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# *The Rosenberg Report*

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Hello!

And Happy Holidays!

The State House has been relatively quiet the past few weeks. But all that changed recently as Senators and Representatives worked to file their bills for the 2003 session by the December 4th deadline. The Senate and House clerks reported that 5,820 bills were submitted for the new session, which begins on January 1st.

Because of the number of bills filed, most legislators will be asked to sign on to more bills than would be prudent. Signing on to a bill should signify more than general support for the concept. It should demonstrate a willingness to perform substantial work on the bill, and a legislator's ability to do this is limited by time and staff constraints. Just because a legislator didn't sign on to a particular bill, doesn't mean he or she wouldn't vote for the bill, doesn't support it, or wouldn't work to get it passed.

Members of leadership in both the House and Senate have an opportunity to set and promote the agenda in their respective branch. If those legislators have their names on too many bills, it can create the impression that they are promoting their own personal agendas over that of the entire body. Consequently, as a member of Senate leadership, I sign on to and file a small number of bills, while working behind the scenes to promote a much broader agenda.

Below you'll find information on a few of the bills I'm filing, including a refile of the local option meals tax bill for Northampton, and some new proposals to make changes in the state's ballot initiative process. I'm also reposting links to the State House bill tracking system and the Senate's live internet feed so you can stay informed when the Legislature reconvenes.

Senate Live -- <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/senate/live/live.htm>

The Legislature's web page -- <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/>

Senate's Bill Text System -- <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/billsrch.htm>

Legislative Tracking System -- <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/ltsform.htm>

Until then, I hope everybody has a happy and healthy New Year! As is my usual practice, instead of sending out holiday cards, my committee will make contributions to local charities that help our friends and neighbors share in the joy of the season.

Yours,



## December Focus

### *2003 session bills*

Click here for the complete texts of a few of the bills I'm filing for the 2003 session:

<http://www.stanrosenberg.com/2003leg/index.html>

### *Initiative reform*

The initiative and referendum process grew out of the Progressive movement of the early 1900s as a way for citizens to be more directly involved in democracy. If a Legislature continually thwarted the will of the electorate on a particular issue, then the electorate could use the initiative process either to spur the Legislature into acting on its own, or to bypass it altogether. The initiative process was widely regarded as the mechanism of last resort.

This is no longer the case. Increasingly, the initiative process is being used as the first move in efforts to make major, even radical, change in state law. This is a particularly attractive approach for wealthy interests. Faced with laws that regulate the amount of money that can be given to political candidates, wealthy interests can turn to the initiative process, which is free of similar restrictions. Candidates can be corrupted, the U.S. Supreme Court has said, but issues cannot. Consequently, the Court has not allowed the kind of campaign finance reform of initiative campaigns that it has for candidate campaigns. This, combined with dwindling participation in the political process that has eroded the threshold number of signatures required to place a question on the ballot, makes the initiative process a relatively easy avenue for those seeking to advance their agenda.

I am co-sponsoring two bills with State Representative Robert Spellane (D-Worcester) that seek to address the contemporary problems with the initiative process while preserving the historic principles that created it. One bill would make changes to state law. The other would change the state Constitution.

The bill making statutory changes would:

- Require the Secretary of State to provide detailed financial information to voters about campaigns supporting and opposing ballot questions.
- Require campaigns to report large contributions above \$2,500 within 24 hours during the last 45 days of the campaign.
- Create a commission to draft titles and summary statements for use on petitions, ballot, and voter guides; and require that public comment and public hearings be held during the drafting process.

- Create a commission to draft a fiscal impact statement for all initiatives that will be included in the voter guide sent to households explaining the financial consequences of passage.
- Direct the Secretary of State to promulgate regulations to protect signatures from forgery and fraud; including: ID's for paid gatherers, limit involvement to one issue per election cycle by paid gathering companies, limit collection to one issue in any given day by an individual gatherer, require a sworn oath by gatherers regarding validity of signatures.

