

# CommonWealth

POLITICS, IDEAS & CIVIC LIFE IN MASSACHUSETTS



## False start

Despite Title IX, women running behind men at state schools

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THE RACE  
FOR  
AUDITOR

ASSESSING  
FENWAY

FITCHBURG'S  
TURNAROUND  
ARTIST

KHAZEI'S BIG  
CITIZENSHIP

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I must learn only in certain ways, and only between 8 am and 3pm, 5 days a week, until I am 18...

I must learn only in certain ways, and only between 8 am and 3pm, 5 days a week, until I am 18...

I must learn only in certain ways, and only between 8 am and 3pm, 5 days a week, until I am 18...

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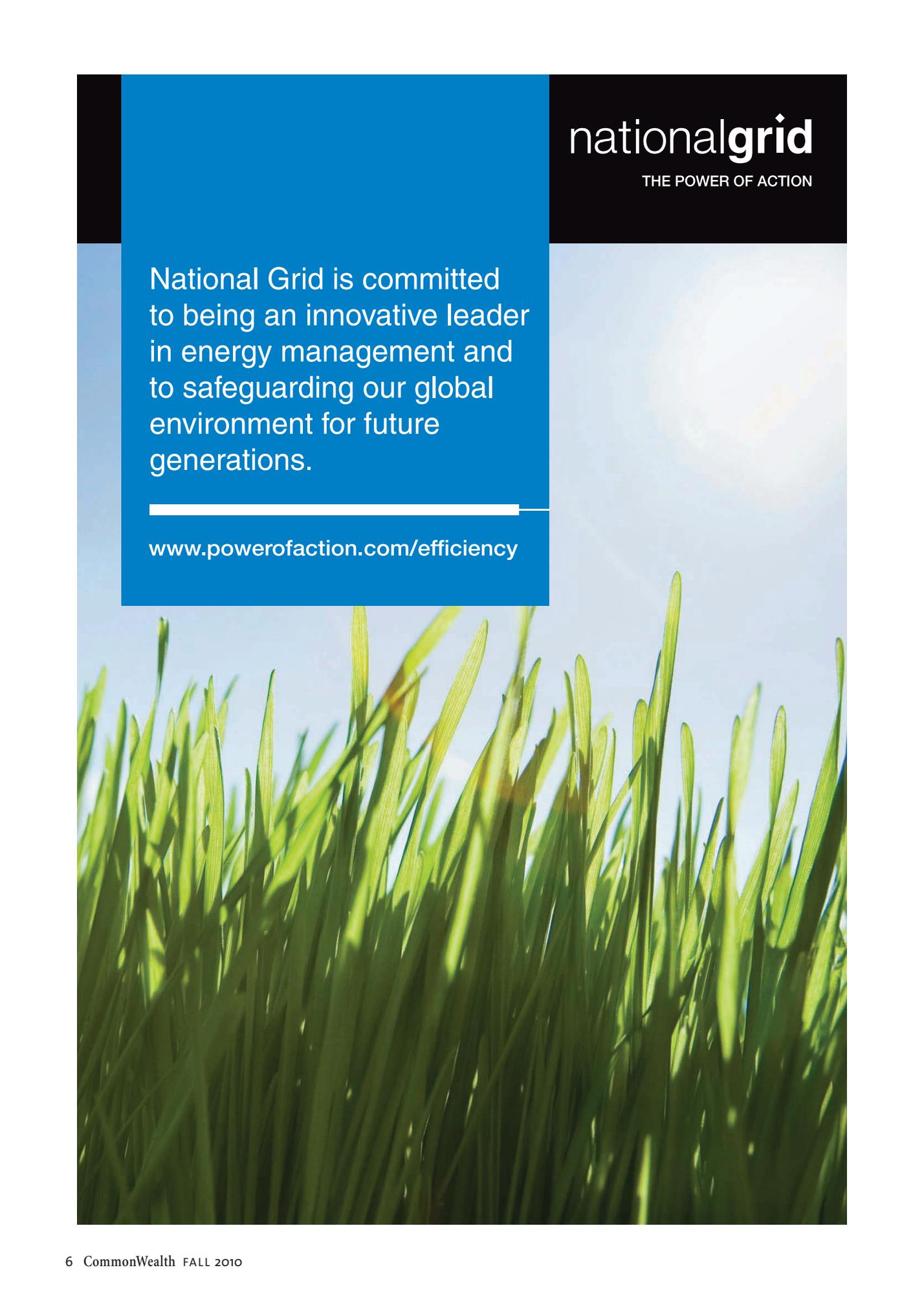
- 32 | **ON THE COVER FALSE START** Women athletes at state colleges and universities run far behind men in nearly every measure of equal treatment despite making up nearly 56 percent of the enrollment. **BY JACK SULLIVAN**
- 46 | **RAISING THE BAR** The state auditor's job holds tremendous potential—potential not always realized. Will this year's election yield a true watchdog? **BY PAUL MCMORROW**
- 54 | **TURNAROUND ARTIST** Fitchburg Mayor Lisa Wong is trying to turn around a troubled mill town left behind by the state's knowledge-based economy. **BY GABRIELLE GURLEY**
- 62 | **ADVICE TO THE GOVERNOR** We asked leading thinkers to help chart a course—for whoever wins—to deal with the economy, health care, and education.

## DISCUSSION

- 76 | **CONVERSATION** Alan Khazei is out promoting his new book *Big Citizenship*, which argues that public service can help reinvigorate American civic life. **BY MICHAEL JONAS**
- 85 | **PERSPECTIVES** Massachusetts jobs once again could be held hostage by high housing costs. **BY BEN FORMAN AND SAM GREELEY**  
Massachusetts needs to get serious about working families.  
**BY ROBERT J. S. ROSS AND DEBORAH CONNOLLY YOUNGBLOOD**
- 93 | **BOOK REVIEW** *Banned in Boston*, by Neil Miller, chronicles the city's intellectual Dark Age. **BY ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN**

## DEPARTMENTS

- 7 | **CORRESPONDENCE**
- 10 | **EDITOR'S NOTE**
- 11 | **INQUIRIES**
- 18 | **STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT**  
A ballpark assessment  
**BY BRUCE MOHL AND JACK SULLIVAN**
- 21 | **STATE OF THE STATES**  
Legislative pay  
**BY JACK SULLIVAN**
- 23 | **HEAD COUNT**  
Road warriors  
**BY JACK SULLIVAN**
- 25 | **WASHINGTON NOTEBOOK**  
Tribes lobby for land in trust  
**BY SHAWN ZELLER**
- 29 | **WHAT WORKS**  
Breathing easier  
**BY ALISON LOBRON**
- 96 | **REAL TALK**  
Online teaching  
**BY ALISON LOBRON**

The image features a background of tall green grass in the foreground, with a bright sun in a clear blue sky in the background. A blue rectangular box is overlaid on the left side, containing text. In the top right corner, the National Grid logo is displayed in white on a black background.

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## MY MRI COST \$7,200

Your article, “Overexposed,” in *CommonWealth*’s summer edition was superb. It revealed so many of the failures and successes of our medical system.

I have only one thing to add: You wrote that the “price of an MRI ranges from \$350 to \$1,400.” When I had an MRI in 2005, the bill, of which I received a copy, was for \$7,200! I don’t know what Tufts Health Plan paid.

A subsequent CAT scan, just before I was to undergo surgery at the Brigham and Women’s Hospital for a subdural hematoma, revealed that the bleeding had stopped, and no further treatment was necessary. I never saw the bill for that welcome discovery.

I think the simple device of telling patients what their treatment costs might put some brakes on the inflation in procedures and expense.

I was on the Board of the Health Planning Council of Greater Boston. The certificate of need program didn’t fail. Every time we turned down a certificate of need, the hospitals had the Legislature overrule us.

*Herbert P. Gleason  
Boston*

*The writer, a lawyer, was formerly corporation counsel for the city of Boston and is a founding director of the Neighborhood Health Plan.*

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY NO GAMBLE

I was surprised to see Bruce Mohl refer to the state’s green agenda as “The big bet” in the summer edition of *CommonWealth* magazine. In it, Mohl claims that the state is betting on a future “in which carbon emissions are costly, fossil fuels are scarce, and clean tech jobs are up for grabs.” Well,



the future is here. With some of the highest fuel and electricity costs in the nation and the signs of climate change nagging in the background, Massachusetts and other Northeast states are taking action. Their first fuel: energy efficiency.

Unlike conventional power generation or even renewables, energy efficiency is the resource we don’t see. Yet in terms of cost-effectiveness and public benefits, efficiency is about as close to a sure bet as we’ve got. Dollar for dollar, meeting electric demand through efficiency costs about a third as much as it does to generate and deliver it from a power plant. Efficiency yields equally-impressive savings on heating fuel as well.

As Mohl points out, Massachusetts is at the front of the pack in terms of our energy policy. But this is no reason to rest on our laurels; to do so would be shortchanging the state’s residents and businesses and leaving money on the table. While Mohl repeatedly referred to “green subsidies,” every dollar invested in efficiency returns

\$2.60 to the economy.

Mohl lumped together energy efficiency investments with bringing new large-scale renewable energy projects online. What he missed is that energy efficiency is the bridge to a clean energy future. The money we save through increased efficiency will help the region finance investments in renewable generation to further displace dependence on fossil fuels.

Efficiency is widely recognized as the pathway of choice to control energy costs, increase energy security, curb greenhouse gas emissions, foster economic growth, reduce dependence on fossil fuels, and contribute to a cleaner, healthier society. That’s why Massachusetts, along with most neighboring states, is directing utility companies to meet as much demand as possible through efficiency before turning to generation resources.

A forthcoming Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships study on New England’s energy efficiency potential says that over the next eight years, we could curb the region’s electric use by

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20 percent. This is through existing programs and technologies that are cost-effective and already in use; it's just a matter of scaling up to the challenge.

Energy efficiency is available now. This is no gamble—it's smart public policy. And it will yield dividends including local job creation, a cleaner environment, and putting money back in people's pockets.

*Natalie Hildt  
Northeast Energy Efficiency  
Partnerships  
Lexington*

### DELUSIONS OF GREEN POWER

It ignores reality to believe that green energy will displace as much fossil fuel as needs to be displaced to salvage the environment and reduce reliance on foreign sources. Although we should develop green energy to the extent feasible, the potential of renewable

energy is pitifully small compared to the energy now produced by fossil fuels, and only a fraction of the practical potential of nuclear energy.

Although the cost of a nuclear electric plant is very high, this is more than offset over the plant's lifetime by the much lower cost of nuclear fuel relative to fossil fuels. In addition, the "hidden" environmental and health costs of the fossil fuel cycle relative to the nuclear fuel cycle overwhelmingly favor nuclear.

One can't blame the electric utilities from shying away from nuclear, given the difficulty of financing and recovering the high construction cost and given the regulatory and political roadblocks to licensing. But eventually the nation must find ways to surmount the institutional and political issues, and must develop the informed will to do so. Our future energy policy should be based on the concept of "Get Real!"

Meanwhile, the environment suffers from the notion that renewables alone will solve our energy problems, politicians continue to be both uninformed and lacking in courage, and the public is lulled by light-weight publicity that fails to reveal the quantitative limitations of renewable energy and biofuels relative to our total energy and environmental requirements.

*R. Murray Campbell  
Cohasset*

### MOSCOVITCH ANALYSIS QUESTIONED

While Edward Moscovitch's Perspectives column, "Teachers Are Not To Blame," in the Summer 2010 edition of *CommonWealth* is thought provoking, the methodology used raises questions about the findings.

Dr. Moscovitch's primary thesis

# The Journey Never Ends.

*Massachusetts General Hospital and Brigham and Women's Hospital have been the sites of many important medical breakthroughs. Essential work in the journey to fight disease and improve the quality of care to all patients continues to this day. Both hospitals are ranked in the top ten in USNews & World Report's annual listing of best hospitals.*

- 1846** First public demonstration of ether use during surgery  
— *Massachusetts General Hospital*
- 1896** First use of X-ray image for diagnosis in the U.S.  
— *Massachusetts General Hospital*
- 1929** First use of iron lung to save polio victim  
— *Brigham and Women's Hospital*
- 1954** First successful human organ transplant  
— *Brigham and Women's Hospital*
- 1962** First successful surgical reattachment of severed limb  
— *Massachusetts General Hospital*
- 1984** First heart transplant performed in New England  
— *Brigham and Women's Hospital*
- 1993** Discovery of genes responsible for Huntington's disease and inherited ALS  
— *Massachusetts General Hospital*



- 1998** First successful transplant of kidney with bone marrow, removing long-term need for anti-rejection drugs  
— *Massachusetts General Hospital*
- 2003** Development of CRP test to predict risk of heart attack and stroke  
— *Brigham and Women's Hospital*
- 2004** First quintuple lung transplant performed in the U.S.  
— *Brigham and Women's Hospital*
- 2008** Development of microchip device to detect rare, minute cancerous tumor cells in bloodstream of cancer patients  
— *Massachusetts General Hospital*
- 2009** Partial face transplant, only the second ever in U.S.  
— *Brigham and Women's Hospital*



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AND MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL

and conclusions are clear—teachers need more tools to improve the quality of public education and student performance—the data and analysis upon which he based his findings and conclusions, despite extensive statistical data, appear to be more hypothetical proposition and argument than a fact-based theorem.

The foundation of Dr. Moscovitch's conclusions are based on his analysis of MCAS results using a stress-ratio model he created to compare student performance in each of the school districts against the relative wealth of the collective school districts. He defined four wealth groups “where the stress ratio is the combined percentage of students who are low income, minorities (blacks and Hispanics), and of limited English ability.”

Unfortunately, the linchpin of his analysis appears to be flawed and inaccurate. A quick check of the 2000

census data for just two of the school districts (Billerica and Plymouth) indicates the cursory approach to defining the comparative wealth groups. The census data reveals that Billerica and Plymouth were virtually identical communities based on the defined criteria.

In 2000, the US Census reported that Billerica was 93.6 percent “white alone” while Plymouth was 94 percent “white alone.” The data also indicate that 9.6 percent of Billerica's households spoke a primary language other than English, while 6.6 percent of Plymouth's households spoke a primary language other than English. And 32.2 percent of Billerica's households reported annual incomes of less than \$50,000, while 43.9 percent of Plymouth's households reported annual incomes of less than \$50,000.

Despite these facts, Dr. Moscovitch included Billerica in the “wealthiest”

category while Plymouth was placed in the “medium-low” wealth category.

The 2009 MCAS results by community are equally revealing. Student performance in Plymouth was slightly better in English in all categories than Billerica. Using Dr. Moscovitch's stress-ratio model, one could argue, based on this simple comparison, that students in a school district with a higher stress ratio (medium-low wealth) performed better than students in one of the Commonwealth's “wealthiest” school districts.

The issues raised in Dr. Moscovitch's column are important and deserve continued research, analysis, and action. Unfortunately, Andrew Lang's famous quote comes to mind. “He uses statistics as a drunken man uses lampposts—for support rather than for illumination.”

*Sean G. Mullin  
Plymouth*

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# Stop pushing paper

**MORE THAN 4,500** state and local officials file statements of financial interest each year with the State Ethics Commission. The ethics forms are supposed to be readily available to the public, but are instead largely hidden behind byzantine processes and bureaucratic hurdles that have no place in a 21st century information age.

When the Legislature first enacted the statute requiring elected and appointed officials to file the statements, there was no Internet access for the regular public, the \$1 charge for each form was intended to offset copying costs, and the requirement to notify filers of who was seeking their forms was a misdirected effort to thwart the “wrong” people from gaining personal information about public officials.

In today's wired world, the paper pushing of ethics forms no longer makes sense. It would save everyone a lot of time and money if the forms were posted online where anyone could review them. Conflict of interest disclosures, which officials file when they want to disclose a possible ethical conflict in their actions, should also be posted online rather than filed willy-nilly around the state.

Most states already do this and most state agencies in Massachusetts have already embraced the advantages of the Internet. The state Office of Campaign and Political Finance, for example, began posting all political contributions online years ago and even makes it easy for visitors to its website to download the data to spreadsheets and analyze it in a variety of ways.

Some newcomers to the political process see no reason why their ethics forms aren't more readily available. Michael Day, who mounted an unsuccessful campaign for the state Senate this fall, posted his ethics form on his campaign website. As he said, “The majority of other states make these forms available online, accessible, and open to anyone who wants to see what financial interests members of the Legislature hold. The public should have access to this information.”

The forms themselves don't disclose as much information as I'd like, but they provide a useful service. They reveal sources of outside income, real estate and financial

holdings, government positions held by immediate family members, debts forgiven, and any gifts, honoraria, or reimbursements received.

The forms came in handy in February when *CommonWealth* published a report on patronage at the Probation Department. Probation Commissioner John O'Brien reported on his financial statement that his daughter worked at a probation agency as a secretary. Reps. Thomas Petrolati and Michael Costello, Sen. Steven Baddour, and Franklin County Sheriff Frederick Macdonald all reported that their wives worked as probation officials.

Often the forms are useful in determining the outside business interests of officials, which can be helpful when trying to evaluate their objectivity on a specific issue. One weakness of the forms is that little detail is provided. Many lawmakers, for example, report earning large sums of money as private attorneys, but the officials rarely disclose who their clients are.

*CommonWealth* last year tried to make it easier for the public to gain access to ethics forms. We purchased nearly 400 forms belonging to legislators and top officials in the judicial and executive branches and posted them on our website. That allowed anyone to review them without having to go the offices of the Ethics Commission, fill out a form, and pay a \$1 fee for each statement.

Many of our readers appreciated the convenience, but we'd like to see all the forms readily available. In September, we began contacting other media outlets in the state to see if they would be willing to split the cost of purchasing all of the ethics forms and making them available online. The more outlets that signed up, the cheaper the cost would be.

One editor emailed me after receiving my letter proposing the joint effort among media outlets, asking what my ultimate goal was. I replied that we were performing a public service and also hoping to shame the Legislature into addressing the issue and posting the forms online.

“The Legislature, as you know, is not easily shamed,” he emailed back. **CW**



**BRUCE MOHL**

# inquiries

## Time on T's side

The MBTA and Massachusetts Bay Commuter Rail Company publish “report cards” showing the commuter rail’s performance and, by all accounts, the trains arrive when they are supposed to 95 percent of the time. Except they don’t.

The two agencies tout the “adjusted” on-time performance of the commuter rail lines, which excludes incidents outside the direct control of the operator. The actual on-time performance—what commuters actually experience—was 87 percent year-to-date through the end of August. The two Old Colony rail lines were even worse, reporting a 70 percent actual on-time rate so far this year.

Some of the incidents the agencies cite as beyond their control are medical emergencies and police actions, but they also include mechanical failures and equipment shortages. The agencies also include rail repairs, including the replacement of all 147,000 defective concrete railroad ties on the Old Colony Lines from Middleboro and Kingston, as beyond their control.

The adjusted on-time performance rate for both lines was 96 percent, but the actual on-time performance was nowhere near that. Trains on the Kingston line ran on schedule 43 percent of the time in June, 44 percent in July, and 57 percent in August. The Middleboro line ran as low as 55 percent in May before rebounding in subsequent months to 68 percent in June and 85 percent in August, although that was “adjusted” to 98 percent.

Transit officials declined comment on their performance criteria, but commuters should read the fine print on the report cards.

► JACK SULLIVAN

## Feds taking aim at real estate fees; BRA seeks guidance

► BY BRUCE MOHL

**A NOVEL REAL** estate fee long collected by the Boston Redevelopment Authority, and more recently by some private developers, is coming under fire from the federal government.

The Federal Housing Finance Agency is urging the lenders it oversees to stop investing in mortgages with private transfer fee covenants. The BRA calls its fee a resale payment, but it operates the same way. Language inserted into a deed on the original sale of a home or condo requires all future owners to pay a fee to a third party when the property is sold.

The BRA collects payments ranging from 1 to 4 percent of the sales price every time a condominium or building is sold to a new owner at about 25 locations across the city. *CommonWealth* previously dubbed the arrangement a “never-ending money machine” (“Money machine,” Winter ’10).

Homeowners associations, land preservation groups, and, more recently, private developers have inserted language into deeds requiring all future purchasers to pay 1 percent of the sale price. Two Massachusetts transportation agencies have also assessed the fees on properties they sold.

Those imposing the fees say they raise money for good causes or help spur development, but the Federal Housing Finance Agency is recommending that the practice be halted. In mid-August, the agency issued a proposed guidance for Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and the Federal Home Loan Banks that would bar them from investing in mortgages with private transfer fee covenants.

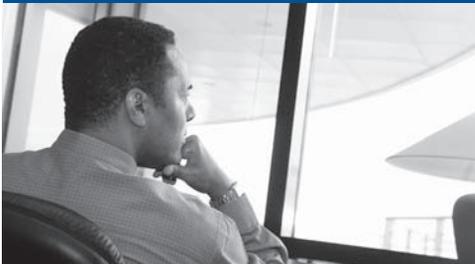
If adopted after a comment period, the policy would make it nearly impossible for developers to attach the covenants to mortgages since any potential buyers would probably have a problem obtaining financing. Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and the Federal Home Loan Banks are huge players in US mortgage markets, providing nearly \$6 trillion in funding.

Susan Elsbree, a BRA spokeswoman, says the language in the federal guidance is unclear. She says the BRA intends to ask the Federal Housing Finance Agency to clarify that its proposal would not apply to transfer fees payable to public entities like the authority.

“Unlike some private developers, who have used transfer fees to build additional profit into projects, the BRA uses these fees to help generate housing development in targeted areas by reducing up-front land costs and also to continue urban renewal efforts in the city,” Elsbree said in a statement.

Michael Parker, a Boston-based land use lawyer who owns a condo at Flagship Wharf in Charlestown that is subject to the BRA fees, says the fed-

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## inquiries

eral guidance is very broad in scope. “If I was the BRA, I’d be very concerned about this proposed guidance,” he says.

The BRA, a self-sufficient government enterprise, relies on resale payments to help balance its budget. Revenues from the payments tend to rise and fall with the economy, but typically hover in the range of \$1.3 million a year. At Flagship Wharf, one of the first properties in Boston to be subject to the resale payment, the money machine has been working since the early 1990s. One of the penthouse units there has sold five times, yielding nearly \$90,000 in resale payments for the agency.

The BRA says the fees allow it to kick-start projects by taking less money up front for land it sells, leases, or clears for development, which makes it easier for a project to get off the ground. The BRA says it recoups its money over time from subsequent condo owners who weren’t involved in the original deal. Condo owners often grumble about the fees, and several have said the payments are an illegal form of taxation, but the BRA says state law gives it the right to impose the fees.

Federal officials declined comment on their proposed guidance until the comment period expires. Some of the concerns expressed in the guidance focus almost exclusively on fees assessed by private developers, but others would also apply to the BRA fees.

“Such covenants appear adverse to liquidity, affordability, and stability in the housing finance market and to financially safe and sound investments,” the guidance states.

“Encumbering housing transactions with fees that may not be properly disclosed and that may limit the alienation of property means that such fees may impede the marketability and the valuation of properties and adversely affect the liquidity of securities backed by mortgages so encumbered,” the guidance says. “FHFA is concerned that such consequences will have a particularly detrimental effect on still fragile housing markets.”

Comments filed with the federal agency indicate the fees are strongly opposed by real estate industry officials but supported by property owner groups and land preservation organizations that often use the fees to support their efforts.

The Hilton Head Plantation Property Owners’ Association of South Carolina said in its testimony that it uses transfer fees to help fund its operations and provide upkeep for properties. The association said the measure would cost it \$300,000 a year.

“This reduction in association income means our homeowners will face higher association assessments, a reduction in the services that attracted them to our community in the first place, or both,” wrote T. Peter Kristian, general manager of the property owners’ association.

The Florida Realtors organization backed the federal

guidance, calling the fees “not prudent or safe or sound investments.” Wendell Davis, president of the group, said concerns about the fees prompted Florida to join a handful of other states in passing state laws that prohibit the imposition of such fees. (Massachusetts doesn’t have a similar law.)

“Private transfer fees increase the cost of homeownership, do little more than generate revenue for developers or investors, and provide no benefit to homebuyers,” Davis wrote. “They place an inappropriate drag on the transfer of property. There is virtually no oversight on where or how proceeds can be spent, on how long a private transfer fee may be imposed, or on how the fees should be disclosed to home buyers.”

## A business improvement district in Boston — finally

► BY BRUCE MOHL

**WITH CITY SERVICES** cut and unlikely to rebound to pre-recession levels any time soon, Bostonians are stepping into the breach.

Businesses in the Downtown Crossing area are banding

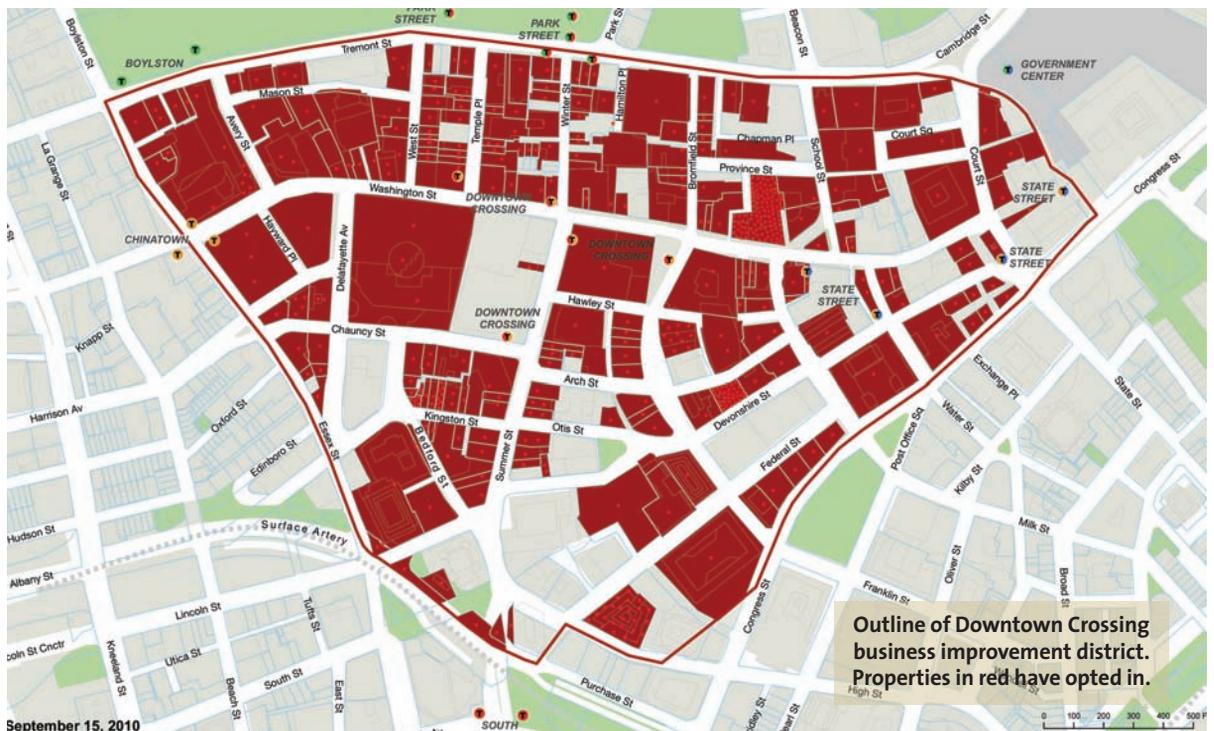
together and voluntarily agreeing to pay more property taxes next year to fund their own cleanup and security operations. Other parts of the city, including the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway, the North Station area, and the Back Bay, are watching closely and considering following suit. Corporate donations are also being sought for the upkeep of the Boston Common and the Public Garden.

