

*Chanrithy “Rithy” Uong*

**18th Middlesex**

**State Representative**

---

*Endorsement Questionnaire*

**Office Sought:** State Representative

**Legislative District:** 18th Middlesex

**Party:** Democratic

**Website:** <http://www.rithy4rep.com/>

**Twitter:** n/a

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/Rithy4Rep/>

**Primary:** September 4

**Election:** November 6



# Contents

<b>Primary: September 4</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Election: November 6</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Introduction: Progressive Mass</b>	<b>2</b>
About	2
Membership	2
How Endorsements Work	2
Sources	2
<b>I. About the Candidate</b>	<b>3</b>
Rithy Uong	3
<b>II. THE ISSUES</b>	<b>5</b>
A. REVENUE AND TAXATION	5
B. JOB GROWTH AND THE ECONOMY	7
C. EDUCATION	10
D. HEALTH CARE	14
E. HOUSING	16
F. RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE	18
G. GOOD GOVERNMENT/ STRONG DEMOCRACY	22
H. SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	24

---

# Introduction: Progressive Mass

## About

---

*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](https://ProgressiveMass.com/member)

### How Endorsements Work

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, you 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. Regardless of whether or not we endorse, all questionnaires will be made available on our website as a public service.

## 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](https://massbudget.org)).*

# I. About the Candidate

## Rithy Uong

---

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

**Rithy Uong:** I am running for State Representative of the 18th Middlesex District to be a voice for working men, women, and families on Beacon Hill. I bring years of service to furthering the education of youth and decades worth of listening and understanding to people of various backgrounds to achieve consensus and a path forward. Due to a current lack of response to the needs of our community, I am asking that voters elect me to be their voice and to bring their concerns to the Beacon Hill. I look forward to doing just that.

My three priorities as State Representative will be housing affordability, education, and finding solutions to the opioid epidemic.

I believe Gateway Cities such as Lowell need to remain affordable for working individuals and families. Housing costs have been increasing every year since the Great Recession and increasing housing costs put pressure on low-income families who face housing insecurity. I will support opportunities to work with nonprofits such as Coalition for a Better Acre to maintain enough affordable housing for our residents. I will also work with other legislators to re-evaluate the Fair Market rate index that has not been reviewed since 2005.

Every great city has great schools. I will tirelessly advocate for more education funding for Lowell so that every child can get a good education, regardless of their address or their family's income. That is why, I will work hard with other legislators to review the education funding formula to ensure that every community receives adequate funding for all their public schools.

We must treat the opioid epidemic as the public health crisis that it is. First government must work with members of our communities and non-profits to ensure there are enough treatment facilities available to those who want help. I will also introduce a free 24-hour hotline and referral service to support those who are in crisis, need help, and have no one to talk to in dealing with their addictions. Confidential treatment facilities should be available to all age groups regardless of their financial needs.

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

**Rithy Uong:** I am a former Lowell City Councilor and for 30 years I have worked as a high school guidance counselor. I have experience in working at the grassroots level in city, state, national and international arenas. I have worked as a consultant to train Southeast Asian parents about parental involvement nationally, worked with Boston Police to train Asian community members in civil rights and racism in the Boston area, worked with United Nations to train national and international staff and volunteers to conduct a Free and Fair election in Cambodia, and more. I am a survivor of the killing fields in Cambodia, working every to become who I am today. And every day I see the challenges of working families and young adults as they make their way into the world. In my career, I have worked with youth of all backgrounds to help make their lives more productive and meaningful. I plan to bring

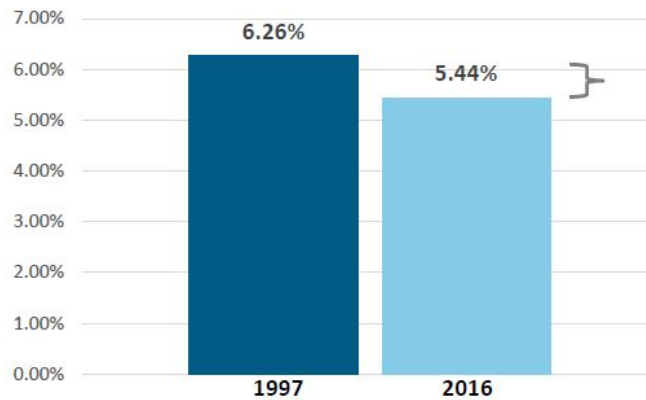
that experience to our whole community.

