
The Rosenberg Report

Vol. XXXV
September 9, 2005

Hello,

I was traveling in eastern Europe, heading west, when Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast. The Europeans I encountered were getting their information straight from CNN, unfiltered by their own local media. At first, they reacted with genuine concern, empathizing with the suffering that they saw. But by the time I reached western Europe, concern and empathy had taken a half-step back to absolute bewilderment tinged with anger: How could the United States be so ill prepared? How could the most powerful nation on earth, one, apparently, with the resources to spend more than \$1 billion a month on a global war against terrorism, allow more of their own people to die in the woeful aftermath than in the teeth of the storm? These sentiments came through loud and clear, across every language barrier.

I suspect reaction here followed a similar arc.

And once again, we, as Americans, find ourselves in a place crowded with high emotion, much as we were after 9/11.

As I continue listening to the various reactions to this tragedy, I can't help but notice the similarities to our post-9/11 response. Americans today are stepping up, pouring their money and putting their backs into the relief effort, just like we did on September 12th, 2001. Our rallying cry today, just as it was then: "We're all in this together."

We all know that the "togetherness" we felt after 9/11 didn't last, and Hurricane Katrina has viciously punished us for our inability, or unwillingness, to do what is necessary to take care of each other.

Let's not allow that to happen this time. Let's demand of ourselves, and of our elected leaders, answers to some hard questions. Chief among them: Do we want government -- local, state and federal -- actively working to protect and improve our lives, or do we want it playing catch-up when things go bad. The first way is expensive, there's no question about it. Shoring up the levees in New Orleans to withstand a Category 4/5 hurricane would have cost about \$15 billion. The clean-up and rebuilding allocations from the federal government currently stand at \$60-plus billion, and counting. The second way, the government-playing-catch-up way, is absolutely heartbreaking.

On Tuesday, September 6th, the Legislature and the governor approved \$25 million from our budget surplus to assist the victims of the hurricane. The first group of evacuees has already arrived at Otis Air National Guard Base on Cape Cod to begin the next phase of their brutally interrupted lives. I know you will join me in welcoming them to our state.

There are dozens of ways you can help. If you would like to make a donation, or volunteer, call the Red Cross at 1-800-293-4031, or call the Massachusetts Emergency

Management Agency at 508-820-2000, to find out how. Or you can visit this website <http://www.mass.gov/massgov2/index.html> to learn more about the Massachusetts response.

Also, I have been informed that a group of local musicians have organized a benefit concert at All Souls Unitarian Church in Greenfield for tonight, this Friday, September 9th, at 7 p.m. Please help spread the word.

We *are* all in this together,



September Focus

Same-sex marriage

The situation with same-sex marriage is confusing, and changing by the day, so please bear with me and I'll try to walk you through it.

On Wednesday, September 7th, Attorney General Tom Reilly decided that the people who want to ban same-sex marriage by writing discriminatory language into our state constitution could start collecting signatures to place the matter before the voters, possibly by 2008. Those of us who are fighting to protect the constitutional rights of *everyone* in the Commonwealth were, to say the least, very surprised by this decision.

On Wednesday, September 14th, the House and Senate will convene for a Constitutional Convention to vote on the Travaglini-Lees amendment. You may recall that this amendment, which received initial approval at last year's Constitutional Convention, would place before voters in November, 2006, a constitutional amendment that: 1) defines "marriage" as a union between a man and a woman, and 2) allows "civil unions" for same-sex couples. An affirmative vote next Wednesday would allow this amendment to move forward to the November, 2006, ballot. A "no" vote would kill it. Quick reminder: The Travaglini-Lees amendment is separate from the question that was the focus of the Attorney General's decision.

I am delighted to report that we now have the votes to defeat the Travaglini-Lees amendment. This coalition of a majority of legislators who are against writing discrimination of any kind into our state constitution formed independently and was not influenced in any way by the Attorney General's decision. So, if all goes according to plan, the Travaglini-Lees amendment, and the idea of "civil unions" as a more palatable way to address same-sex couples, will be defeated next Wednesday.

OK, what next? Attorney General Reilly's decision means that proponents of the same-sex marriage ban will have to collect more than 65,000 signatures of registered voters and have their petition approved by two consecutive Constitutional Conventions in order for it to be placed on the 2008 ballot. The next Constitutional Convention is scheduled for sometime in the spring of 2006. All the same-sex marriage ban proponents need is 50 legislators to say OK and their petition will advance.

All we need is to grow our legislative coalition so that 151 legislators say "no" to discrimination. The fight goes on.