Rosemarie Sansone, the president of the Downtown Crossing Partnership, which spearheaded the effort to form a business improvement district, says it’s taken way too long for Bostonians to wake up to the city’s new funding reality. “With 60 percent of the land in this city tax exempt, we shouldn’t have been the last major city in the country to form a business improvement district,” she says. “We should have been one of the first.”

Many big and small cities across the country have business improvement districts. New York City, for example, has more than 60. Massachusetts has business improvement districts in Hyannis, Springfield, Westfield, Northampton, and Taunton.

Downtown Crossing flirted with the concept many times over the years, but those attempts usually foundered because of opposition from one group or another. Sponsors also tried unsuccessfully to change state law to make participation mandatory if a majority of businesses voted to form a district. Approval was finally won this year from area businesses, but firms were allowed to opt out of the district if they wanted.

Just over 80 percent of the businesses in the district



September 15, 2010

Outline of Downtown Crossing business improvement district. Properties in red have opted in.

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# Northeastern

agreed voluntarily to pay more on their property taxes to fund the privately run district, and officials hope more companies in the area will eventually sign on. Participants include Bank of America, Millennium Partners, Fidelity Investments, and State Street Bank, but a number of big names in the district opted out, including Equity Office Properties, which owns five buildings in the district, the Omni Parker House Hotel, and NStar. There is likely to be some friction between the participants and nonparticipants, because nonparticipants stand to benefit from the district even though they aren't supporting it.

The participating companies are paying an extra \$1.10 per \$1,000 of assessed value on properties valued up to \$70 million; any assessed value above \$70 million would be taxed at a rate of 50 cents per \$1,000 of value. Only businesses are being assessed. Owner-occupied residential properties were not invited to become members of the district although they are being invited to provide input. "Residents can play a role, but I don't think they should be assessed," says Sansone.

The downtown district, which officially launches in April, will be big. Think of it as a triangle with Government Center at one corner, South Station at another corner, and the intersection of Boylston and Tremont Streets at the third. Sansone estimates the district's annual operating budget will be \$3.1 million, which will be used to fund cleaning crews, market the area, and hire ambassadors who will roam about serving as a cross between Wal-Mart greeters and private cops. Those involved say they hope a laser-like focus on cleanliness will demonstrate that someone is taking care of the area and prompt the public to take better care of it, too.

The business improvement district is unlikely to tackle the biggest eyesore in the area—the hole in the ground left when the developers of One Franklin tore down most of the old Filene's and then ran out of financing to finish their project. Sansone says it's the first question everyone asks her.

"People are excited about the BID but they're also concerned about the hole in the ground. We can't ignore it," she says.

Nancy Brennan, president of the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway Conservancy, said her organization is exploring the creation of a business improvement district to increase funding for the park. If feasible, she says she would like to see it up and running by 2012.

Brennan called the idea of a business improvement district one of the original concepts to fund the Greenway. State officials eventually went in a different direction, but, with state funds scarce, Brennan says the Greenway is revisiting the original idea. The biggest property owner along the Greenway, developer Don Chiofaro, has pledged to lead the effort for a Greenway business improvement district.

“This seems to be a really good time to dust it off and see if it would create a more stable funding platform for the Greenway,” she says.

## Power is a money magnet on Beacon Hill

► BY PAUL MCMORROW

**MONEY CHASES POWER** on Beacon Hill, and there may be no clearer example of that relationship than the campaign war chests of state Reps. John Rogers and Charles Murphy.

Rogers used to be powerful, and he had the campaign receipts to prove it. The former majority leader and Ways and Means Committee chairman rode those positions to become one of the House’s most prolific fundraisers. State

In November, Rogers will face Republican challenger Jim Stanton. Rogers is one of just five House incumbents with less cash on hand than their challengers.

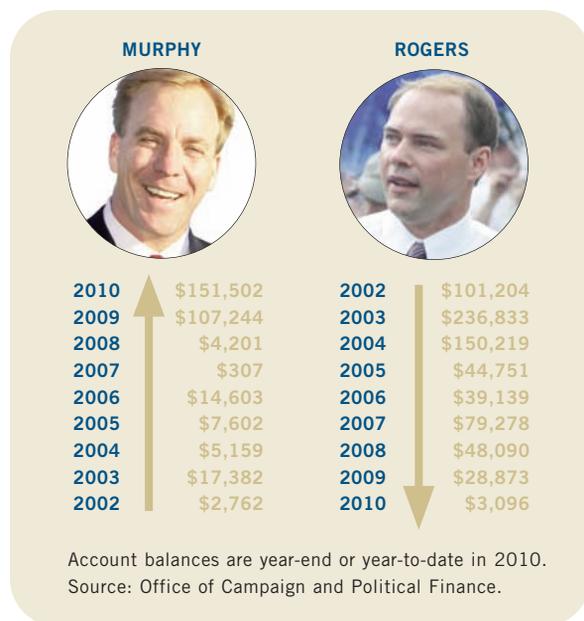
Murphy’s fortunes have also changed, but in a different direction. A former mid-level House functionary, Murphy, a Burlington Democrat, raised \$361,000 and spent \$376,000 between 2002 and 2008; those figures are somewhat inflated by Murphy’s unsuccessful 2007 campaign for an open state Senate seat. He finished 2007 with \$307 in his campaign account, and was only able to raise that total to \$4,200 by the end of 2008.

Murphy was a top vote wrangler during DeLeo’s leadership battle with Rogers, and the newly-minted Speaker DeLeo rewarded Murphy with his old perch atop Ways and Means. Leadership has been very good to Murphy. He has raised \$440,000 since his elevation, and padded his once-depleted campaign account. At last check, it stood at \$151,000.

A significant amount of cash that once flowed to Rogers is now going to Murphy. An analysis of campaign finance records between 2007 and 2010 shows a number of individual donors—many of them lobbyists, attorneys, contractors, and corporate executives—who gave to both Rogers and Murphy. All told, these donors have injected roughly \$95,000 into the two Democrats’ campaign accounts. Their donations ebbed and flowed in accordance with each politician’s proximity to power.

Those common donors gave just \$11,675 to Murphy when he was a vice-chairman in Speaker Sal DiMasi’s House; since Murphy’s ascension to the top job at Ways and Means, that total has risen to \$41,675.

The opposite has held true for Rogers: The group of repeat donors showered \$37,025 on him in 2007 and 2008, when he was majority leader and a likely future House speaker, but they’ve given him just \$4,525 since his 2009 demotion.



campaign finance records show that, between 2002 and 2008, Rogers raised, and spent, \$1.1 million.

But now, after a failed year-long campaign for House speaker against Robert DeLeo, Rogers is languishing on the back benches and being abandoned by a number of influential campaign donors. After raising \$143,000 in 2007 and \$82,000 in 2008, the Norwood Democrat saw his yearly haul fall to under \$29,000 last year; he has taken in just \$25,000 through August, the last date for which public records are available. At the end of August, the tab for Rogers’s campaign vehicle, \$6,900, exceeded the amount of cash his campaign had on hand, \$3,100.

## On Beacon Hill, help is easy to find

► BY JACK SULLIVAN

**MASSACHUSETTS LAWMAKERS HAVE** pared back the size of the legislative staff in the midst of the current recession but the state still ranks as one of the most aide-heavy legislatures in the country.

Last year, Bay State lawmakers had 903 year-round staffers to assist them in their day-to-day affairs, according to the most recent data compiled by the National

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Conference of State Legislatures. That averages out to 4.5 permanent staffers per legislator, and it's down 3.5 percent, or 32 jobs, since 2003.

Of the five states that had larger legislatures than Massachusetts, only New York and Pennsylvania employed more permanent staffers, with the two states averaging 12.6 and 11.5 staffers per lawmaker, respectively. California ranks the highest, with 17.2 permanent staff members for each lawmaker, but the Golden State, which has six times the population of Massachusetts, has just 120 legislators compared with the 200 here (160 House members and 40 Senate members).

The national average is 3.7 permanent staffers per legislator, but that can be misleading since a number of states have part-time legislatures, which add temporary staff positions while they are in session.

Massachusetts ranks sixth nationally in the size of its Legislature, just behind Minnesota's 201, but paling in comparison to New Hampshire's 464 part-time citizen-legislators. Our neighbors to the north employ 147 permanent staff members and add on another 32 temps during the times they're in session, for an average of 0.3 permanent staffers per legislator.

Since 1979, Massachusetts has increased its permanent legislative staff payroll by nearly 52 percent. That's far below the national average increase of 91 percent among all legislatures. New Mexico recorded an eye-popping 330 percent increase in permanent staffers over the last 30 years, but it had only 40 legislative aides to start with in 1979, and lawmakers themselves don't get a penny for serving.

According to the Massachusetts Senate rules, each member can hire at least four aides and some can get the green light from the Senate President to hire more, depending on their seniority or committee assignments. In the House, representatives are allowed to hire one aide but the principal committee on which they sit has additional staff members who carry out tasks for members.

The Senate president, in addition to staff allotted to handle district duties, is authorized to have at least four additional aides. The House Speaker, in addition to district staff, has at least five aides.

## Police scramble on Quinn pay

► BY GABRIELLE GURLEY

**POLICE UNIONS AND** individual officers are trying hard to save what's left of the 40-year-old Quinn Bill with mixed

success. Budget woes forced lawmakers to cut what was once a \$50 million state contribution to \$10 million in fiscal 2010 and \$5 million this year.

The law, more formally called the Police Career Incentive Pay Program, rewards police with salary increases of 10 percent to 25 percent for attaining college degrees ranging from associates to masters. The state was contributing 50 percent of each community's costs but, now that Beacon Hill is bailing on its half, some police unions are trying to hold their cities and towns responsible for the full amount.

**LEGAL  
TACTICS  
VARY.**

This summer, unions in Fairhaven and Rutland came up short in legal actions against municipal officials in their communities. In Medford, however, an arbitrator sided with the union's contention that the city could not cut officer's pay even though the state pulled out.

The difference in outcomes boils down to what's in the union's contract language, with some collective bargaining agreements specifically stating that the community only has to pay its share while other contracts are either silent or contain ambiguous language about the agreement adopting the terms of the Quinn Bill.

Geoff Beckwith, executive director of the Massachusetts

Municipal Association, says lawmakers' failure to design alternative "rules of governance, [left] cities and towns and police unions to their own devices to try and figure out how to sort this out."

Bryan Decker, the attorney for the Massachusetts Coalition of Police, the state's largest law enforcement union, views the Quinn Bill as a wage statute. He says communities that have adopted the measure have effectively incorporated the Quinn provisions into the salaries of their police officers, and those salaries cannot be cut unilaterally, no matter what the local contract says.

Decker represents officers in Mashpee, Wrentham, and Boston who are bypassing arbitration and heading right to court. Falmouth and Scituate are also facing lawsuits.

"The [lawsuits are] saying that the contract can't trump the statute and, therefore, that provision of the contract is simply not valid," says Decker, an attorney for the Boston firm Sandulli Grace, PC.

Municipal officials say the disputes over Quinn benefits are disrupting their staffs. Veteran police officers in towns that can't afford to pay the benefit are moving to municipalities that can, and communities that are cutting benefits are having difficulty recruiting qualified candidates for openings. **CW**

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# A ballpark assessment

BY BRUCE MOHL AND JACK SULLIVAN

**CAN YOU BELIEVE** it? Fenway Park, America's most beloved ballpark, home to the Green Monster and Pesky's Pole, and sacred ground to Red Sox Nation, is worth less than some Boston parking garages. Mercy!

The assessed value of Fenway Park has risen dramatically since John Henry's ownership group bought the Red Sox in 2002 and began fixing up the ballpark. But even with a 52 percent increase in value, Fenway's property tax bill is still less than what developer Don Chiofaro pays on his Harbor Garage near the New England Aquarium.

According to city records, Fenway's assessed value was \$26.5 million in 2002. Eight years and \$200 million in improvements later (funded in part by federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits), the value was \$77 million. The property taxes are \$2.26 million annually.

By contrast, the Harbor Garage, which is less than a fifth the size of Fenway, is assessed at \$5 million more, or a total of \$82.5 million. The garage's property tax bill is nearly \$200,000 more than what Henry and his group pay at Fenway.

Was someone at City Hall giving the Old Towne Team a break on its property taxes? Boston's assessor, Ron Rakow, says nothing is amiss. He says property tax assessments are based strictly on the value of the real estate.

At Harbor Garage, that value is determined by analyzing the income from renting parking spaces and also reviewing what other garages in the area sell for. Fenway Park isn't so easy. Rakow says it's one of about a dozen properties in Boston that are unique and difficult to assess.

Rakow says his staff reviews confidential income data from the team and then decides what portion of each income stream is due to the business (the team itself) and what portion is due to the ballpark (the real estate). "Take the Red Sox out and what's [Fenway] worth," he says, summing up the challenge.

Revenue from a TV contract, for example, would be attributable primarily to the team. But a significant chunk of the revenue from tours of the park, concerts, weddings, and billboards around the stadium can be attributed to Fenway.

Assessing the value of Fenway seems to be more art than science, but the Red Sox don't seem to mind. According to Rakow, the team hasn't challenged its assessment.



## FENWAY PARK

PROPERTY TAX — \$2.3 MILLION  
2010 ASSESSMENT — \$77 MILLION  
SQUARE FEET — 331,219  
BUILDING VALUE — \$59.9 MILLION  
LAND VALUE — \$17.2 MILLION

## HARBOR GARAGE

PROPERTY TAX — \$2.4 MILLION  
2010 ASSESSMENT — \$82.4 MILLION  
SQUARE FEET — 57,346  
BUILDING VALUE — \$72.4 MILLION  
LAND VALUE — \$10 MILLION





## GILLETTE STADIUM

PROPERTY TAX – NOT APPLICABLE

IN-LIEU-OF-TAX PAYMENT — \$2 MILLION

**MOST PROFESSIONAL SPORTS** venues around the country are either publicly owned or heavily subsidized, so their property tax assessments are nonexistent or skewed. But the Massachusetts facilities are all privately owned, so it's easy to compare them. Surprisingly, they all pay about the same, either in taxes or in-lieu-of-tax payments.

The TD Garden, home to the Boston Celtics and the Boston Bruins, was exempt from property taxes until fiscal 2009 and instead made a smaller, alternative payment under a 121A exemption designed to encourage economic development. Since fiscal 2009, however, the property has been taxed like any other commercial property in the city. Its assessed value is currently \$68 million and its annual tax bill is just under \$2 million.

Gillette Stadium in Foxborough also pays about \$2 million, but not in the form of property taxes. Randy Scollins, Foxborough's finance director, says the town

owns the land underneath the stadium under an arrangement set up in the early 1970s to help lure the NFL team to the area. The town continued that arrangement by swapping the old stadium footprint for the land under Gillette Stadium when it was built earlier this decade.

Under the arrangement, the Patriots make in-lieu-of-tax payments to the town funded by ticket fees paid by fans. Foxborough receives \$1.42 for every ticket sold to soccer and football games and \$2.46 for every ticket sold to concerts and other special events.

Scollins says the ticket fees are likely less than what the town would receive if the stadium paid property taxes, but he says it's an arrangement that has worked well, particularly since the Kraft family has opened Patriot Place near the stadium, adding significantly to the town's tax base.

## TD GARDEN

PROPERTY TAX — \$1.99 MILLION

2010 ASSESSMENT — \$68 MILLION

SQUARE FEET – 166,550

BUILDING VALUE — \$61 MILLION

LAND VALUE — \$6.98 MILLION





# The Bellwether: What Milford Thinks.

“The more exchange of ideas and information between the government and the community, the more advantageous it is for both.”

Louis Bertozzi,  
former state senator  
and Milford resident.

*CommonWealth* magazine launched the Bellwether project in an effort to get beyond the horse race in assessing and reporting voter concerns in the run up to the 2010 gubernatorial election.

What issues are most important to real people? Are the candidates running for office addressing those issues? Are voters angry, as some politicians suggest?

To answer these questions and others, *CommonWealth* magazine has been hosting a town common website where residents of Milford can debate and even vote on local and statewide issues. Milford was chosen because it is something of a bellwether community, having voted with the winning side in

every gubernatorial election since 1990. If you're interested in going beyond the polls, read *CommonWealth* coverage of the Bellwether project or go to the website at [www.localocracy.com](http://www.localocracy.com) (click Milford) and read along.

The Bellwether website is being hosted by a new Massachusetts startup called Localocracy and the project is being funded by a grant from The Boston Foundation and the James L. and John S. Knight Foundation.



**CommonWealth**  
PUBLISHED BY MASSINC

# The wages of sausage-making

BY JACK SULLIVAN

**MANY MASSACHUSETTS LEGISLATORS** say the salary they receive as full-time lawmakers is not enough to live on and raise a family, so the majority—nearly 60 percent—report some form of outside income.

But a look at legislative salaries throughout the United States indicates the pay in the Bay State is not half bad. While it certainly pales in comparison to California's rate of \$95,291, which is tops in the nation, the \$61,440 base salary Beacon Hill lawmakers receive ranks sixth in the country.

Among 10 states with full-time legislatures—defined as requiring at least 80 percent of the hours of a full-time job—Massachusetts beat out Ohio, New Jersey, and Florida in salary. And that doesn't include the \$7,200 annual expense stipend (no vouchers required), the per diem payments for travel expenses, or the extra income all committee chairmen and vice chairmen receive in Massachusetts.

According to the most recent data compiled last year

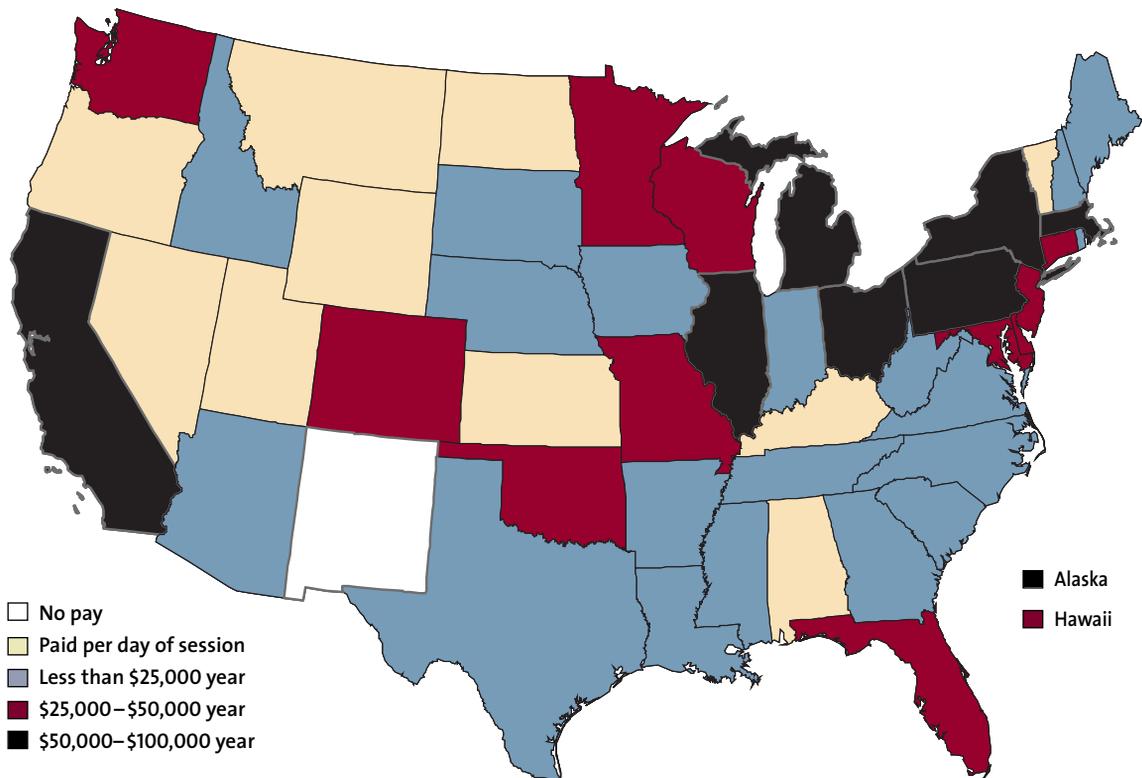
by the National Council of State Legislatures, nearly 58 percent of Massachusetts lawmakers identified themselves as “full-time legislators,” the fourth-highest percentage in the country behind California, Pennsylvania, and New York. The national average is 16.4 percent.

The Massachusetts legislative salary is nearly 2½ times the national average of \$25,969. There are 10 states that pay their lawmakers on a daily or weekly basis when the legislature is in session. New Mexico pays its legislators nothing in salary and allots up to \$144 per day for expenses, but officials have to submit vouchers.

New Hampshire, long cited by smaller government advocates as a shining example, pays its lawmakers \$200 for a two-year term and adds nothing for expenses or per diems.

One other thing to keep in mind: The Massachusetts Legislature has not been in formal session since the end of July but the checks keep going out every month. **CW**

## LEGISLATIVE SALARY RANGES



Source: National Conference of State Legislatures

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# Road warriors BY JACK SULLIVAN AND KATIE MCGINN

**WHEN THE FOUR** gubernatorial candidates were queried at a debate about the cars they drove, Republican Charlie Baker drew some envious chuckles when he said he had a '66 Mustang.

But more than a few people nodded their heads knowingly because they, too, are driving old cars, many out of necessity. According to the Registry of Motor Vehicles, the average statewide age of all the cars, SUVs, trucks, trailers, and motorcycles in Massachusetts was 10.4 years as of Sept. 4, up from 7.5 years in 2000.

The aging of vehicles has had a widespread effect, from a decline in municipal excise tax collections to a dearth of used cars available for sale, thus driving up the price of pre-owned vehicles.

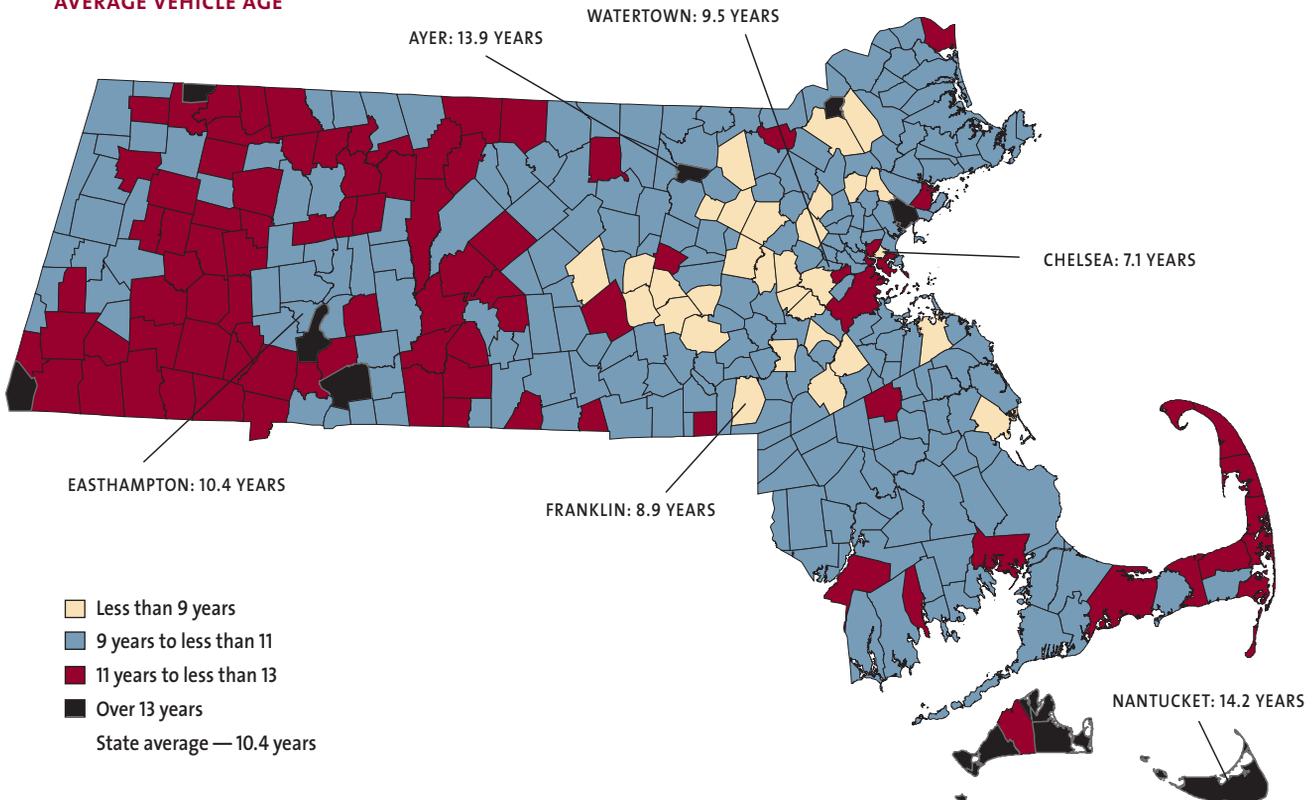
Barnstable Tax Collector Maureen Niemi said the gray-ing of the fleet has had a big impact in her community. The average age of vehicles in Barnstable is 11.2 years, up from 8.1 years a decade earlier. Niemi and other tax collectors say most people are not buying new cars and many

are doing away with cars they use infrequently. She mailed out 44,275 excise tax bills worth \$4.4 million in 2008; in 2009, she sent out 39,228 bills worth \$3.8 million, a 16 percent reduction. "Because of the economy, nobody's going out and buying a new car," she says.

