



Andy Vargas

DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE FOR
STATE HOUSE

THIRD ESSEX ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

PROGRESSIVEMASS.COM/elections

SEPT. 2017

VOTING INFORMATION

Registered voters in Haverhill: Ward 1, Ward 2: Precinct 3, Ward 3, Ward 4: Precincts 1, 2, Ward 5: Precincts 1, 3, Ward 6.

Primary Election: October 10, 2017

Special Election: November 7, 2017

Check voter registration: sec.state.ma.us/voterregistrationsearch/myvoterregstatus.aspx

Find polling place: wheredoivotema.com

CAMPAIGN RESOURCES

Website: andyforhaverhill.com

Twitter: [@Andy4Haverhill](https://twitter.com/Andy4Haverhill) **Facebook:** [/Councilor Vargas](https://www.facebook.com/CouncilorVargas)

AVAILABLE ON THE WEB
PROGRESSIVEMASS.COM/2017ELECTIONS

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Introduction

Progressive Mass & Endorsements



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 5 years ago by local organizers from the Patrick and Obama campaigns in order to continue to move forward progressive values and issues in Massachusetts.

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 that you get to participate in our endorsement votes for key elections, helping to shape the future direction of progressive policymaking in the state.

Not yet a member? Join! ProgressiveMass.com/member

Endorsement Process

Progressive Massachusetts sends candidates this detailed policy questionnaire, revised periodically by the Elections & Endorsements Committee (EEC).

The EEC may choose to make a recommendation in a given race, but the ultimate decision lies with you--the members.

In each race, members can choose to vote for a **candidate**, vote “**no endorsement**,” or **abstain**. Candidates who receive at least 60% of all ballots submitted in their respective race 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 will be made available on our website 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.

Sources

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). All sources are available upon request.

I. About the Candidate:

Andy Vargas



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

I'm running because I believe that millennials bring a renewed spirit to public service that balances progressivism and pragmatism. In that spirit, I hope to be an advocate for working families on Beacon Hill. As a City Councilor, I have been a fierce advocate for educational equity, acting on climate change, strengthening our neighborhood groups, and fostering a community of inclusive entrepreneurship here in Haverhill. My top three priorities as a legislator would be the same as they are now in my capacity as a City Councilor: educational equity, economic policies that encourage entrepreneurship and reward an honest day's work, and strengthening environmental regulations while supporting emerging forms of renewable energy. If I could add a fourth, it would be criminal justice legislation, as I believe that even in MA we still face serious challenges within the legal system that need to be addressed.

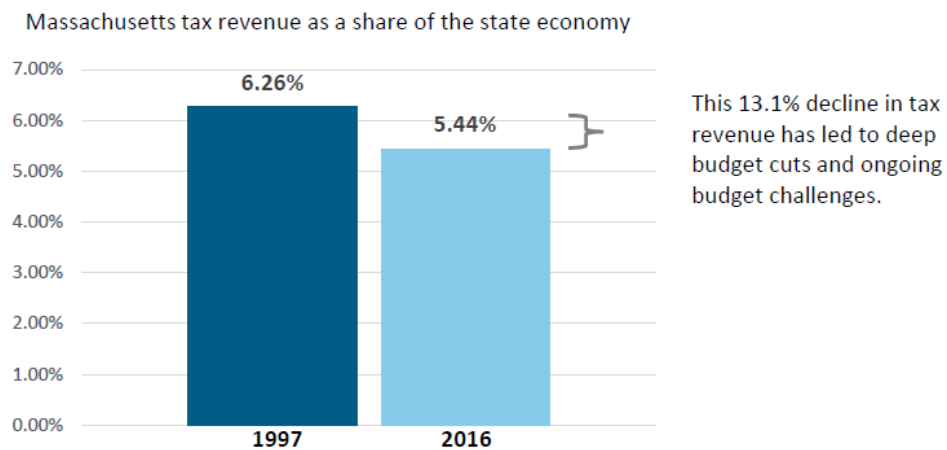
2. *What prepares you to serve in this capacity?*

In 2015, I was elected to the Haverhill City Council. Before this, my experiences range from the local, state, and federal level. At 16 I helped draft civic education legislation and was named to a public commission assembled by the state legislature to consider strengthening civics education in high school curriculum. Following this motivating experience, I did constituent services for two offices at the MA Statehouse in both the House and Senate. Additionally, I was thankful enough to be able to serve as a White House communications intern under the Obama administration. Through my day job at Entrepreneurship for All (EforAll), I have also seen what can happen when we level the playing field for all those willing to work hard for their families.

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.

Support. The Fair Share Amendment is the perfect title for a constitutional amendment that will do exactly as the title implies: ensuring that those who financially benefit most from the Massachusetts economy pay their fair share towards education, infrastructure, and all the other necessities that provide the environment that allows for individuals to employ their individual talents and savvy to earn such a tremendous sum on an annual basis.

