

Dear Friends,



Stan
Rosenberg

The 185th session of the Massachusetts Legislature has come to a close and I'm pleased to report that it was one of the most productive in all my years in the State Senate.

My unshakable core belief is that government, imperfect, like all human endeavors, works best when there is a spirit of partnership between the government and the people. We are truly all in this together, and together, you and me and our colleagues in the House and Senate, passed almost 100 major pieces of legislation, including initiatives to protect our children and invest in their education, to promote alternative fuels and protect the environment, to reign in the cost of health care and encourage economic development, to provide mental health parity and mental health services for children.

We also took care of the basics by funding local aid for our communities, Chapter 70 for our schools and by approving several bond packages to improve our infrastructure.

Here you will find some of the highlights of the 185th session. It's a privilege to serve you and I hope that I will continue to earn your trust, and your vote, when Election Day rolls around on November 4th.

Best Wishes!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stan".

Dairy Farm Revitalization Task Force

In June of '07, I was appointed to the Dairy Revitalization Task Force, a panel charged with investigating solutions to preserving and strengthening the dairy farm industry in Massachusetts. In July of '08, the governor signed the following provisions of the bill drafted by the Task Force:

An income tax credit for dairy farmers when milk prices fall below the costs of production;

A proposal from one of my constituents to allow communities to opt out of collecting local excise taxes on farm equipment;

The creation of a state-qualified milk promotion and research program;

Promotion of renewable energy technologies;

Couponing of fluid white milk with protections for farmers who sell their milk directly to consumers.

Bond and grant funding for local projects

\$10 million for a fire training academy in western Mass. to relieve the continuing backlog at the academy in Stow;

Almost \$5 million for Greenfield projects, including the Intermodal Transportation Center, the new home of the Franklin CoG and for downtown revitalization;

Almost \$1 million for land conservation and recreation facilities in Northampton;

\$1.1 million to repair dikes in Hatfield and Hadley;

More than \$1.5 million for recreational facilities and school buildings in South Hadley;

\$10 million for cleanup at the Belchertown State School;

Almost \$2 million in development grants for Franklin County towns, including Bernardston, Northfield, Erving, Colrain, Gill and Erving.

Tax Fairness

In July of '08, the Senate approved my plan to close a tax loophole that enabled some state corporations to avoid paying state corporate excise taxes.

My plan requires corporations subject to the corporate excise tax in Massachusetts to engage in combined reporting. Under combined reporting, all entities subject to the corporate excise tax in the state would be required to report all of the profits realized by all of their related subsidiaries in the United States, regardless of where those subsidiaries are located and regardless of where their accountants deem those profits to be earned.

This will prevent corporations from using accounting schemes to avoid paying taxes here, thereby generating more than \$400 million for the state in tax year '09.

The bill also contains my proposal to establish a special commission to study the feasibility of innovative local revenue-generating measures, like the local-option meals tax, in an effort to provide revenue relief to municipalities.

Regional Transportation Authority Reforms

In July of '08, the Senate included in its Transportation Bond Bill my reform package, which would save state taxpayers millions in interest payments while improving and expanding transportation services in western Mass.

My proposal calls for authorizing the Secretary of Transportation to investigate the use of existing federal money in the "toll credit" program to begin the process of placing regional transportation authorities (RTAs) on a "forward funding" system.

Forward funding would eliminate the borrowing that the current "lag funding" system requires and save state taxpayers an estimated \$2-\$4 million in interest payments.

Expanded Child Protections

As a founding member of the Legislature's Foster Kid Caucus and a member of the conference committee that drafted the "Act Protecting Children in the Care of the Commonwealth," I played a leadership role in this bill's passage in July of '08.

The bill empowers state government to provide an unprecedented level of protection to vulnerable children. The legislation creates the Office of the Child Advocate, responsible for examining the quality of child services provided by state agencies and reporting directly to the governor. In addition to an oversight and ombudsman capacity, the Child Advocate would also be empowered to investigate and intervene in cases of serious harm or death, and be charged with developing a long-term plan to further coordinate and modernize the child welfare system.

Under this legislation, the foster care system also would see considerable improvements. The bill would extend support for those "aging out" of the system, allowing services to continue for children-turned-adults between the ages of 18-22. Also, in addition to the tuition that is already provided, foster care children would receive fee waivers at all state universities and colleges. There are also a number of new mandates to help guard against abuse and neglect.

Rate-Setting for Social Services

This year the governor signed a new law that establishes a rate-setting bureau for human and social services. The law will provide for a rational approach for setting rates for human service contracts, rates which have not been substantially adjusted in two decades. This type of approach has long been advocated by social service workers.

Higher Education Bond

In July of '08, the Senate approved a higher education bond that grew out of work I had done as co-chair of the Senate's Task Force on Higher Education. The Task Force concluded that the public must re-invest in the higher education system if we were to achieve the goal of positioning Massachusetts at the vanguard of the world's knowledge-based economies. A bond bill, the Task Force determined, was absolutely necessary to enable the state's campuses to address the epidemic of deferred maintenance and help ease the financial burden on students.

The local projects, which will help create thousands of construction jobs, included in the bond are:

\$31 million for GCC renovations;

\$385 million for UMass-Amherst, including: \$95 million for the Life Sciences Center, \$85 million for new classrooms, \$100 million for new science labs, \$12.6 million for repairs to Machmer Hall, \$41.250 million for renovations to Lederle Research Center, \$51.3 million for renovations to Morrill Science Center.

GCC and UMass-Amherst are also eligible for hundreds of millions of dollars in unearmarked funds to further help address the problem of deferred maintenance.

Hampshire County Regional Lockup

I led the effort to secure \$250,000 for the Hampshire County Regional Lockup in the fiscal '09 state budget.

The money, which represents the state's share of the funding plan negotiated by local legislators, police chiefs and community officials in '07, is more than half the operating budget of facility, and will help keep the lockup operational through fiscal year '09.

Universal Broadband Access

I have long worked with my colleagues in the Legislature to bring broadband service to every community in the state. During the past year, our efforts in the Legislature, and with local governments and private companies, helped secure a \$200 million commitment from Verizon in February '08 to establish broadband service for 23 communities in western Mass.

And just this past August, the governor signed into law a bill to enable the state to issue \$40 million in bonds to make broadband service available to every community in the state by 2010. Of that amount, \$15 million would be dedicated to unserved communities.

Franklin County Education Finance Study

For more than a year, I have been working with the Franklin County Legislative delegation, school superintendents and municipal officials, and representatives from GCC and the Franklin Regional CoG, to devise a strategy to address the financial issues affecting Franklin County schools.

The goal of this effort is to provide a long-term strategic vision and educational model that creates schools in Franklin County that are economically viable while still able to deliver quality programs and services to all students.

During the past year, I have secured \$195,000 in state and private grants to provide expertise and information-gathering for a two step study process, the initial phase of which has been completed.

Cultural Facilities

In September of '07, more than \$1 million in grants from the state's new Cultural Facilities Fund, a program I had long championed to increase public investment in the state's cultural treasures, was awarded to four projects in my district that serve the entire region.

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