

CommonWealth

POLITICS, IDEAS & CIVIC LIFE IN MASSACHUSETTS

10th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

THEN AND NOW

A decade of change

ESSAYS BY:

Rosabeth Moss Kanter

Christopher Lydon

Ilan Stavans

Joan Vennochi

Alan Wolfe

Re-mapping
Massachusetts
politics

A return
to Heritage
Road



PLUS Harry Spence:
Commissioner under siege

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CRIME CAN BE CURBED THROUGH SMART DESIGN

Why do reporters assume they have the knowledge to judge one crime reduction strategy over another (“Crime and Puzzlement,” *CW*, Winter ’06)? Based on 35 years of experience in crime prevention through urban planning and design, I am constantly amazed by the shallowness of reporters’ judgments on which program works or doesn’t work. Reporters need to do research in crime prevention as they would in reporting the crime that is committed. They might begin by pointing out the difference between apprehension and prevention, and then examining the different types of prevention strategies that are available.

The reason that a program such as the ministers-and-gangs strategy is so hard to reconstruct is that it is human-resource-based. Because it was created and led by one or more key people who were able to energize others and raise special funding, this approach was, for a short time, able to have an impact on reducing certain targeted crimes. Once the funding runs out—or the leaders move on, are reassigned, or simply get burned out—programs like this dissolve, and the crimes come back as strong as ever.

In contrast, crime prevention through urban planning and design works well, and indefinitely, because such strategies are physical and not dependent upon individual or group enthusiasm—or, for that matter, continuous funding. Example: If a high school draws students from one neighborhood through another neighborhood, it creates a range of crime opportunities, and some of the students take advantage of these opportunities to commit crimes. The high school is unwittingly acting as

a “crime generator,” even though the crimes are not committed on school grounds. By either redrawing the school-district lines so that students are not forced to walk through another neighborhood, or redesigning the street and sidewalk system so as not to allow pedestrian circulation from the adjacent neighborhood through the target neighborhood, the result will be the prevention of all types of crimes this “crime/environmental phenomena” caused. This is crime prevention through urban planning, or “strategic criminology.” While this field is not well known, it has met with significant success where it has been applied.

*Richard Andrew Gardiner
RAGA/Gardiner Associates
Urban Planning & Community Design
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DOES SHRINKING STATE NEED MORE POWER?

Strange to read, in Matt Kelly’s interesting article (“Power Failure”), that demand for electricity in Massachusetts is expected to spike up 16 percent by 2014, even as the state continues to lose population, as noted elsewhere in the magazine. Does the shrinking population really need to gobble up an increasing number of megawatt-hours, even as global warming becomes an increasingly urgent threat, and global supplies of the fossil fuels begin to get tight? When will our leaders move beyond rhetoric on energy issues, and instead work more aggressively to actually *reduce* fossil-fuel-driven energy demand? We could all—citizens, business, and government alike—become much more efficient users of energy, but no one has really asked us to.

*Viki Bok
Jamaica Plain*



IMMIGRANT STUDENTS NEED PARENTS INVOLVED

Thank you for the attention to appropriate schooling for our state’s immigrant children (“Sink or Swim”). Laura Pappano provides thoughtful insight into the politics and policy issues and how they impact the classroom.

The role of parents is conspicuously absent from the discussion. For all the faults of the old bilingual education law, it properly empowered parents. Local communities were obliged to inform and seek immigrant parents’ voices on issues and to offer parent education opportunities. These measures ensured that parents were seen as partners rather than clients, a significant change that supports better educational outcomes for children, whether from the suburbs or the tenement districts. These parent initiatives also paid rewards in assisting immigrant families in establishing and mobilizing social networks.

There may be fewer strands in the safety net for immigrant families in Massachusetts today. Given that the Commonwealth’s population, economy, and congressional representation depend on newcomers, we ought to pay closer attention to their needs.

*Jorge M. Cardoso Ed.D
Executive Director
Institute for Responsive Education
Cambridge College
Cambridge*

'ANTI-GROWTH' LABEL APPLIED WITHOUT BASIS

In the article "House Rules" (Growth & Development Extra 2006), the author, Michael Jonas, referred to me as an "anti-growth activist." I cannot imagine how he came up with that broad characterization when the only conversation I ever had with him was about the history and appropriateness of certain high-density developments in and around the South Shore and Boston, not about generalities of growth. What is this, an attempt to place a kind of "burden of proof" for a person to disprove a lie? How would Jonas like being labeled an anti-accuracy writer?

*Joseph Peceovich
Ocean Bluff (Marshfield)*

ARLINGTON TALE FULL OF ERROR AND BIAS

As an early subscriber to your magazine, I have come to rely upon it as an impartial source of information on public affairs. However, when the magazine becomes a platform for blatant pro-developer propaganda, supported by lazy reporting and invented "facts," I find such reliance is misplaced.

The reference is to the article "Bitter Pill" by Alexander von Hoffman (Growth & Development Extra 2006), an article fraught with errata, selective misquotes, and advocacy of a social engineering and land use policy that may be summarized in a few words: Let the Arlingtons become hopelessly dense, so that the Lincolns and Carlises may remain pristine.

Von Hoffman characterizes the debates over growth as some sort of class warfare. In fact, by the late 1960s, Arlington's five square miles housed over 50,000 people. It was not only the densest town in the state but the seventh densest community, denser than the city of Boston. People across a range of social and economic groups and from all parts of the community

were appalled by the vanishing open space, and the intrusion of high-rise, out-of-scale apartment blocks in their neighborhoods. Those concerned with historical and architectural heritage were concerned that developers seemed to pounce upon the finest old houses and buildings for demolition and redevelopment. The Historical Commission was established by vote of town meeting in 1970, but it was not until many years later that it achieved the power to delay—not veto, as von Hoffman states—destruction of historical resources, and many such resources have in fact been since lost to developers.

His description of the 1973 "sticker" election is almost entirely incorrect, and an example of inventing facts in order to support his predetermined conclusions. Again, there was no class warfare involved, and pro- and anti-developer figures were active in all four campaigns. Margaret Spengler and George Rugg, the sticker candidates, did not replace "two old-line incumbent selectmen who had maneuvered to keep [them] off the ballot." One selectman had been elected the previous year as treasurer, and his seat was filled by the candidate who had finished third in the selectmen's race that year. The other incumbent, a strongly pro-environment politician, decided not to run for re-election. The question raised by another candidate, Jack Donahue, was whether members of the Finance Committee, as Spengler and Rugg were, could run for another town office. He persuaded the town clerk to rule them off the ballot, but they ran on a sticker campaign and were elected overwhelmingly. They were not seated until the case was decided in their favor by the Supreme Judicial Court.

The long section devoted to the redevelopment of the Time Oldsmobile site is, as is typical, fraught with errors. The quote from Richard Keshian that "many only develop in Arlington

once" is unsupported by any facts, and is belied by the fact that Keshian's own client, Michael Collins (a Winchester resident), currently has three projects underway here, and several more to his "credit." The Osco project was ultimately rejected by the Redevelopment Board because the site is at what traffic people call a "failed intersection"—a finding that was ultimately supported by the Land Court after the judge took a look at it himself. Collins, who then obtained development rights to the property, consulted with town officials and some (but not all) neighbors, but ignored whatever the latter had to say. He obtained the support of the adjacent historic church by offering to give them part of the land, an offer that he later retracted. The fire chief, not the Redevelopment Board, required that access for fire trucks be adequate, for the protection of the prospective residents.

My own role in this affair is grossly mischaracterized. I, and the chairman of the Historical Commission, had a long meeting with Collins's architect, and I was quite surprised at the next hearing to find that not one of the modest ideas offered to mitigate the appearance of the project had been adopted. (By the way, 18th-century patriot Jason Russell, like most people, didn't use a hyphen between his first and last names.)

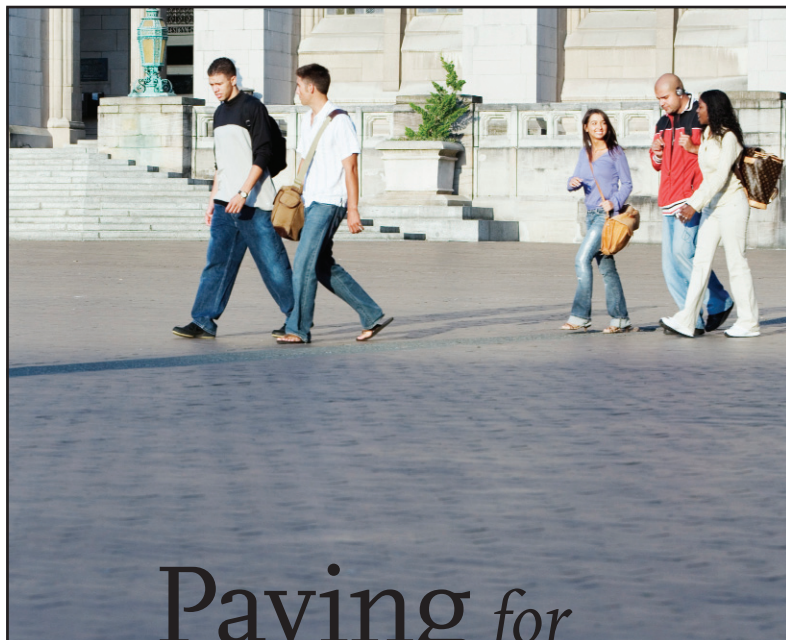
Contrary to von Hoffman's assertions, opponents made it quite clear why they were unhappy with certain aspects of the project. A block north of this site is another Collins project crowded densely onto a site adjacent to one of the few remaining ballfields and widely derided as the ugliest development in town. (At the opposite corner, by contrast, is a beautiful renovation of historic houses done by a more sensitive Arlington developer.) Surrounding Collins's Mill/Summer St. project at the sidewalk is a low stone wall, described by some as a tank barricade, behind which is a

high fence. We didn't want to see that at the important Mill/Massachusetts Avenue intersection. The quote "we don't do walls in Arlington" is taken out of context, the full statement being "except in the case of an 18th-century farm house, appropriately surrounded by its stone wall, we don't do walls in Arlington." Every member of the Redevelopment Board expressed unhappiness with the overly dense proposal, with its minimal setbacks and traffic issues.

Collins then said at a Redevelopment Board hearing he'd do a single building "that would rival the Robbins Library in magnificence" if only he could exceed the height limitations by a few feet. I wrote his attorney stating my concern that such a building not overshadow the adjacent historic church. I never mentioned a court challenge, and as I am not an abutter to the premises, I would not have standing. Collins and his attorney chose to imagine this "threat of litigation" in order to justify cramming, "by right," double family houses, each cheek-by-jowl with its neighbor, on the site, thereby avoiding the affordable housing requirement of our inclusionary zoning bylaw.

Anyone who looks at the statistics would agree that Arlington has done its share, and then some, in accommodating population density. Our zoning bylaw allows between 17 and 79 units per acre depending on the district; single and two-family houses can be built on lots as small as 6,000 square feet. Does anyone really think it's evil or selfish for the people of a neighborhood, or a town, to want to retain a little open space, have recreational areas for young and old, preserve a few remnants of the past, and not have their neighborhoods overwhelmed with out-of-scale apartment blocks and the extra automobiles such developments would bring to their narrow side streets?

*John L. Worden III
Arlington*



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CW comes of age

WINSTON CHURCHILL SAID, "History will be kind to me because I intend to write it." In much the same vein, I intend, on the occasion of *CommonWealth's* 10th anniversary issue, to say a few admittedly biased words of praise for the magazine I am proud to publish, and especially the team that puts it together four (and occasionally five) times a year, led by our very talented editor, Robert Keough.

CommonWealth is unique. It is the only magazine of its sort anywhere. There are, in some other states, magazines on state government, on tourism, and on business matters, though these are shrinking in number, even as magazines on shopping, wealth, and celebrity proliferate. *California Journal* gave up publication in January 2005 after 35 years. *New Jersey Reporter* recently resumed publication after a yearlong hiatus. But even at their best, none of these other magazines has the editorial ambition of *CommonWealth*, which is to be not just a trade journal of state government but rather a journalistic forum for exploring the dilemmas and possibilities of civic life. And none draws the same community support in the form of sponsorship. More than 100 sponsors and over 125 major individual donors (our Citizens Circle) provide material support to the magazine and to MassINC. This breadth of support is a strength that grows by the day.

In each issue, our editors grapple with a big challenge: how to enliven and elucidate the politics, ideas, and civic realities of our state. From Robert David Sullivan's novel analyses, in 2002 and again this issue, of the 10 states of Massachusetts politics—a franchise he has taken national with the acclaimed Beyond Red & Blue series, still available (and still drawing traffic) on www.massinc.org—to Michael Jonas's in-depth reporting on such meaty topics as the future of health care, the middle-class housing squeeze, and the challenges of minority political leadership, *CommonWealth* does something no other publication does, in each and every issue.

And I am pleased that we were able to add staff writer Gabrielle Gurley to the *CommonWealth* masthead. She has already produced for the magazine two outstanding profiles of public-agency managers even as she manages the Issue-Source.org Web site, maintained in partnership with State House News Service, on a daily basis.

I am especially proud of the thorough treatment the editors gave to both health care and growth & development in two full-length extra issues produced in the last two years. In both cases, *CommonWealth's* reputation for fairness, depth, balance, and insight attracted broad-based consortia to underwrite the special issues. In both cases, we had labor and business leaders and the full spectrum of interest groups at the table as sponsors. That these backers would put their faith in a journalistic venture over which they had no control is a testament to the quality of *CommonWealth's* journalism.

Other magazines like it don't have its ambition or its breadth of support.

But what I like the most about *CommonWealth* is what I learn from it every issue. It's not light reading, I will admit. But it is unfailingly thoughtful and insightful. Every issue is a crash course in civics, Massachusetts-style, something that's increasingly hard to come by—in print, on the air, or on the Web. In today's world, the profusion of information and proliferation of opinion make balanced, thoughtful sources of news and analysis ever more precious. *CommonWealth* meets that ever-growing need.

Being publisher, I've found, is like being the owner of a brand-new car, but riding in the back seat as it barrels down the highway. You don't quite know where your drivers are taking you, but you have faith—and hope for the best. For my part, I have full confidence in my drivers, and I'm glad to be along for the ride. Serving as publisher of this still-young magazine is a joy and a privilege.

It's also a joy to present to you *CommonWealth's* new look—full color throughout, with a striking new design, developed entirely in-house under the leadership of art director Heather Hartshorn, and with advice and input from many friends and advisors. I hope it pleases our readers, and our sponsors, as much as it pleases me.

As for history, I'm sure it will be kind to *CommonWealth*, whether I write it or not.



IAN BOWLES, PUBLISHER

This year, MassINC turns 10.

To mark this milestone, MassINC is taking on a new set of initiatives to put the opportunity and challenge of living the American Dream in Massachusetts into the civic spotlight in 2006. Our initiatives are being supported by a special 10th Anniversary Fund.

We would like to acknowledge the individuals, organizations, foundations and companies that have made early pledges to help us build our Fund. Everyone at MassINC thanks them for their generosity, civic leadership and commitment to building a new Commonwealth.

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Re-reading *CommonWealth*

BY ROBERT KEOUGH

ORIGINALLY, I PLANNED to treat the 10th anniversary of the magazine as an excuse to re-read—and, I must confess, when it comes to some older issues and articles, read for the first time—the collected works of *CommonWealth*. But as deadline approached, it became evident that wasn't going to happen. The 44 issues of *CW* published to date measure nearly a foot and a half on the bookshelf, and with each issue containing up to 50,000 words (this one has 56,700, but don't let that intimidate you), a straight read-through was out of the question. But as editor for all but 16 of those issues, and a contributor since the third, I think I can comment on what Massachusetts has looked like over the past 10 years through the *CW* lens, even without a word-by-word refresher.

I'm the first to admit that anyone using *CommonWealth* as sole source might get a distorted view of what took place here over our first full decade. Many of the events and embarrassments that dominated headlines in those years get mentioned only in passing, if at all. That's because *CW* was not conceived as a quarterly synopsis of current events, nor as a running commentary on them. While not indifferent to the news of the day, *CommonWealth* aims to explore in a broader, but also more consistent, way the challenges of living up to the designation Massachusetts goes by in place of "state"—that is, "commonwealth."

In the very first Civic Sense essay, in the Spring '96 debut issue, founding editor Dave Denison wrote at length about the notion of "commonwealth" that has its roots in Puritan Massachusetts but provides civic inspiration even today. In the preamble to the state Constitution, written by John Adams, the "body politic" of the Bay State is defined as "a social compact, by which the whole people covenants with each citizen, and each citizen with the whole people, that all shall be governed by certain laws for the common good."

"In 200 years of economic and political history the very idea of 'the common good' has fallen upon many tensions," observed Denison. "And the notion that government is the natural guarantor of our common interests is today very much taken for granted and at the same time called cyni-

cally into question." But he also noted "a quiet revival of certain intellectual traditions that may lead us to a new consideration of the idea of commonwealth," including new thinking about "civil society" as a realm of citizen activity outside of formal government that could impact both politics and the economy. "If theorists tell us that more civic activity not only will revitalize democratic government but lead to better economic development," concluded Denison, "that is an idea worth pursuing."

For 10 years now, *CommonWealth* has pursued that idea,

***CW* has sounded the alarm on evidence of political dysfunction.**

recognizing that the "common good" has both civic and material dimensions. Our coverage of politics in Massachusetts has left the food fights to others, and concentrated instead on what our state's elected and civic leaders, on their best days, are trying to accomplish, based on their conceptions of the common good. At the same time, *CommonWealth* has neither glossed over the sausage-making messiness of governing nor idealized some sort of good-government utopianism. *CW* has sounded the alarm on evidence of political dysfunction, the effect of which is to depress engagement in the public realm and encourage retreat into the private. Some examples: Dave Denison's departing "screed" against the deterioration of democracy into two-man rule ("The Last Harrumph," *CW*, Fall '99), my own plea for Massachusetts to be a bit less "exceptional" in its bungling of budgetary and other matters ("Aren't We Special?" Winter '02), and associate editor Michael Jonas's incisive reports on legislative sclerosis ("Beacon Ill," Fall '02) and hopes for new leadership ("Great Expectations," Winter '05).

At the same time, *CW* has expended as much energy outside the State House as inside, exploring the nature and variability of Massachusetts civic culture through such vehicles as associate editor Robert David Sullivan's mapping of state politics (Summer '02 and the current issue) and his political character study "Bay State Nation" (Summer '04), as well as our



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CIVIC SENSE

regular dispatches from the front lines of self-government on the local level, Town Meeting Monitor.

EVEN AS WE examine the Massachusetts body politic, *CommonWealth* has been every bit as attentive to the body economic. After all, any reasonable definition of the “common good” for the individuals and families of the Commonwealth would have to include good jobs, good schools, and good places to live.

In our first 10 years we have plumbed no topic more deeply than education reform, which seems to be a never-ending saga. *CommonWealth's* treatment has included the magazine's one and only double issue (Spring/Summer '97) and its first full-length extra edition (Education Reform Extra '02), along with scores of other feature stories, Inquiries, State of the States rankings, analytical essays, and Argument & Counterpoints debates on everything from school finance to charter schools. *CW's* coverage of education has been an education in and of itself, as the often predicted (even by us) train wreck of widespread MCAS-denied diplomas never materialized but, by the same token, academic achievement remains maddeningly gap-ridden even today.

Also consistent have been *CW's* warnings of a certain tenuousness in the means of achieving and maintaining a middle-class existence. Such status is an American state of grace, the material basis not only for the Jeffersonian “pursuit of happiness” but for a civic life not distorted by desperation and want.

In 1996, 2001, and again this issue, *CommonWealth* traveled to Heritage Road in Billerica to check the heartbeat of the suburban middle class, and each time found it strong but irregular. Massachusetts has not been, and is not today, lacking in opportunity. But the basis of economic security has been steadily eroding, making the Holy Grail of middle-class comfort not only more elusive for those striving for it but more fragile for those who have attained it.

This is perhaps surprising, given that *CommonWealth* began publication at a time when Massachusetts was on a reassuring upswing from one of its deepest economic shocks, complete with job losses, bank failures, and home foreclosures. By 1996, the Bay State high-tech sector had gotten “its groove back,” in the words of a Winter '98 article, and was headed toward an economic run-up that would soon be the envy of the nation (even if no one dared to invoke the word “miracle” this time around). By the turn of the millennium, Massachusetts incomes were among the highest in the nation, and unemployment, at less than 3 percent, was among the lowest. Then the bubble burst, and we discovered, much to our dismay, that the New Economy acted very much like the Old Economy: What went up did come down.

More fundamentally, the economy Massachusetts depended on was becoming less stable even as it became more

dynamic. Jobs in our most forward-looking economic sectors—technology, financial services—looked less and less like the lifetime-employment, full-benefits Rocks of Gibraltar of an earlier era. Rather, these jobs were subject to stock-market volatility (“The New Economy’s Dubious Dividend,” Spring ’02), global competition (“Offshore Leave,” Summer

‘Commonwealth’ is not just a state of being but an ideal to strive for.

’04), and what might be called the deinstitutionalization of employment, as competition, corporate restructuring, technology, and lifestyle changes made for the growth of independent contractors and other free-agent workers (“Lone Rangers,” Summer ’05). Even traditional employees came to carry more of the burden of health insurance and retirement savings. Only health care, with its firm institutional base in hospitals, looked anything like a traditional employer, and for all its promise as an economic engine of the future, the life-sciences industry threatened to be as much a drag on growth as a boon, given the costs health care inflation imposes on other industries (See “Prognosis: Anticipation and

Anxiety,” Health Care Extra 2004).

Meanwhile, cost of living became an ever-bigger challenge to middle-class life in Massachusetts. The price of housing, in particular, emerged as a threat to our economic future, as municipal self-interest impeded the development of modest-priced homes. The effects fell hardest on young families (“Anti-family Values,” Spring ’02), who began to vote with their feet (“Moving In or Moving On?” Winter ’04). The state responded with “smart growth” policies aimed at spurring housing development in an environmentally sensitive way, but they have been slow to take hold (“House Rules,” Growth & Development Extra ’06). It all adds up to a Massachusetts version of that 1970s economic anomaly, stagflation: sluggish job growth, declining population, yet precious goods priced out of reach.

Not a pretty picture, but it’s one that reinforces the reality that “commonwealth” is not just a state of being but an ideal to strive for. In both civics and economics, the social compact binding the residents of Massachusetts together for the common good is subject to constant renegotiation. As we head into our second decade, you can count on *CommonWealth* to subject the shifting terms of that compact to the closest scrutiny. That will be our contribution to the Commonwealth living up to its name. **CW**

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Grading the graders

BY ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN

MASSACHUSETTS IS ABOUT as good as it gets when it comes to setting standards for public school teachers and holding schools accountable for outcomes, according to *Quality Counts 2006*, the latest annual report compiled by *Education Week*. The report's editors gave the Bay State an "A" in those areas, the same grade as last year, citing academic standards that are "clear, specific, and grounded in content" (as determined by the American Federation of Teachers), and approving the two-pronged strategy of using both sanctions and additional aid in dealing with low-performing schools.

In other areas of education, the Bay State was closer to the national norm. It got a "C" for "efforts to improve teacher

'Clear, specific' school standards earned the state a gold star.

equality," along with a scolding for its lack of mentoring programs for new teachers and its inadequate funding of professional development programs. Worse was a "C-" for "resource equity," thanks to wide disparities in per-pupil funding among school districts. For "school climate," Massachusetts got high marks for providing choices to students and parents (in particular, through the availability of charter schools) but lost some ground on school safety, for an overall grade of "B-." That was the only change in the four major grades since the 2005 report, when the state received a "C+" for school climate and was criticized by the report's authors for not doing enough to reduce class sizes.

While not providing a letter grade in student achievement, *Quality Counts* did include a good amount of data in that area. For example, at an even 70 percent, the 2002 high school graduation rate in Massachusetts was virtually identical to the national rate (69.4 percent), but there were noticeable differences within two ethnic groups: The graduation rate was 66 percent among Asian-American students in Massachusetts, versus 78 percent nationally, and 42 percent among Hispanic students, versus 55 percent nationally. (Graduation rates of 55 percent among black students and 75 percent among white students lined up pretty closely with rates at the national level.) **CW**

STATE GRADES FROM *QUALITY COUNTS 2006*

STATE	STANDARDS AND ACCOUNTABILITY	IMPROVING TEACHER QUALITY	SCHOOL CLIMATE	RESOURCE EQUITY
ALABAMA	B	B	C -	C +
ALASKA	C -	D	D +	D +
ARIZONA	B	D	C +	D +
ARKANSAS	C +	A -	C +	B -
CALIFORNIA	B +	B -	C	B -
COLORADO	B	C	B	C -
CONNECTICUT	B -	A -	B -	C
DELAWARE	B +	C +	B	B -
FLORIDA	A	C	C	B -
GEORGIA	A -	C +	C +	C
HAWAII	B +	C -	C	*
IDAHO	B	D	C +	F
ILLINOIS	B +	C	C +	D +
INDIANA	A	B -	C	B -
IOWA	F	C +	B -	B +
KANSAS	C	B +	B -	C +
KENTUCKY	B +	B	C	C
LOUISIANA	A	A	C -	B
MAINE	C	D	B	C -
MARYLAND	A -	C +	D +	C -
MASSACHUSETTS	A	C	B -	C -
MICHIGAN	B	D	C -	C -
MINNESOTA	C +	C	B	B
MISSISSIPPI	C +	C	D +	C -
MISSOURI	D +	B -	B	C
MONTANA	D	D +	C -	D -
NEBRASKA	D	C	C +	C +
NEVADA	B -	C	C -	A -
NEW HAMPSHIRE	C	C -	B -	D
NEW JERSEY	B +	B	B -	C -
NEW MEXICO	A	B	C	B +
NEW YORK	A	B -	C	C
NORTH CAROLINA	B	B	C +	C -
NORTH DAKOTA	C -	D +	C	D -
OHIO	A -	B	C +	C
OKLAHOMA	B +	B	C +	B -
OREGON	C +	D	C +	C -
PENNSYLVANIA	B -	B	C	C -
RHODE ISLAND	C	C -	B	D
SOUTH CAROLINA	A	A	C +	C
SOUTH DAKOTA	B -	D +	C +	C +
TENNESSEE	B	C +	C +	C
TEXAS	B -	C -	C	C -
UTAH	C +	C -	C	B +
VERMONT	B -	C -	B -	F
VIRGINIA	B	B +	C	D +
WASHINGTON	B	C	C +	C
WEST VIRGINIA	A	B	C +	B
WISCONSIN	B -	C +	B	B -
WYOMING	D	D +	B	C +

Source: *Quality Counts 2006*, from Editorial Projects in Education, publisher of *Education Week* (www.edweek.org)

*Hawaii has a single school district for the entire state and is not counted in this category.

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Constituent service

BY ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN

ONE EFFECT OF the ongoing shift in population from city to suburb is that more and more town selectmen in Massachusetts have constituencies that dwarf that of city councilors. The Bay State's largest town, Framingham (population 65,598), has regular town meetings but is otherwise governed by five selectmen, or one for every 13,000 residents. That's a higher ratio than in 48 of the 51 communities with a city form of government—the only exceptions being Boston, Worcester, and Springfield.

In North Adams, the state's smallest city (population 14,167), there are nine councilors, or one for every 1,600 residents. There, a sharp drop in population has helped bring citizens closer to their representatives: In 1940, there was one councilor for every 2,500 residents.

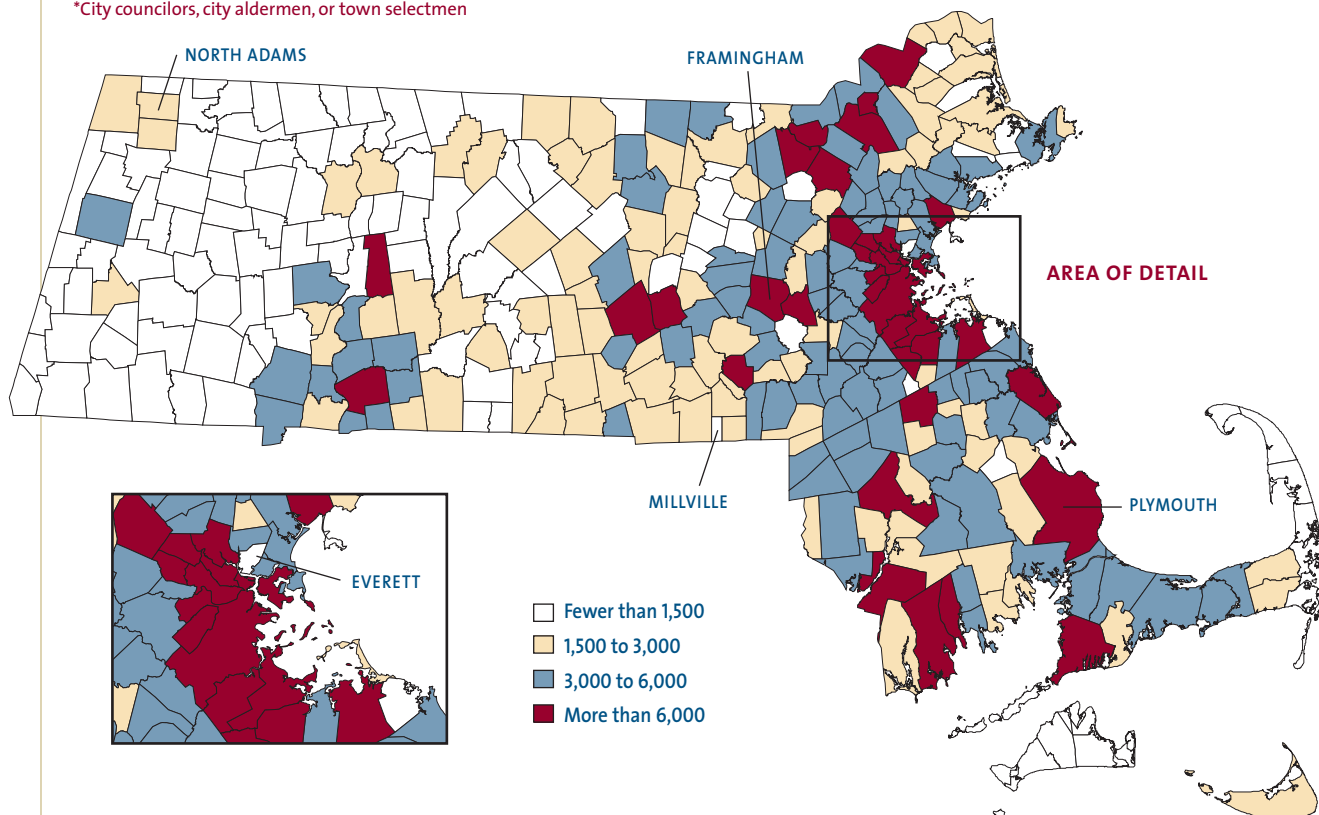
Larger constituencies may mean lower voter turnout. In the town elections of 2004, the last year for which state-compiled figures are available, the median turnout among 300 municipalities was 24 percent. But the five largest com-

munities that have stuck with town government recorded turnouts near or well below that figure: Framingham (11 percent), Brookline (17 percent), Plymouth (25 percent), Arlington (12 percent), and Billerica (20 percent). In the five smallest towns that have five-member boards of selectmen (as opposed to the state-mandated minimum of three), turnout was noticeably higher: Truro (34 percent), Wellfleet (35 percent), Millville (40 percent), Provincetown (36 percent), and Oak Bluffs (47 percent).

The number of representatives may be a factor in city elections as well. Everett has by far the biggest legislative branch in the state—consisting of 18 city councilors and a second chamber of seven aldermen—and logged an impressive turnout of about 49 percent in November 2005. But in Lawrence, which has a nine-person city council but a population almost double that of Everett, turnout was only about 30 percent, even though both cities had hotly contested mayoral races that year. **CW**

NUMBER OF RESIDENTS PER MUNICIPAL POLICY-MAKER*

*City councilors, city aldermen, or town selectmen



Sources: Massachusetts Municipal Association (www.mma.org); Massachusetts Election Statistics 2004.

STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT

BY ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN

GLOBAL SOUL MATES

We usually compare Massachusetts with other states, but there's a whole world out there to search for possible doppelgängers. According to the 2006 *World Almanac*, Massachusetts matches up almost exactly with Paraguay for total population (about 6.4 million), El Salvador for population density (820 people per square mile), Serbia/Montenegro for birth rate (12.1 per 1,000 women each year), Belgium for infant mortality (4.7 per 1,000 births), and Egypt for gross state or national product (\$320 billion).

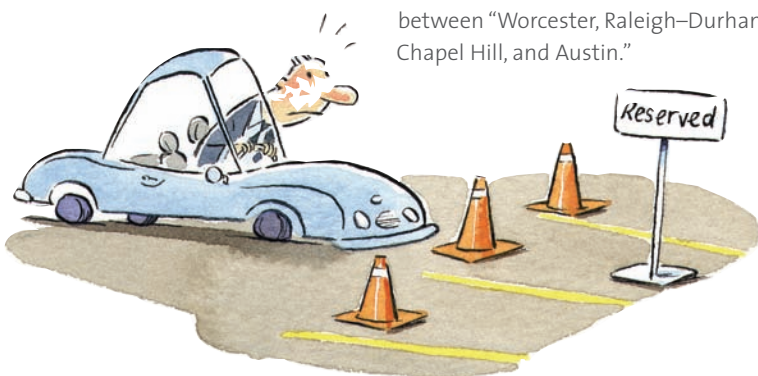
It's tougher to find a country that resembles Massachusetts in the make-up of its workforce, which has advanced beyond—or simply lost—agricultural and manufacturing jobs. Barely more than 10 percent of the Bay State's workers are in those two sectors. Outside of Vatican City, the only nation that comes close to that figure is the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, where only 14 percent of its half million people are involved with growing or making things.

PLEASE YOUR EMPLOYEES WITH PAVEMENT

"Onsite parking for employees" is the top factor for companies deciding whether to locate (or stay) in a particular location, according to *Revenue Sharing and the Future of the Massachusetts Economy*, a recent report by the Massachusetts Municipal Association and Northeastern University's Center for Urban and Regional Policy. Authors Barry Bluestone, Alan Clayton-Matthews, and David Soule surveyed 230 industrial and commercial developers across the US, who also ranked the "availability of appropriate labor" in a region and the "timeliness of approvals/appeals" in a municipality as among the most important factors in decision-making. The least important factor was whether a particular location was subject to a municipal minimum wage law. (State and local tax rates were deemed far more important.) Other low-ranked factors included access to railroads and—sorry, Harvard and MIT—proximity to research institutions and universities.

The authors conclude that local factors can outweigh statewide conditions when companies decide where to locate facilities. The choice, they say, is often not between "Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Texas" as much as

between "Worcester, Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill, and Austin."



NEW BEDFORD'S BIG HAUL

According to figures released by the US Commerce Department late last year, New Bedford was the most profitable fishing port in the nation in 2004, helped by a 35 percent jump in the sea scallop catch. The total value of fish brought into the port was \$207 million, up from \$176 million the previous year, and it was the fifth consecutive year that the dollar figure increased.

The NOAA Fisheries Service, part of the Commerce Department, also reported that Americans ate a record 16.6 pounds of fish and shellfish per person in 2004, including a record 4.2 pounds of shrimp per person. But while the consumption of fresh and frozen fish has been steadily rising, the popularity of canned tuna has slipped from 3.5 pounds per person in 2000 to 3.3 pounds in 2004. Sorry, Charlie.

UNIONS RALLY (BUT QUIETLY)

The Bay State's shift to a service economy has generally coincided with a drop in union membership, but the labor movement here was able to rebound slightly in 2005 after three years of falling numbers. According to February data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 402,000 workers, or 13.9 percent of the state's workforce, belonged to unions last year, up from 393,000 people, or 13.5 percent, in 2004. That put Massachusetts in 19th place among all states in union membership. Rhode Island was first among New England states, but its rate fell last year from 16.3 percent to 15.9 percent. Nationally, the most unionized state was New York (26.1 percent, up from 25.3 percent), and last place goes to South Carolina (2.3 percent, even lower than its 2004 rate of 3.0 percent).

GET ME STATS — STAT!

Massachusetts is second only to California in treating and preventing emergency health situations, according to a January report by the American College of Emergency Physicians. With an overall grade of "B", the Bay State scored highly in the number of physicians and nurses per capita, as well as in injury-prevention programs and immunization efforts. Mandatory helmet use for motorcyclists also got a thumbs up. But the state got a "D-" in the category of "medical liability," thanks to what the ACEP considers too high a cap on non-economic damages in malpractice suits. It also came out below average in the number of emergency departments and trauma centers per capita.

Every state in the Northeast was in the top half of ACEP's rankings, though New Hampshire barely made it at 25th place, with low numbers of hospital beds and emergency physicians relative to its population. (Its libertarian stance on motorcycle helmets—use them if you want—also got the Granite State a demerit.) Arkansas, Idaho, and Utah were at the bottom of the 50 states.



NOTHING TOPS PIZZA

New figures from the Census Bureau also confirm the popularity of seafood in the US. As of 2002, there were 0.48 restaurants that primarily served seafood for every 10,000 people, compared with 0.33 steakhouses for the same group. Unsurprisingly, the gap was larger in Massachusetts, where there were 1.04 seafood restaurants and 0.21 steakhouses for every 10,000 people. Among ethnic cuisines, Mexican was the most popular nationwide (1.01 for every 10,000 people, compared with 0.38 in Massachusetts), but Chinese was first in the Bay State (2.25 for every 10,000 people, compared with 0.99 in the US). But pizzerias were common everywhere: 1.45 per 10,000 people nationally and 1.91 for the same group in Massachusetts.

Overall, there were 13.29 "full-" or "limited-service" restaurants for every 10,000 people in the US, or one for every 753 potential diners. Bay Staters either eat out more or prefer smaller places, as there are almost exactly 15 restaurants for every 10,000 people, or one for every 667 diners.

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inquiries

No charter school to be left behind

Charter schools burst onto the scene as a bold challenge to the status quo. Supporters said that charters—which are publicly funded but operate free of bureaucratic and contractual constraints—would blaze a trail of innovation and serve as models for failing district schools. But what happens when charter schools are themselves failing?

Until now, it's been sink or swim, with the state Department of Education sticking to its role as authorizing agent. DOE approves new charter schools and reviews them every five years, with charters revoked from those judged to be not making the grade.

But after a year in which DOE revoked charters from two schools and found itself pulled into an ugly internecine battle over school leadership at a third (see "In Need of a Renaissance," *CW*, Fall '05), state education officials are laying plans for a new office to aid troubled charter schools.

The blueprint for a "Massachusetts Charter School Technical Assistance and Resource Center," outlined in a recent report commissioned by DOE, calls for a mix of public and private funding for a center to help charters with everything from governance and school operations to facilities planning.

Charter supporters say the schools need these sorts of resources, which district schools get from their local school departments. Critics are likely to see the move as a bulking up of bureaucracy, aimed at helping schools that claimed they would thrive if only freed from such nettlesome strictures.

► MICHAEL JONAS

Can review panel bring order to pension chaos?

► BY MICHAEL JONAS

WHEN HE WAS fired three years ago as the state's correction commissioner, Michael Maloney stood ready to take his medicine—but hoped for a little sugar to help it go down. Maloney, who was ousted in the wake of the controversy over the prison killing of defrocked priest John Geoghan, sought to be placed in the same retirement category as corrections officers and other front-line public safety officials, a change that would have increased his annual pension payout from \$41,000 to more than \$82,000, according to a *Boston Globe* account at the time. The state retirement board turned Maloney down, but his request cast a spotlight on the case-by-case way in which individuals and groups of employees sometimes get favored pension status.

"Confusion is the only way to react to a system that has no logic to it whatsoever," says state Rep. Jay Kaufman, a Lexington Democrat who is House chairman of the Legislature's Joint Committee on Public Service. As many as 200 bills are referred to the committee each session petitioning to have an individual position or group of workers moved up, by statute, in the state's four-tier system for classifying retirement benefits. Meanwhile, the state retirement board

KAUFMAN: THE TIERED SYSTEM 'HAS NO LOGIC TO IT WHATSOEVER.'

reviews 30 to 50 applications a month from workers asking to be assigned to a higher pension group administratively.

Hoping to tame a retirement-classification beast that has fed for decades off political influence, Kaufman and his public service committee colleagues in March appointed a blue-ribbon panel of outside experts to recommend reforms to the retirement classification system.

The rationale behind the tiered system is that those in more hazardous occupations should be able to retire earlier with full pensions than those in lower categories. But over the years, the statute that defines who falls into the highest categories has come to look like a Christmas tree, loaded up with more and more job titles.

