Day on the Hill 2014

“Advocacy: Beacon Hill and Beyond”

March 26, 2014
Massachusetts State House, Boston
9:30 am – noon
"The League of Women Voters is the gold standard in advocacy. I tell my staff that when they see the League's name among the supporters of something, pay attention."
--Nancy Pelosi, former Speaker, now minority leader, U.S. House of Representatives

Representative Pelosi commented on the significance of League advocacy when she met LWVMA board member Marlene O'Brien at the Radcliffe Institute’s celebration of the 50th anniversary of the first report on the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women.

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From the Co-Presidents, League of Women Voters of Massachusetts

Dear Legislator,

Members of the League of Women Voters from across the state are gathering at the State House Wednesday, March 26, for our annual Day on the Hill lobby day. After the morning’s program, League members will be visiting their own Senators and Representatives to discuss legislation that is a priority for the League.

We hope that you can join us for all or part of the program. Registration will begin at 9:30 a.m. and the program starts at 10 a.m. in the Gardner Auditorium.

Our theme this year is “Advocacy: Beacon Hill and Beyond.” Suzanne Bump, State Auditor, will discuss her office’s work and how members can effectively “lobby” executive branch agencies when necessary. Sen. Eileen Donoghue of Lowell will outline some of the ways local Leagues can work in cities which do not have Leagues. Our legislative specialists will then brief members on the bills the League is emphasizing this legislative session.

As an organization devoted to encouraging informed and active participation in government, the League aims to ensure that the public’s voice is an important part of political dialogue. The League selects the legislation it advocates for on the basis of issue positions arrived at through study and consensus.

Nancy Pelosi, minority leader in the U.S. House of Representatives, recently told one of our directors: "The League of Women Voters is the gold standard in advocacy. I tell my staff that when they see the League's name among the supporters of something, pay attention."

We are enclosing information on the bills the League is supporting this session. And we hope you can join us at the League’s Day on the Hill Wednesday, March 26.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Peters and Anne Borg
LWVMA Co-Presidents
**Day on the Hill Speakers**

**Suzanne Bump, State Auditor**

Suzanne M. Bump is the 25th Auditor of the Commonwealth, one of six constitutional officers in Massachusetts, and the first woman to serve in this role in the state’s history.

Reaching across multiple agencies, state audits now evaluate whole government systems. Since being elected in 2010, Auditor Bump prioritized challenges such as:

- Effective Management of Public Resources
- Child Welfare & Education
- Integrity in Public Benefit Programs
- Improving the Municipal and State Relationship

Prior to her election, Auditor Bump served in Governor Patrick’s cabinet as Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development, and for eight years was a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. In the private sector, she worked as a business advocate, legal counsel, and has sat on the boards of numerous non-profit organizations and charities.

A native of Whitman, Massachusetts, Auditor Bump attended Cardinal Spellman High School, graduated from Boston College, received her law degree from Suffolk University, and now lives in Great Barrington.

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**Senator Eileen Donoghue**

Eileen Donoghue is a second term State Senator from the First Middlesex District, serving the communities of Lowell, Dunstable, Groton, Pepperell, Tyngsborough, and Westford. The Senator was first elected to the Massachusetts State Senate in November 2010.

After graduating from University of Massachusetts in 1976, the Senator received her Juris Doctor at Suffolk University Law School in 1979. After twelve years practicing law, Senator Donoghue opened her own firm in the City of Lowell in 1991 before joining Gallagher & Cavanaugh in 2008.

Senator Donoghue was elected to the Lowell City Council in 1996, and two years later was elected mayor of Lowell for her first of two terms. During her tenure as mayor, she championed economic development projects for the city, including the Tsongas Arena, the LeLacheur Ball Park, the construction and renovation of 17 schools, and the artist overlay district which resulted in more than 800 new artists’ lofts now occupying formerly abandoned mills.

