a tax break or other special-interest measure. Rather, it was “Made in Massachusetts Day” on Beacon Hill, and the exhibitors in the Great Hall were more boisterous than demanding. Drywall makers stood next to organ manufacturers. Dessert bakers lined up next to precision machinists. Hundreds of lawmakers, staffers, tourists, and passersby meandered through the spectacle to see what sorts of things Massachusetts businesses churn out.

Just before noon, Gov. Mitt Romney strode through the hall, chatting up business executives and sampling the food. He then took to a nearby lectern and began talking about that most important of issues for state politicians: economic development. With a half-dozen local manufacturers at his side, Romney cited the impressive news released one day earlier that Massachusetts had collected a record \$17.1 billion in tax revenue for fiscal 2005.

“These people and people like them hire people to work in Massachusetts and pay them good salaries, and they pay taxes,” the governor said. “We need to do everything in our power to make Massachusetts a more attractive place to do business.”

Romney and his legislative cohorts seem intent on doing just that. In March, Romney filed an “economic stimulus” plan that would direct \$500 million toward job “incentives” and other assistance for business expansion, as well as accelerate the state’s tortoise-like permitting process for siting business facilities. In July, House leaders announced a nearly

\$300 million package that promises to improve the climate for investment, boost workforce education and training programs, identify regulatory burdens, and support local agriculture. And in August, Senate President Robert Travaglini vowed to “respond to and add on to” the House jobs plan in the fall, setting the stage for the Legislature to pass its second economic-development package within three years.

Taken together, these proposals seek to cure a multitude of business ills. But none would address the three challenges Romney cataloged in his remarks to the business exhibitors in the Great Hall: health care, housing, and business costs. These costs are higher here than in most parts of the United States and around the world. And they are the stock answer you get when you ask any executive why doing business in Massachusetts is so difficult, even in the best of times. No “jobs bill” is going to change that.

Where do the state’s leaders go wrong? Economist David Tuerck, director of the conservative Beacon Hill Institute at Suffolk University, offers one example: the tax credit passed by the House this summer (the Senate in September seemed poised to do the same) to lure the film industry to Massachusetts, offering up to \$7 million in credits for production costs.

“Worse than a waste of time,” he says of such single-industry cuts. “They’re like the relief of symptoms so you can ignore the fundamental problem.” Like any other Bay Stater, Tuerck winces at the thought of a biography of Quincy native John Adams being filmed in Virginia, as is now underway. But, he insists, the state shouldn’t squander tax credits to lure such business back here.

“We’d never much notice the benefits of that,” he argues. “What Quincy needs is a way to prevent State Street Bank

from cutting back hiring in Quincy, or to do something with the Fore River Shipyard other than turn it into a used-car lot.”

On the other end of the political spectrum, Noah Berger, of the liberal Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, doesn’t like the filmmakers’ tax cut any better than Tuerck does. Such cuts to the state revenue stream erode our ability to fund schools and job training efforts, which, says Berger, is what employers really want to see. Tax credits “don’t work,” says Berger. “That’s not how businesses decide where to locate.”

Still, for any state, economic development policy is a matter of capitalizing on strengths and, if necessary, doing something—even if that something is expensive—about the weaknesses. And companies can hardly be blamed if they do the same: capitalize on their home state’s strengths while remaining open to overtures from other states that are covetous of these firms and what they do.

Consider Nantero Corp., a Woburn company pioneering ways to manufacture ultra-small microchips and a darling of the state’s technology community. Chief executive Greg Schmergel praises Massachusetts for its top-notch universities, deep-rooted venture capitalists, and talented workforce. But he’s opening a small branch office in Missouri, where the Show Me State has created an incubator to lure tech companies like his, he said.

The Missouri/Massachusetts comparison is instructive. One state has a low cost of business but has to lure technology; the other has technology galore but has the disincentives of high energy, insurance, real estate, and salary costs. In the emerging globalized world, where brainpower is a commodity and low cost is king, which has the rockier future?

Jeffrey Grogan, a principal at the Monitor Group in Cambridge, a consulting firm that studies economic competition around the world, says the challenges in Massachusetts are “things that will enable employees to stay here, and start families here.... For companies, that’s a critical issue right now. Other regions don’t have these problems.”

COMPETITIVE CLUSTERS

Anyone who wants to look on the bright side of Massachusetts’s economic circumstances should talk to Michael George. In late 2002 George took the reins as chief executive officer of Bowstreet Inc., a maker of business software then headquartered in Portsmouth, NH. One of his first moves: relocating the company to Tewksbury.

“We needed to grow,” says George. Bowstreet had tried in the 1990s to sell software tools, but failed. George wanted to shift the business into more of a consulting role, helping specific customers build tailor-made computer applications. “A major impetus for us was to get into a labor pool that was skilled and broad, and capable of fueling the company’s recovery,” he says.

That labor pool was Massachusetts. When Bowstreet

moved to Tewksbury, it employed only 65 people. Since then George has hired another 30. “The pool of applicants we could draw from was outstanding,” he says.

Bowstreet belongs to what state economic development specialists call a “traded cluster,” an industry *in* Massachu-



CEO Michael George likes the “outstanding” labor pool here.

setts that creates products much in demand *outside* Massachusetts. In Bowstreet’s case, the cluster is software. Biotechnology is another. In the past, traded clusters involved products ranging from fish to shoes to mini-computers. Today, they include higher education (student customers “import” themselves to attend our universities), financial services, and health care.

A cornerstone of the Bay State’s economic development strategy is to nurture traded clusters. If traded clusters can thrive, the thinking goes, the prosperity they generate will pull along the “local clusters” of restaurants, realtors, dry cleaners, banks, and myriad other businesses and social services whose demand is primarily *inside* Massachusetts. Perhaps new software company employees will prod the restaurant next door to hire more waiters; tax receipts from a biotech company might fund job retraining programs for

unemployed mini-computer salesmen. Either way, cultivating those traded clusters is paramount.

On that front, Massachusetts has waged an effective fight. “We are one of the best in the United States at developing new industries,” says state Rep. Daniel Bosley, the North Adams Democrat who is House chairman of the Legislature’s Economic Development and Emerging Technologies Committee. “We have tremendous resources.”

The resources themselves are well-known: stellar universities, a strong venture capital industry, teaching hospitals, and a well-trained workforce able to take the new technologies cooked up in research labs and develop them into products, companies, and industries. These factors tend to earn the Bay State high marks on rankings of economic “competitiveness,” which look at a state or metropolitan area’s assets for creating and growing cutting-edge businesses.

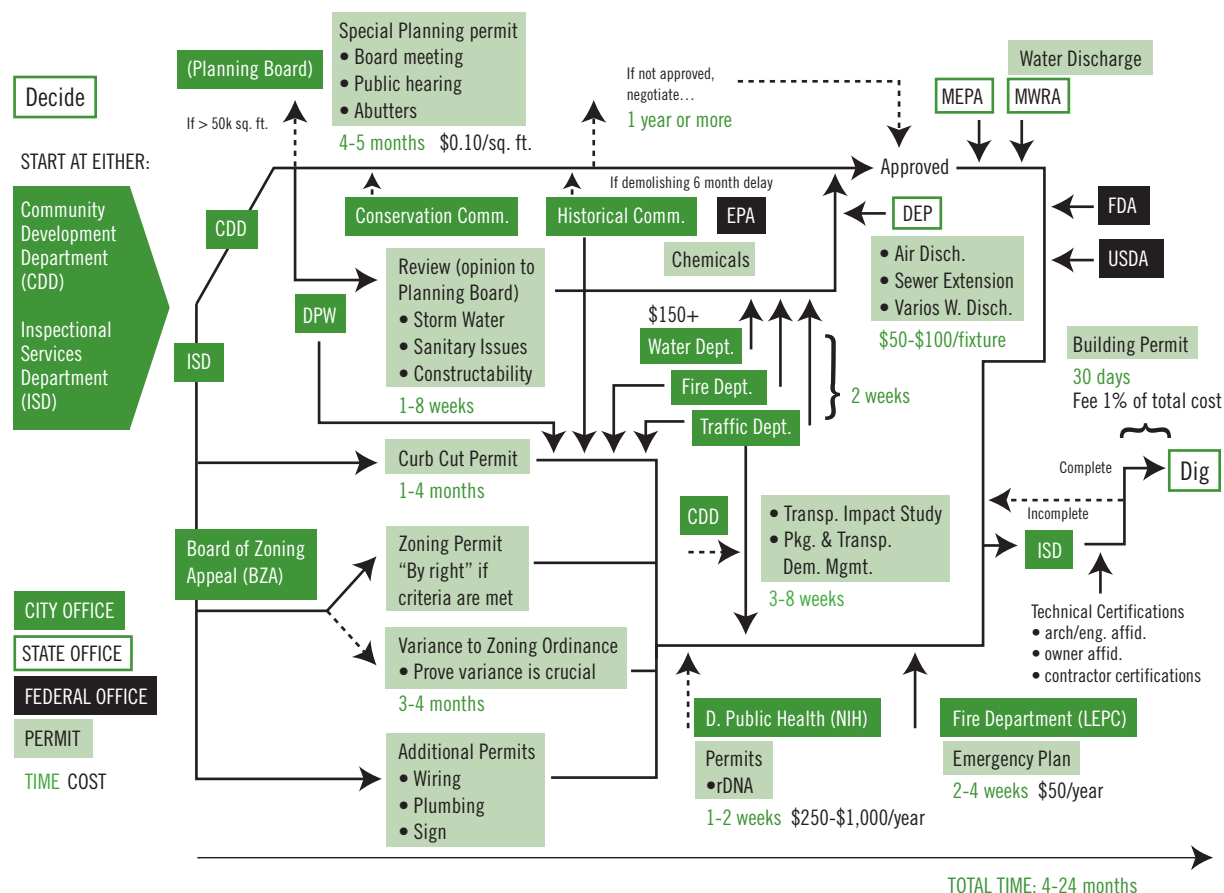
The Beacon Hill Institute, for example, ranked Massachusetts as the most economically competitive state in the country in 2004, with technology and business incubation strengths (the state was No. 1 in both categories) making up for what the Institute considers bad fiscal policy and high

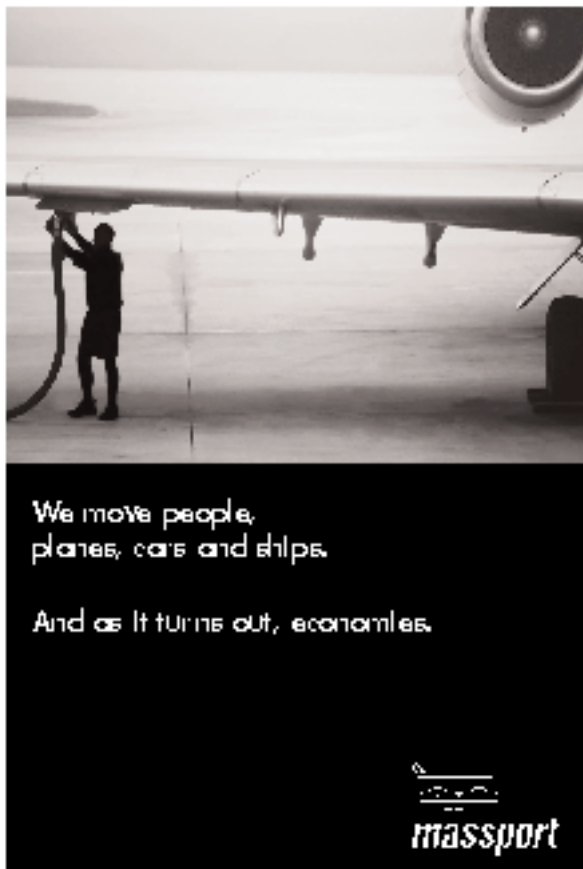

infrastructure costs (we were No. 39 and No. 38 by those criteria). The Milken Institute in California also ranked us tops on its Technology and Science Index in 2002 and 2004 (not to mention its Knowledge-based Economy Index, formerly the New Economy Index, which the Bay State ruled in 2000 and 2001).

