

Tommy Vitolo

15th Norfolk

State Representative

Endorsement Questionnaire

Office Sought: State Representative

Legislative District: 15th Norfolk

Party: Democratic

Website: www.tommyvitolo.com

Twitter: [@tommyvitolo](https://twitter.com/tommyvitolo)

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Primary: September 4

Election: November 6

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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

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).

I. About the Candidate

Tommy Vitolo

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

Tommy Vitolo: I am running because I want to see progressive values pushed further in our legislature. Our current legislature is not accomplishing enough, not passing enough bills, not facing enough issues, not taking enough steps each session or big enough steps to deal with our state's current and future needs. Brookline needs a legislator who can collaborate, listen and lead discussions to address the town's specific needs to ensure we get the support and flexibility to continue growing and serving as a model for communities across the Commonwealth. My three enumerated priorities on all of my media are: social and economic justice, public education, and the environment. Social and economic justice is broad and includes civil rights, equality and equity, and reproductive rights; it also includes improving transportation, housing opportunity, and access to medical care, and increasing gun safety. With respect to public education, I support expanding pre-K, adequately funding K-12 education, holding down the cost attending of UMass and state colleges, and paying all educators a living wage. I oppose high stakes testing and the expansion of charter schools. As an environmental professional, I will bring expertise and leadership on environmental issues to the legislature, with respect to the urgency and need for broad policy support on climate change mitigation and adaptation, and with respect to preserving green spaces, clean air and water, and the ecologies of Massachusetts.

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

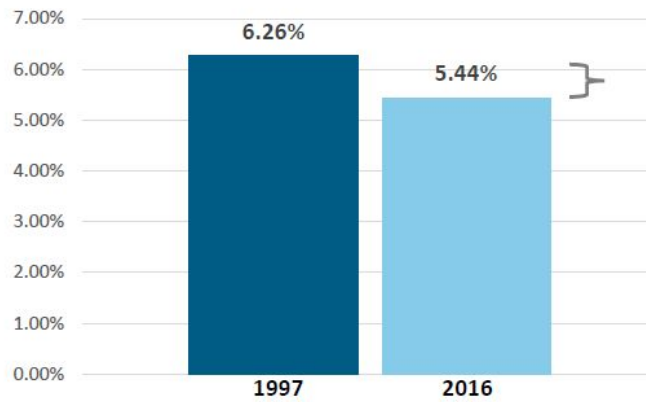
Tommy Vitolo: I've been active in local town government--I was elected to Town Meeting in 2007 and as Constable in 2010. I authored and shepherded to passage nine different bills, or warrant articles, on issues as diverse as education, diversity and inclusion, public art, clean energy, and public health. I've served on a dozen boards and committees in Town. I served as Field Director of the 2015 Yes (pro-override) campaign and as an advisory to this year's Yes Campaign to fund school renovations, additional teachers, and maintain town services. I've spent the past eight years as an expert witness testifying in front of public service commissions - which is to say my current job is to persuade politically connected lawyers on matters of environmental and economic policy on behalf of consumer advocates and environmental advocates. I am prepared as a result of both political experience and professional experience.

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.

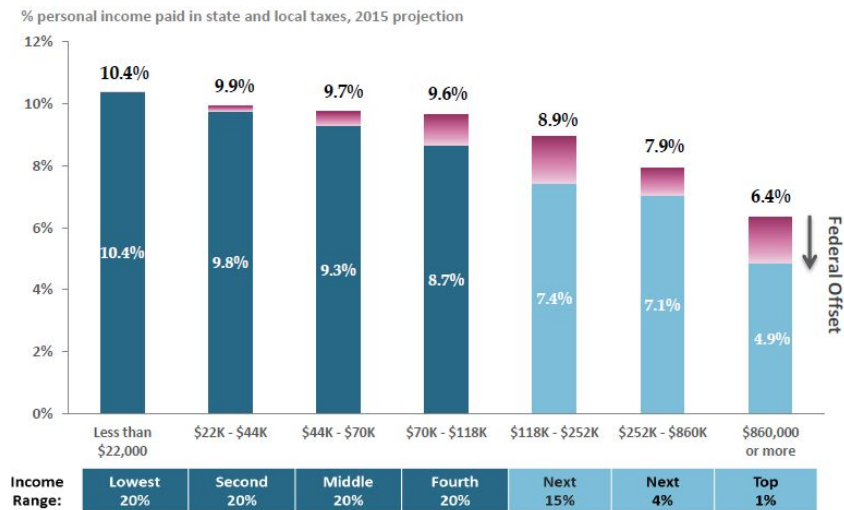
Declining revenues have meant drastic cuts, limiting our ability to invest in our communities and future economic stability.

