



DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES FOR  
**STATE REPRESENTATIVE**

# 1<sup>ST</sup> BERKSHIRE

## ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

PROGRESSIVEMASS.COM/elections      SEPT 2017

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ENDORSEMENTS ARE DETERMINED BY VOTING MEMBERS OF PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS.

### CANDIDATES

LISA HALL BLACKMER–

STEPHANIE BOSLEY–

KEVIN TOWLE–

### SPECIAL ELECTION INFORMATION

**WHO:** REGISTERED VOTERS IN THE 1<sup>ST</sup> BERKSHIRE HOUSE DISTRICT—*Consisting of Adams; Cheshire; Clarksburg; Florida; Hancock; Lanesborough; New Ashford, North Adams; Williamstown*

**CHECK VOTER STATUS:** [sec.state.ma.us/voterregistrationsearch/myvoterregstatus.aspx](http://sec.state.ma.us/voterregistrationsearch/myvoterregstatus.aspx)

**WHEN:** **October 10**, 2017 (Primary) and **November 7**, 2017 (Election)

**WHERE:** Local polling places can be found at [wheredoivotema.com](http://wheredoivotema.com)

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AVAILABLE ON THE WEB:

**PROGRESSIVEMASS.COM/2017ELECTIONS**

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# Introduction

## Progressive Mass & Endorsements

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*Progressive Massachusetts is a statewide, grassroots organization committed to working toward shared prosperity, racial and social justice, good government and strong democracy, and sustainable infrastructure and environmental protection. It was founded by local organizers to move forward progressive values and issues in Massachusetts. We work on legislative, issue, and electoral campaigns.*

Advancing a progressive agenda in Massachusetts requires electing legislators who share--and will fight for--our values, and then holding them accountable.

### Membership

One of the benefits of being a dues-paying member of Progressive Massachusetts is participation in our endorsement votes for key elections. This is one of the very direct ways that our members shape the future direction of progressive policymaking in the state.

**Not yet a member? Join!** [ProgressiveMass.com/membership](https://ProgressiveMass.com/membership)

### Endorsement Process

Progressive Massachusetts sends candidates this detailed policy questionnaire, revised periodically by the Elections & Endorsements Committee (EEC). The EEC carefully reviews the questionnaire responses, assesses and discusses the field, and then makes a recommendation to voting members. However, the decision belongs to our members.

In each race, members choose among the **candidates**, as well as the options of “**no endorsement**” or **abstention**. Candidates who receive at least 60% of all ballots submitted will be endorsed by Progressive Massachusetts. If no candidate in a race reaches the 60% threshold, we will not endorse.

### Context and Materials for the Progressive Voter

All questionnaires are available on our website for all, as a public service, regardless of endorsement outcome. We invite voters to share our materials, with attribution, and help push all candidates and campaigns towards substantive engagement with important progressive issues.

We encourage progressives to use our **Progressive Platform**, **Legislative Agenda**, **Scorecards**, and other materials to help in their research before election day. All are found on our website: [progressivemass.com](https://progressivemass.com)

## Sources

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*Each section features a chart or graph that illustrates one facet of the issue under discussion and is not intended to be comprehensive. All images and data are from Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center ([massbudget.org](https://massbudget.org)) unless otherwise specified. All sources are available upon request.*

# I. About the Candidates

## A. Lisa Hall Blackmer

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**Website:** [LisaBlackmer.com](http://LisaBlackmer.com)

**Twitter:**    **Facebook:** [/LisaBlackmerforStateRep](https://www.facebook.com/LisaBlackmerforStateRep)

1. *Why are you running for office? And what will your top 3 priorities be if elected?*

I am running to make sure those who reside in the 1st Berkshire District have the opportunities they need to prosper in their lives, their work and raising their families.

A Berkshire native, I have spent the last 30 years in the 1st Berkshire District, and my commitment to its future success is evident both in my personal and professional life. My first priority will be to advocate and push through the legislation that my friend and colleague Gail Cariddi proposed on behalf of those in our district.

I know first hand the impact that government can have. There are good programs available to help folks in need. My dad got hurt on the job, delivering milk for Fairdale Farms. Because of workers' compensation and the G.I. bill, he was able to go to college as an adult with a wife and three daughters. My mom was a stay at home mom, and we lived in a rural community where the quarries had closed and jobs were limited. We qualified for an earlier incarnation of food stamps and Medicaid. Later, my sisters attended Head Start. Though we had limited resources, my family still helped others. Like all parents, my mom and dad wanted us to do well. We were expected to do our best in school, keep commitments to organizations like the Girl Scouts, and be good and fair sports if we played.

Taking care of people and creating an environment where we all can succeed is something that is deeply ingrained in me. A State Representative must understand the entire community she represents, from the most vulnerable to the most powerful, all are her constituents. "There, but for the grace of God go I," is never far from my mind.

My Priorities will be 1. Increasing economic growth for all. 2. Fighting for our cities and towns, particularly supporting public education. 3. Ensuring access to quality healthcare

2. *What prepares you to serve in this capacity?*

I have served as a North Adams City Councilor for 10 years including as its president, vice president and committee chair of several committees. I am the immediate past president of the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA), where I advocated on behalf of cities and towns and met regularly with state officials regarding issues important to us. I have built relationships with some in the House and Senate to move particular agenda items forward. I understand the various programs utilized by cities and towns and by the general public. I have worked on legislation and gone over budgets. I worked on several political campaigns.

## B. Stephanie Bosley

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**Website:** [bosleyforstaterep.com](http://bosleyforstaterep.com)

**Twitter:** **Facebook:** [/bosleyforstaterep](https://www.facebook.com/bosleyforstaterep)

3. *Why are you running for office? And what will your top 3 priorities be if elected?*

As many people experienced, after the November 8, 2016 election, I felt called to take a larger role in politics and advocacy. As a woman, I think now more than ever it is important for our voice to be included in policy decisions. I am running for office because I feel as though my experience and knowledge has equipped me to be a voice for the 1st Berkshire District.

We are in unique times in the First Berkshire District: our creative economy is thriving, there are exciting development projects happening, and yet we still have persistent challenges that have affected the region for a long time. We have to keep a balance of creating new industries and encouraging young families to move in while keeping affordability for those on fixed incomes. I believe it is time for a fresh face with fresh ideas to address these challenges. I love the Northern Berkshire community and want to ensure that we have the resources to address our needs and continue growing.

My three top priorities if elected are ensuring that people have access to transportation that is reliable and has schedules that meet their needs, implementing programs that improve the housing stock of the region, and working with our educational institutions and workforce training programs to ensure that we have training programs that not only address the job needs of existing employers but that appeal to potential employers looking to relocate.

4. *What prepares you to serve in this capacity?*

I have a BA in Political Science from UMass Amherst and an MS in Public Affairs from the McCormack School of Policy and Global Studies at UMass Boston. During my time at UMass Amherst, I studied politics as well as social justice through their Grassroots Community Development course. While at UMass Amherst, I had an opportunity to work at Solider On, a nonprofit dedicated to eradicating veteran homelessness, and a unique opportunity to do a semester long internship with a grassroots community organization called Black Women United for Action, an organization that works with low-income single mothers to achieve things that they would like to achieve such as a GED programs, workforce training programs, higher education, employment, etc. I have served in AmeriCorps in North Adams at a youth center that served low-income families. Throughout these experiences, I realized that public policy is so much more than just applying a program or a service to address it. There are so many intricacies that affect someone's ability to thrive. I have worked in grassroots community development with the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition (nbCC), where I worked with youth to encourage them to become active participants in our community where they may feel as though their voices aren't heard. With nbCC I also worked in low-income neighborhoods with residents empowering them to use their voices for change in their neighborhoods or within their own lives. I have worked in municipal government for the Town of Adams managing their Housing Rehabilitation

**CANDIDATE STATEMENTS**  
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STATE REP. / 1<sup>ST</sup> BERKSHIRE  
SPECIAL / PRIMARY-OCT. 10, 2017 / ELECTION - NOV. 7, 2017

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program, a program that low-income families can apply for to make code improvements to their homes. From there I went to the American Cancer Society, where I managed Relay For Life of Northern Berkshire, Relay For Life of Berkshire County Central South, and Making Strides Against Breast Cancer. I became the Western Mass Advocacy Liaison for the American Cancer Society's 501c(4) organization, the Cancer Action Network, where I helped spread the word about action items such as cancer related legislation and helped recruit advocacy volunteers. Lastly, I worked for 1Berkshire, the regional chamber of commerce and the regional tourism council in the Berkshires working with our member businesses to address their economic development needs. Throughout my career I have taken every opportunity to learn and grow and I feel my experience with working families and the public sector will help address the systemic needs of the region and inform my policy decisions.

