

Massachusetts House Minority Leader

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Proudly Representing the 20th Middlesex District



What's Going On At The State House?

June 2010

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Dear Friends,

Welcome to the June 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.

I hope you all had a fun-filled and safe 4th of July weekend with your friends and family. Summer seems to be flying by! I can't believe the Reading Friends and Family has already come and gone. That is a staple of summer and it's already in the history books.

June has been a busy month in the State House and significant legislation was passed in the House including the FY11 budget. Unfortunately, the FY11 budget lacks reforms and is once again unsustainable.

In addition to dealing with the budget, the legislature also passed a safe driving bill that bans texting while driving and works to improve safety for all Massachusetts drivers. The bill also restricts junior operators from using any type of cellular device while driving.

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 that reads "Brad".

Poll Question

Would you like to see a resort style casino built in Massachusetts?

[YES](#)

[NO](#)

Results will be available in the next issue.

Results from last month's poll question

Would you support a proposal to elect the President of the United States by national popular vote?

YES 50%

NO 50%

Fiscal Year 2011 Budget “disappointing”

The Fiscal Year 2011 budget signed by Governor Patrick this month is a testament to yet another missed opportunity by the Legislature and the Corner Office to implement real reforms in the way state government operates.

Once again, the budget relies heavily on the use of one-time revenues, including federal stimulus funding that will no longer be available next year. Governor Patrick has also failed to address the \$160 million hole that has been created by Social Security reimbursements that have yet to be paid to the state. In doing so, the Governor has simply pushed off the day of reckoning and has failed to address the serious financial crisis Massachusetts is now facing.

The state is facing a structural deficit of between \$2 billion and \$3 billion in Fiscal Year 2011. By taking a band-aid approach, the Governor and the Legislature continue to avoid making the tough decisions and adopting the fiscal discipline needed to rein in spending and dig the state out of its fiscal mess. This budget may be on time, but it is certainly not balanced and is anything but responsible.

House Passes Legislation Regulating Use of All-Terrain Vehicles

In June, the Massachusetts House of Representatives passed legislation prohibiting anyone under 14 years of age from operating an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) while imposing strict penalties upon those who ride ATV's recklessly or negligently.

The bill prohibits any person between the ages of 14 and 16 from operating an ATV with an engine capacity greater than 90 cubic centimeters. The legislation dictates that those between the ages of 14 and 16 years can only operate an ATV under direct adult supervision.

The bill would impose fines for operating an ATV under the influence of an intoxicating substance. The legislation would also instate fines, imprisonment – or both – for anyone operating an ATV recklessly or negligently and causing serious bodily injury to another individual.

Under this legislation, anyone under the age of 18 would have to complete a recreation vehicle and responsibility course approved by the Director of the Office of Environmental Law Enforcement before operating an ATV. In addition, the parents or legal guardian of an operator under 16 must complete at least one session of the safety course.

Protective headgear would also be required for those operating an ATV or riding an ATV.

The bill incorporates environmental safeguards by prohibiting ATV's that emit noxious fumes or make unusual or excessive noise. Further, the legislation prohibits the operation of ATV's in a manner that harasses or harms deer or other wildlife.

Safe Driving Law Signed by Governor

In June, the Legislature sent a piece of legislation to the Governor aimed at making roads across the Commonwealth safer. The bill addresses issues related to elderly drivers and junior operators as well as tackling issues everyday drivers face.

Sections of the bill pertaining to elderly drivers focus on two new requirements intended to detect impairments that might prevent a driver from safely operating a vehicle. First, drivers over the age of 75 will now have to apply for a renewal in person and pass a vision test every five years. Currently, all drivers must renew their license every five years; however, a vision test is only required every ten years. Second, health care providers, such as physicians, nurses, optometrists and ophthalmologists, are now empowered to report to the Registrar any impairment that the provider feels would prevent a driver of any age from safely operating a vehicle.

The distracted driving sections of the bill establish safe driving standards for three classes of drivers including junior operators, public transportation operators and adult drivers. For example, junior operators are now prohibited from using mobile phones, whether used with a hands-free device or for text-messaging. The same applies to public transportation officials. The bill does however, create exceptions for emergency uses. Adult operators are now prohibited from text messaging while operating a vehicle.

Expanded Gaming Bill Heading to Conference Committee

This month, both the House and Senate passed their respective versions of legislation to expand gaming in the Commonwealth. I voted in favor of the House version which would allow two resort casinos to be built in Massachusetts. The House version also allows for up to 750 slots at each of the four race tracks in the state.

The revenue generated from expanded gaming would be distributed to a number of different accounts including local aid, education and the rainy day fund. I would have preferred to see more money sent to towns and cities as municipalities across the state have seen local aid cut drastically over the last couple of years. However, this boost in local aid would certainly go in a long way in helping communities continue to provide local services people depend so much on.

The Senate passed its version later in the month and the glaring difference between the two is the Senate does not call for slots at the race tracks. The Conference Committee will begin meeting very shortly to hash out the details. The legislative session concludes July 31 which means the House and Senate must agree on a conference committee report soon in order to have the legislation to the Governor prior to the July 31 conclusion of this legislative session.

Congratulations and Good Luck Graduates

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate all of those seniors who graduated from the various high schools around the district in June. I wish all of the district's graduates the best of luck in their future endeavors and hope they have a safe and happy summer before embarking on the next chapter in their lives.