

Massachusetts Republican Party  
2018 Platform

Adopted

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by

the Massachusetts Republican Party State Committee

## **PREAMBLE**

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts was founded to protect the community that is Massachusetts, to secure the rights of the individuals who make up this community, to promote life, prosperity, and happiness, and to ensure that the laws by which we govern ourselves are fair and faithfully executed.

Today, the goal of the Massachusetts Republican Party is to continue in the promise of our Commonwealth: to lead the nation in liberty, prosperity, education, and good government. We are blessed with people of industry and intellect, imagination and principle.

Our party welcomes all citizens of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to share in the vision that guides our Republican Party. We recognize in this effort that we will not all agree on every tenet outlined in this document. Taken as a whole, though, we know that we agree on far more than we disagree. We also respect the views of those party members who disagree on issues of principle. We endeavor to continue working together to advocate for policies that will guarantee a brighter future for those living and working in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

## **ECONOMY**

In 2017, we had more people working than at any time in state history. Our economy has added 150,000 new jobs in the last three years. And the number of people looking for work has dropped in every county over the past three years, in most cases by more than 35%.

As one of America's greatest engines of innovation, Massachusetts can continue to drive our Nation with the right economic policies in place. Our technology sector, supported by the world's finest universities and teaching hospitals, develops lifesaving biomedicines, innovative software applications, and incredible new materials that transform manufacturing around the world. Our state must continue to be as attractive for business as it is for research. We must continue to ensure that the world's best minds do not go elsewhere to start groundbreaking companies with the ideas they develop here.

The kind of thinking that leads to innovation and tremendous economic growth is inherently incompatible with heavy-handed regulation. Our most innovative entrepreneurs are developing entirely new economies, as they did during the biotechnology and internet booms. If Massachusetts forces them to ask for permission, they will go elsewhere instead.

Gone are the days when a "mom and pop" could simply open a store and begin earning a living, creating jobs, and building a community. That world has been replaced with one in which almost any prospective entrepreneur must navigate a labyrinth of regulation and a forest of licenses, permits, health codes, labor laws, and taxes. Our solution is to make the process far simpler by

cutting regulations and making it easier to start a business in the first place, allowing workers to provide for themselves and their families. We support trade and investment with global partners in Massachusetts and around the world.

The drive that keeps an entrepreneur working long days for years in pursuit of a dream is at the heart of Massachusetts' economic engine. Many entrepreneurs are small business owners trying to build a better life for their families, while others are passionate about their work.

We support the periodic review of all regulations. We support a moratorium on new, non-emergency state regulations, fee increases, and business taxes.

We support streamlining permitting and zoning processes.

We support diversifying our economic base and attracting businesses from around the country and the world.

We support the development of a world-class workforce through world-class education.

More than a million people in the state rely on public transportation to get them where they need to go. The public deserves an efficient, reliable transit system that wisely invests taxpayer dollars in maintaining and improving the transit infrastructure.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Government exists to serve the people it represents. Massachusetts' elected officials and public employees must all be held to the highest standards of conduct and accountability, with strong rules implemented and vigorously enforced to punish any and all ethical violations and abuse of the public's trust.

We support authorizing the Ethics Committee to immediately investigate allegations of ethics violations upon receipt of a letter signed by 20 House members. We further support requiring the Ethics Committee to file an annual report with the Clerk of the House and Senate disclosing the number of complaints received, the number of complaints determined to have merit, the number of complaints determined to be without merit, and the dates of all committee meetings held during the session, with all identifying and personal information removed to maintain confidentiality.

We support replacing the current lopsided, partisan imbalance that exists on the Ethics Committee by requiring four members to be appointed by the Speaker and four members to be appointed by the Minority Leader so there is equal representation from both parties.

All public employees deserve a safe work environment where they can report unacceptable behavior by an elected official, supervisor or co-worker without fear of retaliation. To that end, we support the development and enforcement of a zero-tolerance policy against any and all forms of sexual harassment, as well as ongoing awareness and prevention training for all elected and non-elected officials.

We need transparency throughout state government, so that citizens can see where their tax dollars are being spent, how contracts are awarded, and whether programs are being managed efficiently and effectively. We support frequent, comprehensive audits and the full disclosure of financial information online.

We support requiring all legislation to be posted online for a full day before it can be voted on. We support a requirement that the results of all committee polls be posted online. We also support truth in testimony requirements to ensure that witnesses appearing before legislative hearings disclose any state funding or financial interest in the matter at hand.