## C. Kevin Towle

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**Website:** [kevintowle.org](http://kevintowle.org)

**Twitter:** **Facebook:** /VoteKevinTowle

1. *Why are you running for office? And what will your top 3 priorities be if elected?*

I'm running because I worked as Legislative Aide to Rep. Gail Cariddi and invested a significant amount of personal effort into providing constituent service and passing legislation. I am also running because I want to ensure that progressive values are represented and that progressives have a stronger voice on Beacon Hill.

My top three issues are: Economic Development (I know this is vague, but I released a [12 page position paper](#) on specific plans for this issue that I will submit with this questionnaire); expanding free public education at all levels (including expanding early childhood education and providing free four-year tuition) as well as increasing funding for rural school districts; and transitioning Massachusetts to 100% renewable energy.

2. *What prepares you to serve in this capacity?*

I worked as Legislative Aide to Rep. Cariddi. In this capacity, I researched and authored legislation and also shepherded the legislation through the House. I also led the budget efforts for the office. During this time, I was able to foster connections with other Representatives and throughout the state that I will be able to leverage to build coalitions around legislation and to best represent the First Berkshire District.

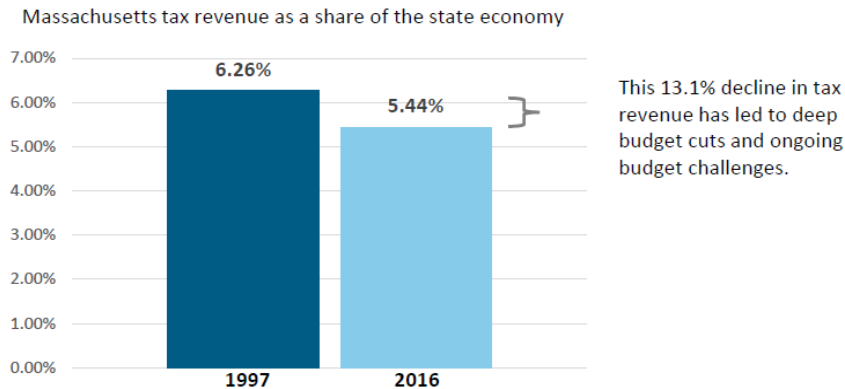
Additionally, I serve on the Energy and Economic Development committees in my hometown (Lanesborough). In these capacities, I have been working on important economic development and energy issues and projects.

## II. Policy & Platform

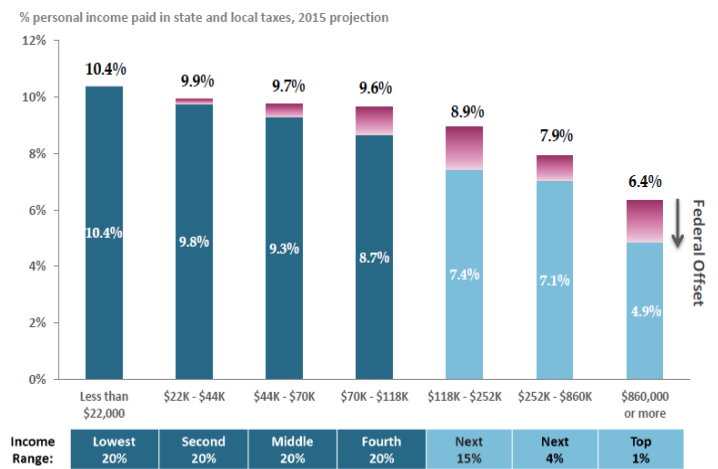
### A. REVENUE AND TAXATION

Despite the label of “Taxachusetts,” Massachusetts ranks 22nd among states in terms of state and local taxes as a share of total personal income and below the national average. Between 1977 and 2012, Massachusetts reduced state taxes by more than all but one other state. Because of income tax cuts enacted between 1998 and 2002, Massachusetts is losing over \$3 billion in tax revenue each year. Such cuts to the state income tax have meant increasing reliance on fees, as well as sales, gas, and property taxes, exacerbating the overall regressivity of the system. Regressive taxation strains low- and middle-income families, and reduced revenue collection curtails our ability to invest in vital infrastructure. It also restricts legislators’ ability to pass new and visionary legislation, as there is a continual shortage of funds for existing priorities.

**Declining revenues have meant drastic cuts, limiting our ability to invest in our communities and future economic stability.**



#### Massachusetts state and local taxes are regressive.



\* Percentages shown inside bar are net effective tax levels after factoring in federal offset. Percentages above bars show tax levels before federal offset.  
Source: Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy.

## Candidate Overview & Experience: Revenue and Taxation

1. *What principles do you bring to considerations of state revenue and tax reform (individual and corporate)? How should we raise more revenue to adequately fund our communities for the future?*

**BLACKMER:** I think we need to pass the "Fair Share Amendment," local options taxes, raise the gas tax, and apply the hotel motel tax to users of shared services lodging like airbnb.

**BOSLEY:** I support the Fair Share Amendment and a graduated income tax.

**TOWLE:** My main principles when looking at tax reform are closing tax loopholes and increasing corporate taxes. Doing both will allow revenues to grow substantially. I am also supportive of the Fair Share Amendment that will be on the ballot next year. I believe the revenues generated from this will be significant and will greatly complement the increased revenue from marijuana tax receipts.

2. *Optional/As Applicable: Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on revenue and taxation (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).*

**BLACKMER:** As an MMA board member, I have pushed for local option gas tax, hotel/motel tax expansion, increase in the recreational marijuana tax, and the "Millionaire's tax" to provide funds for needed services. I think it is important that proceeds from the "Fair Share Amendment" be used to fund education and transportation.

**BOSLEY:**

**TOWLE:** As a member of the Lanesborough Economic Development Committee, I have publicly proposed recruiting a retail marijuana establishment for the town as a means of raising revenue while facing a tight municipal budget. I have publicly announced support for the Fair Share Amendment and plan to work on the ballot question campaign.

## Policy Questions: Revenue and Taxation

3. **Progressive Taxation.** *Progressive Massachusetts grassroots members are working on a constitutional amendment to increase the income tax on income over \$1 million by 4%. Would you support or oppose this effort (the Fair Share Amendment)?*

**BLACKMER: Support.** See above. Additionally, I do not think we will lose many residents to other states. People live in Massachusetts because they chose to.

**BOSLEY: Support.**

**TOWLE: Support.** I believe in a truly progressive tax code that both raises taxes on the highest earners while also closing tax loopholes.

4. **Sales Tax Holiday.** *It has been demonstrated over and over that the annual sales tax holiday does not serve its intended purpose of increasing sales, but rather just shifts sales to the weekend of the holiday. Would you support or oppose efforts to extend the sales tax holiday?*

**BLACKMER: Oppose.**

**BOSLEY: Support.** I have supported a sales tax holiday in the past, I would be interested to speak with retailers in the district to get their feedback on this issue. I did some light research on this issue before

answering and I wasn't able to find much data on it. I would be happy to look over any data or information that you or stakeholders could provide.

**TOWLE: Oppose.** I think the loss of revenue for what turns out to be more of a gimmick is a loss of funds for important programs.

5. **Corporate Tax Incentives.** *Would you support or oppose legislation to impose greater accountability on corporate tax incentives (such as through automatic five-year sunsets or revocation of incentives that do not meet promised job, wage, and benefit standards)?*

**BLACKMER: Support.** I think we need accountability and proven benefits to any tax incentive program with regular reporting and disqualification if companies fail to meet goals.