Among those at one time added to the second tier, whose members can retire five years earlier than those in the first tier at the same level of pension benefits, were all employees of Cushing Hospital, a now-shuttered state facility in Brockton. The highest pension category, Group 4, includes, along with various public safety officials, "licensed electricians" at the Massachusetts Port Authority, along with a handful of other Massport trades. The long list of Group 4 jobs also includes "the conservation officer of the city of Haverhill." A Group 4 classification allows workers to retire 10 years earlier than those in Group 1



Panel member Alicia Munnell says even the idea of higher pensions for hazardous jobs may be ripe for review.

at the same level of pension benefits.

"It's nuts. It's no way to run a railroad," says Alan Macdonald, executive director of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable and a member of the special review panel. "Frankly, if you happen to have an influential legislator on your side, you're likely to be able to make the switch."

Alicia Munnell, director of the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College and chairman of the special pension panel, says even the premise of favorable retirement benefits for more hazardous jobs may be ripe for review. The promise of reward in retirement may "inhibit movement in and out" of these jobs, impeding career advancement, says Munnell, a former member of the President's Council of Economic Advisors. Higher pay during the working years might be a more appropriate reward, she says.

Pensions are a touchy subject in the public sector, where rich benefits are often seen as compensating for modest pay scales. That makes pensions a "potential third-rail issue," says Macdonald. Kaufman describes union leaders as "understandably at least attentive, if not nervous," about the classification review.

But one union official says changes would be welcome if they leveled the pension paying field. "An evaluation of the group classification system is long overdue," says Jim Durkin, a spokesman for AFSCME Council 93, which has about 35,000 members in Massachusetts. "Dealing with inequities in the system through hundreds of petitions each legislative

session has clearly proven to be problematic."

"My whole life is devoted to making sure people have secure retirements, so we're not out to hurt people," says Munnell, a nationally recognized expert on retirement issues. "But we want a system that will stand up scrutiny."

But it will be the recommendations of the eight-member panel, due June 15, that first undergo scrutiny. Any changes in the retirement system will have to pass muster with lawmakers who have shown little appetite for tinkering with public-employee perks.

"Could this be a hard sell?" asks Kaufman. "Yes."

Reentry plan for ex-offenders still looking for entrée

► BY MICHAEL JONAS

A NEW YORKER cartoon captured the problem succinctly. It showed a prison cellblock with a large banner hanging overhead: WELCOME BACK, RECIDIVISTS!

According to a 2002 report by the Massachusetts Sentencing Commission, 49 percent of those released from state and county correctional facilities commit a new offense within one year, a figure that is in line with national recidivism rates. "Incarceration works—until you let people out," says Lt. Gov. Kerry Healey.

So the search is on for ways to break the revolving-door syndrome of offenders going in and out of prison. One strategy gaining favor here is to require a mandatory period of supervision for every offender released from incarceration. But that doesn't mean the idea is gaining traction.

Of the 17,000 inmates let out of Massachusetts jails and prisons each year, nearly half have no mandated post-release supervision. One reason is tougher sentencing laws that often allow little room for parole. And as a 2002 MassINC study, *From Cell to Street*, pointed out, an increasing number of prisoners who are eligible for parole opt to compete their full sentences rather than apply for it—making sure they leave prison with no ongoing oversight.

"It's beyond ironic, it is madness, that we allow people to determine themselves whether they are supervised when they get out," Jeremy Travis, the president of John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York and a leading authority on prison reentry, told *CommonWealth* last year ("Approaching Reentry," *CW*, Summer '05).

In February 2005 the Romney administration filed leg-

isolation calling for mandatory post-release supervision of all released offenders. The bill would revamp sentencing laws to include post-release supervision of every inmate for nine months or for a period equal to 25 percent of the maximum sentence they received, whichever is longer. Similar legislation has been filed by Democratic state representatives Michael Festa, Barry Finegold, and Marie St. Fleur, while Democratic Sen. Cynthia Creem is sponsor of a bill combining post-release supervision with parole eligibility for drug offenders serving mandatory minimum sentences.

Despite support on both sides of the aisle, however, the idea of expanded post-release supervision seems stuck at the starting gate. In November, the Legislature's Joint Committee on the Judiciary heard testimony on the bills. But the committee has yet to take action, and there is little prospect of anything happening before the end of formal legislative sessions July 31.

Former attorney general Scott Harshbarger, who resigned in December from a state advisory commission on corrections reform, voiced frustration with the failure to move aggressively to implement the top-to-bottom changes the panel recommended, including mandatory post-release supervision of ex-offenders. Harshbarger says the Legislature

has largely "abdicated" responsibility for corrections reform, with House leaders not even filling the two slots on the advisory panel designated for state representatives.

Rep. Eugene O'Flaherty, the House chairman of the judiciary committee, says there may be a good case for post-release supervision of those convicted of violent crimes or drug offenses, but he's not sure it is warranted for every

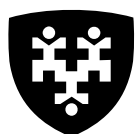
offender. What's more, though the committee heard compelling arguments in favor of post-release supervision, "what we didn't hear a

HEALEY: NO NEED FOR 'ANOTHER TASK FORCE.'

lot of testimony on was the fiscal side of this," says O'Flaherty. Nonetheless, the House budget released in April includes an additional \$1 million for prisoner reentry services.

Advocates say reduced recidivism rates would eventually save the state money by lowering the population behind bars, where costs per inmate exceed \$40,000 a year. But those savings, if they materialize at all, would come down the road, while the bill for an expanded supervision system would come due much sooner.

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O'Flaherty says he plans to form a small "working group" representing different facets of the criminal justice community to shape a post-release supervision bill that could be taken up next session. But Healey says the time for that has come and gone.

"This bill was filed over a year ago as a result of over a year of work where all the key stakeholders from the criminal justice world were in place," says Healey. "Another task force to look at this is probably not necessary. Now is the time to move forward."

"We know what works," says Harshbarger. "What we lack is the political will."

Political will may well be lacking, but there are also questions about what does work. A 2005 study by the Urban Institute found little difference in recidivism rates among those released under parole versus those with no post-release supervision.

Leslie Walker, executive director of Massachusetts Correctional Legal Services, says she is not surprised. With corrections spending already approaching \$1 billion, Walker thinks post-release supervision would be throwing "good money after bad" unless it's part of a broader set of reforms, including intensive education and job training within prisons, plus help in navigating the employment hurdles ex-offenders face because of their criminal records.

"Those two things would be much more helpful to recidivism than following these guys around who get dumped on the street with a \$50 check and no skills," she says.

Still, if lawmakers are not jumping on the bandwagon for post-release supervision, an approach with a considerable public safety component, it's hard to imagine mustering the "political will" for a more ambitious reentry agenda.

In Fitchburg, an arts pilot school takes off but may hit turbulence

► BY GABRIELLE GURLEY

WOULD YOU LEND ancient Chinese masterpieces to a middle school? Maybe not, but the Sackler Foundation didn't blink before sending 33 priceless artifacts, among them Chinese Buddhas and tomb figures dating from 2000 BC, for use at Fitchburg's Museum Partnership School.

"We think that's a unique situation," says Roger Dell, education director at the Fitchburg Art Museum, which has been affiliated with the public arts magnet school since it opened in 1995.



The Fitchburg Art Museum's Roger Dell inspects an item loaned from the Sackler Foundation.

The long-term loan by the renowned New York City-based Asian art collection made in August 2005 was just another milestone for the Museum Partnership School. The Fitchburg middle school was already the only one outside the Big Apple to participate in the Lincoln Center's Focus Schools Collaborative. Under this program, Fitchburg teachers train in New York, then invite a dance, music, or theater group affiliated with the center to perform back home.

"Unique" is the watchword again this fall, as the school—along with the Fitchburg Public Schools district—becomes the first outside of Boston to adopt the pilot school model.

First established in Boston in 1995, pilot schools are public schools that get charter school-like management autonomy, but remain part of a local school district, with the blessing of the local teachers' union. At least, that was the case in Boston until 2004, when Boston Teachers Union president Richard Stutman blocked the conversion of Allston's Gardner Elementary School to pilot status, despite approval from the school's teachers. After protracted negotiations, which resulted in limits to how many hours pilot-school teachers could work, even voluntarily, without additional compensation, the public schools, the teachers' union, and city officials agreed in February to open seven new pilot schools by 2009, including one that the teachers' union will run *sans* principal, a Massachusetts first.

"The pilot idea really came from teachers themselves. This is not a top-down reform that was imposed on resistant faculty or unions," says Paul Grogan, president of the Boston Foundation. "It was really a tremendous process of cooperation and thinking that led to this in the mid '90s, and now it may have the opportunity to reach its full potential."

Now that's true in Fitchburg as well as Boston. Fitchburg Superintendent of Schools Andre Ravenelle says the school district, the teachers' union, and the art museum wanted to formalize their relationship and give the school more in-



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To learn more, contact Jessica Spohn, Project Director, New England Literacy Resource Center, at (617) 482-9485, ext. 513, or through e-mail at jspohn@worlded.org. (The Project is funded by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation through the LiFELiNE initiative.)



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dependence. They did so with the help of a \$600,000 grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The school now serves 167 fifth- through eighth-grade students but will grow to 200 middle-schoolers plus an arts high school, scheduled to open in 2007, enrolling 100 students each year for four years. That's a long way from 1995, when two teachers put together small classes at the museum to motivate eight low-performing and truant-prone students who were considered "visual learners."

The pilot school experiment comes just in time for the 5,700-student Fitchburg Public Schools, which narrowly escaped branding as an "underperforming" district in 2004

PILOTS, UNLIKE CHARTERS, HAVE UNIONS ON BOARD.

and was instead placed on the state's "watch" list.

Pilots can be the path to improvement for districts like Fitchburg, says Grogan, whose foundation is a major financial supporter of

Boston's pilot schools. Although they have similar management autonomy, pilots have an advantage over Commonwealth charter schools because they remain rooted in the district, benefiting from resources such as transportation, facilities, food services, and legal support, says Dan French, executive director of the Center for Collaborative Education, which works with pilot schools in Boston and now in Fitchburg. According to a January 2006 study by the center, Boston pilot students post higher MCAS scores, head to college in greater numbers, and post higher attendance rates than students in traditional public schools. The 145-school Boston district has 19 pilots enrolling 5,900 children, about 10 percent of the school population.

Getting teachers' unions, historically hostile to charters, on board is another plus. "The power of the pilot model is that it does require the school district and teachers' union to enter into a transformed partnership to create an entirely different kind of school," French says.

In both these ways pilot schools are similar to the underutilized Horace Mann in-district charter schools, of which there are only eight statewide, compared with 51 Commonwealth charter schools as of this fall.

Fitchburg Superintendent Ravenelle was previously involved in an effort to create an entire district of Horace Mann charter schools (abandoned, in part, because the state Department of Education looked askance at the plan) when he was superintendent of the Barnstable Public Schools (see "Unchartered Waters," CW, Fall '03).

In Fitchburg, Ravenelle, who himself dabbles in pastels, sees the pilot approach as conducive to reaching out to teachers within his district. "Are you an artist? Are you someone who appreciates art, and you're also a science teacher? How would like to apply for this?" says Ravenelle.

But this is where things get dicey. In addition to signing on to an "election-to-work" agreement outlining school policies that differ from district rules (length of day, professional development responsibilities, additional duties and the like) current arts middle school staff may have to reapply for their jobs—a potentially contentious issue that is unresolved as *CommonWealth* goes to press.

For teachers who brought the school from its infancy, "it's almost like a slap in the face to be asked to reapply," says Chad Radock, president of the Fitchburg Teachers Association. Current staff do have relevant program experience, acknowledges Fitchburg Art Museum's Dell. "But we're going to have an open process at looking at who are the best teachers for this program," he says.

Will pilot schools be a hit in Fitchburg? Radock is taking a wait-and-see attitude, but Fitchburg Mayor Dan Mylott is already preparing to boast. "I think what we are going to have is a terrific model for other communities to emulate," Mylott says.

Sports and politics are no double dribble for new Kerry aide

► BY MARK MURPHY

JON JENNINGS KNOWS a thing or two about the transition game. And not just the kind he helped direct during eight years with the Boston Celtics, the last four as one of the NBA's youngest assistant coaches. The 43-year-old Indiana native has also managed to move smoothly between the worlds of sports and politics, recently becoming point guard in Massachusetts for US Sen. John Kerry.

"Here's a guy who used to be an assistant coach for the Celtics—any red-blooded guy's dream job—and he gave that up to work in public service," said Kerry in a statement. "Jon has been terrific. Everyone in Massachusetts knows him, so he was able to hit the ground running."

After leaving the Celtics in 1994, Jennings enrolled at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, from which he moved on to a stint as a White House fellow and acting assistant attorney general in the Clinton administration, afterward making a failed run for Congress in Indiana two years ago. In his latest post, which he started in December, Jennings serves as Kerry's state director, cutting through clogged bureaucratic channels for constituents and keeping the lines of communication open between Kerry and state leaders on Beacon Hill.

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"It's good for me that I met people at a high level in sports at a young age, because I haven't been starry-eyed or intimidated by working for the president of the United States, or for a United States senator," says Jennings.

Jennings started out on the sports track as a 22-year-old Indiana University student, compiling and editing videotape for one of the most combustible sports figures in the country, former Hoosiers men's basketball coach Bobby Knight. As a White House Fellow, post-Celtics, Jennings was asked to prepare a scouting report for President Bill Clinton on Michael Jordan's Chicago Bulls, on the occasion of the Washington Wizards christening the MCI Center.

"I still had my [scouting] software in my computer, so that wasn't a problem," says Jennings. "I could tell he really went over it, too, because when ESPN interviewed him after the game, he went into an incredible amount of detail."

Even as a young Celtics assistant, Jennings felt the pull of public life. He often made the short walk from Boston Garden to the State House and introduced himself to state legislators. He was known throughout the league as the 27-year-old assistant coach who could quote Winston Churchill, one of his early heroes.

When the Celtics presented Nelson Mandela with a Celtics jersey during a 1990 Boston visit by the South African president, Jennings was chosen to do the honors. Jennings also founded, along with the late Reggie Lewis, Team Harmony, a foundation that promotes racial understanding and public service among local students. When the Celtics star died in 1993, Jennings carried on the project with the help of Leonard Zakim and the Anti-Defamation League, which continues to sponsor Team Harmony.

In 2004, Jennings parlayed his passion for politics into a run for Congress in his native Indiana. Fellow Hoosier Larry Bird and former Celtics president Arnold "Red" Auerbach sponsored fundraisers, highlighted by a golf tournament that helped Jennings raise \$1.5 million for his campaign.

"I couldn't care less about politics," says Auerbach, in his trademark growl. "But I wanted to do something for Jon."

Democratic leaders held out hope that Jennings might be able to topple six-term Republican US Rep. John Hostettler in an Indiana district known for close elections. In the end, however, Hostettler held on easily, winning 53-45.

With his sleeves now rolled up tending Kerry's Bay State outposts, Jennings is in a place that has long been fertile ground for sports and politics alike, and he feels the tug of both. He says wouldn't mind, at some point, coaching a college basketball team. Should Kerry mount a second run for the presidency, however, Jennings would want to be on board, and he hasn't ruled out running for office again himself.

"He's got the bug," says Auerbach.

Mark Murphy is a sportswriter for the Boston Herald.

Tax break falls short for Fairhaven — and call-center workers

► BY DAVID UNDERCOFFLER

AN AT&T CALL center in Fairhaven will soon close its doors after a contentious nine-year relationship with the town, leaving many people feeling like they've been hung up on. Workers at the facility and municipal leaders have been crying foul over the company's failure to live up to the job-creating promises of a tax-incentive agreement between AT&T and the town, while the struggling telecom giant says the planned shutdown is the result of declining call volume and a restructuring of their call center operations. Caught between the two sides are officials in different state agencies, who have been in a row of their own over whether the state has been vigilant enough in making sure companies receiving tax breaks live up to their end of the bargain.

It all began in April 1997, when AT&T approached Fairhaven with an offer to turn a vacant building the company owned there into a service center for online account representatives, pledging to hire 1,200 employees. "AT&T promised us a bed of roses," says Linda Teoli, president of the Communication Workers of America Local 1051, the union that represents AT&T employees.

In exchange, the company sought a Tax Increment Financing plan, or TIF. TIFs were created under the Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP) the state launched in 1993 as a way to encourage business development in economically depressed areas. Under a TIF, the company makes improvements to an existing facility in exchange for a property-tax break on the value of the improvements for a period of five to 20 years.

With an unemployment rate at the time of 6.4 percent in surrounding Bristol County, compared with the state average of 4.1 percent, the town of 16,000 jumped at the deal. Fairhaven's board of selectmen voted unanimously for a five-year TIF granting AT&T a 40 percent reduction on the property tax due for the value added to the building. The plan took effect January 1, 1998, with AT&T spending about \$5 million to update the \$20 million facility.

At its peak, between 1998 and 1999, the call center employed about 1,100 people, according to Teoli. But in 2000, she says, AT&T stopped hiring new employees and began to lose nearly 20 people a month through attrition. Furthermore, AT&T failed to file annual reports required under the state tax-credit program detailing, among other things, a head count of call center employees. When Fairhaven pressed for such figures, town officials found the company's

method of counting questionable, with non-AT&T employees such as painters and cleaners included in the workforce count, according to Jeffery Osuch, executive secretary to the board of selectmen. And union leaders began to have misgivings about the TIF agreement.

But by then the town had little recourse. Under Massachusetts law, a municipality may revoke its designation of a TIF zone at any time, and in February 2002 Fairhaven's board of selectmen voted unanimously to do just that. However, AT&T had already been sent its fifth and final discounted tax bill, so it was too late for the town to cut off any of the tax benefits. All told, the town gave up \$127,949 in property tax revenue over the five-year agreement with AT&T, according to Fairhaven's tax assessor.

Since then, AT&T's employment numbers in Fairhaven have continued to decline. A round of layoffs in November 2004 left the call center with just 185 employees, all of whom were served notice in February of this year that the center would be closed on April 21. In early April, the company notified workers that it would postpone the shutdown for

THE TOWN GAVE UP \$127,949 IN TAXES, AND AT&T CUT 1,100 JOBS.

two months, and the state came through with \$100,000 in worker retraining funding.

Though the workers and town officials feel burned by the tax deal, such agreements are usually beneficial all around, says Renee Fry, director of the state's Department of Business and Technology. "The [EDIP program] has been an unqualified success," she says. Since 1993, EDIP has created more than 60,000 jobs, retained nearly 100,000 jobs, and leveraged over \$10 billion in private investment, according to Joe Donovan, spokesman for the Executive Office of Economic Development.

Yet EDIP is not without its critics. In January 2004, Inspector General Gregory Sullivan wrote to Alan LeBovidge, commissioner of the Department of Revenue, citing a chronic lack of oversight of the EDIP program, in which companies can also receive a 5 percent credit against state taxes for capital investments. "The EDIP... is an example of a tax credit program in need of reform," wrote Sullivan.

At the time of Sullivan's review, Massachusetts law did not give DOR authority to act when businesses failed to deliver on promises made under the program. That changed in 2004, when the Legislature gave DOR the power to decertify a company from EDIP if it was providing no economic benefits to their host communities.

Whether this additional authority will prove effective remains to be seen. The inspector general wrote another letter to LeBovidge in February, citing 55 businesses that failed to hire the agreed-upon number of employees in

2004, yet still received tax breaks. "In effect," wrote Sullivan, "the businesses received 100 percent of the available tax credits, or \$7,958 for each new job, while only meeting 34 percent of their job creation goals."

LeBovidge responded by letter, stating that of those 55 businesses, 42 had not filed state tax returns claiming the credit since the DOR was granted the new oversight authority in August 2004. He said DOR was reviewing the other 13 businesses, and he assured Sullivan that his office would revoke the TIF certification for any that were deemed to be "not in compliance" with the job commitment standards set forth in the new 2004 enforcement statute. LeBovidge added, however, that the standard does not require that a company reach 100 percent of the job projection contained in its original proposal.

Despite the inspector general's criticisms, Sullivan's office favors the program as a whole. "We don't think it's a bad idea to incent businesses to do business in Massachusetts," says Jack McCarthy, senior assistant inspector general. "It's the lack of oversight that hurts the program."

Unfortunately for Fairhaven, no such oversight was in place when AT&T failed to meet employment projections, and the fate of displaced Fairhaven AT&T employees today remains unknown. Under the three-year contract that went

into effect in December 2005, AT&T's only obligation was to offer employment at another call center. The location AT&T ponied up: El Paso, Texas.

"This is ludicrous, because they have centers right in Connecticut," says Teoli. "Instead of letting [displaced employees] move and relocate to Connecticut, they choose Texas, 2,000 miles away, because they knew people wouldn't go, in my opinion."

AT&T has little to say about the ordeal. Walt Sharp, a spokesman for the company, says simply that AT&T decided to close the Fairhaven operation "because of declining call volume coming into that center." As for why Fairhaven workers were only offered transfers to Texas, Sharp says call center consolidations are based on a variety of factors, including physical plant and workforce availability.

Despite Fairhaven's bad experience with AT&T over the past nine years, town officials are reluctant to bite the tax-credit hand that also feeds them: It was a TIF agreement that encouraged Titleist, one of the world's largest golf ball makers, to relocate its corporate headquarters and worldwide distribution center to Fairhaven.

"I can't say they are a bad idea," says Osuch, the board of selectmen's executive secretary. "Unfortunately it didn't work out with AT&T." **CW**



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King of the hills

After a decade in Congress, Jim McGovern has become the go-to guy in Worcester County and a force on Capitol Hill **BY SHAWN ZELLER**

BALD AND BESPECTACLED, he doesn't exactly look like power in pinstripes as he moves through the Capitol. Still, after 10 years in Congress, Jim McGovern is increasingly taking on the aura of a certified Massachusetts powerbroker, even if he's quick to deny it.

"That's not the way I see myself," says the 46-year-old congressman from Worcester, whose district extends southeast to take in part of Fall River. McGovern says he's "just a hard working, bread and butter, nuts and bolts congressman who wants to make a difference for his district."

But the 3rd Congressional District representative has also spawned a political subculture in the City of Seven Hills and beyond, becoming the undisputed go-to guy in central Massachusetts—a role in his region that few, if any, of his colleagues in the state's congressional delegation can lay claim to in theirs. Among his protégés: former McGovern campaign coordinator Timothy Murray, who went on to become Worcester mayor and is now a candidate for lieutenant governor, and Ed Augustus, onetime McGovern chief of staff, who won election to the state Senate in 2004.

Not surprisingly, McGovern downplays his role as political godfather. "If I can encourage good people to pursue politics and government as a career, that's all to the good," he says.

McGovern himself needed little encouragement, even though he was considered a long shot in the 1996 race against two-term incumbent Republican Peter Blute, two years after failing in a bid for the Democratic nomination. But since then, the left-leaning McGovern has had an easy go of it in less-than-liberal central Massachusetts. His GOP challenger in 2004, anti-gay marriage activist Ron Crews, couldn't muster even 30 percent of the vote. Thus far, he has no announced

opponents in this year's election.

"Jim's demeanor is down-to-earth friendly," says Augustus. But "it masks a backbone of steel. People look at him and say he's an easygoing guy. But he can fight hard."

McGovern studied at the knees of two very different Democratic Party masters, the late South Boston congressman Joe Moakley and former US Sen. George McGovern. He worked as an aide to both men, toiling on Capitol Hill for 17 years before winning office on his own, and he is in many ways a composite of his two mentors. From Moakley, he inherited a bring-home-the-bacon devotion to district interests. From the former South Dakota senator whose surname he shares (they are not related), McGovern acquired an unvarnished liberalism that he practices without apology.

"I love this job," says McGovern. "I want to keep it, but not so much that I want to sell out all my convictions and at every vote stick my finger up and see which way the wind is blowing."

The combination has served McGovern—and his district—well, even in the eyes of constituents who may not share his passion for bleeding-heart causes. "Everyone doesn't have to agree with every position he takes, but from an economic development perspective, he's been quite effective," says Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce president Richard Kennedy.

Former state senator Guy Glodis—the Worcester County sheriff and a socially conservative Democrat who's often considered a McGovern rival—also has almost nothing but praise. "We don't always agree on the issues," he admits, but quickly adds, "Jim McGovern is a great congressman—accessible, visible, and effective." That despite the fact that the two differ on some major culture-war issues, such as the death penalty, which Glodis



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favors in contrast to McGovern, and gay marriage, which McGovern champions and Glodis opposes.

How influential McGovern is in politics outside of Worcester County will soon be seen. Last year, he became one of the first high-profile Massachusetts politicians to endorse Deval Patrick in his bid to wrest the Democratic gubernatorial nomination from the establishment favorite, Attorney General Tom Reilly. McGovern met Patrick, who has been embraced by the party's liberal wing, at a political function, then got together with him privately.

"We had a three-hour dinner," says McGovern. "We talked about everything. I'd been reading his speeches. I decided this guy is the real deal." Since then, McGovern says, "I've been campaigning my ass off for him."

As much as McGovern's brand of full-throated liberalism seems to descend from his almost namesake, his passion for social causes was as much honed in service to Moakley, the longtime chairman of the powerful House Rules Committee. In 1990, Moakley sent McGovern to El Salvador as part of a House task force that investigated the murders of six priests, their housekeeper, and her daughter in 1989. McGovern's work is credited with revealing the depravity of the Salvadoran army, then funded by the United States as a bulwark against communism. McGovern has continued to advocate for the closure of the Western Hemispheric Institute for Security Cooperation, a US Army school that trained Salvadoran military officers. He's also continued to work on issues of poverty in the developing world, chairing the Congressional Hunger Caucus.

As he was dying of leukemia in 2001, Moakley asked then-House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt of Missouri to ensure that his seat on the Rules Committee went to McGovern. Rules is considered one of the most powerful committees in the House because it sets the terms for debate on every bill that passes through the chamber. It was a valuable gift, and McGovern—now the second-ranking Democrat on Rules behind 76-year-old Louise Slaughter of New York—says his career ambition is to take over the committee chairmanship eventually. If that dream were to come true, it would vault him to the pinnacle of national power, which for McGovern would be a change of pace. Unlike his mentor Moakley, McGovern has never spent a day in the House majority. To win victories, he has had to make friends on both sides of the aisle, following his mentor's advice: "Get to know every single person here on a first-name basis," because "a lot of what gets done up here is based on relationships."

Sometimes, that means getting on a conference committee that's resolving differences between the House and Senate on a bill. That's how McGovern managed to amend last year's transportation funding bill to bar destruction of the Brightman Street Bridge, which spans the Taunton River between Fall River and Somerset. McGovern's move

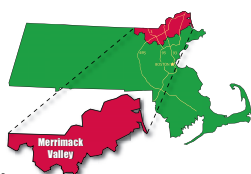


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kept a literal barrier in the way of plans for a liquefied natural gas terminal in Fall River, preventing the passage upstream of tall LNG tankers to the proposed docking site ("Congressional Club," Washington Notebook, CW, Fall '05). McGovern has been an outspoken critic of the project, arguing that the risk of terrorism is too great to allow flammable LNG near a population center.

It's been harder for McGovern to get his way on matters of national policy. He's been a vocal opponent of US

He's an unvarnished liberal who delivers for his district.

involvement in Iraq, and he believes the United States should withdraw troops immediately. Like the state's senior US senator, Ted Kennedy, he wants to expand Medicare until every American has health insurance. He'd also like the federal government to be doing much more to regulate polluters, combat greenhouse gases blamed for global warming, and fight poverty.

Still, by picking his battles and his allies, McGovern has scored some victories. He worked closely with North Carolina GOP Sen. Elizabeth Dole to boost funding for

an international school lunch program, which he considers one of his proudest achievements. In 2005, the program provided \$91 million in food to 3.4 million children in 15 developing countries.

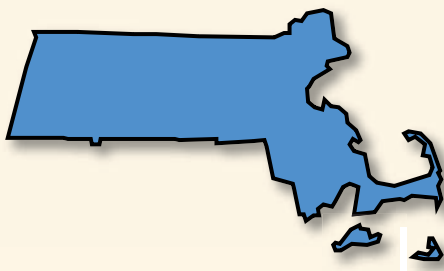
He's also worked to overturn the decades-old embargo on trade with Cuba, and is working with the Cuban government to preserve the home of author Ernest Hemingway, who lived on the island from the late 1930s to 1960. Though he's teamed with like-minded Republicans on Cuba relations, it's this kind of thing that drives hometown Republicans crazy.

"To give Jim McGovern credit, he brings projects and money to the district," says Michael Theerman, past president of the Worcester County Republican Club. "Politically, though, he is way too far to the left for the district. He likes to mollycoddle up to dictators."

So far, his politics have done McGovern little damage at home, and in Washington, he has gotten used to operating in the opposition, though he'd love for that to change. "[There is a case] to be made that people like me may be of greater service in the minority than the majority," he says. "I don't want to test that thesis for very much longer." **CW**

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Choose or lose

Reeling from years of mismanagement, an upscale town faced bad options: a tax hike or a plea for help from the state **BY RAY HAINER**

MEDWAY On a Monday night in late February, several hundred residents of this small town on Interstate 495 gathered in the high school auditorium for what was said to be the first-ever “State of the Town” meeting.

As everyone already knew by then, the state of the town was not good. Two-thirds into the 2006 fiscal year, Medway was staring at a \$1.8 million deficit. If the town couldn’t come up with the money in the next four months, it would default on its bills, and its finances could fall under state control.

Town officials called the meeting to inform taxpayers about their two choices for closing the deficit: a Proposition 2½ override to raise the property tax, or a \$3 million loan from the state that would be repaid over 10 years, with interest. The message to residents was unpleasant but clear. “You obviously are not going to do nothing,” said Suzanne Kennedy, the town administrator, “because we can’t continue to exist as an operating entity and do nothing.” She added, “Neither option is terribly attractive.”

The town ultimately decided to pursue both options. At a meeting on March 13, the board of selectmen scheduled an override referendum for April 24 (after *CommonWealth* went to press), and a week later, as a backup plan, town meeting authorized the selectmen to petition the state Legislature for the loan. (The loan petition will be withdrawn if the override passes.) After so much that has gone wrong for the town over the years, few were willing to put their faith in a single solution.

Medway is not alone in its money troubles. Certain costs, including energy bills and municipal employees’ health insurance, are rising rapidly throughout Massachusetts. And in most places, special education programs mandated by the state are eating up an ever-greater portion of the school

budget. More important, as town officials will tell you, these costs are outpacing state aid. It’s no surprise, then, that nearly a dozen towns are facing budget gaps of up to \$4 million and are considering Proposition 2½ overrides.

Towns like Needham and Shrewsbury, however, are facing shortfalls for the upcoming fiscal year, 2007. Medway is perhaps the only town in Massachusetts with a significant shortfall in the *current* fiscal year. That the town even considered a bailout loan from the state is another dubious distinction. While cities such as Pittsfield and, most recently and notoriously, Springfield have received such loans in the past, Medway would be just the third town in the last decade to opt for one. Southbridge borrowed money from the state early last year, and Swansea—a town about the size of Medway that was also facing a \$1.8 million deficit—borrowed \$2.5 million in 2002. Wall Street has taken notice of Medway’s troubles and the possibility of its joining such bad company: Moody’s Investors Service recently downgraded the town’s bond rating and placed the town on a 90-day credit watch, with no guarantee that the rating would be helped by either an override or a state loan.

HOW DID IT come to this? How did an affluent town of 13,000 residents (its 1999 median household income was \$75,000, or almost 50 percent above the state average) with a \$37 million budget arrive at the brink of default?

This question has been the subject of considerable finger-pointing in Medway for some time. After several years of financial missteps, budget shortfalls, override debates, and budget cuts, it became obvious that a problem existed, but no one knew definitively who or what was to blame. “The

problem,” says resident Ted Hurlbut, “is that we’re spending more than we’re bringing in. And nobody seems to be able to get their hands around that.” More complicated explanations have begun to emerge only in recent months, thanks to what town officials refer to as a “forensic” audit.

Suzanne Kennedy, a former town and county administrator on Nantucket who more recently served for seven years as budget director in Rochester, NY, was hired as Medway’s town administrator because of her expertise in municipal finance. When she took over in mid-July, she declared that she was “focused exclusively on bringing fiscal order to Medway.” That proved a more difficult task than she expected. Within a month of her arrival, the town’s accountant and treasurer resigned—a bad sign. “The deficiencies are much more extensive than what was represented to me,” she told the *Milford Daily News* in mid-September.

Around this time, the state Department of Revenue issued a report, solicited by the five-member Medway board of selectmen, on the town’s finances. The DOR report pointed to the strain placed on the town’s finances by its growth over the past 20 years,

announced it was abandoning its plans for the new plant. (The company, Sithe Energies, blamed price caps on electric energy imposed by ISO New England, the entity that oversees the wholesale energy market in the region. See “Power Failure, *CW*, Winter ’06.) Town officials, in the thick of budget season at the time, saw its budget gap suddenly double, to more than \$2 million.

Even after taking the town’s population growth and the

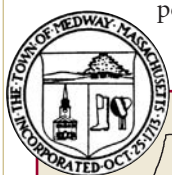
Override opponents decry an ‘entitlement mentality.’

power-plant debacle into account, DOR pointed to mismanagement stretching back more than 10 years as the source of the town’s financial woes. The report criticized the board of selectmen and a former town administrator, but zeroed in on incompetence in the town’s financial offices.

The town’s forensic audit has only amplified the DOR report. Kennedy, working alongside a \$100-an-hour consultant hired by the town, has discovered what she has called “incredible dysfunction.” Town employees, according to Kennedy, were neither following standard accounting practices nor conducting rudimentary budget forecasting. Among other failings, they consistently budgeted insufficient amounts for predictable cost increases, such as health insurance. In one egregious example, for several years the town set aside just over \$50,000 for snow and ice removal, then paid for the inevitable overruns, usually three or four times that amount, out of its cash reserves. (Besides being a safety net, cash reserves are an important factor in a town’s bond rating.)

But some residents see more than incompetence at work. They say the town has lacked fiscal discipline, and has grown accustomed to living beyond its means. In the 1990s, says Hurlbut, who has lived in Medway for 20 years, “When we should have been socking away some rainy-day cash, we were out spending it, down to the last dollar. So on top of the fiscal mismanagement, there is also a sense in town that the group of people that have chosen to pull papers for elections have never been able to say no to a spending proposal.”

Joe Dzikczek, who has been a selectman in Medway for all but three of the last 14 years, disputes that the town’s spending in the 1990s was excessive. Each year, he points out, selectmen scaled back budget requests from the various town departments. On the other hand, Dzikczek admits that longstanding budget practices such as underfunding snow and ice removal were effectively “raiding” the town’s reserves in order to avoid cuts to the operating budget. “That’s bad management,” says Dzikczek, “but it’s what they [town officials] had to do to get [the budget] through town meeting.” He adds, “We couldn’t put



► MEDWAY

INCORPORATED: 1713
POPULATION: 12,886
TOWN MEETING: OPEN

during which the number of single-family land parcels in town increased by more than half, from roughly 2,350 to 3,560. Since 1980, the town’s population has grown by more than a third, from around 8,500 to nearly 13,000.

DOR also noted the town’s recent loss of a potential major source of revenue. In 2001, at a town meeting at which they also approved the construction of a \$39 million high school, residents voted to allow the expansion of a local power plant in exchange for \$50 million, to be paid out over 20 years as an alternative to property taxes. (Both the town and power plant preferred a sum that would not be affected by changes, upward or downward, in the property tax rate.) The expansion involved a 540-megawatt plant next to an existing 160-megawatt plant on a seven-acre site, and it would have added a much-needed revenue stream to Medway’s overwhelmingly residential tax base. But a year later, as construction was about to begin on the high school, the energy company

\$200,000 more into the snow removal because we didn't have it. We would have had to close down the library."

Nevertheless, Dziczek blames the current crisis largely on a convergence of trends over the past four or five years. "Not to use the old phraseology the 'perfect storm,'" he says, "but we weren't collecting enough taxes at the rate that we were growing, and we weren't bringing in businesses and increasing our industrial [tax] base. We were anticipating money coming in from different areas, and all of it dried up." State aid started decreasing, he points out, and not only was the power plant not expanded, but new state regulations allowed the power company to devalue the existing plant significantly, lowering the company's tax payment to the town.

Town officials are not solely responsible for what spending there was, in any case. Taxpayers have directly authorized most expenditures—including new police and fire stations and a new elementary school—in one way or another, by voting for nearly \$55 million in debt exclusions since 1990 (including the new high school), and by passing the budget each year at town meeting. But residents complain—reasonably, it seems, in light of Dziczek's admission—that they were chronically misinformed. After all, the balanced budget presented at last year's annual town

meeting has turned into a \$1.8 million deficit, due in large part to overestimated revenues, underestimated expenses (including for snow and ice removal), and unresolved deficits from prior years.

Although townspeople express appreciation for the 12-hour days Kennedy has been putting in and the seemingly new era of transparency in Medway, years of mismanagement (and property tax increases) have sown frustration and suspicion among them. "The reviews on Ms. Kennedy are wonderful," says Hurlbut, "but nobody believes anything here anymore." In the question-and-answer segment of the February meeting, several residents questioned whether town officials were competent or even forthright enough to be trusted with an override. "What type of accountability is going to be in place, from the board [of selectmen], from the town administrator, back to us?" resident Mark Dergarabedian asked. "I want to hear more about accountability. I heard the word once tonight."

MEDWAY RESIDENTS HAVE been presented with two paths out of the town's financial crisis, and the debate over which one to follow has centered on one question: to cut or not to cut.

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TOWN MEETING MONITOR

The \$2.5 million override proposed by the board of selectmen would, by Kennedy's reckoning, carry the town through the next three fiscal years without a budget gap, and would not require cuts. It would also increase the average property tax bill by about \$600 a year, or more than 10 percent.

Alternatively, the \$3 million loan from the state would force a round of cuts to the town and school budget, unless voters were to raise taxes through a subsequent debt-exclusion override (which increases property taxes only for a fixed amount of time). The loan, known around town as deficit financing, would not by itself address the so-called structural deficit, the built-in gap between expenditures and revenues; without cuts to future budgets, it would leave the town with a budget gap of more than \$3 million in the spring of 2007. "Deficit financing is not a cure," Kennedy has said on several occasions.

Deficit financing requires the stamp of the state Legislature, not expected to be a problem in the case of a small community such as Medway, and carries some conditions. A town must file quarterly reports with DOR, save a certain percentage of its budget in a special stability fund each year, and complete its annual audit before it sends out its tax bills. Naturally, the forced savings and interest costs eat into a town's operating budget, and require cuts. "It's like a second mortgage," says Gerard Perry, a deputy commissioner with DOR's Division of Local Services.

But budget cuts are precisely what appeal to the members of Medway Tax Facts, a local anti-override group that supports deficit financing. The group was founded three years ago by Sal LaRiccia, a Medway resident of more than 30 years who is fond of comparing the town's spending habits to a drinking problem, and who has placed Proposition 2½ *underrides* on town meeting warrants in 2003 and 2004. (Neither passed.) The group's main talking points are tax affordability for all residents and the town's contribution to employee health care plans—which stood at 90 percent until recently, when it was negotiated downward a few points. (According to LaRiccia, this is a higher rate than in any of the nearby towns, some of which contribute as little as 60 percent.) In addition to the budget cuts that would result, LaRiccia and the other Tax Facts members, about a dozen in all, are attracted to another condition of deficit financing: If a town fails to balance its budget in any year during the bonding period, the state imposes a control board to oversee the town's finances. (Springfield is currently operating under such a finance control board.) Town officials responsible for the imbalanced budget can also be held personally liable.

LaRiccia launched his anti-override campaign in March at the local VFW, at a breakfast meeting of the Medway Business Council. Reading from a prepared speech, he accused town officials of displaying an "entitlement men-

tality,” and suggested several cuts to the school budget. “Our taxpayers have been overly generous in the past,” he said at one point. “This must stop.”

When LaRiccica finished, Kent Scott, chairman of the board of selectmen, began to respond—but he was interrupted by the cell phone of a fellow selectman seated nearby. “It’s a warning to get away from the windows!” shouted Mark Cerel, the town moderator, getting a big laugh.

LaRiccica and the town’s selectmen have been sparring for years. With one exception, the current board members unequivocally supported an override, which suggests

that touched on the pros and cons of an override and the possibility of receivership—“We’re not there yet,” said one selectman—a voice vote was held to authorize the board of selectmen to petition the Legislature for the loan. That passed, and was followed by a second voice vote to approve the borrowing itself. It sounded like the required two-thirds majority was met, but the moderator asked for a hand count. The no’s were only about 50 strong—less than one in 10 people. As residents filed out into the parking lot afterward, some were already discussing how to make lawn signs to fight the override vote, which had been approved a week earlier.

