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## *The Rosenberg Report*

Vol. XXIV  
April 13, 2004

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Hello!

*“It is the duty of the people . . . in framing a Constitution of Government, to provide for an equitable mode of making laws, as well as for an impartial interpretation, and a faithful execution of them; that every man, at all times, find his security in them.”*

That principle, set down in the Preamble of the Massachusetts Constitution, the world's most enduring expression of democratic values and the model for our federal Constitution, is what guided me during the Constitutional Convention debates on same-sex marriage. Although the language may sound a bit archaic to modern ears, the message, at least to me and my coalition partners in the Legislature, is crystal clear: It is our duty, our sacred duty, to provide everyone equal protection and equal opportunity under the law.

By now you probably know that by a slim margin -- five votes -- an amendment defining marriage as a union of a man and a woman, while establishing civil union recognition for same-sex couples, was approved and will appear before the Constitutional Convention in 2005.

When this debate began there were only a handful of legislators standing fast to defeat the so-called “defense of marriage” amendment, a draconian bill that would have prevented any kind of recognition for same-sex couples. Our opponents thought that they would crush us at the very beginning, that our defeat was certain and the margin of their victory would be overwhelming. But by the end of this round, 92 legislators voted to uphold the principle of equal opportunity and protection under the law and against the creation of what amounts to a caste system in Massachusetts. That is encouraging, and the months ahead afford us the opportunity of building on our momentum, strengthening our coalition and preserving our Constitution.

There is no place for discrimination. Not in a document that has served as the foundation for democracies for 300 years. Not in Massachusetts. Not anywhere.

Yours,



## April Focus

### *TeamRosenberg kicks off!*

I wanted to let you know that I will be kicking off my re-election campaign the first week in May with an event at China Gourmet in Greenfield on Monday, May 3rd, from 5-7 p.m., and an event in Amherst at The Hickory Ridge Country Club on Friday, May 7th, also from 5-7 pm. Hope to see you there!

This year promises to be one of the most exciting election seasons in recent memory and I'm looking for folks to join my team to help with my re-election effort. If you'd like to participate, please click here to find out how. Thanks!

<http://www.stanrosenberg.com/teamrosenberg.php>

### *Task Force appointments*

Earlier this month, Senate President Robert Travaglini (D-East Boston) appointed me to two Senate education panels, one on higher education, the other focused on Chapter 70 reform legislation.

I will co-chair the Task Force on Higher Education with Senator Steven Panagiotakos (D-Lowell), who is the vice chairman of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means. This seven-member task force is charged with developing a comprehensive 10-year strategy to address shortfalls in the Commonwealth's higher education system. We will focus on developing financing and reform plans for the University, state and community colleges to address enhancing the quality of education, affordability and access issues, coordination with K-12 curricula, and economic development strategies.

In making the appointments, Senate President Travaglini said, "I believe that as a Commonwealth we need to make public higher education a top priority. In order to do that effectively, the Senate needs a complete assessment of our current system and to develop a fresh approach to improving that system. I have asked Senators Rosenberg and Panagiotakos to lead this effort because they possess the vision that is needed to successfully complete this very significant task."

Areas of concern that have led to the creation of the task force include the following:

- Over the past two years, out of all 50 states, Massachusetts has had the largest decrease in state funding for public higher education, a 23 percent reduction.
- Massachusetts is the only state in the country that is spending less on public higher education today than we did 10 years ago.

- Massachusetts ranks 49<sup>th</sup> in the nation in state spending on Higher Education per \$1,000 of state income and 48<sup>th</sup> in the nation in state spending on Public Higher Education per capita.
- According to the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research, between 1998 and 2000, the average full-time worker with a bachelor's degree earned \$53,000 which was \$21,000 more than the average worker with a high school diploma and \$11,000 more than the average worker with an associates degree.

I firmly believe that we have to redouble our efforts to strengthen our public higher education system. If we don't, we run the risk of becoming a second-class state with a second-class economy. I appreciate President Travaglini selecting me for this assignment and I'm looking forward to working with my colleagues on this extremely important issue. I'm also eager to get started on Chapter 70. A strong higher education system needs a strong K-12 foundation. I'm looking forward to the challenge of examining the entire spectrum of our public education system.

The Senate Task Force on Public Higher Education is also comprised of:

Senator Robert A. Antonioni (D-Leominster), chair of the Education Committee  
 Senator Steven A. Baddour (D-Methuen)  
 Senator Joan M. Menard (D-Fall River)  
 Senator Mark C. Montigny (D-New Bedford)  
 Senator Bruce E. Tarr (R-Gloucester)

After fulfilling the seven-year commitment to fully fund education reform, the Legislature continued to provide additional funding for K-12 education until the fiscal crisis made it impossible to do so. Among the issues the Chapter 70 working group will be examining are:

- Many communities believe the funding formula does not treat them fairly. In our area this is especially true for those communities supporting regional and small rural schools.
- Rural and suburban communities have joined forces in filing a new court case asking the court to intervene by ordering the state to meet the funding needs of their respective communities. Although progress was made through education reform funding, state funding for Massachusetts public schools does not even meet the national average, which is typically 50 percent. So people are looking for another multi-year state commitment to increase state funding and to reduce the pressure on property taxes. We expect the court to rule soon.

The fiscal crisis isn't over, but we are beginning to see hope that it will soon end.

The working group is now wrestling with the formula and the questions surrounding inadequate funding for a range of educational services and policies. This is the fourth such task force in just the last few years, each of the others having ended without being able to make a concrete recommendation. I hope we can do better.