**BOSLEY: Support.**

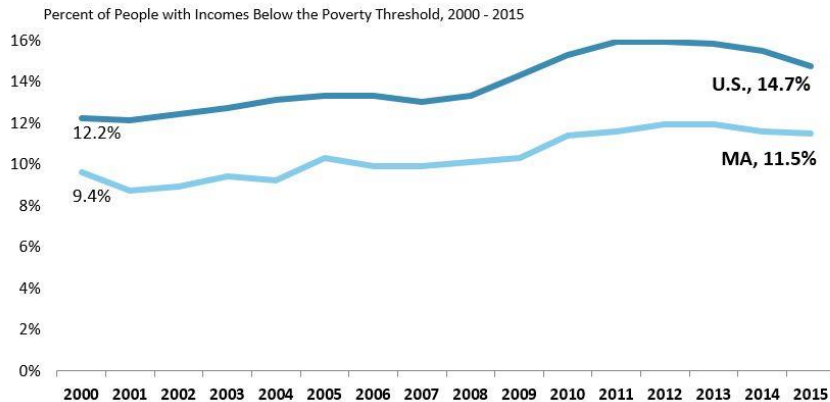
**TOWLE: Support.**

## B. JOB GROWTH & THE ECONOMY

The Massachusetts economy has continued to grow and recover from the Great Recession, but the gains have not been shared equally. Poverty levels continue to increase, while the minimum wage loses value every year. Massachusetts now ranks as one of the top ten most unequal states according to various measures of income inequality.

**Poverty has been on the rise over the past decade.**

### MA and U.S. Poverty Rates Remain Elevated Despite Years of Recovery

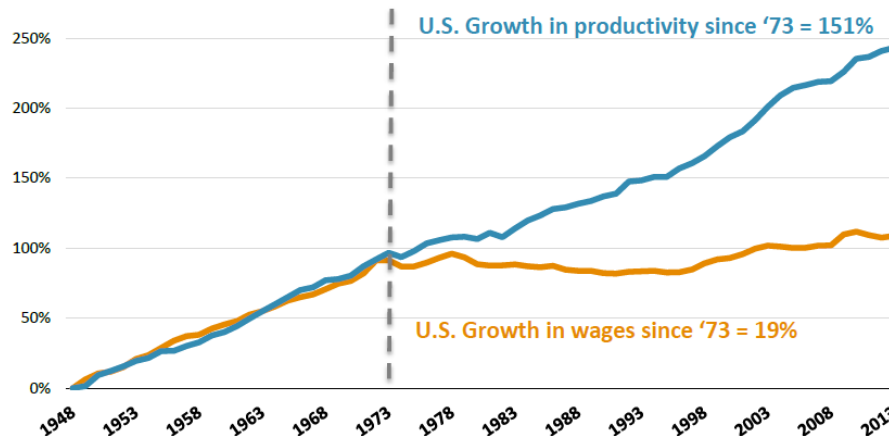


Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey

**Productivity has grown significantly since the 1970s, but it is not being reflected in higher wages.**

### Growing Wage and Productivity Gap is Our Central Economic Challenge

Cumulative percent change since 1973



Source: Economic Policy Institute analysis of unpublished Total Economy Productivity data from Bureau of Labor Statistics' Labor Productivity and Costs program, wage data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Employment Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics' Employment Cost Trends data, and the Bureau of Economic Analysis' National Income and Product Accounts

### Candidate Overview & Experience: Job Growth & the Economy

1. Share your personal values and principles on job growth and the economy. How can we improve the economy and economic security for all people? How do we grow the number of good-paying jobs in the Commonwealth? How do you view wealth and income inequality, and what would you do about it, if anything?

**BLACKMER:** Our residents want to work, but jobs of today require different skills. I want to help connect those residents to the jobs and skills they need. I will push for more effective workforce development programs to help our residents and our businesses be more competitive in the 21st Century economy. Schools like McCann Tech, BCC and MCLA in my area can help us get there and not only help today's employers, but create and attract the employers of tomorrow. We also need access to broadband and transportation.

**BOSLEY:** Self-sufficiency for families is important for their livelihood and success. I will file a bill for a self-sufficiency study. I am interested in looking at the 1st Berkshire District, but it could be done statewide to find out what it takes for a family to become self-sufficient. This is absolutely necessary as we go forward creating programs to skill the workforce. A \$15.00 minimum wage has become the focus for many groups, but we need to figure out what it takes to create the skills for a living wage. What does it take for a family to make enough money to live on? What does it take for a family to be able to survive not only for the next year but for a lifetime? If we are spending a great deal on programs that don't do this, then we are not using resources as best we can and not doing what is intended. My bill would tell us what we need to ensure that after spending money on training and education, people can make enough to live in our area and thrive.

**TOWLE:** As mentioned previously, I publicly released a 12-page position paper on economic development, which includes my ideas for improving the economy and providing economic security. This is a comprehensive issue, but I will summarize a few points here (and would encourage you to read the rest of my position paper, which I will forward): (1) We need to keep highly-skilled workers in Massachusetts. Many areas of the Commonwealth face a "brain drain" problem. If we can keep skilled workers here, jobs will follow. (2) We need to recruit new businesses to Massachusetts. Tax incentives can work, provided they are accompanied by measurable benchmarks, including ensuring that jobs are created and that worker retraining occurs. (3) We need to improve transportation. The legislature has the ability to set regulations that will require regional public transportation to be more accountable to the needs of the district.

2. *As Applicable: Indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on these topics.*

**BLACKMER:** I have advocated for increased funding for our regional employment boards, our vocational schools and investment in infrastructure that supports economic development.

**BOSLEY:**

**TOWLE:** These are issues about which I have always been passionate. These issues inspired me to work to elect Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders and to work for progressive candidates and causes.

### **Policy Questions: Job Growth & the Economy**

3. *Minimum wage. Would you support or oppose raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour?*

**BLACKMER: Support.** I think a gradual increase of \$1 a year works. It is realistic for small businesses and allows them to plan, lessening the chance of large lay-offs.

**BOSLEY: Support.** Ultimately, I support a living wage. As mentioned previously I would like to look at what it takes for a family to thrive and continue to thrive.

**TOWLE: Support.**

a. **Tipped Minimum Wage.** And making the tipped minimum wage equal to that of the regular minimum wage?

**BLACKMER: Support.** Actually, a worker in Massachusetts who works for tips must be paid minimum wage. If their "tipped rate" plus their tips does not equal minimum wage, the employer must make up the difference so that they receive minimum wage.

**BOSLEY: Support.** I cautiously support. I would be interested to speak with servers to see what they would prefer. Employers are supposed to fill the wage gap if a server makes below minimum wage on a slow day. I wouldn't want to implement something without speaking with servers and ensuring that they feel this would be more beneficial to them.

**TOWLE: Support.** In a previous job, I had the benefit of earning more than minimum wage and also receiving tips. This income was very helpful to me as a working college student and was the only way I was able to pay bills after.

b. **Indexing the Minimum Wage.** And indexing the minimum wage to inflation?

**BLACKMER: Support.**

**BOSLEY: Support.**

**TOWLE: Support.**

4. **Paid Family and Medical Leave.** Would you support or oppose efforts to mandate access for up to 12 weeks of Paid Family and Medical Leave?

**BLACKMER: Support.** I think there needs to be a trust fund to support small businesses and the self-employed.

**BOSLEY: Support.**

**TOWLE: Support.** I have made this one of my key campaign issues. I believe this is necessary to ensure economic security and no one should have to choose between caring for family or losing their job.

5. **Wage Theft.** Would you support or oppose legislation to hold businesses responsible for the wage violations of their subcontractors when the work they do is substantially connected to the company's operations?

**BLACKMER: Support.** It is important for companies to hold their sub contractors to high standards and pay their employees fairly.

