
The Rosenberg Report

Vol. IV
May 6, 2002

Hello!

Beacon Hill has been abuzz with activity in recent weeks as citizens across the Commonwealth have become increasingly aware of the seriousness of the state's fiscal crisis. Everyday the halls have been filled with people talking to their legislators, asking questions about the fiscal 2003 budget, putting in a good word for their favorite programs. These lobbying efforts have been intense, but so far the discussions, public and private, have been respectful.

The "Save UMass" rally on April 25th was a good example. More than 2,000 students and teachers – more than 700 of them from Amherst alone – gathered at the State House and made their case for higher education. They were forceful, and they were passionate about their cause. But they were also dignified. And I, for one, have greatly appreciated their efforts throughout this budget crisis.

It's very early in the budget-making process. There are more than a dozen proposals to increase taxes and fees under discussion and the Legislature's budget debates are likely to be as intense and passionate as the recent lobbying efforts. I hope the Legislature and the citizens of the Commonwealth can meet this fiscal challenge with a spirit of partnership because this situation is calling on us to work together like never before.

If you are receiving this newsletter for the first time, welcome aboard! I hope you find it useful. If you are a veteran, I hope you still find it useful. But if anyone wants to be removed from our list, just click here tumitch@sprynet.com and tell us. Also, if you know someone who might like to be added to our list, please forward the link to our on-line registration form. <http://www.stanrosenberg.com/issues/rosenreportreg.html>

Yours,



May Focus

FY '03 Budget Crisis

On May 2nd, the House of Representatives, by a vote of 131-23, approved a tax package estimated to raise roughly \$1 billion next fiscal year. The package includes:

- Freezing the income tax rate at 5.3 percent (\$230 million)

- Taxing capital gains at the same rate as ordinary income (\$240 million)
- Reducing personal exemptions to \$3,300 (single) and \$6,600 (joint) (\$258 million)
- Postponing individual deductions for charitable contributions (\$185 million)
- Raising the tax on cigarettes by 75 cents a pack (\$150 million)

As the Senate prepares for its own budget discussions, I would appreciate knowing your thoughts on the matter.

The link below will take you to an op-ed piece I prepared about the fiscal '03 budget crisis that appeared in the Springfield *Union-News/Sunday Republican* on April 28th. At the end of the article is a feedback form. It would be great to hear from you.

<http://www.stanrosenberg.com/issues/crisis.html>

FY '02 Budget snapshot

Over Patriots Day weekend, the governor and House and Senate leaders forged a tentative agreement to close the FY '02 budget deficit – estimated at \$689 million – with reserves and transfers from other accounts. If this agreement is finalized, it means that there will be no further budget cuts for the remainder of this fiscal year, which ends on July 1st, 2002. It also means that there will be less money in the “Rainy Day” fund to help address the FY '03 deficit. As of today, May 6th, 2002, that agreement, known as the Patriots Day accord, has not been approved by either the House or Senate.

UMass strategy meeting

This morning, a dozen senators joined me in a meeting with Senate President Tom Birmingham and Senate Ways and Means Committee Chairman Mark Montigny to discuss our concerns about the UMass budget.

As a group we expressed pride in the Senate's role in rebuilding the UMass and other public college budgets over the last decade. We expressed concern about this year's six percent cut and 10 percent tuition and fee increase. We urged that the Senate not only work toward at least level funding K-12 education for the fiscal '03 budget, but also level fund UMass and the entire public education system. We pushed yet again for funding of the unfunded collective bargaining agreements at the University. This is the first time that the UMass graduates in the Senate, and Senators representing communities in which the campuses are located, have met collectively with Senate leadership to advocate for the University.

Below you will find a link that will take you to a column I prepared last month for the *Campus Chronicle*, the weekly publication at the UMass-Amherst campus. The column is co-signed by me (UMass Class of '77), State Senators Andrea Nuciforo (D-Pittsfield, UMass Class of '86) and Stephen Brewer (D-Barre, UMass Class of '71) and State Representatives Nancy Flavin (D-Easthampton, UMass Class of '86), John Merrigan (D-Greenfield), Steve Kulik (D-Worthington), Ellen Story (D-Amherst, Honorary Alumna '98).

UMass column - <http://www.stanrosenberg.com/issues/umassxroads.html>

Noteworthy

Definition of Marriage Amendment

On May 1st, a Constitutional Convention – a combined meeting of the House of Representatives and Senate – convened and adjourned without taking any action, ostensibly to allow House members to begin debating tax proposals. The next Constitutional Convention is scheduled for Wednesday, June 19th at 2 p.m.

