



Jamie Eldridge

★ State Senator Middlesex & Worcester District ★

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Dear Friend,

I hope that you had a wonderful Thanksgiving, and are enjoying the holiday season's first snow! Now that formal session has ended, I am spending time attending community events throughout the Middlesex and Worcester district to advocate for community and legislative projects.

The Housing Bond Bill will ensure that Massachusetts has the capacity to build and maintain affordable housing for residents across the Commonwealth and will expand access to safe and quality housing. This is a critical step toward assisting thousands of families currently living in full shelters and motels.

Increasing the minimum wage to \$11 per hour by 2016 will benefit nearly half a million minimum wage and low-wage workers across the state. Becoming a step closer to earning a fair wage will undoubtedly create a stronger foundation for all residents of the Commonwealth.

This fall, the Boston Mayoral race was influenced by outside Super PACs spending millions of dollars to influence the outcome of the election. This brought a renewed focus on the Massachusetts Disclose Act I refilled this session that addresses the issue of anonymous outsider spending.

I was encouraged to see the Joint Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture report out the Water Infrastructure bill that will help upgrade the state's aging water infrastructure..

The Holiday Season is a time to bring families and communities together to welcome the spirit of the New Year. This year, let's give thanks for what we are blessed with and also give back to others who are less fortunate.

Happy holidays and a Happy New Year!



Governor Patrick signs \$1.4 billion Housing Bond Bill.

Holiday 2013 NEWSLETTER

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Featured Event:
Annual MLK Jr. Breakfast
Monday, January 20
9:00-11:00 a.m.
Congregation Beth Elohim -
133 Prospect Street, Acton

Legislative Update

Governor Patrick Signs Housing Bond Bill

I was proud to witness Governor Patrick sign the \$1.4 billion Housing Bond Bill into law at the Putnam Square Apartments in Cambridge on Thursday, November 14th. With the signing of the bill, the Commonwealth is poised to grow and support homeownership and production of housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income residents, veterans, the elderly, and the disabled.

The Housing Bond Bill will fund 11 capital programs over the course of five years and includes \$73 million to fund affordable housing developments in 17 municipalities. This is the first long-term housing finance bill to come before the Legislature since 2008 and includes \$500 million for the rehabilitation and modernization of state-assisted public housing. Providing safe and secure housing is a crucial way to help families across the Commonwealth achieve economic stability.

This legislation also strengthens early education by establishing an Early Education and Out of School Time Capital fund for non-profit childcare organizations to improve their facilities. The legislation also allows for development projects within half a mile of a mass transit hub to be eligible for funding.

As the cost of owning or renting a home in Massachusetts continues to rise, we must continue to invest in affordable housing. The housing bond bill is an important step in this direction and I commend the Legislature for their work and commitment to pass this legislation.

Minimum Wage Increase Passes Senate

The Senate in December passed a bill that will restore the value of the minimum wage in Massachusetts by increasing the minimum wage to \$11 by 2016 and tying future increases to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the Northeast region. The bill also increases wages for tipped workers to 50 percent of the minimum wage.

While corporate America has recovered from the recession, most working families have not. This vote is a mark of victory for hard working citizens across the Commonwealth that will contribute to renewed economic prosperity, stronger communities and level the ever widening gap between the rich and poor.

This bill offers assistance to many of our residents and takes us one step closer to providing a living wage in the Commonwealth.

MA Disclose Act Gains Traction

The enormous quantities of outside, anonymous spending in the Boston mayoral race brought increased attention to the fact that there has been a long absence of campaign finance reform passing on Beacon Hill. To better track where the money is going and promote transparency, I refiled a bill this session that would help keep track of approximately \$4 million in funds that was funneled into the Boston mayoral races, and other races across the state at all levels.

S321, *An Act Relative to the Disclosure of Political Spending* would require new levels of disclosure and transparency for corporate political spending. I hope the media exposure the bill has received will help it pass.

Water Infrastructure Bill Reported out of Committee

I was pleased that the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture reported out a redrafted version of the water infrastructure bill I sponsored along with Senate President Murray that will address the critical need for modernization and greater investment in water infrastructure across the state. S.1947 *An Act Improving Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure* significantly expands the Water Pollution Abatement Trust's capacity, while incentivizing best practices and prioritizing critical needs projects.

The redrafted version of the bill pumps \$450 million in additional funding for water infrastructure investment. The bill increases the Water Pollution Abatement Trust's capacity from \$88 to \$38 million, while incentivizing best practices and prioritizing critical needs projects. The bill also proposes a technical assistance program for the development of asset management plans and for identifying green infrastructure opportunities in local communities. Not less than 40% would be directed to communities under 15,000 inhabitants. The bill would also authorize \$250 million in bonds for the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust to provide capital for maintenance and improvements to municipal drinking, waste, and storm infrastructure.

The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) service and membership fee would also be defrayed to provide wholesale water and sewer services to communities. MWRA's entry fee acts as a barrier to entry for cities and towns seeking these services.

The bill has been sent to the Senate Bonding, Capital Expenditures and State Assets Committee and has not been assigned a hearing date. I look forward to seeing how the bill progresses when the Legislature is back in session.