

Massachusetts House Minority Leader

Bradley H. Jones, Jr.

Proudly Representing the 20th Middlesex District



What's Going On At The State House?

August 2009

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Dear Friends,

Welcome to the August edition of "What's Going on at the State House," an e-mail newsletter I write to stay in touch with you and keep you posted on what I'm working on in the Legislature and in the 20th Middlesex District.

As the last days of summer wrap up, I hope you and your families enjoy Labor Day weekend. I know it is a bit later than usual this year and in several communities school is already back in session, but the upcoming weekend always serves as a farewell to summer.

In past years, August has typically been a quiet month. However, this August has been the complete opposite with debate heating up about filling the senate seat left vacant by the passing of Senator Edward Kennedy. More will be decided in September and I'll be sure to keep you all up to date on any changes that are made to the senate succession law.

This email newsletter has several helpful updates including the status of local aid for the various towns in my district. It can be confusing and given the economic climate, frustrating, but regardless I feel it is important that local officials know as soon as possible what they're working with.

As always, if you have something on your mind that you would like to share, please contact me at my State House office or send me an e-mail. I look forward to hearing from you.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brad".

[Email Brad Jones](#)

Local Aid Update

Last week I responded to hundreds of constituents who were concerned about the Fiscal Year 2010 appropriations for local aid. I too am concerned with the decrease in funds for our local municipalities, and profoundly disappointed with the lack of timely, definitive information provided to local officials during this budget cycle. It is unfortunate that in this time of fiscal uncertainty the Democratic Majority is unable to provide adequate and timely information to legislative members and those who are responsible for budget planning in our cities and towns. Local aid has always been, and continues to be, one of my top priorities.

Poll Question

Do you support the proposal to allow the Governor to make an interim appointment to fill the vacant senate seat?

(Click below to send your reply via e-mail...)

[YES](#)

[NO](#)

Results will be available in the next issue.

Results from last month's poll question

Do you plan on shopping more in New Hampshire to avoid the sales tax increase?

YES 70 %

NO 30 %

In January, the Governor petitioned the Legislature to expand his budget cutting authority to include local aid. I was one in a handful of members who voted to restrict the amount of local aid funding he could cut in Fiscal Year 2009, and a promoter for a definitive plan to be in place before additional cuts to local budgets could happen. Local Aid should be the last resort when balancing an unbalanced budget; reforms and reductions to in discretionary spending should be debated before local aid is impacted, and if after those topics are debated the Governor still feels we needed to address our fiscal troubles by decreasing the Commonwealth's local aid contributions, he should have a detailed plan in place to assure cities and towns that the financial impact would be minimal. The Patrick Administration never provided the Legislature with an outline of proposed actions, and was still granted the expanded authority.

The Republican Caucus and I put forth over \$300 million in reforms, some of which would have supplemented local aid to cities and towns. Instead the Majority chose to raise taxes and fees. I continue to firmly believe that before we head down the path of continually increasing taxes, in what is the worst economy in decades, we need to be bold in proposing and discussing reforms in a variety of areas. We need to look toward efficiencies, and treat the clear financial adversity we face as an opportunity to address issues that have languished for too long—controlling health care costs, both on the state and local levels, and elimination spending that does not maximize the use of sparse state revenues.

Ballot Initiative Deadline Passes

The deadline to file a ballot initiative for next year's election was on August 5th. This year, thirty ideas were filed, several of which are relative to tax relief. One of the petitions filed would roll back the recently hiked sales tax to 5%. Another would repeal the sales tax on alcohol. Alcohol purchases have always been exempt from the sales tax until just recently. In addition to relieving the tax burden, there is an effort to eliminate all tolls from Massachusetts highways as well as a proposed law that would protect local aid. A proposal was also filed to expand enrollment in charter schools, a topic that has been in the news a lot lately.

Last year, you were asked to vote on three ballot questions; repealing the state income tax, decriminalizing the possession of certain amounts of marijuana and banning greyhound dog racing. Two of those questions were approved by the voters, one (repealing the income tax) was not.

The ballot initiative petition process is true democracy in action. It gives the citizens of the Commonwealth a real opportunity to participate in the legislative process. Though voters elect their respective lawmakers to represent them on

Beacon Hill, there is nothing that can compare to a group of concerned and active citizens getting involved in effort to accomplish a common goal.

Sales Tax Advertising Bill Filed

Fifty legislators, including myself, are co-sponsoring legislation that would allow vendors to advertise that they would pay for or absorb the sales tax on purchases. Under current law, it is illegal for vendors to advertise in this manner. Recent advertising, whether on radio/television or through the print media, have been prevalent where vendors announce, "We will pay your sales tax" or "Sales tax is on the house." Under Chapter 64H, Section 23 of the General Laws a \$100 fine can be assessed to the vendor for each occasion they advertise this way.

Businesses throughout the state were already struggling prior to the sales tax increase going into effect. By allowing business to incentivize shopping in their stores, we are not only helping out the business owners, but the taxpayers as well who have less money for discretionary spending now more than ever.

The legislation filed last week would repeal Chapter 64H, Section 23 of the General Laws and puts the responsibility on the vendors, who advertise this way, to pay the full amount of the tax due by the purchaser.

New Credit Card Regulations Going into Effect

A whole host of new credit card regulations went into effect in August 20th. Only a portion of the Credit Card Accountability Responsibility and Disclosure Act has been implemented and some of the changes are significant while others won't have much of an impact on credit card holders.

Below is a list, compiled and distributed by the Massachusetts Office of Consumer Affairs and Regulation:

1. Credit card issuers are required to adopt reasonable procedures designed to ensure that consumers' statements are mailed or delivered at least 21 days prior to the payment due date and the date on which any grace period expires;
2. The penalty for failing to send cardholders their statements in sufficient time such that the creditor cannot treat a payment as late nor collect any finance charges or late fees on that payment;
3. Credit card issuers are required to give at least 45 days advance written notice of significant changes related to a dozen specific account terms, including raising the interest rate, increasing the required minimum monthly payment, imposing or increasing an annual fee, and changing fees for cash advances, late payments, and over-the-limit situations.
4. This advance notice must also advise the cardholder, that in most cases, he or she can reject the changes, and that the account may be deactivated thereafter.

Given the current economic climate, it is important to keep credit card holders up to date on the changes that are happening. The last thing a person needs now is to

be hit with additional fees or penalties when many of them are having a hard enough time keeping up with their bills as it is.

If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the new regulations, please contact my office at 617-722-2100.

Jones Saddened by the Passing of Senator Edward Kennedy

August brought with it the passing of Massachusetts Senior Senator. My thoughts and prayers go out to the family and friends of Senator Edward Kennedy during this difficult time. Though I rarely agreed with the Senator's politics, I always had the upmost respect for him and his advocacy on behalf of the people of the Commonwealth. As a Senator, he worked tirelessly to better the lives of his constituents and for that I will forever be grateful. As his loved ones continue to mourn the loss of Eunice Kennedy Shriver, I hope they can find strength in knowing both of them dedicated their lives to serving the public. Massachusetts has lost its most effective advocate, whose service and dedication is irreplaceable.

Perfect Voting Record Continues

I am very excited that my perfect voting record continues this legislative session. I have never missed a roll call and recently casted my 4,813th consecutive roll call vote.

The people who elect me deserve nothing less than the best I can give and to me that means showing up for every single roll call vote. My number one responsibility is to vote on behalf of my constituents. That is why they put me here and I have their very best interest in mind every time a roll call vote is taken.

I was recently informed that I hold the longest known active voting streak in history of the Massachusetts House of Representatives.