

# Toward a Better Massachusetts

*A plan of action for making our state a better place to live and work.*



*Massachusetts Republican Legislative Caucus*

*January 9, 2007*



# Welcome

Dear Massachusetts Resident:

This year, the Republican members of the House and Senate are collaborating as never before to offer fresh ideas for improving the lives of Massachusetts residents.

Our goal is to make Massachusetts better by getting back to some basic ideas. We want to make our state more affordable. We want to encourage innovation and empower citizens to achieve their dreams. We want to keep residents safe, and we want to make state government accountable to the people it governs.

Our proposals reflect core Republican values. But we believe they also mirror the desires of many Massachusetts residents who look to state government to help make their lives better, while still allowing them to live their lives free from overwhelming interference. This is what our party is all about.

We recognize that our party is at a difficult crossroads here in Massachusetts. The challenges we face today are more daunting than they have been in a long time.



At this point, there is no direction for us to go but forward.

It is no longer enough for us to simply be the critics of the majority. Although we must serve as a check and balance on the Democratic establishment, the Governor and the Legislature, we must also offer a plan of our own that illustrates our vision of a better Massachusetts.

We are seizing this moment as a chance for a fresh start -- an opportunity to take a hard look at who we are, what we believe, and what we want for Massachusetts, and to offer a plan that would turn that vision into reality.

We invite you to join us by exploring the ideas that follow.

Sincerely,

**RICHARD R. TISEI**  
*Senate Minority Leader*

**BRADLEY H. JONES, JR.**  
*House Minority Leader*

**SENATOR BRUCE E. TARR**  
*Republican Policy Conference*

**REPRESENTATIVE PAUL J. P. LOSCOCO**  
*Republican Policy Conference*



# *Our Philosophy*

**The Republican caucus is committed to building a better Massachusetts by improving the lives of people who live here at the most basic levels.**

**Every man, woman and child in Massachusetts should have the same opportunity to be happy, healthy and successful. Everyone defines success differently, but there are basic needs that we believe every person should enjoy.**

**We should all have a comfortable place to call home.**

**We should all be able to find a job that fulfills us and allows us to pay our bills.**

**We should all be able to work hard and reap the rewards of our efforts without government getting in the way through excessive interference or taxation.**

**We should expect that our government will spend taxpayer money responsibly and recognize that public resources belong first to the citizens of the Commonwealth.**

**Our children, no matter what neighborhood they live in, should be able to go to good schools. And we should be able to feel safe allowing our children to play outside without fear of hidden dangers lurking nearby.**

**We should all have access to affordable, quality medical care, and we should all be able to grow old gracefully and with dignity.**

**We should be able to feel secure as we go about our daily lives, knowing that there are plans in place to protect us if disaster strikes.**



**We should be able to expect that those who break our laws will be brought to justice.**

**And we should expect that our elected officials will be at all times accountable to those they serve. When the voters speak their elected representatives should listen, and the democratic process that values their right to be heard must be encouraged and protected.**

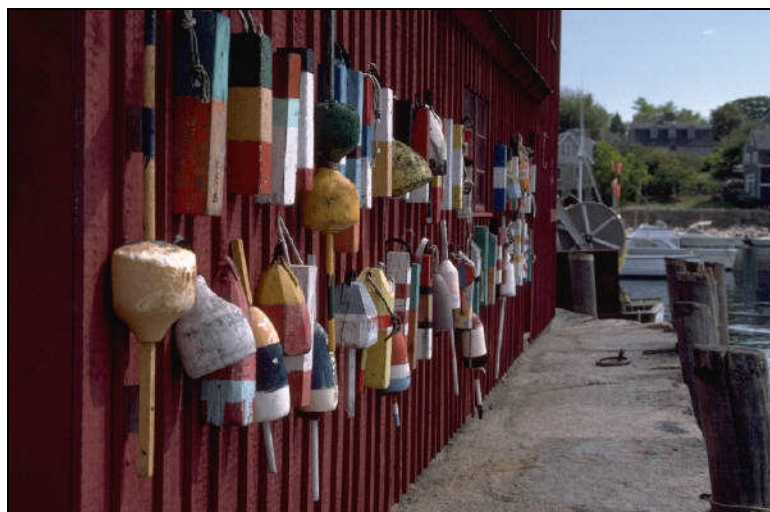
**As Republicans, we believe that government can and should work to ensure that these basic needs are met. We believe this task is best accomplished by providing everyday citizens with the opportunity to succeed and the freedom to pursue the lives they desire for themselves and for their families.**

