

The Civic Engagement Times

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A Message from the Governor

The start of 2009 signifies a historic time in our nation's history. It is a time for new beginnings, a call to service, and an urgency for active civic engagement in ways new and old. It also marks the midpoint of our administration's first term; and provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the important work that we accomplished together. And it calls us to acknowledge that though much has been done, much work remains.

On January 15, 2009, I welcome you to join me at the State House as I speak to the residents of Massachusetts in my annual State of the Commonwealth address. I will outline my agenda for 2009 and I welcome your feedback. Questions and comments can be directed to 617.725.4005 or by visiting www.mass.gov/governor/contactus.

On January 19, 2009, as a Commonwealth and as a country, we will celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day and our National Day of Service. Though many of us enjoy that day as a day off from our regular jobs, it affords us an ideal time to serve our communities and I look forward to serving alongside Commonwealth Corps members in Boston on Saturday, January 17th. Please visit www.mass.gov/connectandserve for volunteer opportunities in your area. And for more information on MLK Service Day and service activities throughout MLK Jr. weekend, please visit <http://www.mlkday.gov/>.

As always, thank you for your continued commitment to civic engagement and may you have a happy and healthy 2009.



Secretaries Address the Commonwealth

After the Governor's State of the Commonwealth address on January 15, 2009, each of the Governor's Cabinet Secretaries will be visiting communities across the Commonwealth to outline 2009 priorities for their respective areas on Friday, January 16, 2009.

For time and location details, please visit www.mass.gov/governor.

Governor's Task Force on Public Integrity Reports Findings

On October 31, 2008, Governor Deval Patrick announced plans to form a bipartisan Task Force on Public Integrity, charged with proposing specific recommendations to improve the Commonwealth's ethics and lobbying laws. The Task Force was convened and chaired by the Governor's Chief Legal Counsel and included four legislators and eight members of the public.

The Task Force sought input from the public through its website:

www.mass.gov/governor/publicintegrity.

The Task Force received input from over 45 individuals. Dozens of citizens provided feedback on ways to improve ethics and lobbying

laws.

While the creation of the Task Force came amidst allegations of corruption among a few in public office, Governor Patrick reminded us that the great majority of those who serve do so with honesty and integrity. He stated that "When a small few act out, it casts a shadow on the good work of those many good people, and it affects government's ability to function as well as it should."

The Governor went on to cite the need for all citizens to enforce the power of accountability we as citizens of a democracy possess. He stated that in a healthy

democracy, ordinary citizens not only elect those who govern, but they also challenge them by running for public office. "I want to make a call on my fellow citizens to take responsibility for your government by standing for election to local and statewide office, by participating in civic life, and by voting," said Governor Patrick.

On January 6, 2009, the Task Force issued its report and recommendations to the Governor. For more information, copies of the report or testimony provided at the public hearing, please visit

www.mass.gov/governor/publicintegrity.

New Ways to Stay Connected

The Governor's Office has a lot of new ways to stay connected on the web. While you can always check out the official website at www.mass.gov/governor, here are some other ways to stay connected.

twitter **Twitter** — Twitter is kind of like instant messaging, only to a whole group of people at once. You can follow the Governor's Office on twitter at www.twitter.com/massgovernor for daily updates, reminders of upcoming events and more.

You Tube **YouTube** — The Governor's Office now posts all video content on YouTube; channel www.youtube.com/massgovernor. There you can comment on videos, share them with others, and subscribe to the Governor's Office video channel to be notified when new content is available.

flickr **Flickr** — Flickr is a photo sharing site. All Governor's Office photos are available there in high quality for you to comment on, share, download and print. Visit www.flickr.com/photos/massgovernor/.

blogs **Blogs** — The first Commonwealth Conversations blog launched this past week. Commonwealth Conversations: Public Health" can be found at www.mass.gov/blog/publichealth. Be sure to check it out and weigh in.

Try them out, let us know what you think, and help us spread the word! The Governor's Office will have more to come in upcoming months.