The latest action on the amendment occurred on April 24th when the Joint Committee on Public Service voted 15-0 across party lines to reject the measure.

If the Definition of Marriage Amendment is approved, the state's constitution would be changed so that the only legally recognized relationship would be the marriage between a man and a woman.

Clergy Reporting

On May 3rd, the governor signed a bill making members of the clergy mandated reporters of child abuse.

That bill was approved in the Senate on April 25th. Led by my colleagues Sens. Susan Tucker (D-Andover), Cheryl Jacques (D-Needham), Marian Walsh (D-West Roxbury) and Senate President Tom Birmingham, the Senate approved the bill requiring any priest, rabbi, clergy, ordained or licensed minister, accredited Christian Science practitioner, or anyone employed by a church or religious body to supervise, coach or counsel children, to report incidences of child abuse to the Department of Social Services.

Currently, the only professions mandated to report child abuse are: physicians and medical professionals; teachers, including guidance counselors and day care workers; social workers; foster parents; police officers and firefighters; drug abuse counselors; clinical social workers; and psychiatrists.

The Senate attached an emergency preamble to the bill, which makes it effective immediately, instead of the traditional 90 days, and the House of Representatives concurred.

Roundup

Franklin-Hampshire County Delegate Workshops

State Democratic Committeewoman Mary Ford and I are co-sponsoring a workshop for all Hampshire County delegates and alternates attending the Democratic State Convention in Worcester. The workshop will be held on Thursday, May 23rd, at the Dorothy M. Breor Elementary School, from 7-9 p.m. The school is located on Main Street in Hatfield behind the Hatfield Public Library. For more information contact Sean Barry at seanb@valinet.com

There will also be a workshop for Franklin County delegates, sponsored by the Franklin County Democratic Committee, on Saturday, May 18th, at Bickford's in Greenfield from 7:30-9:30 a.m.

The workshops are designed to help delegates familiarize themselves with the procedures that will take place at the Democratic State Convention in Worcester later this month.

Upcoming meetings

Next month I will be hosting two "Living with Bears" seminars with the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The dates are:

June 27 – 7-9 pm, at the JFK Middle School, Northampton.

June 29 – 10 am-Noon, at The Notch Visitor's Center, Rt. 116, South Amherst.

For more information contact my district office at 413-587-6259.

State Grant Awards

On April 23rd, Attorney General Thomas Reilly came to western Mass. to announce four grants from the Municipal Brownfields Grants program, which was created during my tenure as chairman of the Senate Ways and Means Committee. The grants are designed to help cities and towns develop plans to turn abandoned, contaminated industrial sites into open space or new commercial sites. The four communities receiving grants in my district were:

Ashfield -- \$57,400 to tear down the former Sanderson Academy elementary school;

Greenfield -- \$36,300 for redevelopment of the Greenfield Tap and Die Plant;

Montague -- \$13,640 for technical assistance to raze a storage facility on Third Street;

Northampton -- \$50,000 for redevelopment plans for the former Mill River bed.

Also, C&A Construction Co. of Ludlow has been awarded the contract to reconstruct South Chesterfield Road in Goshen. Work on the project is expected to begin later this spring.

Trivia

Here's the answer to last month's question -- Name the highest ranking elected official in the state's history who was also a UMass graduate.

As best we can tell, thanks to the gracious assistance we received from the UMass Alumni Office, the answer is Dr. David M. Bartley of Holyoke, who received a B.A. from UMass in 1956 and an E.D.D. from the UMass School of Education in 1988. David was elected to the state House of Representatives in 1962, making him the first UMass graduate in the House, and he became Speaker of the House in 1968. At that time, his fellow

Holyoker Maurice Donohue was Senate President and among their many achievements was the creation of the state's community college system. David is currently the president of Holyoke Community College.

For more information about HCC, follow this link -- <http://www.hcc.mass.edu/>

Now, here's this month's question:

We're going to start something different this month. We'll take all the correct answers receive, select one at random, and offer that person lunch with me in Boston and a tour of the State House. OK, here's the question – What is the official breed of dog for the state of Massachusetts?

Submit your answers to tumitch@sprynet.com and watch this space for the correct answer.

Links

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

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 (April, 2002, edition) --
<http://www.stanrosenberg.com/issues/april2002.html>

And here are some UMass-related links

UMass Home Page -- <http://www.umass.edu/>

Campus Chronicle -- <http://www.umass.edu/pubaffs/publications/chronicle/>

The Daily Collegian -- <http://www.dailycollegian.com/vnews/display.v>

Alumni Relations -- <http://www.umassalumni.com/>

UMass News Office -- <http://www.umass.edu/newsoffice/>

Save UMass -- <http://saveumass.org/>