# 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.

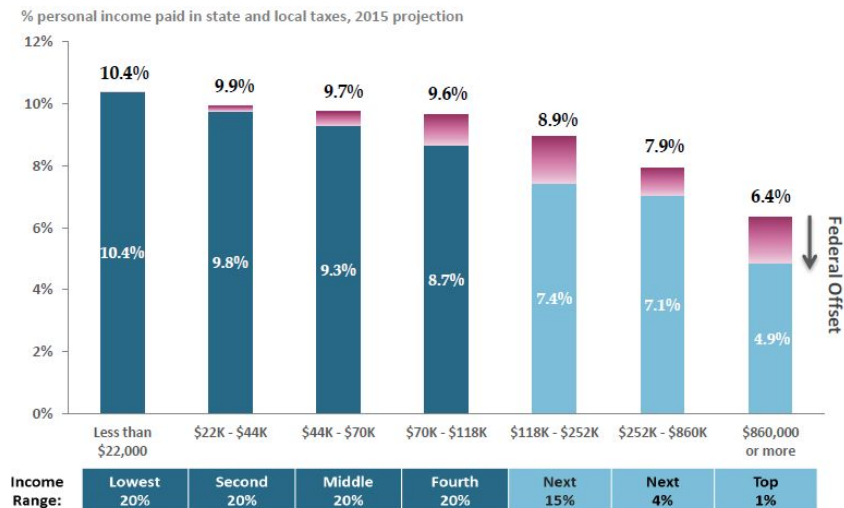
**Declining revenues have meant drastic cuts, limiting our ability to invest in our communities and future economic stability.**

Massachusetts tax revenue as a share of the state economy



This 13.1% decline in tax revenue has led to deep budget cuts and ongoing budget challenges.

## 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.

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?*

**Rithy Uong:** I believe in progressive taxation. I support the Millionaire's Tax that is on the ballot. Additionally, I believe Massachusetts should investigate alternatives to the "pay at the pump" gas tax and instead look into a "Vehicle Miles Traveled" (VMT) tax to repair our roads, bridges, and public transit infrastructure.

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.).*

3. ***Progressive Taxation.** Currently, Progressive Massachusetts is working on a constitutional amendment to increase the income tax on income over \$1 million by 4% (Fair Share Amendment, sometimes referred to as the "Millionaire's Tax"), which will be on the 2018 ballot. Do you support this ballot question?*

**Rithy Uong:** Yes.

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 oppose efforts to extend the sales tax holiday?*

**Rithy Uong:** Yes. Timed school supplies and youth relief.

5. ***Corporate Tax Breaks & Disclosure.** Do you support the state's collecting and publicly disclosing the information about the benefits actually provided by corporations receiving tax credits?*

**Rithy Uong:** Yes.

6. ***Corporate Tax Breaks & Wages.** Do you support requiring any company receiving tax credits from the state to pay a living wage and provide good benefits to all its employees?*

**Rithy Uong:** Yes.

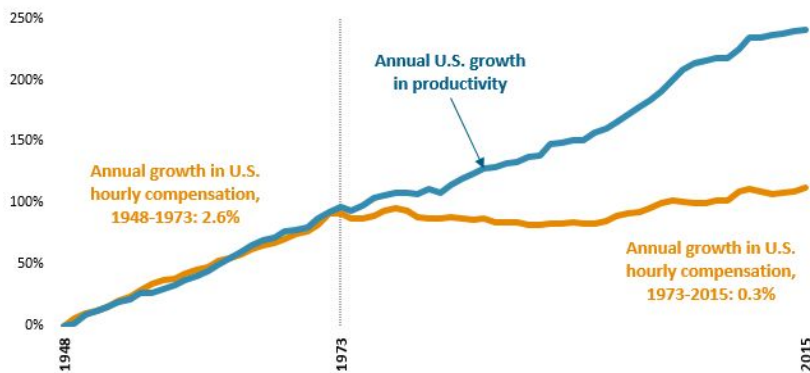
## B. JOB GROWTH AND THE ECONOMY

The Massachusetts economy has continued to grow and recover from the Great Recession, but the gains have not been shared equally. According to various measures of income inequality, Massachusetts now ranks as one of the top ten most [unequal states](#). We are one of the most expensive states in the country for [health care](#), [housing](#), and [child care](#), all of which strain wages. Most MA workers do not have access to paid medical leave, and only a small fraction have access to paid family leave--gaps that force people to choose between their (or their family's) health and their job.

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

### A Large Gap Has Opened Between Wage and Productivity Growth Since 1973

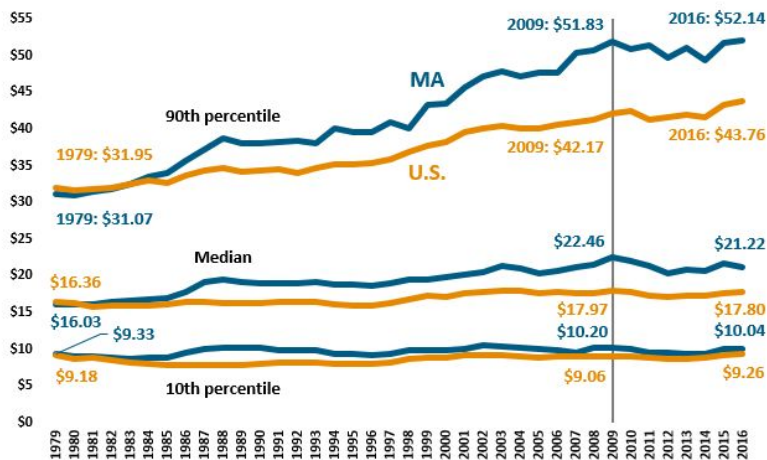
Cumulative Change in U.S. Hourly Wages for Private-Sector Production/Non-Supervisory Workers and Net Productivity, 1948-2015



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  
 Note: Wages are the inflation-adjusted average hourly compensation of private-sector production/nonsupervisory workers.