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?*

Tommy Vitolo: We have a revenue problem. I support progressive changes to the tax code that increase revenue. I oppose rolling back the sales tax (and sales tax holidays). I support the Fair Share Amendment.

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?*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. Should I win my primary (and presuming that no non-Democrat enters the race), I will use my campaign staff and infrastructure to influence ballot initiative outcomes in November, including both in support of the Fair Share Amendment and in opposition to the ballot initiative that would repeal protections for transgender individuals.

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?*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

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?*

Tommy Vitolo: 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?*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. I support this requirement of all companies, and those that receive tax credits should be the first in line.

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

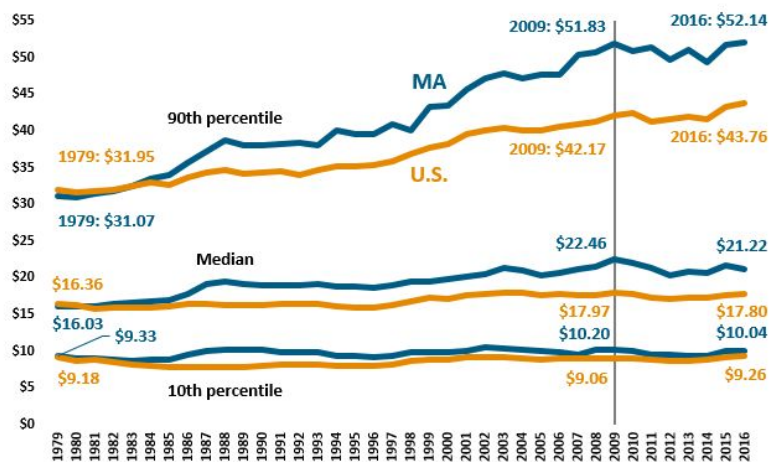
Cumulative Change in U.S. Hourly Wages for Private-Sector Production/Non-Supervisory Workers and Net Productivity, 1948-2015



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?

Tommy Vitolo: I support the Raise Up campaign, and have gathered signatures to put both the \$15 minimum wage and the paid sick time initiatives on the ballot. A full-time job should pay a living wage, and full time employees must have the ability to recover from injury and illness, and help their family members do the same. Massachusetts job sectors with significant growth potential include tech, bio, finance, renewable energy, and health care. Many of these jobs require undergraduate or advanced degrees, and will be salaried jobs. If we are to ensure our economy grows in ways that help people who earn an hourly wage, we must work to encourage manufacturing, construction, tourism, and specialty industry jobs in the Commonwealth, and ensure that these sectors also include prevailing wage and/or living wage provisions. Doing so must not be a corporate tax giveaway, as the film tax credit seems to be.

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.).*

Tommy Vitolo: I have written several reports and testimonies that included job impact analysis, typically performed with the IMPLAN model.

Vermont Public Service Board (Docket No. 8586): Direct testimony on the need and economic benefit of the proposed Coolidge Solar 20 MW solar electric generation facility. On behalf of Ranger Solar, LLC. December 14, 2015 and September 14, 2016.

Vitolo, T., M. Chang, T. Comings, A. Allison. 2015. Economic Benefits of the Proposed Coolidge Solar I Solar Project. Synapse Energy Economics for Coolidge Solar I, LLC.

Stanton, E. A., T. Comings, K. Takahashi, P. Knight, T. Vitolo, E. Hausman. 2013. Economic Impacts of the NRDC Carbon Standard. Synapse Energy Economics for the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC).

3. Increasing Wages.

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

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

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

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

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

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

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

Tommy Vitolo: 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?

Tommy Vitolo: 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?

Tommy Vitolo: 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?

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. Yes, and would work with Labor to rectify any problems that result from an unfavorable Janus decision.

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?

Tommy Vitolo: 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?

