



## News from Senator

# MICHAEL O. MOORE

**SECOND WORCESTER DISTRICT** *Serving*

Auburn, Grafton, Leicester, Millbury, Shrewsbury, Upton, and Worcester Wards 5-8

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Office of Senator  
Michael O. Moore

### CONTACT INFO

#### State House Office

State House, Room 518  
Boston, MA 02133  
Phone: (617) 722-1485  
Fax: (617) 722-1066

#### District office

36 No. Quinsigamond Ave  
Shrewsbury, MA 01545  
Phone: (508) 757-0323  
x13

Fax: (508) 754-5210  
*District Office Hours*  
Tuesdays 8 AM—Noon  
Thursdays Noon—4 PM

#### E-mail:

Michael.O.Moore@State.MA.US

#### Web:

www.MichaelOMoore.com

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## A Note from the Senator...

With a new fiscal year upon us, I wanted to take this opportunity to provide an overview of the state budget process, and outline some of the challenges ahead. The Fiscal Year 2011 budget has now passed through the Legislature, and been signed by the Governor. All of the Commonwealth's expenses – including aid to cities and towns – are contained within this budget. By law, it is a balanced budget.

The process began in January, with the Governor releasing his proposed budget, based on the available revenue projections. The House and Senate each released their own proposals as well. After several months of debate and discussion, the three proposals were eventually reconciled into one, with changes being made to accommodate new revenue projections and the changing economic climate.

This year, we faced a \$2-3 billion structural deficit. This required the Commonwealth to make cuts and elimi-



Sen. Moore presenting the key to Grafton's New Police Boat

nate services, adding to the challenge of supporting our cities, towns, and schools – most of whom are facing their own financial crises. While the budget certainly presented some difficult obstacles, there are signs that both the economy and the revenue situation are improving.

Over the past few months, we have seen the pas-

sage of some crucial legislation aimed at providing relief and assistance in key areas. Major bills targeted at lifting some of the burden placed on local governments, promoting economic development in Massachusetts, and protecting our hardworking nurses from assault, have all enjoyed success this term. I am eager to hear your ideas and suggestions as to how we can move our Commonwealth forward. Please do not hesitate to contact me via e-mail at Michael.o.moore@state.ma.us or by phone at 617-722-1485.

Sincerely,

Michael O. Moore,  
State Senator

## Moore passes legislation to protect Nurses from assault

Governor Patrick recently signed into law "An Act Relative to Assault on Health Care Providers," (S.2383), filed by Sen. Moore, that strengthens protections for nurses and other healthcare providers against assault and battery during the performance of their jobs.

"Today marks a victory for health care professionals across the Commonwealth," said Sen. Moore. "Both doctors and patients depend on nurses to provide critical care. Nurses already face daunting obstacles in the course of their daily work;

they should not be made to face abuse from those they are caring for. This bill highlights the pervasiveness of the problem, and will take steps towards addressing it."

The legislation had been filed unsuccessfully each session since 2004.

The bill mandates a minimum of ninety days in prison or a fine of no less than \$500 for anyone who assaults a healthcare provider who is either treating or transporting them. According to a 2007 report by the Emergency Nurses Association, more than half of emergency room

nurses report experiencing physical violence on the job, while a June 2008 study showed that workers in the healthcare sector are 16 times more likely to be the victim of on-the-job violence than any other service profession.

The bill is part of a larger push to protect the safety of health care professionals and improve overall quality of care. The bill also extends protections to Physical Therapists and Occupational Therapists, amongst others. Such protections already exist for Emergency Medical Technicians.

## Moore Announces Wind Turbine Grants for Auburn, Millbury



Sen. Moore reading to children at the Auburn Library's Open House Day

Two communities in the Second Worcester District, Auburn and Millbury, have each received \$85,000 grants from the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, to study the feasibility of constructing wind turbines on town-owned parcels of land.

"Pursuing clean energy projects will have the long-term effects of reducing our energy costs, protecting our environment, and potentially spurring job growth. This is a responsible investment that looks towards the future," said Sen.

Moore.

The towns will study the technical and economic feasibility of installing at least one turbine. The towns would use the energy generated to offset electricity costs at various municipal buildings through net metering.

The feasibility studies will include wind monitoring, wind resource analysis, financial projections, a permitting plan and an acoustic study.

The goal of the program is to assist responsibly-sited wind energy pro-

jects in achieving successful and timely installations, while also supporting the administration's goal of having 2,000 megawatts (MW) of wind power capacity installed in the Commonwealth by 2020.