Legislative leaders spent much of the 1990s pulling various levers of political power to exploit the Bay State’s resources fully and give it a competitive edge. Where no levers existed, lawmakers built them. As part of deregulating the electricity industry in 1998, for example, lawmakers created the Renewable Energy Trust to invest in alternative-energy businesses. Since 2001 the trust has invested or loaned more than \$9.5 million to various Bay State energy startups.

One star of the trust’s efforts is Konarka Technologies, a Lowell company that is developing technologies such as solar-powered plastics. In 2002 the state invested \$1.5 million in Konarka, when it had less than 30 employees. Since then the company has raised another \$18 million in private capital (more than \$38 million total) and increased its head count to 40.

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Konarka traces its underlying technology back to science developed at the University of Massachusetts–Lowell. UMass and state officials, eager to repeat the process, awarded \$5 million to the school last December to further exploit nanotech research such as Konarka's, as part of a larger \$23 million project funded by federal grants.

That's the sort of magnifying effect that state Rep. Barry Finegold, an Andover Democrat and a member of the economic development committee, hopes to see more of. He envisions similar seed investments in nanotechnology and alternative fuels, among other fledgling industries being perfected by scientists at local universities. "We have to give them some incentive and early-stage money to keep them here," he says.

The Romney administration agrees with the theory of targeted assistance, if not every bit of seed-capital someone on Beacon Hill wants to give away. In recent years the administration has endorsed a tax rebate for biotech manufacturing jobs, an expansion of the research-and-development tax credit, and making the investment tax credit permanent. It worked with Citizens Bank to create the Citizens Job Bank program, under which businesses can secure loans of up to \$10 million, at reduced interest rates, in exchange for adding jobs within three years.

Ranch Kimball, Romney's secretary of economic development, says such levers of power should be pulled strategically. He does not want tax credits to proliferate to the point where companies see them as entitlements, but he does want the right sort of credits so that when a company does want to add jobs, "we have a tool to keep them here."

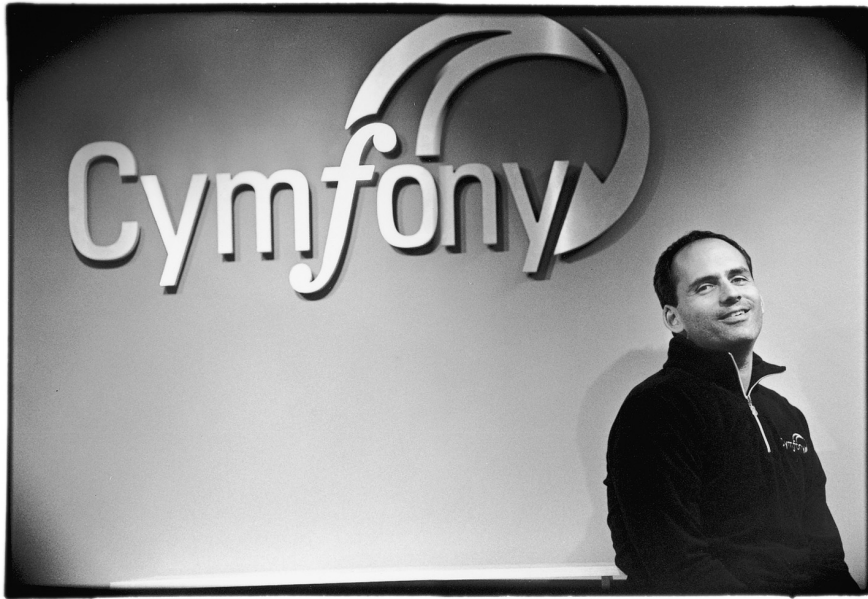
It's worth noting that early applicants for Citizen Jobs loans include Legal Seafoods; Metropolitan Cabinets, a manufacturer and distributor based in Norwood; and Expressway Motors, an auto dealership in Dorchester—significant businesses, but hardly the tech-intensive traded clusters state officials dote on. Still, few people dispute the notion that Massachusetts must be as user-friendly as possible for those technology-driven industries.

"If your trade clusters are doing well," says Grogan at the Monitor Group, "your local industry clusters...are going to do well too."

UNCOMPETITIVE COSTS

But are any of them—traded clusters or local clusters—doing well enough? Since January 2004, the state has created more than 40,000 new jobs. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the new positions span an impressive array of fields predominantly in our traded clusters. Among them: 7,400 new jobs in science or research; 2,200 in architecture and engineering; 1,000 in computer systems design; 5,000 in hospitals; and 8,000 in education.

And yet, some 59,000 people don't think those figures are much to brag about. That is the number of people estimated



CEO Andrew Bernstein: An "extraordinary" cost of living scares off new workers.

to have left Massachusetts from July 2003 to July 2004, and because they weren't quite balanced out by births and people moving into Massachusetts, we became the only state in the nation to lose population last year. What's more, Massachusetts had a slower rate of population growth in the first three years of this decade (1.3 percent) than the nation

as a whole (3.3 percent), and a slower rate of growth throughout the 1990s (5.5 percent versus 13.1 percent). If not for immigrants coming into the state, population growth in the 1990s would have been negative, too. According to the 2003 MassINC report *Mass.Migration*, even at the height of the 1990s economic boom, when there were severe labor shortages in some industries, more people left Massachusetts than came here.

No one knows exactly why people are leaving Massachusetts, but the high cost of living and a volatile job market—both of the recessions that took place in the last 15 years hit the Bay State harder than the nation overall—

may have something to do with the exodus. Think about it: When a worker can't find a good job, he can't afford Massachusetts's high home prices, so he leaves. (Boston is the most expensive metropolitan area in the US, according to a report released in early September by the Boston Foundation and the Citizens' Housing and Planning Association,

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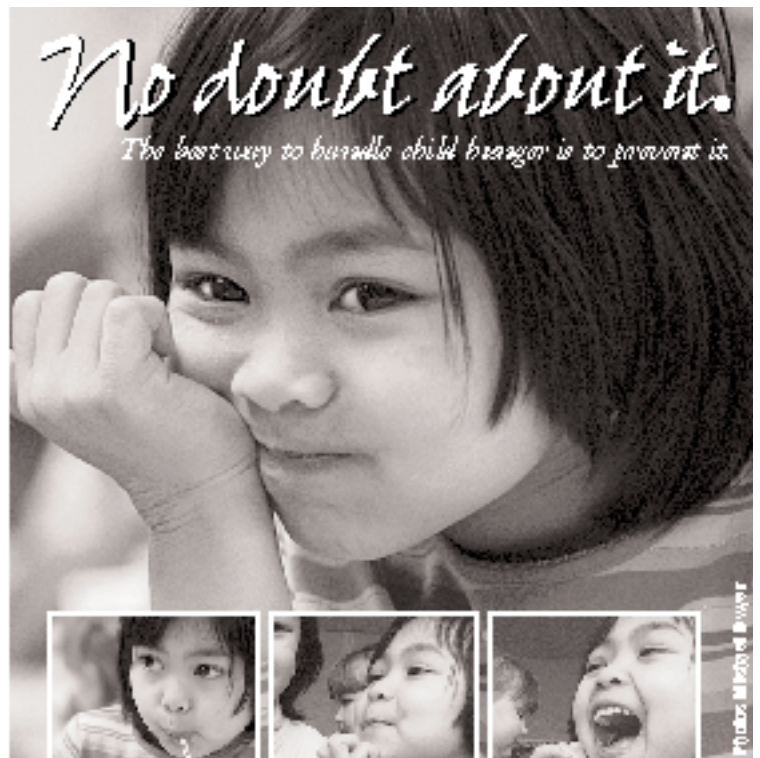
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with a family of four requiring an annual income of \$65,000 to meet "basic needs" including housing, food, and health care.) But because of high home prices, employers can't lure enough workers to come here, so they locate new jobs elsewhere. The result is a workforce stretched surprisingly thin. Despite Massachusetts gaining back a mere fraction of the jobs it lost from 2001 through 2003, already employers report labor shortages.

"The need has appeared at all levels," says Richard Lord, president of the Associated Industries of Massachusetts. "We hear all the time how difficult it is, and we hear it all over the state, which is surprising."

One person Lord could have heard it from is Thomas Walter, general manager of the upscale Crowne Pointe Inn in Provincetown. "In a resort community, we struggle to staff the business in a town where people often can't afford to live," he says. "We provide housing when we can, but that lessens the bottom line. It's a constant challenge."

Cymfony Corp., a software company in Watertown and a world removed from Walter's Cape Cod tourist resort, has the same problem.

"I'm shocked at how difficult it is to hire engineers right now; prices have gone through the roof," says Andrew Bernstein, chief executive of the 60-person company. "The costs of living are extraordinary. If we want to bring someone in at the right salary and they're moving to Boston, it's really expensive."

For both employer and employee, working—and doing business—in Massachusetts is costly. The total package of salary, health insurance, taxes, transportation, real estate, energy, and insurance costs is where Massachusetts loses out to other states.