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?*

Oppose. I find that the current sales tax holiday does not benefit or promote small and local businesses. Instead, these “holiday’s” tend to benefit big box stores. If we move forward with any future iterations of the Sales Tax Holiday, it should be reformed to encourage consumers to shop locally, to shop at establishments that are Massachusetts small businesses, rather than places where profits benefit out of state or out of country corporations.

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)?*

Support. I would support these proposed pieces of legislation. Corporate tax incentives should be treated as an incentive-based “give and take” and not a blank check that is unconditional. Any corporate tax incentive should be subject to review and accountability.

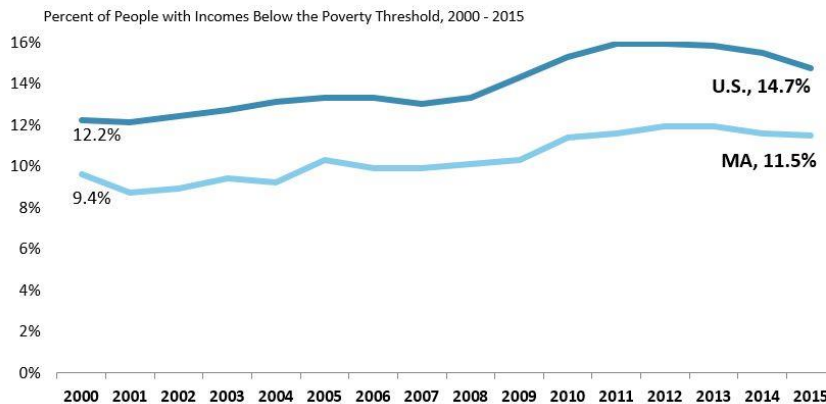
B. JOB GROWTH & THE ECONOMY



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

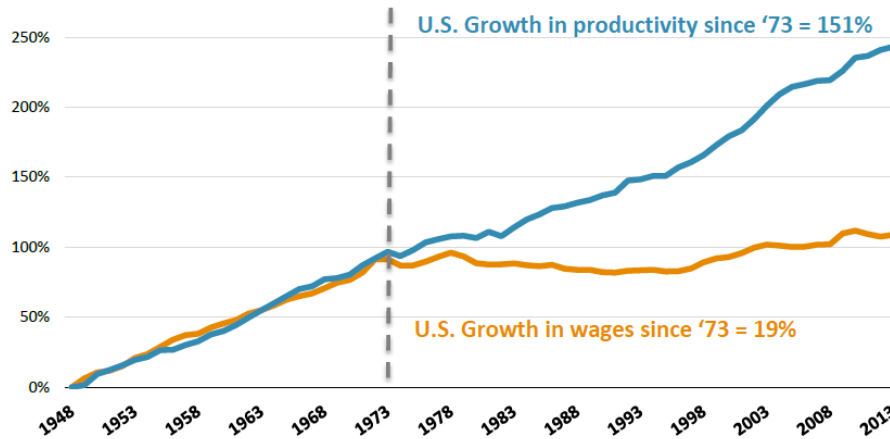


Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey

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

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?

Working within an organization that fosters inclusive entrepreneurship has provided me with key insights on how we can grow our economy. 60% of the entrepreneurs we work with were unemployed when they came to us. 70% are women, and 41% are immigrants. In just 4 years, they've created close to 300 jobs in Massachusetts. What is key about this program is not necessarily the business training --it's the community and holistic mentorship that our entrepreneurs receive in order to make their ideas for businesses and nonprofits a reality.

Moreover, the best economic development strategy is to work with those already invested in our communities. It's much more sustainable and equitable than going out and trying to poach large corporations to move to Massachusetts, until they get better "incentives" elsewhere.

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

As I have mentioned previously, I work for a wonderful non-profit, E-For All. Its core mission is to provide local entrepreneurs the tools needed to create business and jobs in communities.

<https://medium.com/@AndyVargas/local-gov-needs-to-view-the-arts-as-part-of-economic-development-strategy-d6b8b685278d>

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

Support. The current federal minimum wage is inhumane, and our state has thankfully made strides towards getting us closer to ensuring a fair wage for an honest day's work. However, more needs to be done and it should have been done a while ago.

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

Support. I would support raising the minimum cash wage, and ensuring that both the maximum tip credit against the minimum wage and the minimum cash wage equal out to a wage that is on par with the regular minimum wage.

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

Support. I support this move because it would take the politics out something that really shouldn't be political at all. Working class individuals will no longer be cheated out of a raise in pay when they constantly face increases in their rent/mortgage, car loans, and having to deal with paying for higher education..