The Chapter 70 working group is also comprised of:

Senator Therese Murray (D-Plymouth), Chairwoman of Senate Ways and Means  
Senator Robert A. Antonioni (D-Leominster), chair of the Education Committee  
Senator Stephen Brewer (D-Barre)  
Senator Linda Melconian (D-Springfield)  
Senator Richard Moore (D-Uxbridge)  
Senator Robert O'Leary (D-Barnstable)  
Senator Susan Sprague (R-Walpole)

### *Senators rally for UMass funding*

I am rallying my Senate colleagues to support funding for UMass in the fiscal '05 budget.

Thirteen senators have joined me in petitioning Senate Ways and Means Committee Chairwoman Therese Murray (D-Plymouth) and Senate President Robert Travaglini (D-East Boston) to:

- Include full funding of the contracts in the UMass operating budget;
- Make last year's \$10 million supplemental budget appropriation permanent;
- Leverage private funds throughout the higher education system through a \$10 million appropriation to the endowment incentive program.

I've said it before, but it bears repeating, a well-financed public higher education system will be a strong force in continuing to improve our economy.

### *2004 Municipal Conference recap -- Western Mass. speaks, Boston listens*

Thanks to the work of the local officials who attended the Municipal Conference in Northampton on March 27th, I have gained a key ally in my effort to increase regional school transportation funding.

State Representative Marie St. Fleur (D-Boston), chairwoman of the Joint Committee on Education, has conducted education policy and financing panels at the conference for the last two years. This year, two days after hearing compelling arguments from local officials, Representative St. Fleur sent a letter to House Ways and Means Chairman John Rogers calling on House budget writers to place a high priority on increasing regional school transportation funding in the fiscal '05 budget.

In the letter, St. Fleur stated:

“The local officials I met with demonstrated the relative importance of transportation funding for regional school districts and the way in which cuts in this line item have exacerbated cuts made to educational programming as a result of reductions in Chapter 70 aid. Given the challenges facing rural regional districts, in particular, regional cooperation will likely be an increasingly important part of our collective effort to guarantee a quality education for all the Commonwealth’s children. Increasing state support of regional transportation costs . . . will not only provide real financial relief to struggling districts; it will also signal the state’s continued interest in supporting regional cooperation and collaboration.”

Western Mass. spoke and Boston listened. Representative St. Fleur is one of our most talented legislators and I’m thrilled that she’s supporting this issue on the House side. Increasing funding for regional school transportation is also one of my top budget priorities and having someone like Chairwoman St. Fleur on board will help tremendously.

The Municipal Conference also resulted in more commitments from policymakers. During the Transportation and Construction session, MassHighway John Cogliano Commissioner said the department would advertise and award the Rt. 9 widening contract this summer, with the bulk of the construction in 2005 and completion in 2006. Also, MassHighway officials announced that the department is working to make improvements to raise weight restrictions on the Rt. 2 bridges in Charlemont and that the design of the Main Street Bridge project in Deerfield is in the final review stage with construction targeted for 2006. MassHighway is also hoping to re-work the detour routes for the Rt. 112/20 in Huntington so they can restart the bridge reconstruction there. The detours must be resolved before reconstruction can begin.

## Noteworthy

### *March revenues*

Revenues for March were off by \$23 million, the first time in 13 months that collections have fallen below benchmarks. This is not necessarily bad news, because the state has so far this year collected \$456 million more than this same time last year, but it does flash a yellow caution light as the Legislature enters the budget process.

The revised deficit for fiscal '05 is approximately \$1 billion. I have been encouraging the Senate Ways and Means Committee to follow a three-stage strategy for reducing the cuts that will be necessary to bring the '05 budget into balance. First, I am encouraging judicious use of reserves, which now total around \$700 million. The problem, of course, with using reserves is that it's one-time money, but if we use some of what we've built up, it can provide a cushion. Second, I am continuing to push for passage of the combined reporting bill I have been sponsoring for 18 months and for the closing of corporate tax loopholes. And third, I want the Department of Revenue to be able to increase the number of auditors, thereby increasing collections. There is still no appetite on Beacon Hill to raise broad-based taxes, so that leaves us with cuts to make up the deficit. I am hopeful that budget writers will adopt some or all of my proposals so that the cuts will be less deep.

## Roundup

### *Rt. 47 Scenic Byway*

Early this month, State Representative John Scibak (D-South Hadley) and I announced that the governor had signed into law a bill designating Route 47 in Hadley and South Hadley as a scenic byway.

The overall purpose of the scenic byway designation is to recognize the unique scenic, cultural, and recreational resources along the byway. Specific purposes include the preservation of the rural scenic character of the corridor, improvement of highway safety features, expansion of economic opportunities for farm related business, and development of a balanced tourism program.

Now the rest of the state will know what western Mass. residents have known all along, that Route 47 is a beautiful stretch of road that deserves this designation. It was a pleasure working with Rep. Scibak and local officials to make it happen.

### *Appreciation award*

Recently, I was fortunate to receive an appreciation award for “steadfast support for comprehensive family planning services for uninsured low-income women and adolescents throughout the Commonwealth,” from the Mass Family Planning Association and Tapestry Health. Thank you!

## Trivia

Now for the answer to last month's question -- Who is credited with writing the Massachusetts Constitution?

The answer is: John Adams

And our winner is Margaret A. somewhere in cyberspace. We'll send Margaret information on who to contact in my Boston office and we'll look forward to seeing Margaret at the State House. Congratulations! And thanks to everybody who played along!

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

The site of the State House in Boston was once a cow pasture. Whose cows grazed there before construction on the State House began in 1795?

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!

Join TeamRosenberg! <http://www.stanrosenberg.com/teamrosenberg.php>

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)

Guide to Lawmaking -- <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/lawmkng.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 (March, 2004, edition) --  
<http://www.stanrosenberg.com/issues/march2004.html>