



PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS

statewide, grassroots organizing for progressive change in Massachusetts

2014 STATE RACES ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Date:

Candidate: Barry Finegold

Office Sought: State Treasurer

Party: Democratic Party

Web Site: www.barryfinegold.com

CANDIDATE CONTACT INFO

Email:

Mobile Phone:

CAMPAIGN CONTACT INFO

Campaign Manager: Kathryn Alexander

Campaign Manager Phone:

Campaign Manager Email: Kathryn@barryfinegold.com

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?**

I am running to fight for the middle class each and every day. I will make sure more of our money is invested in Massachusetts businesses and communities to strengthen our economy and create jobs. I will protect every dollar of taxpayer money the same way I have worked for my own.

As a son of two school teachers, the public service gene is in my blood. I want to be the next State Treasurer to help ensure everyone in Massachusetts has the same opportunities I had growing up.

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

My combination of public and private sector experience has provided me with the background to be a very effective Treasurer. As a legislator, I have served on the Ways & Means Committee and on the Financial Literacy Fund. Throughout my public service career, I fought to make sure middle class families had more money in their pockets by increasing the minimum wage and passing financial education legislation to help families keep their homes and help our young people make wise financial decisions.

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

Government should be the basic foundation of society, providing safe roads, quality schools, and safe neighborhoods. It should provide everyone with the opportunity to succeed in life, no matter where they live.

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

1. Supporting the building of schools that can provide a 21st century education in a cost- effective manner.
2. Promoting financial literacy.
3. Economic Development in our Gateway Cities.

II. The Issues

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

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?

In order to improve the Massachusetts economy for all residents, we have to create opportunities in our Gateway Cities. As a State Representative and Senator, I have had the privilege of representing the City of Lawrence. The City of Lawrence is the poorest city in the Commonwealth, but it is a proud city of immigrants. I have worked tirelessly to improve education in the City, support workforce development programs, and bring businesses to the City. Growth in our Gateway Cities helps *all* our communities. We must create opportunities in our urban areas to grow our economy as a whole.

2. *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).

On the legislative front, I have been a leader in pushing for policy changes that would create jobs in the clean energy sector in Massachusetts, including:

- S1593, An Act relative to credit for thermal energy generated with renewable fuels, which would promote the growth of the thermal energy sector in Massachusetts, in turn creating jobs in the industry, recently reported favorably from the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy;
- Successful amendments increasing the net metering cap so that solar energy can continue to compete and the industry can continue to thrive in the Commonwealth; and
- During 2013's debate on updates to SREC regulations, I successfully worked with DOER to ensure that the economics of the original SREC program were preserved for shovel ready projects.

Additionally, I am a co-sponsor of the earned sick leave bill.

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In my district, I have done extensive work to advance job growth and the economy, particularly in the City of Lawrence. For years, I have worked with Lawrence Community Works and Groundwork Lawrence to get them the state assistance they need to convert old mill buildings into affordable housing, which has a great impact on the local economy.

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

Raising the wage to at least \$10.50/hour:	Yes	No
Indexing automatic yearly increases to inflation:	Yes	No
Increasing tipped wages to 60% of the minimum wage:	Yes	No

- I voted to increase tipped wages to 45% of the minimum wage, which I felt was a reasonable percentage.

4. **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 No

I voted to increase the minimum wage in a bill that was not paired with unemployment insurance. As we don't know what will come out of conference committee, I cannot answer yes or no on this question. If the only avenue to increasing the minimum wage comes with corresponding reasonable changes to unemployment insurance, I do not want to close the door on that possibility.

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

Yes No

I am a co-sponsor of this bill.

6. **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 No

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

Yes No

8. **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 No

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. 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.*

I believe strongly that all our kids, no matter where they live, deserve the opportunity to participate in the Massachusetts Dream. The only way to do that is to ensure quality schools throughout the Commonwealth. In my capacity as State Representative and Senator, I have learned firsthand that parents do not care what kind of schools their children attend – be it public, private or charter – as long as they receive an excellent education.