Senator Donoghue serves as the Senate chair of the Joint Committee on Community Development & Small Business, vice-chair of the Joint Committee on Higher Education, and member of the Senate Committee on Ways & Means, Joint Committee on Economic Development & Emerging Technologies, and Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities & Energy.
Featured Bills

Education – Terry Yoffie, Specialist

S.208/H.3290/H.523 - An Act relative to dropout prevention and An Act relative to the dropout age
Senate Ways and Means Committee

The bills raise the age requirement for remaining in school from 16 to 18 years of age and create intervention programs for vulnerable students earlier in their school years to prevent them from dropping out of school.

Bills S.208, H.3290 and H.523 have been reported favorably out of the Joint Committee on Education and combined under S.208. The League has been supporting these bills since they were drafted. The bills will support our K-12 schools to help vulnerable students stay in school and enable access to programs geared toward their success.

Talking points:
- 8,000 – 10,000 students drop out of high school every year. There has been a persistent equity gap that will not change without effective interventions.
- Improves systems for identifying students who may be at-risk of dropping out by expanding Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s Early Warning Indicator Index, providing schools the data that are critical to targeting appropriate resources to kids in need.
- Creates the Massachusetts Graduation Coach Initiative, matching at-risk students with caring adults tasked with helping to guide them to success in the school system.
- Creates better communication between schools and parents when a child is suspended or expelled, and pushes schools to reduce dependency on suspension and expulsion.
- Promotes the availability of alternative educational options for students who leave school before graduating, either by dropping out or through long-term suspensions or expulsions.

Other education bills are on page 13.
Elections and Voting – Linda Freedman, Specialist

H.3788 as amended by S.1981—An act relative to election laws
Conference Committee

Massachusetts has a great opportunity to move forward with critical election reforms this year. The House and Senate have adopted two different election reform bills. S.1981, the amended version of H.3788, is a stronger vehicle for election reform. If S.1981 is not significantly changed by the House and Senate conference committee, Massachusetts can benefit from improved administration and integrity of elections, expansion of voter registration and correction of poll book errors, and increased access to the polls.

Talking points:

- Voting machines are not perfect. Post-election audits of the vote will determine if our voting systems are reliable; we need to know if winners were elected by the majority of voters.
- Unused Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funds for Massachusetts may be used for audits. Audits are recommended by the LWVUS and other voting integrity organizations; 26 states have post-election audits.
- Both bills include training for election officials.
- With pre-registration of 16- and 17-year-olds, they will automatically become voters after their 18th birthday. If they preregister when they get their driver’s license, the information will be held in the Secretary of State’s computer system and sent to the appropriate election official when the person turns 18.
- Early voting will ease the crush on election days and encourage more participation. The Senate bill prescribes voting hours on Saturday and/or Sunday immediately preceding the primary or election as well as early voting during regular business hours.
- Election Day registration (EDR) is currently used in 12 states. It significantly increases voter participation and is safe and secure. EDR also allows correction of the poll books on election day. Voters would not have to be turned away at the polls or use provisional ballots, which may or may not be counted.
- Online voter registration is already widely used in other states. It cuts the cost of processing each registration and increases voter registration.
- Incorrect information in poll books is a huge problem on election day. Voters can check their voting status and find out where to vote on a secure online portal.
- Massachusetts is the only state that ties inactive voter status to the return of a city or town census form rather than to voting history. This eliminates the census tie-in.
- The Senate bill reimburses cities and towns for the costs incurred by this act and adds a study of the costs of early voting.

Another election bill is on pages 13-14.
Energy and Resource Conservation – Launa Zimmaro, Specialist

S.386 – An Act relative to information technology producer responsibility
Chief Sponsor: Senator Marc Pacheco
Senate Ways and Means Committee

S.357/H.803 – An Act to require producer responsibility for collection, reuse and recycling of discarded electronic products
Chief Sponsors: Senator James Eldridge/Representative Frank Smizik

S.386 was reported favorably by Joint Committee. S.357 and H.803, Senate and House versions of the same bill were attached to the favorable report of S.386 by Joint Committee and are included here for reference.

