



PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS

statewide, grassroots organizing for progressive
change in Massachusetts

2014 STATE RACES ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Date: February 3rd, 2014

Candidate: State Representative Jason Lewis

Office Sought: State Senate, 5th Middlesex District

Party: Democratic Party

Web Site: www.electjasonlewis.com

CANDIDATE CONTACT INFO

Email:

Mobile Phone:

Home Phone:

CAMPAIGN CONTACT INFO

Campaign Manager: Suzanne Schlossberg

Campaign Manager Phone:

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RETURN COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRES BY MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 5:00PM, BY EMAIL ONLY

RETURN QUESTIONNAIRE AS (1) WORD FILE AND (2) PDF.

E-mail completed questionnaire to deborah@progressivemass.com.

Please be in touch with Executive Director Deborah Shah with questions, at 917-922-7947 or by email.



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- Please compose your answers directly in the document, underneath the question.
- Limit answers to 250 words or fewer. No attachments.

● I. About You

1. Why are you running for office?

Over the last five years in the legislature, I have been passionate about improving our education system, promoting public health, and protecting human and civil rights. That is why I introduced legislation to improve our education funding formula, and promoted and successfully passed legislation funding public health programs. I am running to be a progressive champion on these, and other issues, in the State Senate.

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

For the past five years I have had the privilege of representing the communities of Stoneham and Winchester in the State House of Representatives. During that time, I have helped secure \$2.5 million in state funding for flood mitigation projects in Winchester and \$5 million in federal and state funding to construct a Tri-Community Bikeway. I have also worked hard for the region and for the Commonwealth – leading efforts to create a first-in-the-nation Prevention and Wellness Trust, which allots \$60 million to community-based public health and wellness programs across the Commonwealth. I am the only the candidate in this race with a track-record of progressive advocacy and accomplishments.

3. What do you think is the proper role of government in Massachusetts residents' daily lives?

I don't believe government can solve every problem or that it's always the best solution. But I do believe that government has a role in helping people help themselves, in providing a robust social-safety net, in making sure that businesses and corporations play by the rules, and that everyone gets a fair opportunity. Our Commonwealth can be doing more to increase economic opportunities and fairness. Government's role is to protect the public good – and that includes on issues of health, education, and the environment.

I emigrated from South Africa at the age of 12. I saw first hand the terrible Apartheid state and I believe that one of the most basic and proper roles for government is to protect and defend all civil rights and civil liberties of its citizens. I believe firmly that government's role is to ensuring equality of opportunity for all.

4. If elected, what would be your top three priorities?

1. Health care – bringing down costs, improving the quality of care, ensuring universal access to care, and promoting public health. I believe the best thing we can do for our health care system is to make sure people do not get sick in the first place.

2. Education – Our Chapter 70 funding formula needs revisiting to make sure that it meets the needs of all our students, teachers and communities. I am the lead sponsor of legislation to make sure that our schools truly get the adequate aid they deserve.

3. Fighting for Working Families – I have long been a co-sponsor of the Earned Sick Leave bill and would fight hard for that. I also believe strongly we need to raise the minimum wage to at least \$11/hr and index it to inflation.



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●II. The Issues

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Our questionnaire is focused on economic justice and inequality, as outlined in our Shared Prosperity Agenda (forthcoming). We are interested in your overall philosophy and approach to the components of the Shared Prosperity Agenda, as well as your views on specific policy and legislation.

In each section, **Question 1** seeks your overall view, values, principles and priorities. You do not need to address each item embedded in these first questions; they are suggestions.

In each section, **Question 2** asks about your advocacy experience; you may leave it blank if appropriate—we do not expect candidates to have a record on every issue. Current or former elected officials: please outline your leadership roles, as opposed to simply your voting record.

Additional questions seek your position on specific policies and legislation. At a minimum, please answer “yes” or “no”; you may also provide an explanation of your positions, as appropriate.

A. Job Growth and the Economy

The Massachusetts economy has continued to grow and recover from the Great Recession, but the gains have not been shared equally. Poverty levels continue to increase, while the minimum wage loses value every year. Massachusetts now ranks 8th in the nation for income inequality.

1. Share your personal values and principles on job growth and the economy.

How can we improve the economy and economic security for all people? How do we grow the number of good paying jobs in the Commonwealth? How do you view wealth and income inequality, and what would you do about it, if anything?

The best way to improve our economy is to invest in our workforce – it is the surest way to have an economy in which everyone can thrive. That is why I am the lead sponsor of legislation that would require workers to be provided with reasonable earned sick time/paid sick leave, which allows parents to care for sick children, promotes public health by reducing the spread of disease, and increases job stability.

