

MASC Bulletin

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MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL COMMITTEES

MASC President Pens Op-Ed on Ballot Questions

MASC PRESIDENT KATHLEEN ROBEY'S RECENT OP-ED ON THE DEVASTATING IMPACT THE passage of Ballot Question 3 would have on public services—and public education in particular was featured recently in the *MetroWest Daily News*.

REJECTING QUESTION 3: IT'S ABOUT VALUES

Massachusetts voters have an opportunity to reject political rhetoric and bad information and, instead, reaffirm the state's long commitment to social values by rejecting ballot questions 1 and 3.

Question 1, seeking to reduce the sales tax on alcoholic beverages and Question 3 cutting the sales tax by more than half will cost the Commonwealth \$1 billion before next July and another \$2.5 billion every year after that. These figures are not in dispute, and neither are the social implications of such a dramatic reduction in revenue that comes at the same time as federal stimulus funding runs out.

As we pull out of the worst economic downturn since the 1930s, citizens must consider the risks of undercutting education, public safety, health care, infrastructure needs, and long term recovery by such a foolish and risky pair of ballot questions. It represents no false alarm to say that the loss of billions of dollars from sales tax revenues will mean sharp cuts to local aid and municipal and regional services. Those are services that your communities deliver every day.

This is not a false alarm—this potential public service crisis is real. Since the approval of Proposition 2 1/2, the actual volume of municipal services has shrunk and not recovered over thirty years. Technology has softened some of the blow and regional collaboration has helped us economize.

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MASC 2010 Legislator Awards Announced

Agawam School Committee member Roberta Doering to be presented MASC'S Tip O'Neill award at Joint Conference

In recognition of more than 40 years working to improve public education and the educational prospects for the school children of the Commonwealth, the MASC Board of Directors will honor Agawam school committee member (and former President of MASC) **Roberta Doering** as its 2010 Thomas P. 'Tip' O'Neill, Jr. award recipient. The award will be present-

ed at the Leadership/Life Member Dinner on Friday, November 5 at the Joint Conference in Hyannis.

In announcing the award, MASC President Kathleen Robey applauded Mrs. Doering's commitment to advancing the cause of public education and the passion she has consistently demonstrated as an advocate

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MASC Leadership discuss Challenges to School Boards at Regional Meeting

Keys to effective leadership—especially in response to challenges presented by the focus on school board accountability and a small, but growing, anti-local leadership sentiment—dominated the agenda at NSBA's Northeast Region Meeting October 8-10. MASC Executive Committee members and Executive Director attended the program where they were joined by other school leaders from the New England and Mid-Atlantic states.

Sessions included an in-depth review of the qualities of effective leadership; the changing role of school boards; and challenges to public education and local leadership from charter schools among others. According to MASC President Kathleen Robey "it was clear that there is an effort by several special interests to minimize the role of parents and local government in overseeing public schools. The debate is being driven by private sector corporate interests, Washington and state educational bureaucracies, and large foundations who want to play off the anti-teacher and anti-union theme and who see charters and vouchers as the only viable option."

Robey also reported that MA school committees are viewed as among the most proficient in the nation and, as a group, are far more focused on student achievement, effective policy making, and diligent attention to their fiduciary responsibilities than in other states. In order to counter the anti-

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NEW LAW REGARDING SPORTS-RELATED HEAD INJURY AND CONCUSSIONS

The following legislative update was prepared by MASC General Counsel Stephen J. Finnegan, Esq.

The Governor signed Chapter 166 of the Acts of 2010, *An Act Relative to Safety Regulations for School Athletic Programs* on July 19, 2010 and because this law contained an emergency preamble it became effective when signed into law. Chapter 166 applies to all public schools and any school subject to the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA).

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) shall develop an interscholastic athletic head injury safety training program. Participation in such program is required for coaches, athletic trainers, parent volunteers for any extracurricular athletic activity, physicians employed by the school or who volunteer for any extracurricular activity, school nurses or nurses who volunteer for any extracurricular activity, Athletic Directors, school marching band directors and parents or legal guardians of children who participate in any extracurricular athletic activity. DPH pursuant to a Public Health Advisory and Memorandum which may be found at MASC.org, recommends that student athletes participate in such a course or receive printed materials with information about concussions. DPH (see Advisory and Memorandum) identifies two free online courses that are available and contain all information required by law. At least one of these courses, which includes registration and a receipt indicating an individual has completed the course, can be completed in less than thirty minutes. The receipt should be given to and retained by the superintendent. Also, MASC recommends that the above referenced individuals receive a copy of the law and the Advisory and Memorandum and forward to the superintendent and acknowledgement

of receipt thereof.

