

Massachusetts House Minority Leader

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Proudly Representing the 20th Middlesex District



What's Going On At The State House?

November 2011

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Dear Friends,

Welcome to the November 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.

Thanksgiving has come and gone and the holiday season is officially here! I hope you and your loved ones enjoyed the Thanksgiving holiday. I was fortunate to spend the weekend before Thanksgiving with hundreds of senior citizens from around my district at the Hillview Country Club for one of my favorite traditions of the season, the annual Thanksgiving Dinners. See below for additional details on this great event. It's hard to believe that with all the warm weather we are having, Christmas and Chanukah are actually right around the corner.

Legislatively, formal sessions wrapped up in November. Before session ended, we were able to pass legislation relative to expanded gaming, as well as "Melissa's Bill." More on those two issues below.

As always, if you have something on your mind 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".

Poll Question

In the wake of "Melissa's Bill" passing both the House and Senate, do you believe in harsher penalties for dangerous, repeat offenders?

YES

NO

UNSURE

Results will be available in the next issue.

Results from last month's poll question

Do you plan on traveling for the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday?

NO 60%

YES 40%

UNSURE 0%

Expanded Gaming

In the middle of November, both the House and Senate met in full formal sessions to debate and vote on legislation to bring expanded gaming to Massachusetts.

I am pleased to report that both legislative branches and the Governor have given final approval to this bill, which will bring jobs and economic growth to the Commonwealth.

Having been a long-time proponent of expanding gaming in Massachusetts, I believe resort-style casinos and free-standing slot parlors stand to bring both economic growth and development to the state. Not only will the Commonwealth benefit as a whole from the influx of revenue, but residents of the Bay State will benefit from new jobs as the gaming industry establishes itself here. However, we must remain cognizant that this is by no means the "cure-all" to the struggling job climate in Massachusetts. We must remain steadfast in our efforts to bring long-term employment opportunities to the residents of the Bay State.

I am grateful that many of the strong initiatives passed in the House version of the bill were included in the final compromise. Additionally, I am pleased that Republican-led amendments were largely maintained by the Committee, specifically those aimed at preserving and increasing current local aid levels and fairly and transparently distributing additional infrastructure monies.

The next step in the process is for the Governor, Treasurer, and Attorney General to make appointments of individuals to serve as the 5 member Massachusetts Gaming Commission. This Commission is charged with enforcing the laws governing gaming licenses and establishing any necessary rules and regulations.

"Melissa's Bill"

I was happy to vote in support of legislation aimed at protecting the public from dangerous, repeat offenders.

House Bill 3811, An Act Relative to Habitual Repeat Offenders, Sentencing and Improving Law Enforcement Tools, often referred to as "Melissa's Bill", was filed in 2000 in memory of Melissa Gosule, a then 27-year-old teacher who was brutally murdered by a repeat offender who had served fewer than two years in jail for a combined 27 criminal convictions. More recent violent attacks by repeat offenders further illustrate the need for legislation aimed at keeping these offenders incarcerated.

This particular piece of legislation, 10 years in the making, passed the House overwhelmingly, and with bi-partisan support. "Melissa's Bill" will further ensure the safety of all of the citizens of the Commonwealth from dangerous, habitual offenders.

“Melissa’s Bill,” as passed by the House of Representatives includes:

- The length of time a habitual offender must serve before becoming eligible for parole is increased from ½ to 2/3 of their sentence.
- Anyone convicted of a predetermined offense, who has been convicted twice previously of one or more the listed offenses, will be considered a habitual offender and be punished by imprisonment for the maximum term provided by law for the third offense.
- No person shall be considered a habitual offender based upon any offense for which such person was adjudicated a delinquent child.
- Anyone convicted of a felony who has been previously twice convicted and sentenced to prison for at least 3 years by the state of Massachusetts, another state, or the United States, will be considered a habitual offender and be punished by imprisonment for the maximum term provided by law for the subsequent felony for which that offender is to be sentenced.

After being approved by both the House and Senate, “Melissa’s Bill” was sent to Conference Committee to iron out differences between the two branches. We await final resolution on this bill in coming months.

Welcome Home Bonus

In advance of Veteran’s Day, the House of Representative adopted a Republican-led amendment calling for a \$700,000 increase to the Welcome Home Bonus account to provide up to \$1,000 bonus payments for residents returning from active deployment. Offered on the heels of President Barack Obama’s announcement of the return of combat troops from Iraq, the proposed increase in funding will help to ensure benefits for the 11,000 Massachusetts service-members currently deployed around the world.

I believe that we must have the funding and resources in place for the Commonwealth’s service men and women, particularly in light of the President’s announcement of troop withdrawals. These brave soldiers are returning to a struggling economy and a bleak job market. By transitioning \$700,000 from the states anticipated increase in revenue, we will ensure the better allocation of funding at this point in time and a smooth transition home for the Bay State’s bravest.

The amendment which will redirect \$700,000 from the \$395 million increase in anticipated revenue to the Welcome Home Bonus account within the Office of the Treasurer and Receiver-General was recently signed into law by Governor Patrick.