**BOSLEY: Support.**

**TOWLE: Support.**

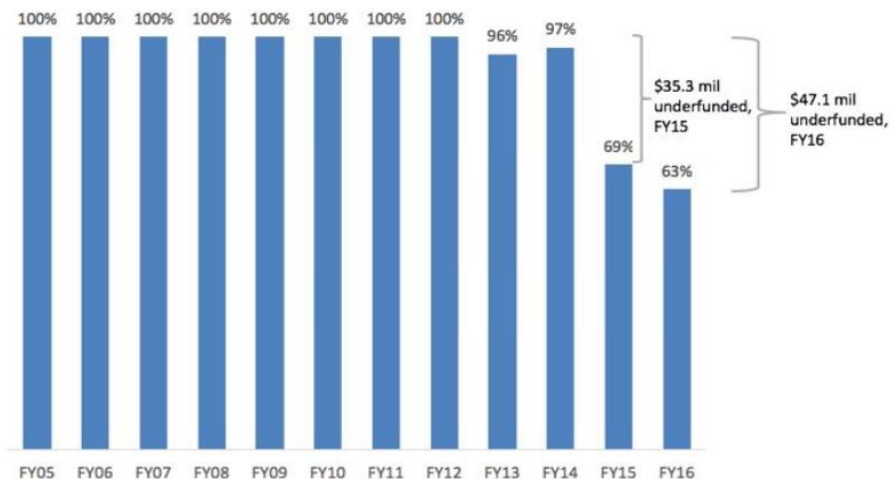
# C. EDUCATION

Public education has always been a gateway to opportunity and mobility for all, regardless of economic circumstances, a cornerstone of the American dream for all residents. The mission of public schools is to serve all students, including English Language Learners and those with special needs. However, powerful corporate interests are working to undermine public schools, teachers, and unions. These groups are investing millions of dollars to promote the expansion of privately run charter schools, which siphon money from our public K-12 districts while largely excluding students with the greatest needs. Various forms of privatization are being proposed and implemented, including charter schools and “turnaround” schemes that put private management groups in charge of struggling public schools. Costly, mandated standardized test results are used to justify these privatization schemes. Finally, the soaring price of higher education over the last several decades has made access to this opportunity increasingly out of reach, at the very moment when higher education makes a greater difference to one’s economic future.

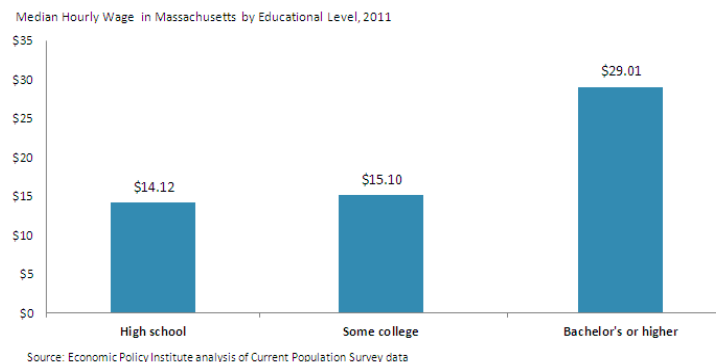
**The state hasn’t been living up to its responsibility to fully fund our public schools.**

### The State Has Not Fully Funded Charter Reimbursements in Recent Years

Percent of charter school reimbursements paid to sending districts, based on reimbursement formula

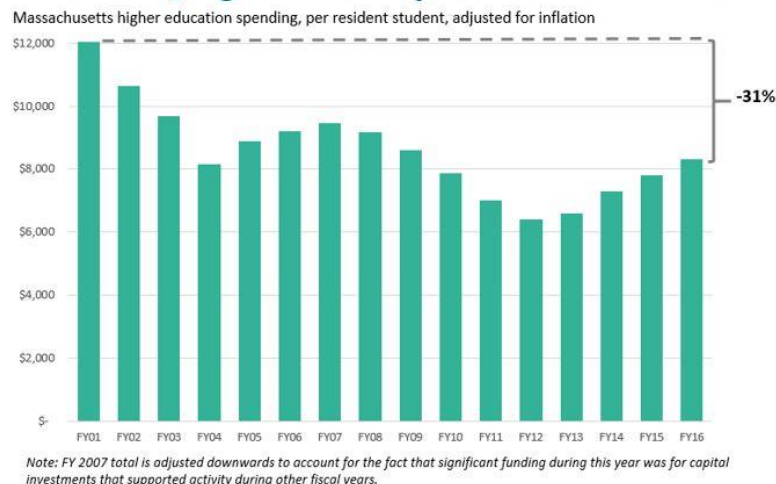


**Higher educational attainment leads to higher wages.**



**Massachusetts has been disinvesting from higher education and shifting the cost burden onto students.**

**Per Student, Higher Ed. Cut by 31 Percent Since FY 2001**



**Candidate Overview & Experience: Education**

1. Please share your personal values and principles regarding public education. What value does public education have in improving our economy as well as in addressing matters of economic justice? How can we close persistent achievement gaps? What measures should MA take on these issues?

**BLACKMER:** I am a strong supporter of public education at all levels. I have voted on local budgets, lobbied for Chapter 70 money and pushed for stronger support for the state college and university system, including funding of negotiated raises.

**BOSLEY:** Education is the foundation for everything in life. We are fortunate to live in a state that is highly regarded for its educational excellence, but we must also work to address funding issues so that all children regardless of their zip code have access to a good educational foundation and teachers have access to the resources that they need to educate our youth.

**TOWLE:** As I believe that free public education needs to be expanded at all levels, including early childhood, special education, ELL, and free four-year tuition at public colleges and universities. I have always been very supportive of education because it has been a huge part of my life. Education is the most important means to success and opportunity and everyone should have access to this.

Achievement gaps can be closed by adequately funding schools. Schools are typically the largest part of the budget of any municipality, so it often becomes difficult for cities and towns to find the money necessary to adequately fund schools. In such a situation, it is imperative that the state takes responsibility to ensure that schools are properly funded. Because of this, I have called for a change in the Chapter 70 formula to provide increased school funding, particularly for rural schools. I am also hopeful that the increased revenues from the Fair Share Amendment and marijuana tax receipts will help meet the funding needs of our schools. I would support legislation to ensure that this happens.

2. As Applicable: Indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on public education.

**BLACKMER:** As an MMA board member and Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts Alumni Board member, I have advocated for education funding at all levels.

**BOSLEY:**

**TOWLE:** I was very supportive and volunteered with the No on 2 campaign against lifting the cap on Charter Schools. I have also been an advocate for public schools. I went to public schools for K-12 and have remained in close contact with nearly every single one of my teachers (as well as college and grad school professors). I have relied on them for advice on matters concerning public schools. I also worked on campaigns for two school building projects (one in my hometown of Southwick, the other was the first campaign with which I was actively involved in Lanesborough).

### Policy Questions: Education

3. *Universal Pre-K.* Would you support or oppose creating universal, free Pre-K, accessible to any resident of Massachusetts, integrated into the public school system?

**BLACKMER: Support.** Children need a good foundation in order to succeed in the future. Education is the great equalizer.

**BOSLEY: Support.**

**TOWLE: Support.**

4. *Standardized Testing.* Would you support or oppose the use of high-stakes testing for such things as student promotion, high school graduation, teacher evaluation, and the evaluation of schools and districts?

**BLACKMER: Oppose.**

**BOSLEY: Oppose.**

**TOWLE: Oppose.**

5. *Funding Structure.* Would you support or oppose changes to the Chapter 70 Education formula, including the Foundation Budget, to incorporate proper state funding for ELL students, Special Education students, transportation costs, charter school reimbursements to sending schools, and class size reduction?

**BLACKMER: Support.** The MMA had a representative on the commission that reviewed and recommended the changes.

**BOSLEY: Support.** Funding is often disproportionately distributed, we need to create programs that will advance funding in ALL areas of Massachusetts.

**TOWLE: Support.** Additionally, I support increased Chapter 70 funding for rural school districts.

6. *Charter Schools.* In Nov. 2016, MA voters overwhelmingly rejected a ballot initiative to lift the cap on charter schools given the millions of dollars it would have siphoned away from public schools.

- a. *Would you support or oppose keeping the cap on charter schools?*

**BLACKMER: Support.** The MMA board, under my leadership supported and lobbied for the "no" vote on this question.

**BOSLEY: Support.** I support the cap on charter schools.

**TOWLE: Support.**

- b. *Would you support or oppose legislation to bring greater accountability and transparency to charter schools, such as by requiring them to adhere to the same disclosure and disciplinary standards as public school districts?*

**BLACKMER: Support.**

**BOSLEY: Support.**

**TOWLE: Support.** Local control is important for any charter schools and the schools should be responsible to the public.

7. *Higher Education Access. Would you support or oppose legislation to grant in-state tuition and financial aid to undocumented students?*

**BLACKMER: Support.**

**BOSLEY: Support.**

**TOWLE: Support.**

8. *Tuition-Free Higher Education. Would you support or oppose making tuition free at public colleges and universities?*

**BLACKMER: Support.** I think it should be need driven so that those most likely to attend public colleges and universities will not be pushed out by those of a higher income bracket who have the resources to pay for their education.