Drivers in Aquinnah on Martha's Vineyard have the oldest vehicles, with the average age of 15.7 years. Registry spokeswoman Ann Dufresne says that's a trend officials have seen for years because island residents bring their "junks" and leave them. Also, the limited miles that year-round residents put on their cars makes them last longer.

The community with the newest vehicles in the state is Chelsea, but Robert Boulrice, the city's treasurer/collector, says most of the credit goes to Enterprise, the car rental company that moved its fleet from Logan International Airport to Chelsea in 2009. Enterprise brought thousands of relatively new cars, which are now registered in Chelsea, pushing the average age of the car fleet down from 11.9 years in 2008 to 7.1 years now. **CW**

## AVERAGE VEHICLE AGE



Source: Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles





## Tribes lobby for reservation land

Seeking leverage in state gambling debate, Wampanoags push for law that would let them take Massachusetts land into trust **BY SHAWN ZELLER**

**THE DEMISE OF** state gambling legislation this summer was a blow to Gov. Deval Patrick and many legislators, but no one was more disappointed when the deal fell apart than members of two Massachusetts Indian tribes, the 2,200-member Mashpee Wampanoag and the 1,200-member Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah). For years, both tribes have eyed jealously the millions in casino revenue earned by Connecticut's Mohegan and Mashantucket Pequot tribes, who run the Mohegan Sun and Foxwoods casinos, respectively. The Massachusetts tribes believe that casinos they would like to build could bring them similar riches.

So both are now hoping that the Obama administration and Congress will come to their rescue. Both tribes believe they can significantly strengthen their position in the gambling debate on Beacon Hill, which is likely to begin again next year, by convincing the Interior Department in Washington to take land into trust for them in Fall River. That would create a reservation there for the Mashpee Wampanoags, and expand one for the Aquinnah Wampanoags, who have an existing 485-acre reservation on Martha's Vineyard.

With land in trust, the tribes could offer limited gambling—such as bingo, bingo-style slot machines, and poker—without state permission and without sharing any revenue with the state or local government. To avoid that type of situation, Indian officials believe the state would grant at least one of the tribes a full-fledged gambling license to operate a casino in exchange for a share of the proceeds. In essence, the tribes are racing each other to see who can be the first to get land into trust.

Cedric Cromwell, the chairman of the Mashpee Wampanoags, says that he would prefer to work with state officials, but plans to move ahead regardless. "I would love to see economic development

and revenue sharing for the Commonwealth," he says. "But we're going to move forward."

Yet moving forward won't be easy without action in Washington. Last year, the Supreme Court ruled that the Interior Department cannot take land into trust for tribes recognized by the federal government after 1934, when Congress passed a law creating the land-into-trust process. Both Wampanoag tribes are affected. The Mashpee Wampanoags were recognized by the federal government in 2007, the Aquinnah in 1987.

There is hope for the tribes, though. The Supreme Court indicated that Congress could act to alter the 1934 law to open the door for newer tribes to take land into trust. The Wampanoags are lobbying hard to see that Congress does that this year. Both Massachusetts tribes have joined a broad coalition, led by lobbying groups such as the National Congress of American Indians and the United South and Eastern Tribes, to try to convince Congress to change the 1934 law. The Mashpee Wampanoags have also hired two lobbying firms to press their case in Washington.

"Entire tribal communities are at risk and entire regional economies are also at risk if this doesn't get fixed," says Cheryl Andrews-Maltais, chairwoman of the Aquinnah Wampanoags.

Like Andrews-Maltais, the coalition members insist that their lobbying campaign is about more than just gambling. In fact, the Supreme Court case was about real estate development. Rhode Island's Narragansett tribe asserted that its housing development adjacent to a reservation in Rhode Island need not meet local building codes—especially once the Interior Department agreed in 1998 to take land for the development into trust. But Gov. Donald Carcieri sued, contending that since the tribe wasn't recognized at the time of the



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1934 law, it could not benefit from that statute. Two lower courts sided with the tribe, but in February 2009, the Supreme Court sided with the Republican governor in a 6-3 decision.

Tribal leaders view the decision as an overly technical reading of the 1934 law, and insist that it violates congressional intent. But winning passage of the so-called "Carcieri fix" from Congress hasn't been as easy as the tribes expected. Last year, Sen. Byron Dorgan, the North Dakota Democrat who is chairman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, wrote a bill to grant all tribes the right to take land into trust, regardless of when they were recognized. His committee approved the bill in December, but it has foundered since, as have two bills introduced in the House. In July, Rep. Tom Cole of Oklahoma, the only American Indian member in Congress, gave the tribes their best hope when he got comparable language written into the House version of the fiscal 2011 appropriations bill that covers the Interior Department. But the fate of the Republican's amendment is still unclear, since Congress failed to pass the bill before members left to campaign for reelection in early October. It is expected that the measure will be rolled into a catch-all spending bill drafted during a lame duck session later this fall.

The issue has split the Democrats who are in charge of both the House and the Senate, including those in the Massachusetts delegation. Sen. John Kerry and Reps. Stephen Lynch of South Boston, Michael Capuano of Somerville, John Olver of Amherst, and Bill Delahunt of Quincy, who is retiring, favor the change. Delahunt's district, which includes the South Shore and Cape Cod and the Islands, is the home base of both of the tribes.

Proponents like Lynch say it's only fair to treat all Indian tribes the same. The court decision, he says, was a "slap in the face" to American Indians, threatening "tribal sovereignty, self-sufficiency, and self-determination."

But Rep. Barney Frank of Newton, whose district would be home to both of the proposed Indian casinos in Fall River, opposes the so-called Carcieri fix because it would potentially allow tribes to open gambling facilities on trust land even if local officials opposed them. He insists that decisions on gambling should be made at the state and local level, not by the federal government in cooperation with the tribes. He nevertheless supports the Massachusetts tribes' efforts to acquire reservation land in Fall River for a casino because the local community strongly supports the effort.

Other members of the delegation declined to state a position on the Carcieri fix, and they will likely never have to if the measure passes as part of a broader spending bill. Olver is the only representative from Massachusetts on the House Appropriations Committee. Neither Kerry nor his Republican counterpart in the Senate, Scott Brown,

have a seat on the Senate Appropriations panel.

Outside Massachusetts, opposition to the Carcieri fix is strong. “There are a lot of very powerful interests who were pleased by the Carcieri decision, such as the commercial gaming industry that doesn’t want competition from Indian casinos,” says Clyde Barrow, a gambling expert who directs the Center for Policy Analysis at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada, for instance, opposes the legislation, as do state officials in California, where tribes have clashed with local governments over gambling.

Interior Department Secretary Ken Salazar sympathizes with the tribes. He has loosened rules for approving land-into-trust deals and continues to process applications from tribes for new reservation land, even as he awaits Congress’s verdict on the Carcieri decision to determine whether he can grant them final approval. In June, Salazar ordered the department’s legal officials to begin considering whether the Mashpee Wampanoags’ application to take land into trust, pending for three years, could move forward. The department declined to comment on its inquiry.

Even if the Indians are able to win a majority for the change in Congress, the Massachusetts tribes face further hurdles. To win approval from Interior, the tribes must

demonstrate that the land they want to take into trust was part of their historic land before white settlement. And the Interior Department has been reluctant in the past to grant tribes trust land more than 50 miles from their home base. Fall River is slightly more than 50 miles from Mashpee, farther still from Martha’s Vineyard.

If it fails to win trust land in Fall River, the Vineyard tribe says that it believes it could win approval for a gambling facility on its existing reservation on the island. But that’s not assured because of a 1983 deal between the tribe and local officials that created the reservation. According to a 2004 Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court decision, that agreement allows local officials to veto development projects on the reservation. Even if the tribe was able to get around that hurdle, Martha’s Vineyard would be far from an ideal location for a casino, since it would be hard to draw customers except in the summer.

Both tribes are counting on federal help to give them leverage in the gambling debate in Massachusetts. “We are supposed to be self-governing, to take care of our own people, and keep our Indian ways intact,” says Cromwell. “We are saying to our federal government, ‘Let us take land into trust so we can sustain ourselves and live within our own country.’” **CW**

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## Breathing easier

Asthma project at Children's Hospital in Boston is redefining care and sharply reducing costly emergency room visits and hospital admissions

BY ALISON LOBRON

**IZAELYAH FRENCH OF** Dorchester is an energetic 7-year-old who loves kickball—and loves knowing asthma won't keep him on the sidelines while other kids play. In the past, "my head would hurt and I'd have to stay home," he says. But, thanks to a pilot program at Children's Hospital Boston that addresses environmental factors in kids' homes that can exacerbate asthma, Izaeyah's condition is largely under control.

His mother, Lolanda Randal, says the hospital's Community Asthma Initiative has helped her to understand the need for changes in her home and helped her with expenses. "I was the type who'd use air freshener in every room," says Randal. "When [a case worker] came in, they said, 'That's an asthma trigger.'"

So Randal, a leasing officer with the Boston Housing Authority, stopped using air freshener. She stopped using bleach as a household cleaner. The initiative paid for the family to have a vacuum cleaner, since allergens were collecting in the carpets, as well as an air conditioner, since Randal's windows must stay closed to keep out pollen. While Randal says she used to make frequent trips to the emergency room with Izaeyah and his older brother due to asthma, the family hasn't been back since joining the initiative about three years ago. Today, the boys are leading increasingly normal, active lives.

"I never took my boys anywhere because I was worried they'd exert themselves," says Randal. "Last year, they were able to do a program for swimming and they loved it. It was so nice. That got me to thinking that boys can be boys."

The premise of the initiative is simple: Asthma is the leading cause of admissions at Children's. In both Massachusetts and the nation, the condition is most common in low-income, urban communities. (While 11 percent of children statewide have asthma, the figure rises to 14 percent in Boston, 23 percent in Holyoke, and 17 percent in Springfield and New Bedford, according to the Department of Public Health.) The reasons for the geographic and income disparities are uncertain, but, according to a hospital spokeswoman, are likely due

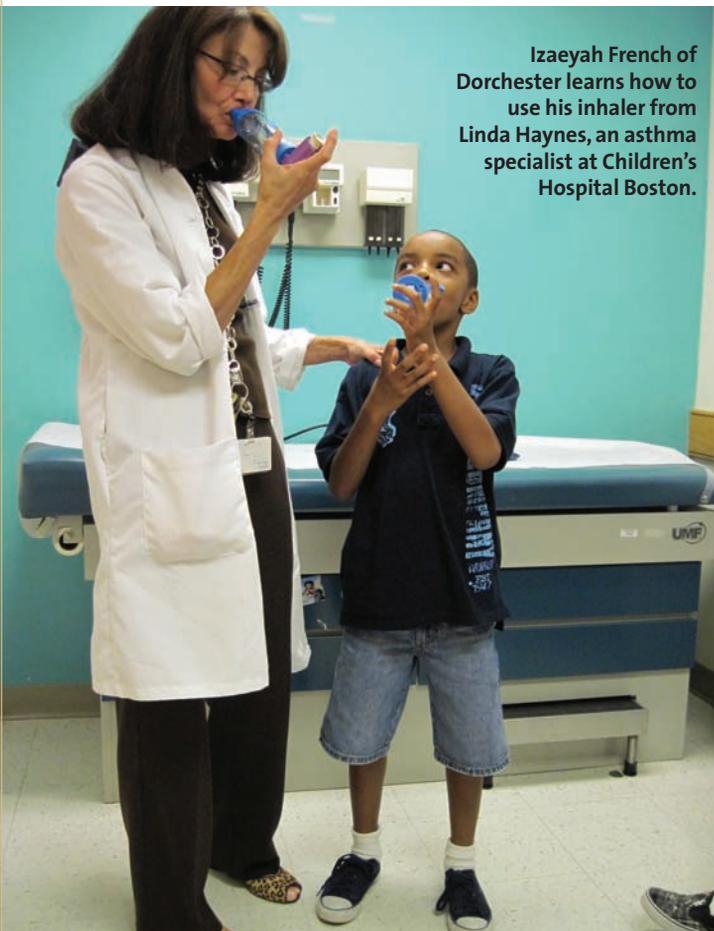
to a combination of factors including outdoor air pollution, poor indoor air quality caused by an aging housing stock, and inadequate access to both medication and assistance managing medications. What is certain is that hospital visits aren't much fun for patients, they're expensive for taxpayers if the children are covered by Medicaid, and, often, they are preventable.

But preventing inpatient hospital stays and emergency-room visits for asthma means redefining what we consider medical care and even medical devices. It means recognizing that for a child with asthma, paying \$200 for a new vacuum cleaner can mean not paying \$2,000 for a hospital stay. If that recognition were to come on a broad scale—and officials at Children's Hospital hope it will—it could have important implications both for pediatric asthma treatment and for a much larger health care challenge facing the state and the country: reforming the way providers are paid.

**CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL BEGAN** the asthma initiative in 2005 and has since served 544 Boston children. Funded through the hospital, private donations, and a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the initiative provides medical care, help with pest management and other environmental hazards, and asthma education. The program has no income eligibility guidelines, although 70 percent of participants are on Medicaid. The initiative's director, Dr. Elizabeth Woods, says the hospital exercises discretion when it comes to assisting patients financially and that many families—even those with employed parents—struggle with the co-payments for their medication. "We certainly try to be judicious in providing the more expensive items, like vacuum cleaners and AC units, to families in greatest need," she says.

As a result of the initiative, kids are spending less time in the hospital. Among the 544 children enrolled in the program since its inception, total visits to the emergency department dropped 65 percent, falling from 482 visits during the six

Izaeyah French of  
Dorchester learns how to  
use his inhaler from  
Linda Haynes, an asthma  
specialist at Children's  
Hospital Boston.



months preceding enrollment in the program to 170 over a six month period after beginning the program. Total hospital admissions decreased 81 percent, declining from 350 to 68. Kids served by the initiative also missed 39 percent fewer school days; their families reported a 49 percent decline in missed days of work. And for every dollar the program spent on asthma management, it saved \$1.49 in hospital visits.

While the causes of asthma aren't well understood, doctors do know what helps patients keep it under control: taking medication regularly, and keeping their environments as free from irritants as possible. "If someone has asthma and doesn't take preventative medicine, they chronically have more mucus. Whereas if you have control of it on an everyday basis, then when you face an irritant, there isn't as extreme a response," says Woods.

Woods says that when hospital social workers—who work with physicians and nurses in the asthma initiative—began visiting local families, they were startled by the high levels of what are considered environmental "triggers" for asthma, such as dust, and the droppings of cockroaches and mice. "We also didn't realize that most families couldn't afford vacuums and filter bags," says Woods. "We often have to supply cleaning materials."

Woods and other members of the initiative would like to see MassHealth, the state's subsidized insurance program, cover items such as cleaning supplies and vacuum cleaners—tools almost as important as inhalers in keep-

ing asthma under control. The hospital successfully lobbied for language in the current state budget to replicate its program elsewhere in the state and explore what are known as "bundled payments" for the management of asthma and other chronic diseases: Instead of reimbursing hospitals on a per-visit basis, MassHealth would pay a lump sum for a patient's asthma care. (Bundled payments are related to, but different from, the concept of global payments, in which providers receive a lump sum for a patient's overall care.)

With bundled payments, providers could use that money to pay for items such as air conditioners and vacuum filters, as well as inpatient treatments. Staff could also spend time working with school nurses to coordinate a child's asthma management and be available for phone consultations with parents, both of which the Children's program now does.

**ON A STEAMY** August afternoon, Lolanda Randal brings her sons into Children's Hospital's Primary Care Center to meet with Linda Haynes,

a nurse practitioner and asthma specialist. Both boys feel fine—in the waiting room, Izaeyah races around with a toy car while his older brother, Javaun Dawkins, 10, immerses himself in a hand-held computer game—and need to have prescriptions refilled before heading off for camp.

"Which medications have they been using?" Haynes asks as the family settles into the examination room.

"I know them by colors," says Randal. "They're on the purple one, two puffs a day. And the orange one. And he"—she gestures at one son—"takes the tablets for allergies."

"The Claritin?" Haynes asks.

"Yes," says Randal.

For much of the rest of the 30-minute visit, Haynes spends time quizzing the boys and their mother on when to use which medication and how much, making sure they're sticking to a system that would befuddle many adults, never mind a 7-year-old. "Which are the controller meds?" she asks Randal, who points to the correct inhaler. "And which are for relief?" Randal points again as her sons look over her shoulder. Each boy takes a turn on the exam table, shows Haynes which inhaler he uses when and for how many puffs, and then gets a high-five from Haynes as he jumps back down.

Later, Haynes says that making environmental changes, as the program helped Randal do, are often straightforward. The harder part of her job is getting kids to believe in the importance of taking their asthma medication even

when they're feeling good. "If someone told you that you had to take medicine twice a day for the rest of your life and you're seven years old, how compliant would you be?" she

The Patrick administration is exploring ways to pay for education, counseling and environmental makeovers—and, ideally, to avoid paying for expensive trips to the emergency room. Reducing asthma-related ER trips and individualizing care is also a priority on a federal level, where it's estimated asthma costs the US \$19 billion in health care costs and lost productivity. Last year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention gave grants to asthma-management efforts in 34 states.

David Martin, the director of health policy at the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, says, "This is an example of where we as a state, where Gov. Patrick and Secretary [JudyAnn] Bigby, want to go as far as getting a handle on health care costs. Right now, no one is paying you to simply take care of the patient. If they were, you'd try to prevent them from coming in to the ER."

His office is now in the process of finding hospitals interested in replicating the Children's program, and determining how MassHealth might reimburse providers. He expects conversations will result in a bundled payment,

but says the details are uncertain; he hopes a plan will be in place by early 2011.

Martin says he expects that if MassHealth begins providing bundled payments for asthma, children with private insurance are likely to be affected as well. "The hope is that by embarking on this pilot, private payers will follow along because it's also in their interest," he says. But even if they don't, hospitals that establish a protocol for asthma treatment—say, sending a caseworker to the home to look for environmental triggers—are unlikely to vary it for patients with different kinds of insurance. "You get to a critical threshold where if 60 percent of kids are being paid for in a certain way, and another kid comes in, you don't say, 'Well, we won't send a caseworker out,'" he says. "As doctors tell us all the time, you seldom know the source of payment. So once you have a system in place, it becomes the norm."

Martin does not yet have an estimate on how much money the state might save if the Children's approach expands to other hospitals. "Once we've defined the hospitals and know how many kids, and know what the bundled payment will be, we can establish an estimate," he says. "But I want to caution that the focus isn't just saving money. We also want to treat kids better." **CW**

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# False start

A group of women athletes in purple and black uniforms are running a race on a grassy field. The race is taking place on a dirt path that curves through a green field. In the background, there are trees and a crowd of spectators. The sky is blue with white clouds.

Women athletes at state schools are gaining under Title IX, but they still run far behind men in nearly every measure of equal treatment

BY JACK SULLIVAN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MEGHAN MOORE





Judy Dixon understands equal opportunity—and the lack of it. Dixon was the first person to file a sex discrimination case against a major university under Title IX, the landmark federal legislation that requires gender equity at any educational institution receiving federal funds.

In 1975, Dixon sued Yale University, where she was serving as the women's tennis coach and women's athletics coordinator, alleging the school was treating its women athletes shabbily and paying her less than a male colleague who had fewer responsibilities. Yale fired her after the lawsuit was filed, although the two parties eventually settled.

Today, Dixon is the women's tennis coach at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She says women athletes at the college level have come a long way since those early days of Title IX, but they still are not on a level playing field with men. Her UMass tennis team, for example, finally got its own locker room this year when an old storeroom that had been used by the long-defunct men's wrestling team was converted for their use. The women's lacrosse and soccer teams still share a locker room, unlike their male counterparts. Dixon says there are many other subtle—and not-so-subtle—ways in which women athletes are treated differently than their male counterparts, from food to uniforms to transportation.

The Title IX regulations say that “as long as you're moving towards equality, you can be in compliance,” she says. “That's like saying as long as we're trying to create a cure for cancer, it's OK we have cancer. Who decides you're moving towards it? I don't think there is enough attention paid to it, and I get very nervous.”

The compliance numbers for sports programs at taxpayer-supported state colleges and universities in Massachusetts seem to buttress Dixon's analysis. Gains have been made by women athletes, but significant gaps remain. From tiny Roxbury Community College to the University of Massachusetts flagship school in Amherst, women run far behind men in nearly every measure of equal treatment, despite making up nearly 56 percent of the public higher education enrollment, according to federal data covering the 2008-2009 school year, the most recent available. The data show:

- Massachusetts state colleges and universities as a whole spent \$29.2 million on men's and women's sports, not in-



On a beautiful fall day in Amherst, the UMass women's softball team played Holy Cross and Bryant University and the tennis team held an exhibition.



## At Massachusetts state schools, women's sports received 38 percent of the athletic budget while men's sports received 62 percent.

cluding administrative salaries and other budget items unrelated to gender. Women's sports received 38 percent of the money; men's sports received 62 percent.

- UMass Amherst, the state's flagship school and a Division I competitor, spends nearly twice as much per capita

on the men's teams on average make 37 percent more than those on women's teams. Much of the discrepancy is due to the salaries of UMass Amherst men's basketball coach Derek Kellogg, who earns \$215,000, and football coach Kevin Morris, who earns \$200,000. The salary for

on male athletes as it does on female athletes.

- Of the \$618,000 the school spent on recruiting, just 30 percent was earmarked for attracting women athletes to the school, with 70 percent going to woo male athletes.

- At state schools, the average salary for a head coach of a men's team is 26 percent more than what a head coach of a women's team makes; assistant coaches

AVERAGE EXPENDITURE PER ATHLETE AT UMASS AMHERST, SCHOOL YEAR 2008-09:

men \$29,430  
\$16,340 women

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education

Sharon Dawley, the new women's basketball coach, could not be obtained, but records show her predecessor, Marnie Dacko, who coached eight seasons, topped out at \$145,000.

UMass Amherst handed out \$5.9 million in full and partial athletic scholarships to 382 students. Men received 56 percent of the scholarship money and women 44 percent, but the women's share is inflated because it includes a disproportionate number of scholarships to out-of-state students, whose tuition and room and board are nearly 60 percent higher than what in-state students are charged.

Some of the moves state schools have taken to comply with Title IX seem curious (counting cheerleaders as athletes) or downright bizarre (counting men as women if the men practice with the women's basketball team). Penalties for schools not in compliance with Title IX have been rare, but that may be starting to change. The Obama administration has stiffened some compliance standards and dramatically accelerated the number of athletic-related compliance reviews. Meanwhile, a federal judge in Connecticut ruled in July that cheerleading is not a sport for Title IX purposes.

The athletic directors at Massachusetts state schools say the numbers do not tell the whole story. They say they are, for the most part, in compliance with Title IX, based on other, more subjective forms of measurement that the federal government allows. One exception is Dana Skinner, athletic director at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. He says more needs to be done at his school to meet Title IX's mandates.

"We obviously don't commit the level of resources we need in order to be in full compliance," he says. "I will not

be completely happy until we can say we are treating our programs completely equitably. We want our female athletes to have the same experience as our men. The only way to get to compliance is to be honest with where you are."

#### A LOT HAS CHANGED

Title IX is most closely associated with gender equality in sports, even though the word "sports" was not included in the statute. The legislation was an outgrowth of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. It was passed by Congress in 1972, but it wasn't until 1975, 35 years ago this year, that then-President Gerald Ford signed the final regulations into law.

A lot has changed since then. When Title IX became law, only one in 27 high school girls played sports, and women's sports received less than 2 percent of the athletic budgets at colleges and universities. Today, one of nearly

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**Proportionality means men and women should play varsity sports in rough proportion to their enrollment numbers.**

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every three girls in high school plays sports, women's sports garner 37 percent of college athletic budgets, and 41 percent of all college athletes are women.

Schools can meet the gender equity requirements of



Members of the UMass Amherst women's cross country team huddle just prior to a race.

Title IX in any one of three ways. The most straightforward method is proportionality, meaning the number of men and women playing varsity sports should be in rough proportion to their enrollment numbers at the school. Proportionality also applies to the distribution of scholarships, facilities, coaches and their pay, and trainers.

The second method is to demonstrate a “history and continuing practice of program expansion for the under-represented gender,” which in most cases is women. Most institutions are finding this difficult to do; it’s simply too expensive to add new sports at a time when revenues for all sorts of college programs are declining.

The third method is to show that the athletic interests of women are being fully accommodated. But demonstrating that women have the sports opportunities they want is not easy. Under the administration of former President George W. Bush, the Department of Education allowed schools to use surveys to show what sports students were interested or not interested in. In some cases, schools said unreturned surveys indicated a lack of interest and used that information to justify cutting sports out of their programs. The Obama administration has changed course,

ruling in August that the use of surveys for such purposes could only be used in conjunction with more thorough methods of assessing the level of interest, including interviews with coaches and alumni, and requiring universities to match the types of programs area “feeder” high schools offer.

Neena Chaudhry, senior counsel at the National Women’s Law Center in Washington, DC, and an expert on Title IX, says the change in policy was needed because surveys were being used as justification for reducing sports offerings. “You can’t just rely on a survey,” she says. “It doesn’t hold water that women aren’t interested in sports when there are over 3 million girls playing high school sports.”

At some schools across the country, athletic directors grappling with budget shortfalls have tried to reduce spending and bring their programs into proportional balance by cutting men’s programs. “You never make a funding decision without looking at your Title IX,” says Skinner, who has had to cut the football, wrestling, and men’s and women’s tennis teams because of budget reductions.