Spring Semester Interns

I am happy to announce that my office is now accepting resumes for spring semester internships, and I encourage college students to send in their resumes to apply.

I truly believe that interning is a great way to determine if the field a student is interested in pursuing is the right fit. Interns in my office will get a good feel for what it means to work in a legislator's office. In addition to possibly receiving college credit for your time and effort, interns will have the opportunity to work on constituent services, policy analysis and a number of other areas as well.

If you or someone you know is interested in interning in my State House office, please send a resume and cover letter to Brittany Carisella, legislative aide and intern coordinator. Please send your documents in a Word attachment to Brittany.Carisella@MAHouse.gov.

Internships are unpaid but college credits can be earned.

Reading/North Reading Thanksgiving Dinners

I would like to take a moment to express my sincere thanks to everyone who helped make this year's Reading and North Reading Senior Thanksgiving Dinners the biggest and best ever.

Nearly 700 people joined us at the Hillview Country Club on Saturday and Sunday November 19th and 20th to enjoy a traditional turkey dinner with all the fixings while being entertained by Sgt. Daniel Clark, who provided a variety of inspirational patriotic renditions along with a set of holiday offerings.

It is truly an honor for us to celebrate the beginning of the holiday season with those who have contributed so much to our community over the years. Many people contributed their time and effort to help us organize this year's event. The generous financial support of The Savings Bank, The Reading Cooperative Bank, Comcast, Keurig, North Reading Selectman Bob Mauceri and his wife Angela, Northrup Associates Realtors and Service Pumping and Drain allowed us to make the dinner an event to remember.

The annual solicitation of donations for the North Reading food pantry was a terrific success. The beginning of the season of giving saw a tremendous outpouring of generosity which allowed essential supplies to be delivered to the pantry to benefit North Reading's own.

Thank you again to everyone who contributed to making this day a success. We look forward to next year and extend our best wishes for a safe and happy holiday season.

District and State House Events

I joined Representative Jim Dwyer in welcoming Troop 71302 from Reading to the State House. Representative Dwyer and I had the opportunity to greet and take a picture with the Girl Scout troop and their leaders during their trip to the State House.



In keeping with the holiday spirit, I was pleased to participate in Reading and North Reading tree lighting ceremonies. This yearly festival celebrates all that is great about the holiday season. Each year, I look forward to the tree lighting for the chance it provides the community to enjoy the unofficial beginning of the holiday season.

The Reading Co-operative Bank celebrated its 125th anniversary in November. To mark this joyous occasion they invited members of the community to come and celebrate. This was a great event for a bank which has done so much for our community. I congratulate the bank on their anniversary and wish them many years of continued success.

The Reading Memorial High School held a dedication ceremony for the Patrick A. Schettini, Jr. Library Media Center. Pat was a personal and professional friend of mine, and I could not think of a better way to keep his legacy alive within the Reading community. The dedication ceremony was very emotional and filled with many heartfelt tributes to Pat. I encourage all residents to stop by the Media Center.

A couple of days ago I had the pleasure of attending the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Howe-Manning Elementary School in Middleton. The successful completion of this project is a testament to Middleton's commitment to the education of our youth. I also wish to thank the Middleton School Building Authority, Howe-Manning principal Elizabeth Boulanger, interim Executive Director of the Massachusetts School Building Authority Jack McCarthy, and all the students and their parents for their continued support of this project.



On November 29th, I attended an informal information forum on the proposed North Reading High School/Middle School construction project. The meeting, hosted by the Secondary Schools Building Committee, was an excellent opportunity for members of the North Reading community to stop by and observe proposed plans as well as ask any project or finance related questions they may have had.

Veteran's Day is a time when we pause to remember America's veterans for their patriotism, love of country, and willingness to serve and sacrifice to defend our democracy and our freedom. This year I partook in a flag pole dedication ceremony in North Reading. Approximately 420,000 veterans currently reside in Massachusetts, and another 11,000 residents of the Commonwealth are deployed abroad. This ceremony was an excellent opportunity to give thanks to those men and women.

I was able to join three young men from Lynnfield and present to them their Eagle Scout badges. The Eagle Court of Honor at the Centre Church recognized Andrew James Hall, John Edward Sanford, and Jacob Connor Kochocki for their dedication to scouting. I would like to offer my sincerest congratulations to these men for this commendable accomplishment.

Finally, I wish to recognize three of Middleton's bravest. In March of 2011 the Middleton Fire Department responded to a call for an explosion at the Bostik Chemical Plant. First responders David T. Leary, Captain Thomas J. Martinuk, and Charles S. Clinch went above and beyond the call of duty to quickly assess a potentially dangerous situation. To thank them for their bravery, these three firefighters were honored during the 22nd annual Firefighter of the Year Award ceremony. I wish to extend a heartfelt thank you to the entire Middleton Fire Department and to all the brave firefighters out there who risk their lives day in and day out.