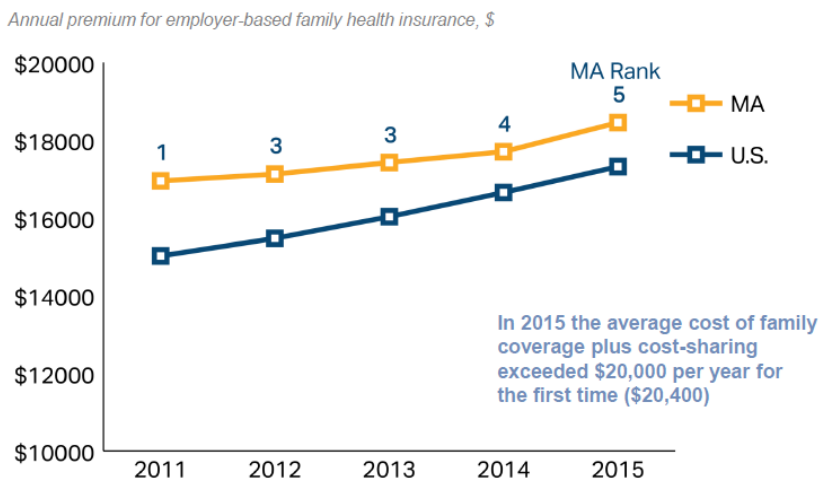
**BOSLEY: Support.** The state of New York implemented a similar program. I am interested to see how it has worked and if there is anything that Massachusetts could add or change to ensure success.

**TOWLE: Support.** As I mentioned earlier, this is one of the key proposals I have made during the course of this campaign.

## D. HEALTH CARE

Massachusetts has led the way in providing near universal health insurance coverage, with 97% of the state having health insurance. But there is still work to do. Significant disparities in health insurance coverage and health care access continue to exist along income, racial, and education lines. Premiums continue to rise, and medical debt remains a persistent problem. We still spend an oversized portion of public and private money on health care, but without necessarily achieving better health outcomes.

**MA has among the highest health insurance premiums in the country.**



Source: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, Insurance Component

### Candidate Overview & Experience: Health Care

1. Please share your personal values and principles regarding health care insurance, delivery, and outcomes.

**BLACKMER:** I think we need to move to a Medicare for All system. We need to better fund smaller community hospitals.

**BOSLEY:** With the uncertainty of the Affordable Care Act on the federal level, I believe it is important that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts does everything that it can to offer our constituents the best in health care and safeguard what the ACA offers.

**TOWLE:** When I announced my candidacy, I announced support for creating a single-payer healthcare system. Healthcare should be treated as a right, not a privilege. Single-payer would not only reduce costs, it would provide better care and would be equally available to everyone.

In North Adams, the only hospital in North Berkshire County closed with an illegal three-day notice. This devastated the community. Over 500 people lost jobs, but the community and the entire region lost its access to healthcare. I have publicly committed to working to ensure that the North Adams hospital becomes a full-service hospital again..

2. *As Applicable: Indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on these topics.*

**BLACKMER:** I pushed for the GIC to provide GYN services at the primary care rate. As the City Council President when our hospital closed, I was part of discussions about what services needed to be returned.

**BOSLEY:**

**TOWLE:** I have attended meetings of organizations committed to re-opening the North Adams hospital. I have publicly committed my support of their efforts and, as State Representative, will work to ensure that the hospital is restored. This is the only accessible healthcare facility in North Berkshire County. There is no other hospital within a half hour. This has resulted in a life-or-death situation for countless individuals when a serious illness or injury occurs.

I have also pledged support to the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA) in their collective-bargaining process as they seek to ensure patient and nurse safety. I have met with the local nurses from the union on several occasions and have heard the horror stories about the safety of both North Adams Hospital (still operating as a satellite facility with only an ER) and Berkshire Medical Center.

### Policy Questions: Health Care

3. *Single Payer. Would you support or oppose legislation to enact a single payer health care system in Massachusetts?*

**BLACKMER: Support.**

**BOSLEY: Support.**

**TOWLE: Support.** This was one of the key initiatives I proposed in announcing my candidacy.

4. *Reproductive Rights. Would you support or oppose legislation to guarantee women access to abortion care without dangerous delay, isolation, and obstruction?*

**BLACKMER: Support.**

**BOSLEY: Support.** Her body, her choice. I support a women's right to choose. As a woman this is an important human right that we have to continue to support.

**TOWLE: Support.** Absolutely.

5. *Birth Control. Would you support or oppose legislation to guarantee access to birth control without copay?*

**BLACKMER: Support.** A woman has no control over her other life choices unless she has control of her reproductive choices.

**BOSLEY: Support.** I support an act Relative to Advancing Contraception Coverage and Economic Security (S 499, H 536), this legislation would protect and expand access to contraceptives by requiring insurers in Massachusetts to cover all FDA-approved contraceptive methods without cost-sharing, including coverage of over-the-counter contraceptives without a prescription.

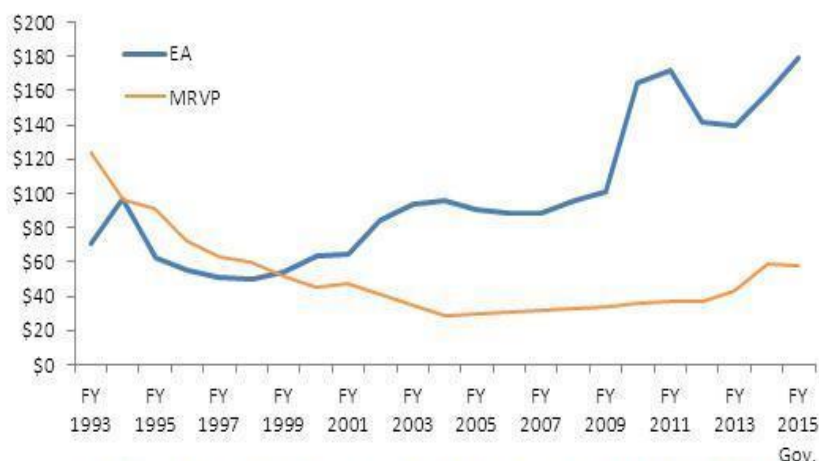
**TOWLE: Support.**

## E. HOUSING

Over the last ten years, the need for affordable housing has increased, while funds for affordable housing have decreased at both federal and state levels. Currently, there is a waiting list of up to ten years for a rental voucher, and the fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment requires a wage 40% higher than the average renter wage. Half of families in Greater Boston alone pay over 30% of their income in housing and utilities costs—and over 25% of households pay more than half their income to housing. This is unsustainable. It has led to expanding economic inequality, increased homelessness, and damage to our economy, as talented workers often leave the state for less expensive regions.

### Funding for housing vouchers has fallen-- costs for shelter has increased

(inflation adjusted to 2014 dollars)



Funding for Shelter (EA) and MRVP has moved around since FY 1993. This chart includes funding from the following line items for MRVP: 3222-9024, 3722-9024 & 7004-9024. Line items for EA include: 4403-2100, 4403-2120, 4403-2130, 7004-0101 & 7004-0103.

### Candidate Overview & Experience: Housing

1. Please share your personal values and principles regarding affordable housing. How would you ensure that there is suitable housing for all who need it, within reasonable distance of job opportunities? How would you address the need to link housing, jobs, and transportation? How would you tackle homelessness?

**BLACKMER:** In rural areas housing, transportation and jobs all go hand in hand. They need to be tackled together.

**BOSLEY:** The Representative must assist homebuyers to afford a home and assist cities and towns to make improvements to housing stock. It is imperative that we improve this as part of an overall economic development strategy as well as a housing strategy. I will support towns in application for Community Block Grant Funding for housing rehabilitation. A program that I managed while with the Town of Adams. I believe that we should use funds for Rehabilitation programs to make code and facade improvements. I would also like to explore options to offer home improvement grants for homeowners and homebuyers to allow low income families and the elderly to keep their homes and incentivize

young people to invest in homes. I believe that it is critical that we support energy efficiency programs that will make housing more efficient, saving homeowners money as well as helping our environment.