We support the public ballot initiative as a way for the people of Massachusetts to express their opinion on important policy issues when the legislature fails to act on these matters. We especially support initiatives repealing taxes, setting term limits, and slowing the expansion of government.

We support yearly performance reviews for all state programs and agencies, as well as zero-based budgeting that requires justification for every dollar.

We support requiring a balanced budget at the beginning of each fiscal year, and suspension of legislative salaries whenever this requirement is not met.

We support a requirement that bills removing money from the state's rainy day account be approved by two-thirds of the members of each body.

As taxpayer funds are limited, we believe the 2017 legislative salary increase of up to 45% in pay was excessive. We believe that no law varying the compensation for the service of elected state officials shall take effect until an election of the General Court shall have intervened.

## **COMPASSIONATE GOVERNANCE**

As Republicans, we believe in a limited government; and we believe that our government has a duty to help and serve the most vulnerable among us. In protecting these most vulnerable – be they children, the disabled, homeless or others – we have an obligation to provide the assistance that is most beneficial to them, at a responsible cost to the taxpayers.

We are a solution-oriented Party and support tackling problems rather than adding funding to programs without an understanding of whether money will actually solve the problem.

We believe the government should be a helping hand and a safety net, dedicated to preserving the rights and dignity of all for whom it cares. Services should aim to empower people and propel them towards self-sufficiency and independence whenever possible. No one aspires to be reliant on government support; the government shouldn't aspire to keep anyone reliant on it either.

Under Democratic leadership, the number of homeless families who had to live in hotels and motels because no shelter or housing was available grew to over 1,500 families, at a cost to the state of over \$50 million. Under Republican leadership, that number has been reduced to fewer than 60 families.

We support these ongoing efforts to reallocate resources to preventing families from becoming homeless and helping families out of motels and into more permanent and suitable housing. Our goal is to assist those who are able, to get back on their feet so they can ultimately provide their own housing, rather than remain dependent on the state.

The government also has a responsibility to ensure the funds allocated for helping individuals and families actually goes to serve those populations. We support rooting out fraud and abuse so that taxpayer funds can be spent on those who truly need it.

We believe that when it comes to caring for the most vulnerable among us, our state government must be held to the highest possible standards. We support the fundamental changes underway at the Department of Children and Family Services in order to better protect children in potentially abusive situations and in foster care.

Too many people in our Commonwealth are suffering from addictions, especially opioids. More than five people per day are dying in Massachusetts from this deadly epidemic, and individuals and families from all communities and backgrounds are impacted by this disease. We believe a comprehensive approach is necessary to tackle this epidemic, including education of children and parents, cracking down on over-prescription of opioids, quality and evidence-based treatment options, and strong support networks to help people maintain their recovery.

The Republican Party has a strong history of leading on policy issues to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities. Milestone achievements include the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) both signed into law by

President George Herbert Walker Bush. However, many in the disability community have not realized the full promise intended by these laws, whether it be the family of a child with autism who is thrown into the tangle of special education or a wounded soldier returning to high unemployment and uncoordinated resources. We see disabled individuals as Americans looking to participate in the American Dream. This view contrasts with the historic view of disability of dependence too often resulting in paternalistic programs dictating care.

Nationally, 67% of working age people with disabilities are unemployed according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Yet, we know that 80% of people with disabilities want to work. We believe in programs that focus on “can” rather than “can’t.” We support a system that provides flexibility to fit the needs of the individual rather than command and control from Washington or Beacon Hill. We see people with disabilities as an untapped pool of talent from which society can benefit. This attitude is in sharp contrast to the idea that we must only take care of people with disabilities.

Under current law, the federal government is authorized to fund up to 40 percent of the additional cost of educating students with disabilities. However, federal contributions have never approached that goal. We support increasing the federal contribution to fund IDEA and building upon the law to better account for the transition to independence.

We support efforts to address the problem of disability employment through innovative employment first policies which require that employment be the first consideration in service planning for working age adults with disabilities.

We believe veterans who have served our country in the armed forces deserve the very best care possible upon their return. Therefore, we support investing in efforts to provide quality care through the Veterans' Administration and other services.

We also believe that our Commonwealth should facilitate programs that help our veterans obtain good-paying jobs. Therefore, we support efforts like the recently enacted "Massachusetts Veteran Friendly Employer Certification Program," which offers a state tax credit for businesses that provide job opportunities and retain the Commonwealth's veterans.