Earlier in the evening, after referring to the town’s financial crisis as a “brush with death,” a member of the town’s board of assessors, Pace Willisson, tried to inject a bit of perspective into the

proceedings. Medway, he pointed out, has been around for almost 300 years. “I’m sure the town has come through harder times than this,” he said. “Imagine what it must have been like during the Depression, or the Civil War, or the Revolutionary War.” It was not entirely clear whether he meant that the financial crisis of 2006 paled in comparison, or was good enough for fourth place. **CW**

One foe of state aid likens it to a deal with a ‘loan shark.’

that Medway, in addition to the Tax Facts crowd, contains a large if considerably less boisterous constituency that shudders at the thought of gutted school budgets.

Keith Peden was the only resident to speak out in favor of an override at the February town meeting, when he likened deficit financing to dealing with a “loan shark.” When you consider property values, Peden says, an override is a good investment, because well-funded schools are far more important than property taxes to the type of people who would consider moving to Medway. “If you look at the homes being built in this community, they’re very upscale homes,” he says. “Tell me that those people who are moving in at a purchase price of \$700,000, \$800,000, or more, are going to be dissuaded by a property tax that goes up a couple of dollars on an annual basis.”

Last spring, facing a \$2.7 million gap between the proposed budget and projected revenues for fiscal 2006, Medway was forced to make drastic cuts to the police department, town offices, the library, and the schools, after voters soundly rejected a \$2 million debt exclusion. The town entered the fiscal year with a balanced budget on paper, but over the course of the ongoing audit, that balanced budget has turned into a \$1.8 million deficit. This time around, most town officials consider additional cuts unthinkable. Imagining the impact deficit financing would have on the municipal and school budgets at a recent board of selectmen’s meeting, Scott exclaimed, “We might as well pack up and move to another town!” As if catching himself, he added, “Some people might make that choice.” Speaking to the selectmen and audience earlier that evening, LaRiccica, who was seated a few feet away in the small audience, had said he has already put his house up for sale.

On the first day of spring, an overflow crowd packed the high school auditorium to decide whether to pursue the loan from the state. After about an hour of discussion

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Going local

Paul La Camera wants formerly high-flying WBUR to put down civic roots

BY DAN KENNEDY

SOME 50 STAFF members of WBUR Radio have crowded into the third-floor cafeteria for a lunchtime event with Democratic gubernatorial candidate Deval Patrick. They settle into chairs or stand around the periphery, balancing sandwiches, chips, and soda. Bob Oakes, the station's morning anchor, is the moderator. Turning to the candidate, Oakes says, "I'd like to ask you today if you'd like to officially announce a running mate." A brief pause, then: "Or select someone from the audience."

After the laughter dies down, Oakes leads Patrick through an hourlong conversation about health care, taxes, and economic development, among other issues. One staffer asks Patrick about being the first African-American to run for governor. It's a subject that elicits a rare show of passion on the part of the customarily cool, controlled Patrick, who refers to it as "the race thing." When asked by State House reporter Martha Bebinger how he would like his racial background to be addressed, Patrick responds, "I say this with due respect. This is not my problem," explaining that he sees it as something for the media, and the public, to work out—not him.

"There's some black folks in here," Patrick adds. "Help me out. Am I wrong?"

"No!"

"Then say it, for God's sake."

Despite nursing a cold, general manager Paul La Camera is a hovering presence at the Patrick event, guiding the candidate toward the buffet table, introducing Patrick and Oakes, and declaring that he wants the station to make a "significant contribution" in covering the campaign. He asks a couple of questions about politics and about the demise of Boston-based businesses such as Filene's, Jordan Marsh, and John Hancock. When it's over, he reminds Patrick that he'd like to set up some on-air debates.

So what has the get-to-know-you session—the first of several, if the other gubernatorial candidates accept La Camera's invitation—accomplished? "I think it drives home to the entire station's staff, not just the news department, the impact of this election," La Camera responds.

And for WBUR, that's something new. Long among the most admired media organizations in Greater Boston, the public radio station (at 90.9 FM) is far better known for its coverage of national and international affairs than for its attention to local elections. But that could be changing. Last year officials at Boston University, which holds WBUR's license, hired La Camera, who was retiring as the president and general manager of WCVB-TV (Channel 5), to straighten out an operation besieged by turmoil and debt. Among La Camera's goals: improving WBUR's local coverage and introducing a new ethic of civic engagement.



Former Channel 5 manager La Camera wants to beef up local coverage while sticking to a lean budget.

"I just believe that if we're going to make as full a contribution as we ought to make to an informed citizenry, part of that has to be local reporting," he says.

Local commitment comes naturally to La Camera, a 63-year-old Boston native (he grew up in East Boston and Winthrop) who went to college at Holy Cross, holds master's degrees from Boston University (journalism) and Boston College (business administration), and for more than 33 years was involved in running what was long considered the best

local television station in the country.

Among those who already see a difference at WBUR is Boston Mayor Thomas Menino. "They're really out there seeking the news," says the mayor, who, like Patrick, was invited by La Camera to take questions from the station's staff. "I hear from them more, I see them more. They seem to be really abreast of what's going on in the region. They're involved, and that's what Paul is trying to instill."

But for La Camera to succeed, he must negotiate some tricky terrain. Under his predecessor, the visionary but imperious Jane Christo, WBUR earned a reputation for its coverage of such cosmic matters as terrorism and the war in Iraq. La Camera inherits a downsized station less able to engage in the kind of programming for which WBUR was known (globetrotting staff members Dick Gordon, host of *The Connection*, and Michael Goldfarb, host of the documentary series *Inside Out*, were among those whose jobs and shows were claimed by the station's budget crisis) and a listenership that is presumably as engaged in the wider world as it's ever been.

La Camera's challenge is to improve WBUR's local presence while maintaining the station's traditional strengths—and to do it with fewer resources.

BECOMING RELEVANT

Turnaround would be too strong a word for what La Camera is trying to accomplish. With nearly 500,000 listeners per week, WBUR is among the most-listened-to radio stations in Boston and one of the most successful public stations in the country. Anchored by National Public Radio's two drive-time shows, *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*, the station consistently cracks the top five in the local ratings. According to La Camera and other staff members, the idea is to tinker, not to overhaul. The goal, they say, is to strengthen local reporting during *Morning Edition* (NPR restricts local news to the headlines on *All Things Considered*)

Under Jane Christo, foreign affairs trumped local news.

and, somewhere down the line, to develop a local news program, most likely a weekly show to be broadcast during the weekend. If it succeeds, it might someday go daily. And as *CommonWealth* went to press, station executives were preparing a series of essays to be broadcast in May, under the working title "Boston at the Crossroads."

"We need to increase the relevance of our station to the



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local audience. And we need to be more mindful of the public service this station provides,” says veteran reporter Monica Brady-Myerov, who’s part of an internal task force for local programming. Adds managing director of news and programming Sam Fleming, “One of his [La Camera’s] long-term goals is to have a greater presence locally. But we’ll take it one step at a time to try and have a richer local presence — and definitely not do it at the expense of our national and international coverage, because we know how important that is to our listeners.” Robin Young, who hosts the noon-time show *Here and Now*, sees a greater emphasis on localism as a way to enrich her NPR-syndicated program. “It doesn’t mean making us less of a national show, but it does mean recognizing that a lot of national news does come from Boston,” she says.

The recalibration may be modest, but it represents a basic instinct for La Camera, who, during his long tenure at Channel 5, was involved in the creation of everything from a local public-affairs talk show (*5 on 5*) to a situation comedy (*Park Street Under*) to an evening news-magazine program (*Chronicle*). Of those, only *Chronicle* survives, as Channel 5, like nearly all commercial television stations, feels the squeeze of the market and of corporate ownership. La Camera himself has nothing but praise for Hearst-Argyle, Channel 5’s current owner. But he also sees public broadcasting in general and WBUR in particular as a fresh blackboard on which to sketch out his ideas of local coverage and public service. “Pure” is a word he often uses to describe the radio station he now heads.

And for WBUR, there’s no question that La Camera’s vision represents a considerable departure. Ten years ago, it was a station with seemingly limitless ambitions. At the same time, it came across as oddly removed from the region it purportedly served. The public face of the station was Christopher Lydon, a quintessential Bostonian who hosted *The Connection*, a cerebral, eclectic talk show. But Lydon’s program lost much of its local flavor after the station syndicated it nationally. The noontime program *Here and Now*, created in part to fill the local void, was soon taken into syndication as well. Off-hours were (and are) filled by news from the BBC.

“It lost its identity, and people perceived a difference,” says former *Here and Now* co-host Bruce Gellerman, who was fired by Christo and is now a freelancer and entrepreneur. “They listened, but they listened mainly for NPR. You ask what station they listen to, and they say, ‘Oh, NPR.’”

Still, the station continued to grow until the spring of 2001, when Lydon and his senior producer, Mary McGrath, were fired in the midst of a very ugly, very public contract dispute. (Lydon and McGrath finally returned to the airwaves last year with a new nationally syndicated program, *Open Source*, heard locally on WGBH, 89.7 FM, and WUML, 91.5 FM.) Lydon’s departure was quickly followed by a



Reporter Monica Brady-Myerov: “We need to increase the relevance” to local matters.

series of financial calamities: the bursting of the dot-com bubble, which devastated the station’s corporate underwriting; a boycott organized by Jewish groups that accused the station of bias against Israel in its news reports; and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which led to Christo’s decision to create another program, *On Point*, a laudable effort for which the financial resources simply didn’t exist. (Though the boycott by Jewish groups eventually eased, suspicions of bias remain. Says Andrea Levin, executive director of the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America, or CAMERA: “We are intending to be in touch with Mr. La Camera, because we do have continuing concerns.” La Camera, for his part, says he’s aware of those concerns and adds that he hopes to take a fact-finding trip to Israel this summer at the invitation of the Jewish Community Council.)

Despite persistent rumors that all was not well at WBUR, Christo was able to hold things together until the fall of 2004, when she announced that she was selling WRNI (AM 1230 and 1290), a Rhode Island station that WBUR had bought several years earlier and for which it had solicited considerable financial support from the community. The announcement prompted an investigation by the Rhode Island attorney general’s office and accusations of mismanagement. Christo, the general manager since 1979, resigned, and was replaced on an interim basis by Peter Fiedler, then a BU assistant vice president. Among other things, Fiedler commissioned a study that found the station had rung up a

deficit of \$13.1 million between 2001 and 2004.

Fiedler then did what an interim general manager is supposed to do when faced with such a dire financial situation: He cut the budget so that the next permanent general manager wouldn't have to. *The Connection* and several reporting positions were eliminated, and *Inside Out* was put on hold. Today, according to La Camera, WBUR operates on a budget of about \$18.7 million, with 115 employees. Though he's not sure what the station's budget was at its peak, *The Providence Journal* reported in 2004 that WBUR, in filings with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, claimed annual expenses of \$22 million to more than \$25 million in the early part of the decade.

The downsized WBUR has attained financial stability in remarkably short order, say La Camera and Fiedler (now BU's vice president for administrative services and chairman of the station's executive council) and is running slightly in the black. It has hired reporters to cover health and science, business, and the local arts community. BU officials have made a commitment to keep WRNI and extend its reach into southern Rhode Island. And La Camera wants to revive the *Inside Out* documentary unit, including stories that would require national and international travel. Assistant program director Anna Bensted says the station is currently working on the aforementioned "Boston at the Crossroads" series and another project about poverty in America, while seeking funding for a program about change in China. "I am totally reassured that, with Paul as GM, we will only be building on what we already do," she said by e-mail. In addition, WBUR continues to offer three nationally syndicated shows: *On Point*, *Here and Now*, and *Only a Game*, a weekly sports program. A fourth syndicated show, *Car Talk*, is produced at WBUR but independently owned.

A year and a half after Christo's departure, some perspective is called for in assessing her reign. Though she could be a difficult boss, she operated in the same environment in which a memorably difficult boss, John Silber, succeeded in transforming Boston University into a nationally regarded institution. Though she overspent her budget and was accused of treating WBUR as her personal fiefdom, much of her spending was directed at making the station better for listeners. Today she is almost universally praised for having created a great radio station.

"I think Jane Christo did a marvelous job for a lot of years," says Fiedler. "She built an empire there that is a nationally respected radio station, and that's her doing. I think things just got a little out of hand for her. She did her best to try to keep the ship on course but found troubled waters." Adds Mary Stohn, the station's former public-relations consultant: "Her legacy is that she made something from nothing, and made WBUR a world-class radio station,

just like John Silber made Boston University a world-class university. And kept excelling year in and year out until the last two years."

Christo is now developing programs for international journalists at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Diplomacy. Asked about her legacy at WBUR, she replies, "I've moved on. I'm engaged in things that I'm passionate about, and I'm very happy to be doing that." As for her successor, Christo says, "I know Paul La Camera and I know his work. I admire his work. It'll be a different direction than I led the station, but I have every confidence that he will lead it in a direction that will be a credit to the university and to the city. I have no reason to think otherwise."

MAN ABOUT TOWN

On the coffee table in Paul La Camera's office is a copy of photographer Bill Brett's book *Boston: All One Family*, with its striking cover portrait of Mayor Menino flanked by former mayors Raymond Flynn and Kevin White, the three of them holding umbrellas. It is a reminder of just how much Boston means to La Camera, whose father, the late Anthony La Camera, was a television columnist for several Boston newspapers, including the old *Herald American*.

Tan, with close-cropped, salt-and-pepper hair, and favoring conservative suits with startlingly white shirts, La Camera's involvement in the city extends well beyond his interest in local news. He is deeply involved with a number of organizations that are engaged in the civic life of the region,

La Camera has a reservoir of good will among city leaders.

such as the United Way of Massachusetts Bay, the Whittier Street Health Center, and the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce. This past winter, his involvement led to some awkwardness for WBUR, as he was one of eight board members of Catholic Charities who resigned in protest of Archbishop (now Cardinal) Séan O'Malley's decision to stop the agency from allowing gay and lesbian couples to adopt foster children. La Camera explained his reasoning on just one program, *Greater Boston with Emily Rooney*, on WGBH-TV (Channel 2), turning down all other media requests, even one from his own station.

"Out of loyalty and friendship I talked with Emily, but I turned down everyone else," La Camera says. As for why he turned down WBUR, he says, "I don't think it's appropriate, and it makes me too much part of the story."

But if La Camera's close ties to Boston might occasionally put the station in an awkward position, it could also help: Among certain classes within the city, the very fact that WBUR would put someone like La Camera in charge generates considerable good will.

"I honestly think he's just got a really good pulse on things," says Rooney, who, as a former news director of Channel 5, worked with La Camera for many years. (Rooney, no fan of public radio, also sees La Camera as the ideal antidote to what she sees as too many stories about "gathering the wool from the Peruvian llamas.")

Few people know La Camera as well as Marjorie Arons-Barron, a communications consultant with Barron Associates Worldwide. Channel 5's former editorial director and producer of the *5 on 5* series, Arons-Barron believes that La Camera may be ideally situated not just to rebuild WBUR, but to advance the notion that a public broadcaster can fill the civic role being vacated by media organizations that now, more often than not, are owned by out-of-town conglomerates.

"Part of Paul's whole modus operandi is being a presence in the community," Arons-Barron says. "It's that Channel 5 ethos. It's rooted in our past—viewing ourselves as part of Boston and Greater Boston. He is very much of a presence, and I think that was probably very important to WBUR. They saw that localism was important."

Consider what the Boston media landscape looks like today, compared with 10 or 20 years ago. In the 1970s and into the '80s, Channel 5 was a model of what local ownership

could accomplish. Channel 7 went through a period of local ownership as well. Today, every television station in Boston is owned by an out-of-state corporation.

In 1996, *The Boston Globe*, though owned by the New York Times Company, still operated under the benevolent management of its previous owners, the Taylor family. Today, the *Globe* is run by a Times Co.-appointed publisher, Richard Gilman, and is struggling to redefine itself at a time of economic uncertainty for the newspaper business.

In 1996, the *Boston Herald*—which had been restored to local ownership two years earlier, when Patrick Purcell bought it from his mentor, Rupert Murdoch—was a thriving tabloid with a strong emphasis on local news. Now the *Herald* is struggling, and Purcell has put both that newspaper and about 100 suburban newspapers in eastern Massachusetts that he owns up for sale.

As for commercial radio, news, with few exceptions, has become an endangered species—in large measure because of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which eliminated most ownership caps and made it more difficult for local ownership to survive.

Another friend of La Camera's, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts executive vice president Peter Meade, who resigned from Catholic Charities on the same day as La



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MASS.MEDIA

Camera, defines the opportunity—and the need—this way: “As all of the media have had to pull back, it is great that there is an important institution like WBUR that is stepping up its local involvement.” Adds Meade, himself a radio personality long associated with WBZ (AM 1030), and someone who served on WBUR’s advisory board some years back: “This is one of the truly great radio stations in America.”

LOCAL MEETS NATIONAL

But can it become one of the truly great radio stations in Boston? Can WBUR deliver the world, but also attend to Boston affairs in its news coverage, becoming what it never was before—a community institution?

It should be no surprise that the public-radio audience has exploded as news on commercial stations has declined. According to National Public Radio spokeswoman Andi Sporkin, the weekly audience for public radio has doubled, from 13 million per week to 26 million per week, in just the past six years. Expanding local news coverage, Sporkin says, is just one way that public radio is now trying to meet that increased demand.

Mark Fuerst, a public-radio consultant based in Rhinebeck, NY, adds that a renewed emphasis on localism could help stations carve out an important niche that emerging national services such as satellite radio simply can’t compete in. “Every major station in the country is thinking about this,” Fuerst says.

The point isn’t lost on La Camera that the local civic role once occupied by the commercial media may well be thrust upon publicly owned outlets such as WBUR. “Public radio is a wonderfully protected sphere,” he says. “For all intents and purposes we have no competition. As other media have become more and more challenged, we’ve become stronger.”

Nor has it escaped him that improving the station’s civic image may improve its financial position as well. “The more engaged, the more visible the station is in the larger community,” he says, “the more top-of-mind it becomes for corporate underwriters and individual donors.”

For La Camera, it’s been a long, circular trip. He began his broadcasting career trying to turn Channel 5 into the best local television station in the country. He’s ending it by attempting to perform similar alchemy with WBUR.

“You can probably count on the fact that I won’t be here for 33½ years,” says La Camera of his new job. “I haven’t given much thought to when I’m next going to retire. But whenever that time comes, I hope I’m going to be more successful at it than I was the last time.” **CW**

Dan Kennedy is a visiting assistant professor at Northeastern University’s School of Journalism. His weblog, Media Nation, is online at medianation.blogspot.com. Tell him about innovative ways by which media are connecting with their communities at da.kennedy@neu.edu.

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Then & Now

FIVE REFLECTIONS ON PLACE AND TIME

IN THE LIFETIME OF A MAGAZINE, 10 years can be an eternity. In the case of *CommonWealth*, they represent 44 issues on the shelf and, considering the failure rate of magazine start-ups, proud defiance of the odds. But for the rest of the world, 10 years is a decade, the smallest unit of chronology with any claim to historical meaning. Increasingly, we have come to measure time periods by the decade, and these 10-year intervals are now resonant enough to serve as titles of serious books (*The Fifties*) and escapist sitcoms (*That '70s Show*). Some historical decades seem to spill over their definitional limits: The '60s hardly seemed to end in 1970, and the argument over that decade's legacy rages still. But when someone says "the '60s," there's no confusion about what's being referred to.

CommonWealth's first decade did not start or end in classic calendar fashion, with zeroes at the end of the years. And though not without drama (the events of September 11, 2001, will certainly go in the history books), the period from spring 1996 to the present is without obvious bookends. But it is a decade nonetheless—long enough, historically speaking, for trends to start up, reveal themselves, or play out. And in Massachusetts, there is plenty that has happened in that time. In politics, we have gone through four governors; we are on our second House Speaker and second Senate President; and we have watched one of our US senators try and fail to win the nation's highest office. In the economy, we have gone



through boom and bust, but not yet boom again. The Catholic Church has endured scandal, retrenchment, and replacement of one cardinal by another. Our public schools have struggled with MCAS and NCLB. The media have changed hands, downsized, and been rattled by the Internet. No one can say that, compared with 1996, the Massachusetts of 2006 is unchanged.

To mark our 10th anniversary, *CommonWealth* lined up five of the sharpest writers and observers we know to take stock of changes in Massachusetts life over the past decade. Some have gone even further, identifying trends in the larger world and reflecting on Massachusetts's role in them. The resulting essays form a collage of our Commonwealth in the age of *CommonWealth*—and beyond.

ECONOMY & BUSINESS

From white collar to white coat

BY ROSABETH MOSS KANTER

WHAT A DIFFERENCE a decade makes. Just over 10 years ago, I convened 150 Massachusetts business and civic leaders at Harvard Business School to discuss success in the global economy, in collaboration with BankBoston, a leader among civic-minded local companies. Digital Equipment Corp. (DEC) was then the state's largest Fortune 500 company (No. 77 in 1995), its high-flying status symbolized by its own airline linking its New England facilities. Information technology was king. The crowd was abuzz about software and the emerging potential of the Web. Back then, Massachusetts was sufficiently important that Ivan Seidenberg, CEO of Nynex (later Verizon), made a point of coming from New York for the conference, even though New England Telephone had already been absorbed into the Nynex corporate structure, and local phone service was not the wave of the future.

Today, it's "Digital who?" DEC dissolved in a 1998 takeover by Compaq, a Texas company that itself merged with California-based Hewlett-Packard in 2001. Another set of high-profile acquisitions of Massachusetts companies buried BankBoston. Continuing consolidation in banking, telecom, retail, and media has replaced local brand-name companies with national chains for which Massachusetts is just another market.

On the 2005 Fortune 500 list, Springfield's Mass Mutual claims the state's highest position, at No. 83—a reminder that there's more to the Commonwealth than Boston (though

Boston, with one-tenth of the state's population, still accounts for a sixth of the jobs and a quarter of the economic impact). Raytheon has moved up a few notches to No. 103, growing through acquisition as well as innovation, as has EMC. Liberty Mutual, TJX, and Staples also appear, though few other giants remain on the list.

Massachusetts is still world-class on the economic stage. But what makes us world-class is changing.

Today, many of the innovations creating a bright economic future are in health-related industries. Stent-maker Boston Scientific is the rising Massachusetts star on the Fortune 500 list; its bold \$27 billion bid for Guidant, beating out Johnson & Johnson, was as exhilarating to local business fans as the Red Sox beating the Yankees. Boston Scientific is now the largest Massachusetts company by market capitalization, up from fifth in 1996. Biogen Idec and Genzyme, also in the state's Top 10 list in market cap, are climbing up *Fortune's* top 1000 list, and Genzyme made *Fortune's* 2006 list of the 100 best companies to work for, joining only five other Massachusetts companies. The magic trio of Genzyme, Biogen Idec, and Boston Scientific appears again on *Business 2.0's* list of the 100 fastest-growing tech companies.

The Massachusetts Biotechnology Council, which had about 100 member companies in 1995, today comprises nearly 500 companies engaged in drug discovery, biotechnology, and pharmaceuticals. Software and interactive media companies are still important in this state, but that industry has grown only slightly since 1995, with employment rising from about 98,000 to 119,000 people.

In Massachusetts, health-related products were the fastest growing category among commodities exports by dollar value between 1996 and 2005, according to Census Bureau data analyzed by *wisetrade.org*. Medical and surgical instruments, the largest export in 2005, nearly doubled over the decade. Pharmaceutical products jumped more than tenfold to become our fourth largest export category. In contrast, the biggest declines were in photographic goods and industrial machinery, a category that includes computers.

Surgical instruments have eclipsed computer software.

While company headquarters were lost to out-of-state acquirers over the last decade (including Lotus to IBM in 1995, Stop & Shop to Ahold in 1996, John Hancock to Manulife in 2004, and Gillette to Procter & Gamble and Reebok to Adidas in 2005), new research-and-development centers brought international giants to town. Novartis has located its worldwide R&D center in Cambridge, proceeding to partner with medical research centers and young life science companies. Others from Big Pharma have followed suit. For Massachusetts, it seems, the future lies in medical and life sciences.



Packing laboratory supplies for shipping at Nova Biomedical in Waltham.

DONNING THE WHITE COAT

The continuing strength of Massachusetts in a globalizing economy, then and now, derives not from particular industries but from innovations seeded in educational and research organizations. In my book *World Class*, which grew out of that Harvard Business School conference 10 years ago, I noted three ways for a region to succeed in a global economy: as thinkers, as makers, or as traders. Today more than ever, Massachusetts is dependent on thinkers. And increasingly, those thinkers are to be found in laboratories.

Compared with 10 years ago, our employment profile is even less blue-collar and even more white-collar, with some pink in the mix. Massachusetts had a non-farm workforce of 3 million people in December 1995—a number that grew only slightly, to 3.2 million, by December 2005. But by that time, manufacturing employed 100,000 fewer people (from 418,000 to 312,000), while nearly 80,000 more worked in professional and business services (from 386,000 to 462,000).

Blue-collar jobs still grew in the building trades; construction jobs rose from 92,000 to 142,000 over the decade.

But jobs in services burgeoned even more, especially in education and health, but also in leisure and hospitality. Tourism continues to be a big industry, and the new Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, which was just a gleam in Gloria Larson's eye in 1995, is proving to be a major draw.

Increasingly, however, our workforce is not just white-collar; it is "white coat." Scientists and health professionals in lab coats are world-class assets that are making Massachusetts important to the world. The life sciences have become a much more important part of the Commonwealth's research-and-development mix, rising from less than 40 percent a decade ago to about half of total R&D expenditures today. Even some of our waiters (Grill 23) and sales clerks (Jordan's mattress shops) wear white coats.

Massachusetts ranked 14th among the states in total federal spending in 2002 (we give more to the federal government than we get), but fourth in federal R&D investments, according to National Science Foundation statistics. This actually represents a slight loss of

relative position, down from 12th in overall federal spending in 1994 and third in R&D investments in 1993. But Massachusetts has ranked second in the number of Small Business Innovation Research awards from 1999 through 2002; in the future, the state also stands to benefit from defense spending for systems integration.

The more advanced the knowledge, the better we do. In 2002, Massachusetts ranked fifth nationally in science and engineering graduate students in doctorate-granting institutions, fourth in science and engineering degrees awarded, and second in post-doctorate education. Massachusetts ranked sixth in patents awarded to state residents (3,608)—up from 2,338 in 1993 when the state was ninth.

Of course, patents and doctorates reflect the results of past investments, and other states are catching up. The current rankings reflect slippage from 1993, when we were fourth in graduate students and third in science and engineering degrees granted. Perhaps this reflects a reliance on private higher education and a failure to invest in public institutions. In 2001, Massachusetts ranked 27th in the nation

in public higher education expenditures.

So far, higher skills have translated into higher wealth, though not for everyone. While 13th in population and size of the civilian labor force, Massachusetts ranks fourth nationally in personal income per capita, up from fifth in 1994. But between the early 1980s and the early 2000s, the gap between upper-income and lower-income families widened more in Massachusetts than in any state except Arizona and New York, according to the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center. During this period, incomes for the highest income families grew almost five times as fast as those for low-income families. Between 1990-1992 and 2001-2003, the ratio of income of the top 20 percent to the bottom 20 percent grew from 6.7 to 7.3.

A great deal of money passes through Massachusetts, but in comparison with the production and flow of goods, the production and flow of capital is handled by a smaller number of people, some of them very highly paid. In 2002, securities-related firms in Massachusetts generated \$22.7 billion in revenue and divided \$6.1 billion in payroll between 61,000 employees, for an average of \$100,000 per employee, according to the Census Bureau's Economic Census.

Massachusetts has continued to grow as a money management center, but not as fast as in the mid '90s, when em-

ployment in securities firms jumped 163 percent between 1992 and 1997, from 20,000 employees to 53,500. Indeed, the mutual fund industry slipped in the recession of the early 2000s and Fidelity lost its preeminence. But private equity and venture capital firms continue to proliferate. In 1995, SDC VentureXpert identified 84 venture capital firms in Massachusetts; by 2005, the number of firms had nearly doubled to 153. Still, Massachusetts companies' share of national venture capital investment has declined, and investments by private equity firms tend to be national and international, not regional.

Unemployment was slightly higher in 1995 than today, ending the year at 5.1 percent (compared with 5.6 percent nationally); at year-end 2005, the state unemployment rate was neck and neck with the national rate, at 4.8 percent. But these numbers don't tell the whole jobs story. As Steve Bailey wrote in *The Boston Globe*, "From February 2001 when the economy peaked, to January 2004 when it bottomed out, Massachusetts led the nation in job losses on a percentage basis, shedding about 207,000 jobs." In the period from 2003 to 2005, Massachusetts ranked 46th in the nation in job growth, up only 1.1 percent, while nationally jobs increased 2.8 percent, according to the economic forecasting company Global Insight.



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HEADQUARTERS NON-EFFECT

As Massachusetts has fallen dramatically over the past decade in Fortune 500 companies per capita, job creation has increasingly come in small batches. Businesses with fewer than 500 employees are responsible for about half of the state's total employment. Between 1995 and 2005, Associated Industries of Massachusetts doubled its member companies (to 7,600 employers), while the number of employees increased only slightly, reflecting a continuing shift in the economy toward smaller employment units. For example, 71 percent of the state's software companies employ 25 or fewer people, and 89 percent are privately held. And as befits the white-coat economy, about two-thirds of AIM's current members are not manufacturers.

Meanwhile, the loss of homegrown corporate giants resembles a chain of fish, each swallowing the smaller fish in front, only to be swallowed in turn by a bigger fish behind. BankBoston acquired BayBank in 1995, was bought by Fleet Financial in 1999 (for a then-local-record \$16 billion), and the whole entity was sold to Bank of America for \$49 billion in 2004.

In 1995, my research found that being a home to large corporations mattered, because of what I termed a "headquarters effect." Because of CEOs with public visibility, local loyalties, and decision-making clout, headquarters companies contributed disproportionate charitable contributions and civic leadership. Employees contributed more per capita to United Way when working for companies headquartered in that city.

Today, the loss of headquarters is perhaps a bigger blow to the ego than to the economy. Over the past 10 years, corporate community service has become an engrained expectation wherever a company has a critical mass of employees. City Year (which began in Boston) and Timberland (in New

the largest corporate giver in Massachusetts, contributing more than \$10 million in philanthropic and sponsorship support, primarily in the areas of economic development, youth development, and the arts; its employment headcount here is scheduled to reach pre-merger levels by the end of 2006. Similarly, P&G CEO A.G. Lafley has already conducted goodwill trips to Boston, heralding R&D contracts in nanotechnology and \$750,000 in donations for dental care for the poor. For Massachusetts, it's more important that P&G keep Gillette's high-tech South Boston plant intact than retain some office cubicles in the Prudential Tower.

Let's face it. We are not a big-business capital. But we do attract global attention and resources in different ways. One route is through our nonprofit organizations. In 1998, Massachusetts had 19 not-for-profit organizations on the *Chronicle of Philanthropy's* Philanthropy 400 list of the largest charities; in 2005, the number was almost the same, at 18. Massachusetts ranks second nationally in Philanthropy 400 organizations per capita, compared with 19th in Fortune 500 companies per capita. Half of these nonprofits are colleges and universities, and another four are hospitals. These "star charities" not only attract philanthropic dollars, they attract other investment to Massachusetts (from students and researchers to R&D funds), and they seed the industries of the future. Paul Grogan, head of the Boston Foundation (No. 345 on the Philanthropy 400), is right to argue that the future of the Massachusetts economy doesn't rest on the number of corporate headquarters but on our talent pool and the institutions that produce it.

A CHANGING TALENT POOL

As one of the few states estimated to have lost population in the last year and the only one to decline two years in a row,

Massachusetts will have to find sources of talent among groups not traditionally included in the business sector.

Ladies first. Women entrepreneurs fit the emerging white-coat profile. Between 2000 and 2005, the top 100 women-headed businesses became more likely to be in professional services, health care, and pharmaceuticals, and less likely to be in high technology or construction, according to a Commonwealth Institute/Babson College study. In 1997, women-owned businesses in Massachusetts generated \$16.8 billion in revenues, employed 155,191 workers, and constituted 26.6 percent of all firms, Small Business Administration figures show. By 2002, women-owned businesses had increased by 14 percent but still remained very small.

When it comes to women holding executive positions and corporate board seats in public companies, Massachusetts is well behind the national average and shows few signs

Community service is no longer limited to where executives live.

Hampshire but filled with Massachusetts residents) helped create that expectation, by leading teams of young people and their corporate sponsors in community improvement activities in inner cities. Civic leadership is now part of the job description for local executives of global companies, such as Chip Bergh, recently deployed by P&G from Cincinnati to head Gillette's blades and razors business in Boston, who said as much at a lunch in February to introduce him to a group of local civic leaders.

Increasingly, companies disperse contributions to areas where they have employees and customers, not just where their top executives live. According to Anne Finucane, Northeast market president and global chief marketing officer, Bank of America (headquarters: Charlotte, NC) has become

of catching up. In the past few years, the percentage of companies with women among their executive officers didn't even increase a whole percentage point, inching up from a paltry 9.2 percent in the early 2000s to 10.1 percent recently, according to the InterOrganization Network (ION), a coalition formed by the Forum for Executive Women. Over half of the publicly held information technology companies have no women on their boards. Massachusetts life sciences companies are more woman-friendly; nearly three-quarters have at least one woman on the board. Call this the Susan Hockfield factor—the female neuroscientist appointed president of MIT. The white-coat economy needs women's talents.

However, the “white” in the state's white collars and coats is an unfortunate reflection of reality. Minority professionals and entrepreneurs, especially those who are black, face numerous hurdles. Hispanic-owned firms increased by 25 percent from 1997 to 2002, to 15,940 companies, and Asian-owned firms by 42 percent, to 18,071. Black-owned businesses increased only 8 percent, to 12,820, over the same period. A mere 4 percent of the state's software companies are minority-owned.

My research a decade ago for *World Class* identified a lack of network ties for minority-headed companies; they tended to be out of the mainstream, confined to serving racial and ethnic markets. The problems of inner cities then were not just unrealized competitive potential of the location but active exclusion, as racial attitudes prevented minority firms from reaching wider markets. A 2005 study by Babson College and the Boston Consulting Group shows little progress. Minority firms of all kinds are under-represented among entrepreneurs; their firms have a third of the employment and a mere fifth of the revenue of firms statewide.

BORN GLOBAL

I began by saying that a decade makes a difference. But perhaps not enough. Massachusetts rose higher than the nation in the late 1990s boom, fell later but further in the 2000s bust, and finds itself today close to where it began.

At the Harvard conference a decade ago, there was consensus that improving the business climate required a focus on forging stronger business networks for emerging industries and international trade. Productive collaborations have emerged, such as the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative and the Massachusetts Alliance for International Business. Harvard plans to build a major science complex in Allston. New nonprofits help women entrepreneurs grow their businesses (Commonwealth Institute) and steer minority youth to opportunities in life sciences and health

(Biomedical Sciences Careers Program, started by Harvard Medical School's Joan Reede).

But other concerns identified a decade ago remain on the agenda today: a slow and unpredictable permitting process, the inadequate marketing of Massachusetts, public schools that struggle with minority achievement, and high-cost housing. There are places to work in abundance: Office and lab space available in Greater Boston grew from 144 million square feet in 1995 to nearly 200 million in 2005, according to Trammell Crow. But there is a growing scarcity of affordable places to live. That alone drives talent out of the Commonwealth.

The three secrets of economic success are no longer location, location, and location. (Thank goodness, because lousy weather trumps the advantages of even the Cape and the Berkshires.) The new keys are networks, networks, networks. Ten years ago, the conference (and my book) highlighted the still-central issues of human talent and connection to global markets. Then and now, new science- and technology-based companies are “born global.” A quarter of the state's mostly small software companies derive over 30 percent of their sales internationally.

Our state can be a center for small companies and big ideas.

There are signs that our leaders get it. The state Executive Office of Economic Affairs recently announced a Business Connection initiative to match large companies elsewhere with entrepreneurial firms and academic centers in Massachusetts; instead of trying to compete for headquarters or manufacturing facilities, we will compete for R&D and educational funding. The Convention Center is marketing conventions and trade shows that link to our core strengths in biomedical professions, information technology, and higher education. Boston's recently launched Initiative for a New Economy will facilitate connections between minority business owners and mainstream business opportunities. A similar effort for women would be valuable. The future labor force for a no-growth population will by necessity depend on women and immigrants.

In short, Massachusetts can be a global center for small companies and big ideas. The Commonwealth can remain important for innovations that solve the world's toughest problems—e.g., the pandemic flu vaccines that Swiss giant Novartis and Cambridge-based Alnylam are collaborating to develop. As long as Massachusetts thinkers develop knowledge that others want, the economy will be strong.

Investments in public schools and public higher education should remain on the agenda—especially in promoting math and science excellence. Massachusetts schools and health centers should become beta sites for our home-

grown technologies, showcasing ideas of the future while improving communities.

And to motivate girls and boys across races and ethnicities to develop their talents, let's give every middle school student a white coat—and help them grow into it.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter is Ernest L. Arbuckle professor at Harvard Business School and author of World Class: Thriving Locally in the Global Economy and Confidence: How Winning Streaks & Losing Streaks Begin & End, among other books. Research assistance provided by Ryan Raffaelli. © 2006 Rosabeth Moss Kanter.

MEDIA

An Emersonian transformation under way

BY CHRISTOPHER LYDON

THE TOWN CRIER is dead and gone, without a successor. We will not hear his hand-bell or his hectoring again. Around his grave the green crocus shoots of new media are growing toward something entirely different: a faster, more diversified, detailed, checkable, and democratic “network of networks” of information and opinion. It could be worthy someday, if we're lucky, of the great father of all New England conversation, Ralph Waldo Emerson.

The Internet is that “better mousetrap” to which, as Emerson said, the world beats a path. I love it for serving a precisely Emersonian vision of expressive democracy. Think of it as a tool for rescuing the individual—“the infinitude of the private man”—from the mass (and from mass media), which was Emerson's great project. “Masses!” he wailed; “the calamity is the masses.” Think of the rising Internet media as the means by which millions already follow the commandments of Emerson's essay “Self-Reliance.” That is, “trust thyself,” and speak for thyself, on thy Web site.

The Sage of Concord said: Forsake the authorities and follow the gleam of light flashing across your own mind *from within!* And now: Blog it! It is a great Emersonian transformation and liberation that's under way in the public conversation. Or so it seems to one recovering child of the Old School of Boston media.

Our exemplary Town Crier was, of course, the late great Tom Winship, editor of *The Boston Globe* from 1965 to 1985 and ginger-man in all the town's gab till his death in 2002. He was a curious mix of the traditionalist and the subversive, a chronic reformer often mistaken for a radical. He'd

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created his own role in the establishment: a sort of Dennis the Menace from the Tavern Club downtown. Winship's *Globe* hit your doorstep like a scribbled note off his personal pad. Maybe 10,000 people around Boston knew they could reach him on the phone. In that sense Winship was a human foreshadowing of the Internet: Everybody had access. He was a muscular practitioner of quirky, agenda-mongering, unconventional journalism who taught us cubs one main premise: The newspaper's function, first and last, was to be a pain in the ass. Why else, but for the joy of being stylishly contrary, would Winship have hired the nonpareil columnist George Frazier and let him make sport not just of Nixon and Agnew but of Dapper O'Neil and Harvard sacred cow Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s form on the dance floor—all those columns about Little Arthur "punishing the parquet" and such. How else would the cartoonist Paul Szep have come to Pulitzer Prize maturity? Or Mike Barnicle to overripeness and delinquency?

Barnicle wasn't the only flaw in the Winship formula. I came to hold the Town Crier responsible for a certain local neurosis, an awkward alienation in both of the two towns that form our state of mind. We are, in truth, two newsy, gabby capitals side-by-side: the incomparable teaching and research industries on one shore of the real and metaphor-

ical river, "the frontal lobe of the universe," led by Harvard and MIT; and on the other side, the ever-evolving ethnic neighborhoods, the city of stately bricks and indestructible three-deckers, and, not least, the Hub of state politics.

The essential trick for Boston journalism, it always seemed to me, was to report and represent both of our cities without apology—with savor, even with enthusiasm. But the *Globe's* body language, especially after the busing wars, looked to me like cringing before the smart folks and lording it over the neighborhood dummies; as if it assumed that the Harvard crowd was wedded to the *Times* and South Boston to the *Herald*. The *Globe* stuck itself with a mushy suburban middle that didn't much appreciate the nuances at either end of the scale. Only when I ran for the mayor's office did I discover that, as of 1993, among voters in the 22 wards of Boston proper, *Herald* readers outnumbered *Globe* readers four to one!

When I moved back to Boston in the late '70s, after a decade in Washington, I felt this fundamental difference between the *Globe* and the *Washington Post*, edited by Winship's pal Ben Bradlee: The *Post*, especially its Style section, made Washington seem more interesting than it was; the *Globe* made Boston seem a lot less vital, cosmopolitan, and conversational than it was coming to be. The *Globe* read like

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a paper that wished it could take the Red Sox and move someplace else. And that was the good old Town Crier's *Globe*!