### Wages For Most MA Workers Have Stagnated Since Great Recession

Real Value of Hourly Wage for Selected Wage-Earning Groups in MA and U.S., 1979-2016 (2016\$)



Source: Economic Policy Institute analysis of Current Population Survey data (deflated using CPI-U-RS).



**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?*

**Rithy Uong:** I have observed an increase in the employment rate in Massachusetts. However, the reduction of the unemployment rate doesn't necessarily improve the quality of all lives due to many of those jobs being low paying. Companies are not required to hire employees permanently, so they avoid paying benefits to their employees and often hire through temporary job agencies. The temporary agencies take up to half of their temporary workers' salary, money that could go toward their benefits. As a result, we taxpayers, pay the benefits to the temporary workers on behalf of the agencies and the companies through public services. We must stop this kind of practice and let our hard-working temporary workers enjoy the full benefits of their work. By doing that, we will increase our revenue to subsidize other necessary programs in the state.

**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.).*

**3. Increasing Wages.**

**a. Minimum wage.** *Do you support raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour?*

**Rithy Uong:** Yes.

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

**Rithy Uong:** Yes.

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

**Rithy Uong:** Yes.

**d. Teen Minimum Wage.** *And reject efforts to create a subminimum wage for teen workers?*

**Rithy Uong:** Yes.

**4. Paid Leave.** *Do you support requiring access to up to 16 weeks of paid family leave and 26 weeks of paid medical leave?*

**Rithy Uong:** Yes.

**5. Unions -- Part I.** *If workers in Massachusetts make the decision to unionize, would you be willing to publicly support a union-organizing drive and discourage management from fighting their decision?*

**Rithy Uong:** Yes.

6. **Unions -- Part II.** *Since 2010 election, a number of states have rolled back the collective bargaining rights of public workers as part of a well-funded, nationwide assault on unions led by wealthy, conservative donors. Would you oppose any effort to roll back the collective bargaining rights of state or municipal employees?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

7. **Wage Theft.** *Do you support 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?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

8. **Mandatory Arbitration.** *Would you support legislation to prohibit the use of mandatory arbitration provisions in employment contracts, i.e., requirements that an employee forfeit the right to sue the employer for discrimination, nonpayment of wages or other illegal conduct?*

**Rithy Uong: No.** Sub-contractors should be accountable.

9. **Economic Democracy.** *Would you support legislation to foster and develop employee ownership of businesses in Massachusetts and encourage the formation of cooperatives and/or benefit corporations?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

# C. EDUCATION

The promise of public education has always been as 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.

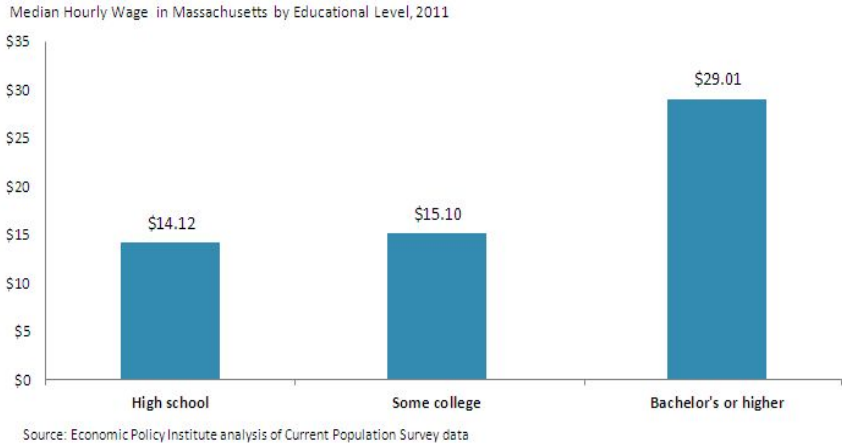
**The state hasn’t been living up to its responsibility to fully fund our public schools.**