**Massachusetts is a great state, built upon a strong foundation of hardworking, visionary and optimistic citizens. It is through their vision that we can best reach our highest potential as a commonwealth.**

**Though our caucus is small in numbers, we are ambitious in our ideas and strong in our belief in the values of personal responsibility, personal freedom, fiscal restraint and accountability to those we serve. And it is as a constant voice of balance in the Legislature that we intend to pursue and perpetuate these ideals.**

***A statement of principle and purpose adopted jointly by the Republican members of the House of Representatives and the Senate.***

***January, 2007***



# Who We Are

## **The Senate Republican Caucus**

Richard R. Tisei  
Bruce E. Tarr  
Michael R. Knapik  
Robert L. Hedlund  
Scott P. Brown

## **The House Republican Caucus**

Bradley H. Jones, Jr.  
Mary S. Rogeness  
George N. Peterson, Jr.  
John A. Lepper  
Viriato Manuel deMacedo  
Fred "Jay" Barrows  
Lewis G. Evangelidis  
Paul K. Frost  
Susan W. Gifford  
Robert S. Hargraves  
Bradford Hill  
Donald F. Humason, Jr.  
Paul J. P. Loscocco  
Jeffrey D. Perry  
Elizabeth A. Poirier  
Karyn E. Polito  
Richard J. Ross  
Todd M. Smola  
Daniel K. Webster

*The members gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the staff of the Republican Leaders' Offices of the House and Senate.*

# *Our Priorities*

**AFFORDABILITY**

**INNOVATION AND COMPETITIVENESS**

**CONSERVING OUR RESOURCES**

**STRENGTHENING, PROTECTING AND  
EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITIES**

**RESTORING CONFIDENCE  
IN GOVERNMENT**

# Affordability

Housing prices. Taxes and fees. Auto and health insurance premiums. Energy and utility costs. In Massachusetts, these expenses are becoming an even more difficult burden. There is no doubt that they are also a major reason behind the exodus of more than a quarter of a million residents from our state over the past four years.



The Republican caucus is committed to making Massachusetts a more affordable place to live, work, raise a family and retire. We believe the state's most valuable resources are the people who live here, and we want to do everything in our power to keep them at home in the Bay State.

We have a plan to make Massachusetts residents' hard-earned dollars go further. Our agenda includes a program to help first-time homebuyers put down roots in Massachusetts, and a plan to give working families a break on their mortgage, child care and education expenses.

We will continue to support getting motorists a better rate on their car insurance by opening the market to more carriers and cracking down on fraud. We will also continue to support bringing our income tax rate back to 5 percent as soon as possible.

## OUR AGENDA

### ➤ **"Keys to Homeownership" First-time Homebuyer Assistance Plan**

A proposal to help first-time homebuyers put down roots in Massachusetts and reward them for saving money to buy a home.

- Creates a First-Time Homebuyer's Savings Account for aspiring homeowners to save for a home tax-free. The money in the account must be spent on housing related expenses, such as a down payment, closing costs, fees or private mortgage insurance (PMI).

- Establishes a Closing Costs Assistance Program that gives income-eligible first-time homebuyers a grant of up to \$2,500 to pay for closing costs when they purchase a home. To qualify, homebuyers must have a First-Time Homebuyer's Savings Account with a balance of at least \$1,000.

➤ **Working Families Tax Credit**

A proposal to help middle-income families make ends meet by allowing them to claim up to \$20,000 in tax deductions for everyday living expenses.

- Creates a tax deduction for rent and mortgage expenses and homeowner's insurance up to \$6,500.
- Creates a tax deduction for utility payments, including gas, electric, water and sewer up to \$2,500.
- Creates a better tax deduction for college tuition and costs, student loan repayment and child care expenses up to \$11,000.

➤ **Permanent Annual Sales Tax Holiday**

A proposal to give consumers two days of sales-tax free shopping every August.