I support an increase in the minimum wage to at least \$11/hr and indexing it to inflation and absolutely oppose any efforts to reduce unemployment benefits.

High income inequality and lack of affordability of higher education should be cause for deep concern for all Americans, rich and poor alike. A vibrant democracy with a prosperous economy depends on a strong, well educated middle class whose workers can earn a living wage with decent benefits, send their children to college, and one day retire with dignity. The American dream has long been based on the premise that with hard work anybody can enjoy economic success, but today the United States actually ranks behind many other countries in social and economic mobility.

In the long term, we need to give working families more opportunities. That means reducing health care costs and moving toward a single-payer system; creating a fairer tax-code so that the individuals who can most afford to pay higher taxes do and those with lower-incomes reduce pay less; investing in affordable housing; improving the fairness of our education funding system and reducing student-debt; investing in our small businesses and our main streets; investing in clean energy and clean, sustainable jobs that cannot be shipped overseas – and more. We have a climate crisis and too many people unemployed – we should do more to invest in “green” jobs. I believe income inequality is one of the most important overarching issues that we face – and that there are things we can do at the state level to chip away at it while simultaneously addressing other pressing needs as well.



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1. *Optional/As Applicable*: Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on job growth and the economy (legislation, community work, published writings, etc).

I am the lead sponsor on the earned sick time / paid sick leave bill, written op-eds on these issues, have worked with the Raise Up team in my communities and support them throughout the district.

1. **Minimum Wage**. Do you support:

Raising the wage to at least \$10.50/hour:	Yes
Indexing automatic yearly increases to inflation:	Yes
Increasing tipped wages to 60% of the minimum wage:	Yes

1. **Unemployment Insurance and Minimum Wage**. As of January 2014, the legislature is negotiating a bill that would pair an increase in the minimum wage with cuts to unemployment insurance. Do you oppose this effort?

Yes

1. **Earned Sick Time**. Do you support requiring businesses with more than 11 employees to provide earned, paid sick time to their employees?

Yes, and I am a cosponsor of this bill.

1. **Job Creation and Standards**. A "Job Creation and Quality Standards Act" would require corporations that receive any kind of public benefits (grants, tax expenditures procurement contracts) to, in turn, pay a living wage (\$15 per hour plus benefits) to full-time employees. Do you support such legislation?

Yes

1. **Employee-Owned Businesses**. Do you support legislation to foster and develop employee ownership of businesses in Massachusetts?

Yes

1. **Co-ops, Benefit Corporations, Community Banks**. Do you support legislation that would encourage the formation of cooperatives and/or benefit corporations and the development of community banks?

Yes



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B. Education and Workforce Development

Public education has always been a gateway to opportunity and mobility for all, regardless of economic circumstances, a cornerstone of the American dream for all residents. However, the soaring price of higher education over the last several decades has made access to this opportunity increasingly out of reach, at the very moment when higher education makes a greater difference to one's economic future. Meanwhile, powerful corporate interests have been steadily undermining public school teachers and unions and siphoning money from our public K-12 system.

1.1. Please share your personal values and principles regarding public education and workforce training. *What value does public education and workforce development have in improving our economy as well as in addressing matters of economic justice? What measures should the Commonwealth take on these issues? You might address, for example, charter schools, school vouchers, standardized testing and federal programs like No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top.*

Both of my children are enrolled in the Winchester public schools. Winchester is an affluent community, but even there, I saw that art and music programs were being slashed, which is shameful. While I am proud that Massachusetts has some of the best schools in the nation, the truth is that education -- a well rounded one -- is essential for the personal development of every resident of the Commonwealth, a human right, and an important economic engine for Massachusetts. We will improve our economy in the long term by investing in education -- from the very earliest ages all the way through higher education.

Our public schools are chronically underfunded in Massachusetts. I believe we need to do a full review and revision of the way we fund public education in Massachusetts, which should also reflect the changes we have seen in education over the last 20 years. I have been the lead sponsor of legislation that would call for a full adequacy study of the Chapter 70 formula, and have worked closely with the MTA, AFT, and other educational unions and organizations in order to advocate forcefully for this critical step forward in education financing.

1.2. *Optional/As Applicable:* Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on education and workforce development (legislation, community work, published writings, etc).

I am a lead sponsor of legislation to review and update the state education funding formula (Chapter 70) to make it more adequate and equitable for all communities and all students. I have written extensively about this in op-eds, worked directly with the Governor's Administration and advocated within the State House. I also work directly within my communities to encourage individuals to get involved with the process and advocate on a grassroots level.