MEDIA GROWN OLD

And then there's the new *Globe*—*Times*-owned since 1994; *Times*-operated, under Taylor-family replacement Richard Gilman, since 1999; and led by *Times*-certified editor Marty Baron since 2001. The new *Globe* practices computer-assisted research journalism, with profoundly redemptive effect in the epic of child- and sex-abuse in the Catholic Church. In truth I often wonder if Tom Winship would have taken on that Herculean cleaning of those stinking diocesan stables. At the same time, this new, notionally professionalized *Globe* more often strikes me as denatured, almost voiceless.

The strategic effect of *Times* ownership, and perhaps the intent, has been to push the *Globe* down-market toward extinguishing the *Herald*, not to charge up the *Globe* with *Times* standards or style. We get no flavor of Maureen Dowd, Paul Krugman, Frank Rich, or Nicholas Kristoff from Morrissey Boulevard. The *Globe* editorial page may be the most predictable rectangle in print, and the least remarked. The only collectable op-ed columnist, James Carroll, is a

once-a-week freelance. The *Globe*'s must-read bylines—just for keeping your dukes up around town—are the passionate, well-informed Joan Venocchi; Alex Beam, the cheerful keeper of the Winship pain-in-the-ass flame; and the best-connected all-around listener, Steve Bailey.

But where is the institutional memory of Marty Nolan, who retired too soon, or the intellectual range of David Warsh, who got the gate? Where is the tempered political judgment of Brian Mooney, once a regular treat but now on display only rarely, in profiles? What of the most faithful beat writer on the paper, music maven Richard Dyer, who is leaving with a sore heart this spring? A friend of mine, talking with a *Globe* City Hall reporter last fall, remarked how different things were “under Ray.” Came the response: “Who is Ray?” A *Globe* court reporter asked another person I know: “Who is Wayne Budd?”

Does the *Globe* really live in our city? Do we live in theirs? You see those green-and-white *Globe* brain-caption posters all over the MBTA, asking such cute Boston questions as “Where's the best pizza in the North End?” But it's a shock now when you see someone on the T actually reading the *Globe*. Or the *Herald*, for that matter, even when they're giving it away free. What the straphangers are reading, if anything, is that moronic poison-pill of non-journalism, or anti-journalism,

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the *Metro*, of which the *Globe* has cynically, or defensively, bought a piece—recalling Lenin’s line about capitalists investing in the rope factory that makes their noose!

The *Globe* is, in so many ways, a diminished institution: its culture and political coverage slowly hollowed out, its staff ranks shrinking through buy-outs, its circulation down. In a community that obsesses about becoming a franchise town (no thanks, Bank of America), it’s an all-around downer, for the *Globe* and its readers, that the first forum of the town’s conversation is itself a franchise—a dim sort of colonial voice—of *The New York Times*.

The *Globe* would claim still to “set the agenda” for other media around Boston, as in Marcella Bombardieri’s tenacious accounting of Larry Summers’s troubles with the Harvard faculty this winter. But in truth the *Globe* is calling the tune for TV and radio shows that move people less and less.

I don’t watch much television, but seriously: Who do you know that actually registers on the local snooze shows? I hear that Smiling Jack Williams (my vintage) has gone back to the future at Channel 4, where Jon Keller is said to report real politics. But where are the stars in that star-struck medium? As I write this, the *Herald* has just dispatched a reporter to the college campuses with snapshots of all the local news anchors. Only one kid could identify any of them. On New England Cable News, Jim Braude, who talks faster than I can think, gives off sparks when I catch him, and sometimes fire. Another eminent friend in the business e-mails me: “Can you name a single TV anchor who’s come along in the last 10 years? Maybe we’re like polar bears as the ice cap recedes. John Dennis leaps off Channel 7 onto the WEEI radio ice floe, but what happens if—when?—they lose the Red Sox to FM?” Indeed, it has come to pass: At this writing, there is talk of the Sox heading to WBOS, even buying a share of the FM station.

There may be no harbor for any of the old brands in this technological storm. “Who listens to Gary LaPierre read the list of school closings on snowy mornings?” my weatherman asks. “I know my kids don’t. I taught them to go to wbz1030.com to get the news instantly. I don’t know how the FM music stations are going to survive either. Consider WZLX, ‘classic rock.’ Does anybody think that their male target audience isn’t going to have either XM or Sirius in the next two to three years?”

JURASSIC PARK

Such is the eerily stripped and becalmed media landscape on which a few fine old dinosaurs yet romp, and where any number of furry little mammals—bloggers and other online upstarts—are munching on the last dinosaurs’ eggs.

Let’s hear it for the dinosaurs that still walk among us. Solid brands that friends of mine count on include Tom Palmer and John Powers at large in the *Globe*, and Peter Howe and Bruce Mohl in the *Globe* business pages. Others I know and admire specially: Peter Gelzimis, the most substantial local columnist we have, Margery Eagan for her sense and sensibility, and Wayne Woodlief for his sanity in the nutty *Herald*. And at the *Globe*: Eileen McNamara, the last bleeding heart; Frank Phillips, the last walking compendium of state politics; and Sunday “Observer” Sam Allis, the last “boulevardier” on the Boulevard. Others I treasure, in person and in print, include book-wise Mark Feeney and Katherine A. Powers, and the peerless sports authority Bob Ryan of the *Globe*. Among the younger practitioners I

There may be no harbor for the old brands, including the *Globe*.

don’t know well but admire hugely are Glen Johnson, late of the *Globe*, who covers the State House for the AP, and Adam Reilly, who writes politics for the *Phoenix*.

Let’s hear it, above all, for the only true Tyrannosaurus Rex still rampaging across the land. Howie Carr gets less respect than Rodney Dangerfield ever did—because he’s printed in the *Herald* and because on the even less respectable WRKO he carries on with his callers about such burning questions as the TV stars they’d love to see naked. But Howie must be acknowledged someday as our bravest and best, if only for his coverage of the rise, reign, and fall of *The Brothers Bulger*, as he calls the book version. It has been the biggest Boston story of our times, maybe the only really important political story since the Kennedys. Ask yourself: In how many places could it have been said with authority that the overlord of the drug cartel and the overlord of local politics were brothers and intimates? Medellín, perhaps, in Colombia. Marseilles, perhaps, in France, once upon a time. And Massachusetts, from the late 1970s into the new century.

Though Kevin Cullen did some admirable reporting on the Bulgers, and in *Black Mass* Gerry O’Neill and Dick Lehr made a fine book of the story, the *Globe* master-narrative over the years was about the “good” brother and the “bad” brother, not about the perverse partnership that corrupted the city and the State House with fear. When Paul Corsetti of the *Herald* got a death threat directly from Whitey, he bought a gun, then quit the news business. Most reporters just decided not to mention the Bulgers. Mike Barnicle’s real sin was fronting continually for John Connolly, the FBI hack now in prison for fronting for Whitey. Brian McGrory extended the worst of the *Globe* tradition when Billy, as UMass president, decided to take the Fifth Amendment before Congress rather than detail his contacts with his on-the-

lam brother. McGrory wrote that poor Billy's silence was an exercise of "brotherly love"—not contempt for the public or anything like that. (That defense earned McGrory a ride through Washington with Bulger after the "say nothing" testimony.) No matter his disreputability in many other matters, nobody over the years took more chances to tell the story straight than Howie Carr. And nobody gave more people courage and some consolation through the Bulger siege.

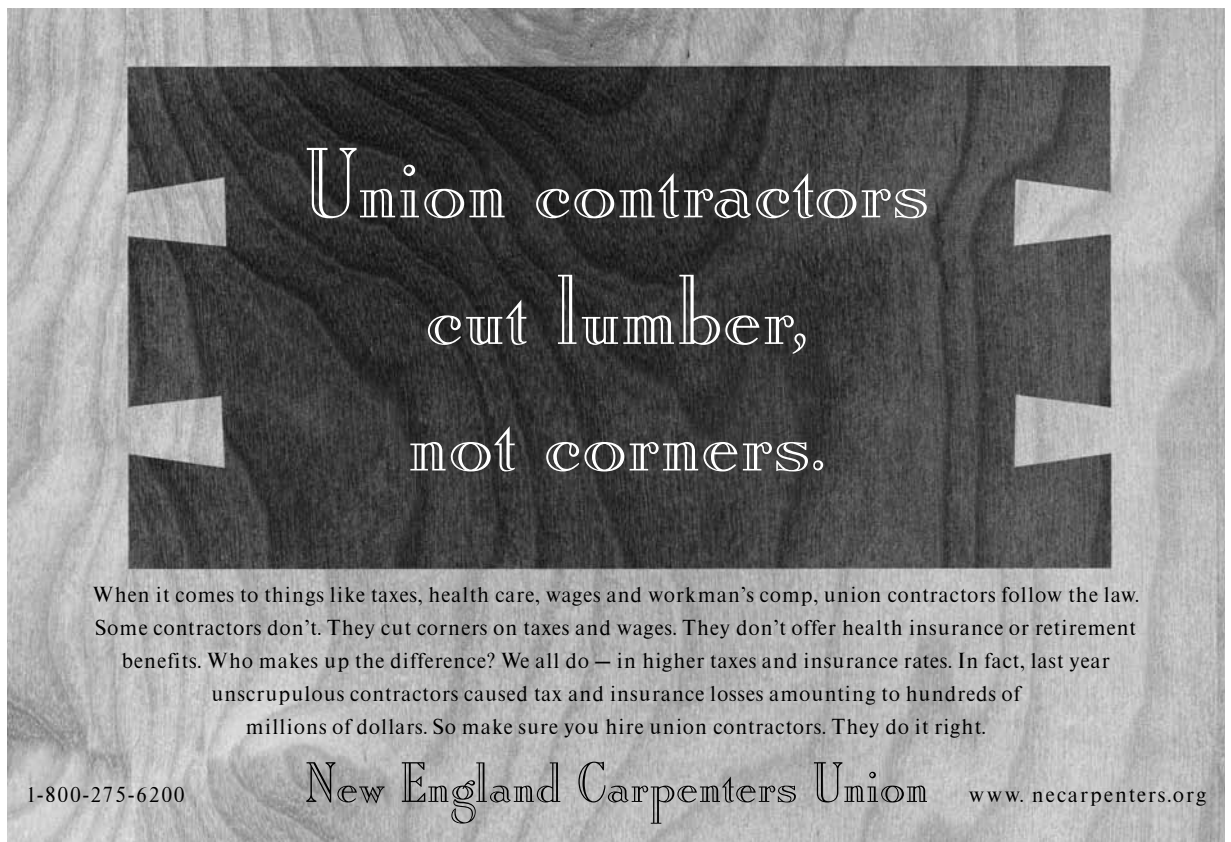
A NEW DIAL

"The future is here," as science fictionist William Gibson has said. "It's just not evenly distributed yet." Around Boston, in fact, the coming shape of journalism is barely visible. But the spirit of the new enterprise is germinating under the compost of the old. In my aggregator of Boston-based Web sites, it's my daily routine now to check a range of bookmarks like these:

David Warsh is our philosopher king, at his **Economic Principals** site (www.economicprincipals.com). Too erudite and eccentric for the new *Globe*, his specialty is new economic theorists, but he's also a Vietnam vet who stepped way out of line—maybe over the line—when he questioned John Kerry's war record in 1996, long before it was fash-

ionable even on the right. Warsh also used his incomparable Rolodex on academia to drill into the corruption and "gangsta-nomics" in the Andrei Schleifer affair that contributed to Larry Summers's fall at Harvard. Robert Birnbaum's **Identity Theory** (www.identitytheory.com) is an online version of Terry Gross, or a Back Bay version of *The Paris Review*. He claims to have read 1,000 books and done 500 face-to-face interviews with the great and the obscure in the last decade or so. They ramble, gossip, digress about craft and culture—and no wonder they're widely cited and linked. Lisa Williams ("Watertown's Net gain," *CW*, Winter '06) is a tech professional and mother of tots who's famous now for starting her newsy, conversational **H2otown** (www.h2otown.info) to be a better citizen and neighbor, because after 10 years living in Watertown, she realized "it's easier to find out about what's going on in Indonesia than the East End." She is a heroine of the hyperlocal news movement, demonstrating how almost any neighborhood can be re-appreciated as "a comic opera with real estate taxes." Bob Falcione applies the same idea with a different result at **The Hopkinton News** (www.hopnews.com), driving a turbo-charged hyperlocal blog with his own takes on high school basketball and the Neil Entwistle case.

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dedicated amateurs—Bob Neer (Harvard '86, lawyer and Ph.D. candidate in history at Columbia), David Kravitz (Swarthmore '86, a lawyer and an opera singer), and Charley Blandy (an Oberlin- and Indiana-educated musician) keep the only blog so far on the governor's race in Massachusetts this year and Deval Patrick's campaign in particular. Lynn Lupien at **Left in Lowell** (www.leftinlowell.com) is another lively link in the "reality-based community of progressive Massachusetts blogs." Also based in Lowell, as it happens, is another candidate for philosopher king: Stirling Newberry, a mainstay now at the **Blogging of the President** site I helped found in 2003 (www.bopnews.com). A vastly learned visionary and a biting writer on finance, politics, the Internet, music, and philosophy, among other things, Stirling was a prime mover among the bloggers who drafted Wesley Clark for president two years ago, and he stays well ahead of the game.

Speaking of games, surely we can claim **Sports Guy** Bill Simmons (www.sports.espn.go.com/espn/page2/simmons/index) as a Bostonian, though he no longer lives here, and as a blogger, though he works for ESPN. Simmons sits with John Updike at the all-time pinnacle of Red Sox lyricists for the tears-of-joy daily coverage that became the book about the 2004 season, *Now I Can Die Happy*. John Daley is a Boston

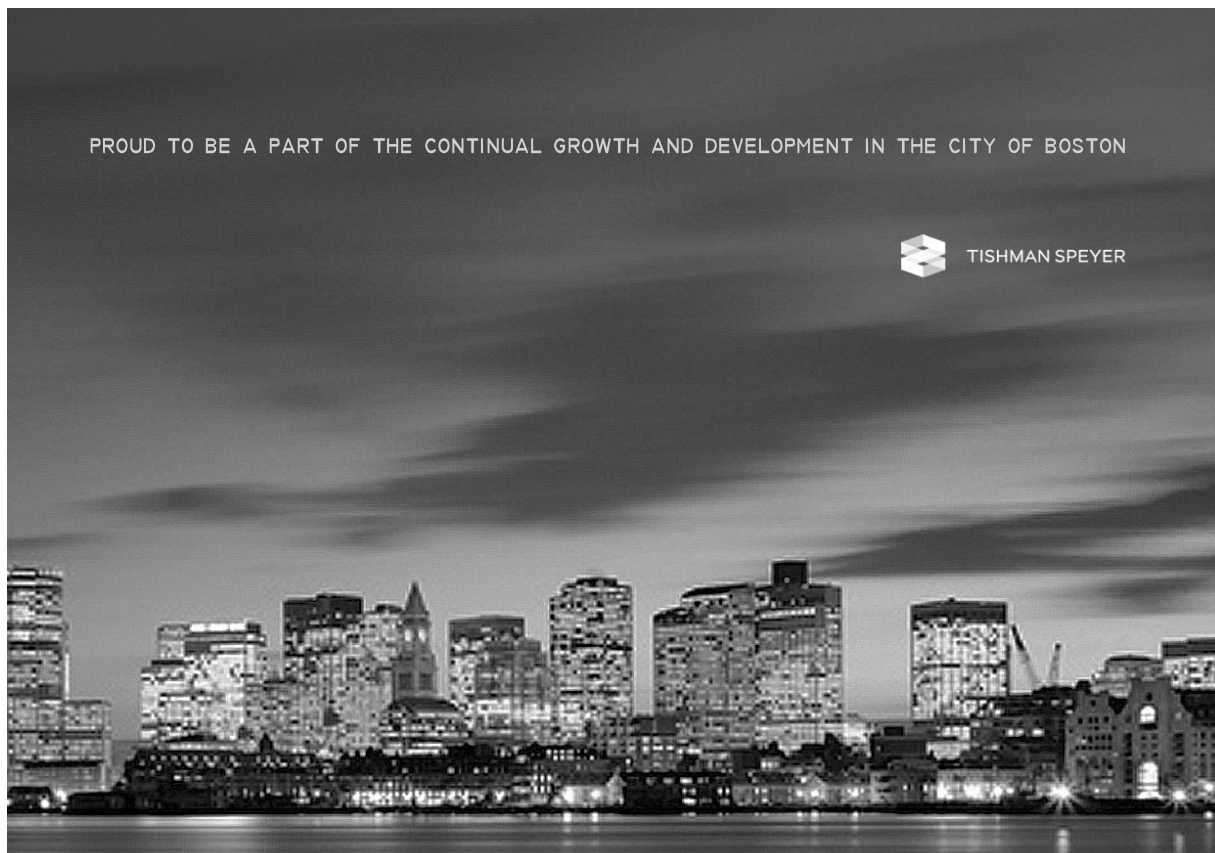
cop who blogs at **daleyblog** (www.daleyblog.com/weblog). Jay Fitzgerald is a *Herald* financial guy who can write, and keeps an old-fashioned but original eye on books, politics, and Boston treasures like Brigham's ice cream at **Hub Blog** (www.hubblog.blogspot.com). Jay Fitz was my introduction to Domenico Bettinelli Jr., a fascinating character. A self-described geek in his 30s, born in Jamaica Plain to a Russian-Jewish mother and Sicilian father, Bettinelli lives now in Salem, edits the *Catholic World Report* and blogs his own curious and plain-spoken version of an orthodox line on the Church's troubles (with gay couples and adoption at the moment) at **Bettnet.com** (www.bettnet.com/blog). And then there are the guests at our New England table—global eyes and ears of foreign bloggers in our midst. My favorite may be the Ghanaian technologist Koranteng Ofori Amaah who works at Lotus/IBM, lives in Cambridge, and writes a brilliant stream of commentary on books, music, culture, and the passing strange of every day at **Koranteng's Toli** (www.koranteng.blogspot.com), "toli" defined as "a juicy piece of news...typically, a salacious or risqué tale of intrigue, corruption, or foolishness."

In that sampling of New Englanders today, nothing so connects the variety of those pages as the authenticity of their individual voices—authenticity that has nearly van-

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ished from the institutional media. In the aggregate of those blogs and many more, one can begin to glimpse, or imagine at least, a contemporary version of *The Dial*, the magazine that Ralph Waldo Emerson edited with Margaret Fuller in the 1840s. Today we would call *The Dial* a “group blog.” Emerson conceived it as a vehicle for the “good fanatics.” He wanted an omnidirectional compendium of “worthy aims and pure pleasures.” In his introduction to the first issue, Emerson wrote: “As we wish not to multiply books, but to report life, our resources are therefore not so much the pens of practiced writers, as the discourse of the living, and the portfolios which friendship has opened to us....”

Emerson had his Concord circle to draw on—Thoreau, of course, and Bronson Alcott, William Ellery Channing, and James Russell Lowell. We have the Web—an Emersonian device for Emersonian ends, on which already we hear strong echoes of Emerson’s earnest individuality, the same longing for an expressive democracy, the same hope of renewal.

Christopher Lydon is host of Open Source, produced at WGBH in association with University of Massachusetts–Lowell and syndicated by Public Radio International.

IMMIGRATION

New England is new once again

BY ILAN STAVANS

THE UNITED STATES is amidst a dramatic ethnic reconfiguration, and Massachusetts, as the nation’s “brain,” is responsible for understanding its effects. Are we up to it? Or will we be unable even to understand the change in ourselves?

Since World War II, immigrants from the so-called Third World—places as diverse as China, India, Mexico, and Senegal—have been arriving at US shores at astonishing speed. The influx, along with the high fertility rates of these groups, has generated a debate not only about the porosity of the nation’s borders but, more significantly, about the future of American identity. This nation has defined itself as a welcoming place to people from all corners of the globe seeking a chance in life—those Emma Lazarus, in her poem “The New Colossus” engraved in the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty, calls the “huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” Indeed, immigrants have shaped the country’s texture ever since the *Mayflower* anchored in Provincetown

Harbor nearly 400 years ago.

However, until recently most newcomers, especially those who arrived at the end of the 19th and throughout the first three decades of the 20th century, originated in Europe, from Norway and Italy and Ireland and Germany. They were poor and illiterate, and as such were often the target of hostility, but they were, for the most part, Caucasian. By 1950, the integration of these immigrants was a success, among other reasons because the economy was in a period of industrial expansion. Internationally, America was seen as a benign force, and, domestically, the military served as a springboard for the poor and the newcomer from a strange land into a more comfortable place in the social hierarchy.

The current wave of immigrants, by contrast, displays a wide array of skin colors as well as traditions. Its ethnic heterogeneity makes it difficult to pin down under a single banner. Likewise, the newcomers run a wide gamut of cultural, religious, and ideological possibilities. They’ve also arrived in the United States at a time when companies are downsizing and relocating abroad in order to remain competitive. As a result, the number of entry-level jobs is rapidly shrinking at home. Their immigration also coincides with a period of collective national introspection in terms of foreign policy, as American endeavors in the Middle East and elsewhere reveal the risks of imperial quests. The military is still a magnet for minorities, but its role as equalizer is increasingly questionable.

I’m part of this new immigrant wave. Having arrived in 1985, I spent a few years in New York before settling down in Amherst in the early ’90s. As thousands before and after me, I was lured here by the proud, small-town New England spirit, the connection between activist politics (especially the concept of self-reliance) and nature dating back to Transcendentalists like Emerson and Thoreau, and the passion and commitment to the life of the mind. I quickly realized, through my experience as a scholar and also in connection with my work in public television, that I had arrived at a time when the region’s collective identity was undergoing a reassessment. No doubt New England still has places where Irish-Catholic character is almost

The current wave is notable for its ethnic heterogeneity.

intact. But when one looks beyond the surface, it becomes obvious that the impact of the ethnic transformation can be found almost in every corner. Massachusetts, certainly, is a state being transformed by immigration in much the same way as Florida, New Jersey, and California. Newcomers are quietly becoming a fixture, revolutionizing the area in a myriad of ways.

New US citizens are sworn in at the John F. Kennedy Library, in Dorchester.



It is not because their numbers are overwhelming. In 2000, according to the last complete national Census, Massachusetts had a population of 6,349,097. The percentage of non-Hispanic whites in the state was 81.9, noticeably higher than the 69.1 percent in the nation overall. Precisely one out of every 20 people in Massachusetts was non-Hispanic black, whereas in the rest of the country they amounted to 12.1 percent of the total. The percentage of Hispanics in Massachusetts was 6.8, compared with a national level of 12.5 percent. The majority of Hispanics are Puerto Ricans living in cities like Springfield, Holyoke, Worcester, Lowell, and Lawrence, although the number of Mexicans has been growing steadily, more than 22,000 at the turn of the millennium. There were over 199,000 Puerto Ricans in Massachusetts and approximately 198,000 “other Hispanics,” people from elsewhere in the Americas: Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Argentina, Chile, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Panama, among other places. Approximately 230,000 people in the state described themselves as Asian, predominantly Chinese, although also from India, Cambodia, and Vietnam. This amounted to 3.7 percent of the state population, slightly more than the 3.6 percent at the national level.

NEW NEIGHBORS

The numbers, unimpressive by themselves, hide a more important story. Right before our eyes, immigrants are becoming the new face of Massachusetts. As MassINC has documented, the share of the foreign-born among working-age residents has nearly doubled since 1980, from

9 percent to 17 percent in 2004. From 2000 to 2004, 172,000 immigrants arrived in the Bay State. Of these, 47 percent came from Latin America and the Caribbean, and 23 percent from Asia; 19 percent were Brazilian. In Boston, immigrants make up a growing share of the population, from 20 percent in 1990 to 26 percent in 2000. Boston, it is often noted, has become a majority minority city, as the white non-Hispanic population dropped from 59 percent to 49 percent in the '90s. But it did so without the African-American share of the population (24 percent) growing at all. It was Hispanics (11 percent to 14 percent), Asians (5 percent to 8 percent), and multi-racial/ “other” (1 percent to 4 percent) that

accounted for minorities achieving majority status.

We see these new neighbors every day, but do we notice them? Who are the migrant laborers? And the cleaning force, the building superintendents? Lawn mowing, washing dishes, and cooking? Don't look for multicolored faces in government. Only after society experiments with an overhaul do politics show a visible reaction. With little access to power, immigrants are changing our food, fashion, and music. The nation's metabolism always functions that way: While people at the bottom might be ostracized because of their foreignness, their cultural expressions exert pressure on the mainstream.

Take the case of language. The second most-used tongue in the state, and in the region in its entirety, is Spanish. It is followed closely by Mandarin Chinese, and Arabic is also an important ingredient to our Tower of Babel. In Boston, 33 percent of residents spoke a language other than English at home in 2000, up from 26 percent in 1990, according to the Boston Redevelopment Authority. Among these, 14 percent spoke Spanish, up from 10 percent a decade earlier. This is not to say that Hispanics in Massachusetts aren't eager to learn English. The opposite is true. As in California and Arizona, exit polls indicated that Hispanics voted against bilingual education in the 2002 referendum that replaced it with English immersion. Still, tongues other than English are increasingly heard in our schools and on our streets. The number and reach of Spanish-language newspapers and magazines, along with radio stations, has rapidly expanded. In 2005, Boston alone had more than a dozen different daily or weekly publications in Cervantes's

tongue and half that number in Chinese.

Take sports also. The Red Sox roster shows fewer and fewer African-American ball players, while the number of stars from the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and Panama is on its way up. The fastest-growing constituency in the team's fan base is among Latinos.

Unfortunately, in the political arena ethnic faces are still absent. State and local officials invariably court the non-white vote with enthusiasm, even though their personal connection to these groups remains tenuous. But the presence of Latinos, Asians, and Arabs in state politics is almost nonexistent. There are but a handful of Latinos in the state Legislature, the highest-ranking of which is Cambridge state Sen. Jarrett Barrios. The first Haitian-American to be elected state representative, Marie St. Fleur, has only recently been joined by the second, Linda Dorcena Forry. Why are such officials harder to find than a penny on a Cape Cod beach? The problem is that the ethnic block isn't a homogenous one. Each immigrant enclave has its idiosyncrasies, which respond to ancestral as well as immediate needs. Furthermore, ethnic groups are frequently fragmented internally. Among Hispanics, for example, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans don't always have the exact same interests.

A TIME OF ADJUSTMENT

As a Mexican by birth whose ancestors crossed the Atlantic from Poland and the Ukraine, I experience the new immigration to New England as a welcome adjustment. Personally, it helps me feel more at ease, as I'm sure it does others with roots elsewhere in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. However, I'm aware that the same adjustments are approached with suspicion by others with a more nativist view of life. The tension between these views, expressed in bars, stadiums, radio shows, and op-ed

The state is more diverse but also more fractured.

pieces, announce that the region, along with the nation at large, is in a state of anxiety. Will the new immigrant eventually be absorbed into the American tapestry, as previous waves did in the times of Teddy Roosevelt? Is the system about to collapse instead? Are immigrants assimilating to the American way of life or is it the other way around? It is clear that Irish Catholics have a stronghold in the Commonwealth. For how long, though? If trends continue as foreseen by the Census Bureau, the white elite is likely to become isolated. Is New England becoming *new* again?

The anxiety is obvious in intellectual and artistic circles. *The Boston Globe*, like major newspapers in every

other metropolis nationwide, caters unequivocally to a white readership. In spite of the good intention, every time it focuses on ethnic communities, it does so in a form of journalism one might describe as "cultural safari." The non-white is presented as exotic and marginal, a person always in the process of becoming. WGBH, too, indulges in this sort of misrepresentation. Its audience is the white, educated middle-class. Blackness, brownness, yellowness, and other color variations are ghettoized into non-mainstream programs.

In the colleges and universities of the area, for a couple of decades the drive has been, through programs like affirmative action, to open up to non-Caucasian populations. The goal is to diversify the student body as well as the faculty and administration. Nevertheless, the percentages remain minuscule. For Harvard to have a Latino student population of 7.7 percent and Amherst College one of 5.5 percent in the 2005-6 academic year is embarrassing. The concentration and reputation of our universities gives urgency to these questions. It is frequently said that the mind of the United States is in Harvard Square. As the region becomes more global, are its thinkers fully aware of the radical ethnic change in our national identity? The United States is used to seeing itself in black and white. But today, American society is in Technicolor, and nowhere is that more true than in Massachusetts.

Ours is now a global universe. In 2006, instant mobility is a pattern, one that was much more faint in 1996. Nations are porous. Cultures affect one another constantly. Polyglotism is the norm in Europe and Asia, where knowing only one language is the equivalent of being partially deaf. The elasticity that surrounds us is delightful: It allows us to be many things and in many places at once. But it is also dangerous. Massachusetts is far more ethnically diverse than ever before, more connected to the rest of the world through technology, its economy more attached to international markets than it was even a decade ago. Yet the state is also more fractured, particularly in urban centers. Slavery might have been eradicated a century ago but segregation is alive and well.

The *new* New England has arrived. Will the word "commonwealth" still apply to it? Will it be a landscape where natural and intellectual resources are equally accessible to every one of its citizens? Or will the nation's brain have nothing to teach America about its 21st century task of becoming a global village?

Ilan Stavans is the Lewis-Sebring Professor in Latin American and Latino Culture and Five College-40th Anniversary Professor at Amherst College. His books include On Borrowed Words: A Memoir of Language and Dictionary Days. He is the host of the syndicated PBS television show Conversations with Ilan Stavans.

POLITICS & CIVIC LEADERSHIP

A turn toward the flat and bland

BY JOAN VENNOCHI

WHEN IT COMES to politics as a clash of ideas, the past decade has not been kind to Massachusetts.

The last big political battle for hearts and minds broke out in 1996, when Republican Gov. Bill Weld unsuccessfully challenged incumbent Democrat John Kerry for the US Senate. Weld ran against crime, welfare, and taxes. His campaign pitted the conservative concept of lean, mean government against the traditional liberal definition: government as problem-solver and provider, compliments of the American taxpayer. The formula worked for the GOP elsewhere in the country and helped Weld capture the governor's office in 1990. Were Bay State voters ready to embrace it as their message to Washington, too? Ultimately, voters rejected Weld's platform as too narrow and callow, and sent Kerry back to the Senate. Weld then tired of the office he actually held, decamped to New York, and began the cycle of short-time Republican governors that has yet to be broken.

Ten years later, another restless Republican is putting ideas back in the headlines. Like Weld, Gov. Mitt Romney is a fiscal conservative. But Romney also embraces socially conservative views—at least he does now, as he seeks to score points with voters far outside New England. Back home, Bay State Democrats are doing their best to turn up the heat on the hot buttons Romney pushes, from gay marriage and adoption to stem cell research and emergency contraception. Sometimes, Romney pushes a hot button and Democrats back away from challenging him, as in the issue of state college tuition parity for illegal immigrants. Romney led the charge against it, and in the end, the Democratic Legislature voted it down. Even the blue state of Massachusetts is not immune from post-9/11 xenophobia.

Suddenly, the “social issues” that so often drive national politics but in recent years barely caused a ripple here (the sole exception being the Legislature's near-reinstatement, in 1997, of the death penalty) are back in play. Romney's national move puts fiscal issues and the push and pull between public and private sector interests under a harsher spotlight, as well. Consider the health care debate and the question it ultimately poses: Who pays for the expanded health insurance just about everyone says they're in favor of?

The package embraced by legislators in April was a hybrid, celebrated for its creative blending of public and

private sector responsibility. It was propelled in large measure by Romney's push for a “personal mandate,” which penalizes individuals who do not have health insurance. Government subsidies are part of the equation, and businesses with more than 10 workers assume some responsibility through a minimal assessment. Amid the euphoria of reaching consensus, this key question remained: Was there actually enough money to extend coverage to 95 percent of the Commonwealth's citizens, as promised?

We won't know the answer for some time. But at least the hoopla over health care showcased the body politic, twitching at last. It's about time.

Boston, the capital city on the hill, is more diverse and sophisticated, less tribal and parochial, than ever before. But over the past decade, the political world that revolves around it felt small, flat, and bland.

Ten years after Kerry turned back the Weld challenge, Massachusetts appears more uniformly Democratic than ever before, and as the country has moved to the right, that has cost us dearly in clout. Camelot's heady surge of New England—fueled power occurred nearly a half century ago, and is now running on fumes. During his reign as Speaker of the House, the legendary Tip O'Neill helped Massachusetts fund the Big Dig and the country weather the Reagan Revolution. But by the end of the last century, Sun Belt Republicans turned Bay State political muscle into an oxymoron.

Two unsuccessful presidential bids by favorite sons, Kerry in 2004 and Gov. Michael Dukakis in 1988, did little to improve the Bay State's political standing beyond its regional borders. Today, Massachusetts is disdained by outsiders—often, by Romney himself—as a caricature of the left. So,

The last battle for hearts and minds broke out in 1996.

too, is Edward Kennedy, the last liberal lion in the US Senate and, with his seniority and iconic status, our last link to a more potent past. Outgunned in numbers and in ideology, Kennedy still brings home the bacon for Massachusetts and fights on for liberal principles. Once he is, at last, gone from the scene, who will be able to do the same on either front?

At home, Democrats have grown afraid to fight the liberal label or defend it. Since 1990, Massachusetts voters have elected Republican governors who promise to shrink government but don't stick around to govern what's left. From Weld to Romney, these governors did manage to diminish the public's expectations and sap the Democrats' conviction, leaving those whose grip on the Legislature has only tightened afraid to raise the bar, or taxes. Instead, another T-word—timidity—dominates Boston City Hall and Beacon Hill alike.

In 2006, Massachusetts is back in the national headlines

as an innovator, due to the outcome of the protracted health care reform effort.

The debate began over a year ago, with pledges to dramatically expand access to those without health insurance. It stumbled over cost and responsibility—specifically, how much of the burden business should be forced to assume. Romney led the charge against any payroll tax or employer mandate. The House, under Speaker Salvatore DiMasi, insisted true health care reform meant more access and more business responsibility. But with important support from the tiny band of business brothers still engaged in Bay State civic affairs, the business tax morphed into an “assessment.”

Whether the state can make good on all its lofty promises remains to be seen.

TRIUMPH OF THE TIMID

The GOP routinely depicts Massachusetts, with its Beacon Hill–dominating Democrats, as a bastion of spendthrift liberals and activist judges, jointly plotting misguided social experiments that chip away at middle-American values. For conservatives, the legalization of same-sex marriage by the Supreme Judicial Court is Exhibit A. But beyond gay marriage it is difficult to find evidence of what conservatives

love to hate about Massachusetts: expensive and expansive social liberalism run amok.

The last big social commitment made by state government was the Education Reform Act, which passed in 1993. An ambitious but tough-minded plan that set standards but gave public schools the resources to meet them, it was spearheaded by Democrats. But the legislation’s authors, Thomas Birmingham in the Senate and Mark Roosevelt in the House, both failed as gubernatorial candidates, and Democrats in general seemed unable to benefit politically from their own brainchild. Instead, Republican governors have reaped the benefits of educational progress.

After education reform, Weld focused Beacon Hill on corporate tax cuts and holding the line on state spending. Both were billed as antidotes to economic recession and the state’s 1980s reputation as “Taxachusetts.” Neither stopped the flow of jobs or people out of Massachusetts, nor stood in the way of industry consolidation. The global economy is bigger than any state’s tax code. But once again, a Republican governor got credit for downsizing, while the Democratic Legislature that passed tax cuts continued to be demonized for its allegedly spendthrift ways.

The popular, if lazy, caricature of the typical Massachusetts Democrat ignores the tenure of someone like House

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Speaker Thomas Finneran. He did not spend taxpayer money gladly, to the dismay of human services advocates. To protect their constituencies, liberals turned to the Senate, then headed by Birmingham. Long, painful budget stare-downs between the two legislative leaders ensued. Today, liberal constituencies see a friend in DiMasi, while Senate President Robert Travaglini takes on a more fiscally conservative role, and once again we got a long, painful stare-down, this time on health care reform. In legislative leadership, the ethnic cast has changed, as Italian-Americans took over from Irish-Americans, but the stubbornness remains the same.

If Republicans downsized government, the Bay State's corporate base downsized itself. Over the past decade, the banking, insurance, and retail industries sold out, putting local economic jewels into the hands of out-of-town owners. This year, Filene's joins Jordan Marsh as another ghost of New England's retail past.

A decade ago, you couldn't fit Bay State business leaders—or their egos—in a room. Now they fit around a table. "When you can get the leadership of the business and hospital worlds around one table in Jack Connors's small conference room, you know things have changed in Boston," says Philip Johnston, chairman of the Massachusetts Democratic Party, referring to meetings piloted by Connors, chair-

man of the board of Partners HealthCare, in search of compromise on health care legislation. Connors brokered the final deal, weaving Partners's economic self-interest into a plan that is billed as a way to serve the public interest, as well.

The local big shot CEO, fully engaged in civic affairs, is an endangered species in Massachusetts. The health care industry is king right now, giving executives like Connors and Peter Meade, executive vice president of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, starring roles, and not just in the health reform drama. It was a busy week for Meade, back in March, when he helped to work out the health care deal behind the scenes just a day after leading a band of Catholic Charities heavyweights off the board in protest of the archdiocese's refusal to allow adoption by gay couples. Earlier, Meade had led a lay commission in reviewing, and smoothing over, the closing of parish churches. And he continues to raise money for the promising but bare Rose Kennedy Greenway as a member of that board. The dominance of business players like Connors and Meade serves as a reminder of just how rare a breed they have become.

The hope now is that others in the nonprofit world—universities and foundations—will fill the vacuum left by buyout-enriched departing executives. The corporate chest-thumping by Chad Gifford or David D'Alessandro is missed

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not only for its entertainment value. These CEOs put their companies' money, prestige, and profile on the line to support civic programs and policies, from the arts to teen summer jobs. Massachusetts and Boston politics seem grayer without their brash egos and colorful personalities. At the Boston Foundation, Paul Grogan puts policy issues on the front burner but is undercut by whispers of a possible mayoral run, arousing suspicion in an always-wary City Hall. John Silber no longer heads Boston University, leaving local academia as flat as the current corporate culture.

No wonder Mayor Thomas Menino is threatening to sink a new 1,000-foot high skyscraper into Boston's silty soil. It's False Psychology 101: Build big, think big, feel big. But it will take more than an office tower for the Bay State to win back its swagger and its soul.

ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER

That felt good. A brisk bashing of Republicans, Democrats, corporate sellouts, and their bean-counting buyers energizes the old Boston spirit. But it still leaves us to mourn the passing of those two confident, articulate politicians who, in 1996, were unafraid to take principled stands on tough social and economic issues, and unafraid to argue them out in public, in full sentences, not sound bites. Passing, I say, because Kerry did not sound that way on the 2004 presi-

The media have lost their zest, depth, and determination.

dential trail and Weld does not look that way as a current candidate for governor of New York.

But it would be disingenuous to mourn the loss of great political actors and great political moments without also mourning the loss of the media that covered them.

That 1996 clash of titans occurred partly because of the stature of the contestants. But there was also something else: a fully engaged press, committed to showcasing the Kerry-Weld showdown as a smart, lusty collision of ideology and personality. The media gave the candidates a grand stage, and bathed them in *American Idol*-like floodlights. Weld and Kerry debated eight times, seven of those debates televised. A media consortium, which included *The Boston Globe*, the *Boston Herald*, and four television stations, co-sponsored their confrontations. An estimated 2 million viewers watched the final debate from Faneuil Hall.

The media still cover campaigns, but not with the zest, depth, and determination of a decade ago. A mayor running for a fourth term decides whether to debate, how many times to debate, at what time of day, and no one forces the issue.

The routine business of government garners even less media attention, even though politicians conducting rou-

tine business have the capacity to commit millions in taxpayer money to a host of special interests. Today, the media cover sports the way we used to cover politics. Great attention is paid to the game on the field, and to the issues and personalities off it as well. Today's media provide breathless details about the sale of Manny Ramirez's condo, but far fewer about the Sox owners' quest to tap into \$55 million in public money for neighborhood improvements.

As to the political press, we flock to entertaining, easy-to-follow scripts, such as Peter Blute's ill-advised harbor cruise or Jane Swift's Thanksgiving Eve helicopter ride. Too often, we turn human beings into caricatures, and I count myself an occasional offender. Black or white, good or evil, hero or chump. That way of covering politics and its practitioners demeans the process as much as the antics of some politicians. And the public? They turn their eyes away.

"Today, people have no expectations. They are cynical and apathetic about politics and government," says Scott Harshbarger, the former attorney general and unsuccessful Democratic gubernatorial candidate. "The Republican downsizing and demeaning of government has worked. But right now, most of us who bemoan the current state of affairs find solace in criticizing and making it clear what we're against." Yet, as Harshbarger acknowledges, there is little pressure on the bemoaners to state what "we are for."