Housing is now the first thing that executives cite as a cost that's crimping their business, but it's not the only one. Health insurance almost inevitably follows. For the last five years Massachusetts has seen double-digit increases in insurance costs every year. In 1999, the average annual premiums were \$4,145 per worker, according to a survey done by Hewitt Associates. Today they are \$8,000—or \$600 higher than the national average.

That cost squeezes companies like CMT Entertainment, a party-planning firm in Boston. Carla Tardif founded the business in 2001 and ran it with only her partner until she expanded last year to six people, working out of a bustling office next to the Orpheum Theater.

CMT does offer health insurance to employees, but "it's extremely hard," Tardif says. "One thing I learned is that when you hire someone at \$50,000 per year, you're really hiring them at \$73,000 because of health care and employment taxes. That's absolutely brutal." Though she says her business is going "extremely well," Tardif has no plans to add any more employees, because of the cost and the paperwork.

BACK TO BASICS

The list of costs goes on. Massachusetts has the highest unemployment insurance costs in the nation, at \$688 per employee. Energy costs have soared thanks to oil at \$65 per barrel, giving a nasty extra pinch to cold-weather states. And employees face high costs other than housing: Matthias Wagner, chief executive of the five-person RedShift Systems Corp. in Waltham, wryly notes that if a startup needs people to work 80 hours a week, someone's child care bill is going to be mighty expensive.



Carla Tardif gives her six employees health insurance, but its "brutal" cost precludes new hires.

While Massachusetts ranks high on many ratings of "competitiveness," it is also among the worst-ranked states for business costs. In the Milken Institute's 2005 *Cost of Doing Business Index*, released in August, the Bay State was third from the bottom, with only Hawaii and New York judged to be more expensive. (Last year, the Bay State was fourth worst, ahead of California.) An analysis by Economy.com released in May called Massachusetts the highest in the nation for business costs, based on 2002 data, and Boston the most costly of 350 metropolitan areas.

Both rankings weigh heavily the state's high wage and salary costs, which reflect high levels of education in the

labor force but also the high cost of living here. In addition, Massachusetts stands out in the Milken index as second highest in office rents, fourth in industrial rents, and fifth in electricity. Economy.com cited commercial energy costs 44 percent above the national average.

"It's a major concern, and I don't think there's sufficient worry for the fact that we're not competitive on business costs," says Michael Widmer, president of the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation. He praises the state for earlier reforms in worker's compensation, which reduced costs to \$2.62 per \$100 of payroll in 2004, which placed Massachusetts 38th among the 50 states. But MTF research still pegs Massachusetts (as of 2002) as the 10th most expensive state for health care premiums, fifth for industrial electricity, and second for unemployment insurance.

All those expenses place enormous cost pressure on both employer and employee, regardless of whether they are in traded or local clusters. Not surprisingly, both have been voting with their feet, leaving despite an array of tax credits and loan programs, venture capitalists in abundance, and trade associations galore—all intended to keep them here.

"It's important for government to work in partnership with business and our educational institutions to make this a good place to do business," Bosley says. "And for that to happen we're going to have to solve some very basic problems."

The problem with these "very basic problems" is that they are, well, basic. If they were so easy to fix, they'd be solved by now.

Take housing. The Romney administration boasts that housing starts are up—a necessity, if the bidding up of home prices is to come to an end—but still lag behind the rest of the nation. According to the US Census Bureau, permits for new housing units rose by 10.7 percent in Massachusetts last year, outpacing an increase at the national level of 8.6 percent. But we're still playing catch-up: 24.1 percent more housing units were authorized here last year than in 1994, far below the 49.6 percent jump in annual new units throughout the US over the same period. Meanwhile, the total number of housing units in Massachusetts rose by 6.1 percent, compared with 14.9 percent nationally.

The Legislature approved last year some modest incentives for municipalities to allow denser housing development in town centers and near transit stops, but it is still unclear whether they will be enough to overcome local resistance to growth. Even amidst talk of a "softening" of the housing market, home prices continue to set new records, with the median price of a single-family home in Massachusetts hitting \$364,900 in the second quarter of this year, up 6.4 percent from second quarter of 2004. And, condo prices race ahead even faster, reaching a median of \$280,000 in the second quarter, a nearly 8 percent increase over a year earlier.

The cost of health care is an even greater challenge. In

'I don't think there's sufficient worry for the fact that we're not competitive on business costs.'

truth, it is a national problem, with matters here only slightly worse. Still, a national solution has not emerged, and as a result Gov. Romney and legislative leaders have identified health insurance reform as one of their top priorities for this year. But the plans under consideration by state officials are focused on finding ways to cover those who currently lack health insurance, not control (let alone reduce) the rising cost of coverage for those now insured—and facing another projected increase of 10 percent or more for 2006.

Alan Macdonald, chief executive of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable, praises the idea of reducing the number of uninsured, but he wants to see more attention paid to giving consumers greater responsibility for and control over their health insurance. Only then, he says, will they pursue low-cost options vigorously, spend less on health care, and drive down the relentless premium hikes.

"We need to bring more individuals back into being more aware of and responsible for their own health care payments," says Macdonald.

ECONOMIC STIMULUS, ANYONE?

Unable or unwilling to address key cost-of-living and cost-of-business problems, where is Beacon Hill putting its efforts? Into competing—or, perhaps, complementary—"economic stimulus" packages.

Earlier this year, the House leadership sent Bosley and several other House committee chairman on a "listening tour," traveling around the state to meet with local businesses to find out their needs. They heard lots about housing and health insurance, he says; they also heard strong demand ("far more money") for job training. From that input, Bosley, his compatriots, and House Speaker Salvatore DiMasi crafted a \$297 million economic stimulus bill they unveiled in July.

The bill would pour \$32 million into workforce development efforts such as English-language training and provide more than \$25 million in grants for repairs and expansion of cultural facilities, the hubs of the arts and tourism industry. (This is where a portion of the hotel tax paid by

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out-of-towners would go once the Hynes Convention Center renovation is paid off.) Like Romney's own stimulus bill filed last spring, it also includes \$200 million to pay for infrastructure improvements for businesses locating or expanding here.

None of these efforts pierces the heart of Massachusetts's problems as a high-cost state. Still, they win plaudits from the business community as small steps in a useful direction — especially funding for workforce development, whose benefits take time to pay off. "One at a time, they are little," Macdonald says. "But together they're a pretty good package."

Kimball, meanwhile, points to other fronts where the Romney administration wants to attack Massachusetts's alleged business unfriendliness. One priority is permitting reform, where Romney wants a fast-track process so that participating municipalities can approve projects for specific parcels within 180 days. Under current law, complex projects routinely take years to get the go-ahead (see chart, page 81). (In pitching this proposal, Kimball often asserts that Merck & Co. needed six years to win approval for a research building in Boston, and claims that Merck executives told him they would not have come here had they known the true depth of the chore. But recently, Merck officials denied the story to *The Boston Globe*.)

Bosley and his colleagues included no permitting reforms in their stimulus bill because, they say, few people complained about it in the hearings on the bill held earlier this year. Bosley also faults Romney's idea of using grants as incentives for towns to improve their permitting, saying they will attract the interest of development-starved communities like New Bedford or Springfield but do nothing to speed things up in areas like suburban Boston that would rather keep development out.

"The governor's incentives aren't enough to change those patterns of behavior in those communities," Bosley says. "I think we have to go back and take another look and be a little innovative."

Bosley welcomes ideas such as those from the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties, which suggests setting up special court sessions to hear permitting cases more quickly or allowing developments to move forward at the owner's risk during litigation. But he wants to establish a small-business advisory committee to mull over such reforms and tackle permitting at a later time.

The Romney administration has also been pushing to prune back the state's unemployment insurance tax. Romney proposes to cut unemployment benefits from 30 to 26 weeks, and increase the eligibility requirement from 15 weeks on the job to 20. Those reforms coupled with other technical adjustments should, the governor claims, reduce the UI cost by more than \$100 per employee.

All that, Kimball says, shows that "on some of these intractable problems, we have some bold legislative pro-

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‘We’re not going to change the fact that a home costs \$400,000 here and \$150,000 in the Carolinas.’

posals we think attacks them head-on.”

Bold, perhaps, but no more than proposals. Reforming permitting procedures and bringing unemployment insurance into line with other states are not radical ideas, but they are controversial here in Massachusetts. Permitting reform, like housing, flirts with the finicky issue of local control, while cuts to unemployment benefits—vehemently opposed by organized labor—can be a touchy subject, especially since Massachusetts lost more of its job base in the last recession than any other state.

And then there is the nagging feeling that, even if the logjam around these items could be broken through, the housing, health care, and other deep structural burdens that give so much trouble to employers and employees alike would still remain. On these issues, it isn’t unusual to hear economic development experts and state officials practically cry “uncle.”

“We’re not going to change the fact that a home costs \$400,000 here and \$150,000 in the Carolinas,” Finegold admits. “We’re not going to win the game of housing; we’re just not going to do it.” His solution: create enough new,

high-paying jobs so that \$400,000 homes are not out of reach for Massachusetts residents (our home ownership rate, at 63.8 percent, ranks 46th in the nation) and so that health insurance, energy costs, and the like are not out of the question for employers.

Meanwhile, don’t forget the other 49 states chasing that same goal of economic growth. California and Connecticut are both investing state money in stem-cell research. New York and Texas have put millions into funding for nanotechnology research. More than a dozen states either do, or want to, offer tax credits for the film industry. Such efforts drag other states into an economic arms race, even when they might distract from more basic woes.

“It’s important for us to do what every other state does,” Bosley says. “Once a few states rush toward some tax credit, then every other state almost has to do it.”

FROM TAXACHUSETTS TO COSTACHUSETTS

One telling item not among the litany of Massachusetts’s woes is taxes. For all the stereotypes still circulating in busi-



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ness circles (*CFO* and *Chief Executive* magazines both recently named Massachusetts among the worst five states to do business in, singling out taxes as a principal cause), the lamentable “Taxachusetts” moniker no longer applies. According to the Tax Foundation in Washington, DC, in 2004 Massachusetts had only the 33rd heaviest tax burden in the nation, a far cry from the late 1970s when it routinely ranked second or third. In the Milken index, the Bay State ranked 29th—just above the national average—in state and local tax burden, and Economy.com put us at 38th. Our corporate tax rate of 9.5 percent is still sixth highest among states that assess corporate taxes, but the business-backed Council on State Taxation placed Massachusetts 47th in the nation in the proportion of state and local tax burden borne by business.