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?*

Support. I wholeheartedly support mandated 12 weeks of Paid Family and Medical Leave.

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?*

Support. Yes. I am willing to go further. I would support legislation that would prohibit the state from entering into contracts with companies that have a repeated history of wage theft.

C. EDUCATION

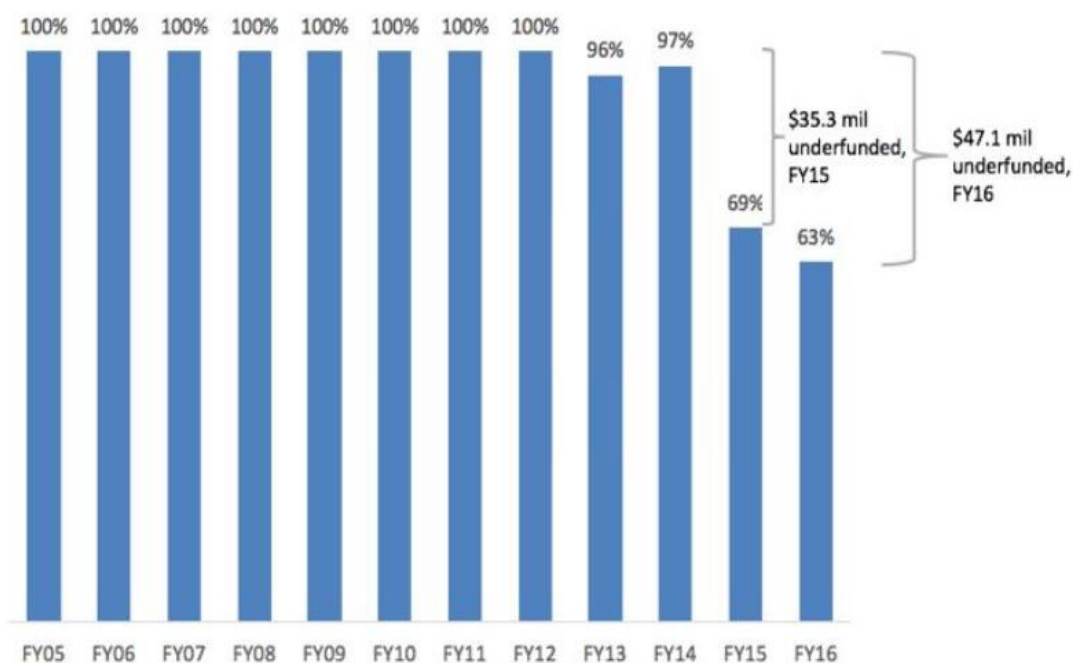


Public education has always been a gateway to opportunity and mobility for all, regardless of economic circumstances, a cornerstone of the American dream for all residents. The mission of public schools is to serve all students, including English Language Learners and those with special needs. However, 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.

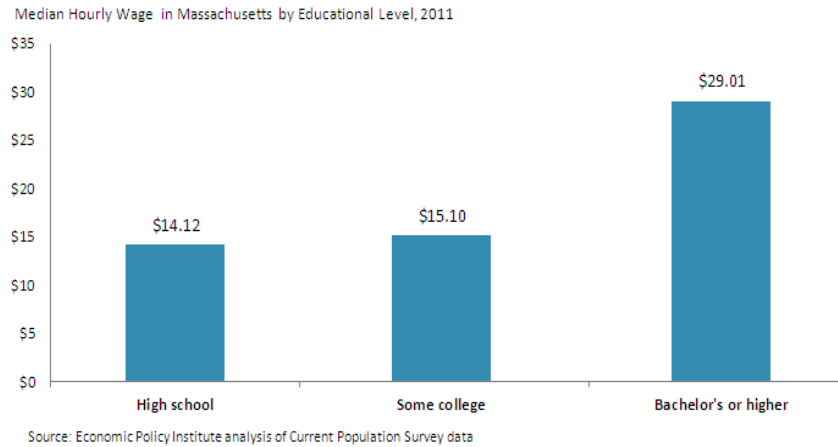
The state hasn’t been living up to its responsibility to fully fund our public schools.