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

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

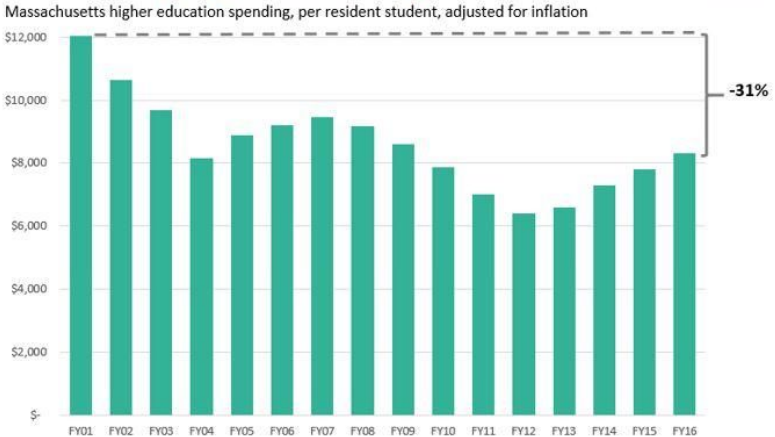


**Higher educational attainment leads to higher wages.**



**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?

**Rithy Uong:** Public education is a great asset to all students in the Commonwealth. I believe that every community should provide the highest quality education possible for every student, of every culture, of every ability, of every means. It is our duty to invest adequate time and money to help our education system flourish. The educational funding formula must be re-evaluated, there should be a cap on Charter School funding. The Charter School method of governing should be revisited. More technical curriculum should be build in public school system, not just in technical high schools. These are few examples of things I will work with other legislators.

2. **Optional/As Applicable:** Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on public education?
3. **Universal Pre-K.** Would you support creating universal, free Pre-K, accessible to any resident of Massachusetts, integrated into the public school system?
4. **Standardized Testing.** Do you 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?

**Rithy Uong:** Yes.

5. **Equitable Funding.** Do you support changing 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?

**Rithy Uong:** Yes.

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 **keeping the cap on charter schools**?

**Rithy Uong:** Yes.

b. Would you support 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?

**Rithy Uong:** Yes.

7. **Sex Education.** Do you support requiring public schools that teach sexual health education to provide age-appropriate, medically accurate information that is inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities that hat includes the effective use of contraception?

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

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

**Rithy Uong: Yes.** This must go along with a path to citizenship for mutual benefits.

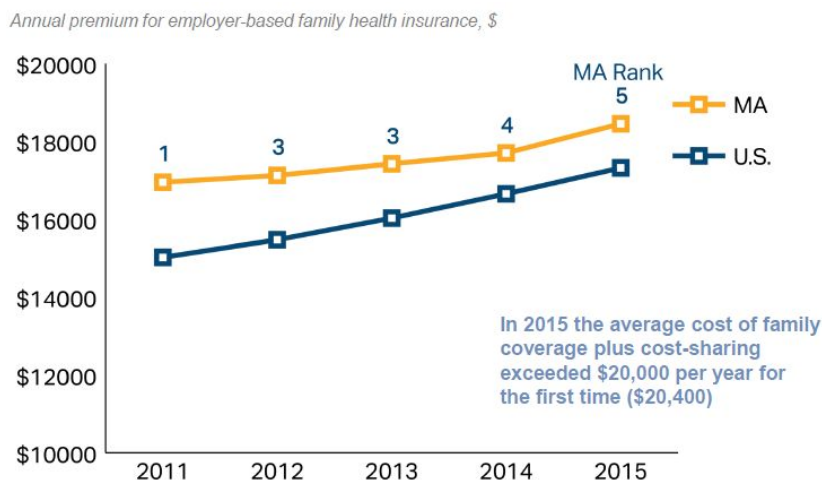
9. *Tuition-Free Higher Education.* Would you support making tuition free at public colleges and universities?

**Rithy Uong: Yes.** Try community college first and analyze results.

## D. HEALTH CARE

Massachusetts has led the way in providing near universal health insurance coverage, with 97% of the state having health insurance. We provided the blueprint for the national Affordable Care Act, with an insurance-based reform passed by the Democratic Legislature and signed by Republican Governor Romney. While the reforms of President Obama's Affordable Care Act are under assault by Republicans (who control the Executive and both legislative chambers), Massachusetts could lead in more progressive health care reforms. Even without the Republican dismantling of national reforms, there is still work to do right here in Massachusetts. MA's Democratic Legislature passed, and the Republican governor signed, the ACCESS bill in 2017--protecting the right to no-fee contraception, which is (federally) under threat: Where our federal advances are being rolled back, Massachusetts could--and should--push progressively forward. 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.*

**Rithy Uong:** The health care insurance system should be revisited. The state mandate that everyone must have health insurance has helped many. But it has also hurt many American families due to the increase in the co-payments. The state has allowed the health insurance companies to raise co-payment rates per visit without any oversight, and this is wrong. I will work with other legislators to address such issue.

Massachusetts was one of the first states to help ensure nearly everyone has healthcare. The

Massachusetts healthcare system is the basis for the national model of the Affordable Care Act. I believe Massachusetts needs to keep striving to provide better and smarter healthcare that is more equitably for all its citizens. We can be a model for the rest of the nation again.