“The fact is we didn’t hear anyone say, ‘Give us tax cuts’ except to say, ‘Give us *targeted* tax cuts,’” Bosley says of his listening tour.

The Romney administration is not so sure. The governor still strongly supports cutting the income tax rate to 5 percent. Even Bosley agrees that some tax policies should be changed, such as the corporate excise tax that whacks venture capital-backed startups when they raise large sums of money. “It makes no sense for us to go after all that capital at the very beginning,” he says.

It may take a while for the corporate rumor mill to catch up, but the course correction away from Taxachusetts suggests that, with effort and discipline, lawmakers can steer the state in a significantly different direction. Twenty years ago the handicap was taxes. Today it is the cost of living and the cost of doing business. To overcome this new handicap—the handicap of being Costachusetts—the state can either create an economic climate that will induce enough growth to outpace the drag of Costachusetts, or it can make some painful choices to cut the Gordian knot of *being* Costachusetts.

Neither will be easy. The former flies in the face of the 21st century, where brainpower is a commodity that can move anywhere. Can Massachusetts—and its residents—simply become rich enough that costs no longer matter? The latter butts up against the political legacy of the 20th century, when home rule was king and health insurance was simply a bill that you paid. Do we have the will to impose unwanted housing on communities and cost caps on medical care?

Somehow Massachusetts must thread its way between those extremes, searching for a state of grace that, when voiced by Bernstein, the chief executive at Cymfony, hardly sounds utopian: “I’d like to see them make it easier for people to live in Boston,” he says. “If I can get employees to live here and spend less money, that’s the most important thing.” ■

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Who moved her cheese?

Author Barbara Ehrenreich finds one aspect of immersing herself in the middle-class workforce tougher than slaving away in low-wage work: finding a job.

You can't exactly call Barbara Ehrenreich the left's answer to David Brooks. But if the conservative *New York Times* columnist's book-length observations on the lives of the comfortable (*Bobos in Paradise*, *On Paradise Drive*) qualify as "comic sociology," as he calls his genre, then the liberal Ehrenreich's latest books make her as much anthropologist as journalist, and one who can be, on occasion, equally comic as she stumbles through life among select groups of the economically insecure.

In *Nickel and Dimed*, Ehrenreich waits tables, scrubs bathrooms, and stocks shelves in Wal-Mart to experience for herself the realities of low-wage work, which she shows to be as absurd as they are backbreaking and budget-defying. In her new book, *Bait and Switch*, Ehrenreich—legally changing to her pre-marriage name of Barbara Alexander—goes after a modestly middle-class job, one she hopes will give her \$50,000 a year and health insurance. Ironically, she has less success. After almost a year of trying—hundreds of résumés sent out and thousands of dollars spent on job coaches, job-seeker boot camps, and networking seminars of dubious utility—this author of a dozen books and frequent contributor to *Time*, *The New Republic*, and *The Nation* (and who took a couple of months off from her job

search to write op-ed columns for *The New York Times*) finds herself unable to land a job as a "communications professional" in the corporate sector. But along the way, she learns plenty about being "in transition" in the professional-managerial middle class, a condition she finds fraught with ambiguity as well as insecurity, as qualifications seem to take a back seat to appearances.

The journalistic mission of illuminating life at various (but always precarious) levels of the economic food chain by means of immersion came late to Ehrenreich, whose previous writings consisted mostly of analysis and social commentary. And it came by accident, she says, the result of a lunch with *Harper's* editor Lewis Lapham at which the conversation turned to one of her favorite topics—poverty—and the then-raging debate over welfare reform. In an unguarded moment, she suggested that Lapham "find someone to go out and do the old-fashioned kind of journalism and try it for themselves"—try to get by working the kind of jobs that would be available to former welfare recipients.

"Now, I did not mean me," she explains by phone from her home in Charlottesville, Va., to which she relocated from her *Nickel and Dimed* home base of Key West, Fla., in order to be near her daughter, who has a position at the University



PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID DEAL

of Virginia Law School, and her two grandchildren. “I didn’t really know how to go about it. I’d not only not done this particular kind of so-called immersion journalism, I hadn’t even done a lot of reporting. Most of my work is essays, so it was a completely new experience.”

But it’s one she has made the most of. Her chronicles of her times as a working stiff and now as a job hunter eager to join the corporate rat race are sharply observed and, perhaps more surprising, funny. Though her sympathies are clearly with those she sees as downtrodden in one way or another, Ehrenreich does not suffer fools, let alone charlatans, gladly at any level of the socioeconomic ladder. Nor

does she spare herself: One night, after a long shift at Wal-Mart, she returns to the kitchenless room she is renting by the week with her dinner of Kentucky Fried Chicken and turns on the television to an episode of *Survivor*. “Who are these nutcases who would volunteer for an artificially daunting situation in order to entertain millions of strangers with their half-assed efforts to survive?” she writes, in *Nickel and Dimed*. “Then I remember where I am and why I am here.”

I talked with Ehrenreich about her adventures among the marginally employed and the white-collar unemployed. What follows is an edited transcript of our conversation.

—ROBERT KEOUGH

CommonWealth: In *Nickel and Dime*d, you set out with the goal of trying to make ends meet, matching income to expenses one month at a time as you lived and worked in three different settings: waiting tables in Florida, cleaning houses in Maine, and tending clothing racks at Wal-Mart in Minnesota. Now, you said it was no surprise to you that you found that hard to do; that was your point in trying to do it. What did surprise you about what made it tough?

Ehrenreich: Well, I began to realize that it's actually more expensive to be poor, in some ways, than to be affluent. Little things, like if you have housing that doesn't have an adequate kitchen, food is going to be more expensive. I had this vision of myself cooking up big lentil stews and freezing them, thawing one each night. I'm a good cook in that kind of basic fashion. But I didn't have a pot. In some situations I didn't even have a fridge or a microwave. Then you're stuck with fast food and convenience store food, which, quite apart from its appealingness as food, is expensive.

CommonWealth: In some locations, the only affordable housing you could find was in motels.

Ehrenreich: Yeah, now that's another high cost for the poor, because to get into a regular apartment you need the first month's rent and a security deposit, at least, which is an amount of capital—\$1,000 or more—a lot of people can't scrape together. So, to get a roof over your head quickly you go into a motel and that's ridiculous, \$40 a night or something. And you're talking about very cheap motels, although some of the creepy residential motels are not even cheap. I was taken aback by these kinds of additional costs.

CommonWealth: In Minnesota, you ran into a severe housing crunch but also a dislocation between where you could find housing that you could afford and where you would find the jobs you were trying to work. You found it was a trade-off: You could live here and get a job there but then have to spend so much, in time and money, getting back and forth to work.

Ehrenreich: Right. I hadn't realized, for one thing, that the Twin Cities is a pretty big urban area, and also that the really cheap housing there is still in the inner city—tenements and so forth—but the jobs tend to be on the periphery, because it's no longer an industrial city, or it's less and less so. The jobs are in the big-box stores in the suburbs. So that's tricky. This was also a problem for me in the Florida Keys. The one affordable, decent place I ever stayed in was \$500 a month. It was a little cottage in the back of some guy's

house, but it was pretty far up the Keys. The jobs are in Key West and the commute was 45 minutes each way. Now, gas prices were a lot lower then, but still I was astonished at how much I was paying just to commute. So I got out of that place and went to the trailer park that's near a lot of big hotels, but that was expensive. What was it, \$625 a month without utilities for a half-size trailer?



**'IT'S MORE EXPENSIVE
TO BE POOR, IN SOME WAYS,
THAN TO BE AFFLUENT.'**

CommonWealth: Now, *Bait and Switch*, your next project, was an attempt to move up the socioeconomic ladder to the middle class. What was it about white-collar unemployment and what you came to call "anxious employment" that made you want to explore it?

Ehrenreich: Well there is a connection here to *Nickel and Dime*d. Since writing *Nickel and Dime*d I've gotten thousands of letters from people experiencing hard times. A lot of them are people who have been chronically poor, but I was struck by how many of these letters were coming from people who were college educated, maybe who had a master's degree, who had once held a pretty decent white-collar, middle-class job but were now bounced right down to the *Nickel and Dime*d level. They'd lost their job in some kind of reorganization or layoff and never climbed back in. So, I said I haven't finished with this subject of poverty until I

know more about that. What's going on there? And the first thought was, well, here's a project: Go out and find a job myself. How hard can it be?

CommonWealth: You found out it was pretty hard, didn't you?

Ehrenreich: Yeah, and that still somewhat hurts my feelings. Hey, I'm presentable, believe me. Not right this minute, but I am presentable. I am articulate, I'm pretty smart, and I have great communication skills—leadership skills, which are something they seem to value in the corporate world. I thought I would have made an excellent communications director or PR [public relations] person, which is what my fake résumé presented me as. My cover letters were well written. I have no trouble talking to strangers. Hey, would you hire me?

CommonWealth: In a minute, Barbara.

Ehrenreich: Okay. Because you start thinking, what's the matter with me?

CommonWealth: One thing you discovered in starting out in your job hunt—you figured it would take four to six months

to land a job—is that the white-collar job search is a highly ritualized activity. Blue-collar folks looking for work have to answer help-wanted ads, they pound the pavement, fill out job applications, maybe pee in a cup for a drug test, but that's about it. As a white-collar job seeker, you had to learn how to put together the perfect résumé, the perfect dress-for-success outfit and makeup, and were told again and again to exude the right attitude. What did you learn from your various makeovers?

Ehrenreich: I should first say something about the white-collar/blue-collar difference. You know, white-collar unemployed people quite often have some assets when a job loss occurs. They might have gotten a severance package, they certainly will get unemployment insurance, and maybe they have savings. So they are a potential market for, the expression seems to be, the “transition industry” that has sprung up since the mid-'90s to help them find a new job—and, of course, to get hold of some of those assets they have. You fall into the clutches, so to speak. My stance was: I have to get any kind of help I can get. I am not proud. I will get a career coach, I will work on this résumé until it's perfect in her judgment, and so on. So I entered into that world, which so many of the white-collar unemployed enter into.



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And what I found was I felt a little odd, more odd doing this than I did in doing *Nickel and Dimed*. To do *Nickel and Dimed* I was basically offering to sell my muscles and my brain to whoever wanted them to get a job done. No acting involved, right? You either do the job or you don't. Now I was pretending to be something I've not been—that is, a PR person instead of a journalist and writer. So there was that awkward feeling, certainly at the beginning, but what I quickly learned from my various coaches and networking groups and everything is that this is all about acting. I wasn't the only actor around. Every job seeker was being encouraged to perform, in a sense, in the way they present themselves, in exuding a constantly upbeat, self-confident, perky manner, and so on. And then I thought, well, I guess I'm not the only fake here. This is all about fakery.