Ending Homelessness in Massachusetts

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has embraced a new approach to ending homelessness that has taken root in every corner of the state. In November 2007, Governor Patrick re-established the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness (ICHH). Chaired by Lt. Governor Tim Murray, the Council is charged with implementing the recommendations of the Legislative Commission to End Homelessness. The state's goal will be to support efforts that provide homeless people with housing quickly and services as needed. This new paradigm of *Housing First* has an immediate focus on cooperative efforts to help individuals and families quickly access and sustain permanent housing. In December, the Patrick-Murray Administration awarded \$8 million to eight regional networks that will coordinate and implement

innovative strategies to refocus our efforts on sustainable housing. By early 2009 networks will be operating in Boston, Metro Boston, the North and South Shores, Worcester County, Merrimack Valley, Cape Cod and Islands and Western Massachusetts. As the Council and regional networks work to strengthen homelessness prevention, rapid re-housing and housing stabilization, they are committed to including the voices of those around the state that have experienced homelessness, advocated for policy changes, and worked or volunteered in service organizations. Thus, it is the charge of the ICHH Civic Engagement Working Group to provide opportunities to involve residents of the Commonwealth in playing significant roles in the plan to end homelessness. One such example is the Project Homeless Connect (PHC), a one day/one stop

approach being implemented across the country where service providers, community and civic leaders, volunteers and faith communities bring multiple resources to one location where people in need can access critical services. Those services include housing, employment, medical and mental health care, legal assistance, personal care, food and clothing. Springfield MA has hosted two such events and more are being planned in other Bay State communities.. Taken together the efforts of the regional innovations, the state's interagency working groups and the ongoing work of countless community based organizations represent a concerted and historic statewide effort to end homelessness. For more information on the ICHH and upcoming events, please visit www.mass.gov and click on *Executive and Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness*.



On July 9, 2008 Governor Patrick signed Executive Order 503 launching the New Americans Agenda (NAA.) The year long planning initiative aims to better integrate refugees and immigrants into the economic and civic life of the Commonwealth.

SPOTLIGHT: The NAA now has website

www.newamericansma.org

- Allows individuals, organizations, and institutions to submit official comments on the NAA process.
 - All comments go to the Governor's Advisory Council on Refugees and Immigrants.
- The website also has a discussion forum where community members can discuss the important topic of integration.
- Please share your thoughts by visiting www.newamericansma.org

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Volunteers Provide Access to Refunds

As tax season approaches, volunteers are needed

Across Massachusetts, volunteers mobilize every year to assist low and moderate-income earners prepare their taxes. Offered by the IRS and the Department of Revenue, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a refundable tax credit that reduces the tax burden on workers, reduces income inequality and helps low-income families build assets.

The Massachusetts Earned Income Tax Credit Campaign, spearheaded by Assistant Secretary for Access and Opportunity, Ron Marlow, represents a partnership between the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the many organizations that are actively involved in promoting tax preparation assistance, the EITC, financial literacy and asset building.

Among its partners are countless community-based organizations throughout

Massachusetts that operate Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites with the help of volunteer tax counselors to prepare and e-file tax returns for low income taxpayers. VITA site volunteers are instrumental in realizing the broader MA EITC Campaign objectives; making this opportunity accessible and maximizing the amount of income support for low- and moderate-income households. They also play an essential role in offering a no-cost option to EITC filers, allowing them to keep more of their money instead of paying fees for commercial preparers.

In 2007, 327,683 households filed and received the federal EITC state-wide. These households received nearly \$569 million in tax credits, many with the assistance of VITA volunteers. Still, there are millions in unclaimed dol-

lars that working class families could be accessing. According to IRS estimates, approximately 20-25% of eligible Massachusetts residents fail to claim the EITC. Boston EITC Campaign volunteer, Patrick Johnson said of his six years of service: "I personally feel a tremendous sense of inner joy to know that my efforts have helped to alleviate someone's financial situation."

In an effort to ensure that working families are taking advantage of this refundable tax credit; the MA EITC Campaign will be working to increase awareness across the Commonwealth.

For more information about the Massachusetts EITC Campaign, general and detailed information about the federal and state EITC, or for information about becoming a volunteer, please visit www.mass.gov/anf/masseitc.

Commonwealth Corps in the Community

Project—Annual Neighborhood Housewarming



December 2008—Corps members served alongside more than 200 volunteers for YouthBuild's annual Neighborhood Housewarming event to winterize 80 homes for Boston's most

vulnerable home owners. Volunteers replaced and weatherized windows to help insulate against drafts, replaced light bulbs with energy efficient products, weather stripped doors and checked smoke detectors. It is estimated that weatherization efforts will help households cut costs in half for heating and cooling. "Being part of Commonwealth Corps and YouthBuild, we have an opportunity to be



part of the process and have an effect," said Abby Gordon, Commonwealth Corps member.

"Working with students..., I was once in their position and just being able to guide them and mentor them has been a great experience...this is a great thing the state is doing," said Sam Coats, Commonwealth Corps member.