The Community Scale Wind Initiative awards grants for qualifying wind projects with a nameplate capacity greater than or equal to 100 kW. The Mass. Clean Energy Center provides grants at both the feasibility stage and the design and construction stage of wind development.

*"The legislation will promote job growth, as well as eliminate wasteful spending and eliminate duplicative government offices for greater efficiency."*

## Economic Development Legislation Works its Way Though Legislature

Major economic development legislation is currently working its way through Beacon Hill, which will benefit the Commonwealth on two fronts. The legislation will promote job growth, as well as eliminate wasteful spending and eliminate duplicative government offices for greater efficiency.

The legislation moves to consolidate some of the various economic development offices in the Commonwealth, which sometimes serve duplicative or poorly-coordinated functions. This effort will combine them into a single Office of Business Development, which will report directly to the Secretary of Housing and Economic Development. Many of these agencies perform important functions that help bring business to the state,

such as promoting our resources and securing capital. This legislation will bring them under one umbrella to better coordinate and execute their efforts, and ensure greater accountability.

This bill also requires the Secretary of Housing and Economic Development to establish an office for developing a performance management system for all Executive Branch offices and state authorities that perform economic development work in the Commonwealth. The system must report both "output" measures, such average length of time to return a call, and "outcome" measures, including cumulative jobs retained as a result of the organizations' efforts.

Based on similar procedures operating in Texas and Florida, this legislation would establish a commission charged with reviewing the operations of all state agencies and au-

thorities in the Commonwealth. The commission would consider the continuing need for agencies and authorities in state government and assign recommended sunset dates for each agency and authority in state government.

In addition, Sen. Moore has filed and co-sponsored several amendments aimed at improving the legislation, including one that will include local agricultural operations in the definition of "small business" for the purposes of this new law. Another aims to address issues that have surfaced around the collection of the Fair Share Contribution and the audit practices of the Division of Unemployment Assistance. It would require the creation of a Hardship Waiver and appeal process, and would give pertinent agencies the authority to mitigate or waive fines for struggling businesses.



Sen. Moore speaking at Auburn's Special Olympics Ceremony

## UPDATE: DUA Oversight Hearings

In the previous issue of this newsletter, concerns that small businesses had been having with the Division of Unemployment Assistance were outlined, and it was announced that Sen. Moore would chair an oversight hearing on the subject. That hearing was held on March 10. Testimony was collected from a sizeable group of small business owners, and reflected the concerns that had been expressed to Sen. Moore and the Joint Committee on Community Development and Small Business.

Secretary Joanne Goldstein, Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development was on hand to answer questions

and address concerns. As a follow-up to the hearing, Sen. Moore requested additional information from Sec. Goldstein including the number of appeals that have been filed to date, the dates the appeals were received, the date the hearing notice went out and the date of the scheduled hearing, how many times have businesses had their accounts swept, and under what statute DUA has the authority to sweep accounts.

Sen. Moore and the committee also outlined a series of recommendations to the Secretary to improve the performance and accountability of DUA. It is evident that, based on testimony submitted, DUA

has begun making changes to address some of their most egregious practices. Unlike her predecessor, Sec. Goldstein has demonstrated a willingness to work with the legislature to affect changes and to establish a dialogue to prevent or diffuse future issues. It is hoped that the remaining conflicts between DUA and small businesses can be corrected as quickly as possible.

The recommendations include enabling businesses to view and print FSC forms without a DUA number, allowing businesses amend their filings prior to certification, and providing thirty days notice prior to appeals hearings.

***“Unlike her predecessor, Sec. Goldstein has demonstrated a willingness to work [...] to affect changes”***



## Moore Outlines New Health Plan for Small Businesses through Mass. Health

Sen. Moore recently announced a new plan launched by the Massachusetts Health Connector this month to help small businesses better cope with the escalating cost of health insurance.

Sen. Moore explained that the new Business Express program is for small businesses with 50 or fewer employees. For some businesses with five or fewer employees, the savings may be more than \$300 per employee per year. Select net-

work plans may offer savings that range from 10 to 15 percent.

Employers will be able to select from a full array of options offered by major carriers whose plans have been recognized by the Health Connector for their quality and value. Carriers selected for the program are Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, CeltiCare, Fallon Community Health Plan, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, Health New England, Neighborhood Health Plan and Tufts

Health Plan.

