

Massachusetts House Minority Leader

Bradley H. Jones, Jr.

Proudly Representing the 20th Middlesex District



What's Going On At The State House?

February 2010

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Contact Information

Rep. Brad Jones
The State House, Room 124
Boston, MA 02133

(617) 722-2100

[Email Brad Jones](#)

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the February 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.

If you've been reading the newspaper or watching the local news, you know there's been much controversy over what many are calling the "Lawrence Bailout Bill." The Legislature was expected to act on a piece of legislation last month that would allow the City of Lawrence to borrow \$35 million. However, due to serious doubts being raised by members on both sides of the aisle, this bill has yet to come up for a vote.

The children of Massachusetts are among the most vulnerable group in our state. That is why the Legislature acted on a proposal that will close a dangerous loophole in our state's law. With the passing of one amendment, children will be greater protected from predators.

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".

Lawrence Bill: Not Strong Enough

Poll Question

Do you think the Legislature should repeal the \$5 fee increase at the RMV?

[YES](#)

[NO](#)

Results will be available in the next issue.

Results from last month's poll question

Do you think texting while driving should be banned?

YES 85%

NO 15%

The Massachusetts House of Representatives was slated to take up a bill at the end of February that would allow the cash-strapped city of Lawrence to borrow \$35 million. Despite the brief delay, I remain frustrated that tougher guidelines are not included in the redraft recently released by the House Ways and Means Committee.

The original version of House Bill 4421 allowed Lawrence to borrow \$35 million through municipal bonds. A fiscal overseer will be appointed by the Secretary of Administration and Finance and will serve as an advisor on all budgetary matters in the city. The overseer will also be charged with developing a 3 year operating and capital financial plan.

If the city is unable to set a FY11 tax rate by January 31, 2011, a finance control board will be established. That control board would consist of the mayor of the city, the president of the city council and 3 members chosen by the Secretary of A&F.

My main concern is the fact that a control board is not going to be put into place immediately. I strongly believe that the city's financial situation is so dire that it requires the assistance of an independent finance control board and have said repeatedly we will not support this legislation without this particular parameter.

After a lengthy and controversial hearing two weeks ago, I was cautiously optimistic that the Ways and Means Committee would redraft the bill with the provision mentioned above. However, after reading the redraft, it is obvious that the redrafting process was nothing more than a box-shuffling exercise. While the committee changed a few words here, deleted a couple there – the content is the same and there were no substantive improvements.

If and when this bill ever comes to the House floor for debate, I will do everything in its power to strengthen the text of this bill. The people of the City of Lawrence deserve better and they want to see the politics taken out of this process.

House Unanimously Adopts Amendment to Protect Minors

I am pleased the Massachusetts House of Representatives unanimously adopted a bipartisan amendment that when signed into law would provide greater protection to minors.

While taking up An Act Punishing Assault and Battery by Means of a Bodily Substance upon Correction Facility Employees, Judiciary Committee Chairman Representative Eugene O'Flaherty and I offered the amendment with the support of dozens of co-sponsors. It was offered in response to the Supreme Judicial Court's ruling made on February 5th. The SJC ruled in favor of a child predator who had been sending sexually explicit content through online communications.

The amendment will expand the statute by prohibiting the dissemination of harmful material to a minor via instant messaging or other online communications.

A few weeks ago I filed legislation because I was concerned that the state's statute

under which the defendant was convicted had not been updated to reflect society's current electronic age.

After an examination of the statute and its legislative history, the Court stated that the Legislature must take action if it wanted to ensure that our children are protected from predators seeking to electronically disseminate obscene material to minors.

I am particularly pleased this proposal garnered such bipartisan support and applaud members on both sides of the aisle for acting swiftly on this very important issue. The bill now heads to the Senate for approval.

Energy Block Grants awarded

A grant of \$150,000 has been awarded to the Town of Reading for a performance contract buy-down project including the steam to hot water conversion at the Birch Meadow Elementary School. The award is part of more than \$13 million in federal stimulus funds recently awarded to help 111 communities across Massachusetts invest in clean energy and energy efficiency projects intended to reduce long-term energy costs, increase energy independence, and create jobs.

In March, the U.S. Department of Energy allocated a total of \$42.2 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to Massachusetts under the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants (EECBG) program. The DOE allocated direct grants to 42 communities with populations over 35,000, and directed the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) to administer the grant program to benefit smaller communities.

I am very pleased the Town of Reading has been awarded this grant. It will allow the Birch Meadow School to become more energy efficient and independent and that is so important at a time where energy costs continue to rise.

DOER's Green Communities Division selected the 97 grant recipients from a pool of 133 applicants, ranking proposals based on projected greenhouse gas reductions, projected job creation potential, ability to leverage private capital and expertise from other partners, and overall readiness. Capped at \$150,000 each, grants awarded today will help municipalities pay for shovel-ready projects at municipal buildings and schools, including solar photovoltaic and solar thermal installations; thermal efficiency measures in oil- or propane-heated buildings, such as new high efficiency boilers and furnaces or improved efficiency in existing ones, replacement or improvement of heat delivery systems, and increased insulation or window replacement; and reduction ("buy-down") of the total cost of efficiency measures identified by energy performance contractors.

Jones Encourages Residents to Nominate Favorite Places in Massachusetts

There is a neat opportunity for people all over the Commonwealth right now and I invite residents of North Reading, Reading, Middleton and Lynnfield to participate by nominating their favorite places in Massachusetts.

1,000 Great Places in Massachusetts is a new cultural tourism program that celebrates what is unique about our state, its communities and its people. The program seeks to increase visitation to the state's wide range of exceptional historic sites, cultural venues and natural landscapes.

Nominations will be considered for a final list of 1,000 Great Places in Massachusetts to be announced in May.

The Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT) has established a website to accept nominations from the public: www.Massvacation.com/1000greatplaces Each community in Massachusetts is unique and the district I represent is no exception. There are some great spots to visit in each town and I hope residents will take this opportunity to nominate their favorites.

All Great Places that are nominated must be open and available to the public. Only one nomination per person will be accepted. The nomination period will close April 1, 2010. The Commission will meet later that month to draw up a final list of 1,000 Great Places in Massachusetts, which will be announced in May. The 1,000 Great Places Commission was created by the Legislature in 2009.