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 legislation to enact a single payer health care system in Massachusetts?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

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

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

5. **Dental Care.** *Do you support the authorization of dental therapists in Massachusetts, similar to a nurse practitioner or physician assistant, in order to expand access to dental care?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.** Dental should be part of single-payer.

6. **Prescription Drug Pricing.** *Would you support a drug transparency law, like the one recently passed in California, that requires pharmaceutical companies to publicly justify steep price increases?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

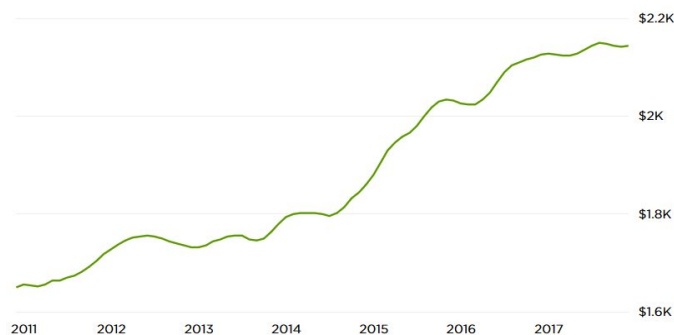


## E. HOUSING

---

Massachusetts has a lot to offer, but that does little if people can't afford to live here. Although Massachusetts ranked #1 last year in the [US News & World Report's state ranking](#), we were #45 in cost of living and #44 in housing affordability. A worker earning minimum wage in Massachusetts would have to work [80 hours a week](#) to afford a modest one bedroom rental home at market rate (and almost 100 hours a week in Metro Boston). 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. The Commonwealth is at risk of losing [14,231 subsidized units](#) by December 31, 2019, as subsidies expire and owners convert properties into market-rate condominiums. 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. There is a waiting list of up to ten years for a rental voucher. 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.

### Median rents have gone up by more than 30% since 2011.



(source: [zillow.com](#))

**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?*

**Rithy Uong:** I support the creation of additional affordable housing and I support local authorities to provide subsidized housing for the homeless, veterans, single parents, low-income families, the elderly, and people in recovery. Lowell has the infrastructure to provide these services and this housing for our community but we lack resources. My job will be to fight for these resources.

We need to link housing to jobs through good transportation including a regional commuter rail network and a regional transportation authority that provides regular and frequent service to job centers and housing. Not having a reliable form of transportation results in individuals losing their job or reducing their ability to climb the economic ladder.

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

3. **Funding.** Do you support increasing funding for...

a. *The creation of new units of affordable housing, especially low-income units?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

b. *The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

c. *Matching funds for the Community Preservation Act (via fees from the Registry of Deeds)?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

4. **Housing Preservation.** *Currently, certain property owners who guarantee affordable rents have been incentivized by subsidized mortgages via the 13A program. However, many of the contracts under 13A are set to expire in 2019. Do you support giving cities and towns the authority to require such apartments to remain affordable?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.** Should incentivize owners to do this.

5. **Foreclosure Prevention.** *Do you support a requirement that banks mediate in good faith with homeowners to seek alternatives before beginning foreclosure proceedings?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

6. **Tenant Protections.** *Would you support legislation, such as the Jim Brooks Stabilization Act, that requires landlords to provide a reason when seeking to evict a tenant, like failure to pay rent, damaging property, or breaking a lease; informs tenants of their rights under state law; and increases data collection on eviction?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.** Need funding for enforcement.

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

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

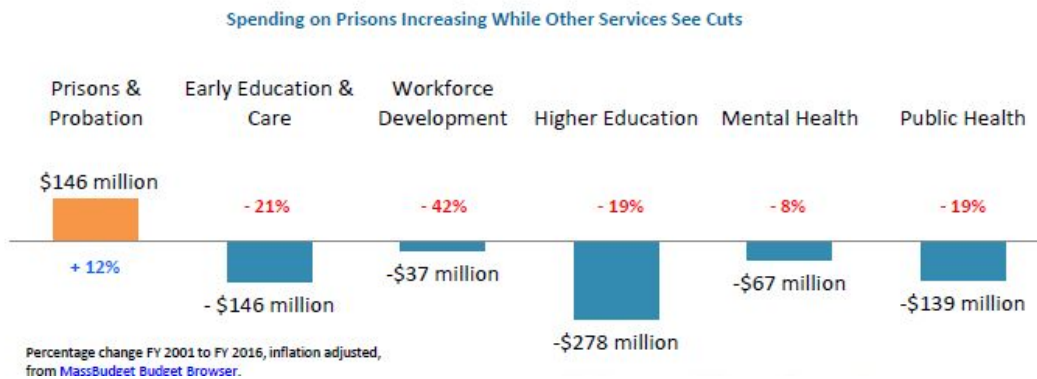
8. **Combating Speculation.** *Would you support legislation to allow cities and towns to impose a graduated tax on private real estate transactions over \$2.5 million, with the money allocated to affordable housing trust funds?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

