

HOUSING

2014 GOVERNOR'S RACE

*EXCERPT; PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS ENDORSEMENT
QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES (SECTION II, PART D)*



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HOUSING

[Section D.] 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.

Statement/Experience

[Question D1/D2.] Please share your personal values and principles regarding affordable housing. SUGGESTED TOPICS: 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?

DON BERWICK

Even though Massachusetts is one of the wealthiest states in the country, homelessness persists here. Massachusetts has almost 20,000 homeless individuals, and the problem is getting worse. The homeless population in Massachusetts has grown by 8.7% in the last year, even while rates have fallen nationally. This need not be the case. Massachusetts can – and should – end homelessness.

“Best practices” to end homelessness exist, and we should use them. Initiatives like the 100,000 Homes Campaign have demonstrated that ending homelessness is possible. In the last three years this effort has mobilized more than 200 cities and communities across the nation to rapidly identify those who are chronically homeless (those who live on the streets for years at a time) and place them into permanent, supportive housing that provides the health care and counseling services they need. More than 70,000 of these individuals now have homes. Remarkably, these placements have actually decreased total costs to the cities and states in question because these individuals are no longer as likely to require emergency services or urgent care in hospitals. Recent discussion of “social impact bonds,” whereby private investors actually make money by helping the state reduce their expenditures for repeat incarceration, are also applicable to the problem of homelessness.

But housing the homeless does not solve systemic problems including lack of transportation and job opportunities. That’s why I have said that we need to invest in our regional transit authorities, increasing public transportation options for residents throughout the Commonwealth. I also support the expansion of job training programs to help build the experience and training necessary for 21st century jobs.

There is also a close link between chronic homelessness and problems of mental health and substance abuse. I will work to improve human services and treatment options for these burdens.

*Berwick/Related Experience/Record*

The organization that I led for 19 years, the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, helped establish the “100,000 Homes” project nationally.

MARTHA COAKLEY

Everyone in Massachusetts should have access to safe, clean, affordable housing; it is not only a moral imperative for a progressive state like Massachusetts, but access to housing positively affects outcomes in many other areas, including education, health care, and economic growth.

There is no silver bullet to address all of Massachusetts’ housing needs, but there are a number of steps we can take now to decrease homelessness, reduce the housing cost burden on lower- and middle-income families, and help keep young people in our state.

It starts with promoting smart-growth development in our Gateway Cities. By expanding existing programs, like the Gateway Cities tax credit and the historical preservation tax credit, and offering incentives for residential and commercial development centered around transportation, we can increase the availability and attractiveness of affordable, market-rate housing in different regions throughout the state, while also growing those cities property tax bases.

Addressing homelessness starts with identifying and addressing the root causes, so that we can catch people and connect them with services before they become homeless, rather than after. This includes increasing access to mental health services; nationally, nearly a quarter of people who are homeless suffer from a severe mental illness. We need to do a better job connecting these individuals with treatment that, both residential and acute, that will allow them to remain in their homes.

There is also a tremendous problem of homelessness among young people, particularly LGBTQ young people. Too often, these young people leave home or are forced out because of their sexual orientation or identification.

Coakley/Related Experience/Record

When the foreclosure crisis hit, our office has been a national leader in taking on the big banks and keeping people in their homes. Through actions against companies like Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley, we have recovered more than \$600 million for homeowners and investors in Massachusetts and helped keep more than 30,000 people in their homes.

With funds from the national mortgage settlement, our office established HomeCorps, a first-in-the-nation program that provides direct personal assistance to every distressed borrower in the Commonwealth to deal directly with the banks. Through that program, more than 2,000 people received loan modifications with more than \$54 million in principal reduction.

We also greatly expanded the Abandoned Housing Initiative to assist communities with the abandoned properties in their neighborhoods. Using the receivership statute, our office has helped dozens of



communities rehabilitate previously abandoned homes, improving public safety and property values in the neighborhoods.

STEVE GROSSMAN

Creating affordable housing is a critical part of an economic growth strategy that leaves no one behind. By raising the minimum wage and building more affordable housing units throughout the state, we can help find a way for many of those families struggling to get by.

I will thoroughly explore the option of facilitating public-private partnerships to incentivize developers by selling or leasing public land virtually for free, provided they guarantee to build affordable housing for low and middle-income families. I will ask the business community to be a partner in a smart growth strategy, a strategy they would undeniably benefit from in the decades to come.

By reducing burdensome regulations and accelerating the zoning approval process for multi-family units, the state can encourage developers to invest in Massachusetts. The young people who comprise our future work force have demonstrated a strong interest in residing in urban communities.

In everything we do, we must make investments that reduce our carbon footprint and encourage our residents to maximize the use of public transportation. I believe that a comprehensive transportation strategy will motivate countless families to live in close proximity to public transportation, which is critical for implementing a smart growth strategy.