The State Has Not Fully Funded Charter Reimbursements in Recent Years

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

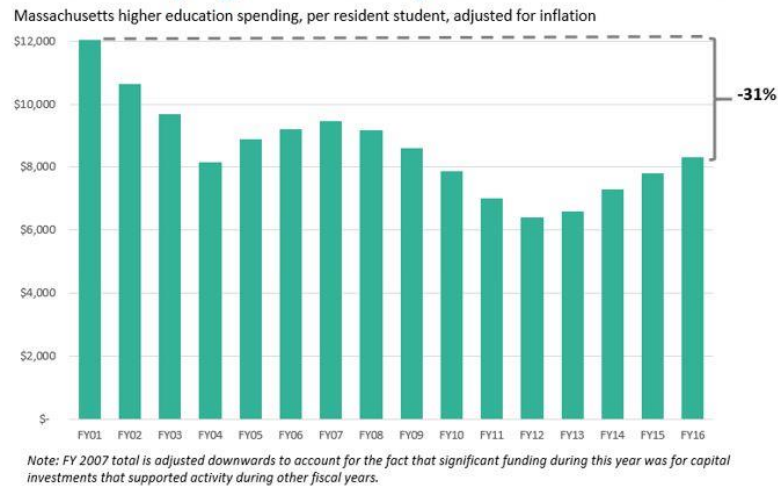


Higher educational attainment leads to higher wages.



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



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 the Commonwealth take on these issues?*

In this globalized world, students are no longer competing only against their peers on the local, state, or national level; the competition opens American workers to those from around the world. Over the past few decades, we as a nation have ceded our standing as having the finest K-12 education in the world to nations like Finland (no disrespect to Finland or the Finnish people), but we are still the envy of the world for our colleges and universities.

I fear that on our current trajectory of underfunding higher-ed, while severely indebting my generation and others to come in cost shifting, we are set to lose our preeminent status in the world. There is still time to fix this, and it can be done by restoring prior per-student funding levels to our public colleges and universities.

We are also doing a disservice to not include universal pre-k as a right to public education. The science tells us that these are the most important and formidable years for kids. It's time we take this responsibility seriously and remove barriers to quality education for all.

2. *Optional/As Applicable: Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on public education?*

I've protested with Haverhill teachers, advocating for a fair raise. I have also spent the last two years highlighting the devastating lack of an adequate investment in Haverhill public schools. 90% of school districts in Massachusetts invest more per pupil than Haverhill does. This is an unfortunate reality while we have crumbling school infrastructure and one of the lowest performing high schools in the state.

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?*

Support. Countless studies have shown the incredible impact on learning that exposure to Pre-K can have on not only the student, but on our economy and even our criminal justice system.

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?*

Oppose. For years, we have focused too much on our youth being great test takers and memorizers. This is not conducive to promoting critical thinking and applying lessons from the classroom to the real world. We should move away from high-stakes testing and more pragmatic forms of assessment.

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?

Support.

6. **Charter Schools.** *Last November, Massachusetts 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**?*

Support. While I previously served on the board of a local Horace Mann charter school -- I did so because the school showed a concerted effort and interest in encouraging more minority applicants to the school, which is considered to be one of the best in the area. I was against Question #2, and voted against it at the booth. My opinion on lifting the cap remains unchanged. I believe we need to improve our public schools. However, I do want to be clear--my thought process surrounding charter schools does not submit to the traditional "anti-charter and pro-charter" ideologies -- I try to always bring it back to the students. In the case of the Horace Mann in Haverhill -- the school was widely considered one of the best in the district and in that moment, I was focused on providing students of low-income backgrounds with the same immediate opportunity for quality education, while we continued to push on the greater systemic issues facing public education in Haverhill and the Commonwealth.

- 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?*

Support. If charter schools are receiving state funding, then it should come with the expectation of adhering to the same disciplinary standards as public schools and providing the same disclosure.

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

Support. Yes, but I would also ensure that they have a path to becoming legal residents or citizens.

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

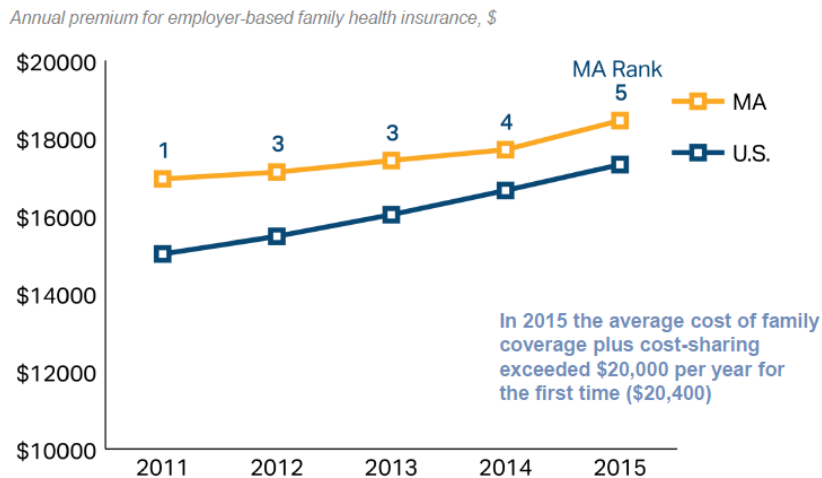
Support. I would support tuition free education at public colleges and universities with two caveats: 1) Students who come from solo households that earn more than \$250,000 and joint households that earn more than \$500,000 would not qualify for free tuition, except for extreme circumstances. 2) Students would be required to meet a minimum GPA requirement over each school year to maintain free tuition, except for those who are facing hardship (i.e., the death of a parent or sibling, health-related issues, severely negative change in personal or family finances).