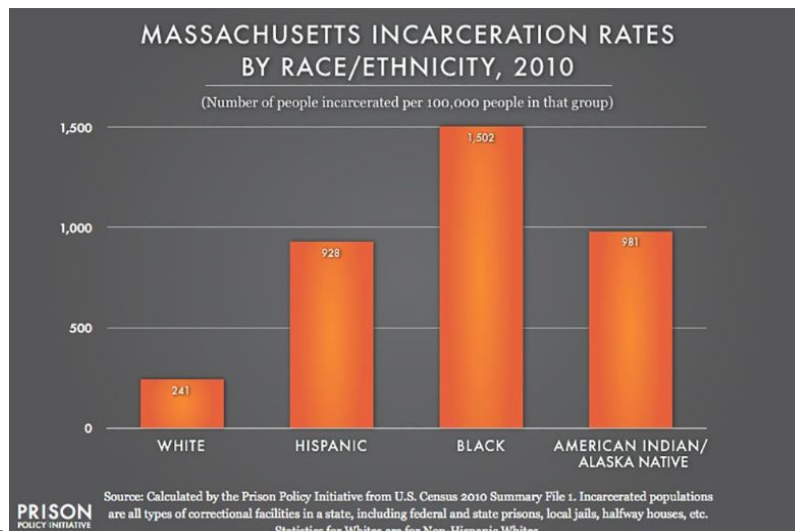
# F. RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

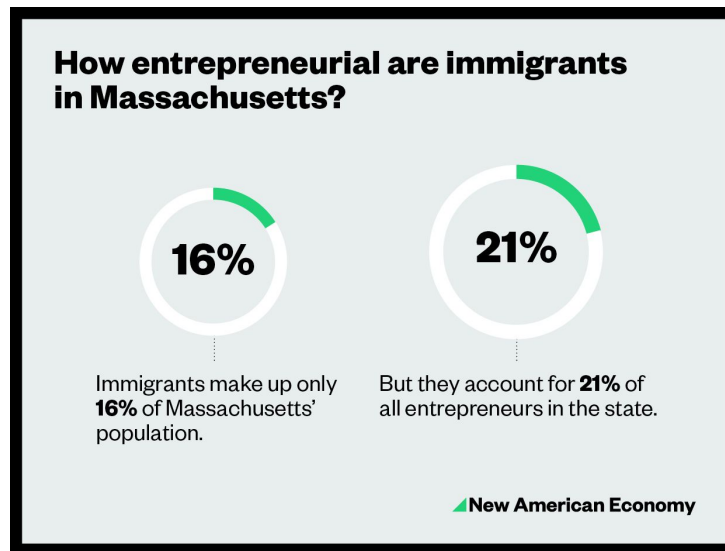
Massachusetts must continue to strive to be a state that welcomes and embraces all of its residents and combats prejudice and discrimination of all kinds. The social and economic costs of mass incarceration and the policies that created it, in particular, have put our aspirations of “justice for all”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

**Rithy Uong:** As a Guidance Counselor and a former Lowell City Councilor, I have observed racial and social injustice in schools as well as in city government. It was and still is difficult for newcomers to access public jobs or get promotions; in the city many people who hold public positions are related. There is a history of harassment by some police officers toward minority groups, although we have made some progress.

Lowell High School has a minority-majority population with only 29% of the student body being white, yet this is not reflected in the faculty or administration, which is overwhelmingly white. As a minority member of this school administration, I am a surprise to some people simply by being educated enough to hold my position. I have also heard charges from the City Council floor against a generalized “Asian youth” population that destroys our public spaces. Until I was elected, there were few services in the city for non-English speakers. It is better now, but there could be more inclusion in our government and our schools.

Many of our cities have very diverse populations and we should strive to include everyone in the dialogue. We should have a government and a workforce that reflects the community.

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

**Rithy Uong:** I worked with a former mayor, district attorney, and attorney general to establish youth programs and after-school activities for minority students; to hire the first two new minority police officers in the early 90s; and to hire a Khmer firefighter in the city. I helped to organize a group to clean up an old park and create a volleyball park for everyone to use; to get more minorities appointed to boards and commissions; and to provide more public access TV programs in the city. I managed to get the history of the Khmer Genocides integrated into the Social Studies curriculum in the high school, and pushed the city to grant Khmer city employees up to 3 days per year off work for religious holidays.

3. *Trans Accommodations. In 2016, Massachusetts passed legislation to prevent discrimination against transgender individuals in public accommodations. Conservatives are seeking to repeal the bill on the*

2018 ballot. Will you advocate for the protection of this legislation?