In the four decades since Title IX has been the law of the land, 212 colleges have eliminated men’s gymnastics,



Nationally, there are 9,560 sports teams for women, compared to 8,465 for men, according to the NCAA.

to the point that there are just 18 programs left in the country; 355 schools have cut their men's wrestling programs; more than 60 men's swimming and diving programs have been eliminated; and a number of schools, including Northeastern University and Boston University, have shut down their football programs.

But Title IX advocates say cutting men's teams was never the intent of the law. They also point out that men's sports programs, in the aggregate, have not suffered dramatic cutbacks.

More men played college sports in 2008 than women—244,267 versus 182,503—but there were 9,560 teams for women compared to 8,465 for men. According to a 2008 report by the NCAA on athletic participation, NCAA-member schools added 2,678 men's sports while dropping 2,484 between 1988 and 2008, a net gain of 194. During the same 20-year period, colleges and universities added 3,978 women's sports programs and dropped 1,690, a net gain of 2,288.

In 2006, UMass Amherst cut seven programs, including the men's tennis, gymnastics, indoor track, and water polo teams and the women's volleyball, gymnastics, and water polo programs.

Jennifer Braceras, a UMass trustee and a former appointee of President George W. Bush to the US Commission on Civil Rights, says she believes in Title IX and

the goal of expanding opportunities for women athletes at the university's campuses. But she says the emphasis on technical parity between the sexes misses a broader point about what sports have become on college campuses.

"From a board of trustees' perspective, I view Division-I athletics as more than being just about the students," she says. "As an alumna and as a trustee and as somebody who has looked at this area academically, I would say the focus should be on the branding of the school and what provides our university with the most benefit marketing-wise."

### SCHOLARSHIP COMPARISONS

Laura Danai is every school's dream of what a student-athlete should be. She excelled both in the classroom and on the tennis court at UMass Amherst. She was the tennis team's most valuable player her junior year and had a perfect 11-0 record in the fall season of her senior year. She graduated with honors in 2009 with a degree in biology and is now pursuing a PhD at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester.

But for all her accomplishments, Danai received just \$1,000 in scholarship money, and that came in her senior year. During her last two years at UMass she commuted from her parents' home in Pittsfield to save money. "My

parents don't come from a lot of money," she says. "Since I didn't get an athletic scholarship, I'm in debt now from student loans."

Natalie Muka of Cortland, New York, had a different experience. A forward on the women's soccer team, she receives a scholarship that covers 70 percent of her out-

## Scholarships for out-of-state students help public schools comply with spending requirements of Title IX.

of-state tuition. "I love UMass, but I probably would not have come without it," she says of the scholarship. "The money was crucial because of the out-of-state tuition."

The money is also crucial for the university's compliance with Title IX. For NCAA Division I and Division II schools, scholarships are one of the simplest and easiest

ways to gauge compliance. Title IX guidelines require schools to distribute athletic scholarships within roughly 1 percent of the proportional participation by the genders. But a scholarship to an out-of-state student plays a much bigger role at a school such as UMass because of the disparity between in-state and out-of-state tuition at public colleges and universities. In-state tuition plus room, board, and fees at UMass Amherst is \$19,000 a year, but students from other New England states are charged \$23,000 and students from beyond New England are charged \$32,000.

A scholarship to an out-of-state student doesn't cost the university any more—the cost of teaching, housing or feeding a student doesn't change whether they are from Massachusetts or elsewhere—but the higher rates charged for out-of-state students pumps up the amount of overall scholarship aid going to women.

UMass officials would not release the numbers of out-of-state versus in-state athletic scholarships, but data filed with the federal government covering the 2008-09 school year suggest scholarship aid is flowing disproportionately to out-of-state women athletes.

About 18.5 percent of UMass undergraduate students

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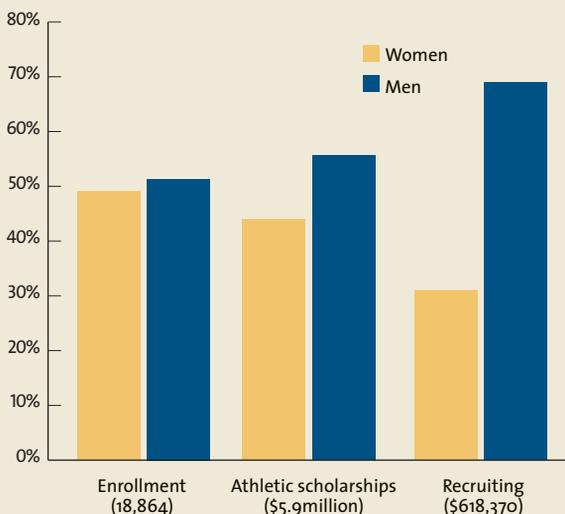
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Policy recommendations will be generated throughout the day to develop a post-conference policy and action agenda. For further information, contact Marcia Hohn, Director of Public Education at The Immigrant Learning Center (mhohn@ilctr.org).

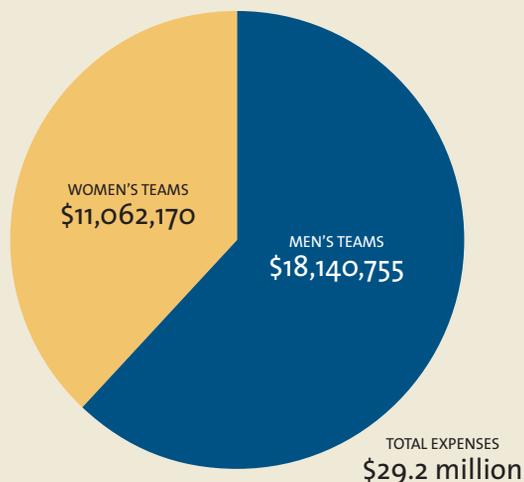
**Registration information to follow in early September.**

**PLAYING GAMES: Where the money goes for men's and women's sports in Massachusetts public colleges and universities**

**UMASS AMHERST**



**ALL MASS. STATE SCHOOLS**



Source: Office of Postsecondary Education Equity in Athletics Data Analysis, 2008-2009 school year

come from outside Massachusetts, but a review of the 10 women's sports rosters shows that 57 percent of the athletes hail from out of state.

All 13 women basketball players received full scholarships valued at \$465,153. Only one member of the team was from Massachusetts.

On the field hockey team, 19 players were awarded full or partial scholarship worth a total of \$330,926. Eleven of the 19 players were from out of state and two others were from other countries.

The tennis team had 11 players, including five from out of state and five from other countries. All but two of those players received near-full scholarships. The only Massachusetts player on the team, Danai, received a \$1,000 scholarship.

Chaudhry of the National Women's Law Center reviewed the UMass data and concluded the school is not in compliance. "Their scholarships are not within the 1 percent guideline," she says. She acknowledges the 1 percent rule is a guideline that can be waived if there are other mitigating factors, but she says the school's use of out-of-state scholarships raises flags. "Schools use [out-of-state] scholarships because they want to try to up their numbers for women in a way that is easy," she says.

UMass Amherst Athletic Director John McCutcheon urges caution in interpreting the scholarship data. "I wouldn't get too hung up on out-of-state figures," he says. "If the question is, are we using out-of-state scholarships

to somehow manipulate compliance, it's no."

Dixon, the tennis coach, agrees on this one. In order to be competitive, she says she has to recruit from outside Massachusetts. With bigger and more well-known programs such as Stanford and Duke scooping up the best US players, she eyes foreign players who want a chance to live, learn, and play in America.

Dixon says she receives no directives from above on

## Westfield State created women's lacrosse and golf teams and counts cheerleading as a varsity sport.

who to recruit and who to avoid. "Our scholarships for tennis have increased dramatically over the years," she says. "We're not told where to get people from. We're told to get the best team we can and go anywhere we have to go." But Dixon concedes that using her scholarship money on the higher-tuition imports also bulks up the bottom line for the school's compliance officer.

"I actually think it's a happy coincidence," she says.

## CRUNCHING NUMBERS

In many ways, Title IX compliance has become all about the numbers. Colleges analyze the number of students enrolled, the number of athletes, and their financial data to determine whether men and women are being treated equally. Every athletic program decision is reviewed within that context.

At Westfield State University, women represent 52 percent of the school's enrollment and 46 percent of the school's athletes. Women's sports receive about 47 percent of the athletic budget.

Nancy Bals, associate director of athletics and senior women's administrator at Westfield, says the school satisfies Title IX requirements because it has demonstrated a history and continuing practice of program expansion for its women students by creating a women's lacrosse team a few years ago and a golf team two years ago.

In addition, Westfield athletic officials count the school's competitive cheerleading squad as a varsity sport for compliance purposes despite US Department of Education regulations prohibiting the practice. Those regulations were upheld in a recent court decision in Connecticut, which said cheerleading cannot be counted unless a school is granted a waiver by the federal agency, which Westfield

does not have.

Bals insists competitive cheering should be counted as a varsity sport, despite the ruling this summer by US District Court Judge Stefan Underhill in a suit filed by members of the women's volleyball team at Quinnipiac University in Connecticut. The judge held that Quinnipiac could not use cheerleading to comply with Title IX participation regulations because "the activity is still too underdeveloped and disorganized to be treated as offering genuine varsity athletic participation opportunities for students."

Even without cheerleading, Bals says, Westfield is within 5 to 7 percentage points of proportionality between men and women athletes. "Five percent is five percent," she says. "It's not zero, I understand that."

At Bridgewater State University, women make up 60 percent of the student body but only 42 percent of the school's athletes. Approximately 44 percent of the athletic budget goes to women's sports.

Still, Mike Storey, the school's associate athletic director, says Bridgewater State is in compliance because the number of teams is equal for men and women even if the number of participants is not. Storey says funding an equal number of sports for women, even if the dollars don't

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match up, addresses the program expansion and overall interest provisions of Title IX compliance. "We're in compliance with two out of three," he says. "We'll never be in compliance with proportionality."

UMass Amherst reports to the federal government that its women's basketball team has 21 members. A small caveat to the records indicates six to eight of the team members are men yet are counted as women for Title IX purposes. The men participate in practices, providing extra bodies, challenges, and rest at scrimmages for the dozen or so members of the team.

In addition to giving regular team members some breathers during practice, the men also provide one more area of assistance for UMass: They are counted in the total number of participants for women's teams when UMass submits its report to the federal government about complying with women's sports mandates.

UMass Amherst athletic director McCutcheon says even though men are included in the census when the report is submitted, university officials do not count the men for

compliance purposes internally. He says UMass has closed the gender gap significantly in terms of participation and scholarship dollars. "We've made progress," he says. "I think we're pretty close."

Braceras says she is a supporter of expanding oppor-

## The UMass Amherst women's basketball team reports it has 21 members. Six to eight of them are men who practice with the squad.

tunities for women athletes, "but the money isn't endless." In 2007, she was named the head of a trustee task force studying the establishment of women's ice hockey teams at the Amherst and Lowell campuses to add more athletic slots for women, as well as to take advantage of a growing regional interest in the sport by women. There are 100 high school girls' ice hockey programs in Massachusetts

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with nearly 1,800 players, according to an annual survey by the National Federation of High School Associations.

“The reason I proposed the task force was it seemed to me a natural area where the university could expand opportunities for women,” she says. “It’s exploding in interest. We’re a New England school, winter sports can be our signature sports.”

Braceras said the idea never got off the ground for one simple reason: “The economy tanked.”

The continuing economic maelstrom is putting the squeeze on athletic directors, especially those at public schools who have to answer to taxpayers. Despite interest in women’s ice hockey, only one state school, UMass Boston, offers a varsity women’s ice hockey team, on which they spend \$111,000. Nine state colleges and universities, including all four UMass campuses, have men’s ice hockey programs, which cost \$3.7 million.

“How do you balance off a Division I men’s hockey team in numbers, scholarships and money? Obviously, a women’s ice hockey team,” says Skinner, UMass Lowell’s athletic director. “That certainly is a path to full compliance with Title IX standards. Unfortunately, you’re subject to the swinging pendulum of the economy and hockey is a very expensive sport to maintain.”

### FOOTBALL IS AN ELEPHANT

The ultimate Title IX numbers game, and the proverbial elephant in the room, is football. University officials tend to be supportive of the sport because it brings money and prestige and engenders alumni loyalty, but the high cost of football and the huge size of college squads make compliance with Title IX a nightmare.

Julia Lafreniere, the coach of the UMass Amherst women’s cross country and the indoor and outdoor track teams, says her programs are among the ones the school uses to counterbalance the huge disparity caused by having 97 football players.

She says the combined women’s programs she coaches have about 133 members, but some of those are counted three times for compliance purposes because they participate on each of the three teams. Men’s cross country and track teams can do the same thing but school administrators limit their rosters so the number of participants who can count as more than one slot is far lower. “On the women’s side, we can help schools with the numbers against football,” says Lafreniere, who as a UMass undergraduate in 1975 was a member of the first women’s cross country team started in response to Title IX.

Lafreniere says football is an important sport at many schools and she would never want to see it eliminated, as Northeastern University and BU did. But, she says, it cannot be excluded from the conversation when it comes to

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Title IX compliance.

“Title IX is just trying to protect women’s rights to be funded and have the same opportunities that the men are given,” she says. Having a big football program is “like having a family and the eldest son gets to eat everything

## UMass Amherst earned \$550,000 for playing Michigan.

he wants and then everyone else in the family gets to eat whatever’s left. Until things change in college athletics, I just see more sports going to the chopping block.”

At some schools, a powerhouse football team can generate enough money through ticket sales, booster donations, television contracts, and clothing sales to pay for nearly all of a university’s athletic programs. But that’s not the case at any Massachusetts state college or university.

When UMass Amherst, a Division I-AA school, played Division I-A giant Michigan in Ann Arbor in September,

the school was paid \$550,000 for the game, in which it nearly upset the then-top 25 Wolverine team. But Michigan is the only top tier opponent on the UMass Amherst schedule this year, and the other opponents offer nowhere near that kind of payday.

In fact, the numbers submitted to the US Department of Education do not reflect any kind of bonanza as far as revenues go for Massachusetts public schools that field football teams. The eight state colleges and universities with football teams spent a little more than \$5 million on their pigskin programs, according to the most recent report, while reporting revenues of \$4.9 million, with a deficit of about \$50,000. Overall, the state’s schools lost \$660,000 on all their athletic programs, with men’s programs losing slightly more (\$350,000) than women’s programs (\$310,000).

“To me, ‘revenue producing’ means making money, paying for yourself, but I don’t think there’s one UMass sport that pays for itself,” says Lafreniere.

### FEW WOMEN PAY ATTENTION

Title IX, fast approaching middle age along with its pioneers, continues to be a hot button issue in the halls and



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Jackie Zacarian, who played field hockey for two years at UMass Amherst, says she thinks women will always need Title IX.

gyms of academia. It's a fact of life for administrators, coaches, and players, yet few people understand or want to talk about the mandates that can have such a major impact on their lives. Athletes at state schools interviewed for this story either declined comment or offered few complaints.

Kelsey Anderson, a college senior from Saugus who receives a 70 percent scholarship for playing soccer at UMass Amherst, says she believes women get a fair shake. "I think they try to make things as fair as possible," she

says. "Football, basketball, hockey—they're always going to be promoted more."

Jackie Zacarian, who played field hockey for two years at UMass before injuries forced her to stop, says who gets what among men and women was not often a topic of conversation among the athletes. But Zacarian, who wrote her master's thesis at Northeastern on Title IX, said it's the right law for the right reasons, even though few people, including those most affected by it, pay attention.

"People don't really discuss it too much," says Zacarian, who now is an assistant coach at Northeastern and coaches at a private girls high school in Boston. "Nobody made an issue of it at UMass. I think there's really nothing to discuss. But I think we'll always need the law. I think schools, if they could, would fly under the radar."

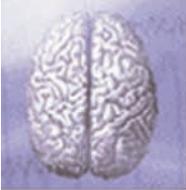
Dixon, the tennis coach at UMass Amherst who literally started the ball rolling in 1975, says student athletes have little historical perspective. "Every three years I show my kids a film on Title IX," she says. "They think it's always been as good as it is and they don't realize how much there still is to go." **CW**

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# Raising the bar



The race for auditor is grabbing little attention in this crowded election season, but the office has the potential to wield enormous power. That potential hasn't always been realized in the past. Will this year's race between two candidates both promising to crack down on waste and fraud yield a true watchdog?

BY PAUL MCMORROW

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL MANNING

Suzanne Bump's campaign staff is antsy. It's already an hour into the campaign event, a barbeque with Malden Democrats, and their candidate for state auditor is seriously lagging behind schedule. The most frequent inquiry she gets is: "What does the state auditor do, anyway?" This question takes some time to answer. Campaigning for auditor is half political pitch, and half civics lesson.

Bump has been explaining the auditor's job to the same table for 10 minutes now. Her staffers keep shooting her looks, silently urging her to wrap it up and move on to the tables out back. Just as Bump breaks loose, the keyboard

player launches into a spirited version of “The Wheels on the Bus.” A kindergartener has the microphone. The girl crumbles under pressure, forgets half the words, and just mumbles along to the music. Bump stands at attention, nodding along enthusiastically. When the song ends, she takes hold of the microphone and addresses the girl.

“You don’t have any idea what I’m doing here, do you?” she asks. “I’m a politician. I’m running for auditor. Do you know what the auditor does? The auditor makes sure government spends your money honestly. You don’t want your money stolen, do you? You want to get your money’s worth from state services. Does that sound good to you? Does that sound like a winning platform for state auditor? I do, too.”

Bump is pitching a 6-year-old, but she faces many of the same hurdles in explaining her candidacy to citizens of voting age. Few voters Bump or her Republican rival Mary Connaughton meet on the campaign trail know what the auditor does. The race is also toward the bottom of a ballot crowded with contentious contests for governor and Congress. Yet the position wields enormous power. The auditor’s job is to scour the state’s books, everything from public bidding rules to theft controls. It’s a watchdog for all of state government.

Joe DeNucci, who has occupied the auditor’s office for the last 24 years, is retiring. Most biographies of DeNucci lead with his prizefighting bona fides—he was a Golden Gloves champ, a top professional middleweight, and a member of the National Italian American Sports Hall of Fame. But in many ways, DeNucci is as pure a creature of Beacon Hill as there is. He was a legislative page as a teenager, and before winning his first race for auditor in 1986 he spent a decade in the House. Seven governors, and six House speakers, have served since DeNucci first took public office. He has institutional ties that stretch back decades. High-profile members of both parties count him as a friend. Most are loath to criticize him publicly, even as they stress the divide between the office’s potential and its current performance.

DeNucci’s 24-year tenure has been marked by reports that had an impact, and by extended periods of quiet. As he leaves office, he’s being dogged by scandal. He handed a job to a man who had been denied work in the state Probation Department because of nepotism concerns, pocketing campaign donations from the man’s family along the way. The State Ethics Commission recently charged DeNucci with illegally hiring his 75-year-old cousin as a fraud examiner. And he touched off a firestorm of criticism for raising his staff’s wages by 5 percent amid broad state budget cuts; a *Boston Globe* editorial called the raises, awarded after DeNucci had decided against seeking reelection, a “shameless Beacon Hill ritual.”

The pay raises helped catapult a sleepy auditor’s race into the press, and raised some fundamental questions



**Suzanne Bump, the Democratic nominee for state auditor, has the backing of the Beacon Hill establishment.**

about just what DeNucci’s office was, or wasn’t, doing with its 300 employees and \$15.7 million annual payroll—and what Bump and Connaughton would do with them. The two candidates emphasize the importance of the office as a fiscal watchdog. They both speak about making the auditor a proactive change agent. Their challenge lies in making voters care about the office’s problems and potential.

“The major problem is letting people know who you are, and what you want to do,” says Larry DiCara, a former Boston city councilor and longtime observer of local politics. “The inability to get your message out is extraordinary. My guess is, right now more people know who Philip Markoff is, or Justin Bieber, than Joe DeNucci.”

#### **LINGERING QUESTIONS**

The auditor’s office is a statewide constitutional office broadly charged with ferreting out waste, fraud, and corruption in state government. It was created in 1855 as an independent check on the state’s executive branch. The Legislature has gradually handed the office a number of additional functions. It keeps tabs on the state’s information technology infrastructure, and issues commentaries on both the finances and property conditions at local pub-



"If you liked me as a pit bull on the Turnpike, you'll love me in the auditor's office," says Mary Connaughton, the Republican nominee.

lic housing authorities. It determines whether new laws represent unfunded municipal mandates. It investigates fraud in state welfare, food stamp, and health care programs. And the auditor's office has final say over whether

## Privately, many on Beacon Hill complain that the office isn't as aggressive as it was, that DeNucci lost his fastball

public contracts run afoul of the anti-privatization Pacheco Law. For those tasks, it commands a relatively sizable bureaucratic force: In 2009, DeNucci's office employed more than 100 more bodies than the office of the state Treasurer. By further comparison, last year the state agency that oversees public employees' health care employed 56 people, while the governor's budget-writing office employed 58.

Every year, the auditor files an annual report to the

governor and the Legislature, highlighting the office's prior fiscal year output. In fiscal year 2009, for instance, DeNucci's office issued 324 audit reports; the year prior, it issued 240 reports, covering 310 state agencies. Lately, though, the great majority of those reports have covered routine, statutorily-required inquiries into IT infrastructure and local housing authorities. Several focused on the need for better cash management systems at district courts, even though a new judicial bookkeeping system is already in development.

DeNucci's office was vigorous in chasing down Big Dig waste and public construction overruns, and recent reports have uncovered costly lapses at the MBTA and at the Division of Unemployment Assistance. But lately, much of the waste, fraud, and abuse the auditor's office has examined has been concentrated in safety net programs. Privately, many on Beacon Hill complain that the office isn't as aggressive as it used to be, and that DeNucci has lost his fastball.

Three recent reports from the auditor's office show where those complaints are coming from. A July 2006 audit of the State Lottery Commission noted that 80 per-

cent of the Lottery's scratch ticket business was being driven through a single firm, Scientific Games International. The audit worried about the impact a disaster at Scientific Games's manufacturing plant could have on Lottery revenues, but did not ask why so much Lottery business was flowing to a single company. The Lottery later faced a lawsuit alleging that state Treasurer Tim Cahill threw business to Scientific Games because the firm was funneling lucrative consulting fees to a close Cahill associate.

A January 2009 audit of the University of Massachusetts School Building Authority noted that the authority had a history of handing out consulting contracts without bidding them competitively. The report also said the authority entered into several consulting relationships without written contracts. The authority responded by saying it had no legal obligation to bid out its consulting work. The audit ran just six pages long, and nothing came of it.

A June 2009 audit examined the Massachusetts Health and Educational Facilities Authority (HEFA). When the report was being written, Gov. Deval Patrick was trying to shoehorn a political supporter into a lucrative job at the lending agency. The gambit revealed that the supporter's prospective job had been vacant for a dozen years, and that HEFA's lending activities overlapped with those of other state agencies. The eight-page audit did not address the staffing controversy, or weigh whether HEFA was a necessary cog in the state bureaucracy. The Legislature folded HEFA into MassDevelopment soon after.

### THE PIT BULL BARKS

It's a cool, gray late-summer morning, and Mary Z. Connaughton is in Fitchburg, handing out cookies and serving ice cream to a roomful of senior citizens. She's discussing scooping techniques with the woman next to her. "I was a Brigham's girl way back," Connaughton says. When she finds out the other woman was, too, they trade an enthusiastic high-five. After the two Brigham's girls have finished their duty, and the mountain of cookies have been dispensed—Connaughton's Worcester County coordinator had baked 15 dozen of them the night before—Connaughton does a lap around the room.

She works it like a pro. She shakes hands, explains the auditor's office, drops her literature, and moves on quickly. When addressing the room, she makes quick mention of strained municipal budgets, transportation consolidation, and the state's unfunded pension obligation. She gets just wonky enough to let the seniors know she knows policy, but the thrust of her stump speech is folksy and populist.

"I really believe that auditor is the second most important job in state government," she says. "It's the top public advocate, the top watchdog. The auditor only reports to



State Auditor Joseph DeNucci has held the post for 24 years.

you. I'll be your eyes on Beacon Hill. I'll roll up my sleeves and find out what's going on with our money. I'm not looking out for the special interests. The only people I want to look out for are you."

This is Connaughton's first statewide run. She has only

## Connaughton has made only one other bid for public office, running unsuccessfully for state rep in 2004

made one other bid for public office before, running unsuccessfully for state representative as part of Republican Gov. Mitt Romney's disastrous 2004 bid to erode the Legislature's Democratic super-majority. She cleared the path for a statewide run not on Beacon Hill, but in Park

Square, where the state's transportation offices are housed. Romney placed her on the board of the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, and she proved to be a devastatingly polarizing weapon in the governor's running battle with the Pike's former chairman, Matthew Amorello. She fought the Turnpike Authority's leadership and used her unpaid seat on the board to attract an unprecedented level of attention to the Pike's finances. Later, she waged a merciless campaign against toll increases on the highway. She did so by aggressively courting the press—in Fitchburg, she ticked off the various print and broadcast outlets the seniors might recall her from. "If you liked me as a pit bull on the Turnpike," she says, "you'll love me in the auditor's office."

To her sympathizers, Connaughton's tenure at the Turnpike shined a light on a bloated, ineffectual government agency; her detractors believed her brawling public persona would wind up fueling a future political run. Patrick's former transportation secretary, James Aloisi, famously denounced her as a distraction and a gadfly.

"She was handpicked to implode the Turnpike Authority," says Jordan Levy, a former Pike board member. "That's why [Romney] appointed her. She asked the tough questions. She was not afraid and she was not bullied by anyone. She was put in there for a reason, and she did her job."

### POLICY TALK AND POLITICAL DIGS

Like Connaughton, Bump is a political fighter. She served in the Legislature from 1985 until 1993, spearheading an overhaul of workers compensation. Following that, she worked as a lawyer and lobbyist for the insurance and financial services industries before joining the Patrick administration in 2007 as the secretary of labor and workforce development. Bump left the cabinet post last year to run for the auditor's job.

Bump was heavily outspent in a brutal three-way Democratic primary. She won comfortably by talking up the virtues of good government, while never shying away from elbow-throwing. She pounded Worcester County Sheriff Guy Glodis over a series of ethical and financial scandals, calling him a liar and repeatedly insisting that Glodis didn't deserve an office of public trust. And she openly questioned whether her other primary opponent, Mike Lake, actually understood what the state auditor does.