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

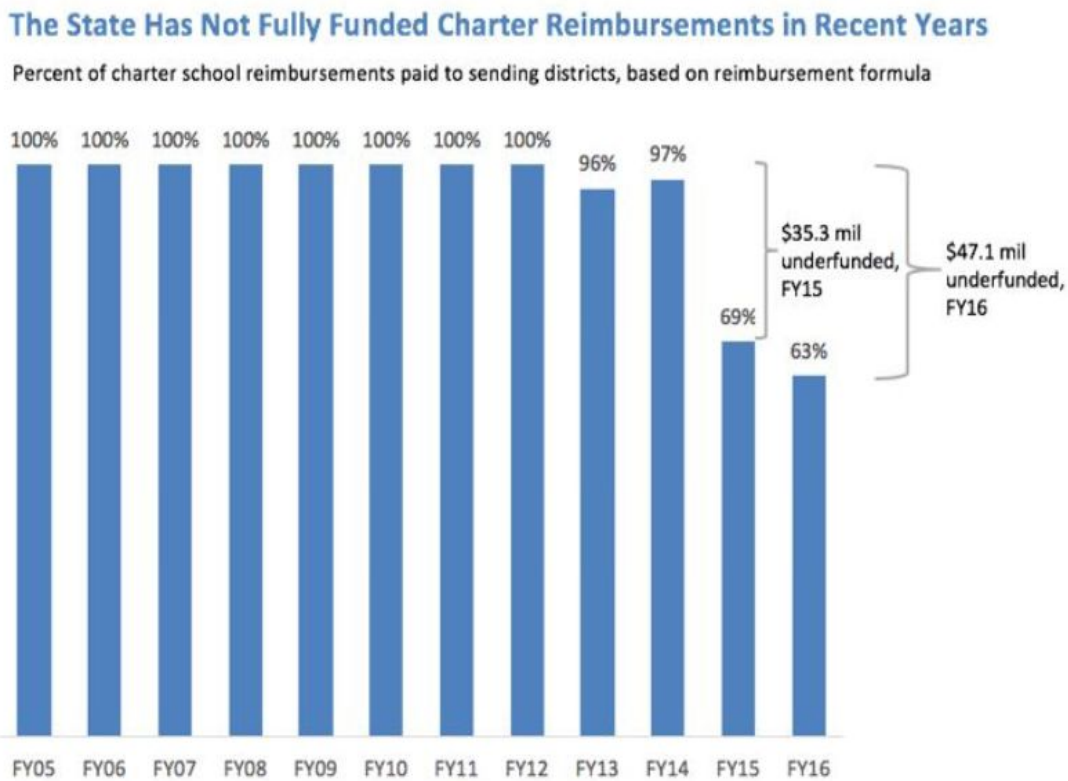
9. **Economic Democracy.** Would you support legislation to foster and develop employee ownership of businesses in Massachusetts and encourage the formation of cooperatives and/or benefit corporations?

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

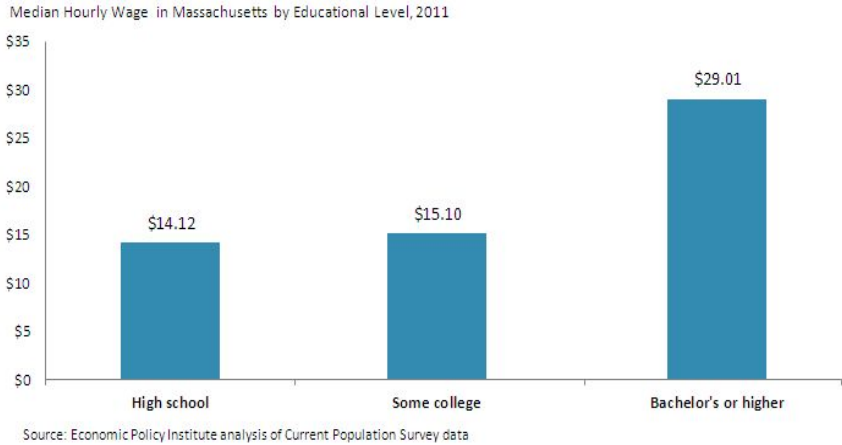
C. EDUCATION

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.

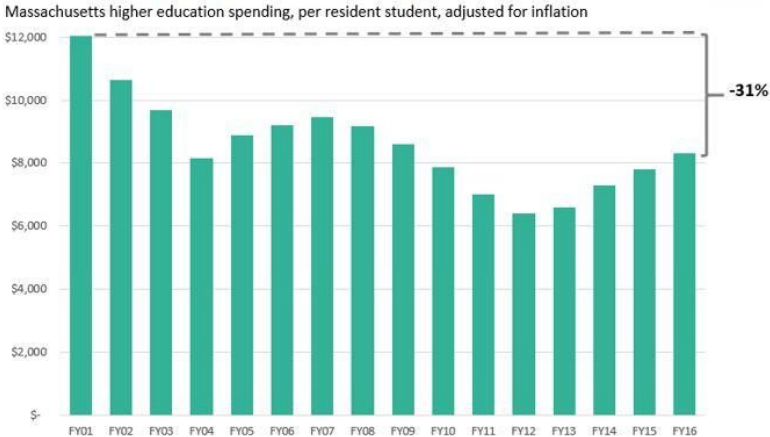


Higher educational attainment leads to higher wages.