**Rithy Uong: Yes.** Have been advocate at Lowell High.

4. **LGBTQ Youth.** *Our neighboring states of Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Vermont ban the use of harmful conversion therapy practices for minors. Do you support banning the use of conversion therapy in Massachusetts?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

5. **Mandatory Minimums.** *The landmark criminal justice reform bill passed earlier this year eliminated or reduced a number of mandatory minimums for drug-related offenses; however, it left in place, or expanded, those related to opioids. The opioid crisis in Massachusetts is severe, but it will not be solved by doubling down on criminalization. Do you support eliminating mandatory minimums for opioid drug offenses?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

6. **Juvenile Justice -- Part I.** *Ample research shows that teenage offenders served by a juvenile system are much less likely to re-offend and more likely to successfully transition to adulthood. Teenagers in a juvenile system have access to greater educational and counseling services, and they're much less likely to face sexual assault than at an adult facility. Do you support raising the age of criminal majority from 18 to 21?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

7. **Juvenile Justice -- Part II.** *Under Massachusetts law, if a high school senior and a high school sophomore have sex – with mutual consent — the senior could be punished by incarceration and then forced to register as a sex offender. In recent years, states have been passing so-called "Romeo and Juliet" laws out of a recognition that such cases only get prosecuted when a parent disapproves of their child's relationship. Do you support the elimination of the charge of statutory rape for consensual sex between youths who are close in age (See H.3065 for reference)?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.** Conditional "yes." Need more info.

8. **Solitary Confinement.** *Do you support limiting the use of solitary confinement to no more than 15 consecutive days, and eliminating the use of solitary confinement for at-risk populations, including pregnant women, LGBTQ people, those with mental illness, and those under age 21 or over age 65?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.** Solitary confinement is a form of torture.

9. **Police Accountability.** *Do you support the establishment of an independent review board for police shootings in the Commonwealth?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.** Conditional yes-how is board appointed.

10. **Militarization of Police.** *Under the federal 1033 program, the US Department of Defense can transfer excess military equipment to local police departments. Such equipment makes police forces look like*

*occupying armies and exacerbates the impact of overpolicing in communities of color. Meanwhile, communities are often left in the dark about the equipment that local police departments are acquiring. Would you support, at minimum, a requirement that local elected officials vote on any such transfer before it can take place?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.** Public should have opportunity to speak.

11. **Safe Communities Act.** *Do you support 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?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.** Conditional yes--agree with portions.

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

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

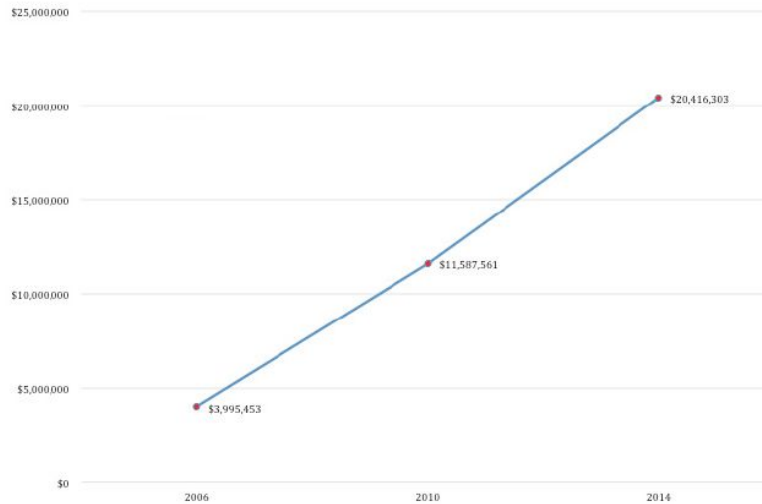
# G. GOOD GOVERNMENT/ STRONG DEMOCRACY

---

*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.*

**Rithy Uong:** I believe in getting people of all ages, ethnicities, and economic statuses involved in political debate. I think the more people you involve in a democracy the stronger the state becomes. We should be creating pathways for strong, informed citizens at a young age. We should make civics and government exciting for students to recognize and affect change.

I support lowering the voting age to 17. We should teach youth to talk about politics and policies at a young age to improve understanding and create a more informed citizen.

2. *Please indicate work you personally have done to promote transparency, campaign finance reform,*

*legislative rules reform, and access to voting.*

3. **Power and the Legislature.** *If elected, would you support 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?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.** Committee must believe in its chair.

4. **Transparency.** *Massachusetts is one of only two states where the Governor's Office, the Legislature, and the Judiciary claim full exemption from the public records laws. Do you support ending that exemption?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.** Must restore trust in government.