DPH will be developing regulations over the next few months to implement the law; however, the sports head injury and concussion awareness program shall commence with the 2010-11 school year. Statutory penalties for noncompliance with the law and regulations shall not be imposed before January 1, 2011.

School officials should be aware of the following sections of the law:

(c) If a student participating in an extracurricular athletic activity becomes unconscious during a practice or competition, the student shall not return to the practice or competition during which the student became unconscious or participate in any extracurricular athletic activity until the student provides written authorization for such participation, from a licensed physician, licensed neuropsychologist, certified athletic trainer or other appropriately trained or licensed health care professional as determined by the department of public health, to the school's athletic director.

If a student suffers a concussion as diagnosed by a medical professional, or is suspected to have suffered a concussion while participating in an extracurricular athletic activity, the student shall not return to the practice or competition during which the student suffered, or is suspected to have

suffered, a concussion and shall not participate in any extracurricular athletic activity until the student provides written authorization for such participation, from a licensed physician, licensed neuropsychologist, certified athletic trainer or other appropriately trained or licensed health care professional as determined by the department of public health, to the school's athletic director.

(d) A coach, trainer or volunteer for an extracurricular athletic activity shall not encourage or permit a student participating in the activity to engage in any unreasonably dangerous athletic technique that unnecessarily endangers the health of a student, including using a helmet or any other sports equipment as a weapon.

(e) The superintendent of the school district or the director of a school shall maintain complete and accurate records of the district's or school's compliance with the requirements of this section. A school that fails to comply with this section, as determined by the department, shall be subject to penalties as determined by the department.

(f) Nothing in this section shall be construed to waive liability or immunity of a school district or its officers or employees. This section shall not create any liability for a course of

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SPECIAL EDUCATION UPDATE

MASC has been working with the MA Association of Parent Advisory Councils to identify issues of mutual concern. MASC and MassPAC will hold a joint caucus at the MASC/MASS Conference at 4pm on Thursday, November 4 in Hyannis for any school committee members and superintendents interested in special education.

MASC reminds school committee members that the current law calls for setting up a Special Education Parent Advisory Council and that the PAC meet with school committees to "...advise the school committee on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities..." Currently, most school committees hold these meetings at least once a year.

MASC Awards

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for students and public education. A staunch supporter of local school governance and high standards for school committee members, she has been the model of gracious but firm, open-minded but principled, public service. Mrs. Doering has broken the



Roberta Doering

glass ceiling for local women leaders at many levels: she served as President of MASC in 1986, and several years later ran from the floor for the National

School Boards Association Board of Directors and in 1995 was elected President of NSBA. She was recently honored with the naming of the Roberta Doering Middle School in Agawam.

In addition, the Board also voted to present its 2010 Legislator of the

Year awards to **Senator Robert O'Leary** and **Representative Martha 'Marty' Walz**, praising the efforts that these two legislators bravely took to move forward the groundbreaking—but often contentious—education reform legislation of 2010.

Having been tapped to Chair the House Education Committee in 2009, Representative Walz led major legislative initiatives this term. She was among those responsible for ensuring the continued leadership role of school committees as part of the Achievement Gap legislation and wrote major parts of the Bullying Bill that was enacted earlier this year. She also serves on the Federal Stimulus Oversight Committee and is a member of the Early Education and Care Advisory Council, which advises the Department of Early Education and Care on early education and after-school services for families.

Senator Robert O'Leary, who chairs the Senate Education Committee, was

co-author with Representative Walz of the Achievement Gap legislation and was among the most sympathetic legislators to the concerns of MASC and school committees during the debate.

Currently serving his fifth term in the Senate, O'Leary also serves as Vice Chair of the Joint Committee on State Administration, and is a member of the Committees on Labor and Workforce Development; Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture; Community Development and Small Business; and Mental Health and Substance Abuse.