- Requires the Department of Revenue to choose and announce the specific date in August of the tax free holiday by July 15<sup>th</sup> every year.

➤ **Expanded Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Credit**

A proposal to give seniors a bigger break on their property tax bills.

- Allows Massachusetts residents 65 and older to include home heating costs in the list of expenses used to qualify for the senior circuit breaker tax credit.

➤ **Providing a Break on Child Care Expenses Through Business**

- Creates a tax credit for companies that provide for or subsidize their employees' child care expenses.

# Innovation and Competitiveness

With its world-renowned universities and teaching hospitals, Massachusetts has long been recognized as a leader in innovation. Our highly-skilled and educated workforce has served as a magnet for companies specializing in biotechnology and other emerging industries.

To ensure that Massachusetts maintains its competitive advantage and remains at the forefront of cutting-edge technology, we must step up our efforts to attract new companies to the state while nurturing those that are already here.

We propose a series of initiatives that will help employers cut through the regulatory red tape and other barriers that contribute to the high costs of doing business in the Commonwealth. We advocate measures to drive down the cost of unemployment insurance for business. We also call for “user-friendly” policies for those seeking to obtain a license, permit or other state-required approval.

Our goal is to provide employers with a business-friendly environment that will encourage companies to provide good jobs for our citizens and expand our economic base. These proposals will better position Massachusetts to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.



## OUR AGENDA

### ➤ **Venture Capital for Massachusetts Student Entrepreneurs**

A proposal to help students develop businesses and gain a foothold in the Massachusetts economy.

- Allows students to access seed money in the form of low-interest and zero-interest government loans and grants. This recognizes the important role of higher education in nurturing the entrepreneurial spirit and in the development of worthwhile business opportunities.

### ➤ **Promoting Industry Through Smart Fiscal Policy**

Proposals to extend the Investment Tax Credit (ITC) to biotechnology companies and allow for the transfer of tax credits within emerging industries.

- Provides a financial incentive for biotechnology companies to operate in Massachusetts by giving them access to ITC savings.
- Provides businesses with the infusion of capital they need to develop their product and get it to the marketplace. Credits must be sold for no less than 75 percent of their value.

### ➤ **Regulatory Cost Impact Statements**

A proposal to require state agencies to consider the impact of proposed regulations on the business community.

- Prevents the implementation of overly-burdensome regulations that can hurt small businesses and drive companies out of state.

### ➤ **Healthcare Purchasing Co-operatives**

A proposal to keep small business health insurance costs reasonable, allowing employers to pool their resources to leverage competitive rates for their employees' health care coverage.

### ➤ **Worker Documentation Certification Program**

A proposal to level the playing field for Massachusetts industries and workers.

- Establishes a certification program for employers to verify the citizenship status of all current and prospective employees.
- Precludes vendors who hire undocumented workers from state contracts.

### ➤ **Support for Health Care Reform Initiatives**

A continued commitment to the successful implementation of health care initiatives passed last session through bipartisan cooperation. Moving forward, House and Senate Republicans will exhaust every option to make sure this legislation increases consumer choice in insurance coverage and options and uses market forces to help constrain costs.

# Conserving Our Resources

Massachusetts is home to some of the most beautiful landscapes in the country, from the mountainous Berkshires to the shores of Cape Cod. As citizens, we value and enjoy those natural resources and we owe it to our children and grandchildren to preserve them for future generations.



Unfortunately, our neighboring states are surpassing us when it comes to enacting aggressive and innovative environmental policies, specifically the integration of new renewable energy sources.

With energy prices rising every year, conservation is not just an environmental concern, it is also an economic one for many people.

Massachusetts must rise to meet the challenges facing our environmental and energy resources, and we need state government, local communities, businesses and individual citizens working together to make it happen.

The Republican caucus is offering a plan to encourage all Massachusetts residents—from homeowners to business owners to municipal leaders—to get involved in protecting the environment by making it less expensive and more rewarding to go green.

## OUR AGENDA

### ➤ **"Conserving our Commonwealth" Promoting the Development of Renewable Energy and the Use of Alternative Fuels**

A proposal to encourage state government, local communities and individual citizens to conserve energy and protect the environment.