The bill making Constitutional changes would:

- Create a two tier threshold for signatures. One level for changes in statute and another, higher, standard for changes in the Constitution.
- Tie the signature requirement for both statutory and constitutional initiatives to the number of registered voters rather than the number casting ballots for governor in the last election.
  - In doing so we will lessen the fluctuations in the number required and return to the kind of higher threshold that prevailed in the decades immediately following adoption of the existing system, before low voter participation eroded the standard.
  - Those thresholds will be 2.5 percent of registered voters for a statutory change and 3 percent of registered voters for a constitutional change.  
(Note: The requirements were established by Article 81, in 1950, when the original two-tier system was abandoned and the current 3 percent of ballots cast was established as the rule. That 3 percent standard regularly translated into a number above 2.5 percent of registered voters throughout the 50's and 60's.)
- Establish a requirement for geographic balance in where the signatures are gathered. A threshold of 1.5 percent and 2 percent of registered voters in each Congressional district for statutory and constitutional initiatives, respectively.
- Increasing the amount of time allowed for the gathering of signatures from approximately 8 weeks to 14 weeks. This will help avoid driving people to the use of paid signature gatherers in order to meet the higher signature thresholds.

<http://www.stanrosenberg.com/2003leg/elreform.html>

(For the complete texts of both bills, click here)

### Noteworthy

#### *Budget update*

Revenue collections for November were up \$16 million over the anticipated level, thanks in large part to the success of the tax amnesty program, Department of Revenue

officials said. That program, which ran from Oct. 1st to 5 p.m. on Dec. 2nd, was the result of a bill I filed with State Senator Marian Walsh (D-West Roxbury), Senate chair of the Joint Committee on Taxation, and State Representative Cory Atkins (D-Concord), is expected to bring in more than \$90 million by the time all the receipts are counted. That's about what those of us who filed the bill figured the program would bring in and nearly triple what the administration anticipated. This additional money meant reductions in some of the cuts that otherwise would have to be made by the governor to bring the fiscal '03 budget into balance. In spite of this windfall, the governor, earlier this week, issued an additional \$60.7 million in very painful cuts. Those cuts included:

- \$38.7 million from the MWRA Water and Sewer Rate Relief Fund;
- \$10 million from the Department of Transitional Assistance;
- \$10 million from the state's subsidy of the Hynes Convention Center in Boston;
- \$1 million from smoking cessation programs; and
- \$1 million from the state's public zoos.

For more information, click here: <http://02133.org/>

### *Telemarketing Act*

The state's new Telemarketing Act, approved by the Legislature this past session and signed by the governor, will take effect on Jan. 1st, 2003. On that date, Massachusetts residents will be able to enroll in the state's first "Do Not Call" list that will prevent them from being called by certain telemarketers. The first "Do Not Call" list will take effect in April and will be updated quarterly.

There is no fee for signing up for the "Do Not Call" list and no personal information, like a social security number, is required. Residents who want to be on the list can sign up by phone, over the Internet or through the mail. The program is being implemented by the Massachusetts Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation. For more information, go to the website below.

Massachusetts Office of Consumer Affairs  
and Business Regulation  
<http://www.state.ma.us/consumer/New/donotcall.htm>

### Roundup

#### *Internship Opportunity*

Here is some information on an internship opportunity I'm happy to pass along.

United Leaders is a nonpartisan, non-profit action tank whose mission is to inspire young people to pursue careers in political service. Its primary method of accomplishing this goal is the Institute for Political Service (IPS) held in Boston and Washington, DC during the summer of 2003.

These eight-week institutes are composed of nearly 50 students from across the

country who intern in government offices and community advocacy organizations, participate in weekly community service projects and policy discussions, receive skills training and meet with some of today's best and brightest political and community leaders.

United Leaders' recruitment efforts target colleges and universities across the country, as they strive to identify a diverse group of students with a passion for public service. Unlike most public sector internships, United Leaders interns receive housing at a college campus in one of the IPS cities, two meals a day, and a \$2,000 stipend.