The purpose of effective e-waste bills is to shift the burden of managing covered products from local governments to producers and manufacturers of the products, and to increase the reuse and recycling of the covered products to protect public health and the environment. S.386, the e-waste bill most likely to be passed this session, could accomplish these goals if amended to require the following:
That manufactures accept specified electronics on a year-round, on-going basis from all public and private entities that currently offer collection services.

Talking Points:
- Reduces environmental pollution from lead, mercury, cadmium and other highly-toxic substances inherent in e-waste.
- Relieves cities and towns of the responsibility for the cost of collection and disposal of discarded e-waste, freeing funds for support of essential public services.
- Encourages responsible product design to control waste of resources and energy ‘up stream’ before it is generated.
- Increases and ensures the safe recycling of electronics through registered processors.
- 23 states currently have e-waste laws that are saving money for local municipalities and reducing the health and environmental impact of these products.
- Since 2001, over 180 towns and cities in Massachusetts have signed e-waste resolutions calling for the passage of e-waste, producer responsibility legislation.

Another energy and resource conservation bill is on page 14.
Equal Rights – Carole Pelchat, Legislative Director

H.838/S.427 – An Act providing for equitable coverage in disability policies
Joint Committee on Financial Services.

The Massachusetts Equal Rights Amendment ratified in 1976 states, “equality under the law shall not be denied or abridged because of sex, race, color, creed or national origin.” The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts was a member of the coalition that achieved that victory and has worked with Representatives and Senators of the General Court since then to remove gender inequality from all of Massachusetts’ General Laws.

After the 1976 ratification, a legislative committee determined that the above-noted language required all insurance policies to be gender neutral. Furthermore, in 1983 the Supreme Court of the United States said that gender-based insurance policies provided to federal employees are “illegal and discriminatory.”

Gender equity in disability insurance, along with other forms of insurance coverage, has been part of LWVMA’s efforts to obtain gender equality for women in Massachusetts for over 20 years. In a long, arduous process we have gained gender equity in health insurance, automobile insurance, homeowners’ insurance and, most recently, annuity policies.

So why is equity in disability insurance, where we currently pay higher rates and receive less in benefits, important to women? In 2009, according to the Population Reference Bureau, 61.6% of married couples had both husband and wife in the work force. It is estimated that in 2012 almost 57% of Massachusetts women age 20-64 were employed and the US Census reports that 30% of working women are self-employed. Of note, the Pew Research Center reported 15% of families with dual incomes have wives who out earn their husbands. Obviously, a woman’s income has a significant impact on the financial stability of herself and her family, and loss of that income can be catastrophic.

Talking points:
- Social Security disability benefits are gender neutral.
- Workers Compensation Insurance benefits are gender neutral.
- Women are moving into higher paying and equally dangerous jobs.
- Fewer women will need state aid when they become disabled.
- Women, and their families, will benefit from more economic security.
S.321/H.651 – An Act relative to disclosure of political spending/An Act strengthening campaign finance
Joint Committee on Election Laws

The purpose of the bill, often called the Massachusetts Disclose Act, is to establish requirements for any electioneering communication that is paid for by an entity other than an individual and prohibits contributions by a foreign national or foreign corporation.

Talking Points:
- This bill passed the Senate in the 2012 session. It needs to pass in both houses in this session. The governor has stated he will sign it, if passed.
- Clarifies that current disclosure and reporting requirements apply to all political communications allowed under the law.
- Requires corporations and labor unions paying for political advertisements to disclose their spending even if the advertisements are made by another group or entity.
- Requires entities or groups paying for political ads to report on funds they receive.
- Requires organizations spending large amounts on political advertisements to register as political committees.
- Requires political advertisements to include disclaimer statements that identify their top contributors, so that big donors can’t hide their spending behind a “shadow organization” with an innocuous sounding name.
- Prevents coordination between candidates and outside groups.
- Bans contributions, independent expenditures, and electioneering communications by foreign nationals and foreign corporations.