1.3. **Achievement gaps.** What would you do to address persistent racial and economic achievement gaps in education?

First, I would be happy to sponsor or co-sponsor legislation to limit class sizes, or to initiate other proven measures that will help close the achievement gap in Massachusetts, and support increased funding in the budget. Second, I think more can be done to invest in early-education and universal pre-k programs, which would help reduce some economic achievement gaps. (I also believe that more needs to be done to invest in adult continuing education.) In addition to racial and economic achievement gaps, I also want to ensure that all students with disabilities are provided the resources they need to have access to a strong public education. We need more and equitable funding for *all* school districts and *all* students.



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1.4. **Universal Pre-K.** Do you support creating universal, free Pre-K, accessible to any resident of Massachusetts, integrated into the public school system?

Yes

1.5. **Universal higher education.** Do you support a program that provides free, publicly funded higher education for every student who wants it?

Yes

1.Funding Structure. Do you support changes to the Chapter 70 Education formula, including the Foundation Budget, to incorporate proper state funding for ELL students, Special Education students, transportation costs, charter school reimbursements to sending schools, and class size reduction?

Yes, and I am the lead sponsor. This is one of the main reasons I ran for office in the first place.



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C. Health Care

Massachusetts has led the way in providing near universal health care insurance coverage. However, we still spend an oversized portion of public and private money on health care, without necessarily achieving better health outcomes.

1. Please share your personal values and principles regarding health care insurance, delivery and outcomes.

I believe that health care is a right, not a privilege. While I am proud that Massachusetts was first-in-the-nation to enact comprehensive health reform in 2006, I believe that reform was just the first step toward truly universal, accessible, high quality, affordable health care. That is why I am the lead sponsor of the bill in the House of Representatives to move toward a single-payer system, which would be far more efficient, ensure that no one is left behind, and help finally reduce health care costs in Massachusetts.

In the meantime, as Vice-Chair of the Committee on Public Health, I have been steadfast in my commitment to preventing chronic diseases and promoting public health through community based interventions and more access to primary care. I successfully introduced a first-in-the-nation Prevention and Wellness Trust Fund that will provide \$60million in funding over four years for community-based public health interventions.

1. Optional/As Applicable: Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on health care (legislation, community work, published writings, etc).

I am Vice-Chair of the Committee on Public Health and I also serve as the Co-Chair of the Prevention Caucus, which focuses on Public Health and ways to improve prevention and wellness in Massachusetts. I have been, as I mentioned, lead sponsor of the single-payer legislation. I also spearheaded efforts to make sure that pharmaceutical companies do not give gifts to doctors (such as fancy meals out) in order to market their prescription drugs. I have written op-eds, worked with single-payer and consumer advocates to transform our health care system.

1. **Single Payer and Public Option.** Do you support moving Massachusetts to Single Payer insurance?

Yes, and I am the lead sponsor of this legislation.

What role might a Public Option play, in your view?

I think ultimately it would be an intermediary step, but it would provide more competition in the marketplace and provide an additional means of access to health care consumers.

1. **Costs and Quality.** What steps would you take to lower health care costs while maintaining or improving health outcomes?

I have already supported the payment and delivery system reforms which were recently signed into law. This encourages our health care industry to move away from a "fee-for-service" model towards integrated, patient-centered care and invests in public health. I believe the next step is to invest in public health programs that reduce instances of chronic diseases and keeps people healthy. We need to invest in more community health workers to keep people healthy and make sure all patients receive culturally competent care. We also need to do more to integrate behavioral health with our overall health care system.



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1. **Mental Health.** What steps would you take to address the gap in affordable mental health services?

I support full parity for mental / behavioral health. (Incidentally, I usually talk in terms of behavioral health, as we need to take a holistic approach, including substance abuse and other behavioral health items that should be treated inclusively in our health care system.) Fundamentally, our mental health system needs better funding and increased access. I also think that, on a personal level there is more we can do to reduce the stigma of mental illness, and this is a fight to which I am committed.

1. **Health disparities.** What steps would you take to reduce racial and income disparities in health outcomes?

I support the bill to establish the Office of Health Equity within the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. The office would coordinate all state activities to eliminate disparities.

I also want to take this opportunity to say that I support restoring full funding for oral health benefits for those on MassHealth, which is a key determinate of health. One of the biggest disparities in our health care system is the divide between who can afford dental coverage and who cannot.

1. **Standards of care and cost.** Do you support establishing a state panel of experts (such as the Affordable Care Act's IPAB/"Independent Payment Advisory Board") to recommend high-value and cost-effective services?