Small business owners can find out more about the plan by calling a broker or going to the Health Connector’s website, [www.mahealthconnector.org](http://www.mahealthconnector.org). They may also call the Health Connector’s customer service line at 1-877-MA-ENROLL (1-877-623-6765). The TTY line for people with partial or total hearing loss is 1-877-623-7773.

***Small business owners can find out more about the plan by going to the Health Connector’s website, or by calling 1-877-623-6765.***

## Moore Announces Funding for Upton Forest Project

Sen. Moore recently announced that the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) will award \$1.34 million in matching funds for 29 improvement projects in state parks and other facilities across the Commonwealth, including the repair of the historic administration building at Upton State Forest. The money is allocated through DCR’s Partnerships Matching Funds Program.

The Partnerships Matching Funds Program ac-

cepts applications from Friends groups and other park advocacy groups, civic and community organizations, institutions, businesses, and individuals with an interest in improving the Commonwealth’s natural, cultural, and recreational resources. DCR considers applications that will provide a match of non-state funds for capital projects in state parks. For each approved project, DCR assigns a project manager to oversee implementation of the project in close consulta-

tion with the partners making contributions.

For the Upton project, DCR will issue a \$6,668 matching grant to bring total funding for the project to \$10,002.

The program received 33 applications this year, some of which may be encouraged to reapply next year. For more information on the Partnerships Matching Funds program, and to receive an application for Fiscal Year 2011, call 617-626-4964.

# Senator Moore in the Community

In March, Sen. Moore was honored by the Worcester Community Action Council as a legislator who is keenly interested in WCAC programs. The WCAC was founded in 1965 as a local economic development agency, aimed at creating jobs and expanding opportunities for area residents. The organization functions today as an umbrella agency for 21 educational and social service organizations.

***Congratulations to Millbury resident Marian McGovern on being appointed Superintendent of the Massachusetts State Police!***



*Col. McGovern with Sen. Moore and Rep. Frost*



***ABOVE:*** Sen. Moore and Auburn business owner Kim Harmon competing in Auburn's "Dancing With the Stars" event, to benefit Auburn Youth & Family Services

***RIGHT:*** Sen. Moore at the Grafton Little League parade



*Sen. Moore with WCAC Executive Director Jill Dagilis*



## Municipal Relief Package Advances to Senate

The Municipal Relief Act is a package of legislative changes and local-option programs – big and small – designed to give our cities and towns the tools they need to operate more effectively and, ultimately, save money.

Many of these are simple, straightforward, and common sense changes, allowing municipalities to do things one might have assumed they already could do. For example, this bill allows municipalities to establish an e-billing program, a money-saving practice that has been used by private companies for years. It also allows cities to offer benefits to their workers – such as healthcare spending accounts and larger optional life insurance maximums – already available for state workers, and gives cities the ability to enter into long term leases.

Provisions in the Senate bill include:

- **Optional Early Retirement Program:** The bill includes an Early Retirement Incentive program for cities and towns. This program would allow a limited

number of long term municipal employees to receive early retirement benefits, while restricting the town's ability to refill those same positions to no more than 30%, 45%, and 60% of the former total salaries over the next three years, respectively. This program would be at the option of municipalities, giving cities and towns the flexibility to determine for themselves whether this tool is appropriate for their community.

- **Retirement system funding relief:** The legislation proposes a pension funding relief plan to help local pension systems address unprecedented asset losses in a fiscally responsible and manageable way, without the significant increases in payments that would otherwise be required. Specifically, the legislation allows local systems to extend their funding schedule subject to certain conditions and requires that future asset gains be used to shorten schedules, not reduce payments.
- **Mutual Aid Agreements:** The bill would allow cities and towns to

join statewide mutual aid agreements to provide police, fire, emergency medical, public works, and other public safety assistance to other municipalities. This would allow cities and towns to save money on staffing and equipment while still being prepared for emergency situations.

- **Transferring Eligible Municipal Retirees into Medicare:** The bill will reduce benefit costs for municipalities by requiring that all eligible retired local employees enroll in Medicare as their primary source of health insurance coverage, as is already done on the state level.
- **Local Option Tax Amnesty Program:** The bill allows towns to adopt a temporary tax amnesty program. Through this program, municipalities could waive portions of the penalties and interest due on unpaid taxes, so long as the taxpayer paid the principal amount owed and was not the subject of a criminal investigation for failure to pay taxes.