Other good governance bills are on page 14-15.
Health Care – Judy Deutsch, Specialist

Three bills related to single-payer health care, all referred to the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing.

S.515/H.1035 – An Act for improved Medicare for all

Talking Points
- This bill would establish a single-payer health care system, guaranteeing first-class health care to all Massachusetts residents.
- It would eliminate the high costs of private insurance and the high cost of pharmaceuticals and medical equipment when they are not purchased in bulk.
- It would reduce healthcare costs to the State, municipalities, employers and individuals that are still wreaking havoc with government, business and personal budgets, saving the Commonwealth more than $10 billion per year.
- It would be funded by a small tax (which will be significantly offset by eliminating health-insurance-premium expenditures) on employers, employees, the self-employed, unearned income (except Social Security and pensions) and Medicare and Medicaid funds.
- Job training would be provided for additional jobs needed to provide actual health care.

S.514 – An Act to establish a public health insurance option
Chief Sponsor: Sen. James Eldridge

Talking Points
- This bill would create a public health insurance option that would compete with private insurance plans — providing consumers more choice and increased competition.
- It will initially be funded through a modest surcharge on insurance reserves that will cover starting costs which will be paid back with the revenues generated by the plan’s premiums; it will be self-sustaining within one year.
- It would encourage private insurers to cooperate, share information and reduce costs.

S.572/H.1053 – An Act to ensure effective cost control

Talking Points
- This bill would require that, for three years, the cost of the present health care system would be compared with a projected “single-payer health care system,” and, if the single-payer system were found to be less costly, a “single-payer health care implementation plan” would be submitted to the Legislature for its consideration.
- It would be a test to see whether or not a single-payer health care system would provide quality health care while effecting financial savings to the Commonwealth, and a test to see if the legislature will pass such a program if it were shown that it would.

Other health care bills are on pages 15-16.
Meeting Basic Human Needs – Clarice Gordon, Specialist

S.1317 – An act improving the earned income tax credit for working families
Lead sponsor: Sen. Cynthia S. Creem
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Urge support for increasing the Massachusetts addition to the federal earned income tax credit from 15% to 20% and mandating outreach to eligible workers.

Talking points:
Discuss with your legislators where they stand on the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) in general. The EITC is likely to be discussed in upcoming campaigns and proposed in future sessions. Both Republicans and Democrats have supported the concept.

- The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) lifts more families and children out of poverty than any other program (6.5 million persons including 3.3 million children in U.S. 2012).
- The federal government through the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) sets the framework for who can claim the tax credit and the benefit levels, avoiding annual state battles over trivia. States then can provide for a percentage increase; 25 states and D.C. now do so.
- The high cost of living in Massachusetts justifies an increase here for workers who do not make enough to buy necessities and pay rent. (For example, it is estimated that a family needs to make $24 an hour to rent a two-bedroom apartment at $1200 per month, a hard to find option in much of the state.)
- Several neighboring states have higher state EITCs, including NY-30% and CT-27.5%.
- The program encourages work, which brings people into the mainstream of society and provides opportunities for skill development.
- Because the EITC is implemented by adding small increases to each paycheck, the funds tend to be spent locally and benefit the Massachusetts economy.
- Raising the incomes of workers may reduce demands on other programs to meet basic needs.
- Administration of the EITC is efficient, working through already existing payroll and tax systems, avoiding expensive bureaucracies to validate income, residency and need.
- Continuous outreach in workplaces is important because of new employees and because EITC brings federal dollars to the state in a very effective manner.