CommonWealth: You found you could fit right in, huh?

Ehrenreich: Yeah.

CommonWealth: As you soon discover, the magic word in a white-collar job search is networking.

Ehrenreich: Yes.

CommonWealth: But that, you found out, wasn't as easy as it sounded, especially for you, since you had no real network to tap into in the field that you were presenting yourself in. But even at best, isn't there something creepy about the emphasis on networking for white-collar jobs? What does it mean about the "career open to merit" concept of fairness that dates back to Napoleon? Is networking just a euphemism for the old saying, "It's not what you know but who you know?"

Ehrenreich: I think so. Yeah, you're being told all the time that the way you ultimately get a job is by meeting somebody, impressing somebody, or through someone—your brother-in-law's friend or someone you meet at church or something. That doesn't have a whole lot to do with what your skills are and your experiences. It is who you know. I mean, everybody's perfectly frank about that. In fact, some of the career-coaching outfits and whole firms that help in these transitions—supposedly help, I should say—one of the things they're selling is contacts. You give us \$6,000 and you can have a little desk, and so on, in our offices, and we're going to dole out contacts to you. But the other thing that's creepy about networking, and this is more philosophical on my part, is that it implies such an instrumental approach to other human beings. You're not meeting people because



you're interested in them. Ordinarily you go to, say, a cocktail party or a kids' sports event, you're mingling with people and chatting and you have something in common, and they're funny or fun to be with or they're not. Now you're just looking over everybody's shoulder to see what advantage you can gain from that interaction. And I found that difficult—creepy.

CommonWealth: The one job offer you got, if you could call it that, was selling insurance for AFLAC—on your own, no office to work out of, no health insurance or other benefits, and the only income whatever you could drum up in commissions.



GETTING A WHITE-COLLAR JOB 'IS ALL ABOUT FAKERY.'

Ehrenreich: No salary, in other words. That's why I rejected that as a job.

CommonWealth: Not exactly a job. But the blurring of boundaries between employment and self-employment is something we looked at actually in a recent issue of *CommonWealth* ("Lone Rangers," *CW*, Summer '05). In some ways, the rise of independent contracting and consulting seems like a positive option for white-collar workers, a function of a technologically connected society that allows people working in the comfort of their home offices to be just as much team players as those in the office cubicle. It gives a level of freedom and self-direction to a certain class of worker who values and can capitalize on life as an independent contrac-

tor. For many it's, at best, a way to tide oneself over between real jobs and, at worst, a substitute for a real job with real benefits and real security. But given the increasing insecurity that comes with a volatile global economy, isn't this the wave of the future?

Ehrenreich: In my real life, I've been an independent almost all my adult life. I'm a freelance writer. And I value, I treasure, that independence. In fact, when you are offered one of these commission-only sales jobs—and I was not only offered AFLAC, I was also offered Mary Kay [cosmetics]—one of the things they say to you is, look at the independence you can have. You can make your own hours. The AFLAC guy even said, "You don't have to be a clone," even though he himself was wearing a duck tie, the AFLAC duck, and there were duck replicas all over the office. He said, "You don't have to be a clone because you're going to work on your own, sink or swim." They are offering a kind of independence, but the price of that is no security. Not that I think jobholders have much more security these days, but when you're selling health insurance and you *have* no health insurance, when you're getting no payment except what you can run out and hustle, to me that's a pretty scary tradeoff. Now, maybe not so in my own case as a writer, because I've been doing this for so long. I know how to do it and earn a living. But I thought that sounded pretty terrifying to try to do that with direct selling.

CommonWealth: Absolutely. Well, the bottom line was you never did get offered a real job, despite your months of search, despite your skills and moxie and a good 200 applications submitted for posted or advertised jobs. You might not have been the perfect test case for employability—a middle-aged woman, in transition, as you say—but neither were you in an appreciably different position than many women attempting a return to the workplace after raising a family. What conclusions do you draw from your failure to land a job in nearly a year of looking?

Ehrenreich: Well, that it's not so easy. One thing I quickly learned was you cannot have a résumé that has gaps in it that you intend to explain by way of family responsibilities. I thought, okay, I'm a woman, maybe I've recently been divorced—this is how I imagined myself. Recently divorced, I was dabbling in doing some event planning and PR and things, but now I've really got to get down to it. I can explain this: "I was raising children." Oh, no. Twice in group situations I brought this up. What if you have a gap in your résumé, which of course is deadly, if you can explain that by the fact that you were a homemaker? One coach said, "Well, you're going to have to think of a pretty story for that." A good story? I thought, hey, isn't this a common story? One of the things I want to shout from the rooftops to those

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young professional women that we read about who are dropping out of their careers for four or five years while the kids are little: "Don't expect to get back in." Certainly don't expect to get back in at the level you were at. And that's pretty scary. Of course, this does affect women much more than men, because they are more likely to be the caretakers.

CommonWealth: The other thing you discovered after all those months and all those jobs applied for and getting nary a nibble, was that it stung, and far more than you were really prepared for.

Ehrenreich: Yeah. At the beginning I had a mixture of cockiness and will and great insecurity. The cockiness came from the fact that I have been successful in a career. I know how to do the things I was purporting to do in my fake résumé. And I've generally been successful at things I set out to do. But I had to, after 10 months, conclude that, no, in fact, take away my identity, my Barbara Ehrenreich identity, and I'm pretty invisible. I'm nothing. You couldn't really tell how middle-aged I was from my résumé, I should say. People often ask me about age discrimination, which certainly is rife in the corporate world. So you're told right away that your résumé can give no hint of your age. I thought you had to put down the date of your college graduation. No, no, no. In fact, you can have no experience listed that goes back more than 10 years, 15 years max. So looking at my résumé, I could have been in my early 40s. So you can't blame it all on that.

CommonWealth: Now, I know your hope in this project was to go through the process of a job search, but also to get in that job and do it. In *Bait and Switch*, you write that you did get from the search process itself and from the people that you met along the way a sense of what corporate culture would have been like. But what do you think you missed by not getting to do that part of the project?

Ehrenreich: Well, one of the big things I missed was not getting to know people, white-collar corporate people, under more auspicious circumstances. I was meeting people who had either been laid off or were fearful of being laid off, or who just couldn't take it anymore, were stressed beyond belief by their job. I was seeing the real downside. I'm disappointed that I was not hired. They were always talking about teamwork and teams, and that's why you're supposed to be so upbeat and positive and friendly all the time. I wanted to be on one of these teams—even though the teams also seem to be a little fragile, since you can always be ejected from your team and right out the door with half an hour to get your stuff together and clean your desk.

CommonWealth: What you did learn from your time among

the white-collar unemployed, and the anxiously employed, was that there's a lot more insecurity in a socioeconomic stratum that you once thought of as comfortable. It seems we all need to anticipate corporate restructuring, as in downsizing and outsourcing, now. We have to count on working for numerous employers in careers that are more likely to zigzag than go directly up any one corporate ladder. Is that something that we all ought to get used to?

**'NOW, INSTEAD OF
BEING ASSETS, PEOPLE
ARE SEEN INCREASINGLY
AS LIABILITIES.'**

Ehrenreich: Yeah, and I don't think there's really sufficient preparation. There has been a major change in corporate culture, corporate governance, starting in the late '80s or somewhere, away from a culture that rested on mutual loyalty between, certainly, the white-collar folks and the top level—the CEO, the C-suite people. That's gone. Let me

put it this way. The very word corporate implies people being bound together in some way by a common project. It comes from the [Latin] word for body, as in corporeal—many people forming one body. That's gone. The corporation today seems to be more of a free-floating money-making machine, rather than a group—whether it's a hundred or hundreds of thousands of people around the world—who are aimed at doing one thing and feel this common bond. Now, instead of being assets, people are seen increasingly as liabilities. This happened first with the blue-collar people, of course, in the '80s, with the movement of manufacturing to other parts of the world. Then, in the '90s, it was the white-collar people, too. And this is very strange. You would think that a good person would be someone to treasure and nurture. Now, well, you look at it from a certain part of the corporation, somewhere in the financial offices, and you think, hey, this person is costing a hundred thousand dollars a year, if you throw in health benefits. We could save that money. So, it's an entirely different world, and I don't think people are prepared. Business is still the most popular major in college, and a lot of those students are thinking about joining the corporate world. But they're not prepared for the fact that it's not going to be one straightforward climb up in a corporation as it might have been in the '60s. ■

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Improving reentry is goal of prison reform

BY SCOTT HARSHBARGER

In “Approaching Reentry” (*CW*, Summer ’05), crime expert Jeremy Travis spoke at length about the problem of inmates returning to society. As former district attorney of Middlesex County, state attorney general, and in my current capacity as chairman of the Department of Correction Advisory Council, I view the issue of returning inmates as one of the most pressing public safety issues of our time. Yet, even though “reentry” has become a hot topic among policy-makers and corrections professionals, we are far from having a comprehensive reentry strategy in place in Massachusetts or anywhere else in the nation.

As attorney general in the 1990s, I worked in partnership with many outstanding federal, state, and local law enforcement officials and community leaders to tackle crime and violence in Boston and other urban areas. One component of our efforts was to identify “impact players,” those individuals wreaking havoc in high crime neighborhoods, and ensure that they received special attention from law enforcement officials, including lengthy prison sentences where appropriate. This and other community policing strategies seemed to be highly successful, as crime dropped considerably, and Boston was showcased as a national model.

Unfortunately, no one focused on the fact that these impact players would all be coming back, and that most would return to the same neighborhoods and the same circumstances they left years before. In fact, 97 percent of prisoners are eventually released, so what we do to prepare them to return to our neighborhoods, and the conditions under which they are returned, directly impacts public safety.

For the past two years, I have had the opportunity to look more closely at this issue as chairman of the Governor’s Commission on Corrections Reform and its successor, the DOC Advisory Council. In the wake of the murder of former priest John Geoghan by a fellow inmate at the Souza-Baranowski prison, Gov. Romney and Secretary of Public Safety Edward Flynn established the commission to conduct a top-to-bottom review of the Department of Correction and develop an action plan for change. The commission, composed of 15 individuals with a range of expertise on corrections-related issues, released a major report in June 2004 containing 18 specific recommendations for action.