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?*

Tommy Vitolo: I want to expand universal pre-K, beginning with communities struggling on a variety of social and economic fronts. We need adequately fund K-12 education, ensure proper Foundation budgets and appropriating Massachusetts School Building Authority's funds. We must ensure that our public higher education system is affordable is critical to keep home-grown talent in-state. All educators, including paraprofessionals, must be paid a living wage. Finally, my support of public education includes opposing high stakes testing, reducing the total hours spent on standardized testing, opposing the expansion of charter schools, and ensuring that charter schools don't exclude special education students and English as a second language students, and don't use the disciplinary process to push out students with lower test scores.

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

Tommy Vitolo: I was the Field Director for the 2015 Yes for Brookline pro-override campaign to fund classroom expansion, and was an advisor for the 2018 Yes for Brookline campaign. I helped draft and provide strategy for a warrant article designed to ensure that the needs of the Pierce School – the K-8 in Brookline both most in need of infrastructure updates and most diverse – didn't get ignored in Brookline's pursuit of additional classroom capacity. And, when disagreements over autonomy and curriculum led to the Brookline's School Committee's failure for three years to sign a contract with the Brookline Educators Union representing teachers and paraprofessionals, I stood with the teachers.

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

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. To the extent that this program is phased in, cities and towns with significant environmental justice communities should be prioritized.

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?*

Tommy Vitolo: 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?*

Tommy Vitolo: 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?*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. I worked on local efforts to support the No on 2 campaign, including canvassing and other voter outreach and lobbying my School Committee to take a public stance opposing Question 2.

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?*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. I think it is outrageous that schools that claim to be public can avoid the kind of transparency that's required of public schools.

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?*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

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

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. The documentation status of an applicant should not be a consideration with respect to tuition or state-funded financial aid or merit scholarship.

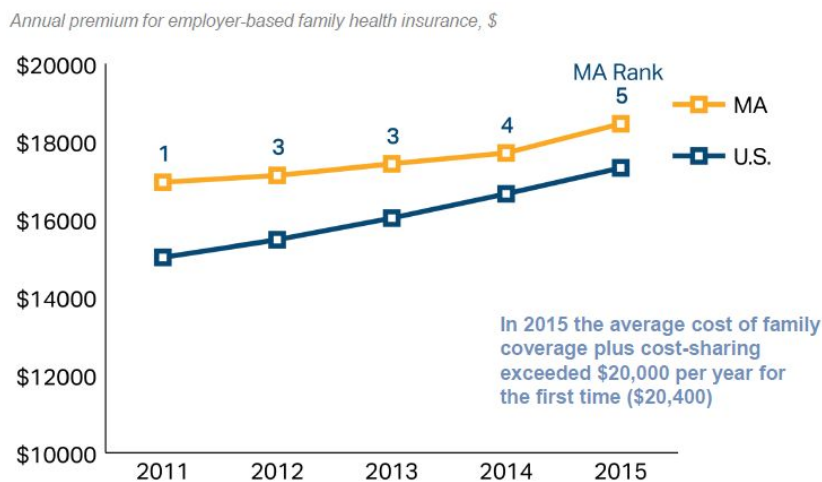
9. ***Tuition-Free Higher Education.** Would you support making tuition free at public colleges and universities?*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. It's much more sensible to use higher taxes on high income lawyers, doctors, engineers, bankers, etc. once they're earning high incomes than to ask that they pre-pay the tax on that future income in the form of tuition and fees. Public university systems in the South and the Midwest have far more financial support from the legislature, and lower total costs as a result. Massachusetts should at the very least mirror those regions with regards to public higher education costs.

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.*

Tommy Vitolo: I care deeply about making health care affordable and accessible to everyone in the Commonwealth. I strongly believe everyone needs access to health care and I will support initiatives to make sure patients are focused on care, not on billing codes. I will sponsor or co-sponsor legislation to make single-payer health care a reality. I also will work to ensure Medicaid payments are adequate for state hospitals and community health centers, which is critical both for public health and for health care workers. I am concerned that the alleged benefits of continued mergers (e.g. Partners) are less than the potential for exploitation of market power. I will look to progressive health care policy advocates for

guidance on health care legislation.

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

Tommy Vitolo: When Town Meeting took a vote to take Town-provided health insurance away from the five Select Board members, I opposed.

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

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

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

Tommy Vitolo: 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?

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. Yes, although I am concerned about the potential for increased medical risk exposure in low-income communities, and want to ensure that the financial savings accrue in the form of lower rates and increased access rather than increased profits.