**COMMONWEALTH
CORPS**
INSPIRE. UNITE. ACT.

**SPONSOR
SPOTLIGHT:**

**VALLEY
OPPORTUNITY
COUNCIL**

Project—Literacy Works
*Creating a Valley of
Opportunity*

This fall, 12 Corps members began providing critical tutoring services at five adult literacy centers in Hampden County and expanded outreach efforts around the VOC's Community Planning Partnership, which identifies and meets the needs of the under-educated and limited English proficient.

Alfred Picard, Jr., Commonwealth Corps member and co-facilitator of the Job Team at VOC, looks forward to developing an ongoing partnership "with an outstanding group of civic, business, and community leaders for the residents of Chicopee and Holyoke."

From the Executive Branch and Across the Commonwealth

Public events being hosted by the Executive Offices include:

USEFUL CONTACTS:

Not sure where to turn?
Let us help.

www.mass.gov

Governor's Office
617.725.4005

Homeownership Preservation Foundation
Foreclosure Hotline
888.995.4673
www.995hope.org

Pro Bono Foreclosure Assistance Hotline
800.342.5297
617.603.1700

Department of Housing and Community Development
Heat Hotline: 800.632.8175
www.mass.gov/dhcd

Greater Boston Food Bank
617.427.5200
Worcester County Food Bank
508.842.3663
The Food Bank of Western MA
413.247.9738
Merrimack Valley Food Bank
978.454.7272

Food Source Hotline
800.645.8333
800.877.1292

Commonwealth Health Insurance Connector
877.623.6765
www.mahealthconnector.org

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



We all can live healthier lives and protect ourselves from heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes by taking simple steps to eat better and move more.

Get started by taking small steps, and making little changes at home, at work, and in your community.

Join the thousands of other people in the state who are getting healthier and losing weight with **Mass in Motion: Better health. It's your move.**
www.mass.gov/massinmotion

DCR

Public Meetings
Jan. 14—Accelerated Bridge Program Overview, Boston Public Library, Rabb Auditorium, 700 Boylston St, 6-8PM

Jan. 27—BU/Craigies Bridge Follow-Up, Kirsch Auditorium (Rm 123), Stata Center (MIT Building 32), 32 Vassar St, Cambridge, 6-8PM

MassDEP Stakeholder Meetings: Solid Waste Master Plans

Jan. 13—Berkshire Community College, Koussevitsky Arts Center, Rm K110, 1350 West St, Pittsfield, 6-9PM

Jan. 15—MassDEP, 627 Main St, Worcester, 6-9PM

Office of Refugees and Immigrants

New Americans Agenda Public Meetings, 5:30PM–7:30PM

Jan. 21—Lowell Senior Center
Feb. 18—Springfield

PUBLIC SAFETY & SECURITY

Criminal History Systems Board (CHSB)

Public Meetings - to consider applications submitted by agencies seeking CORI certification.

Jan. 28—MITC CNFR, 200 Arlington St., Chelsea 9:30AM

Feb. 25—MITC CNFR, 200 Arlington St., Chelsea 9:30AM

State 911 Commission

Jan. 29—Commission Meeting, State 911 Department Offices, 1380 Bay Street, Building C, Taunton, 9AM

(Including discussion/ vote on release of service provider RFR, and possibly consideration/ approval of the draft pre-paid wireless surcharge regulations.)

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Greenhouse Gas Reporting Regulations Stakeholders Meetings

Jan. 16 & 22—Meetings will be held at the State House, Gardner Auditorium, 9:30AM-12PM (Photo I.D. required. Please RSVP to stacy.h.degabriele@state.ma.us or 617.292.5864)

Feb. 11—Public Hearing, MassDEP, One Winter Street, Boston, 1:30PM (Public comment deadline Feb. 23rd, 5PM)

Proposed Stormwater Regulations Public Hearings

Jan. 20—Plymouth Public Library, 132 South St, 2-4PM

Jan. 21—MassDEP, 205B Lowell St, Wilmington, 2-4PM

Jan. 22—MassDEP, 627 Main St, Worcester, 2-4PM

Jan. 23—MassDEP, One Winter St, Boston, 9-11AM (Public comment deadline Feb. 9th, 5PM)

Ethanol Blended Gasoline Feb. 10 – Public Hearing, MassDEP 2nd Fl. CNFR A, One Winter St, Boston, 10AM (Public comment deadline Feb. 17th, 5PM)

Opportunities for civic engagement with MassDEP can be found year round at www.mass.gov/dep/public.

