

Massachusetts House Minority Leader

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Proudly Representing the 20th Middlesex District



What's Going On At The State House?

January 2010

▶ [Web Page Home](#)

▶ [About Brad Jones](#)

▶ [Republican Caucus](#)

▶ [Issues](#)

▶ [Constituent Services](#)

▶ [News Room](#)

▶ [The District](#)

▶ [Contact Brad Jones](#)

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Dear Friends,

Welcome to the January 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.

It’s hard to believe January has already come and gone. The first month of 2010 proved to be quite a busy and exciting month. Many of us will remember January as the month we elected a Republican to fill the U.S. Senate seat held by Ted Kennedy for more than four decades. I want to take a moment to congratulate Senator-elect Scott Brown on running an unbelievable campaign and for getting the electorate energized. Though you may disagree with Senator Brown on many issues, it’s hard not to say job well done.

January will also be marked as the month when Governor Deval Patrick offered his FY11 budget proposal which of course contains more tax increases. Politics aside, this budget is not only irresponsible but also unsustainable. It is unfortunately based on too many one- time revenues and an optimistic revenue projection. Along with increasing spending this year, the Governor also makes no effort to deliver on his number one campaign promise – property tax relief.

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".

Governor Patrick Releases Budget

Poll Question

Do you think texting while driving should be banned?

[YES](#)

[NO](#)

Results will be available in the next issue.

Results from last month's poll question

Do you believe our economy is on the road to recovery?

YES 50%

NO 50%

Governor Patrick released his FY11 budget proposal this month and unfortunately I would consider this budget to be irresponsible and unsustainable. Furthermore, it will put an even greater burden on families in the Commonwealth who are already struggling to get through this recession. Here are some highlights from the Governor's budget.

- Governor's budget actually expands government spending 4%; from last year's \$27.14 billion to \$28.2 billion
- While the state's revenue collection remains volatile, Governor Patrick's budget has a 3.2% increase in revenue projection; up to \$19.05 billion from last year's \$18.46 billion
- \$100 million in new taxes including: candy tax, soft drink tax, cigars and smokeless tobacco tax, expansion of the bottle bill and the repeal of sales tax exemption on aircraft sales (these new taxes are in addition to the \$1.5 billion in tax increases the Governor has facilitated since taking office)
- Medicaid increase of \$600 million; paid for with Federal Stimulus extension that has not yet been approved by Congress
- Governor requests expanded 9C Authority in budget, a sign that the Administration knows this budget is out of balance
- \$1.9 billion in one-time revenues (structural deficit)
- Relies on \$30 million in cash from quasi-authorities
- No initiative to lower property taxes
- Plans to refinance \$200 million in the FY10 supplemental budget - by refinancing the \$200 million in principal we will have a smaller debt service payment for 2011 but will increase debt payments starting in 2014. This is a perfect example of stealing from Peter to pay Paul.
- Grows size of state workforce from 66,483 in 2007 to a project 66,702 in 2011.

What is especially disheartening is the fact that there have been so many missed opportunities. While the Governor appears to be jumping on the Republican bandwagon offering ideas such as the expedited sale of

surplus state land, Governor Patrick continues to reject solid, cost saving ideas.

For example, Republican lawmakers offered a whole host of budget amendments last year that would have saved the Commonwealth millions upon millions of dollars. Two ideas in particular that could save the state a lot of money are shifting all MassHealth members to managed care plans and raising or better yet eliminating the anti-privatization Pacheco Law. Those two ideas alone have the potential to save the Commonwealth \$200-\$300 million annually.

Hopefully, the Governor and the Legislature will adopt these ideas in the upcoming budget season because we will continue proposing these initiatives and others like them. Raising taxes and relying on federal aid is a quick fix, not a long term solution.

School Nutrition Bill Passes House

In January, the Massachusetts House of Representatives passed legislation that would ban the sale of unhealthy foods and drinks in Massachusetts public schools.

The bill – modeled after the recommendations of a 2007 Institute of Medicine (IOM) report – calls for a ban on unhealthy competitive foods and beverages that do not meet scientifically based nutritional standards and are not part of federal meal programs. It would also require schools to sell non-fried foods and vegetables at any location where foods are sold.

The bill's provisions will apply to public elementary schools, middle schools and high schools. The legislation does not prohibit high school students from purchasing food sold off school ground during breaks. Additionally, parents will still be allowed to give their children any type of food to bring to school.

Other provisions of the bill include: continuing education of school nurses, nutrition and exercise instruction in schools, collection and reporting of obesity trends and the establishment of a farm to school program developed by the Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education and Agricultural Resources.

The American Heart Association says childhood obesity is one of the most critical public health issues facing our nation today, threatening to reverse the last half century's gains in reducing cardiovascular disease

and related deaths. One-third of children aged two to five years are either at risk for being overweight or are already overweight. In Massachusetts, 29% of middle school students are overweight or obese.

Civil Service Examination Announced

An aggressive recruitment campaign is now under way for the upcoming entry-level Civil Service Examination for Firefighter, Municipal Service.

The Human Resources Division will hold an entry-level Civil Service Examination for Firefighter, Municipal Service on April 24, 2010. In addition to passing the written examination, candidates must also pass the Entry-Level Physical Ability Test in order to be placed on the eligible list for appointment in a civic service city or town.

The written examination will be held on April 24, 2010 at various sites across the state. Meanwhile, the Entry Level Physical Ability Test will be administered at the Hudson National Guard Armory and must be completed by September 3, 2010. Appointments will be scheduled on a first come, first served basis.

Applications must be filed or postmarked no later than March 16, 2010. Applications and information about eligibility requirements, application fees and the examination process are available at the Human Resources Division. That office can be reached at 617-878-9895. Interested candidates can also apply online at www.mass.gov/civilservice.

Suggest Government Reforms and Win \$10,000

There's an exciting new opportunity for Massachusetts residents to get involved in improving the way state government works.

Pioneer Institute, a non-profit policy research group, is sponsoring the 19th Better Government Competition, which annually seeks ideas from individuals about how to improve government efficiency and effectiveness. The BGC provides an unrivaled opportunity for citizen involvement in the development of government policy. Implementation of winning ideas from previous competitions has saved taxpayers more than \$500 million.

The theme of the 2010 competition is Governing in Times of Crisis, and its focus is budget management and savings. Pioneer is looking for innovative ideas for reform that would lessen the strain on state and

local budgets.

This is a tremendous opportunity for the general public to help make government work better for them. Making government more efficient should always be our goal and I encourage my constituents to participate by sending in an entry.

The winner will receive a \$10,000 prize presented at the BGC Awards dinner in June. Runners-up will each receive a \$1,000 prize for their proposals to improve government.

For more information, interested parties should visit www.pioneerinstitute.org/bgc or call 617-723-2277 and ask for Shawni Littlehale.