

BEACON HILL NEWS BLAST

FROM

SENATOR BENJAMIN B. DOWNING



2009-2010 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

I have set forth my legislative priorities for the 2009-2010 legislative session by filing 37 pieces of legislation and co-sponsoring

an additional 71 bills. These measures include important reform and recovery initiatives to revitalize the Massachusetts economy, create jobs, improve our transportation system, and protect our citizens.

My top ten legislative initiatives are outlined below and as always, you are invited to visit my online office at www.senatordowning.com and click on the "Legislation" tab to view a complete list of sponsored legislation along with full text and summaries. As the session progresses, my testimony will be also be posted here.

Renewable Energy and Green Jobs Creation: Today's economic realities prove Massachusetts, and the nation, cannot continue down the same path. We need a new plan, one that creates jobs and builds the foundation of a new economy.

Topping my list of priorities for the 2009-2010 legislative session is advancing the Commonwealth's green economy. To advance this, I have filed three bills which

will put our depressed economy on a more sustainable and prosperous path.

An Act Creating a Tax Incentive for Renewable Energy Technology Jobs Creation encourages job growth in Massachusetts by establishing a new classification for the Jobs Creation Incentive Payment program. This new program would provide incentive payments for Renewable Energy Technology companies creating 10 or more well-paying positions with skill sets expected to be in high demand for the future.

An Act Authorizing Biomass Net Metering is a straightforward proposal to include biomass generation, with solar and wind, in the Class II and Class III net metering facilities under the new standards established in the 2008 Green Communities Act. Under this proposal, small behind-the-meter biomass and biofuel generation will be eligible for different credit programs.

Net metering, the give and take of a customer using more or less power than is being generated by their renewable power source. When a customer consumes more than is being generated, they purchase power from the utility with prices and fees like any other customer. When a customer generates more

than they are consuming, the utility must purchase that power with the ability to include various fees associated with having to transfer that bought power through the public grid.

An Act Establishing a Woody Biomass Tax Credit would provide a \$20 per ton of harvested and processed woody biomass- residue resulting from normal or preventive timber harvest or production- energy tax credit to organizations that supply sustainable woody biomass to biofuel and biomass facilities located within the Commonwealth.

Economic Development: Cities and towns across the Commonwealth are struggling to stay solvent while trying to find ways to stimulate local economies. I have sponsored several bills aimed at assisting communities in this effort.

An Act Establishing Residential Tax Abatement Zones in Gateway Cities would provide a tool to assist Gateway Cities in attracting much

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needed market-rate residential development to some of the poorest communities in the Commonwealth, while expanding tax bases and supporting compact land use.

An Act Establishing the Gateway Cities Historical Residential Rehabilitation Tax Credit creates a state income tax credit to encourage rehabilitation of residential properties in Gateway Cities that have historic merit.

An Act Establishing Pilot Artist Enterprise Zones would establish Artist Enterprise Zones in the Cities of Pittsfield, Fitchburg and Lowell. An Artist Enterprise Zone is an economic development zone in a city or town specially designated to stimulate the sale of art. Any sale of a work of art "on location," in an Artist Enterprise Zone, would be exempt from excise. This legislation authorizes the program for tax years 2009 and 2010.

Health Care: While the recent overhaul of our health care system has provided coverage to hundreds of thousands of previously uninsured Massachusetts residents, it has created an increased need for outreach and enrollment assistance. *An Act Relative to Healthcare Outreach and Enrollment* permanently establishes the Healthcare Outreach and Enrollment Unit within EOHHS. This Unit will primarily work on coordination of outreach, enrollment, education, and coverage maintenance activities across multiple agencies throughout the Commonwealth.

An Act Promoting Wellness in the Workplace gives tax incentives to employers for establishing health wellness programs for their employees at the workplace. Employers will conduct health assessments and implement a plan targeted to their employees' needs.

Additional Legislation:

An Act Increasing the Allowable Deduction for Heat at State-Aided

Housing increases the heat deduction on state income taxes from between \$300 - \$900 to \$1,500 for tenants of state-subsidized housing.

An Act Relative to Procurement in the Commonwealth allows for a local governing body, state agency or authority to establish a preference for products and services offered by the Commonwealth businesses. This gives deserving Massachusetts businesses a competitive edge while retaining tax revenue, stimulating job growth and spurring the Massachusetts economy.



DOWNING NAMED REVENUE CHAIR

As newly named Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Revenue, I am charged with tackling tough and timely issues during the 2009-2010 legislative session. Senate President Therese Murray's (D-Plymouth) recent committee assignment announcement allowed me to retain my Vice Chairmanship of the Joint Committee on Higher Education. I was also appointed to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means - the powerful panel which considers all matters relating to the finances of the Commonwealth - and the Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies.

The Joint Committee on Revenue considers all matters concerning Federal financial assistance, state fees, the raising of

revenue for the Commonwealth by means of taxation, as well as certain matters relating to local property taxation. With revenue and tax issues an immediate focal point for federal, state and local officials, I, along with newly-assigned House Chairman Representative Jay Kaufman (D-Lexington), will likely consider legislation and engage in policy issues addressing the state's revenue short-falls.

Senate President Murray also continued my membership on the Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure and the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs to this term as well.

This is my third chairmanship in the Senate. The first two leadership roles, Senate

Chair of the Joint Committee on Public Service and Chairman of the Senate Ethics and Rules Committee, afforded me the opportunity to vet and make recommendations on many important policy initiatives.



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