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

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

One day as a nation, we woke up and decided that public education was a right and responsibility to undertake as a society. It only makes sense that we do the same for healthcare. Everyone should have access to quality healthcare.

2. *Optional/As Applicable: Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on health care (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).*
3. *Single Payer. Would you support or oppose legislation to enact a single payer health care system in Massachusetts?*

Support. The United States is the only country defined by the OECD as “economically developed” to not have single-payer health care and yet we pay the most per patient and are near dead last in outcomes. What is wrong with this picture? The issue is the one that is staring us in the face: delivery. Much of the issues related to cost in our health care system could be solved by implementing a single payer health care system for Massachusetts.

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

Support. Every so often, I find myself saying that “isn’t this already settled, isn’t Roe the law of the land?” Why is this still an issue? I will vigorously oppose and call out any and all attempts that will seek to move women one step closer to the horrific days of illegal back alley abortions. The government should not be an interloping and invasive third party when a woman consults with her physician about the choices and decisions that she makes about her health and wellbeing.

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

Support. The Affordable Care Act is not perfect, but it continues to prove to be a significant step towards improving equal access to quality and affordable health care. One aspect that supports the prior statement is how women have access to birth control without a copay. It is critical that Massachusetts shore up protections for women’s health.

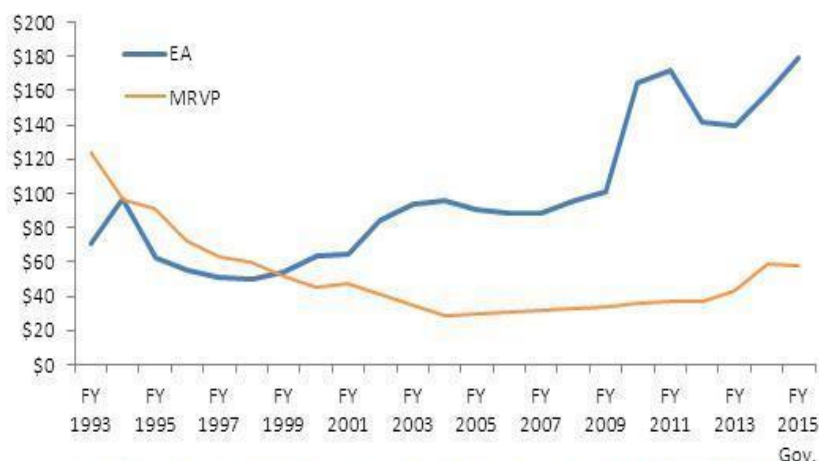
E. HOUSING



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.

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?

Housing, transportation, and jobs are inextricably tied. We need a coordinated effort that address our crumbling transportation system and the lack of housing workforce and affordable housing near jobs. I believe there are some cities and towns that take on more of the responsibility for and affordable housing stock. I would propose or support legislation that holds cities and towns not doing their part accountable. Wealthy communities should be responsible for a having a reasonable affordable housing stock. It should not fall only on gateway cities.

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

I've advocated for affordable housing on the City Council, while also exploring alternative housing ideas like tiny homes.

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?*

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?*

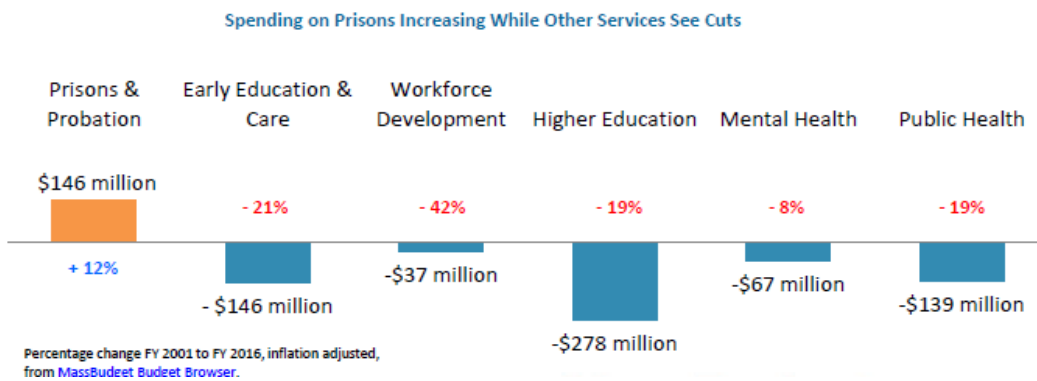
Support.

F. RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

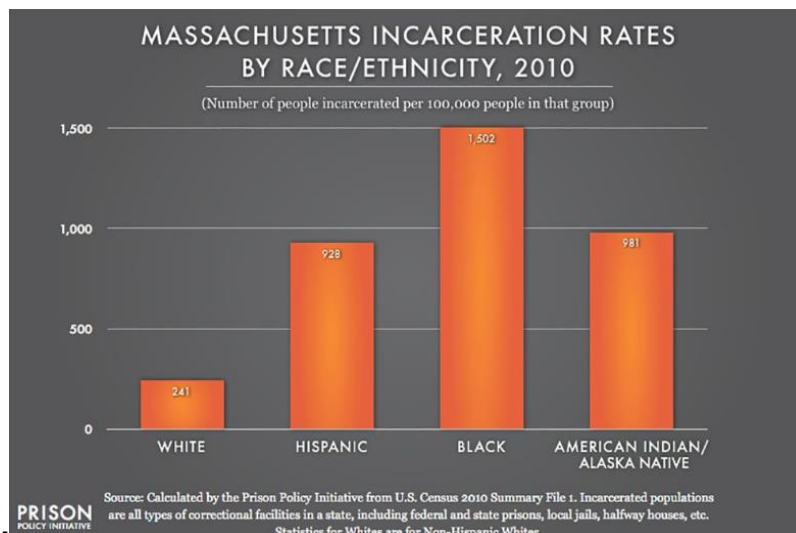


Massachusetts must continue to strive to be a state that welcomes and embraces all of its residents and combats prejudice and discrimination of all kinds. The social and economic costs of mass incarceration and the policies that created it, in particular, have put our aspirations of “justice for all” 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



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

I want to start off by saying you can support law enforcement while also believing that Black Lives Matter. Any conversation about racial and social justice should begin by acknowledging the serious issues in the criminal justice system that disproportionately affect communities of color. To adequately address the very real challenges facing the criminal justice system, we need to not only focus on issues related to race, we need to focus on issues of economic, social, and mental health.

My belief is that any issue we focus on today cannot be done solely through the lens of one perspective, but we should tackle these issues with the recognition that there is intersectionality between individual's identities and the multifaceted factors that attribute to an issue. Taking this approach ensures that individual experiences – with say the criminal justice system – are not generalized and lumped together with other unique and individual experiences.

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

In February of this year, I organized the effort that resulted in myself and six of my fellow of Haverhill City Councilors to publicly sign onto a joint letter that praised Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey's lawsuit against the Trump administration's "Muslim Ban."

Back in high school, while I was a member of the student organization Teens Leading The Way (TLTW), I was heavily involved in their effort to support expunging the past criminal records of those who committed non-violent, petty offenses.

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?*

Oppose. Strongly oppose.

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

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

On Minimum Mandatory Sentences: Rehabilitation should be the focus of the criminal justice system towards drug offenders. Judges should also be able to do what we originally set out for them to do – judge each case individually by taking a look at all the facts and contributing variables.

On Increasing Investment in programs: Recidivism has both a serious societal and financial cost. I am all for killing two birds with one stone: reducing recidivism and saving taxpayer dollars by increasing

the chances of success for the formerly incarcerated by giving them a solid footing to relaunch their lives as productive members of society.

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?*

Support. The United States of America and especially the Commonwealth of Massachusetts should not be in the business of breaking up families and deporting hardworking undocumented immigrants who are here trying to raise a family like the rest of us. If the Trump administration or their acolytes attempt to institute an unconstitutional Muslim registry, then all public officials have an obligation to their oaths and the constitutions of Massachusetts and the United States to resist through ignoring or standing up to such lawlessness. Tax dollars should be focused on deporting violent criminals, drug dealers, and gang members -- not moms and dads that wake up every day and do the right thing for their kids. It's inhumane and fiscally impractical.

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?*

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)?*

Support. I support the democratic process and the will of MA voters. I would also support expungement efforts, which I mentioned in a prior answer. To this day, I continue to support the efforts of the student-led organization of Teens Leading The Way (TLTW), especially in their expungement campaign.