Yes

1. **Pharmaceutical companies.** Do you support prohibiting pharmaceutical companies from including direct-to-consumer drug advertising as tax-deductible expense?

Yes, and I am the lead sponsor of "An Act to eliminate the tax deduction for direct to consumer pharmaceutical marketing." Moreover, I have been a lead champion on legislation to ensure that Pharmaceutical companies cannot wine-and-dine or otherwise give gifts to doctors to influence which prescriptions they recommend to their patients. In addition, I am the lead sponsor on a bill to provide "academic detailing," which provides evidence-based, non-biased information on pharmaceutical drugs and medical devices to healthcare professionals, thereby supporting patient health and reducing healthcare costs

1. **Bulk prescription programs.** Do you support establishing a bulk prescription drug program that would provide lower cost prescription drugs for public employees?

Yes

Do you support establishing this same program for *all* Massachusetts residents?

Yes



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D. Housing

In the last ten years, the need for affordable housing has increased, while funds for affordable housing have decreased, federal and state. Currently there is a 10-year waiting list for a rental voucher, and the average rent for a two bedroom apartment requires a wage 50% higher than the median Massachusetts wage. Half of families in Greater Boston alone pay over 30% of their income in housing and utilities costs—and 25% of households pay *more than half* their income to housing. This is unsustainable. It has led to expanding economic inequality, increased homelessness, and damage to our economy, as talented workers often leave the state for less expensive regions.

1. Please share your personal values and principles regarding affordable housing.

How would you ensure that there is suitable housing for all who need it, within reasonable distance of job opportunities?

How would you address the need to link housing, jobs and transportation? How would you tackle homelessness?

I believe everybody deserves affordable housing and that we need to ensure that there is suitable housing for all who need it. To address some of our housing needs, we need to fully fund the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program, work on the local level to change zoning laws to allow more affordable housing opportunities, and to work with the federal and state administrations build more affordable housing. We must also invest in our transportation system to connect our Commonwealth and spur economic growth. (Particularly in my state representative district, there are only a handful of public transportation options.)

2. *Optional/As Applicable:* Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on housing (legislation, community work, published writings, etc).

One area I think too often goes unaddressed is the need to find housing for persons with intellectual disabilities which is why I filed a bill on this issue. My bill will: increase housing production for individuals with developmental disabilities by making housing projects that serve clients of DDS and DMH who do not qualify for funding through the Community Based Housing or Facilities Consolidation Funds a priority for funding through the Housing Innovations Fund; allow each bedroom to count as one unit of affordable housing in group homes where services are funded through MassHealth or other agencies, as opposed to only those where services are funded through DDS or DMH; increasing and stabilizing funding for Individual Development Accounts by funding it through a tax credit instead of a budget line item; and creating a mechanism for families to open up Mass. tax-advantaged savings accounts that can be used for housing expenses for a family member with a disability.



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3.Housing Authorities. Governor Patrick has proposed consolidating the Housing Authorities to six regional authorities, from the current 242 authorities. The legislature appears reluctant to agree to this reform, in part because it would reduce local control. What is your position?

I believe that there are a variety of ways that we can improve the way we run our local housing authorities, without the complete loss of local control. Among the important changes we can make include regionalizing applicant lists, creating a streamlined application process, and increasing transparency in the ways that local housing authorities are run.

4.Affordable Housing. What would you do to increase the number of affordable housing units in the State? What would you do to ensure that no low-income family has to spend more than 50% of their income on housing and related expenses; and that fewer than a quarter of families spending more than 33% of income on shelter?

I believe we can work on promoting new kinds of urban and suburban renewal that include both housing and commercial development. This will allow for new opportunities for low income housing in a variety of communities. I will advocate for legislation that funds our current housing programs and support measures that create new, affordable housing.

5.Temporary Housing Transitions. What would you do to move homeless families and individuals out of motels and shelters and into permanent housing?

I will continue to advocate for funding and legislation that will enable DHCD to move individuals and families into permanent homes.

6.Regulation Reform, Development and Preservation. Would you support reforms to update our outmoded zoning, subdivision, and planning laws, in such a way as to encourage balanced development and land preservation?

Yes



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E. Revenue and Taxation

Because of income tax cuts and the effects of the recession, Massachusetts has lost nearly \$3 billion in revenue over the last 12 years. We now collect less revenue than 21 other states, and our tax revenue is below the national average. Since 1982, local aid has dropped 58%. Cuts to the moderately progressive state income tax has meant increasing reliance on fees, sales, gas and property taxes, exacerbating the overall regressiveness of our revenue. Regressive taxation strains low- and middle-income families, and reduced revenue collection curtails our ability to invest in vital infrastructure.