Ben Kilgore, a media consultant who once worked in the long-ago mayoral administration of Kevin White and now represents Republican candidates, says corporate buyouts and relocations "have sapped the state's morale." Decrying the "ceaseless gamesmanship" between the Legislature and Republican governors, he says the people "simply don't count for much any more. Only time will tell if there is anything we can do to get back in the game, but the emergence of inspirational leadership would be a good start."

Each political era is a reaction to the one before it. Weld and the downsizing of government followed Dukakis and the expansion of government in the '80s. The Weld era reversed fiscal policy while leaving liberal social values alone. The much shorter terms of Paul Cellucci and Acting Gov. Jane Swift largely maintained the Weldian status quo.

Then came Romney. He, too, promised smaller government and better management. As a gubernatorial candidate, he downplayed conservative social views. As a potential presidential candidate, he is pushing hard to the right. In this unexpected way, Romney has re-energized Massachusetts politics, taking us to a new ideological fork in the road. The question is: Where do we go from here?

"You can never go back. No one's arguing for that," says Secretary of State William Galvin. "The bigger problem is that no one's leading. There is no new model. No one is say-

ing, “This is the way to go.’ What’s the plan? Where are we going to be in 10, 20 years?”

Maybe the next decade will offer a stimulating clash of ideas, or better yet, a substantive conversation about the future of Massachusetts. Maybe it begins with the 2006 gubernatorial campaign.

Joan Vennoch is a columnist for The Boston Globe.

CULTURAL POLITICS

The more things change, the more we stay the same

BY ALAN WOLFE

MASSACHUSETTS IS DIFFERENT from the rest of America, and is becoming more different with every passing year. But it’s not that Massachusetts is more liberal than the rest of the nation, it’s that the Bay State is more conservative.

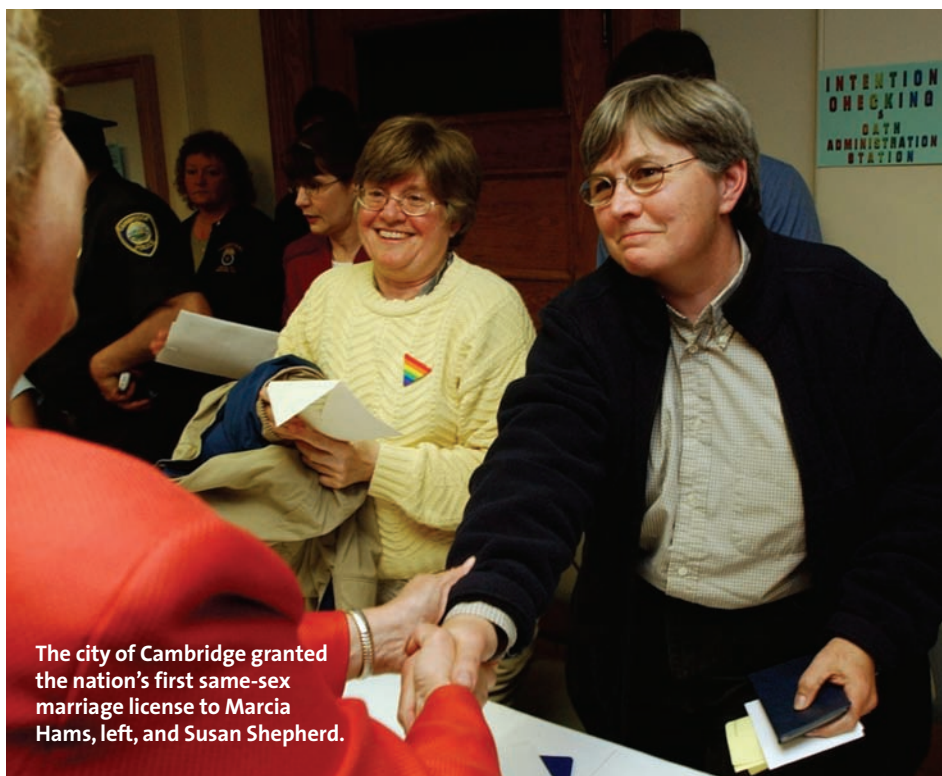
By more conservative, I am not, of course, referring to politics. Even our Republican governor calls Massachusetts “the bluest state in America” when speaking before Republican audiences around the country, presenting himself as a political outcast in his home state rather than its elected leader. We are certainly blue enough: Since 1996, when Republicans Peter Blute and Peter Torkildsen lost their seats, we’ve had an all-Democratic congressional delegation, the largest in the country. We not only reliably vote Democratic in presidential elections, we supply more than our share of Democratic presidential nominees, including the two, Michael Dukakis and John Kerry, who have come to symbolize all the foibles of liberalism. Living in Massachusetts is synonymous with lying outside the political mainstream.

Because it is so politically liberal, conservatives generally hate Massachusetts. Follow the Bay State’s lead, they tell the rest of the country, and the result will be gay rights run rampant, a nation soft on crime, and a

pacifist foreign policy on every issue save Ireland. If the nation is going to hell in a handbasket, as many conservatives believe, Massachusetts is at the head of the march.

But as former Massachusetts resident Daniel Patrick Moynihan once observed, “the central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics, that determines the success of a society.” And when it comes to cultural matters, Massachusetts stands well to the right of the rest of the country. If Moynihan is correct, conservatives ought to fall in line with us instead of running away. For we rank at the top in trends that, if the rest of the United States followed, would improve the quality of life for all Americans.

Talk to any conservative, and the single most important social institution, you will be promptly informed, is the family. Without strong and stable families, children will be lost to crime and delinquency, adults will find themselves in the grip of hedonistic sexuality, and no one will be willing to invest in future generations. These are truths people in this Commonwealth well understand; we rank first—literally first—in the infrequency of divorce. (There were 2.4 divorces in Massachusetts per 1,000 people in 2001, compared with 6.6 in Bill Clinton’s Arkansas and 6.1 in Dick and Lynne Cheney’s Wyoming.) Couples in Massachusetts also take their time before marrying. The median age at first marriage in Massachusetts is 27.4 years for women and 29.1 for men, the highest in the country for both sexes. If you want to find people who believe that their marriage vows should be taken seriously, this is the state on which you



The city of Cambridge granted the nation’s first same-sex marriage license to Marcia Hams, left, and Susan Shepherd.

ought to cast your eyes.

Once you do, you might also discover that people in Massachusetts are less likely to engage in irresponsible sex than those in the rest of the country. For some time, conservatives have been worried about the effects of sexual promiscuity, as taboos against premarital sex have broken down; when people become sexually active in their teenage years, or, even worse, when women become pregnant while unmarried, their failure to control their sexuality harms

We would rather have gays at bridal showers than bathhouses.

themselves, their children, and society in general. People here are good at either abstaining from sex or practicing birth control. We also rank first in the infrequency of birth to teenage mothers. Our record on out-of-wedlock births is almost as good; here we are third, after Utah and Colorado. Surely, then, conservatives should find much to admire about our state.

To be sure, we are by no means consistent in our familial traditionalism; we rank 37th in the percentage of households with single parents, the same ranking we have for households composed of married couples and their own children. (We also have disproportionately large numbers of residents who do not marry at all.) Still, we more than hold up our share of responsibility for conserving the “Ozzie and Harriet” style of family life that has been disappearing in the United States.

Thus the statistical evidence suggests that, in the Bay State, marriage is serious business. No wonder, then, that while other liberal-minded states namby-pambied on the issue of homosexuality—talking in euphemisms such as gay rights or civil unions—we came right out and made hitching gay people up the law of the land, or at least the Commonwealth. Conservatives around the country, of course, denounced *Goodridge v. Board of Health*, the Supreme Judicial Court decision that legalized gay marriage here, as a radical step toward moral decay. But in doing so, they failed to recognize the yearning for marital rights as the conservative impulse that it was. Just a decade or two ago, gay political activists, like leftist activists in general, were denouncing marriage in any form as a stifling, bourgeois, and oppressive institution bound to interfere with personal and sexual freedom. We in Massachusetts knew better, and in 2003 our highest court declared that the thing to do about marriage was to have more of it.

“Marriage is a vital social institution,” Chief Justice Marshall opined in *Goodridge*. “The exclusive commitment of two individuals to each other nurtures love and mutual support; it brings stability to our society. For those who choose to marry, and for their children, marriage provides

an abundance of legal, financial, and social benefits. In turn it imposes weighty legal, financial, and social obligations.” You cannot find language more conservative than this. If gays want to be conventional, the Massachusetts response is to encourage them. Elsewhere—in states that have high divorce rates, for example—gay people are much more likely to be shunned or stigmatized, and for that very reason, they are also likely to engage in dangerous forms of sexual behavior. We would rather have them at bridal showers than bathhouses.

Of course, acceptance of same-sex marriage is not something that happened all at once here in Massachusetts, and is not yet complete. As befits our conservative nature, the SJC ruling was greeted with some unease, and initially lawmakers scrambled to find a way to short-circuit it. But once marriage rights for gays went into effect, in May 2004, the legislative move ran out of steam. And, as befits a state as conservative as this one, once gay marriage became legal, more people began to accept it; according to surveys taken by the Center for Public Opinion Research at Merrimack College, 58 percent of Bay Staters approved of gay marriage in March 2006, compared with 33 percent in February 2004. There may yet be a statewide vote on rolling back marriage to its traditional limits, but not before 2008. By that time same-sex marriage will have been in effect for more than four years. And in culturally conservative Massachusetts, nothing makes a policy more secure than its being the status quo.

CATHOLIC TASTES

No doubt some of Massachusetts’s affinity with marital stability is due to economics; richer states tend to have more stable marriages than poorer ones. But some is also due to the preponderance of Catholicism in this state. When it comes to religion, therefore, it is worth pointing out that, on cultural matters, the Roman Catholic Church is as conservative as they come. By this I do not mean that Catholics are political conservatives; in Massachusetts, although not so much nationally, Catholics are more likely to vote Democratic than Republican. Nor am I referring to the Vatican’s teachings on birth control or abortion, both of which lie on the right side of the spectrum.

I mean instead that churches have cultural affinities as well as political affections. And here, once again, Massachusetts opts for the most conservative cultural styles among religious denominations while the rest of America goes for the most radical. Even if the Catholic Church’s doctrinal retrenchment, abdication of pastoral responsibility in handling sexually predatory priests, and controversy over whether Catholic Charities should allow adoption by gay

couples is putting the state's attachment to Catholicism to the test, Massachusetts seems almost immune to the religious fads sweeping the country.

The fastest growing religion in the United States is Pentecostalism, with the number of self-declared Pentecostals increasing by 11.5 percent nationwide between 1999 and 2005, from 10.4 million to 11.6 million, but it has a weak foothold here. Pentecostals are known for their emotional fervor, born-again enthusiasm, charismatic preaching, and, in the extreme case, dancing in the aisles and speaking in tongues. Compared with that, Catholicism's attachment to a relatively unchanging liturgy is as staid, in cultural terms, as a religion can be. Attend Catholic Mass on any given Sunday and you are engaged in religious rituals that would be familiar to a 13th-century European. Go to a Pentecostal church in California, by contrast, and you will be surrounded by people born in one religious tradition willing to join another, one that promises to put them in touch with their inner selves. If you are Catholic, Jewish, or mainline Protestant, as so many residents of this state are, your God is a bit distant. If you seek to be born again in the rest of America, especially in the allegedly conservative

South, your God is a friend who walks with you in need. The old-time religion used to be found in America's rural backwaters. Now the inner-city parishes of Dorchester are the closest thing in America to religion as it was practiced in this country in the 19th century.

Innovative religion, the kind found in megachurches, increasingly popular throughout the country, is less likely to be found here because people in Massachusetts are as conservative in where they live as in how they live. Megachurches sprout up in newly built exurban communities lo-

Today's old-time religion is in the parishes of Dorchester.

cated some 40 or 50 miles from the city with which they very loosely identify. But we in Massachusetts have nothing like Alpharetta, Ga., or Sugarland, Texas. And the reason is that people in this state simply do not like to move. According to the Census Bureau, 58 percent of Bay State residents in 2000 were living in the same residences as they were in 1995, the ninth highest percentage in the US. Even the sprawl in this state is caused not by the yearning for green pastures but by resistance to growth in the established suburbs. Aversion



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to change, not the desire for it, is driving development into the hinterlands.

The results of this conservative preference to preserve can best be seen in Boston. During the 1960s, when urban whites around the country were fleeing the cities for the suburbs, white, primarily Catholic residents of Boston largely stayed behind. They had invested heavily in impressive parish buildings. Having created urban political machines, they were reluctant to lose the political power they had in City Hall and the State House and didn't want to disperse their votes across suburban subdivisions. Their neighborhoods, once described by the sociologist Herbert Gans as "urban villages," were tight-knit and well policed. This attachment to place had its underside, to be sure, as Boston's urban whites became famous at this time for resisting busing as a way of achieving school desegregation. But it's easy to recognize their instincts as conservative in the deepest cultural sense — preservation of community, fear of outsiders, reluctance to uproot.

ROOTS DEEP IN TRADITION

Life in Massachusetts today continues to be shaped by the conservative need for roots. Where else in America are suburbs (Lexington, Concord) not artificial creations but instead historical monuments? Where else are small cities and towns (Northampton, North Adams) major cultural centers? Fleeing the past is the way America's radically innovative temperament expresses itself elsewhere. Living with the past all around you is the way we do it here. Our real estate prices are so high not only because the supply of housing is low, but also because people in this state will pay a premium to live in places where 18th- and 19th-century Americans became famous. Elsewhere, Americans are infatuated with the new. Here, it's the Colonials and Victorians that rise in value.

Not that long ago, Massachusetts boosters decided to market this state based on its innovative spirit. Route 128, dubbed "America's Technology Highway" during the mid 1980s, was to be the epicenter of a new computerized America. Yet as befits a state as conservative as ours, even our innovators became stodgy, as PCs replaced minicomputers, and Silicon Valley's Hewlett-Packard absorbed Digital Equipment Corp. America saw the future, and it was Palo Alto, not Waltham.

To be sure, Massachusetts continues to capitalize economically on its advantages in science, and there is nothing quite so opposed to conservative stand-pattism as scientific inquiry. So stem-cell research got the legislative seal of approval here last year, while "intelligent design" tried to creep into science curricula in several other states. In the mid 1990s, Boston and Cambridge responded to compelling evidence by adopting needle-exchange programs to prevent the spread of AIDS and other diseases, while President Bill

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Then&Now

Clinton went against his own science advisers in opposing such programs.

Massachusetts owes its advantage in science and technology to the presence of world-class universities. But for all that the modern research university promotes new knowledge, it is important to remember that universities are also culturally conservative institutions. Over the past 10 years, in the rest of America, globalization has shaken up industry, leading to serious job disruption, loss of health coverage, and all the resulting instabilities that undermine tried-and-true ways of life. In academia, however, professors have tenure, which is far more a legacy of feudalism than a sign of capitalism. They can count on their pensions being funded when they retire.

Outside of science departments, most universities are filled with leftists, but no one is more conservative than a faculty member, and that goes for the radicals as well; if you don't believe me, consider changing the college curriculum or tinkering with course times and classrooms (or ask Larry Summers what it is like to propose moving a department to Allston). Massachusetts should be proud of its universities; without them, I would surely be living in another state. But when we praise our institutions of higher education, we generally fail to appreciate the extent to which they protect us against the forces of change that sweep through nearly all other institutions in the United States.

Massachusetts has also been relatively immune to faddish approaches to crime. Despite numerous attempts to reinstate the death penalty, Massachusetts resists, at least in part out of an old-fashioned stubbornness to get on board with trends sweeping the rest of the country. Interesting enough, however, our conservatism on crime threatens to become faddish itself; now other states are joining us in expressing second thoughts about capital punishment. Whether one supports or opposes the death penalty, there is something to be said for a system in which standards of punishment are consistent over time. Massachusetts meets that essentially conservative conception of justice.

I write about the conservatism of Massachusetts not to condemn it, but to praise it. For it just so happens that, like so many other people here, I lean to the left in politics but find myself appalled at the radically transformative cultural trends to which our country is so addicted. There ought to be someplace in America for people who do not know what songs dominate the Top 40, which celebrities are on the covers of which magazines, and how the latest flat-screen televisions compare. Fortunately, there is such a place. It is dreadfully old-fashioned, indelibly resistant to fads, and gladly willing to embrace its history and traditions. Its name is Massachusetts. **CW**

Alan Wolfe is professor of political science and director of the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life at Boston College.

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Revisited

*In a Billerica subdivision,
making it in the middle class
is still a full-time job*



JOHN AND LAURA Peters ended up on Heritage Road in much the same way many others have landed on this quiet street of split-level ranch homes in a Billerica subdivision. After dreaming big, they came down to earth.

The street of well-kept homes, part of a 1970s development called Heritage Heights, is nothing if not down-to-earth. The three-bedroom houses are comfortable but hardly cavernous, decidedly of the pre-McMansion era. They each have a modest-sized living room and dining area on the main level, along with the bedrooms, and a large family room on the lower level. Heritage Heights is laminate, not granite. The families drawn here are neither those struggling at the edge nor the high-fliers whose outsized incomes feed an insatiable consumer appetite for the best and biggest of everything. In this land of the minivan and occasional backyard pool, the half-acre lots provide plenty of elbow room compared with more urbanized settings, but neighbors can still call out and talk to each other while working on the lawn.

It's a place that has worked well for the Peterses, though when they set out to buy their first home four years ago, the couple started looking in nearby Reading, where John grew up and his parents still live. But a dose of real-estate-price reality quickly threw cold water on the idea of buying a home there. Billerica's neighbor to the south, Bedford, where Laura grew up, was also out of the question. Indeed, they found nearly every community in this area north of Boston out of reach. "I figured we'd probably end up in New Hampshire," says John. So when they came upon the tidy split-level on Heritage Road, the Peterses jumped at the chance to become homeowners in what seemed like the last affordable community in this swath of suburbia.

Heritage Heights is a place where, even three decades ago when the first residents moved in, families seemed to land not necessarily because they set out determined to live in Billerica, but because the town of nearly 40,000 people offers a toehold into

BY MICHAEL JONAS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK MORELLI

middle-class life that can be hard to find in many nearby communities. Once there, however, families seem to find this once-rural town, which is increasingly a bedroom suburb to Boston, a solid community in which to put down roots.

Ten years ago, in the inaugural issue of *CommonWealth*, founding editor Dave Denison set out to take the pulse of the Massachusetts middle class by seeing how families were faring on Heritage Road (“On Heritage Road,” *CW*, Spring ’96). *CommonWealth* went back there in its fifth anniversary issue (“Return to Heritage Road,” *CW*, Spring ’01), and now we’ve gone back again. In every visit, the report back has been consistent in its inconsistency. To be middle-class in Massachusetts, it seems, is to be caught up in conflicting sentiments.

Then, as now, residents on Heritage Road by and large know they have much to feel good about and be grateful for. There are no obvious signs of economic distress in these well-tended homes. But conversations with those who live here make clear that there is an undercurrent of angst, a feeling that life seems to throw one curve after another at those who have worked hard and played by the rules but still struggle to get ahead.

A decade after *CommonWealth* first visited here, that mixed outlook remains, even if the cares have, in some cases, changed. Worries about retirement seem to loom ever larger, both for those looking ahead to it and for some already there. Stopping to smell the roses is now done alongside worrying about everything from health care costs to soaring property taxes. And wondering whether your children will be able to do better than you have has, for some, been replaced by the downsized hope that they will simply do as well.

THE PETERSES: ‘WE ARE FORTUNATE’

For \$320,000, the Peterses considered themselves lucky to get in on a real estate market that, in 2002, was still rising by the month. Even if they found themselves in Billerica somewhat by default, they say they couldn’t be happier. Their neighbors are friendly, and they love their home and their easy commutes to work.

Firmly in the white-collar world—John is a manager at Picis, a Wakefield software firm, and Laura is a financial analyst at nearby Hanscom Air Force Base—the Peterses are part of a demographic wave in town that’s been in motion for at least a decade, one that is bringing more and more professionals to once decidedly blue-collar Billerica.

Their four years on Heritage Road have been good ones, they say, especially with the arrival of their first child, Justin, in November. With both of them in desirable jobs,

John says, they’re feeling “pretty well off” and probably doing better than many around them. But it’s not as if they haven’t worked for it. John, 39, who got a computer science degree from the University of Lowell (now the University of Massachusetts–Lowell), has worked his way up after a dozen years at Picis, where he is a manager.

Laura, 40, left college after one year and has worked 21 years for the Defense Department at Hanscom. But growing weary of what she calls the “dead end” data management position she held for many years, Laura went back to school in her 30s, completing her B.A. and receiving an M.B.A. through a branch of Western New England College operated at Hanscom.

John says they are “definitely doing better than my parents,” but he quickly qualifies his answer by pointing to one difference. His parents were able to buy their house in Reading and raise a family in it, “with only my dad working,” John says of his father, an electrician by training, who manages several office buildings in Cambridge.

The Peterses say they could probably get by on John’s salary alone—“Moneywise, we’re probably right on that line,” he says—but for now, they’ve decided not to veer too close to that line. In late January, Laura was getting ready



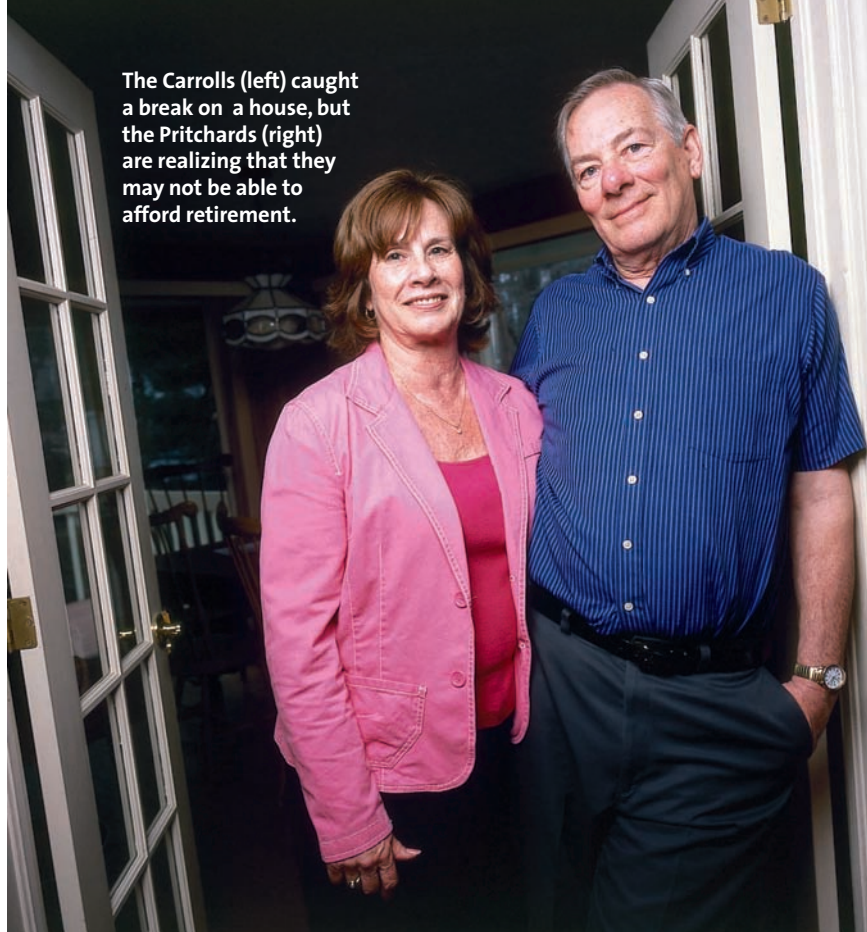
Wondering whether your children will do better than you has been replaced by the downsized hope that they will simply do as well.

to go back to work following maternity leave, and they had recently visited the on-base daycare center at Hanscom, where she’ll drop Justin off in the mornings.

It’s not just Laura’s income they didn’t want to give up. The Peterses were also thinking ahead to retirement. “I’m not sure if I’d want to give up 21 years with the government,” says Laura. If she stays at Hanscom, Laura will be eligible for



The Carrolls (left) caught a break on a house, but the Pritchards (right) are realizing that they may not be able to afford retirement.



a pension at age 55, at which point she will have already recorded more than 30 years of service.

While Laura, in her government job, can count on pension at a young retirement age, John entered a private-sector work world that was giving up on defined-benefit pensions, and at a time when even faith in the security of Social Security was fading. John figures he'll have to fend for himself. "Which is fine, since at least I know," he says with a laugh that seems equal parts resignation and roll-with-the-punches resiliency. "I've got a 401(k) and a couple of IRAs, so I've definitely been thinking about it," he says. "But I'll be 70 by the time I can retire, with the way it's going."

The Peterses have many dilemmas to face before retirement. They might want to have another child, in which case John says they might look for a larger home. And they haven't paid serious attention to the Billerica schools and the question of whether they'll want to stay in town when Justin hits school age. As Laura rocks the sleeping 3-month-old in her lap, that's a decision that seems a long way off.

THE CARROLLS: 'EXACTLY WHERE I WANTED TO BE'

Although she is about the same age as the Peterses, who represent the newcomers to Heritage Heights, Lori Carroll, who lives a few doors down, is very much part of the old guard on Heritage Road.

The 38-year-old telecom sales representative is now the proud owner of the same Heritage Road home that she moved into 31 years ago with her parents and two sisters;

she now shares it with her 11-year-old daughter, Briana, and her fiancé, John. But Lori didn't come to be ruler of the family roost through inheritance or a parental hand-off; she paid for it.

After splitting up with her husband in the mid-'90s, Lori and her daughter moved back in with her parents. She landed a good job at iBasis, a Burlington telecommunications firm where she still works today, and for her, life back on Heritage Road was good. But it wasn't as good for her parents, who divorced five years ago. They needed to sell the house in order to divide their assets, and to Lori that meant the life she was building for herself and Briana might come undone. At the time, she pegged her sense of stability on remaining in the comfortable confines of Heritage Road.

"Right now I consider myself middle-class because I am able to live in this house," she told *CommonWealth* five years ago. "But if I have to leave, I don't know."

The story had a happy ending. Her parents agreed to sell her the house for a price she could afford—\$270,000, at a time when it might have fetched as much as \$320,000. Then she built an 800-square foot addition on the house, creating a cozy in-law apartment where her mother, Rosemary, lives. The arrangement is especially helpful if Lori needs help caring for Briana, but with a separate outside entrance to the apartment, the two women also maintain their own lives. "We're very respectful of each other," says Lori.

Asked to size up the last five years, Lori says, "It's been awesome. This is exactly where I wanted to be. This is where I envisioned myself, and I'm here."

Which is not to say that she has taken her good fortune lightly, or has no worries going forward. Lori knows she dodged a big bullet when she held on to her job during the big telecom downturn of a few years ago, when the industry shed thousands of positions. She regrets not having received a bachelor's degree—she has a two-year degree in office administration from Middlesex Community College—and worries about what that could mean on the job market if she were ever cut loose.

She's unsure how she'll finance her retirement. And she has no idea how she'll manage to pay for Briana's college education, but she's determined that her daughter will get one. "One way or another, she's going," says Lori.

"I don't want her to settle," she says of Briana. "I don't want her to just get by or think someone's going to save her, like I thought," referring to her own dreamy view when she got married at age 23.

Just how determined she is to drill a set of life lessons into her daughter becomes clear when Lori poses a pop quiz to Briana after she arrives home on the school bus one day.

"What is my theory, Briana?" she asks. "What do I tell you about growing up?" Lori turns her head and delivers an aside. "We'll see if she remembers."

"Don't get married till you're 30," says Briana.

"That was a good start," says Lori. "But it wasn't 30, it was 35, so get that right."

Next question: "Go to...?"

"College," says Briana.

"Have many?"

"Friends. And get a good job."

"She's going to learn from her mother's mistakes," says Lori.

THE GIOVINOS: NO EMPTY NEST

Even more representative of the Heritage Heights old guard are Joanne and Tony Giovino. Living one street over from Heritage Road, on Eastview Avenue, the Giovinos were among the original residents who paid about \$40,000 each for the new homes in the 1970s. And *CommonWealth* has spent time with them on every one of its visits over the past 10 years.

Tony retired in December, closing up shop on Main Street Services, the Medford service station he successfully operated for 25 years. Not bad to be able to put up your feet—and lay down the socket-wrench set—at the not-very-ripe age of 58. But Tony earned that respite with plenty of 60-hour workweeks. And Joanne credits him with being a pretty savvy investor as well, and his homework was in evidence:

A paperback titled *How to Make Money in Stocks* was lying on the kitchen counter during a visit to the comfortable home where they have raised two daughters.

Joanne, who grew up in Lynn, has a degree from Salem State College, but she hasn't worked full-time since her children were born. "I'm always the first to say that I'm a very lucky person," says Joanne. Like Lori Carroll, Tony, who grew up in Walpole and got a two-year degree in business, has some parental wisdom that he imparts to their children. "Pick something and go for it. That's what I did," he says. "Whether it's hairdressing or whatever it may be, find something that you want to do and go after it. It's all what you make it."

'How does the middle class afford \$400,000 for a basic house? There used to be a thing called starter homes, which you don't find anymore.'

Though a big believer in self-made success, Tony isn't so sure it's as easy to come by as it once was, even in his own field. The increasing complexity of auto repair and maintenance is driving more and more business to dealerships. Then there's the soaring cost of health insurance, which he has always offered to his workers, along with liability and workers' compensation insurance. "I couldn't do it today," he says of the business he built.

The same is true on the domestic front. The Giovinos were 24 when they bought their house. Says Tony: "I look at where we were and where the kids are today and say, 'What happened?'"

Ten years ago, Joanne talked to *CommonWealth* about how common it was becoming for children in their 20s to move back in with their parents. Today, that is the Giovino family story, as both Katelyn, 25, and Leslie Ann, 21, are living at home. Katelyn, who got a bachelor's degree from Saint Anselm College in New Hampshire, is working as an assistant for a Bedford lawyer and hoping to start graduate school this fall, while Leslie Ann, who left college after two years, has an entry-level position at a bank.

The Giovinos say they are glad to help their daughters get on their feet—and understand why they have to, these days. "The price of grad school is tremendous," says Joanne. Katelyn wants to study international relations at Tufts University, where the annual tab would be \$28,000. Living rent-free at home, she is socking away money for tuition, an expense Tony and Joanne have told her will be her responsibility.

"The competition—it's all global," says Joanne of the job market her daughters are in today. "We never had to face that. We had to worry about the kids sitting next to you or in the next town over."

Meanwhile, it's hard to imagine when their daughters could become homeowners, as they were at Katelyn's age. "How does the middle class afford \$400,000 for a basic house?" asks Joanne. "There used to be such a thing called starter homes, which you don't find anymore."

THE PRITCHARDS: RETIREMENT MAY NOT LAST

For Chuck and Kathleen Pritchard, these were supposed to be the golden years. But they aren't feeling quite as golden as expected.

The Pritchards arrived on Heritage Road in 1975 and raised five children there. They had the builder give them a fourth bedroom where other homes in Heritage Heights have a garage.

Chuck, 71, a native of Kansas City, worked for 30 years as a technical publications manager, first for Sanders Associates, a Nashua, NH, defense contractor, and then for Lockheed Martin after it acquired Sanders in 1986. Kathleen, 66, worked as a quality control manager for an electronics firm

in next-door Bedford, but she stopped working full time when their last child arrived, in 1977.

Asked whether he felt life had worked out as he had hoped, Chuck has a two-part answer.

"Pre-retirement? Yeah. Post-retirement? *Oooh*," he says, his voice trailing off. "The expenses have been terrible."

He singles out health care costs and property taxes as particular offenders. Chuck gets a pension for his years at Sanders, something he knows is becoming more and more rare. Health coverage to supplement Medicare comes with it, but he has to pay the same share of the premium as do current employees at the company. The cost has tripled since he retired in 1998. Meanwhile, the Pritchards' property taxes have doubled in five years, to about \$4,000 a year.

"I planned on them doubling in 10 years," he says. "I did not plan on them doubling in five." To top it off, other retirement savings they had accumulated took a big hit in the stock market downturn.

The couple say they are now seriously considering looking for part-time jobs. It's "sad," says Kathleen, when "in your retirement you have to say, you know what, we need to go to work again because it's just not what we thought."

The Pritchards may be disillusioned, but their fate is likely to become more common. Last year, a MassINC survey, A



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Generation in Transition, found that nearly two-thirds of Massachusetts baby boomers expected to work after retiring from their main career positions, at least 39 percent saying they will do so out of financial necessity. Nearly 70 percent of boomers reported being concerned about having access to affordable health care in retirement.

"We're doing all right," says Chuck. "But I kind of pictured [being more financially secure] than where I'm at right now." There may be a bit of generational stoicism to the Pritchards' stiff upper lip attitude. But they also have good reason to keep life's challenges in perspective: Their oldest son, who lives in Lowell, recently had surgery to remove a brain tumor, though his prognosis is encouraging.

"That's more important than anything in the world," says Kathleen.

A BREWING BACKLASH?

If there's anything *CommonWealth's* visits to Heritage Road over the past 10 years has taught, it's that there's nothing average about being middle class. There are many ways to be above poverty but below luxury, and most of them involve a struggle that, if all goes well, comes with reward. The families of Heritage Road have their financial worries, for themselves or their children, but they all have two solid components of middle-class security: a home of their own, and a reliable source of income, whether from a job, pension, or smart retirement investments. That, experts say, is enough to keep most households on an even keel.

"If you own your home and still have a job in Massachusetts, you're doing reasonably well," says Barry Bluestone, director of the Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University.

But those are big "ifs," considering that Massachusetts was second in the nation in percentage of jobs lost over the four-year period 2001 to 2005. The Billerica area, with its concentration of technology-related firms, lies in the heart of one of the biggest job-loss belts in the state. The six-community area comprising Billerica, Andover, Bedford, Lowell, Reading, and Wilmington lost 11.2 percent of its jobs over this four-year period, more than double the statewide job loss of 4.7 percent during this time.

Even for those who dodged the job-loss bullet, these have hardly been great times for getting ahead. Real family income, adjusted for inflation, fell by 7 percent in Massachusetts between 1999 and 2004, says Andrew Sum, director of the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern. The one household category that held its own—even recording a 1 percent increase in real income over the time—was married couples, he says, while income losses were smaller for those with higher levels of education. Thus, married couples and the well-educated "were the most well-protected from these declines," says Sum.

But owning your home and holding your own in income are no protection from rising costs, and one of the costs that is the talk of Heritage Road, and many communities like it, is the property tax. Since 1980, Proposition 2½ has imposed limits on the total property-tax levy in a city or town based on property value (2.5 percent of total valuation) and rate of increase (no more than 2.5 percent per year). But as the value of residential property has soared in a red-hot housing market, more of the property tax burden has shifted from commercial property owners to homeowners, even within Prop. 2½'s restrictions.

"It costs me more for taxes now per month than it did my mortgage all that time ago," says Tony Giovino, whose tax bill now tops \$4,000 a year. "People who are on a fixed income—I don't know how they're going to be able to stay in their homes."

It's not only those on fixed incomes who are affected. Property tax increases have outpaced income growth in many Massachusetts communities. Last year, Bluestone co-authored a report that documented just how big that gap has

There is growing resentment of public-sector employees, who enjoy benefits that are increasingly rare in other sectors of the economy.

become. The report divided communities into two categories, according to whether their median household incomes were above or below the statewide figure, then further divided those groups according to whether median household income increased or declined during the 1990s. For communities in the upper half of the income distribution with incomes that rose between 1989 and 1999—a category that includes Billerica—median household income grew by 6.5 percent, while the average property tax bill for a single family home grew by 66.6 percent, a rate 10 times that of income.

"I came away from this saying, I understand Barbara Anderson," says Bluestone, referring to the longtime leader of Citizens for Limited Taxation. "I understand the property tax revolt. I understand why people are going nuts about local government."

The property tax revolt that Anderson led a generation ago, which ushered in Prop. 2½, may be ready for a second act. In Billerica, there are signs of it.

"We've always had conservatives or libertarians fighting taxes," says Gil Moreira, a former Billerica deputy town

moderator. "For the first time in a long time, I'm hearing a majority upset about taxes. I think there's a bit of a backlash coming."

One target of the gathering storm over property taxes may be public-sector employees, whose paychecks are funded by those tax bills and who enjoy a smorgasbord of workplace benefits that are becoming increasingly rare in other sectors of the economy.

"We're paying millions and millions of dollars for health care," says Joanne Giovino, a longtime member of Billerica town meeting. A Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation report last year cited health insurance for municipal employees as one of the fastest rising costs in local budgets, calling it "a mounting crisis." But Giovino is particularly galled by a contractual provision that allows town employees to cash in up to 300 unused vacation and sick days when they leave the town payroll. She says the town recently had to pay out \$75,000 to two retiring police officers and \$230,000 to four teachers.

"I think it's obscene," says Tony Giovino. "I worked 60 hours a week. I don't think the taxpayer is going to be able to continue to take this out of their pockets."

When it comes to the benefits and protections of working in the public sector versus the private sector, "a generation ago, the divide wasn't nearly as stark," says Jacob Hacker, a Yale University political scientist and author of *The Great Risk Shift*, a book due out this fall examining the offloading of economic risk and responsibility from employers to individuals.

In Billerica, the widening of that gap seems to be stoking an already brewing backlash against soaring property tax bills, giving an added edge to the issue that Bluestone thinks may be at play in many communities. There is a "growing sense of alienation between private sector workers and public sector workers," he says.

THE TIMMINSES: 'CAN'T AFFORD' HERITAGE ROAD

The divide between homeowners and have-nots also seems to be getting magnified for those in Billerica, as elsewhere in high-priced eastern Massachusetts. And while there has always been a divide between homeowners and those without property, the housing story is increasingly one with a prominent generational divide as well, as younger people even in well-paying professional jobs are finding it more and more difficult to join the ranks of Massachusetts homeowners.

One response to the state's tough-to-crack housing market is to leave, something Bay Staters have been doing in large numbers. Massachusetts has the dubious distinction of

being the only state in the country to suffer net population loss each of the last two years, according to Census Bureau estimates. Much of the loss of younger native-born residents has been to neighboring New England states, a pattern that includes two of the Pritchards' five children: a son who has resettled in Maine and a daughter who now lives in southern New Hampshire.

John and Laura Peters say the house-price run-up meant all their friends who began house hunting a year or two after they did were driven to New Hampshire or places much farther out from Boston like Bellingham or Winchendon. "There's nobody I know that really lives in the area," says John.

"If it were just old folks leaving Massachusetts, we could say, 'have fun in Florida, write home,'" says Bluestone. "But when it's younger folks, we're in trouble."

Meanwhile, under the weight of everything from the soaring cost of higher education to the high cost of housing, stories like that of the Giovinos, whose two twenty-something daughters are both still at home, are becoming more and more common (see "The Young and the Penniless," *CW*, Winter '06).

Young people today "can do one or another—pay for housing or schools," says Tony Giovino. "It's hard to do both,"

adds Joanne.

Boston University economist Laurence Kotlikoff, co-author of *The Coming Generational Storm*, sees very rough seas ahead for those now coming of age. "We have a real horror show going on," he says, citing the growing federal deficit and the looming imbalance between workers paying into Social Security and Medicare and retirees drawing on those benefits. Like many economists, Kotlikoff is also concerned about a rise in income inequality that has accompanied two big trends in the US economy: huge growth in productivity and stagnant growth in wages for all but those at the high end of the earnings scale. To the time-honored question of whether today's younger generation will do better than their parents, Kotlikoff's answer is blunt and bleak.

"I think large numbers of them will not," he says. "The middle class is in grave danger from all these changes."

The Bay State's loss of young families, which MassINC has documented in research (*Mass.Migration*) and in the pages of *CommonWealth* ("Moving In—or Moving On?" *CW*, Winter '04), includes one of the families that former editor Dave Denison met in his visit to Heritage Road 10 years ago. Joe and Debra Timmins, who appeared with their young son and daughter on the cover of the debut issue of



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CommonWealth, had lived on Heritage Road for five years when Denison visited them in 1996.

Soon thereafter, the Timminses pulled up stakes and moved to the Amish country of Pennsylvania so that Debra could attend theological school. Five years ago, they came

Stories like that of the Giovinos, whose two twentysomething daughters are both still at home, are more and more common.

back to Massachusetts, happy to be near Joe's mother in Watertown and Debra's sister in Chelmsford. But after two years in Stoughton, living in the parsonage of the church where she served as pastor, Debra was ready to move on from that post. Ready to rejoin the ranks of homeowners, the Timminses realized they could do far better for themselves, and for young Ben and Kelsey, back in Pennsylvania.

"Housing prices had just increased so dramatically while we were away," says Debra. "I can't afford to live on Heritage Road."