Nor does she need much prodding to lay into Connaughton. "She has been a critic, but she has never challenged her political establishment," Bump says. One of the central themes of Connaughton's campaign is that the auditor should be a CPA, just as the attorney general should be a lawyer; Connaughton is the only certified public accountant in the auditor's race. "We're not electing

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a chief accountant for the Commonwealth,” Bump responds. “That reflects a narrow, shallow view of the role of the auditor. I intend to take audit reports and create change with them. You don’t do that by being in the field.”

Bump’s 30-second stump speech hits familiar ground—eliminating waste and fraud, and shifting the auditor’s office into a proactive stance. When she expands on that, though, she talks extensively about the nuts and bolts of making government work better. She wants the auditor to examine government systems, instead of just individual state agencies. In her view, the auditor should be more than a check on the excesses of government, and more than a muckraker. She sees the auditor as a nonpartisan figure. In order for Beacon Hill’s bureaucracy to function efficiently, she argues, the auditor needs to be able to extract policy changes from inside the State House.

“Financial accountability is the backbone of the office,” she says, “but I also want to focus on performance auditing, finding out where there’s duplication of effort, where there are turf battles, where there are silos. I want to use audit tools to highlight those things, and then use the political skills I have to make sure those reports don’t just gather dust, but they actually get put into action by the executive branch and the Legislature. The ability to drive change is an important attribute in the next auditor, so you don’t just have a report that sits on the shelf, but ability to be an advocate for change.”

Connaughton also sees a greater advocacy role for the auditor. She wants to file legislation, and believes the auditor should question the cost and revenue projections behind major policy shifts such as casino gambling or transportation consolidation. But in her version, the auditor isn’t working Beacon Hill hearing rooms. Instead, she says, she’d use radio, television, newspapers, and social media to put pressure on lawmakers and the governor. “I’d be extremely aggressive,” she says. “The office’s real power, besides going in and looking at the books, is in the power of the people. I’d be out in the public. On the Turnpike board, I saw how things work when the public is informed, and the media is informed. It makes a huge difference in holding people accountable.”

#### **POWER AND POTENTIAL**

Bump and Connaughton have both pledged to elevate the auditor’s office above Beacon Hill’s partisan bickering, but both have political baggage to overcome. Bump has had the backing of the Beacon Hill establishment since the race began, which helped her during the primary but could hurt her if voters are in a mood for change in November. DeNucci endorsed her candidacy before May’s Democratic

convention. She’s in the position of campaigning on her experience in Patrick’s cabinet, even though the governor’s job approval numbers are less than formidable and, depending on how the votes fall in November, she could be in the position of scrutinizing the work of her former boss and colleagues. During their primary fight, one of the nastiest things Glodis thought he could say about Bump was, “She’s the Beacon Hill candidate, and she was serving in the Legislature when I was still in high school.”

## **Just four men have held the auditor’s office in the past 70 years. None of them has used it as a bully pulpit**

Republican Party faithful have repeatedly said that in a state where a solidly Democratic Legislature controls spending, the office of auditor seems ready-made for an aggressive Republican. But that line of reasoning seems at odds with the auditor’s explicit mandate to expose waste, and not settle political scores. In her campaign, Connaughton has appeared to walk both sides of this line. At April’s GOP convention, Connaughton’s speech made the *Boston Globe’s* characterization of her Pike board tenure—“the thorniest thorn in the side of Gov. Deval Patrick”—an applause line; her next line, that she hadn’t meant to be a thorn, failed to excite the crowd.

Even one of her Turnpike board allies, who was himself not unfamiliar with the art of a well-timed grenade toss, says she’ll need a different approach if she’s in charge of an important state office. “If she’s just a bomb-thrower,” Levy says, “she won’t be successful. The office has to change. Anybody can audit. But what do you accomplish?”

Just four men have held the auditor’s office in the past 70 years. None of them has used the position as a bully pulpit from which to launch a run for higher office. And there’s been a longstanding divide between the office’s promise—that of a highly visible, crusading public watchdog—and its reality.

DeNucci replaced John Finnegan, a longtime state legislator and one-term auditor, in 1987. Finnegan replaced Thaddeus Buczko, whom Gov. Ed King appointed to the bench of the Essex probate court. Buczko, a former state legislator, became the Democrats’ pick for auditor when the office’s longtime holder, Thomas Buckley, died the night before the 1964 primary; it’s said the party was less concerned with Buczko’s burning desire to root out waste,

fraud, and corruption in state government, than with his ability to cover two constituencies on the party's ticket, since he was both Polish and from Essex County. And Buckley, whom Buczko replaced in 1964, was first elected in 1940.

Insiders from across the political spectrum are nearly unanimous in their view of the auditor's office: They are loath to criticize DeNucci directly, but they say there is a real need for the office to do far more than it has in the past.

"Most people would be hard-pressed to identify the statutory or constitutional functions of the auditor's office," says House Minority Leader Brad Jones. "This is not necessarily a criticism of what has been done, but more could be done. The office can be a more aggressive check in a state that doesn't have that party balance. At a time of diminished resources, it's more critical than ever."

Former Gov. Paul Cellucci, who was elected to the House in the same year as DeNucci, and counts the auditor as a friend, says the office should play a crucial role on Beacon Hill. "The auditor clearly plays an important role in state government, not only as a watchdog on spending, but in analyzing whether programs are working or not," Cellucci says. "With subpoena power, it's a pretty powerful office."

Former attorney general Scott Harshbarger believes

the auditor's office is up for grabs at a unique time in history. He compares the electorate's current mood to the pessimism that permeated the country in the post-Watergate era. There's one difference, he says: "In the '70s, people believed government could really be reformed with the right systems and the right people. Today, government is believed to be the problem."

The state's independent constitutional offices, Harshbarger argues, were specifically established to perform the sorts of oversight functions that breed good government and public trust. They failed to fulfill that promise the last time the public turned on government—the investigative office of the Inspector General was established in 1981, after the Ward Commission declared public corruption "a way of life in Massachusetts," and the attorney general and auditor were shown to be powerless to stop it. Now, the next auditor will take office with a former House speaker under federal indictment, a former state senator awaiting sentencing on federal corruption charges, and a patronage scandal raging in the state Probation Department.

"The potential for good is huge," Harshbarger says. "It is not inappropriate to ask, what proactive roles could the office take? That's not a criticism of Joe. But what has been done is at least a baseline for what can be done." **CW**



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# Turnaround artist

Mayor Lisa Wong is determined to revive Fitchburg. Will she stick around long enough to make it happen?

**LISA WONG BECAME** a rising superstar in Massachusetts politics the moment she trounced a veteran Fitchburg city councilor and catapulted into the mayor's office at age 28. The wonky daughter of Chinese immigrants, a woman with a short résumé and no previous political experience, was suddenly on everyone's must-meet list. She was invited to join Barack Obama, Caroline Kennedy, Gov. Deval Patrick, Sen. John Kerry, and Sen. Edward Kennedy for a February 2008 pre-Super Tuesday rally in Boston. She had so little advance warning about the event that she jotted down her remarks on the back of a gas receipt in the ladies' room. ("Warm up the crowd and be funny," the organizers told her.)

But after the big-name politicians moved on and the laughter died down, Wong returned to Fitchburg and began the work she was elected to do: Turning a mill town left behind by the Bay State's burgeoning knowledge-based economy into a showcase for central Massachusetts. It's no easy task. Fitchburg is one of the state's Gateway Cities, an edgy urban center of more than 40,000 people grappling with a 12 percent unemployment rate, a precariously balanced budget, few job opportunities, and perceptions that crime is out of control despite a drop in the overall crime rate.

"These are some of the toughest political jobs in America, running these small-to-mid-size cities that don't have a significant commercial tax base," says former Fall River mayor Edward Lambert, director of the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth's Urban Initiative. (The Urban Initiative part-

BY GABRIELLE GURLEY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK MORELLI



Mayor Lisa Wong stops in at Fitchburg's Cleghorn Neighborhood Center.

ners with MassINC, the publisher of *CommonWealth* magazine, on Gateway Cities-related projects.)

Wong has no magic formula, but she's tirelessly attacking the problem on a number of fronts. The Boston University-trained economist is working on putting Fitchburg's finances in order and marketing the city to business leaders as a place where they can find good workers and affordable office or industrial space. She is trumpeting the availability of low-priced housing, romancing the local university to play a bigger role in the city, and trying to position Fitchburg as a cultural and recreational hub.

her two older brothers. The experience, she says, was "kind of like being a mayor," spending weekends welcoming and serving regulars and newcomers.

She studied economics and international relations as an undergraduate at Boston University and went on to earn a master's degree there in economics. She taught global economics at the University of Wyoming for a year before trading academia for a job at the Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority in 2001. She moved up the ranks quickly, becoming executive director in just 2½ years. Her stint at the authority gave her the opportunity to assess

Wong chats with Sheila Lumi, manager of the Fitchburg Farmers Market.



Wong describes Fitchburg like an antique left too long in a dark and dirty basement. Just as Wong is fixing up her own home in the Fitch Hill neighborhood of town, the mayor says Fitchburg needs to be hauled out of the basement and "dusted off," "cleaned up," and "lovingly restored." Talking like an antique dealer, Wong says: "You can't build places like Fitchburg anymore. We want to look at Gateway communities as places where people can afford to buy homes, can afford to rent, and it's still within commuting distance from many different places in the state."

### FITCHBURG, HERE I COME

Wong is not a native of Fitchburg. She was born and raised in North Andover, the youngest of three children of Chinese parents who moved to the United States in 1970. The family opened restaurants in Haverhill and Cambridge, and still runs the Royal East, a Cantonese and Szechuan eatery in Cambridge. Wong worked in the business with

Fitchburg's economic strengths and weaknesses and learn what might make it attractive to employers.

In its heyday, Fitchburg was a thriving industrial center, known for its paper mills along the banks of the Nashua River. The river would regularly turn the color of the dye the paper mills were using on a particular day. (The river was later cleaned up and Wong helped create Riverfront Park, a small urban green space on its banks.) By the 1980s, those industries had moved to the South or abroad. The downtown, once known for its wide range of shops, theaters, and housing conveniently located near the center and the mills, began to decline. The rise of suburban shopping malls contributed to the falloff in activity. Fitchburg was left with no identifiable image and a shrinking commercial tax base.

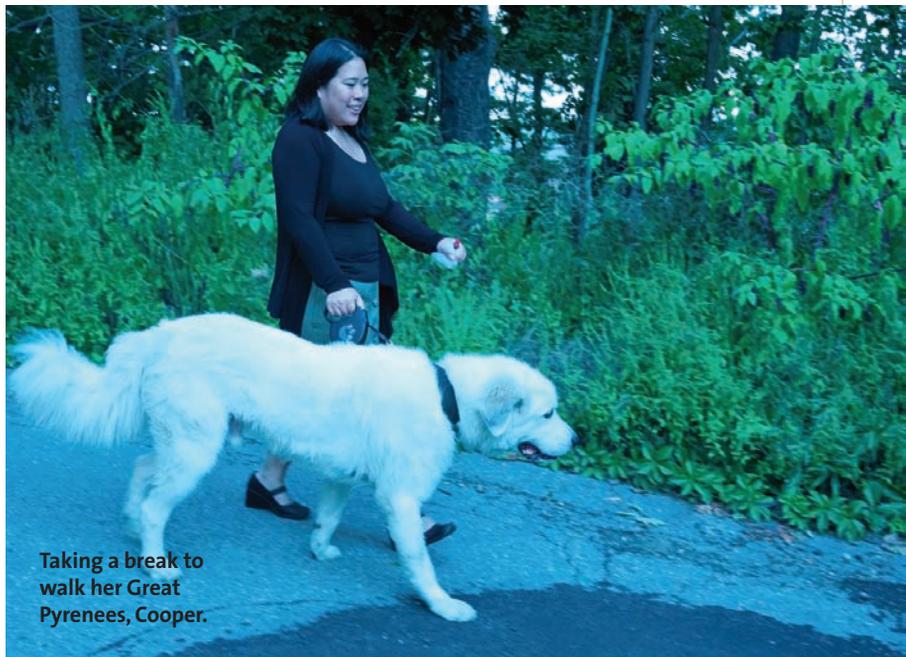
It's hard to get a handle on downtown Fitchburg today. At one end of Main Street is the modern MBTA commuter rail and regional bus station. Further on is the 19th-century Dickinson Building, home to a business center, a cof-

fee house, and a café and martini bar. There are several new art galleries, a bookstore, a seen-better-days bric-a-brac store, and the homey City Hall Café sprinkled among the government offices.

But between these bright spots are cavernous, vacant storefronts. Most drivers zoom right down Main Street past the dozens of available parking spaces. On several summer afternoons, downtown Fitchburg is practically deserted. The retail action is in Leominster, at the Mall at Whitney Field, which the locals still call the Searstown Mall for its anchor store.

There were also small increases in all other grades except 8th grade.

Two of Fitchburg's biggest selling points are its housing stock and its MBTA links. Compared to the rest of the state, homes in Fitchburg are a bargain. The median sales price for a single family home in Fitchburg is \$137,000, according to July 2010 figures compiled by the Massachusetts Association of Realtors. The median price in Boston was \$423,000 and the median statewide was \$333,000. Even Wong admits she moved to Fitchburg in 2001 in part because of its lower housing prices.



Taking a break to walk her Great Pyrenees, Cooper.

The lack of action downtown is reflected in the anemic commercial and residential property tax base. Per capita income is among the bottom 5 percent in Massachusetts. State aid accounts for almost half the city's budget. When Wong came into office in 2008, the city had only \$10,000 in reserves. The year before, city officials discovered tens of thousands of dollars missing from the treasury due to accounting errors. "The unfortunate reality is that the true financial position [of the city] is weak," a 2008 financial management review of Fitchburg by the Department of Revenue found.

The school population is 45 percent Latino. Nearly 80 percent of students receive free or reduced-price lunches. The district failed for the last two years to meet the federal Adequate Yearly Progress benchmark for student achievement gains. But after a major restructuring, Fitchburg High School saw an 11 percentage point increase this year in students scoring proficient or advanced in math and a 2 percentage point increase in English on the 2010 MCAS.

Millions are being poured into a new Fitchburg commuter rail extension and track, switch, signal, and other improvements to that line will help reduce travel times to Boston to an hour or less instead of the current 90 minutes. About 4,800 people ride the line each day. About 350 people take the train into Boston from Fitchburg itself, according to city officials.

For Chris Iosua, the real estate developer who invested "seven figures" into the Dickinson Building downtown, Massachusetts needs Fitchburg. "We can provide homeownership opportunities that just cannot be touched within the 495 belt," he says. At Chaibo, Iosua's new coffeehouse, he has met people who've moved to Fitchburg from Attleboro, Somerville, and Martha's Vineyard. "These are regular customers...who are looking at the city of Fitchburg and saying basically either 'I bought a home or I'm renting a condominium or a loft in this community, and from what I used to be paying I've cut my living expenses in half if not more,'" he says.

## LIFE IN THE BIG CITY

Wong's reputation in Fitchburg was sealed by the ice storm of 2008 that ravaged north-central Massachusetts and left large swaths of the region without electricity for about two weeks. She calls the natural disaster her "trial by ice." Forced out of her home by the storm, Wong set up shop at the Central Fire Station's emergency command center. She pressed the local power company to restore power, held press conferences every day, monitored residents in shelters, and huddled with local and state officials.

Sen. Jennifer Flanagan, a Leominster Democrat, said

she confesses, is "very, very difficult." Now 31, Wong has no children or any "significant other worth talking about at the moment." She's even discussed dating with more senior female mayors, but they haven't been able to give her much advice.

Wong seems to have no problem attracting friends, however. One of them, Sally Cragin, a school committee member who writes for the Boston *Phoenix*, says people are drawn to Wong. "I have been around rock stars and movie stars," she says. "Mayor Wong has the charisma of a public figure, but she has a lot of warmth and people relate to her."



Main Street: A few bright spots, but plenty of vacant storefronts.



Wong asked her to come to Fitchburg during the crisis because she needed help getting answers from the local utility, Unitil. Flanagan says the crisis was a defining moment for Wong. "People got to see Lisa in action," she says.

Wong has been on the move ever since. On a recent summer afternoon at the Central Fire Station, two firefighters salute her as she arrives for a survey of a new hill-top public safety communications tower site. Next, she pops in at the Cleghorn Neighborhood Center, helps some elementary school students with homework, and checks out the neighborhood's "walkability." After stopping by a hospital care center open house, she dashes home for a quick walk with her white "polar bear" of a dog named Cooper, a Great Pyrenees. She grabs dinner in a plastic container and rushes off again to spend the next three hours discussing school redistricting. When she's not working, which isn't often, she's swimming, playing tennis, hiking, or kayaking.

Wong's 24/7 schedule is tough on her social life. Dating,

But warmth shouldn't be mistaken for a lack of toughness. In getting the city's finances in order, Wong has displayed a willingness to take tough and often controversial stands. She bargained hard with municipal unions and won significant concessions on salaries, health care costs, and other benefits. The police department alone has cut 33 police and civilian positions since 2007.

She also slashed hours at the library and the senior center, and turned off more than 60 percent of the street lights, a move that saved the city \$300,000. Wong also tried and failed to get a \$5 million debt exclusion on the November ballot to repair streets. A trash fee also failed, though an alternative plan is in the works.

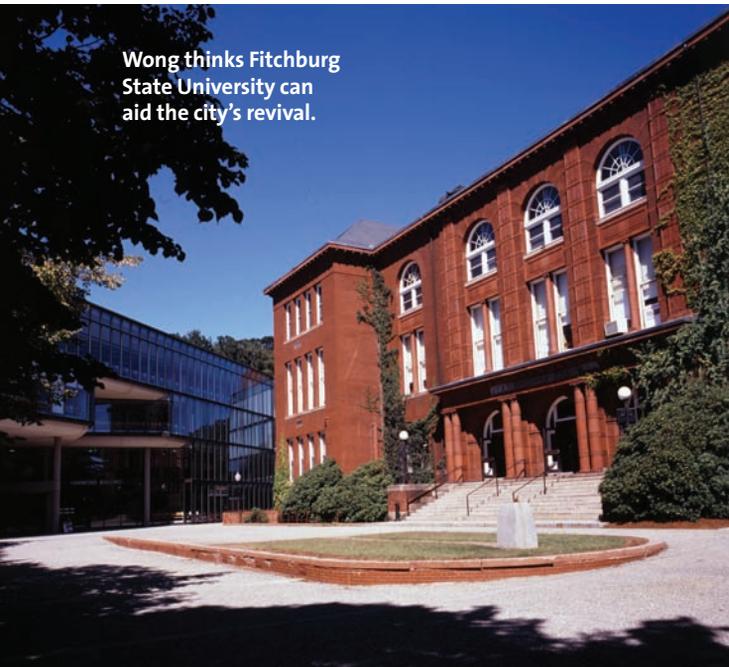
Many of the cuts were hugely unpopular, especially the street lights decision. "She's not seasoned in recognizing the relation[ships] between numbers and what the numbers mean in the lives of people," says City Councilor Rosemary Reynolds.

Fitchburg now has a little more than half of the city's

3,100 lights on, but a perception that fewer street lights equal more crime persists. Total reported crime last year actually dropped by nearly 4 percent, according to Fitchburg Police Department figures, though the incidence of more serious crimes like homicide and rape increased.

Robert Nunes, the state Revenue Department's local services director, says Wong's conservative management has stabilized the city's finances. Cash reserves are now up above \$3 million and Standard and Poor's recently upgraded the city's bond rating to A-, the second upgrade since Wong came into office.

**Wong thinks Fitchburg State University can aid the city's revival.**



Wong makes no apologies for any of her decisions, even the ones that have stirred controversy. "Not everything can have 100 percent support. Not everything can be democratic," Wong says. "If we had voted on street lights, I doubt people would have voted for that."

### **REVIVING FITCHBURG**

Befitting Wong's background, the mayor has become personally involved in attracting new businesses and keeping the ones the city has happy. In a controversial, budget-driven reorganization of city departments, Wong assumed some of the duties of the city's top economic development job, which had been eliminated. She thought it would help the city's image if a developer could work directly with the mayor, but the decision stirred a debate in town about the mayor's proper role.

"We did not hire the mayor to be economic development director," says City Councilor Reynolds. But Glenn

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Eaton, executive director of the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, welcomed the mayor's decision. "Wong can handle the role. She has the energy of four 25- or 23-year-old NFL football players [who] are full of protein all the time," he says. "Lisa Wong is the economic development strategy of Fitchburg."

ment package aimed at Gateway Cities like Fitchburg to help them build market-rate housing and provide tax credits for businesses that create or retain manufacturing, research, or development jobs. There is also money available for historic rehabilitation and brownfields cleanup.

While the city has lost 125 jobs in the last five years, Wong's goal is to create roughly 500 jobs over the next three to five years. The city is still home to niche manufacturers, including biomedical, plastics, and industrial tools companies.

A number of prospective new businesses, from both inside and outside the Bay State, including environmental, alternative energy, and transportation companies, are interested enough in Fitchburg to talk with city officials to find out more. "They like the workforce, affordability, and connections to other places like Boston, Devens, and Worcester," the mayor says.

Developing a college-town atmosphere is also high on Wong's agenda. Fitchburg State University, just minutes from City Hall, is the city's largest employer, with more than 500 workers and about 7,000 full- and part-time students. But for decades there was little interaction between the city and the school. Even today, residents talk about the school as if it were miles away.

Wong and Fitchburg State President Robert Antonucci have forged a close relationship and the mayor is hopeful the city and the university can reduce barriers between them, with students shopping downtown and residents attending events on the college campus. Wong and Antonucci are



**No apologies for making tough choices: "Not everything can have 100 percent support."**

The core of Wong's economic development strategy is to make Fitchburg more attractive to would-be residents and businesses. She wants to add jobs at existing companies and set up the infrastructure necessary to attract new ones as the economy improves. She is doing what she can in Fitchburg and also looking to the state and federal governments for help.

One of the larger planned developments is the city's first industrial park in over a decade. The project, located near the airport and currently in the design/engineering phase, recently secured a \$1.3 million state grant. The Legislature also recently passed an economic develop-

## Despite plenty of speculation that she might move on, Wong says she is 95 percent sure she'll run again next year.

looking at converting five vacant mill buildings into privately-managed student housing.

The school's expansion has raised some gentrification concerns, particularly in the Latino community. "There is tension between those who want to see a focus on arts, etc. and the neighborhoods," says Dolores Thibault-Muñoz, executive director of the Cleghorn Neighborhood Center.

“I don’t think the most vulnerable populations are very far from [the mayor’s] mind, which helps me to reconcile that. But I am watching closely.”

Wong sees no problem. There’s plenty of room for improvements in a neighborhood “without making that neighborhood out of reach,” she says.

#### NEXT ON THE AGENDA

Lisa Wong works hard for her money, and she doesn’t earn much. Her annual \$60,000 salary makes her the lowest paid full-time mayor in the Bay State. She easily won reelection in 2009 against two opponents and is giving serious thought to running again in 2011, despite what she says are “lucrative job offers and opportunities around the globe.

Dave Svens, who retired as Fitchburg Access Television’s community access coordinator, is surprised that she might consider another run for mayor in 2011. With all that Fitchburg is up against, he believes that “she is just beating her head against the wall.”

City Councilor Marcus DiNatale, son of the local state representative, has emerged as the mayor’s principal gadfly. The mayor and DiNatale frequently wrangle over

the budget, about what to cut and how deep to cut. He complained more than once at the council’s finance committee meetings this summer that her nearly \$95 million fiscal 2011 budget was “riddled with mistakes and inaccuracies.”

Jody Joseph, another city councilor, says DiNatale and Wong seem to naturally clash. “Both are talking the same financially sound practices, but it would be like two lawyers in the same room who argue the same case in different ways and who are both right [but] can’t see that they are both right,” Joseph says. “If those two could work together, it would be a powerful thing for the city.”

Speculation swirls around town about whether Wong’s political plans include Fitchburg or some other higher statewide or federal office. Although Wong initially says that she isn’t yet thinking about a 2011 reelection campaign, two weeks later she confesses that “she loves this job too much” and that she’s “95 percent” sure that she will run again. But she also thinks about starting a business “or doing something else.”

“People fear that I’m going to leave the city,” says Wong. “I feel like carrying around my mortgage papers that show I’m committed to the city for another 25 years, according to my mortgage.” **CW**

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# Advice to the Governor

With the 2010 governor's race coming down the homestretch, we asked leading thinkers to help chart a course for the winner to deal with the economy, health care, and education.

ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES STEINBERG

## Think smart

The best economic development strategy is to cultivate smart people and get out of their way

BY EDWARD GLAESER

**DURING A PAINFUL** recession, gubernatorial candidates make too many promises about fixing our near-term problems and too few commitments about the investments needed for enduring economic prosperity. In truth, the governor of Massachusetts can do little to impact next year's state unemployment rate, which is determined by great economic whirlwinds, but can do much to position

the Commonwealth for longer-term success. Likewise, the governor lacks the market-beating insight needed to wisely subsidize particular firms and industries, but has the power to make the state more attractive to the entrepreneurs who generate economic growth. The best economic development strategy for the long term, therefore, is to cultivate smart people and get out of their way, and the next governor should maintain that mantra with laser-like focus.

One of the many lessons taught by the Great Recession that started in 2006 is that education continues to be the linchpin of local economic success. The share of adults with college degrees can explain most of the variation in unemployment rates across Massachusetts' mainland counties today, and why Boston has a significantly lower unemployment rate than the nation as a whole (see graph). Massachusetts's greatest economic asset is its human capital, exemplified by the nation-leading 37.9 percent of its

adults with college degrees and the 16 percent with advanced degrees.