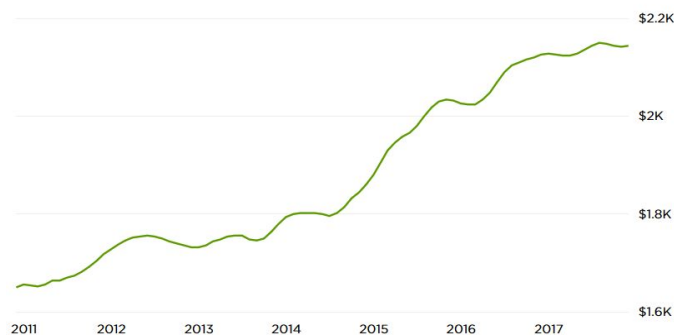
6. **Prescription Drug Pricing.** Would you support a drug transparency law, like the one recently passed in California, that requires pharmaceutical companies to publicly justify steep price increases?

Tommy Vitolo: 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?

Tommy Vitolo: 40B continues to plug away at the need for Affordable housing, albeit far from perfectly. I would support efforts for the state to help cities and towns develop and implement housing production plans, so that new Affordable housing is built at a steady pace, and cited throughout each city or town that is both consistent with smart growth policies and doesn't limit it to a single neighborhood, often at the edge of town.

Public transportation is the lynch pin. Good transportation – broad coverage, frequent inter-arrival times, and adherence to schedule – dramatically expands the effective eligible housing stock for working people. Improving the performance of commuter rail, subways, and trolleys is important and politically necessary, but the lowest hanging fruit are likely associated with bus improvements such as bus rapid transit (BRT), transit signal prioritization (TSP), improved routes and stop locations, improved fare collection (or, better, fare-free buses), electric buses, and more frequent bus service.

Solving homelessness requires comprehensive state-wide effort, because otherwise communities have the perverse incentive to be oppressive to the homeless rather than welcoming and helpful. Much like 40B encourages affordable housing in every community, the state must make an effort to provide right-sized facilities to provide services for the homeless, including homeless schoolchildren, the addicted, the mentally ill, homeless-and-employed, and other circumstances across the Commonwealth, rather than contribute to the clustering of homeless in downtown areas of major cities.

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

Tommy Vitolo: I provided strategy advice on a warrant article to build senior Affordable housing on a Town-owned open air parking lot (and voted in its favor). I voted in favor of supporting the two Town-owned Affordable housing developments Brookline has built in the past 12 years (Fisher Hill and Dummer Street).

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

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

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

b. The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program?

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

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

Tommy Vitolo: 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?

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

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

Tommy Vitolo: 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?

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. In my role as a Constable, I serve eviction notices to tenants. In doing so, I make sure that the tenant understands that the notice must be taken seriously, that the tenant has rights, and that there may be free legal services available. With respect to eviction in order to tear down low-rise

units in order to build more units on the same parcel, I am concerned about the tension associated with creating more housing stock by tearing down and building a taller building on one hand, and the detrimental consequences of gentrification and eviction on the other hand.

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?*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. I share the vision of experts like Don Shoop and Jeff Speck with respect to transportation, urban planning and development, and livable cities.

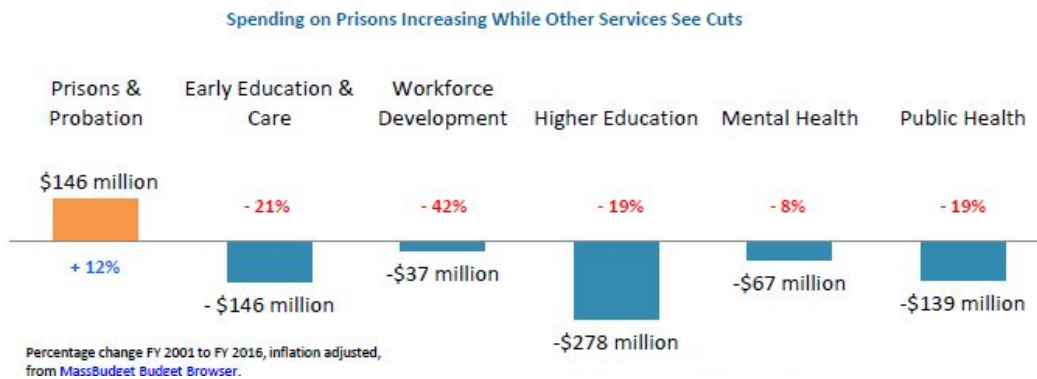
8. **Combating Speculation.** *Would you support legislation to allow cities and towns to impose a graduated tax on private real estate transactions over \$2.5 million, with the money allocated to affordable housing trust funds?*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. Although I am concerned that this might incentivize the condo-ization of apartment buildings, thereby reducing the percentage of rental housing in a neighborhood or region.