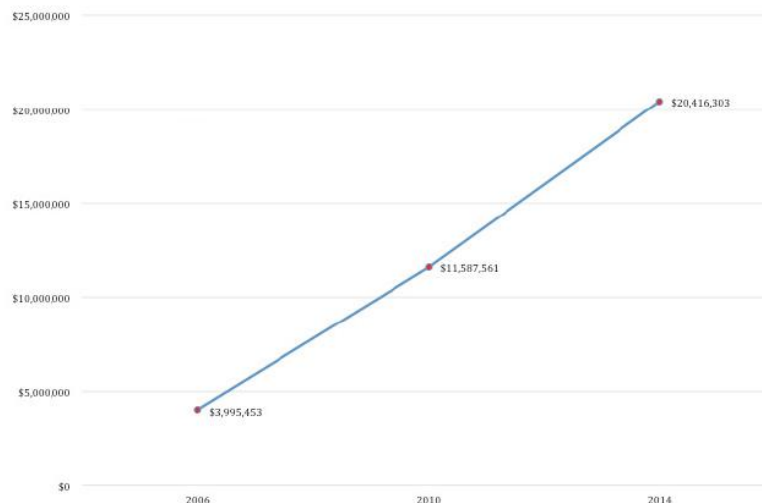
G. GOOD GOVERNMENT/ STRONG DEMOCRACY



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



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

I first got involved in public policy and government by helping draft legislation around civic education because we knew as young people that the success of any vibrant democracy is reliant upon an informed and engaged citizenry.

I will support all efforts to further this mission.

2. *Please indicate work you personally have done to promote transparency, campaign finance reform, legislative rules reform, and access to voting.*

On the City Council, I advocated for the adoption of software called ClearGov, which was unanimously backed by the Council. The software helps residents understand exactly where their tax dollars are going. Here's a piece I wrote: <https://medium.com/@AndyVargas/the-tool-that-helps-you-understand-where-your-local-tax-dollars-go-meet-cleargov-cc4e752ec406>.

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?*

It would depend on each measure. I'm in favor of further democratizing and balancing power, but need to take a look at each proposal carefully.

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

Support. It is no coincidence that we have such a broken campaign finance system nationwide AND a widespread perception among the public that politicians are in it for themselves and actively trying to peddle influence. The public should have confidence that their elected officials are acting solely with the public's best interests in mind. A great first step towards restoring the public's faith in government would be to implement a robust public financing system for state elections. Candidates for office would no longer have to focus on "dialing for dollars" and can go back to prioritizing voter engagement and listening to individual constituents about what more can be done on Beacon Hill.

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

Support. Same-day registration provides additional opportunities for new residents, newly eligible registrants, and those who are motivated by the election at hand to voice their choice by the act of voting.

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

Support. This is a no-brainer. I know Oregon just implemented automatic voter registration and I applaud them for their effort to increase participation of our fellow citizens in the democratic process.

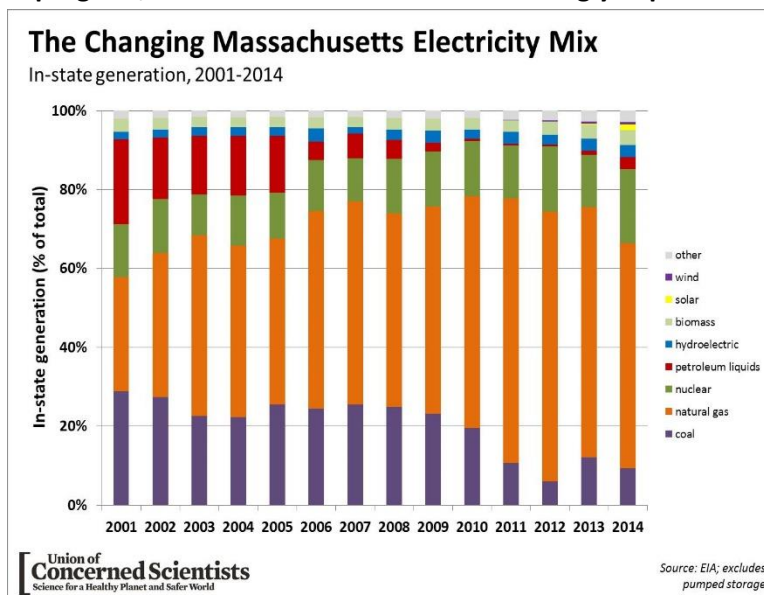
H. Sustainable Infrastructure and Environmental Protection



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.