While, as a whole, Massachusetts has a strong, successful education system compared to many states, in many urban areas the quality of education is not acceptable. Rather than pitting public schools against charter schools, we should ensure collaboration between the two. The City of Lawrence serves as a model of this collaboration for not just of the Commonwealth, but for the nation as well. This school district has seen success from the inclusion of everyone at the table – administrators, unions, charter schools and parents. For example, the UP Academy Leonard School, created when a charter school partnered with union teachers at Leonard Middle School in Lawrence, ranks second in Massachusetts for median student math growth at 83%. Moreover, UP Academy Leonard boasts a one-year math proficiency rate of 56%, which is three-times higher than it was in 2012 at 19%. We cannot ignore results like this – we owe it to our kids to look at these successes and replicate them in failing schools. I'm proud of the successes we've seen in Lawrence and the innovative methods used to get there.

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).

This session, I filed S235, *An Act to further narrow the achievement gap*, as one of my top priorities. This bill would lift the cap on charter schools in the lowest 10% performing school districts and provide the turnaround tools necessary for low performing school districts to improve underperforming schools.

I have a longstanding partnership with Northern Essex Community College (NECC) that continues to provide my district and the rest of the Merrimack Valley with invaluable educational and vocational opportunities that consistently lead to employment. Throughout my tenure as a State Legislator, I have pushed for the expansion of NECC within the City of Lawrence to provide jobs as well as education that will lead to jobs. President Lane Glenn and I are presently working on two new initiatives: the establishment of a police training program in the area and an advanced manufacturing academy in partnership with Greater Lawrence Technical School and local businesses.

Through my interactions with the people and businesses of Lawrence, I have come to understand how Gateway Cities are in desperate need of job training, which is why I have fought and will continue to fight to provide those resources in my district.

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

I have seen the success that can be achieved when everyone involved in education comes to the table and works together to provide the best outcomes for our children as we have in Lawrence. Innovative solutions such as partnering charter schools and public schools together and giving failing public schools turnaround tools can change the face of urban education and provide the opportunities our kids deserve.

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 No

I am open to the idea of a universal pre-kindergarten as long as we first find a sustainable payment model.

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

Yes No

I believe that something has to be done about higher education costs. It is not sustainable to have our young people starting out their lives with such heavy debt loads – they will not be able to afford to buy a home, start a family, or support our economy. Innovative initiatives such as the Commonwealth Covenant Fund provide promise for lowering higher education costs for students while also keeping our best and brightest in Massachusetts.

6. **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 No

I am a co-sponsor of S207, *An Act reviving the Foundation Budget Review Commission*, which would initiate the review and revision of the Chapter 70 Education formula to more accurately provide the resources necessary for students to meet and exceed Massachusetts' education standards.

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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.
2. *Optional/As Applicable:* Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on health care (legislation, community work, published writings, etc).
3. **Single Payer and Public Option.** Do you support moving Massachusetts to Single Payer insurance?
Yes No

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

4. **Costs and Quality.** What steps would you take to lower health care costs while maintaining or improving health outcomes?
5. **Mental Health.** What steps would you take to address the gap in affordable mental health services?
6. **Health disparities.** What steps would you take to reduce racial and income disparities in health outcomes?
7. **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 No
8. **Pharmaceutical companies.** Do you support prohibiting pharmaceutical companies from including direct-to-consumer drug advertising as tax-deductible expense?
Yes No
9. **Bulk prescription programs.** Do you support establishing a bulk prescription drug program that would provide lower cost prescription drugs for public employees?
Yes No
Do you support establishing this same program for *all* Massachusetts residents?
Yes No

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?
2. *Optional/As Applicable:* Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on housing (legislation, community work, published writings, etc).
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?
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?
5. **Temporary Housing Transitions.** What would you do to move homeless families and individuals out of motels and shelters and into permanent housing?
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 No

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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?*

As Treasurer, my goal will be to make Massachusetts the most fiscally responsible state, which will raise our bond rating and allow us to borrow at a lower cost.