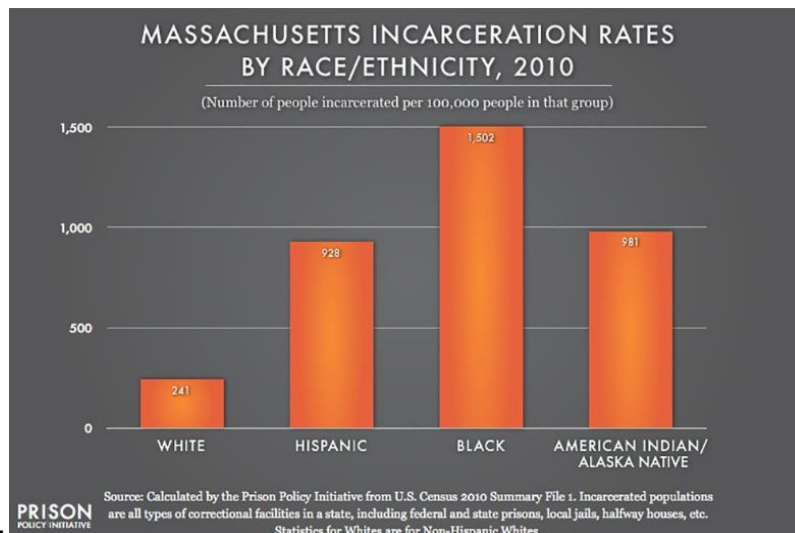
F. RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

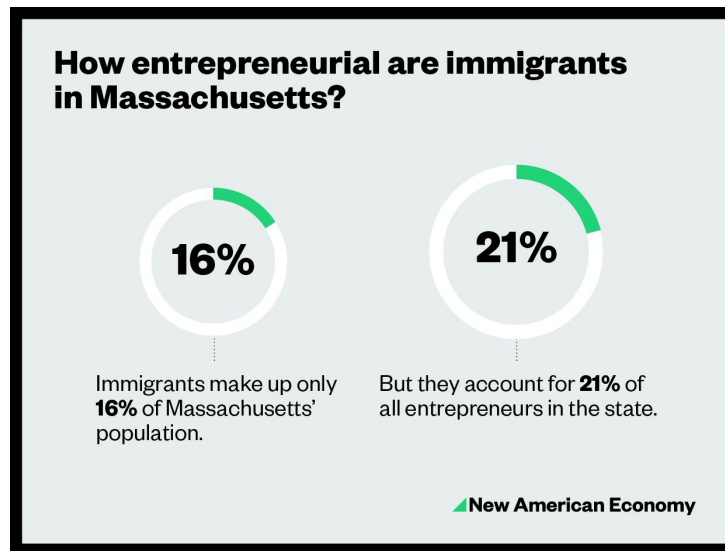
Massachusetts must continue to strive to be a state that welcomes and embraces all of its residents and combats prejudice and discrimination of all kinds. The social and economic costs of mass incarceration and the policies that created it, in particular, have put our aspirations of “justice for all”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

Tommy Vitolo: Social justice and advocating for full racial and gender equality is a key component of my platform. We need leaders to combat inequality wherever it occurs in our Commonwealth. I support equal pay for equal work, paid family leave and quality and affordable childcare, and aggressive pursuit and prosecution of wage theft. We need to honor and support a woman's complete agency over her body. We must continue the work of criminal justice reform, and redouble efforts to ensure education and job opportunities in communities of color.

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

Tommy Vitolo: I've attended the women's marches, attended Black Lives Matter events, and allied with organizations fighting for social equality such as Raise Up and JALSA. I also authored a warrant article to recognize a recently deceased long-time Brookline resident John Wilson, the brilliant African American artist who sculpted the bust of Dr. Martin Luther King placed in the US Capitol Rotunda. The bill both recognized his work and paved the way for a different sculpture of Dr. King to be installed in the Town Hall lobby, paid for with funds raised by the Committee to Commemorate John Wilson (of which I am a member). I am the only candidate in my race who voted to make the Chief Diversity Officer a department head, in order to ensure that she or he have sufficient gravitas and authority to implement broader policies aimed at increasing diversity and inclusion.

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?*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. I've signed up to assist with the Freedom for All campaign.

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?*

Tommy Vitolo: 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?*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. In the past six months I've come to better understand the opioid crisis. I had a bad fall in December, breaking two vertebrae. The ongoing, inescapable pain was overwhelming. Living through that pain, just for a few months, helped me understand how it is so many people turn to opioids to escape such terrible conditions. Although my back has fully healed and I am now pain free, I haven't forgotten the interrelatedness of pain management and opioid addiction, and how important public policy is in improving medical outcomes and reducing addiction.

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?*

Tommy Vitolo: 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)?*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

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?*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

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

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

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?

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. I strongly oppose the militarization of local police.

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?*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. This is a must. There is an urgency to passing this now -- this session.