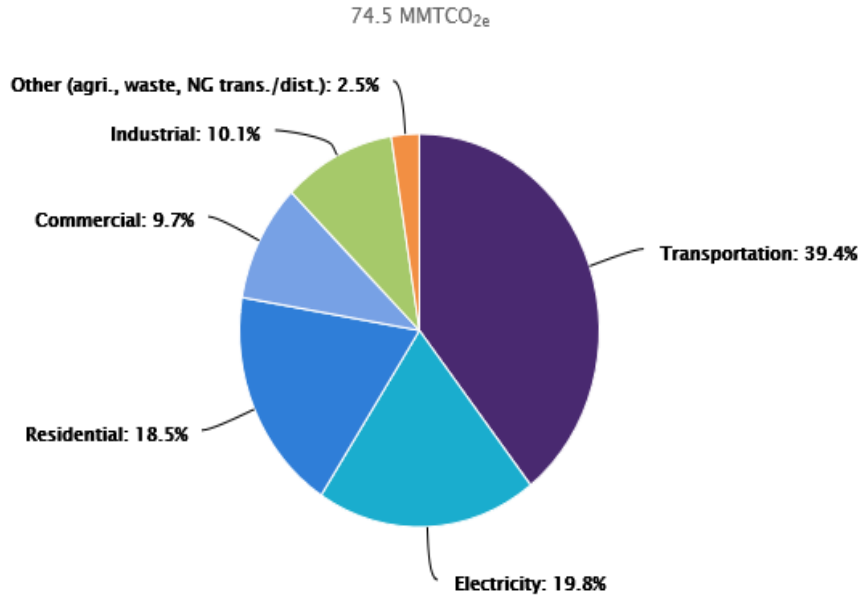
Public transit must play a role in decarbonizing our transportation system, as well as advancing complementary goals of equity and inclusion. However, Massachusetts politicians have lost their understanding of public transit as a public good that benefits all residents and businesses in Massachusetts, 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>)

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

Investing in renewable energy technology is not only right for our planet, but also smart for our wallets. We have an opportunity to create jobs through green energy and we're not capitalizing on it right now.

2. Please indicate work you personally have done to protect the environment and expand access to public transportation.

<https://medium.com/@AndyVargas/tilton-solar-project-school-committee-votes-tonight-63ceab418377>

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?

Support. Archaic laws and the special interests are what is currently holding back the full force of the green revolution here in the state. I am only beholden to ensuring that all of Massachusetts has access to affordable, reliable, and clean sources of renewable energy. I would support legislation that removes caps on solar generation and legislation that restores compensation for low-income and community solar.

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

Support. Economic incentives to discourage the continued use of fossil-fuel based energy sources, coupled with the continued free-fall in the cost of solar and other green technology are tremendous market forces that will play a significant role in moving Massachusetts completely away from dirty forms of energy generation.

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

Support. While I am typically not in favor of the government picking winners and losers, it is painfully clear that we will all be losers if we continue to allow fossil-fuels to be the dominant form of energy and the source that will lead to irreparable harm to the planet via Global Warming.

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

Oppose. The notion that natural gas is “clean” is farcical. We should be doing everything possible to transition away from natural gas and towards affordable sources of clean renewable energy.

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?*

Support In the effort to “save money” the state has merely kicked the can down the road when it comes to adequately funding the MBTA and RTAs. This short-sighted approach will cost more down the line due to not keeping up with maintenance and not being ahead of the curve in improving and expanding service.

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?*

Support. If the state is not stepping up to meet its obligations and the calls for action by local leaders, then municipalities should have full access to the tools of the legislative toolbox to remedy this issue.

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

I think we need to think carefully about raising fares, as several students, seniors, and low-income families cannot afford it as it stands now. We should look at models that are sensitive to the abilities and needs of working families in MA.



III. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Limit answer to 150 words or fewer.

Use this space to add any other issues important to your vision for Massachusetts or any other matter you think progressive voters should know about your candidacy.

The greatest driver in public policy for me comes back to doing all we can to establish an informed and engaged electorate. We can have all the research, science, and facts as elected officials. However, if we want to advance equitable and efficient public policy, we need to foster a spirit of civic engagement among all people. Without this, we can't fully address all the aforementioned issues in this document.



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

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**

Election Information

THE THIRD ESSEX DISTRICT

Consisting of Haverhill: Ward 1, Ward 2: Precinct 3, Ward 3, Ward 4: Precincts 1, 2, Ward 5: Precincts 1, 3, Ward 6.

SNAPSHOT: POLITICS OF THE DISTRICT:

2016 Presidential: Clinton 54.7% - Trump 39.4%

2014 Gubernatorial: Baker 52.4% - Coakley 42.6%

2012 Presidential: Obama 58.3% - Romney 40.1%

PROGRESSIVE MASS LEGISLATIVE AGENDA: REP DEMPSEY'S RECORD:

Rep. Dempsey was a co-sponsor of **0** 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

WHERE TO VOTE: Local polling places can be found at wheredoivotema.com

PROGRESSIVE MASS RESOURCES: THIRD ESSEX

SPECIAL ELECTION MATERIALS: progressivemass.com/2017thirdessex

QUESTIONNAIRE (THIS DOC): progressivemass.com/2017thirdessex-pdf

PROGRESSIVE MASS MEMBERS* ONLY:

P.M. MEMBER ENDORSE VOTE: progressivemass.com/endorsementvote (MEMBERS ONLY)

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

* BECOME A MEMBER: progressivemass.com/membership

HELP BUILD THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR PROGRESSIVE RESISTANCE