Surprisingly, we found that very little was being done in Massachusetts prisons to prepare inmates for release, and that many inmates were released directly from maximum security facilities to the street with no ongoing monitoring or supervision. Nearly half of those released were convicted of a new crime within just three years. Given that we spend nearly half a billion dollars on our state prison system, this recidivism rate is simply unacceptable. The commission concluded that it was imperative to make inmate reentry a statewide priority for public safety and fiscal accountability reasons.

Over the past year, Commissioner of Correction Kathleen Dennehy, with the support of Secretary Flynn and Gov. Romney, has taken numerous steps to begin improving inmate reentry. As noted in our preliminary progress report, submitted in June, the important work of communicating a clear message of reform is well under-

The recidivism rate is simply unacceptable.

way within the DOC. The 18 recommendations have been put on an implementation timeline. Notably, the commissioner has modified the department’s mission statement to explicitly recognize the fundamental role of preparing inmates for release; hired 10 new teachers for education programs; expanded capacity for the Correctional Recovery Academy and other substance abuse and pre-release programs; worked with the Department of Medical Assistance to provide MassHealth cards to all discharging inmates; and partnered with the Parole Board to ensure that all DOC inmates (even those who are not subject to post-release supervision) are released to one of eight new Regional Reentry Centers, community-based centers that can provide referrals for needed services.

Despite this progress, much more work remains to be done. If we are serious about reducing the crime, violence, and chaos caused by returning inmates, we must make reentry a statewide priority and involve a host of state and local partners. Certain changes—in law, in DOC, and in other agencies—are essential if we are going to make meaningful progress in stemming crime committed by former inmates. To this end, the following reforms, as a minimum, should be undertaken with a far greater

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POST-RELEASE SUPERVISION: Unfortunately, most inmates in Massachusetts receive no supervision in the community upon release from prison. Particularly troubling is the large number of inmates who waive their right to a parole hearing, choosing to serve out their full sentences in order to be released to the community without oversight.

Supervised release of DOC inmates, particularly those at high risk for re-offense after serving their sentence, is crucial from a public safety standpoint. The commission strongly recommended that the Commonwealth adopt a system to ensure that all offenders get released with ongoing monitoring and supervision. The commission also urged the Legislature to consider *mandating* post-release supervision for those inmates who are *not* released under parole supervision, either because of the terms of their sentences preclude parole, because they waive parole eligibility, or because they are denied parole. Public safety would be better protected if inmates were supervised for a designated period of time after their release.

REENTRY LEGISLATION: The commission found that successful reentry of prisoners is limited by state sentencing laws and practices that directly impact inmate classification, programming options, pre-release, and supervised release. Indeed, at the time of the commission's report, 84 percent of the inmate population was statutorily prohibited from participating in pre-release programming (i.e., work release, education release, and placement in pre-release centers). The DOC will be unable to fully implement an effective reentry plan for most inmates until these restrictions are removed. Despite recognition of these limitations by policy-makers, including the crime commission chaired by Lt. Gov. Kerry Healey, state sentencing laws and practices—which include mandatory minimum sentences, restrictions on parole eligibility, and restrictions on work release—remain unchanged.

There are numerous ways to reform existing laws to eliminate obstacles to graduated movement through security levels, pre-release programming, and post-release supervision. The Legislature, governor, district attorneys, sheriffs, and advocacy groups should act swiftly to pass legislation with the goal of improving inmate reentry. *This can be accomplished without reducing the length of prison sentences.*

CLASSIFICATION REFORM: The commission found that the existing classification system, by which each inmate is assigned to an appropriate security level, is overly reliant on subjective decision-making and the use of overrides. As a result, many inmates are over-classified — assigned to higher levels of security than necessary—and that costs the citizens of the Commonwealth in both financial (maximum security prisons are more costly to

operate than lower security facilities) and public safety terms. Most important, subjective classification policies and procedures can prevent a "step down" in custody level prior to release. As a result, most inmates go from a highly structured and restrictive environment one day to a completely unstructured, unrestricted environment—freedom—the next.

The commission recommended that the DOC adopt a research-based, objective classification system with appropriate procedures and trained staff to implement it. The department has developed a proposal for such an objective system, and the Advisory Council has urged the department to put it in place as soon as possible.

LABOR-MANAGEMENT REFORM AND BUDGET REALLOCATION: Making reentry a priority requires resources. Since the Legislature, amazingly, chose to *reduce* the DOC budget this year, the department has limited choices. However, the commission and council have both strongly advocated for a re-allocation of the DOC's budget resources, if not an increase in them.

Staffing costs account for 73 percent of the DOC's total budget, while inmate programs comprise a mere 12 percent. Therefore, fiscal management of the department is closely linked with labor management. The commission

found that between 1995 and 2003, staffing costs increased from \$200 million to \$312 million, a 56 percent increase. The high cost of staffing reflects a number of factors, including the fact that correction officers take off an average of 60 days per year, of which 52 are paid (including 18 sick days per officer per year). Sick leave usage costs the department \$21 million per year. DOC has to restrain these labor costs for fiscal management reasons, but also to free up resources to bolster and expand recidivism-reducing efforts.

In our reviews and reports, the commission and advisory council have noted that the existing labor contract is distinguished by startlingly weak managerial rights provisions. Fundamental management functions were bargained away over the past decade and, for whatever reason, political or otherwise, a range of favorable provisions on absenteeism, sick leave, compensation, and supervisory control were allowed into the contract. We have recommended a number of specific steps that the DOC should take to bring down the high costs of staffing through the collective bargaining process and through stronger management authority. However, the resistance of the correction officers' labor union, the Massachusetts Correction Officers Federated Union (MCOFU), is a

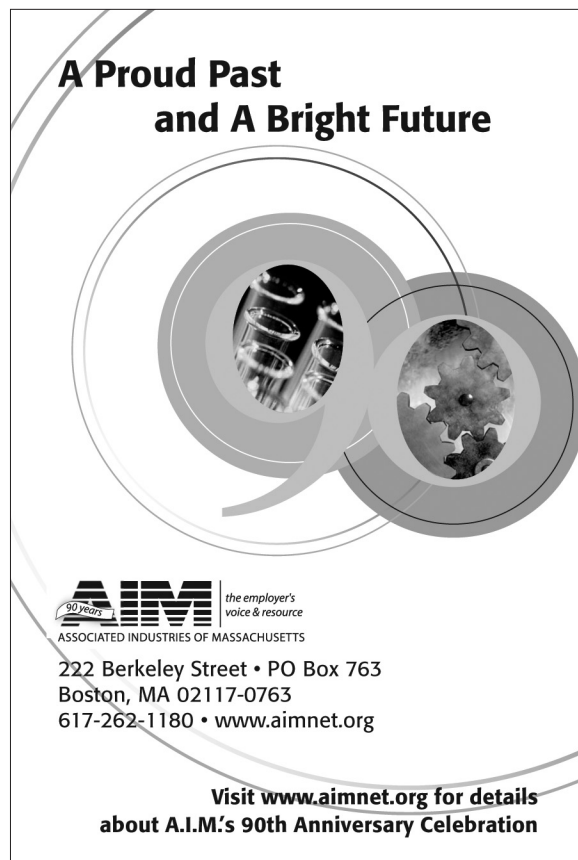


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major barrier to change.

It is understandable that the leadership of MCOFU would oppose changes in their contract. They are not to blame for their apparent bargaining success. However, negotiations are now open over a contract that expired in December 2003 but remains in effect. The governor, the Executive Office of Public Safety, and DOC must seek to restore appropriate management rights and control, in terms of both costs and authority. Union leadership has been unwilling to accept much-needed changes in management and fiscal responsibility, and this is reflected not only in their internal resistance to DOC change and reform, but also in the breakdown of contract negotiations.

MULTI-AGENCY COOPERATION: While reentry has become an important concept in corrections, it is not exclusively the responsibility of the prisons. Many other agencies and organizations at the state and local levels have equally significant roles and responsibilities. The Parole Board and Probation Department have crucial community supervision roles; since a large percentage of inmates have substance abuse addictions and mental health problems, Department of Public Health and Department of Mental Health resources are needed; the capacity of sheriffs to handle female offenders generally and state inmates prior to release is vital, as is the responsibility of DAs, courts, and the Legislature to support legislative reforms. At the local level, criminal justice, human service, and housing agencies, along with faith-based organizations and potential employers, have critical roles to play in ensuring that an inmate's transition back to the community is successful.

All of these players must make reduction of recidivism a priority, and many state and local agencies have engaged in discussions about how to improve offender reentry. Yet, to date, very little concrete action has been taken. There is currently a window of opportunity for serious reform to make our system more effective at reducing re-offense. This important work cannot be left to the DOC alone.

Is offender reentry a concept we are only willing to pay lip service to? Is it unrealistic to expect leaders to take a stand on a complex public safety problem, especially with an election season in the offing? I do not think so. All we seem to lack is the will and the sense of urgency.

But a sense of urgency is warranted. Every time a murder, rape, or violent assault is committed by an ex-con, we must ask if it represents a lost opportunity to have done more to protect the public. Let's take action to stop the cycling of offenders in and out of our prisons, in the interest of public safety and fiscal responsibility alike. ■

Former attorney general Scott Harshbarger is a partner at Murphy, Hesse, Toomey & Lehan, LLP, and chairman of the Department of Correction Advisory Council.

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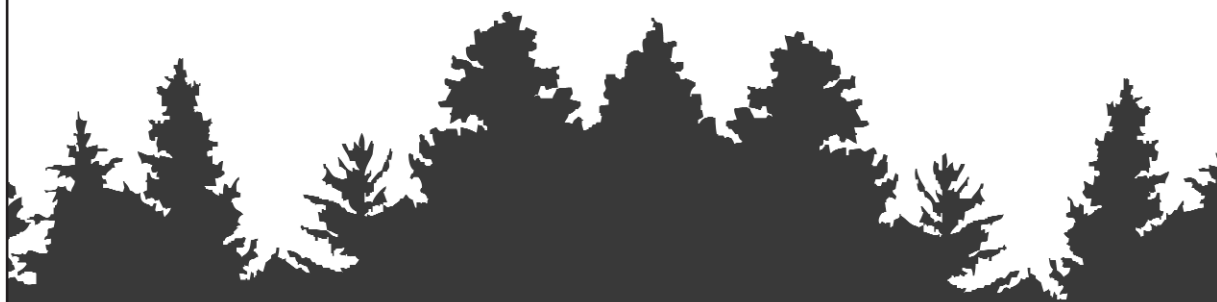
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Post-mortem on managed care

The Rise and Fall of HMOs: An American Health Care Revolution

By Jan Gregoire Coombs

Madison, Wisc., University of Wisconsin Press, 430 pages

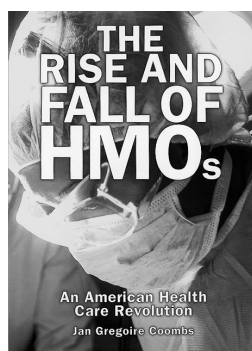
REVIEWED BY ALAIN ENTHOVEN

This well-written and thoroughly researched book by an unusually knowledgeable author traces two distinct, occasionally intersecting, histories. The first is that of the highly regarded Marshfield Clinic, a multi-specialty group medical practice in central Wisconsin with an admirable history of social responsibility and a mission to deliver high-quality health care. The second involves federal and state health care policies intended to help the rural poor and aged, to promote widespread and affordable financial protection from the costs of health care, and to establish and promote health maintenance organizations as one vehicle to achieve these goals.