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?*

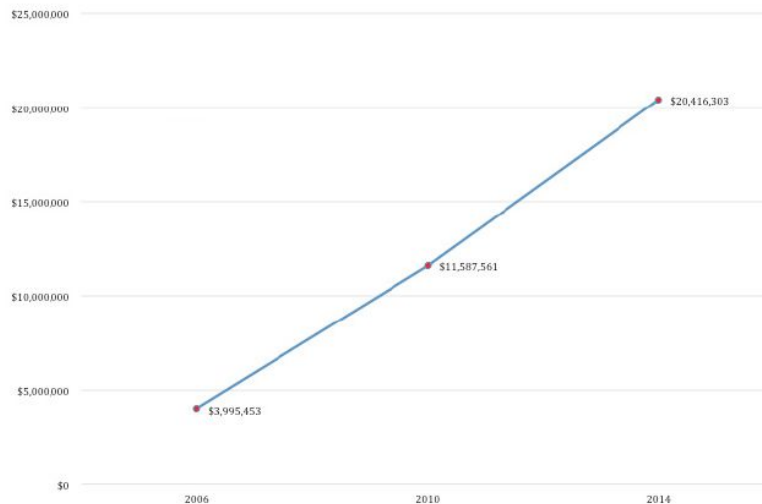
Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

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.*

Tommy Vitolo:

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

Tommy Vitolo: I was an early and vocal advocate in favor of purchasing an electronic voting system for Brookline’s Town Meeting, in order to foster more recorded votes. I am a member of the Recorded Vote Coalition, and stand in favor of every request for a recorded vote in Town Meeting. I also filed a warrant article to require that Advisory Committee recommendations on warrant articles before Town Meeting be recorded and included in the Combined Reports, so that Town Meeting Members and the

public better understand the positions of individual members of the Town's finance committee. This was the only article I've proposed that failed to pass; the birth of my son two weeks earlier prevented my full effort on the bill.

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?*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

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?*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

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

Tommy Vitolo: 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"?*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

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

a. *Election day voter registration*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

b. *Automatic voter registration*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

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

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

d. *No-fault absentee voting*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

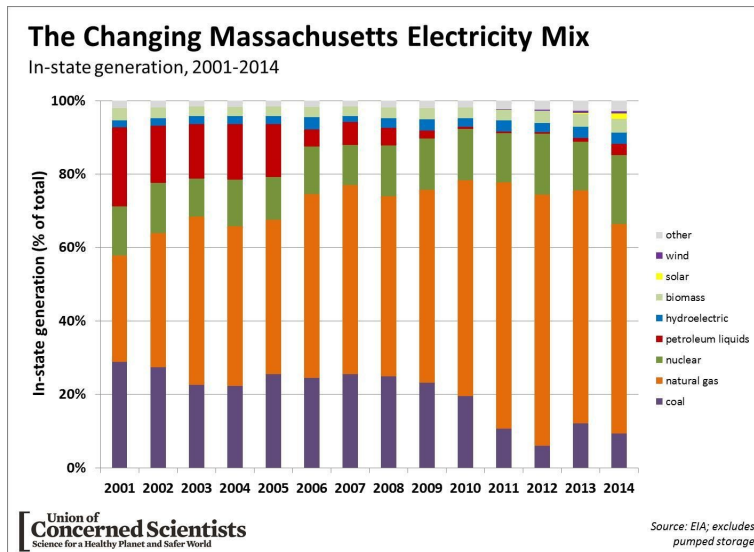
H. SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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.

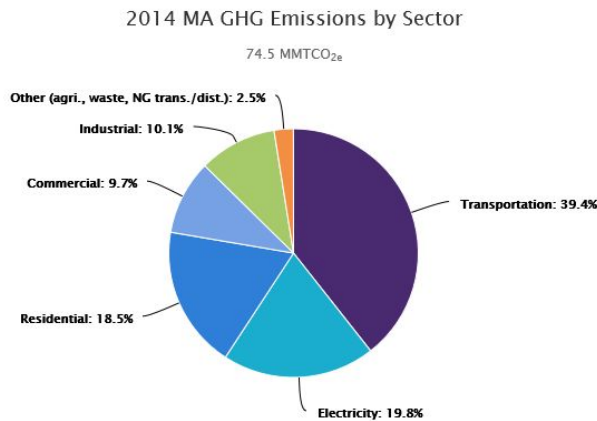
Equity issues loom large, as low-income communities and communities of color are often the most vulnerable to natural disasters and bear the brunt of pollution. In 2014, Governor Deval Patrick signed an executive order directing all state agencies to devote resources to protect the health, safety, and 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.*