Massachusetts has done well by investing in education ever since 1636 when the Great and General Court voted to spend 400 pounds to found a college, and the next governor must renew this commitment with a willingness to spend and, even more importantly, a willingness to innovate. For centuries, skilled inhabitants have enabled the Commonwealth to survive despite a dearth of easily exportable natural resources. Globalization and technological change have only increased the returns to being smart, and humans get smart by being around other smart people in creative clusters like Greater Boston. Boston was able to reinvent itself after many decades of industrial decline because the same density that once helped put hogsheds onto clipper ships sped the flow of ideas across the area's many smart entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurship is inherently unpredictable, which makes the job of picking winners difficult at any time—the track record of attempts to use public money to support key firms or industries is pretty poor. Technology today is changing particularly rapidly, which makes it even more difficult for public servants to play venture capitalist. I disagreed with Gov. Deval Patrick's life sciences initia-

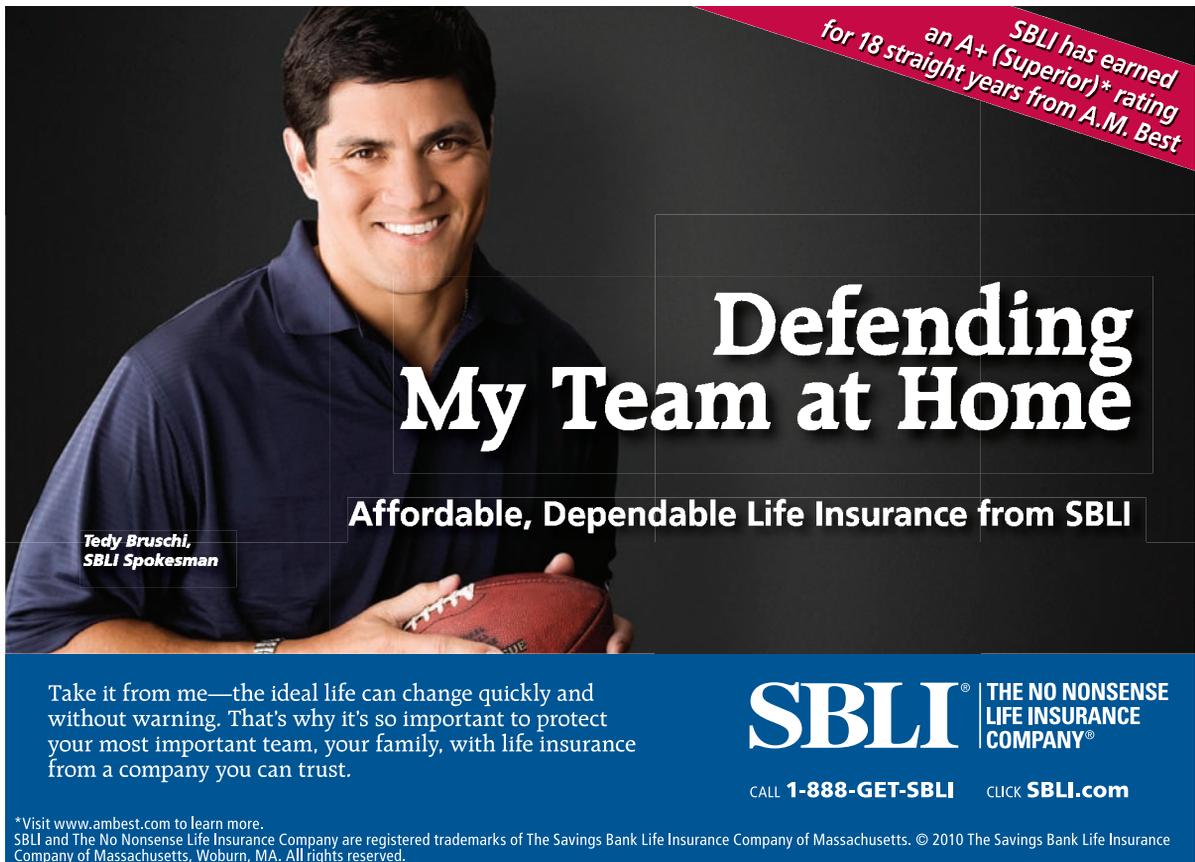


fail to stoke the fires of entrepreneurship. There is nothing wrong with funding basic science, and Woods Hole is a first-rate facility deserving of support, but that doesn't make it a reasonable target for economic development funding.

Now green technology seems to have replaced biotech as the fashionable industry to subsidize, but that doesn't mean that state-supported green tech is likely to be a success, either. I'm sure that there will be terrific environmentally-helpful breakthroughs that will generate jobs and make people rich, but those breakthroughs are far more likely to come from a world of far-flung private innovators than any state-led effort.

One of the problems with large-scale public industrial initiatives is that the public sector is inherently better at

tive when it was announced in 2007, and nothing has caused me to change my mind. The \$10 million given to Woods Hole Marine Biology Laboratory to help renovate a lab building may pay off, but the research on the aquatic *Xenopus* frog being done in that space could just as easily



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evaluating and interacting with large, already successful entities, such as Woods Hole and Genzyme, than with small start-ups. Yet local employment growth was three times as fast between 1977 and 2007 in counties with small average firm sizes than in counties with large average firm sizes. The state should worry about the fact that Suffolk County has the largest average firm size of any county with more than 100,000 people in the US. Whoever sits in the governor's office next year should make it clear that the government can't do everything well, and that he is pulling back from public attempts to subsidize particular firms or industries.

Public grants or loan guarantees don't create a culture of entrepreneurship, but the governor can help make the environment more small-firm friendly. The lowest hanging fruit may be to substantially reduce the enforcement of non-compete clauses. Non-compete clauses make it difficult for employees to leave one firm and start another one. In principle, they can serve a useful role by enabling entrepreneurs to trust their employees, but as long as some states, like California, don't regularly enforce non-compete clauses, then Massachusetts's enforcement manages mainly to push start-ups to another state. The state Legislature came close to non-compete clause reform over the summer, and the governor should prod them to get this done when they reconvene in January.

More importantly, but more intractably, Massachusetts routinely ranks among the least business friendly states, in part, because of its tough regulatory environment. For example, a poll of CEOs by *Chief Executive* magazine gave the Commonwealth a D- for taxation and regulation. The Code of Massachusetts Regulations is amazingly long. The chapter on "The manufacture, collection, and bottling of water and carbonated non-alcoholic beverages" alone runs for 27 pages. Whoever wins the race for governor should charge a blue ribbon panel with going through those rules and finding those that are well past their prime.

In many cases, the problem is often not the severity of the regulatory process, but its unpredictability and opaqueness. The state should embrace the principle of one stop, speedy permitting and prod localities to simplify their processes. The governor should propose that some portion of state aid be tied to better, faster business permitting.

Massachusetts has managed to survive economically, despite being widely seen as hostile to business, because of our people. Yet our human capital advantage is far from guaranteed. Research by Federal Reserve Bank of Boston economist Alicia Sasser reminds us that 29.5 percent of New England's college graduates leave the region immediately after graduation, more than any other region in the country. In contrast, only 20.1 percent of college graduates leave mid-Atlantic states and only 12.5 percent of graduates on the West Coast leave after graduation. While

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New England's high figure is due in part to the fact that New England's colleges and universities attract an unusually high share of students from outside the region, the state retains only 22.7 percent of those outsiders after they graduate, which is a far lower number than in the middle or south Atlantic states or on the west coast. Massachusetts must focus on public policies that will keep our educational edge. The governor might propose expanding the state's Adams Scholarship program along the lines of Georgia's Hope Scholarship initiative, by waiving not only in-state tuition charges at state colleges and universities, but also all mandatory fees, for any high-performing, in-state high school graduate.

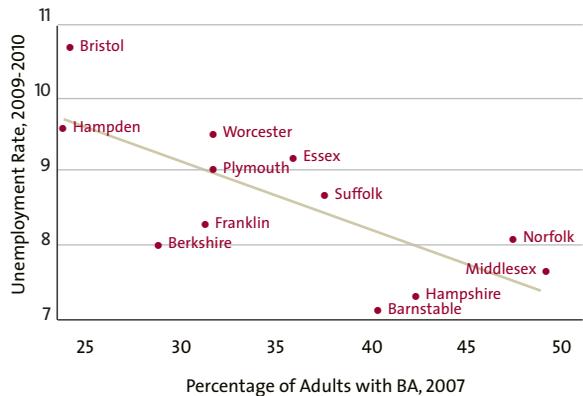
Our schools are the most important element in educating our state, because they both create skilled students and attract skilled parents. Our public schools need to display the same degree of innovation and initiative that we see in most entrepreneurial industries. At the same time, they must do a better job of educating disadvantaged, often inner city, children who don't have access to superb suburban schools.

The charter school movement has produced some remarkable successes, and charters offer the hope of bringing more competition into urban districts and better schools to the less fortunate. Gov. Patrick initially favored strong limits on new charter schools, but with the education reform law he signed earlier this year, which raises the cap on charters, he has become far more charter-friendly and deserves much credit for that shift. Further support for charter schools from the state's governor is needed to continue our urban school reform efforts.

At the national level, the Race to the Top program has had a galvanizing impact on many school districts, even with a modest amount of money. The state is responsible for a large share of public school funding, but it does relatively little to push for innovation and accountability. The governor should propose that state aid be more closely tied to good school practices. Good teachers are the most important ingredient in academic success, which means that we need to do more to reward the good ones, provide professional development support to those in the mid-range, and ensure that weak teachers are prodded into other occupations.

Building human capital isn't just about schools. It is also about providing a good quality of life that will attract skilled workers and entrepreneurs from other regions. Massachusetts's most conspicuous failure in this area is its inability to provide high-quality, low-cost housing. According to the Case-Shiller repeat sales price index, Greater Boston housing prices have only dropped by 14 percent since the boom's height, and the most recent National Association Realtors' data shows that Greater Boston is the most expensive metropolitan area outside of California

**EDUCATION'S IMPACT ON UNEMPLOYMENT**



and the metropolitan areas surrounding New York City. Those high prices reflect the continuing economic vitality of the region, but they also reflect a failure to build new homes. Massachusetts has only permitted 173,000 new homes between 2000 and 2006 (only 6.6 percent of its housing stock), less than Florida did in 2006 alone. With so little building, it is no wonder that the state's population grew by only 3.9 percent between 2000 and 2009, less than half the national average.

Massachusetts's low levels of new construction, and resulting high prices, reflect public policies made at the local level. We have a dizzying array of local regulations that make it enormously difficult for any large-scale construction to take place. While NIMBYist restrictions appeal to each individual town, they cost the state by forcing firms to pay more for their workers and by preventing skilled migrants from coming to Massachusetts.

The governor should take the lead in pressing for housing market reforms that will make the state more affordable and dynamic. The state must provide a counter-weight

**The governor should take the lead on housing reform**

against local regulations and prod localities to take into account the fact that their policies hurt people outside of their border. Chapter 40B is a much needed override of local land use restrictions, and it is important to keep that law, which is being challenged in a statewide referendum in November. The gubernatorial candidates all deserve credit for opposing its repeal. But Chapters 40R and 40S, which provide financial incentives to towns that build, point the way forward. The governor should propose tying more state aid to the issuance of building permits, so that localities would be prodded to lower their regulatory barriers and permit more housing.

Job creation is not done by public fiat. It is a hard-to-

predict and harder-to-manage process that reflects the dispersed genius of interconnected entrepreneurs. For that process to work, the Commonwealth must attract those people and avoid getting in their way. That means a robust commitment by the state's governor to schooling and to eliminating the barriers to new building, and an abandonment of attempts to micro-manage entrepreneurship either through regulation or direct public funding. Like any business, the public sector needs to focus on its core competencies and those are providing a decent quality of life to people throughout the state. **CW**

*Edward Glaeser is a professor of economics at Harvard and director of the Taubman Center for State and Local Government and the Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston, both at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.*

## Tough medicine

A statewide global budget is needed to control the rising cost of health care

BY STUART ALTMAN AND ROBERT MECHANIC

**HEALTH CARE SPENDING** is back at the top of the agenda in Massachusetts, and addressing it must be a top priority of the next governor. Four years ago, the state made a historic commitment to expand insurance coverage to nearly all citizens of the Commonwealth. Last spring, the federal government made a similar commitment with passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Both state and federal governments, however, face intense pressure to limit budget growth, and are already setting tight limits on Medicare and Medicaid payments.

Over the past decade, health care providers have made up for continuing public program shortfalls by negotiating higher rates from private insurers. But if premiums continue growing rapidly, companies will shift more costs to their employees and some will drop coverage altogether, increasing the public sector's cost of covering uninsured workers. The danger of such a cycle is that the hard-fought gains in health insurance coverage the state has achieved could unravel. This danger is very real. If premiums grow as fast over the next decade as they have during the past one, the cost of family health insurance in Massachusetts would more than double from \$14,700 today to more than \$30,000 by 2019.

The impact of unrestrained spending growth goes far beyond its effect on insurance coverage. In Massachu-



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sets, health care spending has grown from 21 percent of the state budget in 2000 to 34 percent today, squeezing our ability to adequately fund vital areas such as education, infrastructure needs, and local aid. The national debt burden is higher now than at any time since the 1950s, and Medicare and Medicaid are principal drivers of future growth in federal spending and projected deficits that threaten the nation's long-term prosperity. More immediately, health spending is a main culprit behind stagnant growth in worker take-home pay. Although there is gridlock in Washington, the Commonwealth cannot afford to postpone bold action.

The first thing needed is an unambiguous signal that business as usual will not continue. We propose that this signal come through establishment of a statewide global budget that sets a limit on total health care spending. Both the state and its health care organizations need time to prepare, so we propose a three-year planning period before such a budget goes into effect. The state should not try to micromanage the health care system. We propose a structure that would give health care providers flexibility



to determine how they will manage costs and improve quality within overall spending growth limits and defined quality goals. A critical element of our proposal is changing the current method of paying for health care services to one that rewards organizations for improving quality and efficiency.

Today health care providers are predominantly paid on a fee-for-service basis. If governments impose price controls, the rational response is to increase the volume of profitable services and reduce the volume of unprofitable services—things like psychiatric care, primary care, and trauma services. This is already happening in Medicare, where a near 10-year freeze in physician fees has been accompanied by rapid growth in imaging, testing, and discretionary procedures. Across the board cuts in fee-for-service payments will reduce access and hurt quality if pursued for any sustained time period. What's more, the burden of such cuts would fall heavily on the Commonwealth's most vulnerable citizens.

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Nevertheless, we must move towards more sustainable health care spending growth rates. The question is, how and how quickly. Some believe that the state should adopt market-based solutions while others want stronger regulation. Over the past 40 years, however, market competition has driven up spending, while attempts at regulation have not been effective. Health care competition has focused on revenue generation rather than efficiency or value because of market failures: information asymmetry (consumers have very little useful information on the cost and quality of health care providers and services), insurance design (individuals are shielded from the true costs of their health care choices), and fee-for-service payments (which lack incentives for efficiency and reward good quality and poor quality equally). Given the persistence of these problems, regulation begins to look attractive. But skeptics are rightly concerned about asking an underfunded state bureaucracy to manage a highly complex enterprise that represents nearly one-fifth of the Massachusetts economy.

We believe the state should resist the temptation of short-term price regulation that does not change the fundamental incentives in fee-for-service medicine. Instead, we urge the state to encourage health care payment reforms and simultaneously promote development of provider networks capable of delivering reliable, evidence-based care within realistic budgets. Such networks have been shown to provide more appropriate patient care while maintaining or enhancing its quality. If future spending levels are constrained, approaches such as “bundled payments” for episodes of care (e.g., heart surgery) or “global payments” that cover all care for an individual over a specific time period allow health systems to reduce avoidable hospitalizations, provide care in less costly settings, and limit unnecessary testing without incurring financial losses.

While we do not support short-term price controls, we are not optimistic that most providers or insurers will make the hard choices needed to establish quickly these more efficient delivery and financing models unless they face a real threat of reduced revenues under the present system. Therefore, we recommend that the governor lead the state towards a two-step process. First, the state should immediately invest in an infrastructure that will address some of the above mentioned market failures and facilitate a transition of the delivery system to a more integrated model. Second, if the private sector does not show meaningful reductions in spending growth within three years, a state established all-payer global budget system should begin to phase in. This second phase would go into effect automatically but could be stopped by specific legislative action. To implement this strategy, we propose that the Legislature establish an independent Massachusetts health care authority.

## **THE HEALTH CARE AUTHORITY**

The new authority must be independent, insulated from politics, trusted by stakeholders, and adequately funded. We propose a model based on the Federal Reserve, with a board appointed by the governor and approved by the Legislature. Neither board members nor authority staff could be state employees, although the secretary of health and human services and secretary of administration and finance would serve on an ex-officio basis. Board members would be selected based on their knowledge of health care systems, clinical operations, actuarial science, and economics, and would be drawn from a national pool of experts. The authority would convene a separate advisory committee made up of Massachusetts providers, payers, employers, state officials, and consumer advocates. The authority would need a budget that is protected and subject to appropriation only every five years. Similar approaches are now in operation at the federal level (MedPAC) and in Maryland, the one state with an all-payer regulatory system.

### **Phase I: Analysis, Infrastructure Development, and Initial Payment Reforms**

During its first three years, the authority would be charged with developing a robust capacity for monitoring the health care system. The Legislature has already expanded the state’s authority to collect data from providers and insurers, build a statewide claims database, produce analytic reports, and hold cost trend hearings. More work is needed to transform these data into actionable information. The authority would construct formal state health expenditure accounts to provide an accurate picture of aggregate state spending, conduct detailed evaluations of quality and efficiency by provider group, clinical service, payment model, and geographic region, and publish reports showing provider group performance against key goals.

## **The authority should be insulated from politics**

Also during its first three years, the authority would encourage payment reforms by organizing pilots, evaluating programs, and providing targeted infrastructure support for medical groups. Last year, a state commission recommended that global payment—a risk-adjusted monthly payment per person covering all health care services—become “the predominant form of payment to providers in Massachusetts within five years.” Although global payment is our preferred model, full implementation of this goal is impractical because of the wide variation in the capacity of provider groups to accept risk and manage population health. The state could encourage expanded episode payment and global payment contracting by offering it as

an option to MassHealth providers and through the state employee benefit program. We prefer a more flexible “tiered” approach that includes global payment as a principal option. Finally, the authority should encourage benefit redesign that aligns employer and consumer incentives with those of the delivery system to promote cost-effective, high quality care in appropriate settings.

### **Phase II: Statewide Global Health Care Budget**

The authority’s final charge would be to develop a global budget model that would include Medicare and Medicaid as well as all private payers. A draft of the model should be completed during the three years of Phase I. The authority would begin implementing the all-payer global budget system in Phase II unless the Legislature acts to delay it. The model we propose is intended to encourage innovation in provider payment and delivery combined with rewards for quality within an overall health spending target. One option is to allow providers to participate in one of three tiers based on criteria developed by the authority. Tier 1 would be for fully integrated delivery systems or ACOs (accountable care organizations) that agree to accept risk-adjusted global payments (at rates determined with each payer group). Tier 2 would be networks

of separate health providers that agree to work together. Each network would face a predetermined budget cap. Subgroups within the networks could continue to be paid under a fee-for-service system or accept other approaches such as episode payments. These groups would share annual budget surpluses and losses with payers. Tier 3 would be a residual fee-for-service model where each provider or provider group operates independently. All Tier 3 providers collectively would be held accountable to stay within a predetermined spending cap. Excess spending would result in future fee reductions for all Tier 3 providers.

The budget cap for each tier and for specific networks in Tier 1 and Tier 2 should be based initially on the historic revenue of each group. Some have argued that the state should “equalize” private payment rates in response to the attorney general’s report showing wide variance in provider payment rates. We believe that the politics of trying to do this could easily result in gridlock. Moreover, under the proposed system, higher priced providers will face significant pressure to demonstrate value in order to maintain referrals from other groups that are trying to manage within their own budgets.

While the system will need to recognize differences in rates paid by various payer groups, it should be cognizant

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of the growing imbalance between public and private payment levels. The authority must develop a Medicare waiver so that the incentives of the federal system are consistent with those in the private sector. Finally, the state should examine its Medicaid system, both to ensure consistency in design and to prevent its payment rates from falling too far from those of the other payers. A large differential poses serious problems, particularly for providers who care for a disproportionate share of Medicaid patients.

Annual budget growth rates would be established by the authority and would be the same for each tier. A portion of the overall increase—say 2 percent—would go into a fund for quality incentive payments and infrastructure support. Tier 1 providers would receive the bulk of quality incentive payments, Tier 2 would receive modest incentive payments, and Tier 3 would get a minimum allocation. The authority would also make some infrastructure grants to help groups implement data systems and medical management programs—as they aspire to move into more advanced tiers.

One of the greatest challenges for the authority will be determining the annual budget growth rate. Health spending has been growing considerably faster than the Commonwealth's rate of economic growth. This needs to change.

But there is no “right” growth rate. If the authority sets the rate too high, health care organizations will not make tough decisions to eliminate waste and consumers will bear an expanding cost burden. If set too low, quality of care will suffer and institutions that are central to the Commonwealth's economic and community fabric will deteriorate, jobs will leave the state, and medical and life sciences talent will become difficult to recruit and retain. Controlling health care spending is no simple task, and although the state must proceed with urgency it must not do so with haste. We have tried to propose a framework for whoever assumes the gubernatorial reins that creates urgency for action, allows room for health system innovation, and builds an information infrastructure that will support evidence-based policy making. These are essential elements for success regardless of the philosophical direction of the next administration. **CW**

*Stuart Altman is a professor of national health policy at Brandeis University and was co-chairman of the Governor's Health Care Task Force for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts from 2000 to 2002. Robert Mechanic is a senior fellow at the Heller School of Social Policy & Management at Brandeis and executive director of the Health Industry Forum.*

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## Early read

Strong reading skills in early grades are crucial to closing the achievement gap and ensuring success in school and beyond for all children

BY PAUL O'BRIEN AND RICHARD WEISSBOURD

**WE OFFER ADVICE** to the next governor about education from two distinct perspectives. One of us, an academic and a founder of the literacy program ReadBoston, is alarmed by the tremendous difficulties in catching up that confront children who fall behind in reading in early elementary school. The other is a businessman concerned about the looming labor shortage in our graying state and the need to develop a skilled workforce capable of supporting one of the nation's most sophisticated economies. Yet we reach the same conclusion: Early reading skills are crucial. Children who master reading in the earliest grades are well prepared to learn in any subject. Everything else on the educational agenda—eliminating the achievement gap, reducing the dropout rate, increasing college completion, improving science and math skills—becomes considerably easier to tackle.

Indeed, substantial evidence points to third grade reading as a powerful predictor of children's later success in school and beyond. It is the vantage point from which to look back at the early experiences that lay the groundwork for future learning and forward to the skills children must acquire to become effective and productive citizens. Three-quarters of children who are not proficient readers by the end of third grade, research tells us, will continue to struggle in school, making them far less likely to finish high school, attend college, and contribute to our knowledge-based economy.

If we are serious about closing the achievement gap and preparing for tomorrow's economy, the next governor must act boldly to integrate high-quality early education into the state's broader education agenda while bolstering the primary grades.

That means recognizing that learning begins at birth and building a system of high-quality early childhood education and care. It means strengthening language and literacy instruction across the disciplines in the primary grades.

On the 2010 MCAS reading test, 63 percent of Massachusetts third graders scored proficient or above, up from 57 percent in 2009. While the improvement is encouraging, now is not the time for complacency. More than one-third of third graders (37 percent) still read below grade level. Although the problem is more pronounced in

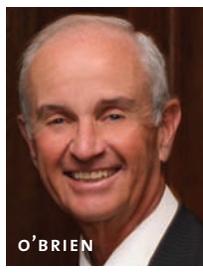
urban districts, suburban and rural communities are not immune. Almost three-fifths (57 percent) of third graders from low-income families are not proficient readers, and neither are more than a quarter of the rest of the state's elementary school students. This is an issue that lingers. Almost half of the nation's high school graduates are not prepared for college level work, and 70 percent of students enrolled in remedial reading in college never graduate. The College Board warns of a generation of young adults less likely than their parents' generation to have earned a post-secondary degree.

Research is clear that the achievement gap is evident well before children enter kindergarten. High-quality early education is one of the few educational strategies with a quantifiable positive impact on children's language and literacy development, later academic achievement and life outcomes. Nobel laureate James Heckman and other leading economists conclude investing in high-quality early education yields a 10-16 percent rate of return in increased productivity and reduced social costs.

"Our strategy to close the achievement gap must be front-end loaded," Medford School Superintendent Roy Belson wrote earlier this year in the *MetroWest Daily News*. "Our best opportunities lie with a solid investment by the state in well-coordinated early learning programs—pre-kindergarten to third grade—that address the needs of the whole child."

In both the recently enacted state education reform law and the state's successful Race to the Top application, the Commonwealth has taken important first steps by including early education in such areas as data collection, turnaround schools, and the regional Readiness Centers. Whoever takes office as governor in January can solidify our standing as a national leader by filling in this infrastructure to create a system that addresses children's educational needs from birth. To do this, we must engage children where they are—at home, in private and public early education settings, and in schools. We must meet the needs of the growing population of English language learners as well as children whose first language is English.

Montgomery County, Maryland, a racially and economically diverse district, offers compelling lessons. Over the past decade, Montgomery County has invested in high-quality pre-kindergarten, strengthened the primary grades, and aligned both with the rest of the system. Almost 90



percent of kindergartners now start first grade well-prepared in early literacy, and almost 88 percent of third graders are proficient readers, the Pew Center on the States reports. The county's achievement gap in third and fifth grade reading has been narrowed by more than half.

We offer the following guideposts not as a substitute for continuing to strengthen the K-12 system overall but as a solid foundation for children upon which to add the more complex demands of later grades. Too often we take a spray and pray approach to literacy, sprinkling widely interventions that sound promising. Instead, we must evaluate programs for effectiveness and depth rather than number of children and families served—and only then bring proven strategies to scale.

### **Family engagement**

Children's later literacy is built on the language skills they develop from birth. The governor should use the office as a bully pulpit to promote the practices—including reading aloud and ongoing rich, playful conversation—that create language-rich home environments. He should ensure that federal home visiting funds are used, as required, to foster language development as well as physical health and the prevention of abuse and neglect. He should promote

policies for parental engagement in schools, including creating the expectation that parents will read to their children at least several times a week and providing support to help them do so.

### **High-quality early education and care**

Infants and toddlers, whether in family child care or center-based programs, need the language-rich settings that research links to improved academic achievement. All children must have access to voluntary high-quality pre-kindergarten. In 2006, Massachusetts launched a universal pre-kindergarten grant program, designed to help programs achieve and maintain quality. It has reached 6,400 children in 105 communities across the Commonwealth. The next governor should significantly expand high-quality pre-kindergarten.