The median sales price of single-family homes in Billerica went from \$148,000 in 1996, the year they left, to \$250,000 in 2001, when they returned and landed in Stoughton. By 2003, the year the Timminses decided to head back to Pennsylvania for good, the median sale price in Billerica had soared to \$311,500, and it hit \$369,000 last year. Home prices now seem to be leveling off in Greater Boston, but at a very high level.

Today, the Timminses are settled in a four-bedroom colonial they bought in Chester County for \$207,000. They miss the provincial patois of home. "We watch a lot of *This Old House* just to hear the people talk," says Debra. And they love to come back to their home state.

"Massachusetts is still my vacation location," she says. "We have the best of both worlds."

But it's hardly the best of worlds for Massachusetts, and for its future, if the best that can be said is that it's a nice place to visit. **CW**

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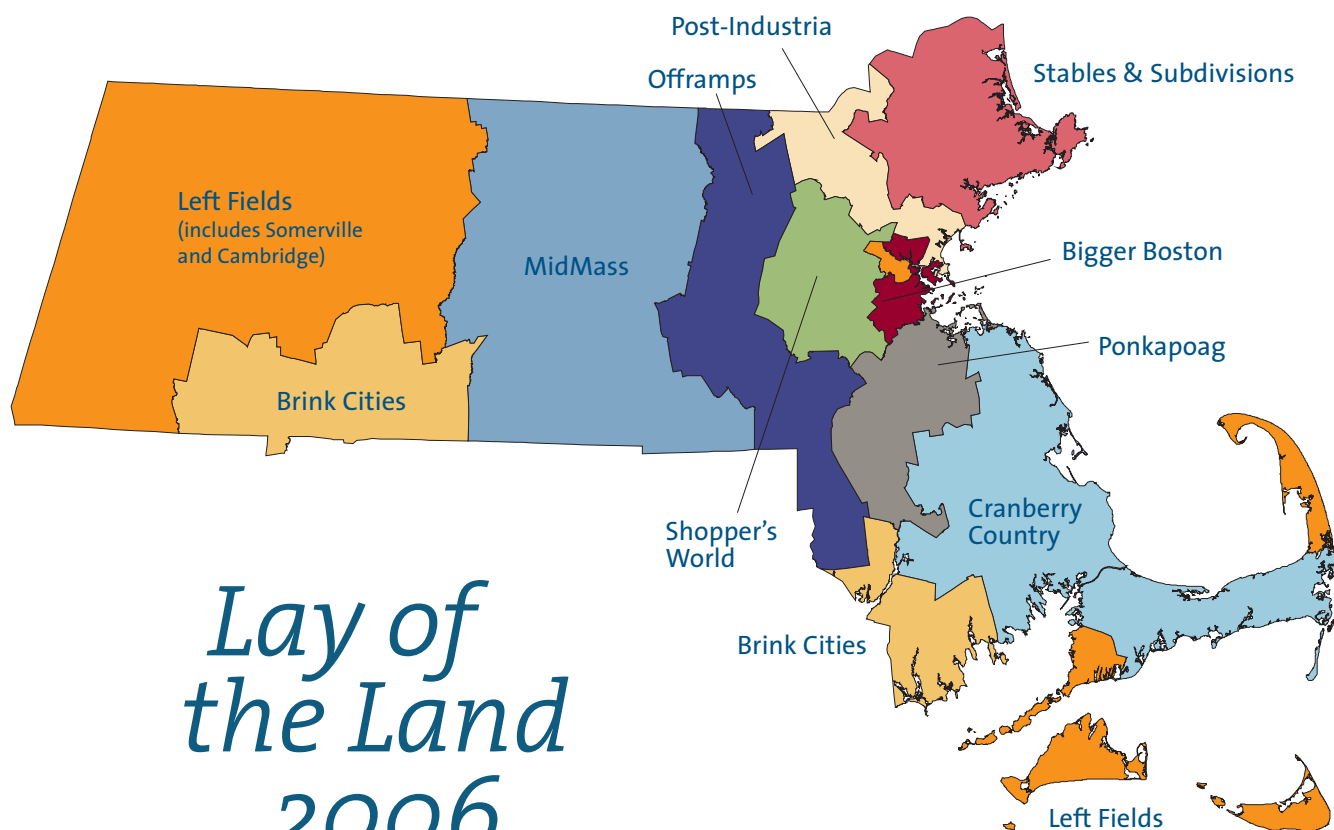
BY ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN

Four years ago, Mitt Romney beat Shannon O'Brien to become governor of Massachusetts. Another way to look at it is that the town of Westwood, where the Republican percentage of the vote increased by 10 points between 1998 and 2002, beat the city of New Bedford, where the Republican share dropped by 17 points over the same period.

Or, based on *CommonWealth's* new map of political regions in the Bay State, Shopper's World (which includes Westwood) triumphed over the Brink Cities (which includes New Bedford) in 2002. By contrast, in 1998 Shopper's World swung toward Democrat Scott Harshbarger for governor but was thwarted by the shift in the Brink Cities toward Republican Paul Cellucci. Every region of the state, it seems, gets its turn at influencing the outcome of major elections in Massachusetts. And with five first-time gubernatorial candidates, including an independent, in this year's race, no

region can be sure of being on the winner's side.

Our 10 political regions are variations on those presented four years ago (see "Lay of the Land," *CW*, Summer '02), with adjustments made on the basis of how municipalities voted that fall, and also on the number of voters who participated in that election. Each region represented roughly one-tenth of the electorate in 2002, or between 213,000 and 227,000 votes (including blanks). No one has won statewide office in Massachusetts in the past 25 years without carrying at least five of these regions.



Lay of the Land 2006

The regions explain how the Republicans have been so successful in tight races, where geographical differences can be crucial. GOP gubernatorial candidates Bill Weld in 1990, Paul Cellucci in 1998, and Mitt Romney in 2002 each won at least six regions, but each won with a somewhat different set, suggesting a nimbleness on the part of Republicans in finding where their voters are—or a failure on the Democratic candidates' part to master the state's political geography. (See chart, next page.)

Four regions have voted Republican in all three races: **Cranberry Country**, which includes most of the South Shore and Cape Cod; **Offramps**, which includes exurbs along Interstate 495; **Ponkapoag**, which includes most of Norfolk County and other suburbs to the south of Boston; and **Stables and Subdivisions**, which includes Cape Ann and most of Essex County. In 1990, Weld added two more regions to his

column, presumably by running to the left of Democrat John Silber on social issues: **Shopper's World**, which includes suburbs to the immediate west of Boston; and **Left Fields**, which combines the liberal strongholds of Cambridge and Somerville with much of western Massachusetts and left-leaning parts of Cape Cod and the Islands. Those two regions abandoned Cellucci in 1998 for Democrat Scott Harshbarger, but he compensated by picking up: **Post-Industria**, which includes both former mill cities and newer exurbs from the Merrimack Valley to Lynn; and **MidMass**, which includes most of Worcester County. Finally, in 2002 Romney faced a continuing slide in the GOP vote in Left Fields but made up for it by snatching back Shopper's World to win statewide over Democrat Shannon O'Brien.

Only two regions stuck with all three Democratic candidates: **Bigger Boston**, which includes the state's biggest city

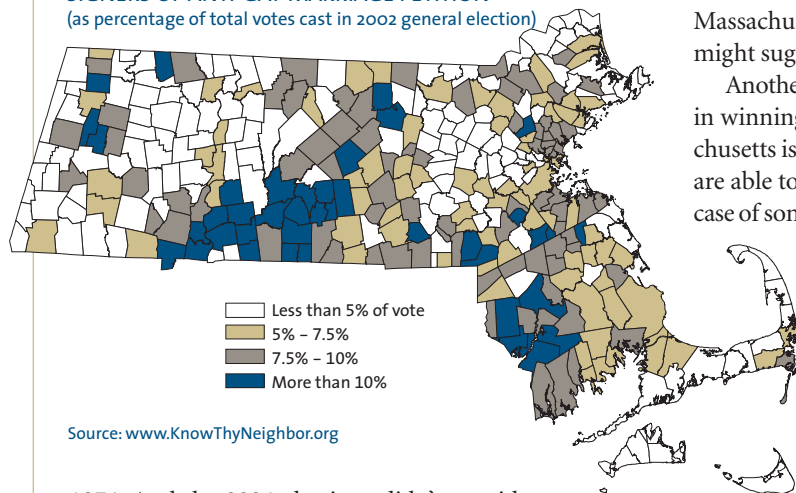
and four nearby suburbs; and the **Brink Cities**, which combines the Fall River–New Bedford and Springfield areas. These two mostly urban regions have been on the winning side in only one hotly contested race during the 1990s, when US Sen. John Kerry, beating back a challenge from Weld, also carried Shopper's World, Left Fields, Post-Industria, and Ponkapoag.

NOT-SO-TRUE BLUE

While winning six regions, Kerry beat Weld by 7.3 percentage points, a wider margin than many had expected. Indeed, Democrats in Massachusetts seem to win big or not at all. The five closest statewide elections over the past 25 years have all gone to GOP candidates: Ronald Reagan in the 1980 and 1984 presidential elections (winning by 0.1 point and 2.7 points, respectively); and governors Weld, Cellucci, and Romney (winning by 3.1 points, 3.4 points, and 4.8 points).

The Republican Party's ability to come out ahead in the closest races in Massachusetts may seem odd, given how easily the Democrats win almost every other election. Outside of gubernatorial elections and Joe Malone's two easy wins as state treasurer in the early 1990s, the GOP hasn't come within five points of winning any statewide office since

SIGNERS OF ANTI-GAY-MARRIAGE PETITION
(as percentage of total votes cast in 2002 general election)



Source: www.KnowThyNeighbor.org

1974. And the 2004 elections didn't provide much cheer for the Republicans. President George W. Bush carried only 45 out of 351 municipalities in Massachusetts, his worst state, and all 10 political regions went for Democratic nominee Kerry—all but Cranberry Country by more than 10 points. At the same time, not a single GOP congressional candidate got more than 34 percent of the vote, and the party lost seats in the Legislature despite fielding more candidates than it had in a decade.

So why the exception for gubernatorial races? Perhaps the lack of competition for downticket races gives Democrats a false sense of security and deprives some of their candi-

VOTE BREAKDOWN IN GOVERNOR'S RACES, BY REGION

	1990 D-R SILBER VS. WELD	1998 D-R HARSHBARGER VS. CELLUCCI	2002 D-R O'BRIEN VS. ROMNEY	AVERAGE GOP VOTE
BIGGER BOSTON	51-42	57-39	58-34	38
BRINK CITIES	53-39	49-47	52-43	43
CRANBERRY COUNTRY	41-54	40-56	36-59	56
POST-INDUSTRIA	47-47	44-52	41-52	50
LEFT FIELDS	43-47	57-40	59-33	40
MIDMASS	49-46	42-55	40-53	51
OFFRAMPS	40-55	38-59	34-60	58
PONKAPOAG	47-48	45-51	43-51	50
SHOPPER'S WORLD	40-55	51-46	44-50	50
STABLES & SUBDIVISIONS	42-54	43-54	37-57	55
STATE TOTAL	45-48	47-50	44-49	49

dates of practice in tough campaigns before they aim for the top office. Or perhaps the answer is another way in which Massachusetts is something of an outlier: Forty-nine percent of the electorate is not enrolled in either major party, behind only Alaska and New Jersey among the 27 states that keep voter registration figures by party. In addition, several independent presidential candidates, including John Anderson in 1980, Ross Perot in 1992 and 1996, and Ralph Nader in 2000, have counted Massachusetts among their best states. (They averaged 13.3 percent over those four elections, a figure that's higher only in the much smaller states of Maine, Vermont, Alaska, Rhode Island, and Montana.) Even in the close gubernatorial race of 2002, slightly more than 5 percent of the electorate voted for candidates other than the Democrat and the Republican. All of this means that more of the state's electorate is up for grabs than Massachusetts's all-Democratic congressional delegation might suggest.

Another explanation for the Democratic Party's difficulty in winning the governor's office is that "true blue" Massachusetts is really not so monochromatic. When Democrats are able to run here on broad national themes—or, in the case of some lower-level offices, to avoid divisive issues completely—the various shades of blue seem to run together. But when voters' passions are stirred, on issues from government spending to crime, it becomes clear that the overwhelming majorities for Democrats such as Bill Clinton and Ted Kennedy are not automatically transferred to more specific liberal causes.

Just as Republicans have won most of the recent close elections in Massachusetts, the more conservative position has prevailed in five of the six closest referendum battles of the past 25 years, and each time predominantly Democratic or swing regions were pivotal to the outcome. Voters rejected a ban on dog racing in 2000, with opposition strongest in the Post-Industria region; abolished rent control in 1994, a move most popular in Shopper's World; approved term limits for all state offices in 1994, a wish ignored by the state Legislature; rejected a rather convoluted plan to work toward universal health care in 2000; and, in the same year, rejected changing the state's drug laws to emphasize addiction treatment. The

only nail-biter won by the arguably more liberal side came in 1994, when voters rejected an obscure law that would have made it marginally more difficult for activist organizations (e.g., MassPIRG) to raise fees from college students.

There have been other victories for the liberal side, to be sure, but they've mostly come when there was little doubt about the outcome on election night, as when voters passed an increase to the tobacco tax in 1992 or opted to retain a mandatory seat-belt law in 1994. Similarly, nobody really expected voters to endorse a plan to eliminate the state income tax in 2002, which made the eight-point margin of defeat a surprise. If anti-tax forces had raised enough money to make this a truly competitive race, perhaps they could have tipped it toward their side.

This pattern should give pause to opponents of a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage (which is on the way to the ballot in 2008, provided it gets the support of 25

Democrats in this state seem to win big or not win at all.

percent of the Legislature in two separate sessions). If current public opinion polls, which show majority support for gay marriage, are correct, the amendment may never gain traction, eliminating any suspense in November. But if the vote is close, there is no consistent liberal majority that can be counted on to ensure the amendment's defeat. Indeed, it's worth noting that according to KnowThyNeighbor.org, an organization that published the names and addresses of every voter on the petitions submitted to the secretary of state's office in support of the amendment, the most signatures by far came from the Brink Cities (see map, opposite)—one of the only two regions that voted for Democratic gubernatorial nominees in 1990, 1998, and 2002. No matter how blue Massachusetts appears to the rest of the country, the electorate often changes its stripes.

WILD CARD

Adding to the unpredictability in this year's gubernatorial race is the independent candidacy of businessman Christy Mihos, a former member of the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority. At this writing, it's too early to tell whether Mihos will be seen as a viable candidate in November, but the conventional wisdom is that his presence in the race hurts presumptive Republican nominee Kerry Healey, since Mihos was a member of the GOP right up to the day he kicked off his campaign as an independent. If Mihos simply takes votes away from Healey, the Democratic nominee would

seem to have a good chance of winning even without totting up any more votes than his losing predecessors did in 1990, 1998, or 2002. Silber got 45.5 percent of the total vote, Harshbarger 46.6 percent, and O'Brien 44.4 percent, but if Mihos gets 10 percent this year, the victory zone may indeed shift downward to the mid 40s.

The problem with this theory is that each of the three Democratic nominees had weaknesses in different geographical areas, so the Democratic vote may not be as stable as it first appears. Silber was weaker than either Harshbarger or O'Brien in Bigger Boston, Left Fields, and Shopper's World, and he ran at least five points behind both these other candidates in Cambridge, Newton, and Somerville, among other liberal strongholds. Harshbarger was the weakest vote-getter in the Brink Cities, and he ran at least five points weaker than the other two in Fall River, Lawrence, New Bedford, and other blue-collar cities. O'Brien, having lost by a slightly wider margin, was the weakest of the three in six of our regions, but her drop-off was the worst in Stables and Subdivisions, and her unique weak spots among cities and towns included middle-class Barnstable, Peabody, and Woburn.

It is possible that this year's Democratic nominee could combine the strongest attributes—geographic and otherwise—of all three previous candidates and win in a blowout similar to Michael Dukakis's 23-point margin in 1982, which would make the Mihos candidacy moot. But he could also combine the particular flaws of just two of the previous nominees and dip below the 40 percent mark, especially if Mihos can carve out a constituency that doesn't merely cannibalize the Republican base. (Or if Green Party nominee Grace Ross gets a couple of points.)

That's a big "if" for Mihos, of course. Massachusetts may have been one of Ross Perot's better states in the 1992 presidential election, but while he came within eight points of upsetting Bush for second place, he was 25 points behind Clinton, who was never in danger of losing the state. Among communities that cast at least 10,000 votes in the last gubernatorial race, Perot ran best in Dracut, where he got 34.6 percent to Clinton's 35.8 percent and Bush's 29.1 percent. Ten years later, O'Brien got 35.6 percent in the same community, almost exactly the same as Clinton, suggesting that nearly all the Perot vote fell into Romney's lap in an essentially two-person race. In Billerica, the Clinton-Bush-Perot split was 38-29-32, and the O'Brien-Romney split was 36-58; and in Plymouth, a 39-31-30 split turned into 36-58. In all, 179 of the state's 351 cities and towns were carried by Clinton in 1992 (in almost all cases, with less than a majority) and then by Romney in 2002. Only the tiny western community of Rowe went in the other direction, going Republican with Perot in the mix and Democratic in 2002.

If Mihos were to expand his appeal across ideological lines, however, the Democrat might suffer. In recent years,

the best showing by a left-of-center third-party candidate was in the 2002 state treasurer's race, in which the Green Party's James O'Keefe polled 7.4 percent of the vote. In Cambridge, a 68-22 romp for O'Brien in the governor's race turned into a 53-21-17 split in the treasurer's race. In Northampton, the same 68-22 margin turned into a 51-19-23 split, and in Pittsfield a 63-31 split turned into 50-25-12. Democrat Tim Cahill won regardless, thanks to his strong showing on his native turf of Norfolk County, but it's unlikely that any Democratic nominee for governor could win with such low numbers in these liberal strongholds.

THE 10 REGIONS

Yet another difference between Massachusetts and the United States is that political geography still seems fluid here, as evidenced by the changing bases of support for each party in recent gubernatorial elections. That's not the case nationally: Straight-ticket voting has been on the increase in other states, and there were negligible changes in the red-vs.-blue map between the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections (See *Beyond Red & Blue: Post-Election Update*, at www.mass-inc.org). One reason for the lack of deep-set geographic patterns in Massachusetts may be the "big tent" philosophy that has endured here in both parties, but especially among Republicans. In 1978, when Democrat Ed King faced Republican Frank Hatch, and in 1990, when Silber faced Weld, the GOP candidate was the more liberal on social issues, and partisan leanings were poor predictors of how communities broke in November. Similarly, in the 2002 treasurer's race, the Republican candidate was Dan Grabauskas, an openly gay, "good government" type who made inroads into liberal-leaning suburbs.

Yet the 2002 gubernatorial race may have brought Massachusetts a bit closer to the red-blue division seen at the national level. Republican nominee Romney embraced the

conservative label

to a greater degree than his predecessors did (though also committing not to push for more restrictive abortion laws here), and the result was that urban areas became more Democratic and fast-growing exurbs became more Republican, mirroring national trends. The question for 2006 is whether our 10 regions settle into a more predictable groove or continue to offer surprises with each new election. Some clues emerge as we take a closer look at the makeup and political behavior of each.

Bigger Boston: The GOP in free fall

Outside of the landslide re-elections of Weld in 1994 and the decisive wins of Treasurer Joe Malone in 1990 and 1994, no Republican has carried the city of Boston in any statewide race for more than three decades. That doesn't mean the city doesn't provide any suspense in November: The margin of victory for the Democrat, as well as voter turnout, varies wildly from election to election.

The city of Boston makes up the majority of our Bigger Boston region, joined by the first-generation suburbs of Brookline, Everett, Malden, and Medford. Demographics and socioeconomic characteristics are literally all over the map here, but politically the region has become more and more Democratic. One reason may be that this is the most densely populated region, and density is increasingly correlated with support for candidates in favor of more activist government. (This may be a global phenomenon; in Canada's recent national elections, the Conservative Party surged overall but did not make noticeable progress in the largest cities.) In terms of party registration, Bigger Boston is the least Republican (9 percent) and least independent (38 percent) region.



AS BELLWETHER, FITCHBURG REMAINS CHAMPION

From 1990 until now, only 27 communities have voted for the winner in every gubernatorial race (all won by Republicans) and every US Senate race (all won by Democrats). The largest are Falmouth (in Left Fields), Braintree (in Ponkapoag), Needham and Natick (both in Shopper's World), and Melrose (in Post-Industria), which also boasted the highest voter turnout of any city in Massachusetts.

But when considering presidential elections, general elections for all statewide offices, referenda, and the primaries of both major parties, the bellwether champ remains Fitchburg. The last time the MidMass city has been on the losing end was in 1994, when an initiative to abolish rent control lost here by six votes while passing statewide. Counting all other contests in 1994 and since, Fitchburg has a win-loss record of 84-1. When we noted this distinction in 2002, we cautioned, "Fitchburg lost population in the last federal census, in contrast to Massachusetts as a whole, so it may not be the best harbinger of the state's political future." But the US Census Bureau has since estimated that the entire state followed Fitchburg's lead by losing population in 2004 and 2005. Our apologies to the City by the River for doubting its prognosticative powers. —ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN

Even in victory statewide, Republican performance in Bigger Boston has been slipping. In 1990, Weld got 42 percent of the vote and carried Brookline plus four of Boston's 22 wards (including Allston, the Back Bay, Beacon Hill, and the North End). In 1998, Cellucci slipped to 39 percent even as he carried Everett, Medford, and five Boston wards (including the North End, Charlestown, East Boston, and both wards in South Boston). Last time out, Romney got only 34 percent and lost every one of the communities in this region, as well as all of the wards in Boston. Bigger Boston also had the biggest jump in total vote from 1998 to 2002, and O'Brien got 23,000 more votes than Harshbarger had. The trouble for the Democrats is that it's tough to boost turnout here without the Republicans doing the same in *their* strongholds. (That's what happened in the high-turnout presidential race of 2004.)

One rule of thumb is that if Bigger Boston is the best region for a Democrat (see Ted Kennedy in 1994, or Kerry in the 2004 presidential election), he or she will be in good shape to win statewide. But if the Democrat runs better in the less partisan but more ideological Left Fields (as O'Brien did in 2002), he or she is in trouble.

Bigger Boston naturally looms large in Democratic primaries, and, as often as not, it hurts the more liberal candidate. In the 2002 gubernatorial primary, Thomas Birmingham won the region by less than two points, but Shannon O'Brien netted her biggest cache of votes here, and she won the city of Boston despite carrying only three wards. Her trick was finishing second everywhere else, while Robert Reich and Birmingham fin-

ished third in as many places as they placed first. In the primary for lieutenant governor, this was Chris Gabrieli's best region in terms of raw votes (but not percentage of the vote), and he beat former state Sen. Lois Pines by an easy 49-29 margin. In the 1998 primary for attorney general, Bigger Boston provided the biggest bundles of votes for both Thomas Reilly and Pines, but Reilly carried the region by four points, close to his winning margin statewide.

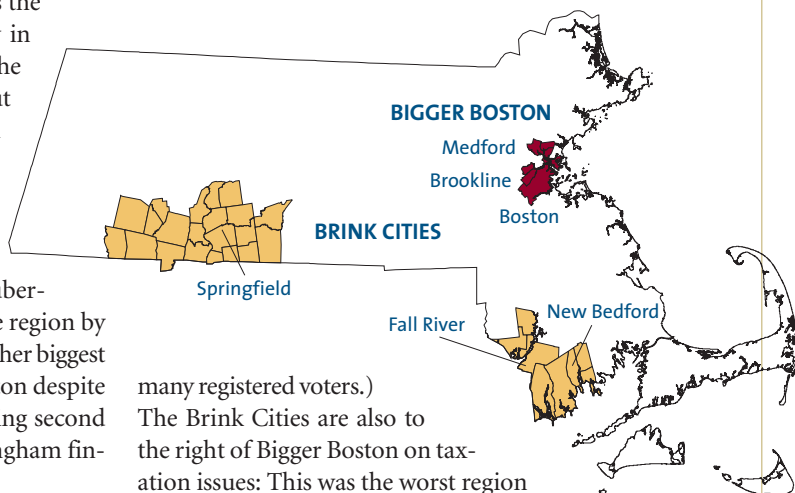
The Brink Cities region is reliably Democratic but not exactly liberal.

Another essential building block for any Democratic candidate consists of two urban areas outside the Boston media market, and both have long lagged behind the rest of the

Brink Cities: Far from the golden dome

state economically. One piece is southern Bristol County, which includes Fall River and New Bedford and is closer to Providence than it is to Boston. The other section includes much of Hampden County, including Chicopee, Holyoke, and Springfield; it's even farther from Boston and looks toward Hartford as the nearest major metropolitan area. The Brink Cities had the smallest jump in voter turnout between 1998 and 2002, and its core cities have all lost population over the past 15 years.

Though it has voted Democratic in every competitive election over the past 30 years, this region is not exactly liberal. It was Reich's worst region in the 2002 gubernatorial primary, and it has contributed the most signatures for the gay-marriage ban working its way toward the 2008 ballot. (Springfield was responsible for 4,195 signatures to Boston's 9,183, though Boston has more than four times as



many registered voters.) The Brink Cities are also to the right of Bigger Boston on taxation issues: This was the worst region for the 1992 referendum that raised the cigarette tax, and the 2002 proposal to abolish the income tax did better here than in the state as a whole, losing by only a 47-40 margin.

In Democratic primaries, turnout here is not as high as might be expected, given that this is the only region outside of Bigger Boston where registered Democrats outnumber independents. (Members of the two major parties count for 60 percent of the electorate in Fall River, higher than in any other city or town.) The loose ties to the Boston media market may be one reason for this, and for the tendency of the Brink Cities to back veteran candidates over newcomers such as Reich. In 1998, longtime legislator Pines came within one point of beating the less well-known Reilly in the primary for attorney general, even though Pines's brand of suburban liberalism did not seem to be a good fit here. But four years later, this was Gabrieli's best region, and he beat Pines 58-21 to become the nominee for lieutenant governor. Gabrieli's designation as the official running mate for gubernatorial favorite O'Brien seems to have carried a lot of weight here.

Left Fields: The limits of liberalism

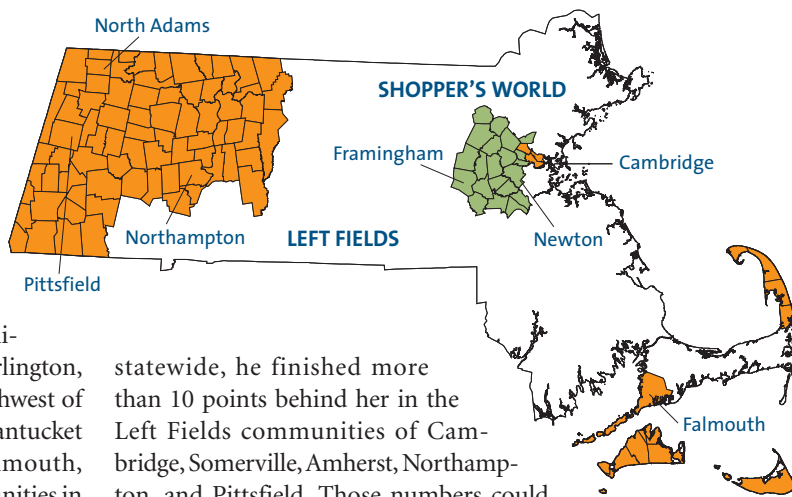
The Left Fields region is to Massachusetts what Massachusetts is to the United States. It's more liberal, more Democratic, better educated, less populated by nuclear families—and often on the losing side of elections. This is our most geographically dispersed region. It consists of three parts: Arlington, Cambridge, and Somerville, which lie to the northwest of Boston; the islands of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket along with the Cape Cod communities of Falmouth, Provincetown, Truro, and Wellfleet; and 76 communities in the western third of the state, including the college towns of Amherst and Northampton and the increasingly arts-oriented North Adams and Pittsfield.

This was one of only two regions to vote against an in-

Romney's biggest gains were in the affluent Shopper's World region.

come-tax cut in 2000 (the other was Bigger Boston), and it cast the strongest vote against abolishing the income tax altogether in 2004. Romney got 33 percent of the vote here when he ran against Kennedy for US Senate in 1994, and he got the same percentage when he ran for governor eight years later, making this the only region in the state where he didn't do better at all.

This was O'Brien's best region in the 2002 general election (59 percent over Romney), but it didn't help her as much as it might have, considering that Kerry got 73 percent here in the presidential election two years later. A recurring problem for Democrats here is the weakness of partisan ties. In Bigger Boston, where O'Brien won 58 percent against Romney, 52 percent of the electorate are registered Democrats; in Left Fields, where O'Brien did slightly better, only 42 percent are registered Democrats, meaning that she relied more on independent voters. Some of those independents apparently drifted to Green Party candidate Jill Stein, whose 6 percent kept this from being the most lopsided region in the state. (That distinction instead went to Offramps, which gave Romney a hair below 60 percent of the vote.) In the state treasurer's race, the Greens did even better: Nominee James O'Keefe got 15 percent, pushing Democrat Tim Cahill down to just under 50 percent. Indeed, though Cahill ran slightly ahead of O'Brien



statewide, he finished more than 10 points behind her in the Left Fields communities of Cambridge, Somerville, Amherst, Northampton, and Pittsfield. Those numbers could foreshadow trouble for the Democrats if Mihos broadens his appeal toward the left—or if Healey moves enough to the left on social issues to seem a reasonable facsimile of Bill Weld.

In Democratic primaries, the Left Fields region consistently opts for more liberal candidates. It was the best region for Reich in the 2002 gubernatorial primary, for Pines over Reilly in the 1998 primary for attorney general, and for Frank Bellotti over John Silber in the 1990 gubernatorial primary. Patrick—who has recently built one well-publicized residence in this region, a 24-room vacation home in Richmond—clearly must win big here to secure the gubernatorial nomination.

Shopper's World: What's the matter with Carlisle?

If you believe that economic status should determine partisan leanings, Massachusetts is as big a puzzle as Kansas, the relatively low-income state that consistently votes Republican and was examined in Thomas Frank's best-seller *What's the Matter with Kansas?* In a reversal of the paradox that book explored, the affluent Bay State habitually votes for presidential and congressional candidates who support higher taxes, especially on the rich, and who advocate more spending on government programs. Shopper's World, with the highest median income among our 10 regions, is the most extreme example of a constituency appearing to vote against its economic interests.

Shopper's World, named after the prototypical suburban mall in Framingham, fans out from Boston along Routes 2 and 9, stopping short of I-495. It voted for Kerry by a margin of 66-33 in the 2004 presidential race, and for "big spender" Ted Kennedy over



Romney by a 59-41 margin in the 1994 US Senate race. One explanation for Kansas's voting behavior is that cultural issues, such as abortion, often trump economic issues, and the same might be said for Shopper's World. After all, this is the region that produced the fewest signatures for a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. It was also the strongest region for an increase in the state's tobacco tax in 1992 and for a mandatory seat-belt law in 1994. In 1998, when Democratic gubernatorial nominee Harshbarger was being tarred with the "loony left" label, partly because of ACLU-type positions he had taken as attorney general, he increased the party's vote in this region from 40 percent to 51 percent.

When purely economic issues come to the fore, however, Shopper's World isn't so committed to the left. This is where Romney, sounding warnings about the fiscal consequences of total Democratic control on Beacon Hill, made his strongest gains in 2002—getting an even 50 percent, or four points above Cellucci's mark in the previous election. As for taxes that don't involve stigmatized behavior like smoking, Shopper's World is closer to the middle of the road: It voted 60-40 to reduce the income tax to 5 percent in 2000 (the same as the statewide margin), though it was 53-36 against the more extreme proposal in 2002 to abolish the tax entirely (much wider than the eight-point margin of defeat statewide).

Democratic primary voters here generally lean left and are wary of "insider" candidates. This was state Senate President Birmingham's worst region in the 2002 primary, even though it abuts his best region (Post-Industria). This was also the only region where Pines beat O'Brien-designated running mate Gabrieli in the primary for lieutenant governor.

Post-Industria: Northern Exposure

A few decades ago, you'd be hard pressed to come up with two adjacent states more unlike each other than Massachusetts and New Hampshire. One was derided as "Taxachusetts," the other had the libertarian motto "Live Free or Die." In the 1980 general election, Ronald Reagan got 58 percent of the vote in New Hampshire and 42 percent in the Bay State, one of the biggest gaps between two neighbors; and two Massachusetts natives, Democrat Edward Kennedy and Republican George H.W. Bush, suffered humiliating losses in New Hampshire's presidential primary. Since then, however, the Granite Curtain has largely disintegrated. Massachusetts voters have taken a few steps toward New Hampshire's low-tax philosophy, and those in New Hampshire have shifted to the left on social matters such as abortion and gay rights (though not on requiring motorcyclists to wear helmets). The three Massachusetts presidential contenders since Kennedy (Dukakis, Paul Tsongas, and Kerry) have all won the New Hampshire primary, and Kerry even dragged this famously Republican state into the Democratic column in 2004.



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The Post-Industria region, which comes within 25 miles of New Hampshire's biggest city, Manchester, is where our northern neighbor seems to have the most influence within the Bay State. It includes several cities (such as Lowell, Lynn, and Woburn) that once hosted thriving textile or shoemaking industries but are now trying, with varying success, to make the transition to high-tech or "creative class" industries. It also includes bedroom communities, such as Billerica and Chelmsford, whose residents are more likely to do their shopping in tax-free New Hampshire than in parking-space-deprived Boston.

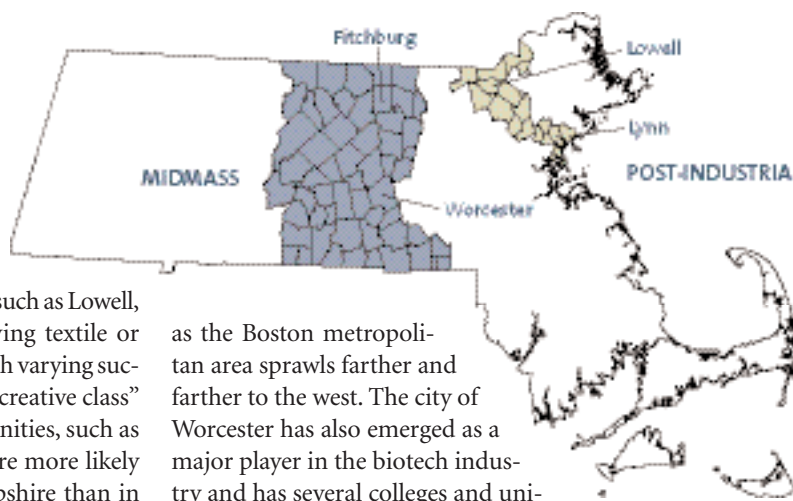
Post-Industria is where the Republicans made the biggest gain between the 1978 and 1990 gubernatorial elections, vaulting from 35 to 47 percent of the vote, and the Democrats have not been able to win it since. Thanks to a New Hampshire-like libertarian streak here, it was the second-worst region for a cigarette-tax increase in 1992 and the worst region for a mandatory seat-belt law in 1994. This is the third-lowest region in Republican registration (only 11 percent of the electorate), but only 45 percent of voters here voted to retain the state's income tax in 2002, lower than any region outside of Cranberry Country.

At first glance, the success of the Democratic Party in neighboring New Hampshire in 2004 would seem to be a good harbinger for Democrats in this region in 2006. But while Kerry carried the Granite State in the presidential race and Democrat John Lynch was elected governor, both lost Hillsborough and Rockingham counties, which border the Post-Industria region. Instead, their margins of victory came from northern and western counties, which more closely resemble Vermont and western Massachusetts in demographics and political attitudes.

In Democratic primaries, Post-Industria leans toward labor-backed candidates (this was Birmingham's best region in the 2002 gubernatorial primary) and against the most socially liberal candidates (this was Reilly's strongest region against Pines in the 1998 primary for attorney general).

MidMass: The Democrats' fade-out

Worcester County is the Bay State's equivalent to the American Midwest—or, less charitably, our "flyover country." It rarely appears in tourism campaigns or in photography books about Massachusetts, not having the obvious charms of the seashore or the Berkshires. But MidMass, the region that includes almost all of Worcester County plus a few adjoining towns, has always been an integral part of the state's economy. It has some of the last cities with a substantial manufacturing workforce, including Leominster and Southbridge, and it now has several fast-growing bedroom communities,



as the Boston metropolitan area sprawls farther and farther to the west. The city of Worcester has also emerged as a major player in the biotech industry and has several colleges and universities that beckon to those turned off by the high cost of living in Boston.

In politics, MidMass also has similarities to the American heartland. More than any other region, it has trended toward the GOP during the past decade. In 1990, Weld lost the region with 46 percent; in the 1998 race, this time featuring a Democrat who was clearly to the left of the Republican, Cellucci got a solid 55 percent. And in 2002, Romney slipped only a bit, to 53 percent. In US Senate races, Kennedy beat Romney here 55-44 in 1994, but two years later Weld beat Kerry 49-46, the biggest such swing in the state.

The Post-Industria region, much like New Hampshire, has a libertarian streak.

Another sign of Democratic decline is that MidMass has the state's largest bloc of unenrolled voters, though it ranks fourth in the *percentage* of voters (53) who are unenrolled. That discrepancy is explained by the fact that the number of people who actually went to the polls in 2002—our measure for coming up with 10 equal regions—is a lot lower than the number of registered voters. MidMass's 53 percent voter turnout in 2002 was lower than the state average of 56 percent, and worse than in all but the two urban-dominated regions of Bigger Boston and Brink Cities. It's not surprising that the cities of Fitchburg, Southbridge, and Worcester were below 50 percent, but such towns as Athol, Charlton, Webster, and Winchendon also fell well below the halfway mark. It's possible that Mihos will tap into the independent vote (Perot got 24 percent here in 1992) and boost turnout this fall; a new Democratic nominee could also attract new voters, especially if Worcester Mayor Timothy Murray wins the nomination for lieutenant governor and motivates voters to get to the polls for a regional favorite son. But even a boost in turnout might not be able to overcome the Republican Party's steady gains here.

In 2002, Democratic primary voters here were pretty close to the state as a whole in their preferences, but Reich's

20 percent (vs. 24 percent statewide) showed that there aren't many liberal pockets in MidMass.

Ponkapoag: The New Southie

If Boston's near western suburbs evolved from Beacon Hill and the Back Bay, and its northern suburbs are extensions of Charlestown and East Boston, its southern suburbs see South Boston and parts of Dorchester as the Mother Country. The southern sections of the MBTA's Red Line—completed in 1980, following years of “white flight” from Boston—connect Southie to Milton, Quincy, and Braintree. And the 9th Congressional District, now represented by South Boston's Stephen Lynch, follows a narrow path out of the city to include such middle-class suburbs as Norwood and Stoughton, as well as the factory city of Brockton. These are among the 21 communities south of Boston that make up the Ponkapoag region, named for the American Indian tribe that was once centered in present-day Canton and Stoughton (after being pushed out of the Neponset area of Dorchester). Nowadays, Ponkapoag has a negligible American Indian population and is instead probably the most Irish of our 10 regions. According to the Census Bureau, four of the six Bay State communities with the highest percentage of residents with Irish ancestry as of 2000 are here (Milton, Quincy, Norwood, and Braintree).

Ponkapoag stays fairly close to the statewide average in general elections, though it's moved a bit toward the GOP: Weld ran 0.8 points behind his statewide percentage here in 1990, but Romney bested his statewide showing by 1.9 points in 2002. The region also mirrors the state in terms of party registration. As of 2004, the electorate here was 48 percent unenrolled, 39 percent Democratic, and 12 percent Republican. Occasionally,



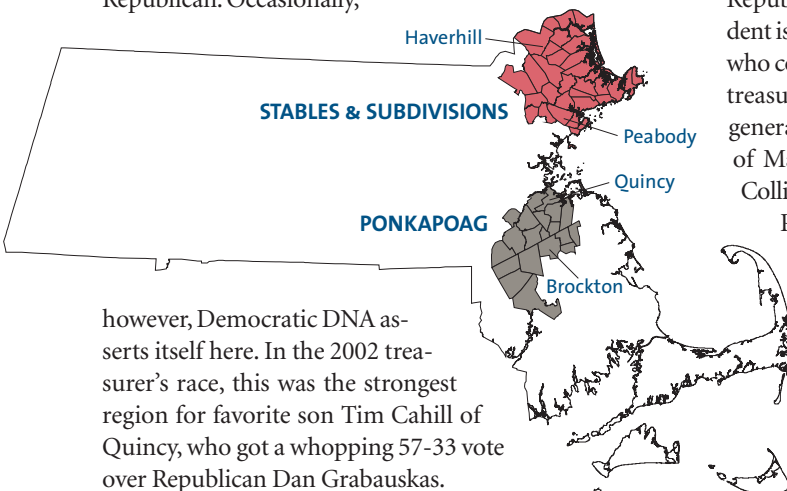
nor. Overall, the vote for Reich in the 2002 gubernatorial primary was light (20 percent vs. 24 percent statewide), but as a Milton resident, Deval Patrick may be able to improve on that showing.