1. What principles do you bring to considerations of state revenue and tax reform (individual and corporate)? *How should we raise more revenue to adequately fund our communities for the future?*

I believe that our tax code needs to be more fair and equitable -- more progressive. In my time in office, the Legislature has passed key reforms to make our government more efficient, accountable, and transparent. Yet it is clear that too many critical programs and services are being cut and we are not investing in our schools, our transportation systems, and in our communities to help them thrive. That is why I support An Act to Invest in Our Communities to both make crucial investments in our public infrastructure and ensure that those who can least afford a tax increase will not receive one. I would also support a Constitutional amendment to create a progressive income tax.

2. *Optional/As Applicable:* Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on revenue and taxation (legislation, community work, published writings, etc).

I have co-sponsored An Act to Invest in Our Communities, spoken out publicly in favor of this legislation. I have worked within the Progressive Caucus to help organize other representatives from other districts and advocated to House Leadership on these issues.

1. **Tax Rates for Upper Incomes.** Do you support increasing income taxes on the wealthiest residents of Massachusetts?

Yes

1. **Automatic Tax Decrease Triggers.** Do you support halting the automatic decrease in state tax when Massachusetts state revenues grow four quarters in a row?

Yes

1. **Capital Gains.** Do you support increasing the capital gains tax (with safeguards to protect seniors)?

Yes, provided those safeguards are in place.



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1. Progressive Taxation. “An Act to Invest in Our Communities” was designed to raise significant revenue while making our tax code more progressive, but it has not passed the legislature. Would you support a renewed effort to pass this or similar legislation?

Yes, and I am a co-sponsor of “An Act to Invest in Our Communities.”

1. Corporate Tax Breaks. Do you support eliminating or substantially reducing corporate tax breaks?

Yes

Do you support repealing or significantly reducing the Film Production Tax Credit?

Yes, I am in favor of limiting or capping the tax credit and potentially gradually phasing it out over time.

1. Clawbacks and Transparency in Corporate Tax Breaks. Do you support increasing corporate tax break transparency and clawback provisions?

Yes

1. Graduated Income Tax. Would you support a state constitutional amendment creating a Massachusetts progressive income tax?

Yes



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IV. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- *Please compose your answers directly in the document, underneath the question.*
- *Limit answers to 250 words or fewer. No attachments.*

Use this space to add any other issues important to your vision for Massachusetts or any other matter you think progressive voters should know about your candidacy.

I am the progressive candidate in this race for State Senate. As Senator, I will continue to champion the issues that I have fought to improve during my time in the House: better funding for our public schools, improving healthcare for all, increasing government transparency, fighting for working families, and ensuring rights and protections for all families in the Commonwealth to name just a few.

There is a very clear choice in this election. As a member of the progressive caucus, I know how important it is to have more progressive voices in the Legislature. My main opponent simply does not share our progressive values. There is a lot at stake in this election and I hope that you will endorse me so that we can work together on all the issues outlined in this questionnaire. Thank you for considering me for your endorsement.

I am proud to be currently endorsed by the following organizations and progressive state legislators:

Organizations

Mass Alliance
MassEquality
Massachusetts Voters for Animals
NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts
SEIU Local 509
Stoneham Democratic Town Committee
Winchester Democratic Town Committee

State Legislators

State Senator Will Brownsberger (D – Belmont)
State Senator Harriette Chandler (D – Worcester)
State Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz (D – Boston)
State Senator Linda Dorcea Forry (D – Dorchester)
State Senator Ken Donnelly (D – Arlington)
State Senator Jamie Eldridge (D – Acton)
State Senator Pat Jehlen (D – Somerville)
State Senator Dan Wolf (D – Harwich)
State Rep. Denise Andrews (D – Orange)
State Rep. Ruth Balsler (D – Newton)
State Rep. Marjorie Decker (D – Cambridge)
State Rep. Tricia Farley – Bouvier (D – Pittsfield)
State Rep. Jonathan Hecht (D – Watertown)
State Rep. Jay Kaufman (D – Lexington)
State Rep. Mary Keefe (D – Worcester)
State Rep. Kay Khan (D – Newton)
State Rep. Jay Livingstone (D – Boston)
State Rep. Liz Malia (D – Jamaica Plain)
State Rep. Denise Provost (D – Somerville)
State Rep. David Rogers (D – Cambridge)
State Rep. Byron Rushing (D – Boston)
State Rep. Tom Sannicandro (D – Ashland)
State Rep. Carl Sciortino (D – Somerville)
State Rep. Frank Smizik (D – Brookline)
State Rep. Chris Walsh (D – Framingham)