



Jamie Eldridge

★ State Senator Middlesex & Worcester District ★

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Dear Friend,

As I'm around the district talking with constituents, the one topic that comes up constantly is job creation and economic development.

That's with good reason. Although the economists say the recession has officially ended, and although the pace of job growth in Massachusetts leads the nation, the fact remains that far too many residents are still out of work.



As the session came to a close at the end of July, the Legislature passed two bills designed to help increase economic development and provide support for businesses — especially small businesses — who are trying to create jobs. You can learn more about the Economic Development bill and the Small Business Health Care Cost Relief bill on the back of this newsletter.

This year I also authored the Property-Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) legislation, which will expand the market for both solar installation and making homes more energy-efficient — creating green jobs in the process.

Moving forward into next session, we need to continue focusing on ways of supporting our local small businesses and promoting jobs in growth sectors for Massachusetts, including the life sciences, clean tech and green energy. We also need to invest in the infrastructure — from transportation to water to our education system — that makes Massachusetts a good place to do business.

We can and will come out of this recession stronger than we were before, but we need to be bold, and there's still a lot of work we need to do to get there.

As always, I encourage you to contact my office with any thoughts, questions, concerns, or constituent issues you may have.

Sincerely,

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Legislative Update

Economic Development

In July, the Legislature passed the Economic Development bill, which overhauls our state's network of business development agencies, establishing a streamlined, cohesive model to reduce redundancy and help small businesses open, expand, and create jobs.

The reform package creates a 'one-stop shop' for businesses seeking to expand or locate in Massachusetts by requiring the existing Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD) to contract with regionally-based economic development organizations.

The bill also increases direct lending to small businesses and provides technical assistance and business advice from regional development organizations to help small businesses grow and create more jobs.

Small Business Health Care Cost Relief

In an effort to keep the doors of the Commonwealth's small businesses open, the Legislature passed a Small Business Health Care Cost Relief bill this summer. The legislation will reduce small business health insurance costs and promote job retention and job creation, reducing premium fluctuations in the market and requiring insurers to offer affordable health plans.

The legislation delivers an estimated premium relief of at least 10 percent that small businesses can save and reinvest in their operations and workforce. It also establishes standardized transparency measures for provider pricing and annual public reporting to shine a light on the marketplace and collect important financial information for ongoing policy discussions about long-term system reform.

Farm Wineries Bill

Last spring, I wrote about my bill, *An Act Relative to Wine Sellers*, which will allow farmers who make wine on their farms to sell those products at State and County Fairs and recognized farmer's markets.

Working with supportive colleagues, I was able to get this legislation included as part of the final Economic Development bill which passed last session (see above.)

The legislation will support our local wine industry by helping wineries find new customers, increase sales, and eventually grow their businesses, while being good for the environment.

Foreclosure Prevention & Tenant Rights

With home foreclosures continuing to rise in the Commonwealth in spite of the improving economy, the Legislature in July passed legislation that protects both homeowners and tenants from mortgage fraud and arbitrary evictions.

The foreclosure crisis has had a serious impact on many communities in our district, hurting homeowners and tenants and destabilizing neighborhoods. Over the past year, it's only grown worse, with the number of affected units in the district growing by 15%, according to the Massachusetts Housing Partnership. This legislation will help reduce foreclosures and keep people in their homes.

The bill requires that tenants in foreclosed buildings can only be evicted for just cause. A lender cannot evict a tenant for failure to pay rent unless a written notice with proper contact information has been posted and delivered. It does not prohibit a lender from evicting tenants for valid reasons, such as using a unit for illegal purposes or not allowing the lender to enter the unit to make repairs.

For homeowners, the legislation temporarily extends the 90-day right-to-cure period, enacted by the legislature in 2007, to 150 days. The right-to-cure period can be reduced from 150 days to 90 days if the lender makes a good-faith effort to negotiate a commercially reasonable alternative to foreclosure.

National Popular Vote

In August the Governor signed into law a bill I have been working on for several years: National Popular Vote. This legislation takes our country one step closer to giving our electoral votes to the presidential candidate with the most popular votes nationwide.

The bill is part of an interstate compact that would take effect only if enough states join to make the electoral votes of the states in the compact total at least 270, which is the number needed to decide who wins the presidential election.

With enough states in the compact, the electoral votes from each member state would automatically go to the candidate with the most popular votes nationwide, making that candidate the winner.

In passing this bill, we are helping strengthen the foundation of our democracy - the principle of one person, one vote.