**TOWLE:** Again, these issues are discussed more substantially in my position paper. However, I would seek to increase funding to communities in order to rehabilitate blighted properties in order to make them livable and bring them up to code. I would make this funding subject to making the properties available to those with low incomes or facing homelessness. I would also seek to increase funding for public transportation.

2. *As Applicable: Indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on these topics.*

**BLACKMER:** I have supported the work to build housing for homeless veterans and others. The MMA has advocated to properly fund appropriate housing.

**BOSLEY:** At the Town of Adams I managed our Housing Rehabilitation program to ensure that the elderly and low income families could make necessary code improvements to stay in their homes.

**TOWLE:**

### Policy Questions: Housing

3. *Housing programs. Would you support or oppose legislation to increase funding for affordable housing production (especially low-income housing units) and the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program?*

**BLACKMER: Support.**

**BOSLEY: Support.**

**TOWLE: Support.**

4. *Zoning Reform. Would you support or oppose legislation to upgrade Massachusetts's zoning laws to encourage more affordable housing and transit-oriented, walkable development and to promote inclusionary zoning practices?*

**BLACKMER: Support.**

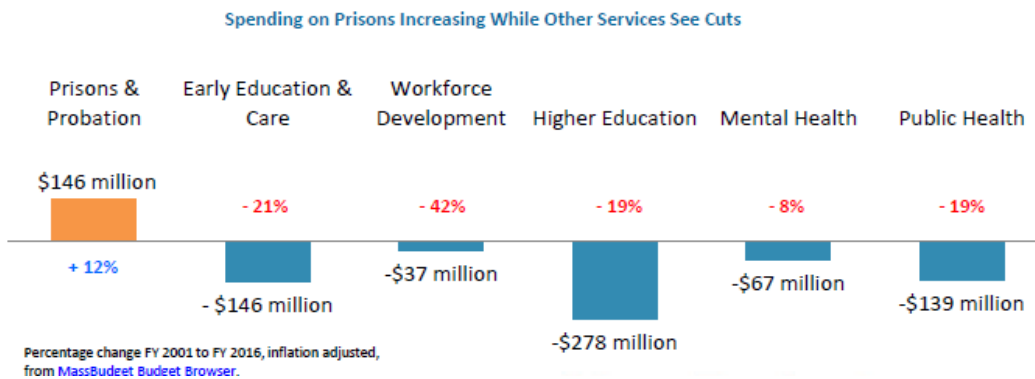
**BOSLEY: Support.**

**TOWLE: Support.**

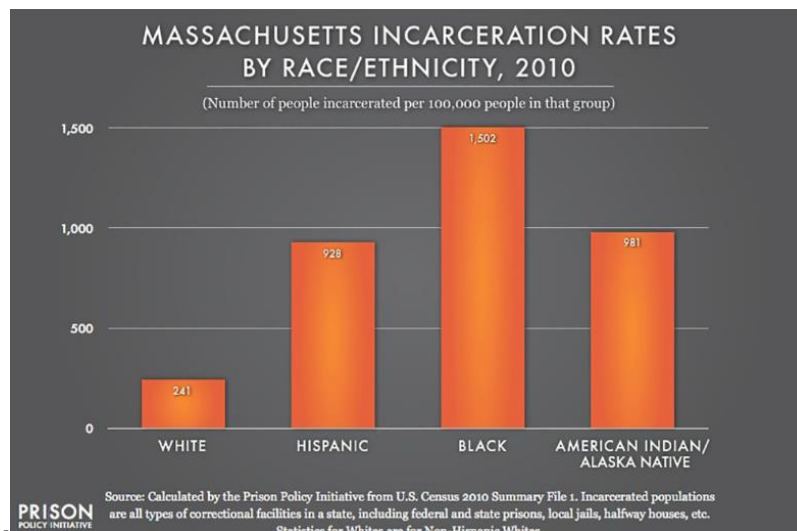
# F. RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Massachusetts must continue to strive to be a state that welcomes and embraces all of its residents and combats prejudice and discrimination of all kinds. The social and economic costs of mass incarceration and the policies that created it, in particular, have put our aspirations of “justice for all” into crisis. We support a judicial system that does not disproportionately target communities of color and the poor, that does not criminalize public health issues such as addiction, that reorients away from ineffective and costly ‘tough on crime’ policies. A comprehensive approach to reform must be taken in all aspects of the criminal justice system.

## Spending on prisons has increased while other services have been cut.



## Significant racial disparities exist in incarceration in Massachusetts



## Candidate Overview & Experience: Racial and Social Justice

1. Please share your personal values and principles regarding Racial and Social Justice.

**BLACKMER:** I think that everyone has the ability to make a contribution to our society and should be given a chance to do so.

**BOSLEY:** As a white, middle-class person I have grown up with privileges that I know others have not. I will use my privilege and my voice to ensure that policies across the Commonwealth are equitable and

just for all. Given a time when our Federal Administration works to divide people, I believe it is important that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts show through policies and legislation that we are working towards more equitable policies for all.

**TOWLE:** I support reforming the justice system to treat addiction instead of imposing criminal penalties and will be supportive of any legislation that shifts Massachusetts away from "tough on crime" policies such as mandatory minimum sentences, raising the felony threshold, and increasing education and job training

I am also supportive of the Safe Communities Act and will be supportive of any other social and racial justice legislation. I was supportive of the same-sex marriage protections when they were passed in Massachusetts and was happy to see the Supreme Court's ruling protecting same-sex marriages. In short, I support any legislation that ensures equal protection and equal rights for all, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.

2. *As Applicable. Please indicate work you personally have done to combat racism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, and other attempts to marginalize disadvantaged groups.*

**BLACKMER:** Our City Council has passed a "Free and Welcoming Community" resolution in the city. My family sponsored a Cambodian refugee family.

**BOSLEY:**

**TOWLE:** This is not an area I have worked in extensively, but I am very supportive of all efforts and any legislation to ensure equal protection and equal treatment.

### Policy Questions: Racial and Social Justice

3. **Trans Accommodations.** *In 2016, Massachusetts passed legislation to prevent discrimination against transgender individuals in public accommodations. Would you support or oppose the 2018 ballot question to repeal this law?*

**BLACKMER: Oppose.**

**BOSLEY: Oppose.** Trans rights are human rights.

**TOWLE: Oppose.**

4. **Sentencing Reform.** *Which of these four steps to combat mass incarceration in the Commonwealth do you support? (1) eliminate minimum mandatory sentencing, (2) increase felony threshold, (3) reduce/eliminate fines/fees, (4) invest in re-entry programs)*

**BLACKMER: SUPPORTS (1)** Eliminating mandatory minimum sentences related to drug offenses, **(2)** Raising the felony threshold for theft from \$250 to \$1500, **(3)** Eliminating or reducing fees and fines that hinder reentry efforts and turn jails into debtors' prisons, **(4)** Increasing investment in education and job training programs for the formerly incarcerated.

**BOSLEY: SUPPORTS (1)** Eliminating mandatory minimum sentences related to drug offenses, **(2)** Raising the felony threshold for theft from \$250 to \$1500, **(3)** Eliminating or reducing fees and fines that hinder reentry efforts and turn jails into debtors' prisons, **(4)** Increasing investment in education and job training programs for the formerly incarcerated.

**TOWLE: SUPPORTS (1)** Eliminating mandatory minimum sentences related to drug offenses, **(2)** Raising the felony threshold for theft from \$250 to \$1500, **(3)** Eliminating or reducing fees and fines that hinder reentry efforts and turn jails into debtors' prisons, **(4)** Increasing investment in education and job training programs for the formerly incarcerated.