### **Full-day kindergarten**

The governor should also expand children's access to high-quality, full-day kindergarten. Here again the research is clear. Children in full-day programs experience greater gains in early literacy, math, and science than children in half-day programs. In addition, children's vocabulary in kindergarten correlates strongly with their 10th grade

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reading scores.

Policy makers and practitioners must also recognize that 5- and 6-year-olds learn differently than older students. "There still needs to be thoughtful play time. There still needs to be a language-rich environment," says Jill Flanders of the Plains Elementary School in South Hadley, who was the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals' Association 2010 outstanding principal of the year. "It does not mean sitting at desks working on worksheets in a test prep type of program."

### Improved early educator and teacher quality

Research consistently demonstrates that the quality of teaching, whether in early learning settings or schools, is a critical determinant of children's achievement.

We must treat early educators, both in family child care settings and center-based programs, as professionals, with professional training and professional wages. Research finds that young children taught by early educators with bachelor's degrees and training in early childhood have better language and math skills and stronger peer relationships. Yet only 30 percent of early educators in center-based programs and 18 percent of

family child care providers in Massachusetts have bachelor's degrees, and the field suffers from low pay and high turnover. The state should maintain and expand scholarships and other supports for early educators returning to school. It should find ways to increase compensation for early educators as they earn associate degrees and bachelor's degrees. It should build a professional development system that stresses language-rich environments for young children and career pathways for early educators.

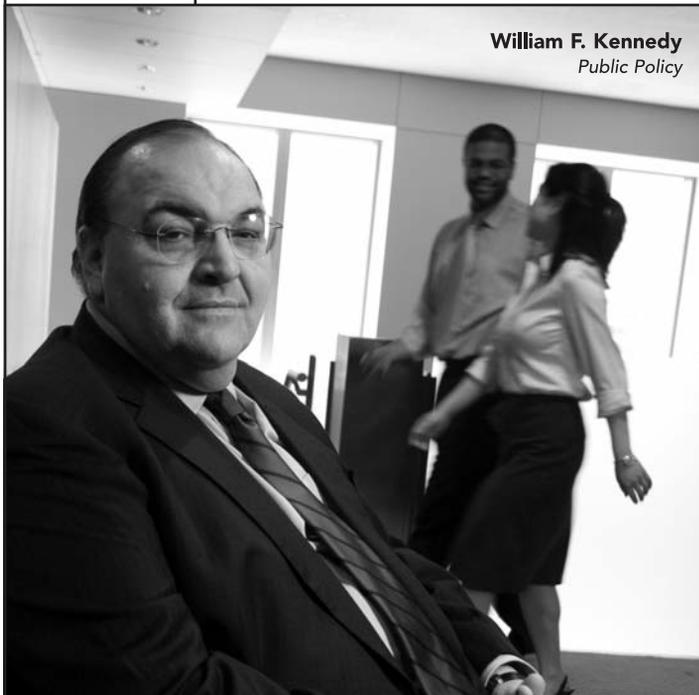
Research shows that children with strong primary grade teachers three years in a row make great progress in overcoming early deficits. Professional development for teachers should focus on language development and literacy. It should be ongoing, guided by data and linked to practice. Likewise, teacher preparation programs and certification

## We must treat early educators as professionals

requirements for teachers, pre-K-3, must include coursework in language and literacy development and reading instruction as well as early childhood. Instructional leadership is critical, yet many principals lack the skills or



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training to guide their faculty in implementing best practices for developing young readers.

The Cambridge-based CAYL Institute works with elementary school principals to strengthen their understanding of early learning. Early education's "lens of developmentally appropriate practice" is a powerful school improvement tool, says CAYL President Valora Washington. "It helps the youngest learners, but it's also a vehicle through which we can provide a framework for an entire elementary school."

### Pre-kindergarten to third grade alignment

The state's public schools and private providers of early education and care should collaborate to align curriculum, professional development and assessments as well as to ease children's transition from one setting to the next. The state's anticipated inclusion of pre-kindergarten standards in the Common Core Standards and the recent signing of a model memorandum of understanding between the Springfield Public Schools and the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care are important steps in this direction.

The state should offer guidance on curriculum both to ensure that curricula are language-rich, rigorous and engaging and to streamline the number in use.

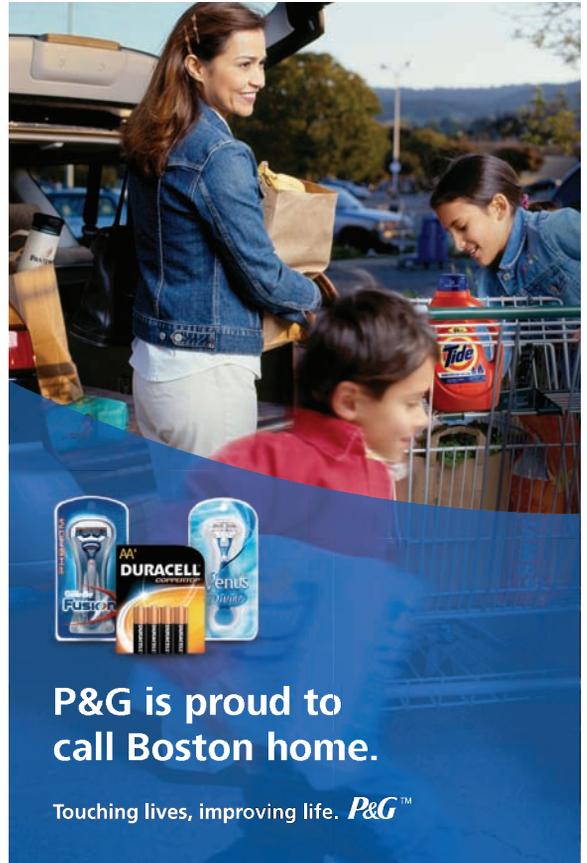
The third grade MCAS is currently the first statewide measure of children's progress. The Commonwealth should devise a standardized and developmentally appropriate method for tracking children's earlier learning to inform and improve practice, better analyze overall progress, and direct resources. We should not let fear of testing trump the need to sensitively and carefully adopt assessment tools suitable for young children.

"When assessment systems result in high-stress experiences for our children or purposeless additions to professionals' plates we can all be concerned," Harvard-based literacy expert Nonie Lesaux wrote in the 2010 report *Turning the Page: Refocusing Massachusetts for Reading Success*. "However, by neglecting to regularly evaluate our young children's language and early reading skills, we have done more harm than good."

Massachusetts must give all children the strong start they deserve and, in the process, reduce the need for remediation that is costly to taxpayers, emotionally taxing for children and families, and difficult for schools. The governor should recognize this as the unfinished business of education reform and the essential first step in building the workforce of the future. **CW**

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*Paul O'Brien and Richard Weissbourd serve on the board of Strategies for Children. O'Brien, the former CEO of New England Telephone Company, is president of The O'Brien Group. Weissbourd is a lecturer in education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a founder of ReadBoston and WriteBoston.*



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# Big Citizen

Alan Khazei hoped to become the state's next US senator, but he says "citizen" is the highest office in the land. In a new book, the co-founder of City Year says a robust national service movement can repair broken communities, tap our "justice nerve," and help reinvigorate American civic life.

Alan Khazei stepped into the spotlight last fall when he ran in the special election race to fill Ted Kennedy's seat in the US Senate. But the high-profile race was hardly his initial foray into public service. In fact, it represented more of a capstone to the more than 20 years Khazei has devoted to building a movement that calls on all Americans to think about how they can give back to their communities and country.

In 1987, together with his former Harvard roommate, Michael Brown, Khazei founded City Year. The Boston-based nonprofit has grown to 22 cities, with more than 12,000 young people, aged 17 to 24, having taken part in its one-year program of community service work. City Year "corps members" are a familiar sight in Boston, sometimes gathering in their trademark red jackets on City Hall Plaza or other prominent locations for morning calisthenics to start

PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRANK CURRAN



the day before heading off to work at community centers, schools, or other programs.

City Year has been at the forefront of a wave of service-oriented programs that have sprouted nationally over the last several decades. Though it's a decidedly different phenomenon than the insurgent movements of the 1960s, the service movement has, in many ways, become the face of activism on college campuses and among people in their 20s.

"Give a year. Change the world." That is the City Year motto, but that change doesn't necessarily happen in a straight line. Organizations such as City Year, which enjoy bipartisan political backing and support from corporate sponsors, have consciously avoided the partisan political fray.

City Year may not push for change in the way Khazei heroes like Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy did. But the 49-year-old New Hampshire native says the service movement is a powerful force cultivating young people to become engaged citizens. The service work done by those who sign-up with City Year, Teach for America, and other groups, he says, helps ignite their "justice nerve" and inspires them to join political battles to reform urban education or make the other kinds of change needed to address issues their work has focused on.

City Year served as the model for the federal AmeriCorps program, started in 1994, which now funds hundreds of service-oriented nonprofits across the country

—and accounts for about a quarter of City Year's budget.

Khazei has had a long interest in politics—he cut his teeth as a volunteer on Gary Hart's 1984 presidential campaign. But he says his real awakening on the need to get more directly involved in politics and public policy came in 2003, when a budget move by some House Republicans threatened to slash AmeriCorps funding by 80 percent. He credits a grassroots mobilization of activists—together with a bipartisan coalition of Congressional allies, including Ted Kennedy and John McCain—with beating back the threatened cuts.

In 2007, he left City Year to found a new nonprofit, Be The Change, which aims to promote citizen service and build bipartisan coalitions to advocate for policy changes in education, workforce training, and other areas. Two years later, he jumped into the political mix as a candidate in the race for Senate.

Though he finished third in the four-way Democratic primary, Khazei's campaign sparked enthusiasm—and support—across the state and country. He was endorsed by the *Boston Globe*, the Worcester *Telegram & Gazette*, and the *Cape Cod Times*, and drew backing from a bipartisan roster of national heavy hitters, including New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and retired General Wesley Clark.

Khazei resists political labels, but his embrace of the Democratic Party values of opportunity for all combined with a yen for entrepreneurial thinking and openness to

market-based solutions to problems put him in the tradition of “New Democrats” who have insisted on fresh approaches that reject the traditional ideologies that have dominated both major parties.

Khazei says everything from grassroots community service work to involvement in political campaigns makes up what he refers to as “big citizenship.” He has pieced these various strands together in a book, *Big Citizenship: How Pragmatic Idealism Can Bring Out The Best in America*, published in August. What it sometimes lacks in literary polish, the book makes up for with inspiring personal stories leavened with the history and political philosophy that underpins the service movement. It is an engaging window into how Khazei believes “big citizenship” can help us reach that “more perfect union” the country’s founders envisioned.

Khazei doesn’t put his thinking about social innovation

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on hold when he gets home. His wife, Vanessa Kirsch, is founder of New Profit, a “venture philanthropy” nonprofit that funds organizations with promising solutions to social problems. I sat down with Khazei at his home in Brookline, where he lives with Kirsch and their two children. (Even his 2-year-old son, Reece, seems drawn to these issues, climbing into Khazei’s lap at one point to join the discussion.) What follows is an edited transcript of our conversation.

—MICHAEL JONAS

**COMMONWEALTH:** Talk a little about this concept of “big citizenship.” What is it and why are we so in need of a movement to revive it?

**KHAZEI:** For me, big citizenship is simply a person or people’s willingness to contribute to a cause larger than their own self-interest, to give some of their time, their talent, their resources to try to make a difference in the world. I harken back to President Harry Truman. When he was leaving the White House, a reporter called out to him, “Mr. President, what are you going to do now that you’re leaving the highest office in the land?” And Truman, who was a very modest person who never thought he’d actually be president, shot back right away, “I’m not leaving the highest office. I’m assuming the highest office—that of citizen.”

Part of the reason I wrote the book is to try and send this message, just as a citizen living in America, we all hold an office, and I’m trying to encourage people to think of it that way and to think about, well, as an office-holder, what do you do? Hopefully, you engage in politics and government and the political process. Secondly, it’s about giving back and doing community service work. Being a big citizen means that you share your gift, your talents, whether it’s helping to build homes with Habitat for Humanity or volunteering to tutor kids in schools or working on the environment. Third, being a big citizen means joining with others in movements for change. Pick a cause, an issue, something that you really care about, and join together with other citizens.

**CW:** You cite the long history of citizen-led efforts in this country driving big change at times of crisis and major challenge.

**KHAZEI:** The history of this country is that we’ve made great breakthroughs when we’ve had a combination of citizen movements combined with visionary political leadership. And it’s often the citizens in movements that make the visionary leadership possible. You think of the very founding of the country with the citizen soldiers. Without the willingness of those journeyman farmers to put down their pitchforks and pick up their muskets, there is no American Revolution. The abolitionists helped to make the Emancipation Proclamation possible. Without the suffragist movement, we wouldn’t have had the 19th Amendment. We’re still revering the Greatest Generation because of the collective effort to survive the Depression and then fight Hitler and the Nazis. So, for me, at the micro level, that’s what big citizenship means, and I think we’re at a similar time.

**CW:** But what is the big challenge today? It’s not nearly as clear-cut as the Nazis in Europe or the Great Depression or the issue of slavery in the Civil War.

**KHAZEI:** I think that’s been part of the challenge ever since the end of the Cold War. What’s our mission as a country? During the Cold War, it was pretty straightforward. The battle was between freedom and democracy and free market capitalism versus Communism and dictatorship. Ever since then we’ve sort of been searching for a mission, and the world has become more complicated and we don’t have that one great challenge. As we enter the 21st century, we’ve got multiple challenges. The economy is obviously number one. We’ve got millions of people unemployed, and it’s affecting people of every strata. Climate change is a crisis that’s literally affecting everyone, and we’re in danger of losing the planet as we know it. Extreme poverty is

## CONVERSATION

an extreme challenge, poverty both in America, which, sadly, is on the rise, and globally—the fact that a billion people, our fellow global citizens, live on less than \$1 a day. And we've got the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Iraq war, thankfully, is winding down. And then the education system. We rank almost last among developing countries in terms of how our students are performing on tests once they get through high school. So there are multiple challenges, and we need more citizen engagement on all of these. That's why I say pick the cause you care most about and try to dedicate some of your time and your energy to it.

**CW:** You cite the history of these citizen-led efforts going back to the taking up of muskets here as part of the tradition City Year and other service-oriented organizations draw from. But these were all decidedly more political battles. People were in the streets. There was a clash of interest groups. The whole service phenomenon seems very apolitical. It has very explicitly tried to draw people from across the political spectrum toward these common goals, focused on what you could do as an individual or community to fix this playground, tutor these kids. How do you claim it as part of that tradition when it has seemed to want to hold at arm's length this idea of jumping into the political fray?

**KHAZEI:** It's a very good point, and I guess I'd say a couple of things in response to that. First, what the service movement shares with these other movements is the idea that it's up to individual citizens to choose to get involved to try to make a difference, and empowering individuals. And it's not necessarily the name-brand people or the famous leaders. All these movements started with individual citizens. The leaders then emerged. You think of Rosa Parks launching the Montgomery bus boycott, which gave Martin Luther King the opportunity at

**National service is an entry point to big citizenship, which also means engaging in democracy and politics.**

age 26 to then become a great leader. But it started with Rosa Parks, who was a regular citizen, who had been to some civil rights trainings.

I think you're right about the political piece. I think people involved in the service movement, including myself



when I was helping to lead City Year, are vehemently non-partisan, partially because this is an idea that we wanted to be embraced by all sides, and that's one of the successes of the service movement. Also, because of government funding, we've had to be careful about not being political on one side or the other. But what I always have hoped is that national service is sort of the entry point to what I like to call big citizenship. For me, big citizenship is not just doing service; it's also engaging in democracy and politics and voting and engaging in movements.

My own evolution involves going from the service movement to advocacy to then politics itself. My second organization is called Be The Change, inspired by Gandhi, who taught that there are three keys to building a strong, robust democratic society: the ballot, the spinning wheel, and the jail. The ballot is your political rights, and people's willingness to exercise their political rights. The spinning wheel is service, and Gandhi actually said it often started there, because it's through that direct work, teaching people to read, building housing for the homeless, or joining

with others in economic empowerment projects, that you get what I like to call your “justice nerve” turned on, where you get educated about what’s really going on and then think about making change by exercising your political rights. Finally, jail for Gandhi had to do with civil disobedience, because people who believed something was so wrong would give up the greatest gift you have in a democracy, your freedom. I think what’s happening with the service movement is it is that entry point where people get their justice nerve turned on.

Our alumni vote at rates much higher than their peers, so it’s translating. They give to political and other causes at four times the rate of their peers, in terms of donating money. They volunteer their time after City Year at much higher rates. They become leaders at much higher rates.

**CW:** So you see national service as sort of a springboard to fuller participation in politics, rather than the solution in and of itself to our big challenges.

**KHAZEI:** That’s right. I think national service is necessary but not sufficient. I do think it’s foundational. I do think if you did have a million people per year doing national service and, say, 250,000 of them were working in urban

and rural low-income public schools, you would then build a constituency for education reform. You can talk to any City Year alumni or Teach for America alumni or Citizen Schools alumni, and they will tell you, “We need change in public education,” and they can give you five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10 ideas of what to do, and they’re not the same ideas you’re hearing from the political parties. They are more creative. They are more integrated. They are more reform-oriented.

Part of the reason I decided to run for office is there has been within some areas of the service movement a feeling of, well, politics is dirty, and government is dirty, and you can’t get anything done. Let me just go build a house with Habitat [for Humanity] or tutor a kid to read through City Year, or serve with Citizen Schools as an apprentice. I want to send the message, if you believe in this stuff, if you believe in educating kids or building houses for the homeless or taking care of the hungry through food banks, ultimately it’s through public policy that we make the big decisions. Even if we had City Year in every single school in this country, which I’d love to see, and Teach for America teachers, we’re ultimately not going to solve the problem of public education unless we have public policy that goes beyond that.

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**CW:** Can you talk a little about your own political outlook? You talk about trying to forge a new kind of political philosophy. You write about this in your book, and during your campaign you talked about this idea that the models



that people have clung to are outmoded, whether it's the New Deal-FDR view of big government having the answer to every problem, or the Reagan era lack of faith in government being the solution to anything. Although that suggests an approach that eschews those decidedly partisan views, what emerges is a political philosophy of its own. There's a lot in the service movement that seems to connect with thinking in the Democratic Leadership Council and other centrist strains of thought. It seems to be an effort to embrace some of the values of the Democratic party of opportunity for all, but with approaches to dealing with issues that bring in a lot of the entrepreneurial energy and models of competition and choice of the business world.

**KHAZEI:** I am trying to articulate a new public philosophy. My public philosophy comes from a combination of my hands-on practical experience of 25 years in the service and social entrepreneurship movement combined with studying

democratic theory and political philosophy and government efforts, both throughout history and, particularly, in the time that I've actually been in the workforce. We have jumped back and forth between this debate between FDR and Reagan for the past 30 years, and I think we need to shift onto a different territory, stop talking about government and talk about how do we address our problems and our challenges. It is entrepreneurs and innovators that throughout our history drive change—not the government.

**CW:** But that's not always been a view that dominated policy-making, right?

**KHAZEI:** That's right. It hasn't been, and it's sort of a counterintuitive view, especially for Democrats. But I'm a social entrepreneur. I helped to create an organization from scratch that's now an international institution with over a \$65 million budget. If you study our history, social entrepreneurs invented the first public school, the first public library, the first volunteer fire department, [the first] settlement houses. So in our social history, this idea of social entrepreneurship goes right back to the beginning, and it's similar in the private sector. It is the private sector entrepreneurs that create the jobs that drive the economy and often create the breakthroughs.

**CW:** So, is it fair to place you as a New Democrat?

**KHAZEI:** In some ways, but I don't like labels. I do think we need a fundamentally different approach to how we address problems and seize opportunities in the 21st century. But this isn't just theory for me. It's grounded in my own life experience. I've seen it work over and over and over, both through my own work and then through the network that I've been in. It's definitely going some oxen, it's definitely fighting the existing system. There are a lot

**We have jumped back and forth between the FDR view and Reagan's. We need a new approach to solving problems.**

of people in my party who don't agree with this, who have a more traditional liberal, special interest group view of things, and believe as long as you line up all the interest groups, you're going to get your right answer, and it's also the way to win an election. I don't think that works anymore. I think there's a lot of common sense among people, and they understand that the solutions of the past don't

apply today. But entrenched interests are hard to move.

**CW:** Is part of what's missing in our politics today a kind of vigorous center? You are drawing from some elements that have traditionally defined the left and the right, whether it's this belief in market-based approaches to some problems, or whether it's this belief in—

**KHAZEI:** Justice.

**CW:** Yet we keep hearing about how polarized things are now.

**KHAZEI:** Again, I don't like the labels. When you say centrist, sometimes people think, "well, you're just a mushy compromiser," and that's not me. I prefer innovative thinking. We need new thinking, and one of the ways we built City Year is we took the best of all the sectors. I think part of City Year's success has been we took from the military the idea of uniforms and calisthenics and a culture of discipline and pride. We took from the business world an entrepreneurial approach and a focus on the bottom line getting results. We took from the government a sense of everybody participating, equality of opportunity. I'm not an ideologue. In everything I've done, I've said, "well, what works?" And what can you take the best from? And if it's a market idea or if it's a justice idea, it's often integrating those you think will get you the best answer.

To push for Race to the Top [the federal competition that awarded funds to states committing to a set of school reform measures] and charter schools and education reform, that's not compromise. That says, here's a new way to do it, and it's getting results, and you've got to be open to breaking with the past. It's also about justice. Every single child born in this country should have a really robust, powerfully strong public school education.

**CW:** When we look today at where we see the most grassroots activism, people would probably point to the Tea Party movement. Are those big citizens?

**KHAZEI:** I think they are. Look, I don't subscribe to what's been articulated as a Tea Party philosophy. My issue with the Tea Party is it seems more about tearing down than building up. But the Tea Party is mostly citizens who are exercising their political and democratic rights, and they're having an unbelievable effect. I'm more of a progressive. But if we could get that same kind of energy going in another direction, I even think we could bring over some of the Tea Party people. I know there is a frustration with government.

**CW:** What did you learn from your own run for office

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about what is broken with the political system?

**KHAZEI:** I learned a lot about that. I think money does dominate politics too much. You can talk to anybody who's in politics and they'll tell you the one thing they don't like is the time on the phone begging people for money. Part of the reason the PACs and the lobbyists have so much power is they make it easy so you don't have to do that, they come with big bundles of money.

We need campaign finance reform. I would have matching funds for contributions of \$200 or less for all political races. The Internet provides an opportunity here that didn't exist. Look at all the money Barack Obama raised running for president with the Internet, or even before him, John McCain and Howard Dean. Before the age of the Internet, it was much harder to raise a lot of money in \$25 or \$50 chunks. I would also provide free TV time. One of the things I learned is it's the TV time that's so expensive. The consultants will tell you unless you're spending \$500,000 a week on television, you're not credible. That's an enormous amount of money. So I'd provide either free TV time or drastically reduced TV time. Now TV stations won't be happy with that, but it's the public airwaves. We own them. We license them.

**CW:** Is there something broken about what's happened with the political parties? People talk increasingly about how primaries now drive things to the fringe, and that seems to be a dynamic that works against some of the ideas you talk about. There's a lot of pressure for people to fall into line and to fall into line at the extreme of the parties. I'm struck by, for example, John McCain who, I think, has probably most popularized this notion you use a lot in the book of being about "a cause greater than yourself"—and he certainly has been that through his military service and otherwise. This year he found himself in a tough primary race, with a challenger from the hard right, and he veered sharply right and cast off a lot of the views he'd had about trying to strike a compromise on immigration, in particular. Was that disappointing? When you see a guy like McCain do that, doesn't it make you think, how could there possibly be hope of getting away from that kind of polarization?

**KHAZEI:** The primaries tend to be dominated by the activists, who tend to come from the more extreme wings of the parties. It's part of the reason the Tea Party was able to defeat [in the Republican primary] Senator [Robert] Bennett in Utah, who is a strong conservative. Part of my message to people about being a big citizen is engaging in politics, and the truth is, if you don't engage in the primary, you don't have as robust a choice when you get to the general election. But right now, very few people engage in

the primary process. In the election I ran in, I think it was 16 percent or 17 percent turnout for the primary.

**CW:** Was that disappointing to you to see how McCain tacked so sharply to the right that way?

**KHAZEI:** I admire John McCain. I've worked closely with him on service. I did not follow all the details of that race. I hope that if he is reelected that he exercises the kind of leadership he's exercised in the past where he has been bipartisan and has been able to work across the aisle. He did that with Senator Kennedy on immigration reform and on the Patients' Bill of Rights. He certainly did it on national service. He was a key leader. When the AmeriCorps program was wiped out, McCain was one of the leading Republicans who actually helped us to save it.

**CW:** You write that running for Senate was an exhilarating experience for you, in spite of the outcome. A lot of people have said it's something you'll look at again in two years when Scott Brown is up for reelection. What are the chances of that?

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to run for office.**

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**KHAZEI:** I'm not ruling anything out right now. I'm trying to promote the message of the book. The reason I ran for the Senate is the same reason I wrote the book. I've been trying to push this idea of public service and citizen participation in democracy and how do we really reach our potential as a country and fulfill that journey towards a more perfect union. That's been my life's work, and I saw that campaign as another opportunity to do that. I did have a great experience. It is a unique privilege when you run for office. It's like having a passport to talk to anyone at any time about anything. I've worked with a lot of diverse people, but it's a whole other level when you're running for office, in terms of the people you get to meet, who will open up to you and will share with you their hopes and dreams and their anxieties and their fears and what's going on in their lives. Even in these challenging times, I felt people wanting to come together, wanting to come up with new solutions. I had a good experience. Right now, I'm trying to promote the message of this book and get back to Be The Change. We'll see what happens in the future. **CW**



## Jobs held hostage by housing

Trends suggest the state's high housing costs could drag down job growth once again **BY BEN FORMAN AND SAM GREELEY**

**LIKE NEW ENGLAND** Patriots victories, high housing costs became matter of fact in Massachusetts over the last decade. As we rebuild from the Great Recession and the housing bubble that precipitated it, now is a good time to revisit whether the high cost of living is something the state can continue to take for granted.

