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Patrick-Murray Administration's Regulatory Reforms Cut Permitting Times, Encourage Economic Development and Job Growth

BOSTON – Thursday, March 21, 2013 – Governor Deval Patrick today announced a report showing that initiatives to streamline permitting at the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) have dramatically shortened the time to permit, removed unnecessary barriers to jobs and economic growth and made MassDEP a national leader in protecting the environment through smarter and better methods.

In 2007, Governor Patrick directed MassDEP to speed up and simplify its permitting process to match “the speed of business.” In response, the Department initiated a permit streamlining program in 2007 that cut review timelines across the board and simplified the approval process for key permits associated with significant economic development opportunities. Overall, MassDEP has reduced permitting timelines by 20 percent since 2007, with 90 percent of DEP permits now being issued within three months, compared to only 69 percent before 2007. Ninety-seven percent of permits are issued within six months, compared to 81 percent before 2007.
"Massachusetts is growing jobs because of our strategy to invest in education, innovation and infrastructure and because of the tremendous strides we have made in positioning Massachusetts as a top place to do business," said Governor Patrick. "Thanks to the efforts at MassDEP to remove barriers and create efficiencies in the permitting process, more businesses are making Massachusetts their home and creating jobs and opportunity in our neighborhoods."

The Governor made today’s announcement at Lovejoy Wharf, a site that, because of the Administration’s efforts to remove delays and barriers in the permitting process, will soon be the corporate headquarters of Converse. The Governor also touted a package of more than 20 additional reforms proposed by MassDEP, in coordination with business, municipal and environmental stakeholders, to weed out unnecessary or obsolete regulations, further lightening the regulatory burden on businesses and helping promote job growth. The package of reforms will further streamline environmental permitting requirements and eliminate state permits that are of low environmental protection value or that duplicate local approvals.

“These reforms will lighten the regulatory burden on industry and promote jobs and economic development without compromising the Commonwealth’s strict environmental and public-health protection standards,” said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Rick Sullivan. “The top-to-bottom review and reform of its regulations have helped MassDEP reach the Governor’s goal of approving permits at the speed of business.”

“Once implemented, these reforms will save MassDEP hundreds of hours of administrative time per year and improve overall environmental protection by allowing our agency to focus on the most pressing environmental challenges,” said MassDEP Commissioner Kenneth Kimmell. “The private sector will also see significant savings. We estimate that the changes in our hazardous waste site cleanup program will save businesses and municipalities approximately $1.4 million a year.”

MassDEP’s efforts are part of Governor Patrick’s nation-leading regulatory reform effort. This is the most significant and impactful reform of the regulatory system in Massachusetts in decades. Through September 2012, 60 state agencies had reviewed 446 sets of regulations with 286 of those regulations being amended or eliminated. Nearly two-thirds of all of the regulations reviewed have had some action taken. The goal of making it easier to do business in Massachusetts is one of the five main goals of the Commonwealth’s long-term economic development plan, "Choosing to Compete in the 21st Century."

“Governor Patrick’s call for an innovative, wide-ranging review of regulations has made it easier for hundreds of thousands of small businesses to operate in Massachusetts. It is a significant step toward dispelling the notion that it is difficult to do business in Massachusetts,” said Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Greg Bialecki. "Through these reforms we are cutting red-tape, refining how state government operates, lowering costs for many businesses and improving the regulatory environment to create opportunity for everyone in Massachusetts.”

“We can protect the environment and vulnerable workers while still promoting economic growth that benefits everyone in the Commonwealth,” said Labor and Workforce Development Secretary Goldstein. “Our work with employers to fund workforce training initiatives promotes job growth while ensuring that jobs that are created are safe and stable.”
Today’s announcement also came on the heels of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development’s report that Massachusetts has now surpassed pre-recession job levels, adding over 19,000 jobs in January and February 2013. The Patrick-Murray Administration, in partnership with the Legislature, has pursued a strategy of investing in education, innovation and infrastructure, even in the midst of the economic recession, which positioned Massachusetts to recover faster and stronger than most other states.

In January, Governor Patrick unveiled a budget proposal that includes new investments in education and transportation, investments that have proven to create new jobs and economic opportunities. The Governor’s plan includes a $1 billion annual investment in the Commonwealth’s transportation system to maintain the transportation assets we have today and launch a number of high-impact transportation projects across Massachusetts that, if built, will create thousands of jobs and spur economic development across the Commonwealth. The plan also includes a $550 million investment in education, reaching $1 billion over four years, to expand access to high quality educational opportunities and make higher education more affordable for all students in Massachusetts.

Over the past two months, Governor Patrick has been traveling across the state making the case for business leaders, educators, local elected officials and members of the public about the importance of investing now in education and infrastructure to spur job creation and unlock opportunity in every corner of the Commonwealth. For more information on the Governor’s investment plan visit www.mass.gov/governor/choosegrowth.

For more information on MassDEP’s regulatory reform initiative and permit streamlining efforts, visit: http://www.mass.gov/dep/about/MassDEP-streamlining.pdf

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