We've been deeply hurt by the dramatic reduction of federal housing vouchers and a shift to a two year housing voucher program, which should return to three years. In addition, I would make it a top priority to utilize the housing bond bill to renovate as many unlivable units of housing as possible.

Grossman/Related Experience/Record

I was particularly proud to have served on the board of Crittenton Women's Union, which deals so effectively with affordable housing issues.

JULIETTE KAYYEM

We must approach this challenge first by saying that every resident must have access to affordable housing, but second that not every part of the state will have the same solution. Through regional planning we can increase affordable housing, while providing access to job opportunities. Access can mean many things, but it cannot happen without infrastructure, which is the backbone of our state's economy. Infrastructure prepares us for the future. Without an efficient, reliable, and forward-thinking infrastructure, our economy is less productive and able to expand and grow going forward. Transportation infrastructure – our roads, highways, and railways – helps move our workforce to and from jobs, as well as employees and their families to affordable homes and schools.



Policies and Proposals

Housing Authorities

[Question D3.] 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?

Berwick

Massachusetts has a long-standing tradition of local control. Our town meetings embody democracy in the truest sense. This tradition ensures that every citizen has a voice in the decision making process. However, the current Housing Authorities system is too complex and uneven. It is time to explore seriously the possibility of consolidation of housing authorities to ensure a streamlined process and that our dollars are spent as efficiently as possible.

Coakley

As Governor, this is something I would explore, along with other opportunities to increase accountability in our housing market.

Grossman

This is an outstanding example of a critical priority, which demands involving the legislature in the early phases of proposed new housing policies in order to maximize the possibility of building consensus and dramatically improving our service delivery.

Kayyem

As stated above I strongly support regional planning, as this is the only way we can increase access to housing.

Affordable Housing

[Question D4.] 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?

Berwick

Investing in affordable housing will need to be a priority of the next Governor. Studies have continually shown that communities that invest in affordable housing save money in the long run. I will prioritize funding of the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program to ensure that low-income families can afford housing and other living expenses. I will work with the Legislature and with local housing authorities to double down on the successful programs implemented by the Patrick Administration, including social impact bonds and Home & Healthy for Good.

Coakley

In terms of physical housing stock, it is important to focus not only on the development of single-family homes, but also on the development of affordable rental housing. State government should work with every city and town in the Commonwealth to ensure that they reach the 10% threshold of affordable housing currently required under Massachusetts' law, and cities and towns should be held accountable. We also need to improve public housing, both in terms of ensuring the quality of housing, and making the administration of the public housing system more efficient and cost-effective.

It is also important to expand financing options for both rental properties and home ownership. Expanding opportunities for second mortgages, both through state and federal programs is critical for many homeowners, and expanding state rental assistance will give more families the opportunity to access stable housing.

Grossman

I will thoroughly explore the option of using public-private partnerships to incentivize developers by selling or leasing public land virtually for free, provided they guarantee to build affordable housing for low and middle-income families.

Kayyem

Affordable housing can no longer be thought of as an individual development, but must be part of all development. Individual cities, or neighborhoods within cities, cannot solely host affordable housing, as this approach decreases economic vitality and communities' ability to sustain both affordable housing and living wage jobs. To provide this link between affordable housing and living wage jobs we must increase the connectivity of our regional economic hubs. To do this we must increase access to public transportation, increase mixed use development, and create regional strategic planning.

Temporary Housing Transitions

[Question D5.] What would you do to move homeless families and individuals out of motels and shelters and into permanent housing?

Berwick

Rather than waiting for emergency situations and relying on motels to put up homeless individuals and families, we must invest in robust homelessness prevention programs that focus at the community level on the root causes of homelessness, and finds innovative intervention methods, including eviction prevention and job training programs for young parents. Successful existing programs such as HomeBASE exist, and I will work with the Legislature to build on the progress we have made.

Coakley

Again, there is no silver bullet for transitioning individuals and families out of homelessness. One critical element is the provision of supportive services, including employment services, substance abuse counseling, and access to health care.



One potential strategy is to expand the development of “supportive housing,” which incorporates affordable, permanent housing with on-site services to help connect residents with jobs, counseling, and health care. By providing these services, we can make it easier for the previously homeless to get back on their feet, and reduce the likelihood that they will fall back into homelessness.

Grossman

We’ve been deeply hurt by the dramatic reduction of federal housing vouchers and a shift to a two year housing voucher program, which should return to three years. In addition, I would make it a top priority to utilize the housing bond bill to renovate as many unlivable units of housing as possible.

Kayyem

The only way to move away from temporary solutions and into permanent ones is to fix the problems of today, while viewing the solutions of tomorrow. With housing this means providing families and individuals increased access to vouchers, but at the same time working to increase access to affordable housing and a living wage job.

Regulation Reform, Development and Preservation

[Question D6.] 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?

- SUPPORT: Berwick, Coakley, Grossman, Kayyem



NOTES