
The Rosenberg Report

Vol. XII
January 8, 2003

Hello!

And Happy New Year!

Last week, the members of the House of Representatives and the Senate, and the Constitutional officers, including the Governor and Lieutenant Governor, were sworn in to office, each of us pledging to do what we can to improve the lives of Massachusetts citizens. The challenges we will face in the coming months are truly monumental, beyond anything anyone currently serving in the State House has ever experienced. I started this newsletter a year ago with a promise to keep you informed and with a request to hear your thoughts on the matters facing our state. Today I'm renewing both. Please use the links below to look in on the Senate's formal sessions and to send me your thoughts. It's a new year with new challenges. I'm looking forward to working with you to see them through.

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

Click here for our on-line feedback form www.stanrosenberg.com/form.html

Yours,



January Focus

Senate leadership

Newly elected Senate President Robert Travaglini (D-Boston) has begun to reorganize the Senate and has named his leadership team. I am pleased to report that he has named me to be the Senate's first President pro tem, a position that will give me a significant role in helping to shape and coordinate the Senate's agenda.

The position of President pro tem grew out of the Senate restructuring proposal I put forward during my run for the Senate Presidency. My plan was to decentralize the power of the Senate leadership by expanding the number of leadership positions, and broadening their duties, while giving more responsibility to committee chairs over the content and flow of legislation. Thirty-eight other state senates have either a President pro tem or Vice President, in addition to a majority leader, as part of their leadership structures. Those serving as President pro tem are most often senior members of the body and are chosen for

their experience in other leadership roles. I have, for example, served as Chair of the Committee on Ways and Means and as Assistant Majority Leader.

Although I didn't win the presidency, some of my ideas did. I am delighted and humbled that President Travaglini has embraced so much of the plan that I advanced during the campaign. One of his hallmarks has always been his ability to accept and advance other people's good ideas. I'm glad to be a part of this team and I'm looking forward to continuing to play a significant role in the Senate. My primary duties will revolve around helping the Senate develop and advance its agenda.

Here's how the new Senate leadership looks:

- Robert Travaglini, President
- Fred Berry (D-Peabody), Majority Leader
- Marian Walsh (D-West Roxbury), Assistant Majority Leader
- Joan Menard (D-Somerset), Majority Whip
- Robert Havern (D-Arlington), Assistant Majority Whip
- Stan Rosenberg, President pro tem
- Therese Murray (D-Plymouth), Chair, Ways and Means Committee
- Steven Panagiotakos (D-Lowell), Vice Chair, Ways and Means Committee
- Marc Pacheco (D-Taunton), Chair, Post-Audit and Oversight Committee

Position is important, but relationships are even more important. I enjoy excellent relationships with all the leadership members, but especially so with President Travaglini, and new Ways and Means Chair, Senator Murray. This is a smart and committed group of senators and I'm proud to be working with them.

Fiscal '03 budget

There is actually some good budget news to report. For the second consecutive month, revenue collections have exceeded projections. December's revenues came in \$31 million ahead of estimates so that now, for the first half of fiscal '03, revenues are about \$51 million above the revenue targets as last adjusted on Oct. 15th. This is a hopeful sign, but we are no where near being out of the woods. The fact remains that the fiscal '03 budget could still be short as much as \$600 million before the fiscal years ends June 30th, and the deficit for the fiscal '04 budget could be as much as \$3 billion. I hope that with my new position as Senate President pro tem I will have access to more detailed budget information sooner and can help keep you better informed.

Noteworthy

New tax amnesty

On December 30th, Acting Governor Swift signed into law another tax amnesty program modeled after the one approved earlier this year, which brought in \$91.6 million and helped minimize the impact of service cuts. This new program will run from Jan. 1st to Feb. 28th, 2003.

Throughout my career I have aggressively pushed for, and won support for, programs to ensure that citizens pay the taxes they legitimately owe. We all benefit from the services tax dollars provide and it is only fair that we all pay our fair share. I am pleased with the success of the first amnesty program, which was the result of a bill I filed with State Senator Marian Walsh (D-West Roxbury), and State Representative Cory Atkins (D-Concord), and I am especially encouraged that Governor Romney holds the similar view that taxes legitimately owed must be collected in a timely fashion. With Governor Romney's support, I am hopeful that other collection ideas will move forward, including a plan that I have pushed for in the past and will push for again that would aggressively address the issue of road tax evasion. Collecting those legitimately owed taxes would make a substantial difference in state and local revenues. These programs, on their own, will not solve our budget problem, but every little bit helps. Again, I'm hoping these ideas will gain momentum this year.