- Requires that 20 percent of all gas and diesel sold in Massachusetts must be alternative fuel, such as biodiesel or ethanol, by the year 2020.

- Increases the number of renewable energy sources that Massachusetts must use to produce electricity under the Renewable Energy Portfolio.
- Allows all ENERGY STAR products to be sold sales tax-free.
- Requires the state to buy alternative fuel vehicles when adding to its fleet. Also requires the state to use alternative fuels in qualified vehicles when possible.
- Provides tax breaks and on-road incentives for owners of energy efficient cars, including elimination of sales tax on the purchase of hybrid vehicles, a \$2,000 income tax deduction and free Fast Lane transponders.
- Provides grants to help cities and towns buy alternative fuel vehicles for their fleets.



#### ➤ **Massachusetts Green Buildings Initiative**

A proposal to construct environmentally-friendly state buildings and provide incentives for businesses and communities to follow suit.

- Establishes minimum energy-efficient building standards for new construction and major renovation of state-owned facilities.
- Provides assistance and financial incentives to municipalities that meet state standards for green building.
- Gives tax breaks to businesses that construct green buildings and establish environmentally-friendly practices, such as installing ENERGY STAR light bulbs.

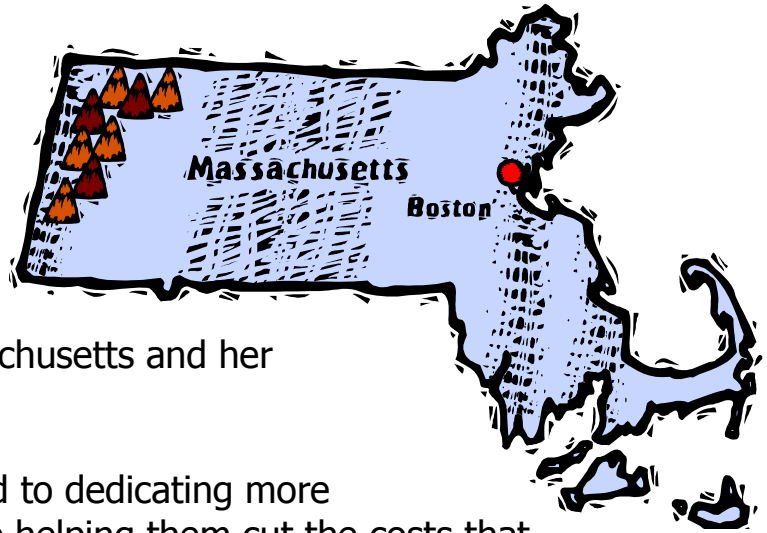
#### ➤ **Maintaining and Improving State Parks**

A proposal to allow Massachusetts residents to donate to state parks by checking off a box on their income tax form.

# *Strengthening, Protecting and Empowering our Communities*

Massachusetts is made up of 351 hometowns—communities that provide essential services to our citizens, as well as a place to belong.

Our cities and towns are where workers return at the end of the day. They are home to the schools where our children learn to read and write, and where fire and police officials protect us in emergencies.



Without strong communities, Massachusetts and her citizens cannot prosper.

The Republican caucus is committed to dedicating more resources to our cities and towns while helping them cut the costs that are draining their budgets. We are also committed to developing plans that will help communities cope when disaster strikes.

This year, we are offering proposals to increase local aid to cities and towns, help them cut healthcare and fuel expenses, improve the safety of our schools, and give municipalities more tools to deal with emergencies.

We are also committed to working closely with our colleagues in the Legislature to devise a more equitable distribution of Chapter 70 education aid to local school districts, to fully-fund the special education circuit breaker and to ensure adequate support for the school building assistance program.

## **OUR AGENDA**

### ➤ **"Municipal Fair Share" Sharing the State's Success With Municipalities**

- Aim to send 40 percent of the state's new growth revenues from the income tax, sales tax and capital gains tax back to local communities as local aid every year.

### ➤ **Providing Financial Relief to Communities**

A proposal to help cities and towns cut the costs that drain their budgets. Plans also call for increased efficiency in local permitting for housing creation.