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).
3. **Tax Rates for Upper Incomes.** Do you support increasing income taxes on the wealthiest residents of Massachusetts?
Yes No
4. **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 No
5. **Capital Gains.** Do you support increasing the capital gains tax (with safeguards to protect seniors)?
Yes No
6. **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 No

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

Yes No

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

Yes No

8. **Clawbacks and Transparency in Corporate Tax Breaks.** Do you support increasing corporate tax break transparency and clawback provisions?
Yes No

I do support some clawbacks. If a corporation does not meet the conditions of the tax break, they should have to return that money to the state.

9. **Graduated Income Tax.** Would you support a state constitutional amendment creating a Massachusetts progressive income tax?
Yes No

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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.

In this questionnaire, I focused on the questions that are applicable to the Treasurer's office. I'd also like to elaborate on some of my positions on issues under the control of the Treasurer:

Lottery

I recognize the importance of lottery funds in bringing back money to our local communities, but believe that we must do all we can to ensure that our state gaming policies do not prey on the poor or the vulnerable. For that reason, I opposed the expanded gaming bill. I do not support expanding keno and lottery sales on line, nor do I support allowing credit card payments for scratch tickets at convenience stores as I believe both would increase addictive gaming behavior in our state. After learning more, I may be open to allowing fantasy sports in a limited fashion. Additionally, I would like to increase funding for resources that deal with addictive gaming behavior.

Pension Fund

I believe that our pension fund should reflect our values. Currently, approximately 2.6% of the Massachusetts Pension Reserves Investment Trust (PRIT) Core is invested in fossil fuels, totaling approximately \$1.4 billion in investments. These investments run counter to our state efforts to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and promote renewable energy and efficiency. It was for similar reasons that the Legislature passed, and I voted for, a law divesting from tobacco-related companies in 1997.

The Asset Owners Disclosure Project, a group that seeks to "protect" funds from the risk of climate change, recently gave Massachusetts pension fund a "D" rating, far below the AAA given to California's state pension fund. Additionally, a recent study conducted by the Associated Press and S&P Capital IQ found a fossil fuel-free portfolio would have outperformed one that included fossil fuel investments over the past 10 years. The study found that a \$1 billion fossil fuel-free college endowment would have grown to \$2.26 billion over the past 10 years, while an endowment that included investments in fossil fuel companies would have grown to only \$2.14 billion. These numbers demonstrate that it is worth exploring whether we can have a successfully performing PRIT while promoting renewable energy and efficiency.

If, and only if, we can do so gradually and in a manner that does not negatively affect returns, I would be open to a divestment from fossil fuels.

Financial literacy

Some of the most important work I have done as a State Senator has involved promoting financial literacy, and it is a mission I want to continue working on as State Treasurer. I serve on the Financial Literacy Trust Fund (FLTF), led by Treasurer Grossman, and recently led the effort to pass legislation in the Senate that would add the FLTF as one of the groups that taxpayers can choose to donate to on their tax forms. Additionally, I filed a successful amendment to the welfare reform bill that required DTA to require TAFDC recipients to participate in a free financial education program to assist in developing their economic independence goals.

Last session, I filed a bill that would have required financial literacy to be integrated into the math curriculum in all Massachusetts schools. Working with stakeholders, we created a pilot program in high schools in 10 Gateway Cities to plan and pilot financial literacy programs. This is a 3-year pilot program and I am hopeful that it will serve as a model for statewide implementation in the future. Between huge student loans and offers of credit cards, our children are now faced with massive financial decisions so early in life that we must equip them with the knowledge to make responsible financial decisions.

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Massachusetts School Building Authority

In order to give our kids a 21st century education, we cannot have classrooms from the 60's and 70's. I want to build more schools and reduce the long waiting list by expanding the model school building program, because there is a best way to build a science lab and a gym.

Additionally, I would like to explore the possibility of creating a Massachusetts Building Authority in the model of the MSBA in order to help municipalities with funding for non-school buildings such as police and fire stations.

Additional comments

I have taken some tough votes while representing a district that is historically conservative. Votes such as my votes to raise revenue, in support of gay marriage and against the death penalty were often the source of extremely strong criticism in my district, but I always voted my conscience and worked extremely hard to get re-elected each term against formidable Republican challengers.