New data show our housing costs are once again outpacing the nation. While this trend may have negligible impact on growing high technology sectors, housing costs out of line with other states will surely make it difficult for Massachusetts to add the middle-class jobs most residents of the Commonwealth seek.

Before the real estate bubble burst, the outflow of young adults was the clearest sign that housing costs were taking a toll on the Massachusetts economy. Between 2000 and 2006, our population in the 25 to 34 age group fell by 110,000 residents. In just a few short years, a city of young workers the size of Cambridge and Allston combined vanished because we simply couldn't produce housing at prices young families starting out could afford.

Post-bubble, today's scenario seems reversed. The state's young population has at least stabilized and it's probably even grown. This follows a national trend of young unemployed and underemployed residents moving back home with their parents. But as the economy improves nationally, if Massachusetts can't put the brakes on our tendency to outpace the nation in escalating home values, these children will leave the nest for jobs elsewhere.

We should expect this because surveys of young adults conducted by the *Boston Globe*, MassINC, and others during the last expansion clearly showed that young people were migrating out for lower-cost housing and jobs, both of which we weren't creating in sufficient quantities here. Economists

including Ed Glaeser, Barry Bluestone, and Ed Moscovitch looked at the data and concluded that our high housing costs were caused by barriers to



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developing modestly priced homes. They also found that our slow job growth wasn't the result of a broader downturn in our industries. Our mainstays like finance and IT were growing, just not here in the Commonwealth, where we couldn't house their workers at a reasonable cost.

The good news is the Massachusetts economy is recovering some lost ground. For seven straight months, we've added jobs, a total of 64,300 between January and

August. But with 304,400 unemployed residents, and signs that the recovery nationally may be losing steam, the question is, how much longer will we maintain strong job growth with housing prices much higher than the rest of the country?

Massachusetts home prices have fallen from their all-time peak relative to the rest of the country. In November 2002, Bay State homes were priced 80 percent higher than the US average. But for 28 consecutive months, the state's home values have been diverging from the nation's. July's figures, the most recent that are available, show our homes now cost 62 percent more than the US median.

This is not just a symptom of our relatively healthy market holding its own against a national figure weighed down by hard-hit states like Florida and Nevada. Compared to key competitors, our high housing costs continue to put us at a disadvantage. For 21 straight months Massachusetts



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## PERSPECTIVES

has lost ground to North Carolina; we're now paying 121 percent more than residents there. California remains the only state with higher prices (the zillow.com data we rely on do not include Hawaii). But three years ago California prices were an astonishing 50 percent higher than ours; in July our prices were just 17 percent lower than theirs.

Economists have been describing various scenarios for an economic recovery. It's worth reflecting on how our high housing costs position us for each of these potential pathways to growth.

The status quo scenario is high-skilled knowledge industries continue to do very well, and both low- and middle-skilled industries continue to see jobs move overseas. A slight variation on this theme would be more government policy focused on fostering high-growth start-ups. Research shows these companies create a lot of jobs, but they tend to scatter them all over the map, moving the bulk of the work to locations where it can be performed at the lowest cost.

If we follow these trajectories and the recovery is mostly in skilled knowledge sectors, what will the outcome be for Massachusetts? Regional data do show Greater Boston, our high-tech economic engine, becoming less cost competitive relative to other leading metros. Regions like San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, DC, have seen home values fall by about a quarter from the peak. Boston is off by just 16 percent. But in the past, the high premium for talent meant businesses showed little sensitivity to cost-of-living. Innovators would do almost anything, including living under a cubicle, to be where the action was. It's difficult to say whether this will change as more cities around the world attempt to replicate our innovation ecosystem, but at least in the near-term, Greater Boston's knowledge sector seems relatively safe.

The real concern for us should be the missed opportunity if the alternative scenarios some economists have described, which are much more favorable for middle-class Americans, should transpire. Optimistic economists believe that companies have already begun to tire of dealing with offshore production and shipping costs, and will move some manufacturing back to the US. They also see potential in a renewed national commitment to manufacturing, and a focus on rebuilding export markets for domestic products, which could lead to more jobs for low- and middle-skilled workers.

While Greater Boston will probably always struggle with high costs when competing for growth in less-skilled sectors, we might look to regions outside of Boston, where housing prices are dramatically lower, as the state's opportunity to add these jobs. But the median home in the Worcester area still costs \$17,000 more than the median home in Greater Chicago. A house in the Springfield area is \$8,500 more than a home in the Raleigh-Durham metro area. Contrasts

to other mid-size regions are even more discouraging—Springfield homes cost 54 percent more than homes in Rochester, New York; homes in Worcester are 52 percent more expensive than homes in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

As we contemplate our future and strategies for renewed economic growth, it's critical that we keep housing as a focal point. Massachusetts voters who dream of one day having the kids move out should think carefully about the fate of Chapter 40B when they go to the polls in November. The so-called “anti-snob” zoning law has created 58,000 housing units. During the last decade, the vast majority of rental housing in greater Boston wouldn't have been built without 40B.

At the same time, it should also be clear that 40B is not enough to solve our problem. We need is a policy that gives communities real incentive to produce housing that middle-class families can afford. Chapter 40R, which establishes these incentives, is an excellent framework. The state just needs to make a greater commitment to it with a reliable funding stream. As it stands now, towns have little confidence that the state will fulfill its obligation to reimburse them for costs incurred by new development.

Beyond efforts to create more housing opportunity in Massachusetts, we need to be especially mindful and vigilant when it comes to qualities that mitigate our high housing costs. Two in particular are at risk.

Protecting public education should be our first concern. Employers value the Commonwealth's strong public schools. To the extent families are willing to pay more to live here, in large part it's because they have confidence in our schools. As the federal government withdraws its support for cash-strapped states, we could easily flitter away this asset by underfunding our public schools.

The second is our transportation system. After housing, transportation is by far the highest household expense for most families in the Commonwealth. According to a recent Urban Land Institute report, the typical family in Greater Boston spends more than half their income on housing and transportation. Massachusetts must maintain a reliable transportation system to reduce commuting costs and make communities with affordable housing more accessible. If major employers lose faith in the future of the debt-laden MBTA, we could find ourselves in real trouble.

As much as we'd like to see recovery in our housing markets, there's no cause to celebrate Massachusetts outpacing the nation in home-value appreciation. At the polls in November, we should support those who are committed to reducing the state's high cost of living and building an economy that works for all of us. **CW**

*Ben Forman is research director at MassINC and Sam Greeley was a summer policy intern for MassINC.*

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# Overcoming tough times

We need to get serious about supporting working families in

Massachusetts BY ROBERT J.S ROSS AND DEBORAH CONNOLLY YOUNGBLOOD

**ECONOMIC CRISES ARE** social accelerators—things that were abstractly understood as trends are suddenly new and crushing realities. Twenty-five years ago, while the “Massachusetts Miracle” of growth charmed a generation of optimists, some observers of “deindustrialization” warned us about a looming vision of an hourglass economy of unequal incomes and unremitting pressures on single-parent families and those without technical credentials. Since the Great Recession began in 2007, the steady erosion of sustaining jobs for middle-income families has become a flash flood.

In an earlier era, many working families’ incomes and benefits were buoyed by unions, but the hardest hit sectors during this recession are those that used to have the most union density, manufacturing, and construction. The Commonwealth now waits for a real, rather than abstract, recovery, for the time when new job creation once again outdistances labor force entries. While we remain hopeful that this will happen in the not-too-distant future, and that unemployment rates will finally come closer to or below 5 percent (rather than 10 percent), there is reason to fear that recovery will not provide adequate financial support to many families struggling to make ends meet on diminishing real wages.

Even prior to the recession, the majority of low-income parents did not have the credentials required for jobs that paid family-sustaining wages. Low-wage and low-income families who struggled to make ends meet before the onset of the recession won’t share in the benefits of a more robust economy unless one or both of two things happen: either they gain access to the training and education needed for the jobs that provide family support in the newly-restructured economy, or wages provided by their lower-wage jobs improve.

In spring 2010, Crittenton Women’s Union, a Boston-based nonprofit, published the Massachusetts Economic Independence Index 2010. This budget calculator—available online at [www.liveworkthrive.org](http://www.liveworkthrive.org)—identifies what it costs to make ends meet in Massachusetts without pub-

lic or private assistance. In 2010, a family with one adult and two children requires \$61,618 (\$29.01 per hour) to achieve economic independence—approximately three and one-half times the



ROSS



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(grossly unrealistic) federal poverty level of \$18,310. A two adult/two child family requires over \$68,000—more than \$36 per hour. Housing, child care, and a more realistic accounting of transportation and health and other costs make the federal poverty level more or less irrelevant to what is necessary to maintain a basic standard of living.

It is no wonder, then, that 72 percent of Massachusetts married-couple families with young children had both spouses in the labor force in 2008 compared to 67 percent for the nation as a whole. Families with two wage earners have become the strategy to avoid poverty for large numbers of Commonwealth households.

Single mothers are uniquely vulnerable to poverty; almost three-quarters of all Massachusetts families living in poverty are headed by single women. In 2009, the median income in Massachusetts for single mothers was \$29,754, less than half of the Independence Index family-sustaining wage for Boston. Forty years ago the mothers of young children were less than half as likely to be in the labor force.

When job growth begins anew in Massachusetts, will adult earners, including single mothers, be able to support their families? “Hot Jobs 2010,” another CWU report, identifies 11 “hot jobs,” that is, jobs with 100 or more vacancies in Massachusetts at time of publication that require two years or less of education or training after high school and pay enough to support a family. This report, published every three years, demonstrates some

key trends in employment.

In 2007, 16 out of that year's 26 hot jobs required no post-secondary education. By 2010, only two of the 11 hot jobs required no post-secondary education.

Not only are the number of hot jobs dwindling, which is not surprising in a recession, but the education requirements for available jobs are going up fast. Skill levels are not keeping pace. In 2008, nearly half of Massachusetts's 3.2 million workers lacked a two-year associate's degree or other post-secondary training.

One effective anti-poverty approach would be to provide access to post-secondary education and training and support for educational success for adult students, especially parents. Yet state policymakers, while long recognizing the importance of higher education and training, have not provided adequate funding and corollary supports to adult students supporting families.

According to the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, Massachusetts community colleges are among the most expensive in the nation. Workers earning at the bottom 20 percent of Massachusetts incomes have to pay two-thirds of their salary to receive a community

college education. And parents attempting to attend college while raising children face costs of more than double their non-parenting counterparts because of child care costs. Additionally, part-time students are ineligible for many financial aid and educational grant programs. Single parents trying to improve their financial circumstances through education face daunting roadblocks.

## The education requirements for available jobs are going up fast.

The Skills2Compete-Massachusetts campaign, part of a national initiative to promote access to training for middle-skill jobs, has articulated a challenging vision for the Commonwealth:

Every Massachusetts resident should have access to the equivalent of at least two years of education or training past high school, to be pursued at whatever point and pace makes sense for individual workers and industries. Every person must also have access to the basic skills and support needed to pursue such education.

There have been earlier moments in history when society's reflection on education and the needs of our



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population and our economy have produced massive change: the 19th century introduction of free public education and the post-World War II launch of the GI Bill, which expanded college attendance five-fold.

Now we have arrived at one of those crucial moments that require an additional investment in education for our workforce, an investment that will almost certainly pay off in increased productivity, increased well-being for families and children, and reduced need for public assistance.

Several short-term initiatives, many proposed by the Asset Development Commission, established by the Legislature in 2006, would go a long way to improve access to higher education and training and help families achieve economic self-sufficiency.

First, support for the Educational Rewards Grant, which provides low-income adults access to education and training. This program is unusual in that recipients can use some of the grant to cover living expenses (as did the GI Bill), an essential component for working and parenting students and one with proven success. The program is currently a victim of state budget cuts with no grants being awarded this academic year.

Second, support for academic and career counseling that specifically targets low-income working adults, recognizing their individual challenges and identifying attainable career objectives with realistic and expeditious pathways. Single parents need information and guidance on what jobs are in demand, which ones pay family-sustaining wages, and the most cost effective and streamlined path to get them.

Third, increased support for adult basic education and better alignment between the K-12 school system and post-secondary schools, ensuring that young adults leaving the public school system are prepared to successfully continue their education and training.

Finally, increased consumer protection and education related to for-profit schools to prevent low-income students from enrolling in high-tuition schools which may not lead to gainful employment.

The other path to improving the earning power of working families, in particular those who may never qualify for a “hot job,” is increasing the wages paid for today’s low-wage jobs. We have in mind the vast number of low-wage workers who care for the old and sick, clean our houses and offices, tend to our gardens and dirty dishes, and, in general, help sustain our Commonwealth in important but often invisible and usually unacknowledged ways. The Clinton Administration used the tax system effectively to “make work pay” through the Earned Income Tax Credit, which reduces poverty but uses taxpayer dollars to subsidize low-wage employers.

Another way is to facilitate workers’ ability to collectively bargain on their own behalf both locally and nation-

ally. Harold Meyerson has noted that Las Vegas is “the only city in the land where service-sector workers in supposedly dead-end jobs can afford to buy homes, retire securely, and put their kids through college.” His observation was not about the beneficence of hotel owners, but rather the effectiveness of Unite-Here, the hotel workers’ union.

There is a certain straight-line logic about this idea: If the loss of union protection has been a large contributor to the vulnerability of so many of our working families, one potential corrective action is new dimensions and areas of union protection.

Some readers may believe that the Commonwealth cannot afford increased expenditures for education and training. And some would oppose measures that would enable more of our less-educated workers to band together to improve their wages and working conditions. But if we are to take seriously the plight of hundreds of thousands of working families in Massachusetts, one or both of these strategies needs to be pursued. **CW**

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*Robert J.S. Ross is a professor of sociology at Clark University. Deborah Connolly Youngblood is vice president of research and innovation at Crittenton Women’s Union.*

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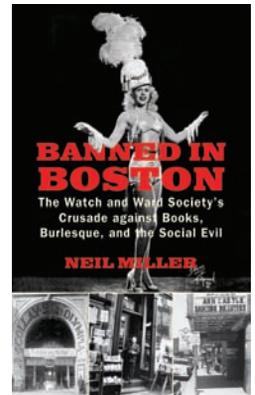
Shining a light on the city's intellectual Dark Age

**Banned in Boston: The Watch and Ward Society's Crusade against Books, Burlesque, and the Social Evil**

By Neil Miller

Boston, Beacon Press, 209 pages

REVIEWED BY ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN



**IT'S EASY TO** be smug when you live in the state with the most educated population, some of the best schools and universities, and one of the most vibrant literary scenes in America. But it wasn't so long ago that Massachusetts was known for its aversion to new thought—a place that would strike even Sarah Palin as sadly lacking in cosmopolitanism.

*Banned in Boston*, by *CommonWealth* contributing writer Neil Miller, gives us the scoop on the Hub's read-no-evil era, from the end of the 19th century through the 1950s. Before reading it, I thought of the title as a joke. I knew that city leaders at the time went beyond tsk-tsking at racy books and actually made them illegal. But just as Prohibition was weak tea in terms of curbing alcohol consumption (Daniel Okrent's recent book, *Last Call*, discusses the lax enforcement in Boston), I had assumed that it was relatively easy to obtain "banned" books here, and that being put in the forbidden zone only increased sales.

But Miller explains how the shadowy nature of the censorship system here—completely lacking in transparency and accountability—made it so effective. At the height of its power, the extralegal Watch and Ward Society, the impetus behind the book-banning craze, could more or less single-handedly pull books out of circulation in Boston, without any kind of judicial review—helped by a broadly written obscenity law at the state level, which the Society was instrumental in enacting. Area booksellers acquiesced to the crackdown, perhaps tired of seeing their clerks arrested for selling titles they often knew nothing about. Beginning in 1915, a committee consisting of three booksellers (always including downtown's Old Corner Bookstore) and three Watch and Ward members examined new books and decided

which ones would be sent down the memory hole. "The general public knew almost nothing of what was going on," writes Miller. "The names of banned books were never announced, and such books were never reviewed or advertised.... It was if they never existed."

For much of the 20th century in Boston, it was almost as difficult to get a book mentioning abortion as it was to get an abortion itself. Miller notes that readers often traveled to New York to stock up on the latest national bestsellers, as the Watch and Ward Society's influence extended to most of New England. Predictably, the "banned" label often boosted sales elsewhere. Miller notes that as early as 1882, sales of poet Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* benefited from its exclusion from Boston, so much so that the book's publisher quietly, but unsuccessfully, tried to get it banned in Philadelphia, too. (One question left unanswered by Miller is whether there was a significant underground market for banned books in the Hub. But perhaps verboten titles like Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* weren't dirty enough to profitably peddle from beneath trench coats.)

The "gentlemen's agreement" between booksellers and the Watch and Ward Society fell apart in 1927, thanks in part to H.L. Mencken's successful crusade to overturn a ban on his *American Mercury* magazine. But there followed what Miller calls a "wild orgy of book-banning," lasting about a year and a half, in which the Boston Police Department, the Suffolk County District Attorney, and the Boston Archdiocese of the Catholic Church each made their own contributions to the "banned" list that booksellers continued to honor. During this time, banned books included Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*; Sinclair Lewis's *Elmer Gantry*, presumably for satirizing religion; and Upton

Sinclair's *Oll!*, ostensibly because it included a scene at a "petting party," though Sinclair charged that he was being punished for his socialist politics.

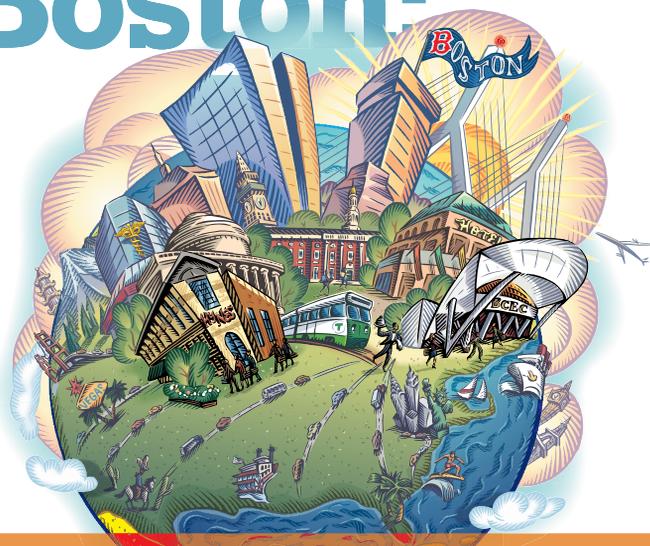
By this time, civic leaders started to get concerned about Boston's national reputation. In a 1927 letter to a Boston newspaper, department store magnate A. Lincoln Filene came out as something of a precursor to modern-day sociologist Richard Florida and his "creative class" theories, as he warned that Boston's prissiness might scare off the city's "younger and more vigorous sectors." (Filene may have also been distressed by the thought of these sectors doing their Christmas shopping in New York.) Still, it would take a couple of decades for censorship fever to completely pass, as legislators and courts hemmed and hawed about rewriting, and reinterpreting, obscenity statutes.

In the meantime, Boston's bluenoses turned their attention to the stage. Watch and Ward had some success in getting the city to act against burlesque shows that wouldn't raise an eyebrow today ("vulgar contortions of the body" was a typical offense), but the authorities seemed to give more leeway to popular entertainment. Highbrow plays were another matter. In 1929, Mayor Malcolm Nichols put the kibosh on Eugene O'Neill's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Strange Interlude*, forcing it to move to a theater in Quincy,

on the grounds that it promoted atheism and infidelity. By this time, even the Watch and Ward Society was loosening up a bit, determining that the printed version of O'Neill's play was "not actionable," but it no longer had control over the "banned in Boston" label (perhaps the group should have trademarked the phrase). For decades, Boston had a city censor with a hands-on approach (the "urban dramaturge?"). In 1960, he forced the producers of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* to delete "irreverent references to the Deity," and in the 1970s he vetoed the desecration of an American flag in *Hair*. The post was finally abolished in 1982, by which time the city was on its way to its current national reputation as hopelessly permissive.

Why did the censorship impulse sink such deep roots in New England? Ironically, the region's liberal politics was a factor. Book-banning was of a piece with "moral uplift" crusades, and the New England Watch and Ward Society was equally concerned with rooting out public corruption and working toward "good government." On the national political stage, as Okrent points out in *Last Call*, the drive for a constitutional amendment banning alcohol was part of a progressive agenda that included a national income tax and women's rights, though Watch and Ward seemed more interested in tightly regulating alcohol than in wiping

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it out completely.

Watch and Ward was founded (originally as the New England Society for the Suppression of Vice) by some 500 men at Boston's Park Street Church in 1878. Miller calls the event "in part a reaction to the perceived moral decline of a materialistic age, in part an extension of the reforming impulses and Puritan conscience that were long the heart and soul of Boston." He notes that "ultimate Brahmin" Godfrey Lowell Cabot, said to be the wealthiest man in Boston when he died in 1962, was a major financial supporter, as well as an active member, of Watch and Ward; a Cabot biographer wrote that the man "was much happier when he found something to condemn." And his censorious impulses were certainly catholic with a small "c." He was offended by the "coarse and immoral" book *The Three Musketeers* but also by the city of Cambridge's lack of competitive bidding for municipal contracts. (He once ran for mayor of that city as a reform candidate and was crushed by the incumbent Democrat.)

Watch and Ward fought against gambling, opposing lotteries that targeted poor people desperate for a lucky break and supporting laws that gave the police expanded powers to break up penny-ante poker games. It also ran sting operations in and beyond Boston exposing bars and hotels that abetted prostitution, which it euphemistically called "the social evil."

Given this agenda, plus the society's dogging of machine politicians like Boston's James Michael Curley, it seems unlikely that many well-educated suburbanites—the kind that now vote for Deval Patrick and Martha Coakley—would have opposed Watch and Ward just so everyone could get their hands on *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

Still, it seems almost too tidy that Puritan-founded Boston, rather than some other big city, would become synonymous with censorship. Miller doesn't tell us much about what was going on elsewhere at the time, but his biographical sketches of Watch and Ward leaders leave the impression that a handful of determined and resourceful people made a big difference, and if they had lived in the nation's biggest city instead, perhaps "Nixed in New York" would have become a catchphrase.

Miller also avoids commentary on contemporary issues (nothing on school libraries banning *Heather Has Two Mommies* and the like). This is perhaps out of a concern that taking sides in current ideological battles would distract from a carefully researched work that does not use the benefit of hindsight to take cheap shots. He does not suggest that Watch and Ward leaders, many of them clergy, were hypocrites or charlatans (though some politicians may be a different story). And after all, all of this was before talk radio and cable TV, so they weren't in it for the money. Their aim, misguided as it might have been, was true. **CW**



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# Online teaching

The Internet is a useful teaching tool, but only that

**“ALTHOUGH SCADS OF** red are always stomach-dropping, I’m really going to learn a lot from this interaction.”

I’ve taught writing, off and on, for more than 10 years, and received plenty of feedback from students. The note I just quoted, though, was a little unusual. Its author is the first person I’ve “taught” without ever meeting. My interactions with this working adult who wants to improve her writing skills have taken place entirely via email.

Since the late 1980s, online education has steadily trickled down from universities to high schools, and now to younger students. This fall, the first virtual public school in Massachusetts opened in Greenfield, with students in grades K-8 statewide eligible to enroll. Although the opening of the Massachusetts Virtual Academy has sparked controversy, support for online schools is growing. In its 2010 annual survey, Harvard University’s Program on Education Policy and Governance found that 52 percent of the public thinks high schoolers should receive credit for courses taken over the Internet, up from 42 percent the year before.

As a former high school teacher who now teaches creative-writing and study skills, at both the university and adult ed levels. I see technology as a blessing—mostly. Once upon a time, the teaching of writing went something like this: Students would do battle with the school’s aging printers, then breathlessly hand me several crumpled pages that may or may not have all been intended for English class. A week and a dozen paper cuts later, I’d return them, covered in largely illegible handwriting.

Then I started collecting work electronically, and began to reap the benefit of other distance-learning technologies. A student could email a piece, and I’d return it with comments he could read while also creating an automatic copy for myself. I could comment on pieces far more quickly while the writing was fresh in students’ minds. Students could use a course website to peer-edit each other’s work and also access assignments when absent.

Still, until this fall, I’d always used technology as a complement to the classroom environment. Interacting with a student exclusively online has been a very different experience. My role is far narrower: I see the woman’s writing, but nothing else. Since she’s a focused adult who has spent 15-plus years in classrooms, my comments on her prose may be all she needs. She’s told me our interac-

tions are helpful, and I’m glad. But it is hard to imagine this kind of remote interaction serving the needs of younger students, especially those who don’t yet understand what they need to learn. For me, email exchanges proved useful as a starting point with students. But it was in class and conferences that I saw them grasp why a specific sentence was made stronger by a particular change—and came to know them as people, too.

Earlier this year, Bill Gates, whose educational foundation has become a priority-setter for American schooling, called for the use of more interactive technology in classrooms. “So far technology has hardly changed formal edu-

## Cost savings are enormous, but the experience is also less

cation at all,” Gates wrote in his foundation’s annual letter. “With the escalating costs of education, an advance here would be very timely.”

Happily, Gates’s letter recommends use of the Internet as a complement to “face-to-face learning,” but his emphasis on the potential cost-savings is a little alarming. Sure, online learning may seem cheaper: You can send a 12th-grader to an online private school for about \$2,000 a year, well below the \$18,000 average per pupil expenditure in the Boston Public Schools in fiscal year 2009. But the reduced cost may indicate a reduced experience.

After all, online schools typically offer fewer services. Florida-based Forest Trail Academy, an Internet high school, advises prospective parents that if their child isn’t entirely self-motivated—if she or he is, in other words, a typical teenager—the parent should be prepared to play a role akin to that of an old-fashioned teacher: supervising, motivating, even tutoring. (“Having a stay-at-home parent can be a great asset,” the website advises.) Cost “savings,” then, may just be code for “costs passed onto families.”

Like so many other educational trends, online learning offers both great advantages and great potential pitfalls. It can allow teachers to better tailor lessons to individuals, allow kids to better work at their own pace, and mean no student will ever again have to squint over an English teacher’s chicken scratches. But it can’t replace human relationships—nor should we ask it to. **CW**

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