- Exempts cities and towns from having to pay the state's gas tax when fueling municipal vehicles.
- Increases the threshold for certain public construction to make it easier for cities and towns to build smaller projects outside of public bidding limits.
- Support for municipalities to opt-in to the Group Insurance Commission, cutting the cost of providing health care for municipal employees.

### ➤ **Creating Safer Schools**

A proposal to give law enforcement and emergency personnel more tools to protect students and to increase information sharing between districts.

- Requires communities to submit copies of new school design plans to the local fire and police departments when they apply for state school building funds. A central registry of plans would be created so that state police could also gain access in case of an emergency.

### ➤ **Disaster Preparedness and Relief**

A proposal to help communities develop effective plans to deal with disasters.

- Establishes a low-interest loan program for the repair of homes and businesses damaged in disasters.
- Permits cities and towns to repair and reconstruct public facilities damaged in catastrophic events more quickly and less expensively.
- Enhances preparedness functions of the Executive Office of Public Safety.

### ➤ **Making Improvements to the DNA Database**

A proposal for Massachusetts to collect DNA samples from all people arrested for serious crimes. This law has already been passed in several other states.

### ➤ **Credit Protection**

A proposal to protect citizens' identity and credit information from abuse.

# Restoring Confidence in Government

Government is supposed to provide citizens with a place to go when they have problems too big to solve on their own. It is supposed to create order and serve as a trustworthy authority that administers justice, law enforcement and social programs. Government is supposed to keep our state running smoothly.

But when citizens reach out for services and encounter bureaucratic red tape, inefficient practices and too much political involvement, they become discouraged and disenchanted.



It is essential that residents feel they can trust and count on their state government to work on their behalf. Otherwise, government cannot be truly effective.

The Republican caucus wants to make Massachusetts government more people-friendly and accessible. We want citizens to feel good about their state government and feel confident that it is working in their best interests.

Our legislative proposals would make it easier for citizens to complete transactions with the state, protect property owners from abusive eminent domain takings, and take legislative redistricting out of the hands of legislators and put it into the hands of an independent, non-partisan commission.

The caucus will also actively participate when the Legislature debates and adopts its rules for the coming legislative session. We will focus on making sure the process is as open and accessible to as many viewpoints as possible.

## OUR AGENDA

### ➤ **Protecting Private Property From Eminent Domain Takings**

A proposal to help prevent the government from seizing private property where there is not a clear public interest at stake.

- **A constitutional amendment and a bill** to prohibit state and local government from taking private property solely for economic development. This will insulate Massachusetts property owners from the often-criticized U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Kelo v. New London*. The bill also requires reversion of property if it is not used for the reason it was taken.

➤ **Taking Politics Out Of The Redistricting Process**

A proposal to create special commissions to handle redistricting of congressional and state legislative districts in Massachusetts, instead of having the Legislature make those decisions according to partisan politics.

➤ **Enhancing Fiscal Planning For Our Commonwealth**

A proposal to establish a two-year cycle for the budget to help state and local leaders make better plans for the use of resources over time.

➤ **Protecting Our Savings**

A proposal to require a 2/3 vote of the Legislature to take money out of the state's "Rainy Day Fund."

➤ **Enacting Real Pension Reform for Public Employees**

- A proposal to prevent abuse of the state pension system by capping individual pension benefits to 400% of the statewide average. Benefits also would be limited to those based on actual compensation, and abusive transitions between different retirement groups would be prevented.

➤ **Promoting Good Government Through Rules Reform**

Numerous, ongoing proposals would prevent the abuse of power by the majority party by promoting a more open and inclusive legislative process.

➤ **Making State Government More Efficient**

A proposal to streamline state government, cutting costs and making government services more "user-friendly" for all.

- Establishes benchmarks for improving state efficiency, including plans to reduce paperwork and eliminate waste.
- Streamlines transactions for individuals, corporations and municipalities.
- Standardizes state medical billing procedures, saving significant time and money in the health care industry.
- Reduces the amount of prescription drug waste at medical facilities.
- Ensures that reusable, expensive medical equipment is returned to the state after patients finish using it.

**Produced by the House and Senate Republican Caucuses  
with the Republican Policy Conference.**

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