



## **SENATOR BENJAMIN B. DOWNING**

*Berkshire, Hampshire and Franklin District*

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### **OFFICIAL BIOGRAPHY**

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Benjamin B. Downing (D – Pittsfield) was elected to the Massachusetts Senate on November 7, 2006. Senator Downing represents 48 communities in Berkshire, Hampshire and Franklin Counties, proudly serving the largest Senate district in the Commonwealth.

Senator Downing's top legislative priority is promoting sustainable economic development through expanded access to broadband Internet in the currently unserved and under-served communities and making critical investments in transportation and housing.

As Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Revenue, Senator Downing 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 the local property tax. He also serves as Acting Chairman of the Joint Committee on Higher Education, and is an active member of the Senate Committee on Ways & Means and the Joint Committees on Economic Development & Emerging Technologies, Consumer Protection & Professional Licensure and Veterans & Federal Affairs. Senator Downing also participates in Legislative Caucuses focusing on Regional Schools and Gateway Cities and is the Vice Chairman of the Regional Transit Authority Caucus.

Senator Downing is the former Chairman of the Senate Committee on Ethics & Rules and the Joint Committee on Public Service.

Since beginning his service, Senator Downing has represented the Massachusetts Senate in a variety of capacities. He has served on the Governor's Local Government Advisory Commission, where members of the Administration, Legislature, and municipal government seek to address municipal concerns. He represented Massachusetts at the Council of State Government's (CSG) Eastern Leadership Academy in 2007. During his first term he served on eleven special commissions and task forces charged with the study and recommendation of specialized policy areas. In Pittsfield, the Senator serves as the Co-Chair of the Leadership Council to End Chronic Homelessness in Berkshire County. Statewide, he serves as the Co-Chair of the Massachusetts Democratic Party's Committee on Youth Services and the Honorary Chair of the College Democrats of Massachusetts.

A Pittsfield native, Senator Downing received his B.A. in Political Science from Providence College (2003). In May 2008, he received a M.A. from Tufts University's Department of Urban and Environmental Policy & Planning.

Before returning to Pittsfield, Senator Downing lived in Washington, D.C. working for U.S. Representatives William Delahunt (D-Quincy) and Richard E. Neal (D-Springfield), before joining the staff of U.S. Representative John W. Olver (D-Amherst). For nearly two years, he served as Congressman Olver's senior advisor on housing, budget, tax, homeland security and foreign affairs.

Senator Downing's family has a long history of public service. He is the oldest of four children (Maggie, Nate and Nick) raised by late Berkshire District Attorney Gerard and Pamela Downing.

**SENATOR BENJAMIN B. DOWNING**  
**LEADERSHIP POSITIONS, APPOINTMENTS & AWARDS**

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**2009-2010 LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:**

- *Chair*, Joint Committee on Revenue
- *Acting Chair*, Joint Committee on Higher Education (2010)
- *Vice Chair*, Joint Committee on Higher Education (2009)
- Senate Committee on Ways & Means
- Joint Committee on Economic Development & Emerging Technologies
- Joint Committee on Consumer Protection & Professional Licensure
- Joint Committee on Veterans & Federal Affairs

**2007-2008 LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:**

- *Chair*, Senate Committee on Ethics & Rules (10/07- 1/09)
- *Chair*, Joint Committee on Public Service (1/07-10/07)
- *Vice Chair*, Joint Committee on Higher Education
- *Vice Chair*, Senate Committee on Bills in the Third Reading
- Joint Committee on Financial Services
- Joint Committee on Veterans & Federal Affairs
- Joint Committee on Consumer Protection & Professional Licensure
- Senate Committee on Post Audit & Oversight

**2010 AWARDS & SPECIAL APPOINTMENTS:**

- 2010 Legislator of the Year Award – Massachusetts Association of Dairy Farmers
- 2010 Legislator of the Year Award – American Resort Development Association – New England Committee
- Senate Member of the Economic Development Reorganization Legislative Conference Committee
- Senate Member of the Comprehensive Siting Reform for Land-Based Wind Projects Legislative Conference Committee

**2009 AWARDS & SPECIAL APPOINTMENTS:**

- 2009 Legislator of the Year Award – SEIU Local 509, the Massachusetts Union for Human Service Workers
- 2009 Healthy Air Award – American Lung Association of Massachusetts
- 2009 Elected Official of the Year – Tufts University Democrats
- 2009 Pride Month Special Recognition Award – Partners in Transportation Diversity Committee
- 2009 Best Politician in the Berkshires – *Berkshire Eagle's 2009 Best of the Berkshires*
- Senate Member of the 1,000 Great Places in Massachusetts Commission
- Senate Member of the Special Commission to Promote the Development and Use of Advanced Biofuels

**2008 AWARDS & SPECIAL APPOINTMENTS:**

- 2008 Legislator of the Year – Bay State Hydropower Association
- Best Legislator in the Berkshires – *Berkshire Eagle's 2008 Best of the Berkshires*
- Senate Member of the Special Commission to Study the Siting of Energy Facilities in Massachusetts
- Senate Member of the Special Municipal Relief Commission
- Senate Member of the Governor's Task Force on Ethics and Lobbying Reform

**2007 AWARDS & SPECIAL APPOINTMENTS:**

- Best Legislator in the Berkshires – *Berkshire Eagle's 2007 Best of the Berkshires*
- Robert J. Thompson Eastern Leadership Academy Fellowship – Council of State Governments/Eastern Regional Conference, University of Pennsylvania
- 2007 Legislator of the Year – Massachusetts Association of School Committees

**2007 AWARDS & SPECIAL APPOINTMENTS (CONTINUED):**

- Senate Member of the Governor's Local Government Advisory Council (LGAC)
- Representative of the Massachusetts Senate for the Agriculture, Environment and Energy Committee for the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)
- Representative of the Joint Committee on Higher Education for the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education's Transfer Advisory Group
- Member of 2007 Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Public Service Award Selection Committee
- Member of the Senate Special Commission to Investigate Automobile Insurance Reform
- Co-Chair of the Special Legislative Commission to Investigate and Study the Commonwealth's Liability for Paying Retiree Health Care and Other Non-pension Benefits
- Senate Member of the Special Commission to Investigate and Study the Accessibility and Quality of Doctors who Specialize in Obstetric, Gynecological and Neurosurgical Care of Women in Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire Counties.
- Senate Member of the Commonwealth's Advanced Biofuels Task Force

**LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS MEMBERSHIPS:**

- *Senate Vice Chair*, Caucus on Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs)
- Caucus on Regional Schools
- Caucus on Gateway Cities

**COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS:**

- *Honorary Chairman* of the College Democrats of Massachusetts
- *Co-Chair* of the Massachusetts Democratic Party's Committee on Youth Services
- *Co-Chair* of the Leadership Council to End Chronic Homelessness in Berkshire County
- Advisory Council of the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center
- Pittsfield Democratic Committee