5. ***Safe Communities Act.** Would you support or oppose the Safe Communities Act, which prohibits the use of state resources for mass deportations or deportation raids, limits local and state police collaboration with federal immigration agents, and prohibits state support for a Muslim registry?*

**BLACKMER: Support.** The City Council proposed and supported a resolution on this.

**BOSLEY: Support.**

**TOWLE: Support.**

6. ***Safe Driving Act.** Would you support or oppose the Safe Driving Act, which would remove immigration status as a barrier to applying for a license or learner's permit?*

**BLACKMER: Oppose.** I am concerned about identification, etc.

**BOSLEY: Support.**

**TOWLE: Support.**

7. ***Marijuana legalization.** Last November, Massachusetts voters passed Question 4, a ballot initiative to legalize recreational marijuana and regulate it akin to alcohol. However, many legislators are already keen on rolling back the will of the voters. Would you support or oppose the implementation of Question 4, with additional steps to increase equity (such as by expunging the records of those arrested for things that would now be legal)?*

**BLACKMER: Support.** The legislature has addressed some of the issues relating to local control.

**BOSLEY: Support.**

**TOWLE: Support.** I publicly supported Question 4 and would support further legislation to expunge records.

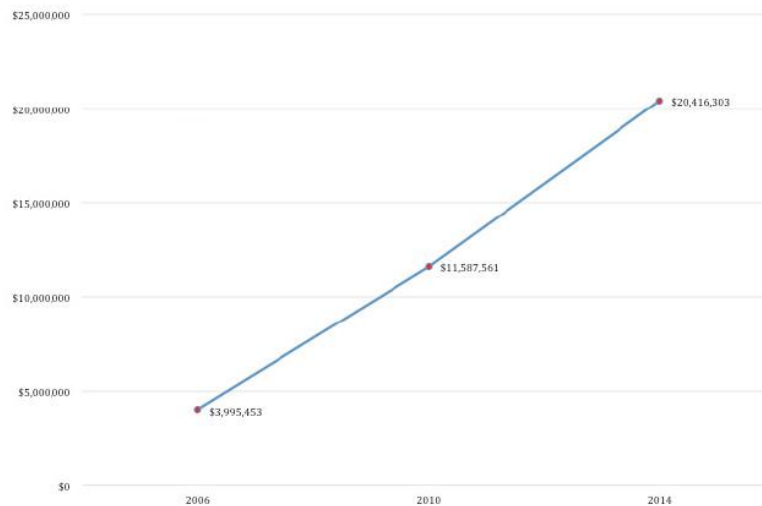
# G. GOOD GOVERNMENT/ STRONG DEMOCRACY



*The influence of big money in politics is detrimental to democracy. Independent expenditures in MA elections have grown by a factor of five over the past decade. A centralized power structure on Beacon Hill, is undemocratic, and makes it easier for lobbyists to target the top and undermine the system. A strong democracy requires an engaged electorate, but voter turnout in midterm elections, and especially local elections, remains low. Myths about voter fraud are peddled in order to justify voter suppression. The Election Modernization Act of 2014 helped eliminate Massachusetts's embarrassing status as one of the ten worst states in terms of voting rights, but there is still much work to be done.*

**Independent expenditures in MA elections have risen rapidly.** (Source: [Common Cause](#))

**Figure 1: MA Independent Expenditure Totals**



## Candidate Overview & Experience: Good Government/Strong Democracy

1. Please share your personal values and principles regarding Good Government and Strong Democracy.

**BLACKMER:** I think early and extended voting hours are helpful and make access easier.

**BOSLEY:** I believe the most power is that of the voters. I want to work to expand our voter base by implementing things such as Automatic Voter Registration.

**TOWLE:** I would be supportive of a transition to a publicly-financed campaign system, I believe this would eliminate the influence of outside and "dark" money on campaigns.

I also support legislation transitioning Massachusetts to Automatic Voter Registration and same-day registration. AVR has worked in states such as Oregon and more states are increasingly making the move to AVR. Making registration easier is the first step toward increasing participation.

2. *As Applicable: Indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on these topics.*

**BLACKMER:** I have promoted the early voting program.

**BOSLEY:**

**TOWLE:** Increasing access to voting was actually a key component of my Master's Thesis. Among my recommendations was a transition to Automatic Voter Registration.

### **Policy Questions: Good Government/Strong Democracy**

3. **Power and the Legislature.** *If elected, would you support or oppose efforts to dilute the amount of power held by leadership in your respective branch of government? For example, would you support a rule change allowing committees to appoint their own chair, instead of leadership?*

**BLACKMER:**

**BOSLEY:**

**TOWLE: Support.**

4. **Public campaign financing.** *Would you support or oppose legislation to create a robust public financing system for state elections?*

**BLACKMER: Support.**

**BOSLEY:**

**TOWLE: Support.**

5. **Election Day voter registration.** *Would you support or oppose Election Day Registration?*

**BLACKMER: Support.**

**BOSLEY: Support.**

**TOWLE: Support.**

6. **Automatic voter registration.** *Would you support or oppose automatic voter registration?*

**BLACKMER: Support.** I would enthusiastically endorse automatic voter registration for all qualified citizens as long as safeguards are in place to establish and easily check for duplicates and residency without violating privacy and ensuring digital security.

This seems like an easy issue, but it begins to get tricky when you consider that each town is responsible for keeping and maintaining records. This would likely be solved by a single statewide or even national database, and that creates massive privacy and data security concerns from hacking and political operatives. The recent request from the Trump Administration for all voter information from the states only heightens my concerns.

**BOSLEY: Support.**

**TOWLE: Support.**

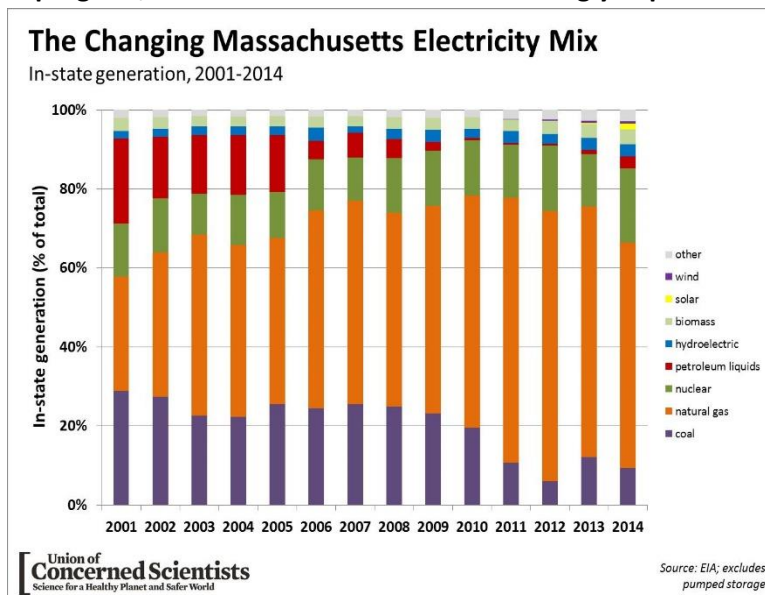
# H. SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



Massachusetts will be hit particularly hard by climate change. In order to avoid catastrophic climate change, global carbon emissions need to be reduced by 70% by 2050 and brought to 0 by 2080. Last year, the SJC ruled that the state has failed to meet its legal obligation to set and enforce annual limits on greenhouse gas emissions as outlined in the 2008 Global Warming Solutions Act. Setting and reaching these goals will require the decarbonization of our state economy and a transition away from fossil fuels toward clean, renewable sources of energy. In light of congressional gridlock at the federal level, state government must take a role in incentivizing reduced carbon usage and assisting in coordination between agencies and moving forward local government understanding of looming climate threats.

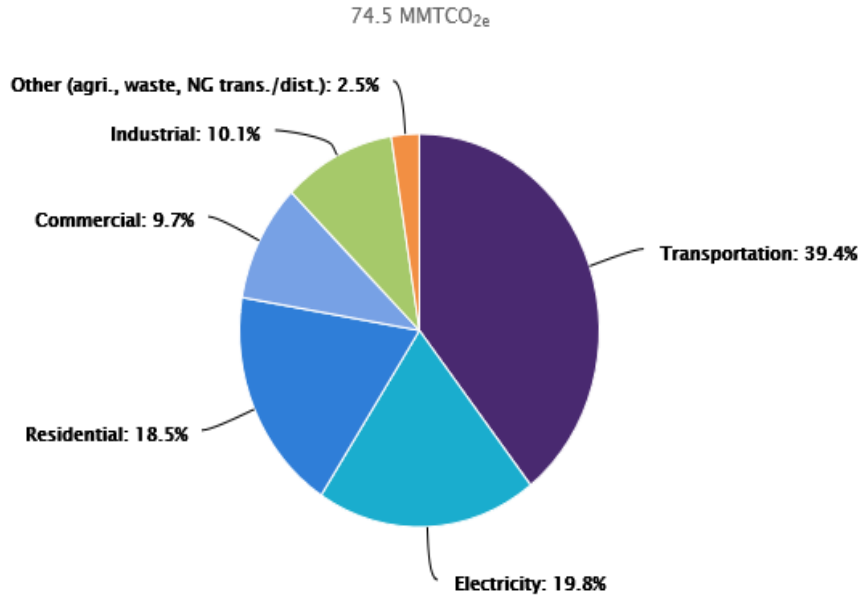
Public transit must play a role in decarbonizing our transportation system, as well as advancing complementary goals of equity and inclusion. However, Massachusetts politicians have lost their understanding of public transit as a public good that benefits all residents and businesses in Massachusetts, not just those who use it in their daily lives. The greatest evidence of this is their neglect of the MBTA: its debt has grown to nearly \$5.5 billion, with over \$7 billion in deferred maintenance costs. Regional Transit Authorities that serve communities, including Gateway Cities across the state, face enormous capital needs as well.