Mass Fisheries & Wildlife

Jan. 27 – Board Meeting, DF&W Field HQ, 1 Rabbit Hill Rd, Westborough, 1PM (In case of inclement weather the meeting will be held the following day at the same time and location.)

ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE**Office of Access and Opportunity****State of Civil Rights in the Commonwealth**

Residents are encouraged to come forward and share their comments and concerns about civil rights issues impacting them or their community.

(If you cannot attend, but would like to submit comments, you can do so at stateofcivilrights@state.ma.us.)

Jan. 14—MA College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, 19 Foster Street, Worcester, 6-8PM

Feb. 3—Reggie Lewis Track & Athletic Center Gymnasium, 1350 Tremont Street, Boston, 6-8PM

(Hosted in conjunction with the MA Commission Against Discrimination, the Civil Rights Division of the Attorney General's Office, the Department of Housing and Community Development, and the MA Office on Disability.)

TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WORKS**Planning**

Jan. 28—Transportation Enhancements Steering Committee, Office of Transportation Planning, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, 10AM

MHD Public Hearings

Jan. 14—Proposed Reconstruction of East Main Street, Marlborough City Hall, 140 Main Street, 7PM

Jan. 12—Proposed Improvements at the Intersection of East Street and Living Street, Tewksbury Public Library, 300 Chandler Street, 6PM

RMV

Jan. 21—Public Hearing, EOT 10 Park Plaza Boston

(Review fee changes for certain transactions. Many of the RMV's transactions are not aligned with fees in other DMVs in neighboring states. Many of the RMV's fees have not been adjusted since the late 1980s/1990s. Looking to enhance these fees to streamline

Affirmative Market Program

Jan. 14, 28 & Feb. 19—How to Submit an Effective AMP Plan Workshop
Operational Services Division, 1 Ashburton Place, Rm. 1017, Boston, 10AM-12PM

Jan. 15—AMP Workshop for State Departments
Operational Services Division, 1 Ashburton Place, Rm. 1017, Boston, 9:30AM-12PM

Assisting all state dept. procurement staff and AMP Coordinators increase tools for developing AMP procurement process approaches.

Jan. 21—Advanced Vendor Workshop, MassHousing CNFR, 1 Beacon Street, Boston, 9:30AM-1PM

For SOMWBA Certified Business ready to respond to an RFR and needs help with the technicalities.

(All workshops and training require pre-registration and some require an entrance fee. Please go to www.mass.gov/amp for details.)

the fee structure so that the average driver has a clear understanding of what certain transactions cost. The public is invited to submit comments, ask questions and give their suggestions at the hearing.)

Jan. 14—Commuter Rail Task Force Monthly Meeting, District 5 Office, Taunton, 4-6PM

(Will hold a policy brainstorm as well as conduct a regional review of the South Coast Rail priority development and protection map.)

Feb. 11—Commuter Rail Task Force Monthly Meeting, District 5 Office, Taunton, 4-6PM
Will discuss the scope of work for the Draft EIS/EIR.

Operational Services Division- Quality Assurance, Training and Outreach

OSD will be providing information to municipalities on cost saving opportunities with OSD's statewide contracts, programs and services and Comm-PASS the Commonwealth's e-procurement system:

Jan. 23 & 24 – MA Municipal Association Annual Meeting and Trade Show

Feb. 27 – MA Association of School Business Office—Regional Meeting Western MA

PLEASE JOIN

GOVERNOR DEVAL PATRICK

for his annual address to the residents of Massachusetts

THE 2009 STATE OF THE COMMONWEALTH

State House
Boston, MA 02133

The Great Hall on the 2nd floor will be available to view the address.

MLK National Day of Service
January 19, 2009
Make it a day ON, not a day Off



Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve.

-- Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King, Jr. recognized the power of unity through service to strengthen communities and achieve common goals. In 1994 Congress passed the King Holiday and Service Act in honor of Dr. King's legacy; transforming this Federal Holiday into a National Day of Service. MLK Service Day has grown steadily over the years and 2009 is set to be an extraordinary event with thousands of projects and millions of volunteers.

Massachusetts has been named a Marquee State for MLK Day of Service by The Corporation for National and Community Service – encouraging Americans to view MLK Day as a "Day On" rather than a "Day Off."

The Connect & Serve website is a great way to find volunteers opportunities throughout the Commonwealth, visit: <http://www.volunteersolutions.org/mass-service/volunteer/>
For more information on MLK Service Day visit <http://www.mlkday.gov/>