## **EDUCATION**

Massachusetts' colleges and universities are the envy of the world. Some of our public school systems underperform. Our colleges and universities compete globally, and succeed. For too long, our public schools have been insulated from competition – and many have fallen behind as a result. Our children will have to compete globally; we owe it to them to provide the best education we can.

We support efforts to make higher education more affordable for students and their families, such as expanding early college programs and paid internships.

While Massachusetts has one of the highest percentage of residents with college degrees, we recognize that not everyone can or wants to go to college. We see apprenticeship as an alternative path to provide people with chance to earn while they learn while also addressing the growing skills gap. Instead of graduating college too often burdened by debt, apprentices are learning valuable skills and are employed in a field with high demand for skilled employees. We support innovative apprenticeship programs.

We believe parents can make the best decisions for their children. We support parents' right to choose where to educate their children: in a public, private, or charter school, or through home schooling. We believe that the cap on charter schools should be lifted.

We support high standards and rigorous testing for students, teachers, and administrators, with meaningful consequences for excellent or substandard performance.

We support a strong focus on the fundamentals: reading, writing, math, science, history, civics. We support local control over educational standards and curriculum; and reject federal attempts to impose federal standards and curriculum, such as Common Core.

## **ENERGY**

Our economy depends on energy. Massachusetts has a diverse energy portfolio. We believe that a strong and resilient economy depends on maintaining energy diversity. We recognize that economic growth requires developing new sources of energy and more efficient ways of harnessing that energy.

We support a policy of private, free market-driven development of new energy sources, especially those that are sustainable, renewable, efficient, and clean. We oppose quotas, subsidies, taxes, and similar attempts to tilt the playing field in favor of particular energy sources or individual projects.

We support streamlining energy project permitting, and placing permitting decisions under local control.

We support an “all of the above” energy policy that relies on the free market to maximize energy output while minimizing public expenditure.

We oppose any attempt to enact or increase energy taxes.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

Conservation is inherently conservative – we support responsible environmental stewardship. To leave the world a better place for our children, it is vitally important to preserve, protect, and conserve the environment of Massachusetts and the surrounding ocean. We have seen that clear property rights – and the long-term thinking and sense of stewardship that they create – are the best incentives for conservation.

We support local control and enforcement of prudent environmental laws, instead of passing new laws or the creation of new regulations.

We support a broad discussion of strategies for protecting our fisheries and sustaining commercial fishing, in order to ensure the long-term viability of our fishing industry.

We support all reasonable and economically sound solutions to address proven sources of pollution, especially through the private sector or through public-private cooperation. We support measures to promote working forests, farmland, and recreational land.

## **HEALTHCARE**

Massachusetts is home to world-class physicians, specialists, and hospitals that provide our citizens with the highest quality health care. These providers play a vital role in our state's economy and deserve a health care system that allows them to continue this important work without unnecessary government interference.

The federal government's takeover of health care is eroding the progress we have made. People are losing insurance as they knew it, premiums are going up and an ineffective bureaucracy is failing to find solutions. Everyone in Massachusetts should have access to quality, affordable health care.

We believe Massachusetts knows best how to care for our own citizens. Because we have a proven record of insuring our residents, we should be able to maintain control of our own health care system, rather than being subject to a federal system which has thrown our system into disarray.

We support replacing the Affordable Care Act with solutions that make more sense for the Nation and for Massachusetts. As a minimum measure, we support providing a waiver for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

We need to reduce the cost of health care in Massachusetts. A lack of transparency about health care costs prevents consumers from making informed decisions about their care. In addition, responsible management of the state's Medicaid program is important to both the overall health of the state's budget as well as the ability provide a critical safety net for the low-income people who need it.

We believe that market-based solutions -- not government mandates -- hold the key to driving down the cost of health care in our state. In particular, increasing pricing transparency in the health care market will help keep costs down for consumers by providing the information needed to make smart decisions and encouraging real competition among insurers and providers.

## **TAXES AND SPENDING**

Our Commonwealth has amazing economic strength which derives from a long history of industriousness and ingenuity. Our present economic opportunity is stifled by the extraordinarily heavy burden of taxes and spending. It was estimated in 2017 that Massachusetts's taxpayers worked the fourth longest of taxpayers in any state to pay their total tax bill.

We support lowering all taxes to encourage economic growth and attract businesses. We support a reduction in the state sales tax, and demand that our legislature comply with the voter-mandated reduction of the state income tax to five percent.

We oppose the indexing of any tax to the rate of inflation.

