
The Rosenberg Report

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Hello,

Our own people need our help.

Last month, the Legislature approved a \$25 million relief package to assist Hurricane Katrina victims being re-located to Camp Edwards at Otis Air Force Base on Cape Cod. Fewer evacuees have arrived than expected, and I have filed an emergency request to tap that fund for western Massachusetts flood relief.

At least seven communities Franklin County in my district have reported “major damage” as a result of the recent torrential rains and hundreds of people have lost homes and property. The entire western Massachusetts legislative delegation is mobilized and energized and working with all relief agencies and all levels of government to do whatever we can, as soon as we can, to bring the necessary help. I'm working to have my request to tap the Katrina fund included as part of the Senate's upcoming supplementary budget, expected next week.

The Hurricane Katrina money is available now and can start making life better while we pursue federal relief. The key word is ‘now.’ Our people need immediate help and we should spare no effort to provide it. We responded generously to our southern neighbors. We can do no less for our friends here in western Massachusetts.

We're all in this together,



October Focus

In the works

Several important bills are in the works for the remainder of this legislative session, which is scheduled to end sometime around November 16th.

Alternative fuels:

This bill is designed to kick start the use and development of alternative fuels in both the public and private sector. The full text is here <http://www.mass.gov/legis/bills/senate/st02/st02211.htm> but a few of the highlights include:

- Makes corporations that are primarily engaged in the development, construction or operation of alternative fuel refueling stations and the development of alternative fuels eligible for an investment tax credit.

 - Decreases by 25% the tax payable upon each gallon of alternative fuel. This section is effective for tax years 2005 through 2010.

 - Establishes the Commonwealth Alternative Fuels Institute at UMASS for the purpose of researching and developing alternative fuel vehicles, hybrids, alternative fuels and any related technology involved in the production, conversion, operation or maintenance of such alternative fuel vehicles and hybrids. Sets forth terms for governance of the Institute and membership of an Advisory Board.
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- Directs Commonwealth Alternative Fuels Institute to undertake comprehensive industry needs assessment of businesses engaged in the research, development and/or production of alternative fuel vehicles and hybrids, alternative fuels and related technologies. Describes Institute's primary goals as the development and commercialization of alternative fuel vehicles, fuels, equipment and technology.

 - Directs the Registry of Motor Vehicles to furnish a special vehicle identification placard or sticker, to be called the "Energy Independence Placard," to any person who owns or leases a qualified alternative fuel vehicle or hybrid fuel vehicle. Directs the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority to make Fast Lane toll transponders available to all placard holders and to waive the initial application fee for the transponder. Entitles placard holders to travel in HOV lanes for 3 years following the effective date of this act and permits municipalities, by local by-law or ordinance, to grant municipal parking to placard holders at a reduced rate or without charge.

 - Establishes the Energy Independence Grant Fund for the purpose of encouraging the purchase, lease, aftermarket conversion and use of hybrid and alternative energy vehicles by municipalities, school districts and Regional Transit Authorities. The Division of Energy Resources is directed to administer the Energy Independence Grant Fund based on criteria set forth in the legislation.

 - Directs the Division of Energy Resources to make grants available for the planning, design and construction of alternative fuel refueling stations on land owned or controlled by the Commonwealth or a Regional Transit Authority. Authorizes the State Treasurer to issue and sell bonds of the Commonwealth, in an amount not to exceed \$10 million, to pay for a portion of the expenditures necessary for the planning, design and construction of alternative fuel refueling stations.

 - Provides that not less than \$100,000 shall be expended from the Energy Independence Grant Fund for the Massachusetts Maritime Academy for the purpose of developing a pilot program to utilize wind energy technology to create on-site, hydrogen-based electricity and to develop a hydrogen-based fuel cell-powered tug boat.

 - Authorizes and directs the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority to develop a plan, in consultation with the Executive Office of Transportation, for creating alternative fuel fueling/service terminals on the Massachusetts Turnpike by January 1, 2012. If the

Turnpike Authority determines that facilitating such availability is not feasible, it must report this finding to the Legislature by January 31, 2006.

- Provides a \$2,000 tax deduction for individuals who purchase a hybrid or alternative fuel vehicle between January 1, 2006 and December 31, 2010.
- Directs the Commissioner of the Division of Energy Resources, in consultation with various secretariats and other named agency representatives, to develop a statewide, 10-year master plan for the advancement of alternative fuel vehicles and hybrids and related technology in the Commonwealth.
- Directs the MBTA to file a report indicating its utilization of alternative fuel vehicles, hybrid vehicles, and related technologies, emissions rates for such vehicles, the increased costs or savings and any positive or negative factors associated with this use.
- Allows a tax credit for any corporation that maintains a motor vehicle fleet of 50 or more vehicles and purchases or leases an alternative fuel vehicle or performs an aftermarket conversion of a conventional fuel vehicle to an alternative fuel vehicle. The tax credit will be equal to 50% of the difference between the purchase price or cost of aftermarket conversion of the alternative fuel vehicle and the listed purchase price of a gasoline-powered vehicle of like qualities. The credit is not available unless the corporation maintains at least 10% of its fleet as alternative fuel vehicles, and the credit is in effect for taxable years 2005 through 2015.
- Allows a tax credit for any corporation that (1) is licensed as a common carrier of passengers; (2) maintains a motor vehicle fleet of 25 or more vehicles; and (3) purchases or leases an alternative fuel vehicle or performs an aftermarket conversion of a conventional fuel vehicle to an alternative fuel vehicle. The tax credit will be equal to 50% of the difference between the purchase price or cost of aftermarket conversion of the alternative fuel vehicle and the listed purchase price of a gasoline-powered vehicle of like qualities. The credit is not available unless the corporation maintains at least 10% of its fleet as alternative fuel vehicles, and the credit is in effect for taxable years 2005 through 2015.
- Requires the Commonwealth, when purchasing new motor vehicles, to purchase hybrid or alternative fuel vehicles to the maximum extent feasible at a rate of not less than 5% annually. The bill requires that, taking into account the existing number of such vehicles owned and operated by the Commonwealth, not less than 50% of the motor vehicles owned or operated by the Commonwealth must be hybrid or alternative fuel vehicles by 2010. Directs the Division of Operational Services and the Division of Energy Resources to work together regarding all agency requests for motor vehicle acquisitions.
- Authorizes the Secretary of Administration and Finance to enter into any necessary contracts and agreements with manufacturers or providers of hybrid or alternative fuel motor vehicles for the purchase or lease of these vehicles or aftermarket conversion equipment or technologies in order to implement this legislation.
- Directs the Commissioner of the Division of Energy Resources to annually develop a directory of alternative fuel vehicles, equipment and services available for purchase by

