

# Progressive Massachusetts

**Candidate:** Kathleen O'Connor Ives

**Party:** Democratic

**Position Seeking:** State Senator

**District:** First Essex

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**We only accept questionnaires via email. Please email the completed version to [progressive.mass@gmail.com](mailto:progressive.mass@gmail.com) by Sunday, July 15, 2012. Please feel free to be in touch via email if you have any questions.**

*Please respond to each question. When "Yes" and "No" are listed, a simple yes or no answer is all that is required, but feel free to add an explanation of your support or opposition. If your answer is conditional, please explain your conditions.*

## I. Revenue

While the Commonwealth's current budget deficit is partially a result of the national recession, state tax policy has played a major role. In the 1990s, Massachusetts passed over \$3 billion dollars in tax cuts, which disproportionately went to the wealthiest taxpayers and corporations. These actions by elected officials have resulted in significant cuts to important government investments, including public education, health care, protecting the environment, the state judicial system, affordable housing, and human services. The Coalition for Our Communities ([www.ourcommunities.org](http://www.ourcommunities.org)) is working actively to increase revenue to invest in our communities.

1. Will you support making Massachusetts's tax system more progressive, such that those who earn more pay a larger percent of their income in taxes, and those who earn less pay a smaller percentage of their income in taxes, including by supporting a constitutional amendment to allow for a progressive income tax?

Yes                      **No**

2. Will you support *An Act to Invest in Our Communities*, which would raise the income tax from 5.25% to 5.95% (its rate in the 1990s) while increasing the personal exemption to minimize increases for low and middle income families, while also increasing the tax rate for investment income (short and long term capital gains and dividends and interest) from 5.25% to 8.95% which includes an exemption for low and middle income seniors?

Yes                      **No**

The Commonwealth spends billions of dollars in tax breaks, credits, and exemptions for corporations. While these tax breaks were designed to create jobs, they have delivered far less than they promised and there is no mechanism for accountability for those promises.

3. Will you support repealing tax breaks for corporations? **Yes** **No**

4. What other proposals or initiatives would you propose or support to deal with the State's budget challenges and move toward a more equitable tax system?

- I would support increasing the tax rate on dividend and interest income, with an exemption for low and moderate income seniors.
- I would you support restoring the income tax rate to 5.95%, with an increase in the personal exemption to avoid any tax increases on working families

## II. Health Care

1. Will you support legislation creating a single payer health insurance system in Massachusetts that guarantees health care as a right, provides health care access to all residents, is publicly administered, and lowers the cost of health care?

**Yes** **No**

2. Will you support the state fully regulating health insurance reimbursement rates, in order to reduce health care costs, ensure an equitable reimbursement system for health care providers across the state, and prevent excess profits by health insurance companies?

**Yes** **No**

## III. Housing

The mortgage crisis in Massachusetts continues to hurt families and communities with losses of billions of dollars to our state's economy. Massachusetts is the only New England state without mandatory mediation. Bold action must be taken by the Legislature to reduce foreclosures and better protect struggling homeowners.

1. Will you support *An Act to Establish Mandatory Mediation with Judicial Review*, which would require that when a bank decides to foreclose on a home, all borrowers have the option of participating in mediation with a foreclosure mediation program before foreclosure can begin, and access to judicial review if a mutually acceptable mediation agreement cannot be reached?

**Yes** **No**

## IV. Welfare

Low-to-moderate income families working hard to achieve financial stability and break the cycle of poverty face substantial barriers to building their assets they need to succeed - such as a car to drive to work or modest savings to stay solvent in an emergency. However, many transitional assistance and education programs are restricted to those with few or no financial assets, making it harder for recipients to gain employment and creating disincentives to saving. *An Act Promoting Financial Stability and Asset Development*, is designed to do fix these problems.

1. Will you support removing asset limits for transitional assistance (welfare) recipients in order to allow a licensed driver in that household to own a reliable vehicle to get to work, school, etc? **Yes** **No**

2. Will you support allowing parents receiving transitional assistance to use the time spent receiving education and/or training to meet their work activity requirement as required by

Massachusetts welfare, for more than just 12 months so that they can secure family-supporting jobs while transitioning off of welfare? Yes **No**

## **V. Workers Economic Security**

1. How do we protect working families in these tough economic times? What are some of your ideas on improving economic security for working families, and creating jobs for all Massachusetts residents in need of work?

The key issues in my campaign are:

- 1) Economic revitalization (supporting job creation, skill-building, stronger public education)
- 2) Investments in public infrastructure
- 3) Public Health (which includes environment, consumer protection, public safety, and access to health care)

Working on the City Council has helped me to grow my skills in the areas of negotiation and building consensus. I believe the above three issues are all interconnected in the larger issue of investing in those areas that will directly result in improved quality of life for those living in Massachusetts.