Other meeting basic human needs bills are on pages 16-17.
Natural Resources – Lynn Wolbarst, Specialist

H.3848– Initiative Petition -An Act updating the bottle bill
Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy

H.2943 – An Act updating the bottle bill
Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy

The purpose of these bills is to expand the bottle deposit system to include non-carbonated, nonalcoholic beverage containers, excluding containers of beverages that are derived from dairy products. H.3848 is the text of the petition/ballot question. The legislature has until May 4 to pass this bill instead of having it go to the voters in November.

Talking Points:

- LWVMA and the Updated Bottle Coalition organizations collected 108,000 certified signatures, over 130,000 total signatures, from Massachusetts voters to place the UBB on the November 2014 ballot. The number of certified signatures was more than any of the other initiative petitions that qualified.
- Ninety-five legislators are cosponsoring the Updated Bottle Bill legislation, both the original bill filed in 2013 and the current one, H.3848.
- Signatures were collected from every one of the 351 cities and towns in the Commonwealth.
- LWVMA would prefer that the Bottle Bill become law through a vote of the legislature, but we will work to pass the ballot question if the legislature does not take action by the May 2014 deadline.
- This law will save municipalities $4.53 to $6.5 million annually in litter collection and disposal costs when consumers redeem their deposits and recycle containers that now end up as trash or litter.
- Redeeming plastic bottles reduces energy use and carbon emissions since PET plastic #1 is comprised of 99% petroleum.
- A recent poll by Mass Inc revealed that over 70% of a broad sample of Massachusetts residents supported an expanded bottle bill.
- An expanded container deposit system has been successfully implemented in Maine, New York, Connecticut, California, Hawaii, Oregon and Michigan.
- Prices in Bottle Bill and non-Bottle Bill states are comparable. Donald Dowd, Vice President of Coca Cola of New England, stated "our prices pre-bottle bill and post-bottle bill are virtually the same." A study funded by the National Food Processors Association found that soda in Massachusetts “costs roughly the same as soda in New Hampshire.”

Another natural resources bill is on page 17.
**Public Safety – Carolyn Lee and Terry Yoffie, Temporary Specialists**

**Gun Control Bill:**

**No bill number yet:** The Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security and the Speaker have both indicated a new bill number will be created for an omnibus bill that has yet to be released. Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security Legislative Coalition: LWVMA joined the Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence (MCPGV)

Over 40 gun-related bills were filed at the start of the session. The Speaker appointed an external Task Force to study what could and should be done. That committee report was not released until the beginning of February. The Speaker and the Joint Committee agreed there would be no legislation out of committee until after the Task Force Report was released and analyzed.

The Joint Committee held five hearings around the state last spring through early fall, all of which were attended by and testified at by representatives of LWVMA and the MCPGV. The MCPGV agreed upon a set of five priorities for legislative action, all but one of which is addressed in the Task Force Report.

Those priorities are:
• Universal background checks, including for all private, gun show and internet sales
• Massachusetts coming into compliance with the National Instant Criminal Background Check system (NICS)
• Expand the suitability standard for licensing to apply to FID (card required to legally purchase a rifle or shotgun) cards as well as licenses to carry. This gives police chiefs discretion to not issue when there are known dangerousness issues.
• Require law enforcement to trace the ownership history of all guns used in and recovered from crime scenes. The NRA has successfully barred this from federal legislation, but we can enact it statewide.
• Limit handgun purchases to one handgun per month. This helps to minimize trafficking and straw purchases (purchases made by someone who passes the background check expressly to “give” it to someone who could not. THIS ONE is not covered by the Task Force Report.
Transportation – Robin Roberge, Specialist

H.3847 – An Act repeal of 2013 gas tax indexing
Chief Sponsors: Initiative Petition
Joint Committee on Revenue

This certified initiative petition would strike out indexing provisions from the Massachusetts gas tax that were enacted in the Transportation Finance Act (SL 2013:46) last year. Specifically, the initiative strikes out the indexing to the Consumer Price Index and the requirement that the tax will be at least 21.5 cents per gallon (in case of deflation); the initiative also provides a severability clause in case any part of it is found to be unconstitutional. In effect, the gasoline tax would stay at 24 cents per gallon.