In order to prepare for inevitable lean economic years, it is necessary to restrain spending and reduce the size of government during years of better economic growth. To this end, we support streamlining government to make necessary programs work more effectively and efficiently. We also support the outright elimination of programs that are duplicative or that can no longer be justified.

A two-thirds vote of the Legislature should be required in order to raise taxes.

## **JUSTICE**

We assert that the state and federal Constitutions are the most basic of our guiding documents.

We embrace a deep and profound respect for the law enforcement professionals who risk their lives to keep us safe, and we are committed to supporting their vigorous action against crime.

We support the court's option of imposing the death penalty, with strict safeguards, in first degree murder cases.

We believe the heart of liberty begins with the freedom of speech as defined in the First Amendment of the Constitution. Essential to our freedom is also the right to acquire, own, possess, enjoy, and dispose of private property, and we maintain that the presumption of all judicial and legislative decisions must respect and protect this fundamental unalienable guarantee.

We support and pledge to uphold the individual right to keep and bear arms as a basic right to protect one's life and property. These rights are enumerated in the Second Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America and Article XVII, Part of the First of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The rights of sportsmen should be protected.

We believe in tough penalties for drug traffickers and in providing our law enforcement officials with the tools they need to investigate, arrest and prosecute those who traffic and deal drugs.

We recognize the important contributions that immigrants have made to our state and our nation throughout history and we support all those who seek to enter our country legally. We believe our immigration system is broken. We believe existing laws should be enforced until such time as new federal legislation is enacted.

We oppose rewarding illegal immigrants by granting them the same rights, benefits and privileges as citizens and legal residents. We oppose the issuance of driver's licenses to illegal aliens; and driver's licenses for holders of student visas, should not exceed the duration of their visa. We oppose granting in-state college tuition rates to illegal aliens.

A recent Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court decision (*Lunn v. Commonwealth*) prevents state and local law enforcement from honoring detainer requests from United States Immigration and Customs and Enforcement (ICE), even for criminal illegal aliens. To keep our communities safe, we support legislation that would allow law enforcement officials to cooperate with ICE in identifying and detaining criminal illegal aliens.

We denounce any attempt to confer 'sanctuary' status upon any individual who is in our country illegally. We recognize that since it is a felony under Federal law to harbor or conceal someone known to be in the country illegally, establishing a sanctuary state, city, or town would undermine the rule of law and public trust. Furthermore, we reject any attempt by local or state government to restrict cooperation between Federal, State, and local law enforcement to share

intelligence, equipment, and resources in their cooperative effort to identify anyone who has violated the law.

The private assets of a citizen should only be surrendered to the state if they have been proven guilty of a crime and if those assets were associated with that crime. We seek to reform our Civil Asset Forfeiture laws to ensure people cannot be deprived of their property merely due to suspicion they have committed a crime.

The symbol of national unity to which we pledge allegiance is the American flag. The American and Massachusetts flags should be given legal protection against desecration; and we encourage the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools.

We condemn the creation and misapplication of our laws through judicial activism.

## VALUES

True to the spirit of Abraham Lincoln and Ronald Reagan, Republicans believe that inalienable individual rights and the responsibilities that go with them are the foundation of freedom.

Informed by the essential guarantees of the Declaration of Independence, we affirm the inherent dignity and sanctity of all human life including those with disabilities identified before birth. We believe that every instance of abortion is tragic. We advocate policies that will assist a woman during a crisis pregnancy.

We reject all forms of discrimination, intolerance and exploitation for all individuals in all stages of life.

It is estimated that millions of human beings are exploited globally through human trafficking including many here in the United States and in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We seek justice for those men, women, and children who are trafficked for forced or bonded labor in various industries, commercial sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, or for the purpose of organ removal. This egregious crime violates the dignity of humanity, and we must be vigilant in the cause for human freedom.

We believe the institution of traditional marriage strengthens our society. There should be no infringement on the rights of the people of Massachusetts to vote on ballot initiatives.

Our Party vocally supports religious liberty. As a Party, we support the Constitutional guarantee of individual religious freedom, and we oppose judicial and legislative attempts to eradicate faith, whether in symbol or practice, from public life.

We affirm every citizen's right to apply religious values to public policy and we support the right of faith-based organizations to participate fully in public programs without renouncing their beliefs, symbols, or hiring practices.

We support the First Amendment right of freedom of association for religious organizations, including the right of religious organizations to refrain from participation in public policies that violate their religious conviction.