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

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

6. **Candidate Diversity.** *The cost of child care can prove prohibitive to working mothers or fathers seeking to run for office. Would you support legislation to explicitly allow working parents running for office to use campaign funds to pay for childcare while the candidate is "performing work or attending events directly related to the candidate's campaign"?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

7. **Voting.** *Which of the following policies to increase voter participation do you support?*

a. *Election day voter registration*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

b. *Automatic voter registration*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

c. *Expansion of early voting to "off-year" elections*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

d. *No-fault absentee voting*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**



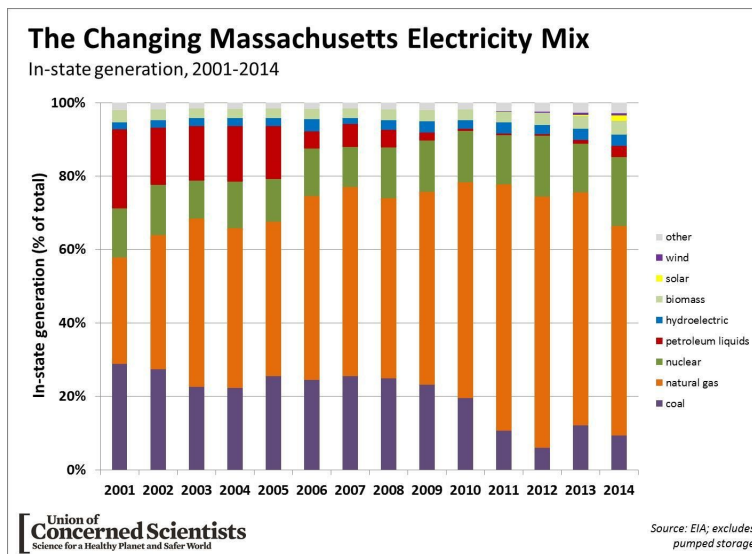
# H. SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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. In 2016, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court 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.

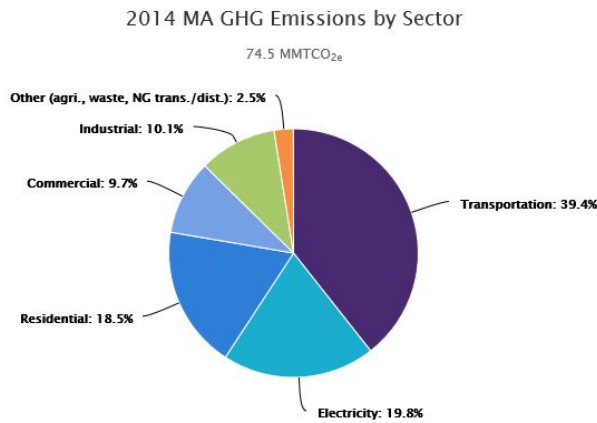
Equity issues loom large, as low-income communities and communities of color are often the most vulnerable to natural disasters and bear the brunt of pollution. In 2014, Governor Deval Patrick signed an executive order directing all state agencies to devote resources to protect the health, safety, and environment for the most vulnerable residents. However, this nominal commitment to “Environmental Justice” has been more rhetorical than real.

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.**



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

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

**Rithy Uong:** I believe we need to encourage the MassDOT (as well as our local communities) to construct roads and streets in ways that encourage people to walk and bicycle. Not only are these modes better for the environment but they cause less wear and tear on our roadways and therefore the fewer cars on the streets means cheaper road repair.

I also believe in creating and protecting our recreational and open space areas for wildlife protection.

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

**Rithy Uong:** I personally recycle regularly and try to pick up trash on the street. I attend community service cleanups as much as I can.

3. *Waste Reduction. Would you support a statewide ban on single-use shopping bags and a requirement that alternatives be more sustainable?*

**Rithy Uong:** Yes. Expand bottle bill to water, nip and others.

4. *Solar energy. Do you support increasing equitable access to solar power by removing caps on solar generation and restoring compensation for low-income and community solar?*

**Rithy Uong:** Yes.

5. *Renewable Energy. Do you support a target of at least 50% clean energy by 2030 for Massachusetts, as adopted in California and New York? (Hawaii is committed to 100% renewables by 2045). To accomplish this, would you support an increase in the Renewable Energy Production Standard (the green energy mandate on utilities) by at least 3% each year?*

**Rithy Uong:** Yes. Would like to see higher than 50%.

6. **Environmental Justice.** *Successive and bipartisan gubernatorial administrations have made verbal commitments to environmental justice (EJ) and Governor Deval Patrick issued an Executive Order on Environmental Justice in 2014 which has not been implemented.*

a. *Would you support implementation of the 2014 EO?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

b. *and support efforts to codify environmental justice into law?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

7. **Gas pipelines.** *Do you oppose the expansion of gas pipelines in the state?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

8. **Carbon pricing.**

a. *Do you support putting a fee on carbon emissions?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.** Tiered fee based on income.

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

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

9. **Public Utilities.** *Would you support legislation to allow municipalities to purchase their electric distribution utility (the poles and wires that transmit power) and operate a municipal or cooperative electric utility?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

10. **Public Transit.** *Do you support finding progressive revenue sources to fund the maintenance, expansion, and improvement of the MBTA and the RTAs?*

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**

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

**Rithy Uong: Yes.**