public entities in the Commonwealth. The directory is intended to promote awareness and utilization of alternative fuel vehicles by the Commonwealth and its political subdivisions.

- Directs the Division of Operational Services to study the feasibility and potential cost-savings of developing and implementing a system to facilitate the mass purchase of alternative fuel vehicles by the Commonwealth and its political subdivisions.
- Directs the Secretary of Economic Affairs to evaluate the feasibility and desirability of any and all methods that the Commonwealth could use to facilitate the production of alternative fuel vehicles and equipment within the Commonwealth.

Biodiesel:

I successfully attached an amendment to the alternative fuels bill that would create a special commission to report on the expanded use of biodiesel. The amendment, which was co-sponsored by Senator Steve Baddour, chairman of the Transportation Committee, and Senator Bruce Tarr states:

The commission shall consist of 1 member to be appointed by the department of environmental protection; 1 member to be appointed by the department of telecommunications and energy; 1 member to be appointed by the division of energy resources; 2 members to be appointed by the senate president; 1 member to be appointed by the senate minority leader; 2 members to be appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives; 1 member to be appointed by the minority leader of the house of representatives; and members to be appointed by the governor to provide appropriate consumer, environmental, and industry representation. The commission shall submit a report and recommendations to the secretary of environmental affairs; office of commonwealth development; the joint committee on telecommunications, utilities, and energy; the joint committee on environment, natural resources and agriculture; the joint committee on state administration and regulatory oversight; and the house and senate clerks by June 30, 2006.

The commission shall conduct a study of the current impediments in state and federal law and regulation to the certification, licensure and availability for sale in the commonwealth of highly efficient diesel passenger vehicles under the California LEV II standards and potential methods to address such impediments. It shall also examine barriers and opportunities for widespread use of biodiesel and low-sulfur biodiesel fuels for motor vehicles, heating and other appropriate uses in the commonwealth. From this study the commission shall submit a plan for the expanded use of biodiesel where feasible and appropriate.

Energy efficiency/heating assistance:

The House and Senate teamed up to put forward an \$80 million energy efficiency/heating assistance package that includes a combination of one-time spending proposals and tax incentives. Some highlights of the bill include:

- Tax deductions of up to \$800 for home heating oil and natural gas expenses for individual homeowners with incomes up to \$50,000 and joint filers up to \$75,000;

- Credits of up \$600 for residents who purchase new windows, advanced thermostats and other materials to make homes more energy efficient;
- A one-time tax credit of 15 percent, or \$300, for businesses to install solar water heating systems;
- A \$20 million state supplement to the federal Low-Income Home Energy Heating Assistance Program (LIHEAP), nearly three times the amount the state spent last year. The program would also be expanded to include people up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

Noteworthy

Higher education pay raises

Once again, the governor vetoed the raises for higher education employees, and once again the Legislature, both branches, overrode the veto unanimously. The governor did change his rationale for the veto, however. When he vetoed the first installment, he said that because he didn't negotiate the contract he didn't feel bound to honor it -- a rationale that seems to fly in the face of our "we're-a-nation-of-laws-not-men" concept of government. This time he said didn't like the retroactive nature of the raises. Well, when fairly negotiated raises aren't paid on time there seems to be only two choices: retroactive or renege.

There is so much at stake with these raises -- the economic prosperity of western Massachusetts and the integrity of government. It's galling when the governor seems to care so little about either.

Round-up

Alumni of the year award

On September 30th I was fortunate enough to be presented with the first Mary Killeen Bennett Alumni of the Year Award by the UMass Amherst Pioneer Valley Alumni Club for my work on behalf of the University. This award means a lot to me and I deeply appreciate the Alumni Club's recognition and support.

State grants

The Tilton Library in South Deerfield was recently awarded a \$10,000 Reader's Advisory Grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. The grant will provide materials and training for the library staff in Reader's Advisory, the art of assisting readers with book selection.

Trivia

Now for the answer to our previous question:

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?

The answer is: Old Ironsides

And our winner is Leslie S. from somewhere in cyberspace. We'll send Leslie 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 game of Volleyball was invented in Holyoke in 1895 by William G. Morgan. But Volleyball was not the original name. What was the original name of the game invented by Mr. Morgan?

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!

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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 (September, 2005, edition) --
<http://www.stanrosenberg.com/issues/sept2005.html>