Rep. Marty Walz



Sen. Robert O'Leary

MASC President Op-Ed on Question 3

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The temporary federal stimulus funds have only protected us from some of the steep reductions in services that would have occurred, but these will happen immediately after a prospective sales tax reduction and, even more dramatically, in July, when both the full impact of halving the sales tax and losing the two-year stimulus grants take effect.

Massachusetts has been a model for the nation in foresight, planning, ethical social values, and prioritizing educating and caring for young people. Decades ago, we in Massachusetts created a model program of unemployment compensation and worker's compensation to protect vulnerable families and injured employees. In fact, we created the concept of public schools and gave it to the nation to replicate.

To your credit, Massachusetts provides not only the nation's best schools as measured by national standard testing measures, but also the best health care and sen-

ior services. We do it with recognized quality and efficiency the public demands.

Massachusetts citizens have been willing to pay for it, but we have always demanded accountability, results, and value. You get it in the top performing public schools that match not only the best in the nation, but the best in the world. You get it when you can walk into Massachusetts hospitals and receive world class, quality, and insured health care.

That we are first in the nation in educational achievement and boast the best health care research and medical services for our citizens is not an accident. Nor is it a coincidence that the level of our state financial assistance for schools matches the commitment to Medicaid services for economically disadvantaged families and senior citizens.

Our health care reform program rejected the proposed rationing of medical care that Governor Romney proposed in favor of health care for all. Our education fund-

ing law provided enough money to every community to move towards a level playing field for our kids.

Despite the rhetoric, that's what we have and that's why voters should not cut the legs out from under the financial foundation that establishes them.

We set our values clearly and wrote them into our law. There's a reason we're called the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Now is the time to stand by those values and not allow them to be rewritten by a poorly guided hand of political expedience or the voice of inflammatory rhetoric—the kind of rhetoric that would have you slash the sales tax and, at the same time, put the most vulnerable members of our society at risk.

That's why the Board of Directors of MA Association of School Committees urges voters to reject Questions 1 and 3.

Kathleen Robey
President, MASC

MASC Lifetime Achievement and All-State School Committee Honorees Named

On Thursday, November 4 at its featured Award Dinner Banquet during the Joint Conference in Hyannis, the recipients of MASC's 2010 Lifetime Achievement and All-State School Committee awards will be honored. The awards will be presented to the following MASC members.

ALL-STATE SCHOOL COMMITTEE 2010

Division I

The Gloucester School Committee:
Valerie Gilman, Melissa Teixeira, Michelle Sweet, Nancy Harrison, Roger Garberg, Kathleen Clancy, Mayor Carolyn Kirk

Division II

Richard Baniewicz, Everett

Division III

Elizabeth White, Somerset and Leslie Hill, Berkley

Division IV

Michael Barbaro, Winchendon

Division V

Doris Doyle, Greenfield

Division VI

Susan Carroll-Lombardi, Central Berkshire Reg.

Division VII

Richard Bailey and Kathleen Stanley, Mashpee

Division VIII

Kevin McKenzie, Nashoba Valley Voc. Tech.

Division IX

Steven Cole, Newburyport

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT 2010

Kathleen Bodie, Winchester

Robert Carter, Wachusett Reg.

Jean Cotter Fox, Freetown-Lakeville Reg.

Tassos Filledes, South Middlesex Reg. Voc. Tech.

Chrisanne Gregoire, Hingham

Kathleen Murphy, Winchendon (in memoriam)

Maureen Springer, Silver Lake Reg.

Sports injuries

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legal action against a school district, its officers or employees.

(g) A person who volunteers to assist with an extracurricular athletic activity shall not be liable for civil damages arising out of any act or omission relating to the requirements of this section, unless such person is willfully or wantonly negligent on his act or omission.

Challenges

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public school movement and the effort to minimize local governance, Robey announced that MASC will be developing more intensive training for boards beyond the comprehensive new member orientation program. This enhanced focus will include training on the use of data for student achievement, collective bargaining strategies to improve learning, 21st century financial accountability, and analysis of best practices of best school boards. "By maintaining a statewide system of high functioning, fully updated school committees, MASC plans on building our image as boards that contribute to the nation's highest performing students."

Massachusetts Association of School Committees

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