Interestingly, the only three communities where O'Brien, Reich, Birmingham, and Tolman all came within two points of their statewide percentages were all in the Ponkapoag region: Canton, Hull, and Randolph.

Stables and Subdivisions: Down East

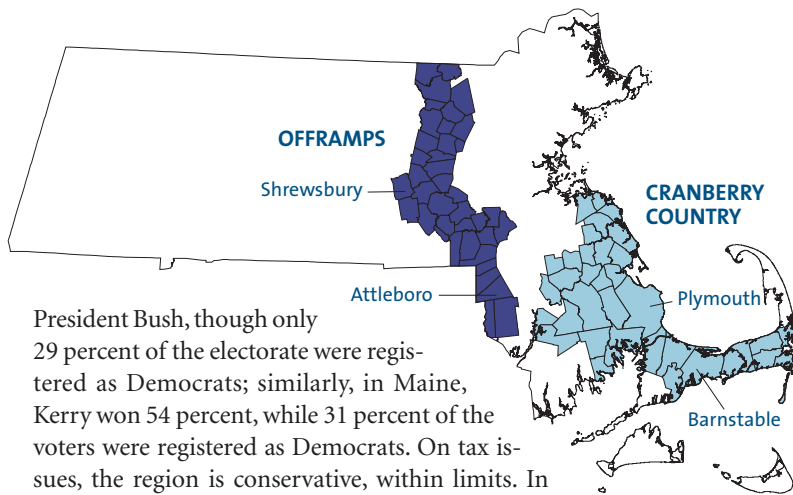
The Stables and Subdivisions region is centered on the “other Cape”—that is, Cape Ann, along with most of Essex County and the towns of Reading and North Reading. It includes both affluent “horse country” towns such as Hamilton and Topsfield and slightly more affordable suburbs such as Danvers and Peabody. Politically, it resembles the state of Maine in its affinity for moderate-to-liberal Republicans. Kerry Healey lives here, in Beverly, and this was her best region against conservative James Rappaport in the 2002 Republican primary for lieutenant governor. Another resident is MBTA general manager Dan Grabauskas, of Ipswich, who counted this as his best region in his bid to become state treasurer in 2002, both in the Republican primary and the general election. It's easy to imagine Republicans in the mold of Maine's two US senators, Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins, doing well here. (Another moderate Republican, Peter Torkildsen, was elected to Congress in the early 1990s from a district that covered almost all of the Stables and Subdivision region.)

More conservative Republicans cannot take this region for granted. Romney got a commanding 57 percent here when he ran for governor as a moderate who would keep the Democratic Legislature in check, but he got only 45 percent when he ran against liberal lion Ted Kennedy for the US Senate in 1994. (Two years later, Torkildsen lost his seat, possibly because the new conservative Republican leadership in the US House didn't go over so well here.) In 2004, John Kerry won 57 percent here against



however, Democratic DNA asserts itself here. In the 2002 treasurer's race, this was the strongest region for favorite son Tim Cahill of Quincy, who got a whopping 57-33 vote over Republican Dan Grabauskas.

In Democratic primaries, Ponkapoag is usually a bit to the right of the state: Reilly beat Pines by 10 points in the 1998 primary for attorney general, and Gabrieli beat her by 20 points in the 2002 race for lieutenant gover-



President Bush, though only 29 percent of the electorate were registered as Democrats; similarly, in Maine, Kerry won 54 percent, while 31 percent of the voters were registered as Democrats. On tax issues, the region is conservative, within limits. In 2000, it voted by a 30-point margin to roll back the income tax to 5 percent (the margin was 20 points statewide), but it broke with Cranberry Country in narrowly rejecting a plan to abolish the income tax altogether in 2004. There also seems to be a sizable liberal vote among those who vote in Democratic primaries: Reich got 27 percent here in 2002, higher than any region outside of Shopper's World and Left Fields.

Still, the region has been unusually consistent in gubernatorial elections: Outside of the two Dukakis landslides in the 1980s, the GOP vote has ranged from 54 to 57 percent here in every election from 1978 through 2002, or four to eight points above the state average. Healey's ties to the region should keep it on the more Republican side of the ledger this fall as well.

Cranberry Country: Red Tide

The cranberry crop in Massachusetts may be shrinking, but this region is still as red as it gets in Massachusetts. Cranberry Country, which takes in most of Plymouth County and Cape Cod, went for Kerry over Bush in the last presidential election, but only by a five-point margin. The three biggest towns where Bush got a majority of the vote—Hanover, Middleborough, and Sandwich—are all here. This was also the region where Romney came closest to beating Kennedy in the 1994 US Senate race, losing by only about 400 votes while falling short by at least 10,000 votes everywhere else; and it was the only region to vote for abolishing the income tax in 2002. But Cranberry Country was not the most Republican region in any of the three close gubernatorial races won by the GOP. It resembles Left Fields in that whenever it is the strongest region for one side in an election, that candidate or cause is almost sure to be too conservative to prevail statewide. (Another case in point: It was the strongest region for James Rappaport against Healey, Romney's more moderate choice, in the primary for lieutenant governor in 2002.)

In terms of party registration, this is the most Republican region, but the GOP share is still only 18 percent. A strong majority of voters (56 percent) are unenrolled

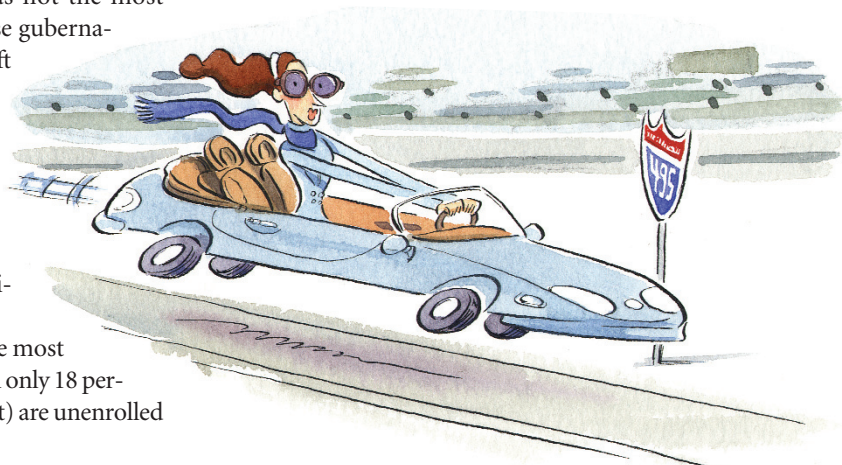
in any party, and this was the best region for independent Ross Perot, who got 28 percent in the 1992 presidential race and won the towns of Berkley, Middleborough, and Rochester. Independent gubernatorial candidate Christy Mihos's base is here—he lives in Yarmouth, operates convenience stores on Cape Cod, and ran for the state Senate while living in Cohasset in 1990—and he is clearly hoping to do well in a region that the Republicans cannot afford to lose.

Cranberry Country voters in Democratic primaries consistently prefer moderates and conservatives: It was Silber's best region in the 1990 gubernatorial primary and 12 years later it was Shannon O'Brien's best region against three more liberal candidates.

Offramps: Stay to the Right

If you were to take a map of the state and plot the 50 or so communities that voted most heavily for Romney in 2002, most of your pushpins would form a large "C" around—and well removed from—the city of Boston. It would start in the Stables and Subdivisions town of Boxford (72 percent Republican), head south and west as far as Southborough (65 percent), and curve back to the coast at Cranberry Country's Duxbury (68 percent). The middle part of that "C" is the Offramps region, which includes three cities and 36 towns clustered around the major commuting artery of I-495. This has been the most Republican region in all three of the past competitive gubernatorial elections; in fact, Romney's 60 percent is the best showing by any candidate in any region in any of these elections. In terms of improvement over his 1994 race against Kennedy, this was also Romney's best region, giving him a bounce of 13 points.

One reason for the Republican dominance here is that there are few urban areas to dilute the GOP vote. If you take the largest community in each region, Offramps has the smallest: Attleboro, with about 44,000 residents. But this is





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a high-growth area in a low-growth state. Offramps grew by an even 18 percent from 1990 through 2004, second to Cranberry Country's 18.8 percent and well above the statewide figure of 6.7 percent. Of the 25 communities in the state that added the most new residents during that time, seven are in Offramps: Shrewsbury, Franklin, Marlborough, Attleboro, Westford, Hopkinton, and Westborough.

In Offramps, there are few urban areas to dilute the Republican vote.

This is the state's most independent region, with 57 percent of voters not enrolled in any party, so Offramps is by no means a lock for the Republicans. Similarly, the anti-tax faction here is strong but not invincible. The proposal to cut the income tax to 5 percent in 2000 won by a 2-to-1 margin in Offramps, the best showing in the state, but voters opposed doing away with the tax altogether in 2002. The abolitionists got 45 percent here, 15 points behind Romney (who did not endorse the proposal but was seen as the more tax-

resistant candidate); this was the largest such gap in the state.

Given how many residents are new to Offramps, it may not be surprising that "insider" and urban-based candidates generally don't do well in primaries here. Birmingham got 17 percent in the race for 2002 Democratic gubernatorial nomination, six points below his state average. In the primary for state treasurer the same year, Boston City Councilor Steve Murphy got only 14 percent here, seven points below his state average.

LET THE EARTH-MOVING BEGIN

Almost every election night, whether national or statewide, features some cartographic plot twists—which also serve as cliffhangers. For a few years, we're kept in suspense as to whether the changes on the map will last for generations or be reversed by the next election. In the 1928 presidential election, Massachusetts cast aside six decades of being one of the most Republican states in the US and voted for Democrat Al Smith, the first Catholic nominee from either major party. That turned out not to be a fluke, and the Bay State has leaned Democratic ever since. By contrast, in 1976 Jimmy Carter carried several Southern states including Mississippi and South Carolina, that the

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Democratic Party had seemingly lost forever during the social upheavals of the 1960s. In retrospect, that election clearly was a geographical fluke, and those two states haven't voted Democratic since.

The Bay State's 2002 gubernatorial election had its share of surprises, which generally cancelled each other out. Romney did better than Cellucci had done in four regions (Cranberry Country, Offramps, Shopper's World, and Stables and Subdivisions) and worse in six others. But how long will these shifts last? Framingham and Waltham, two of the largest communities in Shopper's World, voted for Romney despite going Democratic in almost all recent statewide elections. Are they part of a realignment or were they part of an aberration? Lenox and Lanesborough, two Berkshire County towns in the Left Fields region, voted for O'Brien after supporting the Republican Party in nearly all races where it was competitive. Can the GOP get them back—and does the party need them anyway?

We'll find out this November just how important the twists of 2002 are in the long run. And we'll get a sense of just where the losing party needs to go—to take back towns or claim new ones—in order to turn its fortunes around next time. Get ready: The political terrain for 2010 will largely be formed in just a few months. **CW**

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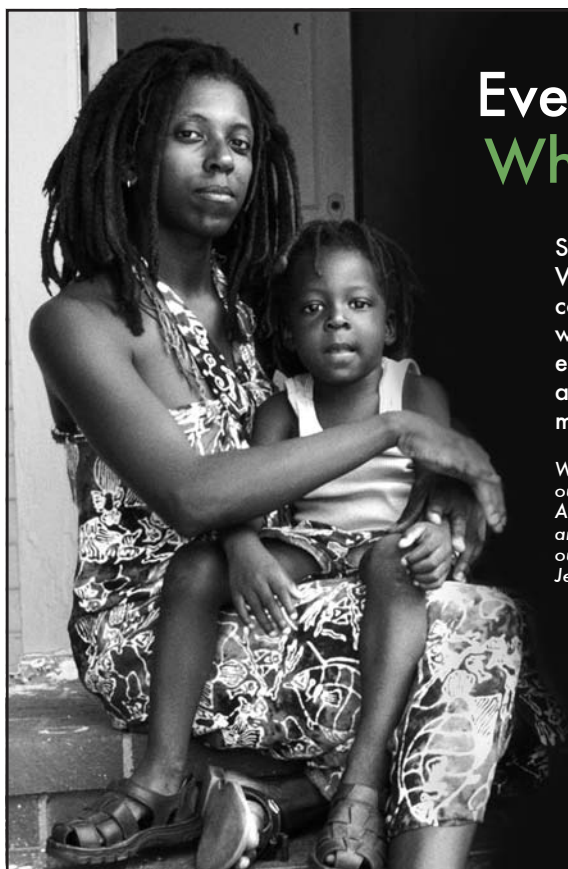
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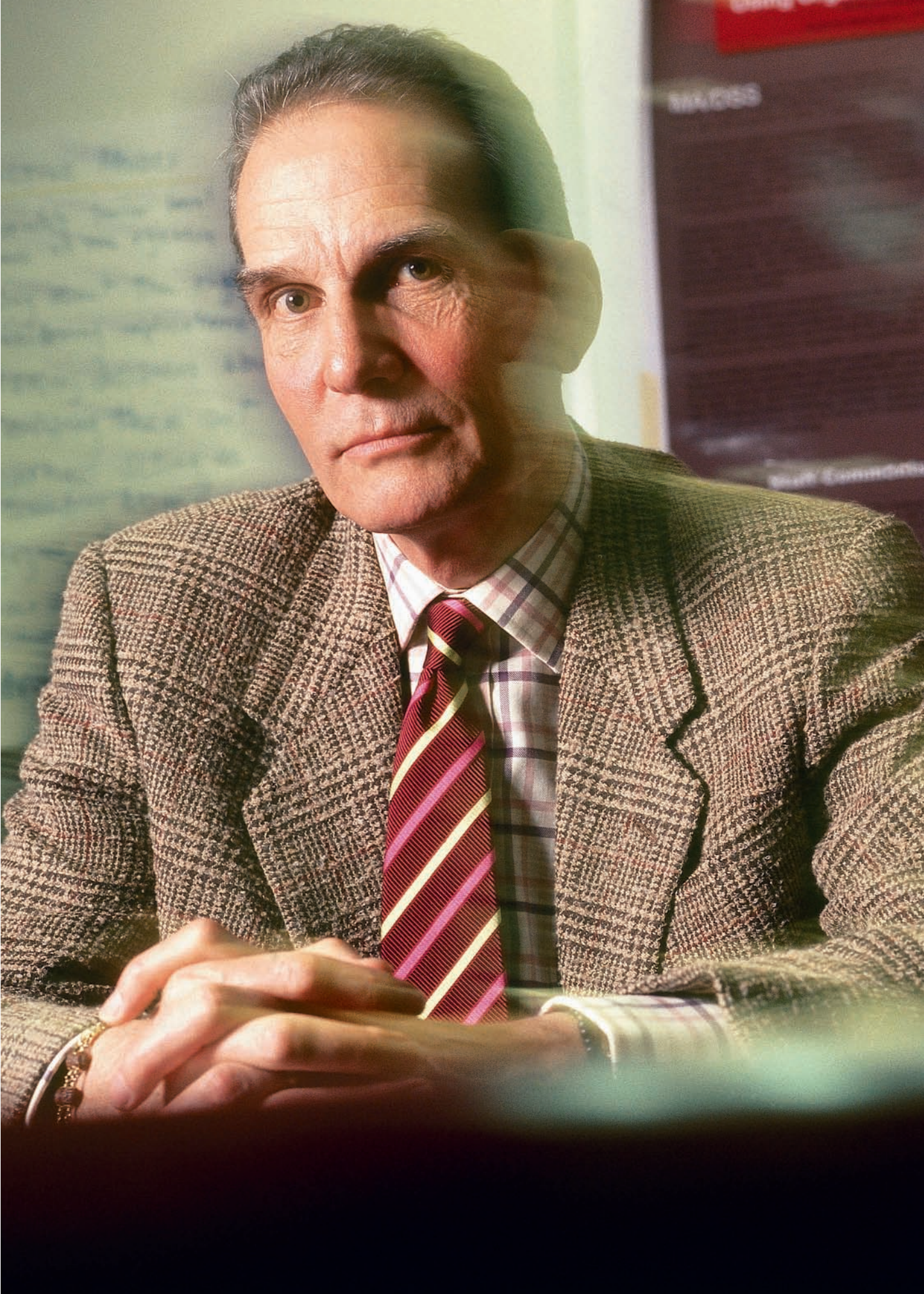
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Hazardous duty

Harry Spence likes to manage institutions in crisis, and in the Department of Social Services, he's got one. Or does it have him?

THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES was in the dock—again—and that meant Harry Spence was on the hot seat. This time, it was the horrifying tale of yet another child whose name became a household word synonymous with the failings of a state agency charged with protecting her.

The tragedy of Haleigh Poutre, now 12, came into public view last September, when the girl arrived at a Westfield emergency room unconscious, allegedly beaten into a coma by her adoptive mother (who was also her maternal aunt) and stepfather. Soon afterward, DSS gained custody of the child and sought a court order to remove life support. In January, just after the Supreme Judicial Court upheld a lower court ruling sanctioning the action, DSS officials reported—some said belatedly—that Haleigh had begun showing signs of responsiveness. Though the agency decided not to pursue removal of life support, the reversal raised questions about the apparent DSS rush to pull the plug. Other questions had to do with how Haleigh ended up in that condition. After her adoption in October 2001, DSS received multiple abuse and neglect reports, known as 51As, about Haleigh, but those reports were dismissed by medical and mental health providers who concluded that Haleigh was inflicting her own injuries.

The Haleigh Poutre case propelled Massachusetts into another grim debate on child welfare. And that meant another high-level investigation of the Department of Social Services.

At a packed State House press conference in March, the Governor's Special Panel for the Review

BY GABRIELLE GURLEY

of the Haleigh Poutre Case released its report, concluding that there was evidence of “systemic failure on all levels, public and private,” which produced “a frightening confluence of a health care system ignorant of abuse and a child protective system ignorant of medicine.”

But it was the governor himself who addressed the question on everyone’s mind. With the three review panel members behind him, Gov. Mitt Romney revealed that he asked the panel point-blank if the agency needed a change of personnel.

“Their answer was quite clearly and definitively no,” the governor said. “We have a group of individuals, particularly Commissioner Spence, who understand the challenges.”

Spence once declared that he liked taking on public institutions in crisis. Today, the DSS commissioner says his is a classic case of “be careful what you wish for, for you may get it.” Operating in crisis mode is all too common for DSS, as it is for child welfare agencies in most states. On average, a child is reported as abused or neglected in the Bay State every five minutes, according to the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. And it’s the cases that DSS bumbles, one way or another, that make the news. Before Haleigh, there was 4-year-old Dontel Jeffers, who died in March 2005, 11 days after DSS placement in a Boston foster home.

In other words, DSS is ignored until some gut-wrenching event jolts the department back into public consciousness. “I think people don’t want to know about it,” says Carol Trust, executive director of the Massachusetts chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. “This is society’s dirty work.”

His defenders say Spence is just the man to deal with it. “He fully appreciates the responsibility of the work, and in a way that I have never seen in my career,” says Molly Bald-

DSS is ignored until some gut-wrenching event jolts the department back into public consciousness.

win, executive director of Roca, a multicultural human development and community building nonprofit in Chelsea, and a friend of Spence’s from his days as receiver for that once corruption-ridden and nearly bankrupt city.

But appreciation for the complexities of child welfare work may not be enough to protect Spence from agency critics, who are weary of the tableau of dead and injured children—and of contrite commissioners. “This is an

agency that has wavered on the edges of mediocrity,” says Maureen Flatley, a child welfare and adoption consultant, who charges that Massachusetts, like most states, runs its motor vehicle department more effectively than its child protection agency.

Spence understands that he’s operating in an environment that requires heroic efforts but produces few heroes. “If we could predict human behavior with such certainty that we could protect every child from ever being harmed, we would run the entire world,” he says. Indeed, he sees his challenge as applying his talent for public management to an agency whose mission is as fraught with ambiguity as it is heavy with responsibility.



State Rep. Marie Parente says the “human services–industrial complex” sucks up department resources.

In DSS, the veteran public-sector turnaround artist has taken on one of the most distressing, complex, and reform-resistant tasks in state government. And now that Spence has been more than four years at the helm, the question is: Does he still have a chance to succeed? Or has the task defeated him already?

A THANKLESS TASK

The commissioner, a longtime student of public-sector administration and organizational behavior, considers child welfare a “seriously undeveloped industry.” Considerable research has been done on clinical issues involving families, he says, but almost none on how to organize child-welfare work effectively. Rather, the most common management strategy nationally has been to fire people involved in high-profile cases. “It’s kind of astonishing that we’ve never looked up and said, ‘Gee, it doesn’t seem to have made a difference,’” says Spence.

It’s widely recognized that there are few harder ways to make a living than by intervening in troubled families. Child-welfare work exerts an enormous emotional toll on its workers, and Spence says that is what frequently leads to mistakes: Staff become emotionally frozen, isolated and injured by the work, and then make deep errors of judgment.

A 1998 House Post Audit and Oversight Bureau report on DSS concluded, “There is a feeling among employees that their work is becoming more difficult; that the children are more troubled and the families, more dysfunctional.” That was eight years ago. “Mary,” a social worker in eastern Massachusetts who works with teens and single mothers, says that often she will hear from clients, “DSS doesn’t know what’s good for my family. I know what’s good for my family.” (DSS asked *CommonWealth* not to use her real name to protect her safety.)

And wielding the state’s power to take a child away from a family is not easy. “I think one of the hardest tasks is for a social worker to make the judgment, within a 10-day period, as to whether the allegation of abuse and neglect is real,” says Marylou Sudders, president of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Then, she says, comes the critical question: “Do you remove the child from the home?”

To relieve some of that stress, Spence is trying to reorganize the department’s nearly 2,200 social workers, through a multiyear “teaming initiative.” Although working in teams is standard operating procedure in many fields, it is new to child welfare: Traditionally, social workers have worked alone, each reporting to a supervisor. Under the new DSS model, five case workers and one supervisor share up to 90 cases. Currently, 12 to 14 teams are at work in eight area offices.

“Turns out families love this relationship, because when they call up, any one of the members of the team can talk to

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them about the case,” says Spence.

Spence also wants to make his social workers better decision-makers by means of expanded professional development. In 2004, DSS launched the Child Welfare Institute in collaboration with Salem State College and the University of Massachusetts Medical School, with the agency defraying the costs of graduate study for DSS workers. Interest in classes such as “Preparing Adolescents for Young Adulthood” has been stronger than anyone at the institute anticipated, says Cheryl Springer, director of Salem State College’s School of Social Work.

“To do this job right, you really need to keep educating workers on a regular basis,” says Edward Malloy Jr., president of the DSS chapter of the Service Employees International Union, Local 509, and a DSS supervisor since 1983.

Malloy appreciates Spence’s consistent defense of social workers, and his push for benefits like the institute. But he faults him for the agency’s continued failure to reduce social worker caseloads. Under their union contract, DSS social workers are supposed to carry no more than 18 cases, each of which involves not only one child but parents, extended family members, and foster parents; social workers and school, medical, and court personnel; and other outside

contacts, sometimes adding up to more than 200 individuals. Every one of them, says Malloy, can call and say, “Why haven’t you gotten back to me?”

The Child Welfare League of America recommends that a social worker overseeing foster family care carry 12 to 15 children; a social workers who conducts initial assessments and investigations, 12 active cases per month; and workers with ongoing cases, 17 active families and no more than one new case assigned for every six open cases.

Spence acknowledges that about 250 social workers now carry more than 18 cases, and he notes that the department has never complied with the 18-case benchmark but should be able to do so, with minor exceptions, within a year. As for meeting CWLA standards, that would require more funding, Spence says, which would be a decision for the Legislature.

On top of all these pressures is the department’s bureaucratic culture. Some social workers say they are afraid of retaliation from managers if they blow the whistle about the problems involving children and families. According to state Rep. Gloria Fox, a Boston Democrat and a member of the Special Legislative Committee on Foster Care, the commissioner has admitted being kept in the dark about certain things that have gone on in his agency.

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"That's kind of scary," says Fox. "Because of that, there are a whole lot of people that are in charge and he's not."

But Spence says he's doing a lot to promote direct, candid conversation on clinical and administrative issues: "In any organization, it's hard to get bad news to move upward."

'REALLY DESPERATE'

Training, teamwork, and manageable caseloads would help, but making a difference in the lot of children living in troubled homes is still difficult. Most DSS clients struggle with poverty, mental health problems, substance abuse, or domestic violence—and have nowhere else to turn. "Families don't show up at DSS because kids are bad or families are bad," says NASW's Trust. "It's because they don't have the kind of support that those of us who don't need DSS have had in our lives."

Every day 20 or more children come into DSS care, according to Stephanie Frankel, a supervisor in the Arlington regional office of the department's Adoption Development Licensing Unit. "We really are desperate for foster families," she says.

On a recent evening, eight people turn up at the Arlington office for an information session on foster parenting and adoption. A longtime DSS employee, Frankel runs down the in and outs of the foster care/adoption screening process, outlining the application forms, criminal background checks, home visits, and special training classes. She doesn't miss a beat, even as she scoops up a wandering toddler. The youngster settles into her lap, gazing at her and listening to every word.

Last fall, Spence began rebuilding the foster care recruitment staff that had been eliminated during the state's fiscal crisis. DSS began a new foster parent recruitment campaign with a goal of bringing in 1,000 additional foster parents. DSS is using experienced foster parents to help serve as recruiters and mentors.

"There are so many people that could open up [their homes] and they don't," says Medford resident Audrey Roth, who attended the Arlington session.

DSS has custody of roughly 10,000 Massachusetts children. About 7,600 children and teenagers were in foster care, and another 2,500 in residential facilities at the end of 2005. Statewide, 60 percent of the kids in placement are identified as white, 20 percent are African-American, 4 percent are multiracial, 2 percent are Asian, and the rest are not identified by race. In Boston, most of the kids in placement (57 percent) are black. In the western part of the state, 38 percent of the kids in placement are Hispanic, a higher percentage than in any other region.

If children don't return to family homes or if adoption doesn't pan out, they remain in DSS custody until they reach age 18. Last year, 700 young people left the DSS rolls because



Children's advocate Maureen Flatley: DSS "has wavered on the edges of mediocrity."

they had outgrown the agency's jurisdiction, if not a need for help. "Aging out," says Spence, is the invisible challenge of child welfare, and DSS tries to persuade these 18-year-olds to participate in various independent living, employment, and education programs until they turn 22.

"Atrocities against children set off an immense public reaction; 700 kids whose lives have no hope disappear without any evidence to the larger public," he says.

"Harry's on target on this, by saying aging out is a failure of the system," says Julie Wilson, director of the Malcolm Wiener Center for Social Policy at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

Bob Webb knows what failure of the system is all about. Born in 1950, Webb became a foster child at age three. A neighbor called the police after finding him and his four sisters eating garbage. His mother was schizophrenic, his father, "out of the picture," he says. He navigated seven or eight foster homes over the next couple of years with one sister before being reunited with two others in Ethel Squire's foster home in Melrose. Although he adored his social worker, Nicki Caperelli ("Every time she arrived at the foster home, she had a big smile on her face," he says), at age 13 he rebelled against his foster mother's strict regime and ran away. Once Squires declared him disruptive, he bounced between a series of boys' homes and camps. After stealing a pack of cig-

arettes, he ended up in reform schools.

Now married with two children and the owner of Sunrise, a Boston-area window cleaning company, Webb aged out of the custody of the Division of Child Guardianship, a DSS predecessor, at 17. Officials gave him \$130 and sent him on his way. He found a room in Boston's South End and worked "for gangsters" parking cars and doing odd jobs in a dry-cleaning establishment before finding gainful employment.

"I see why people re-offend," he says.

"This is where we have focused as a department in the last three years," says Spence. "How do we sustain and improve the safety record of the department while taking up the permanency challenge? [It] gets lost too easily in child welfare because the media doesn't focus on it—even though the human damage is enormous."

PERMANENT SOLUTIONS

By "permanency," Spence means the reunion of a child with his or her birth family, guardianship by another family member, or adoption. Getting kids into permanent situations helps lessen the reliance on one of the least desirable options for children, placement in residential facilities.

The focus on permanency reflects a national trend: moving kids—and dollars—away from residential care, where adolescents are the largest group, to permanent placements in a child's home community. DSS's response to this shift, the new Family Networks program, enables the agency to work with outside providers to furnish community-based services to children and adolescents still living at home who are at risk of ending up in residential programs. Contracts with Family Networks began in July 2005.

If reunification fails, the possibility of permanent placement is greater in the home community, since there are opportunities for involvement with a possible adoptive family or for another family member to step forward to act as guardian.

But residential care won't completely disappear. Those with severe developmental delays or violent tendencies will continue to need residential placements, and foster families will still need the break that respite care offers. And some of the 100 or so residential providers who work with DSS say the agency may be moving too fast to embrace permanency.

"Does the field staff have all the information they need to help manage a change?" asks MSPCC's Sudders, whose agency contracts with DSS. She also says some providers are experiencing financial problems, since they no longer receive referrals, yet they aren't sure where the kids are going.

It's critical that, if a child can't make it in a community setting, there is a place for them to come back to, says Michael

Weekes, president of the Massachusetts Council of Human Service Providers and a former DSS deputy commissioner. But while most agree that concerns about gaps in service are justified, at least one provider termed objections to the speed of the long-anticipated changeover "ludicrous."

For some agency critics, reliance on the private sector for services is itself problematic. State Rep. Marie Parente, a Milford Democrat who chairs the Special Legislative Committee on Foster Care, says the new system relies too heavily on outsider providers, which she likens to a "Massachusetts human services—industrial complex," funneling too much money to vendors that rely on government funding rather than to families.

Besides boosting permanent placements, Spence believes that redirecting funds from residential care to community agencies will bolster early intervention programs. The agency's proposed 2007 budget is \$762 million (with about \$516 million allocated for services for children and families), up from about \$744 million in fiscal 2006. As recently as last year a little less than one-third of the total budget went to kids in full-time residential settings (about 2,500 of them), at a cost of \$100,000 to \$120,000 per child per year.

"It's a classic all-acute, no-preventive system," Spence says.

Spence says that shifting funds from residential care to community agencies will help prevention efforts.

"When people say to me, 'Do you have enough money in the system?' my fundamental response is, 'Until we get it in the right places, I can't tell yet.' We've been spending it in so many wrongheaded ways."

Mary Jane England, president of Regis College and the agency's first commissioner (serving from 1979 to 1983), says DSS initially focused on early-intervention services, in the hopes of preventing child abuse before it occurred. But as reported abuse overwhelmed DSS resources, those components atrophied. "I think that's a big issue for the commissioners who have had to follow me," she says.

At the end of 2005, some 40,000 children were receiving services from DSS, about 30,000 of them at home, with more than 350 private agencies delivering services under the supervision of 29 DSS area offices. Most families don't become DSS clients because of abuse and neglect reports. Rather, they seek out voluntary services, such as tracking (keeping tabs on kids at school), mentoring programs, parenting classes, and home-based counseling. Others turn to DSS when older children and adolescents make trouble at school,

get hooked on drugs, or become uncontrollable at home, ceding custody to the state under a CHINS (Child in Need of Services) petition.

"If you take a family in crisis, everyone knows that's the best opportunity to make a change," says Spence. "But you need to get services in immediately."

Union chief Malloy doesn't dispute the need for these services, but he says the idea of shifting resources to provide them is a shell game. The message it sends the Legislature, he says, is, "We are going to interact with families in this magical way and then we don't need more staff, and we don't need significantly more money for services."

Spence has his game plan, he's putting it into effect, and many people in the field are rooting for him. "Harry is on the right track in a lot of ways," says Weekes. But even Spence has to admit that evidence of progress is slim.

"The benchmarks we've laid out for ourselves are ones that require the substantial revision of the system to achieve," he says. "Child welfare does not lend itself, nor should it, to quick fixes."

So, how does DSS measure up, overall? Massachusetts, at least, has more resources and is able to do more for children than some other states. "This agency is not worse on any general measure of success and is probably better on some,"

says Mary Elizabeth Collins, an associate professor of social welfare policy at Boston University's School of Social Work.

MADE FOR THE JOB?

Only the strong survive in a Darwinian atmosphere like DSS. Tall and rail-thin, Lewis Harry Spence hardly looks like Hercules, but mentally he is every bit as strong, says Stephen Kraus, chairman of the board of trustees of City on a Hill Charter School in Boston, where Spence also served as chairman. (He is currently on the board of the school's foundation.)

Spence has certainly survived taxing assignments in combative environments. Before returning to Boston, he was deputy chancellor for operations in the New York City Public Schools from 1995 to 2000. "Harry has an extraordinary capacity to look into the institutional blockages...that prevent services from getting to children," says his ex-boss, Rudy Crew, formerly New York City Chancellor and also once a Boston deputy superintendent, who is now superintendent of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools in Florida.

Before that, Spence put a bankrupt Chelsea back on the road to solvency and led housing authorities in Somerville, Cambridge, and Boston, where he helped desegregate



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Charlestown's public-housing developments without the violence that marred attempts elsewhere. Returning to the Hub after his New York sojourn, Spence worked as a College Board consultant as the firm sought to expand its Advanced Placement program beyond suburban classrooms.

Despite his distinguished résumé, Spence says the opportunity to take over DSS "came out of the blue." Andrea Watson, now project director for the Federation for Children with Special Needs, suggested to then-state Human Services Secretary Robert Gittens that Spence was the man for the DSS job. Spence took his time mulling over the resulting offer. Among those he consulted was Nicholas Scoppetta, who led New York City's Administration for Children's Services through landmark reforms. Plenty of people were working to improve schools, Scoppetta told Spence, but child welfare needed the help of people like him.

The kicker came in his old Chelsea stomping grounds. Invited to attend a weekend "circle" of open conversations facilitated by the nonprofit group Roca, Spence found himself in the middle of a generational failure to communicate. When young people launched into complaints about DSS, the adults would have none of it. "Do you know what it was like before they were really active in this community, how many lives they've saved?" Spence remembers them saying. Acting Gov. Jane Swift appointed him the sixth commissioner of DSS in November 2001, handing Spence his most challenging public-management assignment to date.

Spence's first efforts in public service came in his hometown of Cranbury, NJ, near Princeton, in the 1950s. At that time, the town was a small agricultural community, about one-quarter African-American or Hispanic. The town's poor population of farm laborers lived in appalling conditions, and after some homes were destroyed by fire, his father started a volunteer homebuilding group, a sort of early Habitat for Humanity. As a teenager, Spence spent weekends on rooftops, helping his father with the construction.

A graduate of Harvard College and Law School, Spence, who turns 60 in November, lives in Boston's South End. He credits his wife, Robin Ely, a Harvard Business School associate professor of organizational behavior, with helping him draw on "the best management theory available." His youngest daughter, fourth-grader Francesca, is 9. Two older children, from his first marriage, both live in New York; Rebecca, 29, is a freelance writer and Adam, 31, a Wall Street leveraged buyout specialist.

Now charged with saving at-risk children, Spence finds his attitudes informed by age and personal experience. In his early years as a father, Spence disciplined by spanking. But one night at dinner his son, then 9, suddenly asked that the spanking stop. Flummoxed, Spence wanted to know what he was supposed to do if Adam said to "go jump" when asked to take out the garbage. They could talk, Adam told his father. Spence never spanked his children again.

Perspective of a different sort came from a diagnosis of prostate cancer in September 2003, which caused him to step down from his dual post as assistant secretary of health and human services in August 2004. At the time, he said, "In what would once have been a bad joke, I've decided I'm going to dramatically reduce my stress level by just being commissioner of DSS."

"The word 'cancer' confronts you with mortality [and]

'What I will never do is scapegoat social workers in high-profile cases,' Spence says.

the sense that goes with aging that time is short," Spence says today. Now cancer-free, he says the experience reinforced a belief that his current work "is as important as anything I could wish to do on this earth."

But there are others who wonder if Spence is up to the task. "You hate to hurt a good man like Harry Spence, because he is the nicest commissioner that we've had," says Parente. "But you need a tough man for a tough job."

"Haleigh's case is a screaming indictment of the agency because this case played itself out through Harry's tenure," says advocate Flatley, who is involved in the Jeffers case and has served as a CNN analyst on the Poutre case. Flatley is not convinced that past success in public management translates into success in an agency like DSS. In Spence's case, she says, the bloom is off the rose.

"You are reminded a little bit of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, where for a period of time he appears to be the golden boy," says Flatley. "He's this attractive, dynamic, persuasive leader and then, all of sudden, someone opens the door and peers behind the façade."

Even some longtime fans are losing patience. Fox says she and others in Boston "go way, way back with Harry Spence" to his days as BHA receiver. But Fox points out, "The Department of Social Services has been out of control for a while."

When it comes to criticism of his department, Spence distinguishes between the Jeffers case and the Poutre cases. In the Jeffers case, the structure and the oversight of therapeutic foster care (for children with severe emotional problems) was very poor, he concedes. But Spence rejects charges that the Haleigh Poutre case illustrates a failing of the agency at all.

"Simply because we [are] the agency whose task is to deal with issues that the culture finds unbearable to look at, whenever they come to the light of day the first place to look for blame is us," says Spence.

The commissioner is a fierce, public protector of his staff. There are times when termination has to occur, he admits, noting that the department recently fired its 38th social worker or supervisor in the past two years. "What I will never do is scapegoat social workers in high-profile cases," he says.

How about Spence himself? Would removing Spence have solved anything?

"No, it wouldn't address the problem," says Poutre panel chairman Christine Ferguson, the former state Department of Public Health commissioner, just after the March news conference. "You would have to look at—and it would be impossible to do so—every single person involved in this case for the last 11 years, in the private and public sectors," then punish them all because the outcome was bad, she adds.

When things go wrong, fingers always get pointed at commissioners, says Harvard's Wilson, but firing them precipitously can sometimes impede reform, rather than accelerate it. "I think changing commissioners rapidly, unless the commissioner is just not a good commissioner, is not good for the agency, because you can't get any traction on changes," she says.

REFILLING PRESCRIPTIONS

Apart from scandals and cases that shock the public, child-welfare agencies have a hard time getting the attention of policy makers. According to a 1995 report from the State Legislative Leaders Foundation, lawmakers generally do not hear about children and family issues from their constituents and rarely read reports about them. But seeing for themselves is a different matter. To provide Utah lawmakers with insights into child welfare, Richard Anderson, director of the state's Child and Family Services, set up a program in 2001 for lawmakers to shadow a caseworker handling an ongoing case or an investigation. "I can't believe what you do every day" is the frequent response from participating legislators.

But in Massachusetts, investigating DSS has become a cottage industry, with about a dozen probes since the late '80s. Major legislative inquiries took place in 1998 and 1995-96, and special commissions on foster care were appointed in 1993 and 1987. And as this story goes to press, the House Post Audit and Oversight Bureau is conducting its own DSS investigation, hard on the heels of the governor's Haleigh Poutre review panel.

Relying on specific episodes of child abuse or neglect as catalysts for reform has its limitations, however. Prescriptions tend to be narrow and case-specific, and those that aren't tend to recycle recommendations from past event-driven investigations. The Poutre review is a case in point. The panel's key recommendations, which addressed end-of-life decisions—one of the rarest dilemmas facing a dilemma-



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filled agency—involving obtaining a second opinion from a doctor outside the treating hospital, requesting an opinion from the hospital's ethics committee, and assuring that, once compiled, the information finds its way to the courts, the child's guardian ad litem, and the child's attorney. While some of the recommendations deal with technologies that did not exist a decade ago, Ferguson says many have much in common with those made by the 1993 Special Commission on Foster Care (itself established in response to the highly publicized "Mikey" case, involving the sudden removal of a child from a foster home).

The panel's sole legislative proposal would increase the investigation period for reports of abuse and neglect, as well as the period during which DSS can access medical records, from 10 to 20 calendar days. This proposal mirrors a bill now pending in the Legislature (and first filed in 2003) that would increase the investigative period to 15 working days, and Malloy says his union has tried for several years to get legislation passed to increase investigation periods.

The Haleigh Poutre panel's criticism of the gap-riddled interactions between DSS and the Department of Mental Health also has many echoes. A 2002 Pioneer Institute report, *Rationalizing Health and Human Services*, written by former health and human services and administration and finance secretary Charles Baker, found that the Executive Office of Health and Human Services's various agencies serve many of the same clients, but do so in isolation. One of the goals of the reorganization led by then-Secretary Ronald Preston begun that year was to improve the working relationships between the agencies. And while Spence stresses some improvements, such as reducing lengths of stay for children in psychiatric hospitals, the Poutre review found that inadequate child mental health services at DMH makes DSS the "de facto child mental health resource," a role for which it is ill-equipped. According to the panel's report, a child's DSS status "precludes or hinders" DMH services rather than "triggering the possibility of joint services," while the DMH eligibility process "serves to obstruct, not facilitate [medical] care."