Tommy Vitolo: As an energy & environment professional employed by Synapse Energy Economics, I know that we can and must eliminate fossil fuels from our energy mix. We need to fix gas leaks, increase energy efficiency, add mass transit, increase electric storage, and implement a smart grid that empowers consumers to simultaneously save money and enable the integration of more renewable electricity. I will support to continue and expand GridMod efforts that allow owners of solar, storage, EVs, and other critical 21st century infrastructure to be compensated the full value of these customer-owned (or leased), customer-sited resources, and in fact have authored Value of Solar (VoS) studies in Mississippi and the District of Columbia. My “all of the above” energy policy is everything that will move us toward 100 percent renewable electricity, 100 percent electric vehicles, and 100 percent electric heating and cooling by 2050, necessary if we are to hit our climate reduction goals, and opposition to adding infrastructure or policy that distracts or delays achieving those climate goals.

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

Tommy Vitolo: Professionally, I have worked to retire coal-fired power plants, and working on behalf of Sierra Club have been directly involved with the retirement or legal-promise-of-retirement of coal fired power plants in Colorado, Nebraska, Michigan, Illinois, and North Carolina. I have worked to prevent new interstate gas pipelines on the East Coast. I have worked to allow significant new solar installations to be installed in Nebraska, North Carolina, South Carolina, Vermont, Massachusetts, and New Jersey.

At the local government level, I have authored four warrant articles related to the environment – one requiring the use of GS-37 green certified cleaning products in Town buildings, one requiring Town roofs be made “solar-ready” whenever substantial roof construction work was being performed, and two to implement Community Choice

Aggregation in Brookline, effectively increasing the RPS requirement of all residents from +12 to +37 by setting up a default service with an additional 25 percent Class I REC retirement.

I've also served on the following committees:

-Amory Park Design Review Committee, 2007. Designed and approved paths, stairways, and other accessibility measures.

-Clean Car Committee, 2007-2008. Co-authored state-wide legislation to encourage the purchase of more fuel-efficient vehicles.

-Bicycle Advisory Committee, 2008-present. Work to secure grant money, develop a comprehensive bicycle plan, assist with the Brookline Bikes Beacon bicycle parade, and advise on policies and capital improvement bicycle infrastructure expenditures within Town.

-Pay As You Throw Committee, 2008. Crafted a proposal that projected to reduce our Town's trash tonnage by 25 percent while saving the Town \$300,000 per year.

-Emerald Necklace Bicycle and Pedestrian Crossing Committee, 2011-2012. Modified and approved a proposal to improve the safety and aesthetic of five locations where a roadway divides the Emerald Necklace parks in Brookline, including the once extremely dangerous (and now safe) Route 9 crossing.

-Solar Roof Study Committee, 2013. Researched and drafted building design specifications so that when the Town builds or substantially renovates a Town-owned roof, that roof will be solar panel ready if the siting is appropriate for solar electricity generation.

-Complete Streets Task Force, 2014-2016. Created policy to support right-of-way design, implementation, use, and maintenance of safe, comfortable use of transportation infrastructure by motorists, cyclists, pedestrians, and transit users of all ages and abilities.

-Community Choice Aggregation Subcommittee, 2016-2017, ex officio. Guided the Town through the process of Community Choice Aggregation, including contractual acquisition of Renewable Energy Credits and wholesale energy and capacity, marketing and communications, and implementation.

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

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. I am the only candidate in my race who supported this at the Town level.

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?*

Tommy Vitolo: 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?

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. I would expand the requirement to the currently exempt municipal electric utilities.

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?*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

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

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

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

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. New gas infrastructure is inconsistent with Massachusetts Law requiring an 80 percent CO2 reduction by 2050, and will result in stranded assets ultimately costing ratepayers billions of dollars.

8. **Carbon pricing.**

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

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

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

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. While some form of “tax and dividend” or revenue distribution may be supported by some, I believe that the reinvestment of RGGI revenue is a far better model.

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?*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. Although I note that in my professional experience, some of the best and all of the worst run electric utilities are munis and coops. To prevent this, Massachusetts must provide more regulation of and more support to munis to ensure that their actions are in the best interests of ratepayers and the environment.

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

Tommy Vitolo: Yes. I would also like to see a “Charlie Card 2.0” that allows passengers who typically ride one RTA to ride another with the same card. One of many benefits is that it might foster broader state-wide support of all public transit systems in the Commonwealth.

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?*

Tommy Vitolo: Yes.

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.

Tommy Vitolo: A “pet” interest of mine is improving foster care. It relates to many issues above, including diversity, homelessness, education, criminal justice, juvenile justice, and more. I believe that relatively modest investments in the improvement of the Massachusetts foster care system would yield dramatic, immediate, and immensely moral benefits.