Noteworthy

State grants

Several state grants came our way during the last couple of months:

- \$180,000 for emergency repairs for damage to Brook Road in Shelburne Falls during a severe thunderstorm in July.
- Bernardston has received state highway assistance -- materials and equipment -- to repair roads damaged by that same storm.
- \$1.9 million School Building Assistance payment to Pelham.
- \$4.6 million School Building Assistance payment to Hatfield.
- \$15,000 from the Massachusetts Environmental Trust to the Deerfield River Watershed Association for the management of the invasive plant Japanese knotweed in rivers and streams throughout the watershed.

Quabbin PILOT payments

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) recently made payments from the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program to several communities in my district. These payments compensate these communities for hosting and protecting lands owned by the DCR's Division of Water Supply Protection.

- \$170,786 -- Belchertown
- \$264,481 -- New Salem
- \$162,276 -- Pelham
- \$250,019 -- Shutesbury
- \$16,247 -- Wendell

Round-up

Office hours

Here is my schedule of office hours for the next couple of weeks. If you can stop by, my staff and I would love to see you!

Monday, September 19th -- Noon-1 pm, Office hours in Amherst, Community Room @ Amherst Police Station.

Friday, September 30th -- 3-4 pm, Office hours in the Community Room, Shelburne Town Hall.

Local artists

**STUDENT PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT AT SENATOR STANLEY
ROSENBERG'S OFFICE AT THE MASSACHUSETTS STATEHOUSE,
BOSTON**

Hallmark Institute of Photography is pleased to announce a student exhibition at the Massachusetts State House. Thanks to the graciousness of Senator Stan Rosenberg, the visitors, staff and legislators of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will have an opportunity to enjoy imagery produced by the 2005 Graduating Class of Hallmark Institute of Photography of Turners Falls, MA. Images include samples of work from all disciplines of photography including portrait, commercial and fine art photography. Many of the images have been borrowed from the permanent collection of Hallmark Museum of Contemporary Photography, also located in Turners Falls.

Opening Reception

Date: September 22, 2005

Time: 3:00 – 5:00 PM

Location: State Senator Stanley Rosenberg's Office at the Massachusetts State House, Boston

Exhibition Dates: September 6 thru October 31, 2005.

About Hallmark Institute of Photography

Hallmark Institute of Photography is located in Turners Falls, MA. For thirty years, Hallmark has provided students with the basic skills necessary to enter the international imaging market. Hallmark's 10-month intensive learning program is designed to provide both the technical and business fundamentals that graduates need to find employment or to create small photographic businesses around the world in this very exciting and competitive field. There are over 200 students from around the world who attend the institute every year and add substantial economic benefit to the local Pioneer Valley Community. For information about Hallmark, please visit our web site, hallmark.edu.

About Hallmark Museum of Contemporary Photography

The Hallmark Museum of Contemporary Photography is the Pioneer Valley fine art photography outpost for the students, alumni, faculty and friends of Hallmark Institute of Photography. Official opening date is January 2006. For more information about Hallmark Museum of Contemporary Photography and upcoming events, visit hmcp.org or e-mail Vern McClish at vern@hmcp.org.

August revenues

Last week, the state Department of Revenue announced that revenues for the month of August totaled \$1.2 billion, and increase of \$13 million over last August.

Income tax collections for August totaled \$670 million, an increase of \$7 million or 1.0 percent over last August. Withholding tax collections totaled \$654 million, an increase of \$5 million or 0.7 percent. Sales and use tax collections were \$354 million, up \$19 million or 5.7 percent. Corporate and business tax collections totaled \$23 million, a decrease of \$6 million or 20.2 percent over last August.

Year-to-date income tax collections were \$1.315 billion, an increase of \$34 million or 2.7 percent. Year-to-date withholding tax collections were \$1.273 billion, an increase of \$44 million or 3.6 percent. Year-to-date sales and use tax revenues were \$723 million, an increase of \$42 million or 6.2 percent. Year-to-date corporate and business tax collections were \$68 million, an increase of \$15 million or 27.9 percent.

The monthly sales tax collections, it should be noted, were not affected by the August 13-14 sales tax holiday weekend. Sales tax collected in August will be reported and paid to the Commonwealth in September.

Trivia

Now for the answer to our previous question:

The Boston Common, situated at the foot of the Massachusetts State House, is recognized as which of the following:

- 1) The largest public park in Massachusetts
- 2) The site of the oldest American Elm in the nation
- 3) The nation's very first public park
- 4) The location of the pub that inspired the hit TV sitcom

"Cheers"

The answer is: 3) The nation's very first public park.

And our winner is Joyce B. from somewhere in cyberspace. We'll send Joyce information on who to contact in my Boston office and we'll look forward to seeing her 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 USS Constitution is the oldest fully commissioned vessel in the US Navy and is permanently berthed at Charlestown Navy Yard. What is the USS Constitution's nickname?

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!

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

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>

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 (June, 2005, edition) --
<http://www.stanrosenberg.com/issues/june2005.html>