To say that public policy did as much good as harm to the health care delivery system in its pursuit of worthy goals would be, in the views of the author and this reviewer alike, to give public policy too much credit. And to say that HMOs like the one formed by the Marshfield Clinic—a type that has become more rare even as HMOs, at least in name, have spread across the landscape—ever got a fair chance to work their magic on a health care system in desperate need of it is to misunderstand the history of this much-maligned innovation in medical delivery and finance.

In 1971, the Marshfield Clinic teamed up with Blue Cross of Wisconsin and St. Joseph's (Catholic) Hospital to form the Greater Marshfield Community Health Plan, the first health maintenance organization in Wisconsin and the first rural HMO in America. After 15 months, it had enrolled more than 13,600 members and lost more than \$482,000, both substantial numbers in those days. The idealism of the doctors got them into trouble: GMCHP enrolled too many direct-pay subscribers (i.e., not in employment groups) in poor health, and it was not able to sign up the city's largest manufacturer "because its national office purchased all employee benefits," writes Coombs. "Other losses arose because local agents of competing insurance carriers encouraged sick clients to enroll in GMCHP but warned healthy customers to avoid the clinic's plan." The reluctance of employers and agents to participate in an efficient and equitable delivery system reverberates to this day.

GMCHP suffered all the growing pains of the early HMOs: a lack of personnel experienced in prepaid health plan operations, an enrollment policy that was too open, and a lack of employer purchasing policies that would let them compete on their merits. Other pains were caused by the workings of the political process.



"The long-awaited HMO Act of 1973 failed to resolve the nation's health care crisis and nearly derailed the HMO movement..." writes Coombs. "Subsequent federal and state legislation intended to facilitate prepaid health care often had the opposite effect. Federal funding gave prepaid health care a legitimacy long denied by the medical profession, but

the federal requirements for HMOs deterred many potential sponsors."

The story of GMCHP, one of the HMOs that struggled to remain true to its mission despite the market and political forces stacked against it, reveals a history of health care reform gone wrong.

HMO TAXONOMY

What we now refer to as a health maintenance organization has gone through a multitude of forms over the years. The idea, which originated with Dr. Paul Ellwood, a pediatric neurologist from Minnesota turned health policy visionary and reformer, was of a self-regulating health care system that aligned provider incentives with consumer interests. This was done through an "integrated delivery system," built on the core of a large multi-specialty medical group practice—often with links to hospitals, labs, and pharmacies, and often with a significant amount of revenue based on per capita prepayment. Replacing fee-for-service payments with a per capita prepayment, or a fixed number of dollars per person per month, gave the doctors an incentive to keep people healthy, to solve their medical problems in less costly ways, and to be economical in use of resources generally. In some cases, the health

insurance plan had a mutually exclusive contract with its affiliated delivery system, as in the case of Kaiser Permanente or the former Harvard Community Health Plan. In other cases, the insurance part of the partnership was an independent company, as in the cases of the GMCHP and the Lahey BCBS HMO.

But then the HMO began to evolve, in form, structure, and incentive. Medical societies found they needed a vehicle for their members in solo (or small specialty group) practice to be able to compete with integrated-delivery HMOs, so they created "independent practice associations," or IPAs. Bay State Health Care was one example.

Then came "network model" HMOs designed to link independent multi-specialty group practices, in which the groups shared cost risks. HealthNet and Pacificare in California were prominent examples; Multi-Group Health Plan in Massachusetts was another.

Then came "capitated primary care networks," or community-based primary care physicians who accepted risk for the costs of primary care and shared in the risk of referral care. The most prominent was US Healthcare.

The Blues, historically allied with traditional providers they paid on a fee-for-service basis, also entered the HMO market, contracting with wide networks of providers.

(Most of the Blues converted to for-profit status, but Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts remained nonprofit.) They were joined by the commercial insurance companies, which also contracted with wide networks of traditional providers. These could be called "carrier-based" HMOs, since the chassis of the HMO was an insurance carrier rather than a medical group or delivery system.

Finally, through mergers, these various models combined with each other to produce mixed-model HMOs. Thus the integrated-delivery Harvard Community Health Plan acquired Multi-Group and merged with IPA-based Pilgrim Health Care. It then spun off its delivery arm as Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates, a large multi-specialty practice group, and ultimately became Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, which is strictly an insurer.

For its part, GMCHP started as a partnership with Blue Cross of Wisconsin and St. Joseph's Hospital. In 1986, conflicting corporate goals drove Blue Cross and the Marshfield Clinic apart. The clinic established its own Security Health Plan, which operates to this day. In an effort to upgrade the quality of care in the region generally, the clinic enrolled many of the solo practice doctors in the region as affiliates of its plan and worked with them on practice guidelines.



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So the term HMO is now non-specific and covers a wide range of health care financing and care arrangements, most of which are quite different from the original idea. What they have in common is a "benefit package," or coverage contract, that covers comprehensive health services, including disease prevention; low co-payments at the point of service; and a commitment to deliver the services directly or through contracting providers.

FALL FROM GRACE

None of these varying forms saved HMOs from the backlash that began in the mid-1990s. Patients complained about services denied and referrals refused, but the disgruntlement actually started among physicians. Most doctors working under HMOs, with the exception of the integrated-delivery and network models, still preferred the traditional practice model (choice of provider, choice of treatment, fee-for-service payment), but that model had become too costly for many employer groups. Feeling coerced by market forces, doctors complained to their patients.

Dissatisfaction was strongest among people not in HMOs by choice.

As for patients, many of them were forced into HMOs by their employers, who gave them no choice, little explanation, and none of the financial benefit. Research showed that dissatisfaction was strongest among people in HMOs not by choice. Research also showed that the most satisfied patients and doctors in California were in Kaiser Permanente, presumably in part because they were all there because they wanted to be. The for-profit carrier-based HMOs came in for a disproportionate share of criticism both because their cost-saving efforts were ascribed to profit-seeking, rather than consumer benefit, and because they were mainly perceived as imposing limits on care, rather than organizing and delivering care in better ways.

In response to the backlash, carrier-based HMOs morphed into practically all-inclusive networks of unaffiliated doctors, so that the employees who were not members by choice could still have insured access to the doctor of their choice. This weakened the HMOs' ability to control quality and expenditures. The carriers also offered "preferred provider organizations," or PPOs, which gave employees incentives to go to contracting doctors—who in turn had an incentive to accept discounted fee schedules. Not medical care organizations at all, PPOs are discounted fee-for-service systems, close to the traditional model. But they are very flexible vehicles. They can be set up

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quickly, without actually changing the delivery of medical care. They can be used by employers who prefer to self-insure, or by insurance companies that bear risk. Their only problem is that they can't do much to moderate the growth in health expenditures. Yet PPOs, whose market share nationally was 28 percent in 1996, grew to 55 percent of the market by 2004, by which time the HMO share was down to 25 percent (from 31 percent in 1996).

While complaining about the rapid increase in health expenditures, employers have remained, in practice, committed to fee-for-service and unorganized medical care delivery. Most offer only PPOs or carrier-based HMOs with wide networks. Those who do offer delivery-system-based HMOs as a choice also offer PPOs and pay a flat 80 percent to 100 percent of the premium of either. With employers effectively willing to pay more for fee-for-service and PPOs, providers of care see no reward for organizing efficient delivery systems. Employers do not understand medical organization. If they did, they would not choose insurance policies that attack efficient forms of delivery.

The Marshfield Clinic and Security Health Plan suffered in terms of payment from government programs as a result of their own success in controlling costs. As Coombs recounts: "Reimbursement from the state and

federal [Medicaid and Medicare] contracts were based on a percentage of the average fee-for-service costs for serving beneficiaries. Local charges in central Wisconsin were unusually low because of the influence of the cost-efficient clinic, so GMCHP's Medicaid reimbursements were a great deal lower than what HMOs in two of Wisconsin's urban counties received a few years later."

AN UN-LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

Government generally has done a poor job of creating market conditions in which delivery-system HMOs could succeed. An important exception to this was and is public employee health insurance programs. The federal government and the governments of states like California, Minnesota, Washington, and Wisconsin have offered their employees a wide range of choices, including traditional insurance plans and HMOs, and a more or less fixed-dollar contribution so the employee could keep much or all of the savings from choosing an economical health plan. (Alas, Massachusetts does not qualify for this roll of honor. The state's Group Insurance Commission pays a high fixed percentage of the premium of the plan of the employee's choice, thus systematically paying more to higher-priced health plans—usually fee-for-service—and attenuating



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any incentive to enroll in a lower-priced health plan.)

On the federal level, the 1973 HMO Act tried to help in the private market by requiring employers of 25 or more to offer employees a choice including one group practice HMO and one IPA, if such plans served areas where employees lived and if they “invoked the mandate.” For the most part, however, HMOs were reluctant to invoke the mandate: Forcing the customer to do business with you is not a good way to start a relationship. Employers could, and many did, find ways to evade the intent of this provision of the law, which was repealed in the 1980s.

Employers in general compounded this problem by not even offering choices of carrier. A survey in 1997 found that the employers of 77 percent of employed insured Americans did not offer such a choice. (Three “plan designs” from Aetna—an HMO, a PPO, and a consumer-directed plan, all with the same fee-for-service doctors—do not open the market to delivery system-based HMOs.) Worse yet, some 20 percent of employees were offered an HMO without a choice, thus bringing on the backlash against managed care.

Harvard Community Health grew until it hit a ‘glass ceiling’ in the mid-1980s.