LWVMA is opposing this bill and the ballot question. Campaigning against the repeal is an opportunity to shape and mobilize public opinion. We can continue the momentum that has been building for investing in our transportation system. If residents defeat the repeal, our state’s leaders will be encouraged to take future steps needed to build strong and reliable infrastructure in Massachusetts.

Remind your legislators the League supports an increased gasoline tax and appreciates their courage in passing the gas tax indexing law last year.

If this indexing initiative passes, we will

1. Lose money for transportation. Gas tax money is dedicated to transportation. Without indexing, we will lose over $1B in the next 10 years. In addition, construction costs are expected to increase approximately 3% annually over the next several years. Without indexing, we will be unable to keep up with this growth in costs.

2. Hurt our economy. We won’t have adequate resources for critical transportation investments that will grow jobs and the economy.

3. Continue the cycle of deferred maintenance. 42% of Massachusetts’s major roads are in either poor or mediocre condition and more than 50% of our bridges are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

4. Reverse the momentum for investing in infrastructure. Legislators intended to invest significant new resources in our transportation system and spoke of the new law as an important first step that needs to be followed by further legislative actions to improve transportation. Rolling back a significant piece of transportation funding moves us in the wrong direction.

Another transportation bill is on page 18.
Other Bills LWVMA Supports/Opposes

Pending:

Education – Terry Yoffie, Specialist

When you talk to your legislators, please ask them to support including a League representative on the Foundation Budget Review Commission that is being reactivated to review the way Chapter 70 state aid to education is allocated. The League has always held a seat on the Commission and has been very involved with developing the Ch. 70 state aid allocation formula. We would like to continue in this role. The originating legislation had listed us as a member of the Commission. The Governor’s office left us off the list. We believe that our exclusion was an error that we would like corrected. The Commission is part of H.2, the Governor’s 2015 Budget, Section 12 of the Outside Sections, Volume 2, currently in the House Ways & Means Committee.

H.3793 (was S.209/H.450) – An Act relative to healthy youth
House Committee on Ways and Means

Bill requires medically accurate, age-appropriate sex education in the public schools. Bill will ensure that children in all school districts will get an age-appropriate education in all health-related issues, including those related to sex education. The bill also upholds the existing state law that lets parents opt-out their children from sex education programs. Reported favorably out of Joint Committee on Education.

S.2027 – An Act to involve youth in civic engagement
Chief Sponsor: Sens. Harriette Chandler and Richard T. Moore
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Requires the development and implementation of K-12 civics education and engagement in public schools. Reported favorably out of the Joint Committee on Education.

Elections and Voting – Linda Freedman, Specialist

H.680 – An Act to ensure secure voting equipment
Joint Committee on Election Laws

The purpose of the bill is to require all electronic voting systems used in the Commonwealth to produce a permanent paper record of votes cast. The current voting procedures which use paper ballots have demonstrated ease of voting, secrecy for the voter, and the ability to verify the accuracy of the tallying votes. It is important that we require the use of paper ballots.

Research of many electronic voting systems has demonstrated the difficulty voters sometimes have using the equipment, problems with the equipment during elections, the difficulty of voters in reviewing their vote, and the ability to tamper with the results. The proposed audits of the vote will need paper
There is no way to properly recount electronic voting systems; they only regurgitate the original numbers from election day. Even where there are paper receipts with electronic voting, they are often not retained and are easily changed. Paper receipts are not like our paper ballots; they are easily torn and smudged. Few voters check the paper receipts to see if their votes were recorded accurately.