More information about the IPS as well as application materials can be found at the United Leaders' website, [www.unitedleaders.org](http://www.unitedleaders.org). The application deadline for this summer's institute will be February 19, 2003.

### *State Grants*

Last week, the city of Northampton was awarded a \$16 million zero-interest loan from the state's Revolving Fund/Safe Drinking Water Program for a new water filtration treatment plant. The city is expected to start the bidding on the project very soon.

In early November the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction announced that the town of Chesterfield would receive a \$500,000 Small Town Road Assistance Program (STRAP) grant to repair 1.6 miles of South Street.

On Dec. 4th, the Swift administration authorized \$350 million from the 2002 Housing Bond to finance renovations at 329 state-aided public housing developments. Here is the list of Housing Authorities in my district receiving funding:

- Amherst                    \$214,350
- Belchertown            \$3,350
- Franklin County       \$153,300
- Greenfield             \$258,350
- Hadley                  \$217,600
- Hampshire County    \$5,975
- Hatfield                \$2,200
- Montague              \$36,350
- Northampton         \$336,350
- Shelburne             \$600,425
- South Hadley         \$330,100

### *Local artist*

I am pleased to host the works of renowned Amherst artist Deborah Rubin in my State House office from now until January 15th. Deborah works with watercolor and her works are on display at R. Michelson Galleries in Northampton and Amherst. Next time you're in Boston, please stop by my office and enjoy the exhibit. In the meantime, click here for some samples of her work.

<http://rmichelson.com/Deborah%20Rubin%20Gallery.html>

### *Stan's favorites*

Here's a recipe for Holiday Grapes, a quick, easy and tasty dessert you might like to try:

Take a bunch of red or green seedless grapes and dip or spray with Crème de Menthe. Put them in the freezer, but don't freeze them. Leave them in there long enough to get very, very cold so the Crème de Menthe sticks to the grapes. Take them out about 10 minutes before serving. Just before placing them on the table, sprinkle with confectioners sugar to create the effect of snow. Yummm!

### *Just for fun*

The holidays are upon us and I know a lot of you probably spend a lot of time in the kitchen, so here are a few links that might give you some ideas. Enjoy!

Food Network

<http://www.foodtv.com/>

Food Channel

<http://www.pcf1.net/channels/food/default.htm>

iVillage Food

<http://www.ivillage.com/food/>

### Trivia

The answer to last month's question -- Name the Constitutional Officers -- is: Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Treasurer, Attorney General and Auditor.

Thanks to everybody who played along. And now the winner of the lunch and State House tour, chosen at random from the thousands (just kidding!) of correct answers is Lauren M. from somewhere in cyberspace. We'll send her information on who to contact in my Boston office and we'll look forward to seeing her at the State House. Congratulations Lauren!

Now to this month's question and another chance to win lunch and a State House tour. Name the state's longest river.

Submit your answer to [tumitch@sprynet.com](mailto:tumitch@sprynet.com) and watch this space for the correct answer and the prize winner.

### Links

Here are a few links. Until next time, happy surfing!

Click here [tumitch@sprynet.com](mailto:tumitch@sprynet.com) if you want to be removed from our list.

Click here for our on-line feedback form [www.stanrosenberg.com/form.html](http://www.stanrosenberg.com/form.html)

Forward this link to a friend [www.stanrosenberg.com/issues/rosenreportreg.html](http://www.stanrosenberg.com/issues/rosenreportreg.html)

Senate Live -- <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/senate/live/live.htm>

Guide to Lawmaking -- <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/lawmkng.htm>

Senate Live -- <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/senate/live/live.htm>

Massachusetts State Government Home Page – <http://mass.gov/>

The Legislature's web page – <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/>

Senate's Bill Text System – <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/billsrch.htm>

Legislative Tracking System – <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/ltsform.htm>

My personal website – <http://www.stanrosenberg.com/>

The Rosenberg Report (November, 2002, edition) --  
<http://www.stanrosenberg.com/issues/nov2002.html>