Among integrated-delivery HMOs, Kaiser Permanente expanded beyond its West Coast locations with some successes (Denver, Atlanta, Washington, DC) and some failures (New York, Connecticut, North Carolina, Kansas). Harvard Community Health Plan in Boston and Group Health Cooperative in Seattle grew rapidly up to the mid-1980s, when they hit “glass ceilings,” having enrolled all they could from choice-offering employers. These group practice HMOs were not good candidates to be a single source of health insurance for an employer. Many people want the option to choose their own doctors and certainly do not want to be forced to change. Group practice HMOs can prosper only if they are a part of an offering of responsible health plan choices.

In the mid-1980s, Harvard Community Health Plan and Group Health Cooperative found themselves forced to make themselves acceptable to “single source” employers by merging with or developing large networks of solo practice doctors, rather like what the Marshfield Clinic had done. Unfortunately, solo practice is inherently less efficient than group practice, so these organizations lost their cost advantage over other forms of organization. (According to Coombs, this problem was one to which GMCHP did not succumb: Apparently, market conditions in central Wisconsin made it possible for the Marshfield

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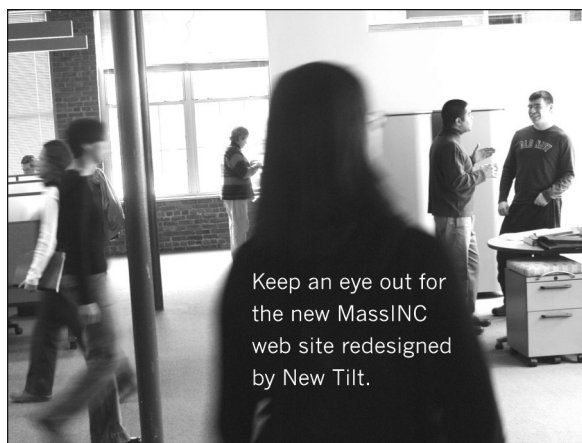


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Clinic to control the practices of the solo doctors in their affiliated Security Health Plan, assuring reasonably economical practices.)

In California, integrated-delivery and group practice-based network HMOs have done very well among employers that offer choices and fixed-dollar contributions, with market shares of 75 percent to 80 percent. Employers like Stanford, University of California, and Wells Fargo can pay a fixed dollar amount at or below the price of the low-priced HMO and save a great deal of money.

This history, in my view, does not indicate that group practice HMOs are unpopular; rather, it illustrates the inability of employers to put together a strategy that gives employees a responsible choice and lets employees keep the savings for themselves.

The difficulties faced by HMOs as they tried to deliver health care in a more efficient and effective way, only to be subverted by pressures from bigger forces—private and public—show why it is time for fundamental modifications of the employment-based health insurance system. These modifications could include such alternatives as regional exchanges that serve many employers and broker multiple choices for every employee; or, better still, in the views of the author and this reviewer, complete replacement of the employment-based system. Employment-based health insurance leaves out too many people, especially in rural areas where many people do not have an employer.

A promising example of non-employment-based health insurance has recently been proposed in Wisconsin by state representatives Curt Gielow, a Republican, and Jon Richards, a Democrat. Under the proposed Wisconsin Health Plan, all employers would pay a payroll tax (in lieu of health insurance premiums); all residents would have a health insurance purchasing account and an annual choice of health care plans and providers. Such a model would open up the opportunity for all residents in central Wisconsin to join and get their care from the Marshfield Clinic, or any other delivery system of their choice—not to mention encourage, rather than undermine, true HMOs.

Indeed, a similar model of universal coverage and choice of health plan could open the market anywhere to integrated-delivery HMOs for anyone who wanted to join them—and keep the savings for themselves. As health insurance is increasingly priced out of the market, it will become increasingly important to offer people the opportunity to save money by joining an efficient delivery system. ■

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Reversing the (racial) curse

BY HOWARD BRYANT

Now that donkeys can fly, hell has frozen over, and the Red Sox have been champions for an entire year, there exists here a palpable desire to peer even more deeply into victory for social significance, if there is any to be gleaned. It is an exercise peculiar to Boston baseball. When the Anaheim Angels won the World Series in 2002 after blowing it in '79, '82, '86, and '95, it was sufficient to merely be champions. The same was true for the Patriots, who suffered through magnificent forms of failure, associated with names like Hugh Millen, Ron Earhardt, and Tommy Hodson now notable as much for obscurity as for infamy. Now that the Pats are Super Bowl champions three times over, Bill Belichick and Tom Brady are household names, a status once foreign to anyone associated with the Patriots. Being winners instead of losers was gift enough. This is the routine, the natural order in sports.

The Red Sox, of course, are anything but routine.

If nothing else, that night of October 27, 2004, when the plastic draped over each locker in the visitor's clubhouse at Busch Stadium in St. Louis not only protected the real estate from champagne spray but served as proof that the Red Sox were indeed champions, signified a line

The Sox's racial struggles paralleled those of the city.

of demarcation like those crossed by the Angels or the Patriots. But for the Red Sox, because of their history, because of the way the team's struggles along racial and social lines paralleled those of the city, jumping around like little kids that night was not its own reward.

The championship wasn't enough, nor was finally beating the Yankees along the way. Winning needed to erase the sins of the famously racist Tom Yawkey. Winning needed to rehabilitate the image. Winning needed to heal the original wound, the Jackie Robinson tryout of 1945, when the Sox decided Robinson was the wrong color to play for them. It needed to ease Pumpsie Green's pain, as the belated breaker of the Boston color barrier. It needed to make those conflicted diehards feel not just ecstatic about the present, but better about the past. It needed to wipe the slate clean.

That's a lot to ask of a single championship, even one the city waited 86 years for.

Somehow over the years, the connection between the team's prolonged inability to win a World Series and its pathological humiliation of its black players became intertwined in the Red Sox storyline, as if the team's historical racism could not stand on its own as an egregious offense. The transgression somehow required a greater, more tangible price to be digested by the baseball fan.

The Red Sox racial infamy took on greater importance because the team did not win, even though the two elements are not wholly related. Embarrassing Robinson somehow became linked with pitching Galehouse over Parnell in '48. Integrating last when the Red Sox could have been first explained Bucky Dent. Indeed, race became a subplot that somehow illuminated the team's perennial failure not to win, but not to win the whole thing.

None of which is to suggest racism did *not* affect the product on the field. The Red Sox could have fielded Hall of Fame players Jackie Robinson, Willie Mays, Billy Williams, maybe even Hank Aaron, and those players certainly would have affected the win column nearly as much as the mediocre white players the Red Sox selected in their stead during the losing days of the 1950s. In turn, the unlucky Sox never took home the big prize and—as 1949 morphed into '67 which became '75, '86, and so on—a new piece of the Sox legend seemed cemented as fact: The Red Sox did not win because, when it came to race, they were bad people.

The converse of the racial axiom—that winning the World Series once or twice during the bad years would have lessened the import of the way the Red Sox conducted their business—seems almost perverse, and yet one need only look to the Bronx for evidence of such a mindset. During the dynasty years of 1947-64, when the Yankees appeared in 15 World Series and won 10, the Yanks were racially bulletproof because the victory column was mountain high. The Yankees were just as racist as the Red Sox; some might argue more so, because of the ugly public statements against integration, in the stands or on the field, by the owners. When the Yankees were finally criticized for their aggressive and unrepentant institutional racism, it came in the mid-1960s, at the onset of the losing.

(Of course, race is not just about white and black, but that has been the dominant dynamic in Boston, in fact and in symbol. Latino players have always been popular in Boston, if lacking in influence, but that ethnic group has never been the focus of the city's racial dynamic, so the parallel between Latino Boston and Latino baseball is not as strong.)

The two—victory and organizational attitude—become linked to make one's case of racism's crippling effects, but the two are not always related. The Red Sox prevailing in 1986 would not have mitigated the damage done by manager Mike “Pinky” Higgins, who once said, “There will never be any niggers on this team as long as I have anything to say about it.” Nor would it have made Mo Vaughn or Dan Duquette, with his aggressive hiring of players of color, less relevant to racial change in the clubhouse.

Now, in the sunlight of championship, it is fashionable to attribute victory to the end of the Yawkey regime. This is a tale comforting to the right-thinking folk long conflicted by their passion for their team and its own unforgivable roots, and it should make them feel good.

The facts are a little less sunny.

The Red Sox have not fielded a black regular since the uncomfortable final days of Duquette, Joe Kerrigan, and Carl Everett. In three seasons under Theo Epstein, the Red Sox have not employed a single African-American player who took the field every day. Pokey Reese was the regular shortstop in 2004 only out of the necessity of replacing the injured Nomar Garciaparra. In 2003, the Red Sox employed more black coaches (hitting coach Ron Jackson, first-base coach Dallas Williams) than players (utility player Damian Jackson being the only one). When new ownership took charge in 2002, the principal owner, John Henry, said he was committed to adding a person of color as a limited partner. Three years later, he has not done so.

What the championship has provided, however—and this is no myth—is a real sense of inclusion, even if it has not translated to a seat in the boardroom, or the right-field roof box seats. The difference is in the feel, and it comes with the surprising, and surprisingly welcome, lifting of an element of the team's mystique: The Red Sox are no longer a mirror of the city.

It is an odd development for a club that so long stayed in lockstep with Boston's brittle racial temperament, but one that may simultaneously diminish and elevate the Red Sox as a franchise. The Red Sox have become just another team, no longer burdened by a history both unflattering and persistent.


If the team mirrors the city today, it is in another way. Whatever gaps the Red Sox have bridged racially, the club

has created an equal chasm economically. In becoming a team of high fashion and desire (with accompanying prices), the Red Sox have paralleled a city surpassed only by glamorous San Francisco, New York, and Honolulu for expensiveness. For the past four seasons the Red Sox have boasted the highest ticket prices, a status unlikely to change in the age of Monster Seats. Yesterday's lament was the lack of black faces at the ballpark. Today's is the lack of seats that anyone can afford.

The Red Sox are no longer bound to the city's sharp edges. Nor, it seems, do they have to be. Where the Red Sox are concerned, the numbers of blacks may not have changed on the field or in the bleachers, but the hostility has dissipated. The result is an inclusion of a cosmetic, emotional sort that may one day translate into real diversity.

Today, the Sox insignia is ubiquitous, whether in Jamaica Plain or Brookline, on a Puerto Rican or on a descendent of Lodge, Curley, or Douglass. Kids of all sorts wear the “B” hats, showing their fandom without sending any social signal. With every neighborhood sharing in the celebration, the Red Sox are now something they've never been. They are a team instead of a symbol. ■

Howard Bryant is a sports columnist for the Boston Herald and author of Shut Out: A Story of Race and Baseball in Boston.



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