**Energy and Resource Conservation – Launa Zimmaro, Specialist**

**H.2532 – An Act relative to shifting from carbon emissions to transportation investment**
Joint Committee on Revenue

The purpose of this bill is to price carbon to reflect its social cost - the impact of carbon based fuel on health and the environment. H.2532 is based on the successful carbon pricing system in place in British Columbia for the past five years. H.2532 would offset negative impact of the carbon fee by shifting revenue raised to lower other taxes. Under the Governor’s directive, the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources is studying how a carbon tax might be implemented in Massachusetts. California, Oregon, Washington and British Columbia recently signed an accord to coordinate their carbon emissions pricing systems as a possible model for a regional plan.

**Good Governance – Carolyn Lee, Specialist**

**H.630 – An Act to close certain campaign finance loopholes**
Chief Sponsor: Sen. Thomas Sannicandro
Joint Committee on Election Laws

The purpose of the bill is to limit contributions by a political party and non-resident individuals in local elections.

**S.320/H.559 – An Act relative to accountability for corporate political spending**
Joint Committee on Election Laws

This bill mandates that all campaign finance spending by any corporation be reported to the shareholders of that corporation and that any spending greater than $5000 on any political campaign by any corporation must receive the express approval of either the board of directors or the executive committee, as appropriate. At the state level it puts back into effect some provisions of state law invalidated by *Citizens United vs. FEC*.

**S.1481/H.2783 – An Act to enhance access to electronic public records**
Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight

These bills mandate that records be provided electronically when available by amending statutes relative to public records to include public record information which may be separately retrieved from an electronic record; require state agencies to designate records access officers for the purpose of acting as custodians of such records; and direct said officers to disseminate information upon request for a reasonable fee not to exceed the cost of reproducing a document.
S.1482 — An Act restoring public confidence in government by eliminating "pay-to-play" opportunities
Chief Sponsor: Sen. James Eldridge
Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight

This bill prohibits legislators or executive agents from soliciting, receiving or coordinating contributions for any candidate for constitutional office, district attorney, state House of Representatives or state Senate and prohibits aforementioned legislators and agents from promising to donate or otherwise support or oppose any such candidate.

Health Care – Judy Deutsch, Specialist

H.1008/S.557 – An Act related to patient safety
Lead Sponsor: Rep. Marc R. Pacheco
Joint Committee on Health Care Financing

- This bill would establish patient/nurse ratios to ensure there are sufficient nurses to care for patients.
- It would include the number of patients that may be assigned to different units.
- It would stipulate that failures to adhere to the legislated ratios be reported to the Attorney General.
- This bill aims to prevent there being a lack of nurses sufficient to give quality care to patients.

S.546/H.3844 – An Act relative to transparency in hospital margins
Lead Sponsor: Sen. Michael O. Moore
Joint Committee on Health Care Financing

- This bill would require hospitals to be transparent about their financial holdings and CEO compensation, as well as to limit CEO compensation and to reduce excess profits (what not-for-profit hospitals report as surpluses) to ensure that taxpayer money is dedicated to safe patient care.
- It is necessary because of the huge CEO salaries and surpluses in some hospitals, and the scarce resources in others.
- It would create the Medicaid Reimbursement Fund from penalties for excess CEO salaries and hospital surpluses.
- All Massachusetts hospitals receive taxpayer money and therefore the public deserves to know how these funds are allocated.

The two bills above were introduced by the Massachusetts Nurses Association. They may also be ballot questions in November.

S.564 – An Act relative to spousal waiver for home and community-based services for physically disabled adults age 60 and under
Joint Committee on Health Care Financing

- This bill asks for an amendment to exclude spousal income and assets when determining eligibility for physically disabled adults age 19-60 who are living at home.
• It would alleviate some of the tremendous financial costs of caring for disabled persons aged 19 to 60 at home that spouses presently bear; it is comparable to what has been done for seniors 60 and over.
• The present situation is a “catch-22” one. Spouses can’t afford to stop working while providing the at-home care their disabled spouses need, yet their income prevents them from getting the financial help they require, even when working, to provide the care that is needed.
• Fewer people would need to go to nursing homes, saving money for the Commonwealth and individuals.