2. Will you support *An Act to Promote the Commonwealth's Economic Recovery with a Strong Minimum Wage*, which would raise the minimum wage from the current \$8 to \$10 an hour, a level closer to an actual living wage?

Yes **No**

3. Will you support indexing the minimum wage to the cost of living, to help working families maintain economic security?

Yes **No**

4. Nearly one million workers in Massachusetts are not allowed even a single day off from work to care for themselves or a sick family member. Will you support *An Act Establishing Paid Sick Days*, providing workers in Massachusetts with the right to earn up to 56 annual hours (7 days) of protected paid sick time to take care of their own health or that of a family member?

Yes **No**

## **VI. Civil & Legal Rights**

1. Will you support a woman's fundamental right to choose an abortion as established in *Roe v. Wade*?

Yes **No**

In Massachusetts, women under the age of eighteen seeking an abortion are required to obtain the consent of a parent or to get a waiver by a judge. While most teenagers involve their parent in helping make a decision about a pregnancy - even in states without laws mandating parental involvement - many cannot.

2. *An Act to Support Consent and Counseling* (the "Minor Counseling bill") would make the age of consent sixteen and allow a teenager who needs consent to obtain it from a parent, a legal guardian, foster parent or family member over the age of 25, or to seek counseling from a "licensed medical professional" about her options. Will you support the Minor Counseling bill?

Yes **No**

3. Will you oppose placing on the ballot any constitutional amendment that would ban or impair marriage rights for same-sex couples?

Yes                      **No**

4. Will you oppose the death penalty?

**No**

Yes

5. Civil rights protections have been extended to transgender people in the areas of employment, housing and credit in 2012 in Massachusetts. However, protections in public accommodations have not yet been established for gender identity, leaving transgender people vulnerable to discrimination in venues which are open to the general public, such as grocery stores, banks, public transportation and other establishments where daily life is conducted. Will you support legislation to extend non-discrimination protections in public accommodations to transgender individuals just as the current law protects against discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc?

Yes                      **No**

6. A college education is essential to earning a good living in today's economy. Will you support *An Act Relative to Higher Education Opportunities for High School Graduates in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, allowing children who are undocumented immigrants who have graduated from a Massachusetts high school to be able to pay the same in-state tuition rates as legal residents do at the state's public colleges and universities?

**Yes**                      **No**

7. The federal so-called "Secure Communities" policy calls for local and state law enforcement to enforce federal immigration law, leading to the deportation of immigrants who have not be convicted of any crime. Will you oppose the implementation of "Secure Communities" in Massachusetts?

**Yes**                      **No**

## **VII. Environment**

Toxic chemicals have become widespread in our air, water, food, schools, workplaces, household products, and ultimately, our bodies. Most people have over 100 chemicals in their bodies that interact with each other, creating unpredictable damage.

1. Will you support *An Act for a Competitive Economy Through Safer Alternatives to Toxic Chemicals* (the "Safer Alternatives" bill), that would create a program to replace some of the worst toxic chemicals with safer alternatives where economically feasible?

Yes

**No**

The collection, recycling, and disposal of electronics, televisions, and computer monitors are an increasing burden on municipal solid waste management budgets. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) requirements require manufacturers to take responsibility for these costs, giving the manufacturer a financial incentive to less toxic and more recyclable products and saving money for cities and towns. 24 states already have EPR laws.

2. Will you support *An Act to Require Producer Responsibility for Collection, Reuse and Recycling of Discarded Electronic Products ("E-Waste" bill)* legislation that would require producer financial responsibility for electronic waste (computers, televisions, tablets, etc.)?

Yes                      **No**

3. The Bottle Bill, the State's nickel deposit on beverage containers, encourages recycling and decreases litter. However, about one-third of beverage containers (including water, teas, sports drinks, and other non-carbonated beverages) are not covered. Currently-covered beverages have an 80% recycling rate, but non-covered beverages have only a 22% recycling rate. Will you support *An Act Updating the Bottle Bill*, that would include these beverages?

Yes                      **No**

### **VIII. Transportation**

1. Will you support both long-term and short-term funding solutions for the MBTA, Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs - bus and van services), and the improvement of roads and bridges for the entire state?                      Yes                      **No**

### **IX. Education**

A significant amount of research suggests that standardized tests such as the MCAS fail to accurately assess students' knowledge or educational abilities. Furthermore, these tests tend to discriminate against economically-disadvantaged children, people of color, non-English speakers and children with special needs.

1. Will support decreasing the usage of standardized tests like the MCAS to assess students' abilities, and support more comprehensive methods to assess students?