**Despite recent progress, Massachusetts is still overwhelmingly dependent on fossil fuels.**



**Transportation is currently the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in MA.**

2014 MA GHG Emissions by Sector



(Source: <http://www.mass.gov>)

**Candidate Overview & Experience: Infrastructure and Environment**

1. *Please share your personal values and principles regarding Sustainable Infrastructure and Environmental Protection.*

**BLACKMER:** We need better mass transit in western Massachusetts, including high-speed rail from the Berkshires to Boston.

**BOSLEY:** It is important that Massachusetts continues to be a clean energy leader while protecting our natural resources.

**TOWLE:** I have publicly called for legislation to transition Massachusetts to 100% renewable energy. I have also proposed a substantial public works program that would provide low- or no-cost solar panels to homeowners and business owners. I am supportive of lifting the arbitrary net-metering cap. I also support a carbon tax, provided that it is implemented in such a way that there is not a substantial burden to small business owners. I have also called for the creation of a state green bank, likely funded by a carbon tax, that would provide low- or no-interest loans to green energy businesses that are seeking to expand, purchase equipment, purchase inventory, or hire new workers. I have also publicly called for a permanent moratorium on gas pipelines.

I am also supportive of expanding regional transportation service, particularly in a way that promotes sustainable growth and environmental protection. Many transit authorities have begun using hybrid vehicles, but I would propose supporting development and use of fully-electric buses and other transit vehicles that can derive energy from renewable sources.

2. *As Applicable: Indicate work you personally have done to protect the environment and expand access to public transportation.*

**BLACKMER:** I have advocated for more funding for our local RTA.

**BOSLEY:**

**TOWLE:** I currently serve on the Energy Committee in Lanesborough. Our main task has been increasing energy efficiency in town and recommending programs to meet that goal.

Also, having worked with Rep. Cariddi who chaired the Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture committee, we worked closely with DEP and the Executive Office on Energy and Environmental Affairs to ensure that both offices were properly funded in their mission to protect the environment. We also oversaw all legislation that relates to environmental affairs, so I have substantial experience in these matters.

### Policy Questions: Infrastructure and Environment

3. *Solar energy. Would you support or oppose efforts to increase equitable access to solar power by removing caps on solar generation and restoring compensation for low-income and community solar?*

**BLACKMER: Support.**

**BOSLEY: Support.**

**TOWLE: Support.**

4. *Carbon pricing. Would you support or oppose legislation to put a fee on carbon emissions?*

**BLACKMER: Support.**

**BOSLEY: Support.**

**TOWLE: Support.**

- a. *Do you support or oppose using some of the revenue from such a fee to invest in green infrastructure?*

**BLACKMER: Support.**

**BOSLEY: Support.** We have to make sure when creating carbon pricing policy that we don't have adverse effects on low-income and rural communities.

**TOWLE: Support.** I have proposed using the funding to create a state Green Bank for just this purpose.

5. *Gas pipelines. Would you support or oppose the expansion of gas pipelines in the state?*

**BLACKMER: Oppose.** As the Town Administrator in Sandisfield, I filed for intervenor status with FERC regarding the Connecticut Expansion.

**BOSLEY: Oppose.**

**TOWLE: Oppose.** I oppose the expansion of gas pipelines. I have publicly expressed my support for Sen. Eldridge's bill to transition Massachusetts to 100% renewable sources of energy and would be a leader on this issue as State Representative.

## SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE / ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STATE REP. / 1<sup>ST</sup> BERKSHIRE  
SPECIAL / PRIMARY-OCT. 10, 2017 / ELECTION - NOV. 7, 2017



6. **Public Transit Funding.** *Would you support or oppose finding progressive revenue sources to fund the maintenance, expansion, and improvement of the MBTA and the RTAs?*

**BLACKMER: Support.**

**BOSLEY: Support.**

**TOWLE: Support.**

7. **Regional Transportation Funding.** *Would you support or oppose legislation to allow municipalities to place a question on the ballot to raise revenue for local and regional transportation projects?*

**BLACKMER: Support.**

**BOSLEY: Support.**

**TOWLE: Support.**

8. **Public Transit Access.** *Would you support or oppose fare increases for MBTA riders?*

**BLACKMER: Support.** There should be some kind of sliding scale for low-income workers, but higher prices for those who can afford it.

**BOSLEY: Oppose.** Although, as someone from Western Massachusetts, who rides the MBTA maybe once or twice a year it is hard to decide what should happen.

**TOWLE: Oppose.** In general, I am opposed to fare hikes, but I also recognize the need for revenue for maintenance and operations. I believe that fare increases disproportionately affect lower-income individuals, so I would advocate for ensuring that any fare increases do not exceed the rate of inflation or 5%, whichever is lesser.



PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS is a grassroots organization and we rely on member and community contributions to fund our work. Support resources such as our comprehensive, substantive candidate questionnaires with your contribution: [progressivemass.com/give](https://progressivemass.com/give)

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All questionnaires are available on our website for all, as a public service, regardless of endorsement outcome. We invite voters to share our materials, with attribution, and help push all candidates and campaigns towards substantive engagement with important progressive issues. We encourage progressives to use our **Progressive Platform, Legislative Agenda, Scorecards** and other materials to help in their research before election day. **On the web: [progressivemass.com](https://progressivemass.com)**

## Election Information

### THE FIRST BERKSHIRE DISTRICT

Consisting of Adams; Cheshire; Clarksburg; Florida; Hancock; Lanesborough; New Ashford; North Adams; Williamstown

### SNAPSHOT: POLITICS OF THE DISTRICT:

**2016** Presidential: Clinton 64.8% - Trump 28.9%

**2014** Gubernatorial: Baker 28.1% - Coakley 68.8%

**2012** Presidential: Obama 76.0% - Romney 22.0%

### PROGRESSIVE MASS LEGISLATIVE AGENDA: REP CARIDDI'S RECORD:

Rep. Cariddi was a co-sponsor of 10 of the Progressive Mass Legislative Priorities for 2017-18

### VOTER RESOURCES

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR:** **October 10**, 2017 (Primary) and **November 7**, 2017 (Election)

**CHECK VOTER STATUS:** [sec.state.ma.us/voterregistrationsearch/myvoterregstatus.aspx](https://sec.state.ma.us/voterregistrationsearch/myvoterregstatus.aspx)

**WHERE TO VOTE:** Local polling places can be found at [wheredoivotema.com](https://wheredoivotema.com)

### PROGRESSIVE MASS RESOURCES

**1<sup>ST</sup> BERKSHIRE SPECIAL ELECTION MATERIALS:** [progressivemass.com/2017firstberkshire](https://progressivemass.com/2017firstberkshire)

**1<sup>ST</sup> BERKSHIRE QUESTIONNAIRE (THIS DOC):** [progressivemass.com/2017firstberkshire-pdf](https://progressivemass.com/2017firstberkshire-pdf)

**P.M. MEMBER ENDORSE VOTE:** [progressivemass.com/endorsementvote](https://progressivemass.com/endorsementvote) (MEMBERS ONLY)

**BECOME A MEMBER:** [progressivemass.com/membership](https://progressivemass.com/membership) HELP BUILD THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR PROGRESSIVE RESISTANCE

**ENDORISING VOTE CLOSE:** THU, **SEPT. 14, 9PM**

## Voter/Member NOTES