Telemarketing Act

The state's new Telemarketing Act, approved by the Legislature this past session and signed by the governor, took effect on Jan. 1st, 2003. Massachusetts residents can now 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, and to register, go to the website below.

<https://www.madonotcall.govconnect.com/Welcome.asp>

If you don't want to register on-line, you call toll-free (866) 231-CALL (2255). This automated system is also available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Or you can print out a [registration form](#) and mail it to the following address. When writing, please remember to include your name, address and phone number:

Massachusetts Do Not Call Program
P.O. Box 1348
Boston, MA 02117

Home rule petitions

Here are a few home rule petitions that were signed into law at the close of the 2002 session:

A bill concerning recall elections in the town of Montague
<http://www.state.ma.us/legis/bills/house/ht05263.htm>

A bill authorizing the Division of Capital Assets Management to convey certain land in the town of Ashfield

<http://www.state.ma.us/legis/bills/house/ht05217.htm>

A bill establishing the annual observance of Thomas Paine Day on January 29th of each year

<http://www.state.ma.us/legis/bills/st01602.htm>

A bill authorizing the South Hadley Housing Authority to retain the balance of money from the sale of certain property in town

<http://www.state.ma.us/legis/bills/house/ht05241.htm>

A bill providing for the office of town clerk-collector-treasurer in the town of Deerfield to be an appointed office

<http://www.state.ma.us/legis/bills/house/ht05260.htm>

Roundup

2003 Municipal Conference

For you municipal officials out there, this year's conference will be Saturday, April 12th at The Clarion Hotel and Conference Center in Northampton.

We are in the process of putting the program together, but we are looking forward, once again, to attracting the top legislative leaders and administration officials. I have always seen this conference as an opportunity for us in western Massachusetts to present our perspectives to policymakers in Boston. This year we will have new leaders in the executive branch and a new leadership structure in the Senate. With that much change in Boston, it's even more important that we get to know the new people and get our message across. I will keep you posted about the program as we get closer, but if you have any questions or comments, contact Tom in my district office at 413-587-6289 or at tumitch@sprynet.com.

State Grants

December was a great month for state grants in western Mass. Here they are:

The Department of Housing and Community Development awarded the following Community Development Block Grants:

- \$912,262 -- for Cummington, Chesterfield, Plainfield, Goshen, Westhampton, Williamsburg and Worthington for housing rehabilitation, First-Time Homebuyer Program, microenterprise assistance, predevelopment planning study and public social services projects.
- \$1.6 million -- for Heath, Amherst, Colrain, Gill, Montague and Orange for housing rehabilitation, microenterprise assistance and senior center renovations.
- \$600,000 -- for Buckland for architectural barrier removal at Town Hall.

- \$700,000 -- for Montague for architectural barrier removal at Town Hall.
- \$700,000 -- for Shelburne for housing rehabilitation, microenterprise assistance, and architectural barrier removal at the recreational center.
- \$600,000 -- for South Hadley for infrastructure improvements.

The Department of Housing and Community Development also made the following awards from its HOME First-Time Homebuyer program and the state's Affordable Housing Trust Fund:

- \$220,000 to Franklin County Rural Development Inc.
- \$920,000 to The Community Builders of Northampton for the Ice Pond Lane development.

The Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and the Department of Environmental Protection made the following Municipal Recycling Grant awards:

- \$1,800 for Northampton to provide technical assistance to help the city evaluate a permanent regional household hazardous waste collection center;
- \$1,400 for Leverett for a mercury waste shed;
- \$1,140 for Hadley for 30 home composting bins;
- \$15,000 for Amherst for technical assistance for a restaurant composting project;
- \$8,500 for the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District for technical assistance for a pilot residential food waste collection project.

Just for fun

The legislature enacted, and the Acting Governor signed into law, three bills at the end of 2002 session that would make Springfield native Dr. Seuss the state's official children's book author, "Make Way for Ducklings" the official children's book, and the Boston Cream donut the state's official donut. These types of commemorative bills are filed by school classes as civics projects. Pay attention, because you'll probably see them again someday in the Trivia section!

Trivia

The answer to last month's question -- Name the state's longest river -- is: the Charles River, approximately 80 miles.

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 Laurie T. from somewhere in cyberspace. We'll send Laurie information on who to contact in my Boston office and we'll look forward to seeing her at the State House. Congratulations Laurie!

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

Submit your answer to 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 if you want to be removed from our list.

Click here for our on-line feedback form www.stanrosenberg.com/form.html

Forward this link to a friend www.stanrosenberg.com/issues/rosenreportreg.html

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 (December, 2002, edition) --
<http://www.stanrosenberg.com/issues/dec2002.html>