Yes

**No**

2. Will you support and advocate for legislation that will conduct a study to determine what resources are necessary and adequate to provide the programs and services students and schools need to meet the Commonwealth's education standard, including adequate spending in the areas of Chapter 70 education funding, school transportation, special education, and English Language Learner (ELL) programs?

Yes

**No**

3. Will you support collective bargaining rights for all public school teachers and support personnel, including employees in charter schools and chronically under-performing schools?

Yes

**No**

4. Young people need accurate information in order to make healthy choices about sex and relationships. Will you support *An Act Relative to Providing Health Education in Schools* to require public schools that teach sexual health education to provide age appropriate, medically accurate, information including information about the effective use of contraceptives, and that is inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities?

Yes

**No**

5. What are your ideas on reducing the achievement gap that exists in many poor communities in Massachusetts?

This is a complex question which necessitates a longer explanation, but we need to invest in teachers, programming, neighborhood development, public safety and job creation. Standardized testing has served to mandate instruction and does not allow for the flexibility that is often beneficial to specific education circumstances.

### **X. Voting Rights & Campaign Finance Reform**

1. Over 1.5 million eligible citizens in Massachusetts are not registered to vote or have out-of-date or inaccurate registrations. Every year, citizens arrive at the polls only to discover they are unable to vote. Will you support *An Act to Establish Election Day Registration*, which would allow eligible citizens to register and vote on the day of an election, as they can in New Hampshire, Maine, Connecticut, and six other states?

Yes      **No**

2. There has never been any significant evidence presented to show that voter fraud exists in the United States, but there is ample data that shows that many elderly citizens have expired state-issued IDs, many young people have IDs with an out-of-date address, and some communities of color lack easy access to obtaining an ID, making them less likely to be able to vote if they are required to show such an ID every time they vote. Will you oppose legislation which would require government-issued photo IDs in order to vote?

Yes      **No**

3. Will you support publicly-funded elections for candidates for legislative and statewide office (sometimes known as the "Clean Elections" law)?

Yes      **No**

In January 2010, the Supreme Court ruled in *Citizens United vs. FEC* that corporations may spend unlimited money from their general treasury funds in elections, resulting in even greater power in elections for corporations (and, through pass-through corporations and SuperPACS, for the wealthy) and drowning out the voices of ordinary citizens from participating in the democratic electoral process.

4. Will you support a resolution that calls upon our U.S. Congressmen and women and U.S. Senators to support a constitutional amendment that would overturn the Citizens United decision, therefore preventing corporations from spending from their general treasury funds in elections?

Yes      **No**

## **XI. Rules Reform**

1. Will you support changing the House, Senate and Joint Rules of the Legislature to require that all roll call votes by legislators on the floor of the House of Representatives and the State Senate be publicly recorded and posted on a common government website within 24-hours of every vote?

Yes      **No**

2. Will you support changing the House, Senate and Joint Rules of the Legislature to require that all legislative committees, joint and separate, publicly record and post on a common government website the votes of the members of each committee on every bill heard by each committee?

Yes      **No**

## **XII. Supporting Fellow Progressives**

1. Please list all candidates for local, state, and federal office in the last six years that you have supported by volunteering for, contributing money, or otherwise publicly endorsed, or that you are currently volunteering or have publicly endorsed this year.

Steve Grossman, Treasurer, John Tierney, U.S. Representative, Felix Arroyo, Jr., Barack Obama, Elizabeth Ives, N.H. State Rep. Candidate

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2. Will you commit to supporting candidates for other legislative, county, or statewide offices that share our progressive values? **Yes**

**No**

**XIII. Other comments**

Please feel free to use this space to talk write tell us any other legislative initiatives you are interested in pursuing, facts about your campaign, and/or why you seek the endorsement of Progressive Massachusetts.

I am seeking the endorsement of Progressive Massachusetts because I not only support a progressive agenda, I want to serve as a leader on progressive issues to achieve progress in these areas. I'm running for this State Senate seat because I'm committed to advocating for improved access to quality public education, reproductive rights, environmental protection and justice, consumer protection, campaign finance reform, single payer healthcare, the development of new revenue streams to fund services and infrastructure needs, civil rights, and myriad other items which comprise progressive public service.

My time on the Newburyport City Council has been a valuable experience in consensus-building, constituent problem-solving and public outreach. A clear, honest and fair message can truly resonate with voters when elected leaders are focused on achieving solutions on previously intractable issues. It's also very important for a State Senator to be accessible, responsive and accountable to the residents of the district. I have a track-record of getting results at the city level and believe I can bring a similar approach to representing the First Essex District.