"I think what the report highlights is that we are still in the nascent stages of that reorganization," says Health and Human Services Secretary Timothy Murphy. "It doesn't just happen overnight."

Some lawmakers are willing to give DSS credit where credit is due, but still want the agency on a tighter leash. In April, the Special Legislative Committee on Foster Care proposed the "Dontel-Haleigh" bill, for which hearings have not yet been scheduled. Notably, four of the committee's six members—Parente, Fox, Democratic Sen. Stanley Rosenberg of Amherst, and Democratic Rep. Paul Donato of Medford—are former foster children.

"DSS is a significantly better and stronger department than 10 years ago," says Rosenberg, an Amherst Democrat.

But “both cases demonstrate there are very specific areas that need to be addressed.”

Where the governor’s panel targeted DSS-medical community issues, the Dontel-Haleigh bill addresses the breakdown between DSS, state prosecutors, and local law enforcement. Under this legislation, certain child abuse reports would immediately go to district attorneys and local police before, rather than after, a DSS internal investigation. The bill also touches on medical issues, requiring DSS to get a second medical opinion in end-of-life decisions and provide the court with all opinions and medical data; conduct medical screenings within 14 days of placement; and convene multidisciplinary teams in area offices. But the biggest change would affect providers, who now operate outside the DSS legal framework. They’d be mandated to follow laws, rules, and regulations now governing DSS.

This is an “opportunity to craft and mold and reorganize the child welfare system in Massachusetts,” says Fox. “It doesn’t simply hand the policymaking over to the agency, but it continues to put in place a system of checks and balances,” says Flatley.

“We are studying the [legislation] and plan to meet with the special panel on foster care to further understand the details of what they’ve proposed,” says Spence through a DSS spokesman.

STARTING OVER

When all is said and done, the Poutre review was a vindication of sorts for Spence, allowing him to get back to the work he’s started. The single most powerful message of the report, he claims, is the need for child protective and medical communities to deepen their dialogue and their understanding of each other. “The outline of the work that they lay out for us is exactly right,” Spence says.

The report confirmed another of the commissioner’s firmly held views: “I think in the sense that it said very clearly that they found no carelessness no lack of due care or concern or attention by any staff, that was my belief as well.”

But others take a gloomier view. “Let’s blow up DSS and start all over,” declared a *Boston Herald* editorial.

“What kept coming back in my mind over and over again was the apparent helplessness DSS felt to remove Haleigh from that abusive situation,” says Flaherty. “I just think that nothing good is going to come of this [from] any direction.”

There is certainly reason to wonder whether DSS will ever change, bouncing as it does from one heart-rending case to another.

“I think it’s wrong to blame [DSS] for the kind of failures that happen,” says BU social work professor Collins. Utah child-welfare chief Anderson says the challenge is to build a system that is not reactive, so that one child’s death

is not seen as “representative of the system as a whole.”

But Parente doesn’t buy the these-things-are-bound-to-happen argument. “If it’s one case and it’s your kid, would you trust us with your child?” she asks.

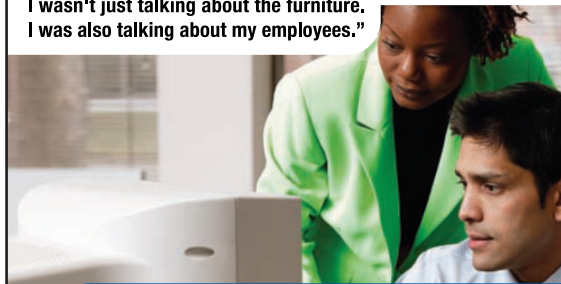
“All the ingredients for change are at hand. What is necessary is the political will to give the children and the families of the Commonwealth the type of child welfare agency they deserve.” That was the conclusion of the 1993 Special Commission on Foster Care, and it is the challenge that remains today. The terrible truth about child welfare is that tragedies drive reform, and that reform peters out when memory of those tragedies fades.

“Haleigh’s tragic experience unfortunately underlines the failures of successive governors to implement clear guidelines for major reform set forth in 1993,” says Malloy.

For now, Spence soldiers on. His commitment to the organizational triage that, in DSS, passes for reform is undisputable, and it’s conveyed with a passion not often seen in public officials. Whether he can rally and redirect the agency sufficiently to withstand the cycle of accusation, investigation, and recrimination is an open question, though not for the person who threw his hat in the ring in the first place.

“He was absolutely the man for the job,” says Watson. “I have no regrets at all.” **CW**

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Athens wasn't built in a day

Historian Thomas O'Connor says the Hub's first plan for urban renewal—physical, intellectual, and spiritual—was the product of an enterprising, civic-minded elite. Which leaves him wondering: *Who would make Boston the 'Athens of America' today?*

Thomas O'Connor has been telling Boston's story for more than three decades. His 1976 book, *Bibles, Brahmins, and Bosses*, based on a series of lectures delivered at the Boston Public Library the year before, established the South Boston native as the dean of Boston historians, an informal title no one has challenged since.

O'Connor began teaching American history at Boston College—his alma mater for bachelor's and master's degrees; he got his Ph.D. a trolley car ride away, at Boston University—in 1950 and never left. He became professor emeritus in 1993, but he has been no less productive in “retirement,” constantly exploring new angles on Boston's past. In what remained of the last decade of the 20th century he published *The Boston Irish: A Political History* (1995), *Civil War Boston: Home Front and Battlefield* (1997), and *Boston Catholics: The Church and Its People* (1998). In 1999, O'Connor was named University Historian at Boston College.

A revised edition of *Bibles, Brahmins, and Bosses* published in 1984 brought O'Connor's survey of Boston history up to the inauguration of Raymond Flynn as mayor. But when he set out on the eve of a new millennium to update Boston's story once again, he found his 1970s alliteration to be dated.

“I suddenly discovered that the title wouldn't work anymore,” says



O'Connor, in his office across the street from Gasson Hall, the "tower building" erected on BC's Chestnut Hill campus in 1913. "It was an appropriate title back in 1976. Twenty-five years later it was not, because of the many changes in Boston—the demographic changes, the economic changes. *That* was no longer Boston."

So O'Connor decided to appropriate Oliver Wendell Holmes's term for the city, and *The Hub: Boston, Past and Present* was published in 2001. But "hub of the solar system"

is not the only immodest title Bostonians have bestowed upon their city, and as he thought about a next project for his inquiring historical mind, O'Connor gravitated toward another, one slightly less well known today than "hub" or Winthrop's "city on a hill."

The result is *The Athens of America: Boston 1825-1845*. It was William Tudor—whom O'Connor calls an "enterprising merchant" and a member of the circle who launched a magazine, the *Monthly Anthology*, in 1803—who first

referred to Boston as a new Athens, but the term reflected the classical ideal Boston's elite had adopted for their city, and then set about trying to realize. In this post-Revolution, pre-Civil War era, Boston's civic leaders embarked on a program of physical reconstruction, institutional reform, and intellectual awakening that, to a surprising degree, made Boston what it is today.

As he delved into Boston's Athens of America period, O'Connor found his research resonating with current events. He spelled it out in *Athens's* introduction: "At the turn of the twenty-first century, what seemed like an inordinate number of Boston-owned and Boston-based financial and literary enterprises were taken over by corporations based in other parts of the United States or, with the rapid growth of globalization, located in other parts of the world." The litany he lays out is familiar: Gillette, Fleet, John Hancock, *The Boston Globe*, Jordan Marsh and Filene's, *The Atlantic Monthly*.

"The leaders and directors of these prominent financial and literary institutions were men who lived in Boston, whose enterprises were located in Boston, and who had always assumed a serious personal responsibility for the social, cultural, and intellectual life of the community," O'Connor writes. "As I read about all the companies and institutions leaving Boston, with their directors residing in New York, London, Singapore, and Tokyo, I must say I wonder who now will serve as the 'treasurers of God's bounty' and represent the community as trustees of corporations, editors of journals, directors of hospitals, board members of museums, subscribers to the symphony, monitors of the charitable and welfare centers of the Commonwealth? Who will serve as the new leadership elite in shaping the future of the city?"

It's a question being asked by others ("Corporate Citizens," *CW*, Spring '05), but not many with the knowledge and appreciation O'Connor has for a time when, as he writes, "a leadership elite, composed of men of family background, liberal education, and managerial experience in a variety of enterprises, used their personal talents and substantial financial resources to promote the cultural, intellectual, and humanitarian interests of Boston to the point where it would be the envy of the nation."

"There is a vacuum," says O'Connor. "At the present time there is a vacuum where, if I had to put my finger on any one particular group and say, well, that is who is influential in the city, I can't. I'm sure there are some. I'm not saying that there are not any. But I don't think they're as definable and cohesive as they were earlier."

What follows is an edited transcript of our conversation about what today's civic leaders—state and local, public and private, known and unknown—could learn from a time when Boston strived to be the Athens of America.

— ROBERT KEOUGH



COMMONWEALTH: So how was it that, in the early 1800s, such a cohesive group seemed to be directing things in Boston?

O'CONNOR: One advantage, perhaps, that some of these earlier people had was that they knew each other. They intermarried, for one thing. Old money married new money during that period of time, when the Lowells married the Lawrences and so forth. There was that incestuous type of relationship there. They lived close to each other, most of them up on Beacon Hill. They sent their children to the same schools. I'd say there were roughly 40 families in the [so-called] Boston Associates [old mercantile families and new mill owners who diversified their investments in real estate, banking, and other enterprises]. You had a kind of social commerce, social collaboration, among these people. They went to dinner together. They had lunch together down at the Parker House every Saturday and so forth.

CW: Not only was it a cohesive group, but one that made quite a concerted effort to bring about this new identity for Boston as the Athens of America. This was not a natural evolution, you say. It didn't happen by accident.

O'CONNOR: Right. It didn't just happen. We tend to look back on history and say, wasn't that wonderful, what happened? Well, it took a lot of planning and work. In teaching the survey of American history, I was always fascinated to come to this period of American literary history. Can you imagine all of these great figures—Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, John Greenleaf Whittier, and those were

only the biggies—all on the same stage at the same time? Most of them went to Harvard together. They'd meet each other at the Old Corner Bookstore. Right here on our stage, you had a dozen of the major figures of American literary history, and by this time internationally known. [Boston's elites] put them to work, by organizing the lyceum system [clubs that held public lectures all over the city], by giving the money, for example, to the Lowell Institute [founded in 1839 from the estate of the son of textile magnate Francis Cabot Lowell to sponsor free lectures "for the promotion of the moral and intellectual and physical instruction" of Boston residents]. What [the civic elites] did was to give

'There were good, practical reasons' for humanitarianism.

these people a podium, a public podium, so that they wouldn't be over at Harvard teaching all day long and not seeing anybody else. Think of some of the names of the organizations—the Mechanics Association, the Mercantile Association—that were organizing lectures for their workers. It was not only realizing that these [intellectual] resources were there, but putting them to work, and putting them to

work so that the less fortunate classes would benefit. It was this idea of ancient Greece. You not only have a great city, but you have a great populace who could understand history.

So there was a certain humanitarianism there. I'd also have to say that these were practical men, and there were good, practical reasons for what they were doing. They wanted to benefit the poor, but they were helping themselves out, too. What they were doing, in many ways, was justifying their political position. They were ousted from national politics [definitively in 1828, when President John Quincy Adams was unseated by Andrew Jackson], but they had, for all practical purposes, taken over the city. It was their city, by God, and they weren't going to let any of these Toms, Dicks, and Harrys run the government. When you look at the lists of mayors when they made it a city, they were all upper-class people. John Phillips and Josiah Quincy and Harrison Gray Otis—these were the mayors. As practical people, they had to face the question: Why should these unfortunates vote for us? Why are they going to vote for rich people for mayor? Basically, what they had to say was, I can do more for you than anybody else. *We can do more.*

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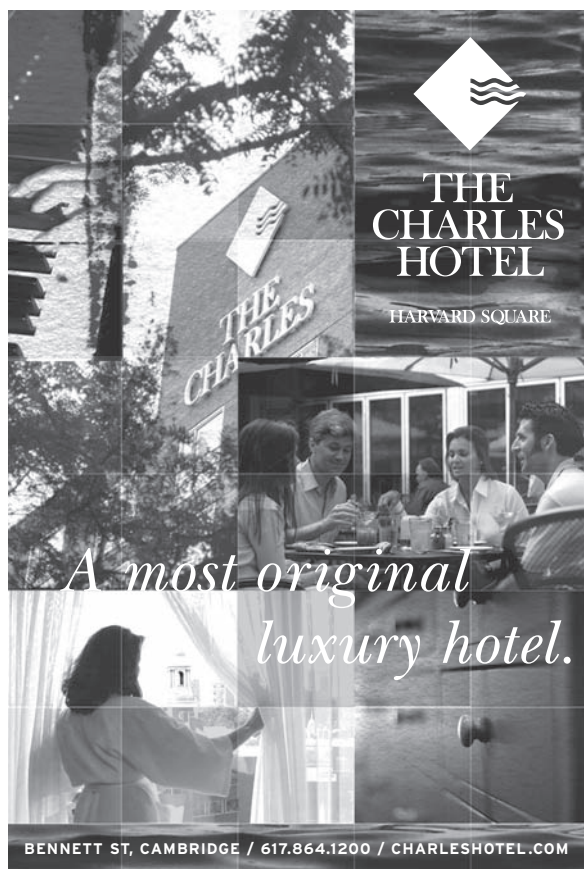


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CONVERSATION

Take Josiah Quincy, in his first inaugural address, saying he had to fix up the city. And he made the point that people like himself and his friends could go off to Nahant for the summer, but the poor people had to stay in the city and endure what he called the “noxious effluvia” of a long hot summer. The place stunk. It wouldn’t bother him, but these people had to stay and bear a stinking city, and that was not right.

Part of it was moral, if you like. These were Christian people. I’m sure they were feeling, “This is the right thing to do.” For example, cleaning up the jails—I’m sure they were doing it for humanitarian reasons, moral reasons, that it’s not Christian to see these people without blankets and so forth. But I think there were other reasons, some of them practical. There was this idea of being proud of your city. Many, if not most, of these people were the sons of the revolutionary Founding Fathers. This was a new generation after the Constitution and so forth. Their forebears had done all of these great things—fought the war, won independence, wrote the Declaration of Independence, wrote the Constitution. What do you do for an encore? We talk about noblesse oblige, but there was also a built-in sense of responsibility that this is “the city on the hill.” What are you going to do with it? How do you put it up there, as John Winthrop said, so that the eyes of the world will be upon it? That’s a question of family pride, if you like. I think they had to do good for their forebears, make them proud of them.

CW: This, you say, was a period of institution building, social reform, and intellectual leadership. Boston and Bostonians had been eclipsed politically on the national stage, but tried to set an example for the country in a variety of ways. What were some of the institutions built and the great causes taken up at that time?

O’CONNOR: One of them was physical—that is, when Josiah Quincy rebuilt the city. Boston was 200 years old at this time. Now, maybe that doesn’t sound old—if you’re in Europe, you think 200 years old is a new city—but not much had been done to it. It suffered greatly during the Revolutionary War. And, as Quincy said himself, it stunk. So he set up, almost single-handedly, a program of what we would call today urban renewal, and it actually renewed the city—and built the market [now named for him]. Then there was the development of the Massachusetts General Hospital a little bit earlier, in 1810. They were developing a medical school at Harvard, and this young doctor, John Collins Warren, looks around and sees there’s no hospital. So he goes around to these financiers, these Boston Associates, and he taps them for money. He said, “You are the treasurers of God’s bounty.” They came up with the big bucks, not only for the Mass General but also eventually for the McLean Hospital. And the word “general” was very interesting, because that’s what it was intended to be, a general hospital—not just for

the elite, but for everyone. And these prominent people not only gave the money but also became trustees of Mass. General Hospital. Actually, you could trace whole families for generations, starting with the Warrens, all of the family names continuing on the boards of trustees of this hospital, making a personal commitment to the institution.

So they were interested in making Boston a healthy city. This was something Josiah Quincy praised himself for, that he had made Boston the healthiest city in America by cleaning up the garbage and the sewers. This insistence on cleaning up Boston, making its citizens healthy, [then led] into the temperance movement. Josiah Quincy and Dr. Warren, and members of the Harvard Medical School, took that up. Then of course the religions got involved in it, which gave it a much broader base, with the idea that intemperance was a moral sin and obviously had serious moral effects. I think that people like Quincy and the doctors were interested in the health effects of intemperate drinking. It's bad individually for the health, but it was also bad socially because it affected families and children.

Then there was the involvement of many of these peo-

'Their forebears had done all of these great things. What do you do for an encore?'

ple in what were called prison discipline societies. They would visit the jails and make sure that the inmates had something to eat. They were appalled by the conditions that they saw and began to get behind the movements that were going on during this period, creating what they called penitentiaries. The Quakers in Pennsylvania were coming up with some new ideas, and so were people in New York. Boston incorporated some of these ideas in the new state prison in Charlestown, and particularly in the Leverett Street [Charles Street] Jail. The designs were intended to give better conditions to inmates, like windows, and to provide them with better meals and with inspiring literature. And a significant movement at this time was taking out the juvenile offenders. They put them in a special building that was called the House of Reformation.

The term reformation obviously has a religious connotation, but it was also the idea of rehabilitation. This was new, in a sense. Strictly speaking, in the Congregational ethos, you couldn't really rehabilitate anybody. But in the new Unitarian spirit, there was the idea of salvation. People could be saved. And that was the idea of putting these young men into a situation where, you try to inspire them, but at the same time they were given training in some kind of work, whether it was leather work or metal work, whatever, so that they would have some kind of job when they got out.

At least that was the hope.

CW: All this institution building and social reform was very inward directed, all about improving Boston, even if the purpose was, in part, to set an example for America. But at a certain point the reform impulse turned outward, and national, and changed in tone, on the subject of slavery.

O'CONNOR: I think there were "reformers" who looked at all of these nice things that were being done, in libraries and hospitals and school systems and so forth, and said, that's all well and good, but you're not getting at the real problems. You're dealing with intemperance, but you're not doing anything about the labor problems that drive people to getting drunk when they can't get work. You're talking about the goodness of man and the possibility of salvation, but you're not saying anything about slavery. So I think that, philosophically, there was a difference here. See, these people [of the elite], generally speaking, were collaborationists. They were very, very conservative people. They wanted to make progress. But they wanted to move at a measured pace and they wanted to do it on their terms, without creating social divisions, without angering churches, without upsetting Southerners. Most of these elites personally didn't like slavery. I think they found it dirty. And I think it was something that they thought and hoped would gradually decline. I think most of them, if they thought about it at all, felt it would die on the vine.

A number of them joined what were called anti-slavery societies. Now, I use two terms—anti-slavery society and abolition society. I see them as two separate things. In the early 1800s, there were anti-slavery societies, and a lot of Southerners belonged to them. One of these, I'm sure you know, was the American Colonization Society. President Monroe was not only president of it for a period of time, but they named Monrovia after him, in Liberia. [The Colonization Society's approach was,] we'll form these societies, we'll raise money, and every year we'll purchase the freedom of some of these slaves. Then we buy this place in Africa, Liberia, and every year we send them back to Africa—send them back where they come from.

I know [that] members of the Lawrence family joined the American Colonization Society. So, if somebody asked, they'd say, we're working on it. We want to reduce slavery. But we want to go about it in a gentlemanly way.

CW: But the abolitionists took a more strident tack.

O'CONNOR: Yes, and William Lloyd Garrison said that. He said, "I am told that many object to the severity of my language, but is there not cause for severity in a case like the

present?” The style of the earlier groups was one of gradualism, moderation, and a gentlemanly spirit. The approach of the new reformers was immediacy, no holds barred, immediate, and unconditional. Garrison, of course, infuriated people. But the question of conscience became introduced into the reform movement.

CW: I was struck by one sentence from your introduction that describes the arc of this period: “Boston started out trying to be the Intellect of America, ended up trying to be its Conscience—only to find that at least half the nation wanted neither its intellect nor its conscience.” Has America ever been more resistant to leadership from Boston and from Massachusetts than today? We keep offering leaders, but America rejects them—Mike Dukakis, John Kerry, now we will have to see what happens to Gov. Romney as he offers himself up to a national audience. And I think of gay marriage. This is an example set in Massachusetts that most other states are trying to inoculate themselves against.

O’CONNOR: That doesn’t surprise me. It’s true. But is that a bad thing? You know, Boston prides itself on being a thinking person’s city. If it loses that, won’t it be losing something that is really what makes Boston unique among all the cities in America?

CW: One of the things I noticed in *Athens* and in your previous book, *The Hub*, was the role of universities in civic life. It was striking, in the early 19th-century reform period, how closely intertwined the intellectual elite and the financial elite were, how much they were working in tandem in this greater cause of raising the public dialogue. But also in the early New Boston period, in the 1950s, both business and the academy played very active roles in city life.

O’CONNOR: Yes. And that was unique for Boston because that had stopped for a long time. What John Hynes did was quite remarkable, in terms of reaching out. He had a remarkable vision for the city, but he didn’t have the horses, the kind of people who were sophisticated enough to do it. So he reached out to Harvard University and he reached out to MIT. He made use of Boston College, which launched a series of citizen seminars. In the same way, he reached out to ask for help from businessmen. Before that, in the Curley years, politicians and businesspeople hated each other. And now they get a call from the mayor’s office: Would you sit on this commission? They say, nobody ever asked us before. So that was unique.

And again, I think it indicates something about a new base for some kind of elite, a thinking group, for today and for the future. I mean, people could say, you’re talking about

a bunch of big rich fat cats. But you don’t have to be rich fat cats to form this kind of elite. Maybe you don’t like the word “elite” even. But some kind of steering group that would meet on a regular basis—not the one big meeting a year down at one of the big hotels where you have a panel, but I’m talking about the things these people did, meeting for dinner and then sitting around and discussing some particular topic, whatever it happens to be. What are we going to do about it? Not merely the health institutions and the social institutions, but what are we going to do about opera, for example, in Boston? Or plays. Should Boston simply continue to be a tryout town? Or shouldn’t Boston be a great center for art? What about this art community that’s growing up in South Boston? Everybody’s doing their own thing. And that’s fine, that’s going to happen anyway.

‘[We need] some kind of elite, a thinking group, for today and for the future.’

But I think it would be nice if the mayor, for example, could sit down with a group like this occasionally and say, what are your ideas?

CW: Every time you write a book like *The Hub*, in the last chapter you get to come into contemporary history and identify the most important moments and trends of the most recent period. You finished *The Hub* around the year 2000. If you were writing it today, what would you identify as the key events or developments of the last 10 years?

O’CONNOR: One is the changing demography. Since 1970, let’s say, to pick a date, one remarkable thing has been the influx of persons of color, starting with African-Americans—who already had become a force in the city, where before 1950 they were not. They had no political clout until Kevin White was mayor. But there are the African-Americans, and then increasingly the Latino-Americans and the Asian-Americans, who have now come into the city. And they constitute—well, already they’ve gone over the 50 percent mark. But the numbers are much more impressive when you look at the school figures. This is the dynamic that’s developed over the last 25 years, and it raises the kinds of questions that were raised earlier in Boston history, about not only immigrants but also new Bostonians. I haven’t heard many people talking about, how will they become happily integrated into this city in such a way that they become not only active participants in the city but [also] feel themselves a *part* of the city? So that they can feel, “This is my city.”

If I go back to 1850, I can get statements, which I do bring into class, about what Bostonians were saying about the

Irish. It was worse than anything that anyone's saying about newcomers today. "These Irish, they're no good, they're drunks, they fight. And they'll never become Americans." And yet, 100 years later, they're the ones that saved the city from default. I mean, look at the mayors: Johnny Hynes, John Collins, Kevin White, Ray Flynn. You look at all the names involved in urban renewal, for example, and not all of them are Irish, obviously, but they made an impact.

CW: And they certainly made this their city.

O'CONNOR: Yes. But there must be, you know, creative people who could think of things to do [that would make the integration of newcomers to Boston into] a two-way street. We're not only saying to these people, "Welcome to Boston and now you're going to have to become Bostonians just like us," but also, "Welcome to Boston, and what can you give us? How can you participate in this?" To have some dialogue.

In terms of the changes, one is the new Bostonians, and along with that, because it's part and parcel of it, is the school system. Mayor Menino always talks about that. Housing—again, if Boston is to keep these people and keep new people coming in, they have to have a place to live. I know Boston College has that as a problem. They find somebody at the University of Illinois that they like and say, this guy would be great here, and you make him an offer and he says, sorry, I can't afford to live there. My daughter just moved back here two years ago. She was living in Houston, Texas, and she had a lovely home, with a swimming pool and everything. But she got a good offer in Boston, and she took it. We're delighted she's here, and she did buy a nice house, but it cost her three times what it would've cost in Phoenix or in Kansas. Now, whether this will produce a brain drain, I don't know.

But see, these are the relationships between issues in the city that have to get addressed. If everyone is doing work in his or her own bailiwick, that's one thing. But you have to get to a situation where you're talking about housing as compared with other things. Like the schools. I mean, if the guy [you're recruiting] comes in and says, I can afford the house but your schools stink, I don't want my kids to go there, that becomes a factor. But they're factors that have to be seen in light of one another. That's where this idea of reintroducing an enterprising elite, if you want to call it that, comes in. Elite is not a fashionable word, and I'm sure somebody could come up with a better one. But a leadership group of some kind based on the concerted efforts and ideas and talents of people in these various areas.

CW: Needed for the next attempt to be the Athens of America?

O'CONNOR: Right. Well, it could be again. Yes, why not? **CW**

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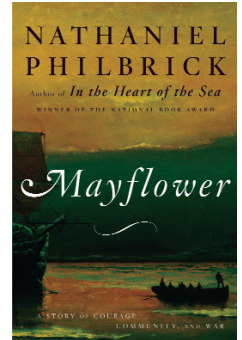
A compact unraveled

REVIEWED BY WILLIAM M. FOWLER JR.

Mayflower: A Story of Courage, Community, and War

By Nathaniel Philbrick

New York, Viking Press, 480 pages



BENEATH THE GOLDEN dome of the Massachusetts State House, tucked away safely in the State Library, lies one of the great treasures of America: the manuscript diary of William Bradford. In words simple and eloquent, Bradford, leader of a band of men and women we call Pilgrims, chronicled the history of Plymouth Plantation. After recounting their travail in England, the strangeness of life in Holland, and a stormy passage across the north Atlantic, Bradford set down how “they fell with that land which is called Cape Cod.” In this wild place, “they had now no friends to welcome them not inns to entertain or refresh their weatherbeaten bodies; no houses or much less towns to repair to, to seek for succour.”

“Succour” was not to be found on the windy wasteland of the Cape, and so Bradford’s Pilgrims went to look for a more congenial place. They found a “harbor fit for shipping” and nearby “divers cornfields and little running brooks.” They went ashore and called their new home Plymouth after the English port from which they had departed four months earlier. From the moment of settlement until his death 37 years later William Bradford was the most influential person in the colony, and for all but four years he was governor. His diary is the canonical text for the Pilgrim story.

Not surprisingly, Nathaniel Philbrick’s *Mayflower* hews to the Bradford diary. Much as he did with *Sea of Glory* and *In the Heart of the Sea*, Philbrick digs deeply into original texts to craft a narrative based on the words and writings of the actual participants. All the familiar aspects of the story are here, including the starving time during the winter of 1620–21 (during which half of the Pilgrims died), as well as relations with London backers, internal politics, and the gradual expansion of the colony. It is the oft-told tale of tribulation and triumph.

But in *Mayflower*, Philbrick acknowledges these storytelling traditions, then proceeds to demolish them. *Mayflower*’s theme is not triumph but tragedy.

November 21, 1620, marks the invasion. On that day the Pilgrims landed on a Provincetown beach and “fell upon their knees and blessed the God of Heaven.” A few days later they were digging up American Indian graves, stealing corn, and chasing down natives. The culture clash had begun.

Pilgrim-Indian relations took a turn for the better with the arrival at Plymouth, in March 1621, of two English-speaking natives, Samoset and Squanto. They announced that Massasoit, the Great Sachem of the Pokanokets (part of the Wampanoag nation), wished to visit. A few days later Massasoit arrived with 60 warriors.

Neither Massasoit nor Bradford appreciated the true nature of the other. The Pilgrims assumed that Massasoit was a powerful ruler who kept sway over the multitude of tribes in the region. In truth, he ruled only the Pokanokets and even among them his authority was not absolute. At the same time, Massasoit, seeing a half-starved band of strangers that could muster barely 20 men to arms, felt no great threat from the Pilgrims and viewed them as potential allies in his ongoing quarrels with his neighbors. This was not the first time Massasoit had engaged with Europeans. For as long as he could remember, fishermen and traders had visited the coast, but they had never stayed. The Pilgrims were different. They were the vanguard of a European invasion. They intended to remain.

Wary of each other, but in need of mutual support, on March 22, 1621, the Pilgrims and Massasoit signed a simple treaty. Bradford recorded the terms. Both agreed not to harm one another and agreed that if any of their people, natives or Pilgrims, should “hurt any of theirs, he should send the offender, that they might punish them.” They also agreed that, should either group be attacked unjustly by a third party, the other would come to its defense.

This was the high point of Pilgrim-Indian relations. After five months of anxiety Plymouth was, for the moment at least, safe from their greatest

fear—Indian attack. And although we cannot be certain about what Massasoit believed, it seems reasonable that he viewed the Pilgrims as allies in his ongoing struggle to maintain power in the shifting politics of the native peoples in southeastern Massachusetts. Two weeks after the signing, the *Mayflower* left for home, sailing without passengers. All who had come to Plymouth and survived elected to stay.

Massasoit and Bradford were not friends. Neither understood the other's culture. For racial and religious reasons the Pilgrims did all that they could to keep the natives at arms' length. However, mere survival demanded that they adopt native methods of agriculture, and in trade they quickly saw the advantages of using wampum. As for religion, the Pilgrims were jealous of their God and unwilling to share him with others. Nor were the natives eager to know the English God, although a few inquired and became Christians. Massasoit, understanding fully that any of his people loyal to the Christian God were likely to be less loyal to him, did all that he could to discourage conversion. Fanciful images of Thanksgiving notwithstanding, Pilgrims and natives remained, as Philbrick suggests, "enigmas to one another."

During the years of Bradford and Massasoit, the two peo-

ples did all they could to settle their issues through negotiation and compromise. "As they all understood it was the only way to avoid a war," writes Philbrick.

THAT UNDERSTANDING WAS soon forgotten, however. Bradford died in 1657 and Massasoit not long after. Before his death, Bradford recorded his forebodings. The "First Comers" were dying off; a new generation had grown up. They had no memory of the starving time and the difficult early years. His beloved community of saints, in Bradford's eyes, had turned into a band of degenerate, land-hungry settlers who would be the "ruin of New England."

Pilgrims and Indians were 'enigmas to one another.'

It took a while for the European settlers and natives to come to loathe one another. But it did happen, and Bradford's predicted apocalypse arrived in 1675. Metacomet, better known as King Philip, was Massasoit's son and successor. In the years since the death of Bradford and his father, Metacomet had watched his people being nibbled to death. The



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Europeans claimed that they purchased Indian land on fair terms, and by their standards that may have been true. But the results for the Indians were disastrous. By the early 1670s, Metacomb's people were eking out an existence on a fraction of the lands they once claimed. The murder of John Sassamon, a Christian Indian, set the kindling afire. Three Indians were arrested and charged with the murder. Ignoring law, justice, and good sense, the Plymouth authorities tried, convicted, and executed all three. Pressures that had been building for years erupted. King Philip's War was underway.

For Philbrick, the war's central character is Benjamin Church, a carpenter turned Indian fighter. Grandson of Richard Warren, one of the original Pilgrims, the impetuous Church loved war in a way that Bradford and Massasoit had dreaded it. When it came to Indian fighting, Church wrote, "I was spirited for that work." Sadly, Church, as Philbrick suggests, was a man for his time.

The war spread quickly across southern New England. The English settlers suffered devastating defeats, but in the end Philip was not able to rally enough native support, and the English, with greater numbers and superior resources, defeated their enemy. Thousands of natives died, and at least another thousand were sold into slavery and shipped off to West Indian sugar plantations. To proclaim their victory, the Pilgrim descendants placed the head of Metacomb on a pike near the entrance to the fort where Massasoit and William Bradford had once met to talk about peace.

KING PHILIP'S WAR, Philbrick asserts, is the moment when "both sides had begun to envision a future that did not include the other." How did this happen? Why did the sons and grandsons of those who had been sustained and saved by native peoples now seek to destroy them? Philbrick's answer is provocative:

"In the end, both sides wanted what the Pilgrims had been looking for in 1620: a place unfettered by obligations to others. But from the moment Massasoit decided to become the Pilgrims' ally, New England belonged to no single group. For peace and for survival, others must be accommodated. The moment any of them gave up on the difficult work of living with their neighbors—and all of the compromise, frustration, and delay that inevitably entailed—they risked losing everything. It was a lesson that Bradford and Massasoit had learned over the course of more than three long decades. That it could be so quickly forgotten by their children remains a lesson for us today."

Mayflower is no paean to our Pilgrim ancestors. The tale it tells is tragic and heartbreaking, and we wear the stain of it still. As such, *Mayflower* deserves our keenest attention. **CW**

William M. Fowler Jr. is distinguished professor of history at Northeastern University.

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Anniversary of a Senate beating

In 1856, Charles Sumner's tirade against slavery won him national fame—and a crack on the head **BY JAMES V. HARRIGAN**

US SEN. EDWARD Kennedy stirs up the emotions of both supporters and detractors. The Bay State's senior senator rallies the Democratic Party faithful like nobody else. And the mere mention of his name, in a direct-mail piece, can raise millions for the GOP from its most extreme quarters. But who can imagine a congressman bursting into the Senate and beating Kennedy, nearly to death, with a stick? That's what happened to another US senator from Massachusetts, 150 years ago this spring.

Charles Sumner was a Republican with clout, seniority, and a national profile comparable to Kennedy—and when it came to attracting the enmity of his political opponents, he was even more of a lightning rod. In 1854, Sumner led Senate opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act, introduced by Illinois Democrat Stephen Douglas, which repealed the Missouri Compromise and allowed for “popular sovereignty” to decide whether slavery would exist in the new western territories.

Abolitionists like Sumner believed that if settlers in Kansas and Nebraska were allowed to vote on the issue, it would mean an extension of slavery. When the bill passed despite his opposition, Sumner supported the formation of the New England Emigrant Aid Company and encouraged his abolitionist-minded neighbors to move to Kansas and vote against making it a slave state. But pro-slavery forces in adjacent states were doing the same thing, and their number dwarfed the anti-slavery northerners who settled in the territory. Sumner called the pro-slavery transplants “murderous robbers from Missouri” and “hirelings picked from the drunken spew and vomit of an uneasy civilization.”

When the Senate convened on December 5, 1855, Sumner predicted the session wouldn't pass “without the Senate chamber's becoming the scene of some unparalleled outrage,” but he scarcely imagined it would be committed against him. At one o'clock in the afternoon of May 19, 1856, Sumner took the floor of the Senate to speak against Douglas's bill to admit Kansas to the Union as a slave state. He railed for three straight hours in a speech he called “The Crime Against Kansas.”

His fellow senators had other words for it. Sen. Lewis Cass of Michigan called it “the most un-American and unpatriotic” address “that ever grated on the ears” of the Senate. From the rear of the chamber, Douglas was heard calling Sumner a “damn fool,” likely to “get himself killed by some other damn fool.” As word of Sumner's harangue spread through Washington, crowds thronged the Senate galleries. On the other side of the capitol, the House adjourned early and congressmen of both parties crowded the Senate lobby. “No such scene,” the *New York Evening Post* reported, had been “witnessed in that body since the days” of another Massachusetts senator and orator extraordinaire, Daniel Webster.

When the Senate reconvened the next day, Sumner continued his invective. This time, however, his targets were ready to give as good as they got.



Douglas told his colleagues it was “well known” and “the subject of conversation for weeks” that Sumner's speech had been “practiced every night before the glass with a Negro boy to hold the candle and watch [his] gestures.” The histrionics, Douglas claimed, annoyed Sumner's fellow boarders “until they were forced to quit the house” where they were lodging.

Sumner struck back by calling Douglas “the squire of slavery, its very Sancho Panza” and described the absent Sen. Andrew Butler of South Carolina as Don Quixote, charging that Butler had as his mis-

trese “the harlot Slavery,” a paramour “who, though ugly to others” was “always lovely to him.” Butler, added Sumner, couldn’t “ope his mouth, but out there flies a blunder.”

In antebellum America, those were fighting words. One of the congressmen listening from the gallery was 36-year-old Preston Brooks, a second-term member from South Carolina who, until then, was most noted for having proposed that lawmakers leave their firearms in the cloakroom before entering the House chamber. Brooks, a nephew of Butler, felt Sumner had insulted him, his uncle, and every Southerner, and vowed to respond.

Although he’d fought a duel in his youth, Brooks knew that no Southern gentleman would challenge Sumner in this manner; doing so would give the Massachusetts senator respect he didn’t deserve. When insulted by an inferior, the only way to avenge the slur was with a cane or horsewhip.

When the Senate adjourned two days later, Brooks entered the chamber and found Sumner sitting at his desk, franking copies of “The Crime Against Kansas” to send out to constituents. As Sumner later recalled the event, Brooks declared he’d read the speech “twice over carefully” and found it to be “a libel on South Carolina, and Mr. Butler, who

is a relative of mine.” The congressman remembered using more fanciful language, telling Sumner he’d read the speech “with care and as much impartiality as possible,” concluding that the senator had libeled his state and “slandered a relative who is aged and absent.” Not only that, but he’d “come to punish” him for it.

THERE WAS NO disagreement over what happened next. As Sumner rose from his chair, Brooks struck the senator with a gutta-percha walking stick, delivering “about 30 first-rate stripes,” as he reportedly said to his brother the next day. (“Every lick,” he boasted, “went where I intended.”) The

Brooks felt that Sumner had insulted the entire South.

attack lasted less than a minute but would’ve continued longer if the cane, which was hollow with a gold head and weighed less than a pound, hadn’t broken in half.

“Towards the last,” Brooks blustered, the bloodied and battered Sumner “bellowed like a calf.” As two other congressmen pulled Brooks away, he said he hadn’t meant to kill

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Sumner but “did intend to whip him.”

The senator lay sprawled in the aisle, “as senseless as a corpse,” according to a report in the *New York Tribune*, “his head bleeding copiously from the frightful wounds.” When he regained consciousness, he took a few sips of water and was carried to a sofa in the Senate lobby. After a doctor stitched and dressed his wounds, a carriage was brought and took the senator home to bed. His condition stabilized, but his physician felt it “absolutely necessary that he should be kept quiet” and not told “the extent of his injuries.”

As Sumner drifted off to sleep, mumbling that he couldn’t “believe that a thing like this was possible,” news of his assault traveled nationwide. By the time he awoke, his wounds were transformed into a crown of martyrdom—at least in the North. At the same time, Brooks was arrested, freed on \$500 bail, and became a hero in the South.

A House committee investigated and recommended expulsion, but Brooks moved pre-emptively to make a martyr of himself, delivering a speech in the House justifying his actions and then dramatically resigning his seat, only to be elected again almost immediately.

Sumner returned to Boston, holed up in his Beacon Hill home, and refused to see anyone but his closest friends, while his speech made the rounds. The *New York Tribune* printed almost a million copies of “The Crime Against Kansas,” which Republican strategists bought at 20 cents a dozen and \$20 per thousand and distributed throughout the North.

Although his physical injuries healed within months, Sumner’s mental and emotional state remained fragile. In January 1857, Sumner was reelected to the US Senate, but rather than return to Washington, he spent the next eight months in Europe. When he learned Brooks had died—at 37, apparently of natural causes—Sumner went back to Washington for the 35th congressional session. Soon after adjournment, however, he again sailed for Europe and recuperated abroad until November 1859.

In 1860, Sumner supported the election of Abraham Lincoln, and the two later became close friends. Although Lincoln wouldn’t issue the Emancipation Proclamation until 1862, Sumner’s early insistence upon the total overthrow of slavery paved the way for it.

In 1869, his bust was placed in the Massachusetts House of Representatives. When he died in 1874, Sumner was the longest-serving member of the US Senate. Statues were erected in the Public Garden and Harvard Square, and a three-quarter-length portrait was hung in the State House.

Nonetheless, as we mark the sesquicentennial of his caning at the hands of a fellow lawmaker, Charles Sumner seems largely forgotten. Ask Bostonians today about him and the best you could hope for is a guess that the Sumner Tunnel running under Boston Harbor was named after him. But that’s because they have even less recollection of his distant relative, East Boston landowner William Sumner. **CW**



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