H.2008/S. 1081 – An Act relative to certified professional midwives
Joint Committee on Public Health

• This bill would create a Committee on Midwifery under the Board of Registration of Medicine that will set standards for the practice of out-of-hospital midwifery care in Massachusetts.
• It would require midwives practicing in out-of-hospital settings to become licensed and regulated — meeting national educational, training and certification standards.
• Research shows that low-risk women who give birth under the care of Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs) have outcomes equal to those of low-risk women who give birth in hospitals with fewer costly interventions, including a five-fold decrease in Caesarean sections.

Research shows babies born to women under the care of CPMs experience a significantly reduced rate of preterm births and low birth rates — two primary contributing factors to infant mortality.

H.2082 – An Act establishing statewide discount of pharmaceuticals
Joint Committee on Public Health

• This bill would establish a Massachusetts Prescription Drug Program charged with making prescription drugs available at the lowest possible cost to consumers, including state agencies.
• Many pharmaceuticals are priced so high that a significant number of ill people cannot afford to take the ones their physicians have prescribed, and the profits made by pharmaceutical companies are huge.

Meeting Basic Human Needs – Clarice Gordon, Specialist

H.135 – An act providing housing and support services to unaccompanied homeless youth
House Ways and Means Committee

This bill directs the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to contract with organizations to provide a continuum of voluntary housing options and wraparound support services to homeless unaccompanied youth. For more information on the need, see the Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Report http://www.mahomeless.org/files/Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Report.pdf

S.35 and H.114 – An act regarding pathways to family economic self-sufficiency

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Provides for training and education programs to increase the ability of persons receiving state aid to provide for their families in the future.

**S.37 and H.93 – An act promoting financial stability and asset development**

Changes provisions in welfare programs that tend to keep recipients poor.

The four above bills have been incorporated into the comprehensive “Welfare Bills” passed by the Senate as S.1806 and by the House as H.3756. They are currently in a Conference Committee made up of Sens. Barrett, Hedlund and Flanagan and Reps. Dempsey, Khan and Ferguson.

**Natural Resources – Lynn Wolbarst, Specialist**

**H.235/S.354 – An Act for healthy families and businesses**


Joint Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture

The purpose of these bills is to decrease the presence of toxic chemicals in the production and design of consumer products. The focus is on toxic chemicals with widespread human exposure and links to diseases such as cancer, asthma, birth defects and diabetes.

Talking Points:
- Closes a loophole that allows toxic chemicals that negatively impact public health to be used in consumer products
- The public health of residents of Massachusetts, especially infants and children, will be improved by dramatically reducing their everyday exposure to toxic chemicals
- It will provide an economic incentive for Massachusetts businesses to develop innovations in green chemistry, nontoxic products and clean technology
- It will help Massachusetts stay competitive in global markets – over 37% of Massachusetts trade is with European Union member states which have stricter chemical policies than the US.
- Priority chemicals for replacement would be chosen based on independent research on chemical exposure and health effects
Passed:

Transportation – Robin Roberge, Specialist

H.3091 – An Act relative to active streets and healthy communities

The presence of active transportation infrastructure in a community encourages residents to lead more active, healthier lifestyles. “Active streets” are streets designed to allow for more trips to be taken via active transportation such as walking and cycling. This law creates a program that encourages cities and towns across Massachusetts to routinely include contextually appropriate active streets design elements in locally funded road projects. By providing additional accommodations for active transportation, the Active Streets Certification Program will help the state reach the goal set by MassDOT to triple the number of walking, cycling, and public transportation trips while simultaneously addressing public health goals related to increased activity. Communities that are certified by this program by adopting certain policies and procedures would be eligible to receive a modest amount of additional local transportation funding, thereby incentivizing these actions.