

# PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS

## 2014 LEGISLATIVE RACES QUESTIONNAIRE



### CANDIDATE:

**Sara-Lynn Reynolds**

Democrat for State Senator

Norfolk, Bristol, and Middlesex

**ElectSaraLynnReynolds.com**

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### **About the Candidate**

1. Why are you running for office? And what will your top 3 priorities be if elected?

Job creation/eliminating corporate tax initiatives

Improving Education Resources for All

Affordable health care for All

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

My work experience, my life experience, my service as an At Large Attleboro City Councilor.

My Experience:

BS in Health Education

Teacher and Coach in the North Attleboro School System

News Director for WARA 1320 and reporter for WKOX Framingham

Field Director for the Mass Dept of Public Health

Southeastern MASS Field Manager for the Mass Dept of Public Health (Mass Tobacco Control Program)

Statewide Trainer with UMASS Donahue Institute, Boston

Marketing position for several Senior Health Care Companies

Liaison to School to Work Initiatives

Attleboro At Large City Councilor

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### **The Issues**

*Our questionnaire is focused on economic justice and inequality, as outlined in our Shared Prosperity Agenda. 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, the first question seeks your overall view, values, principles and priorities. You do not need to address each item embedded in these first questions; they are suggestions.*

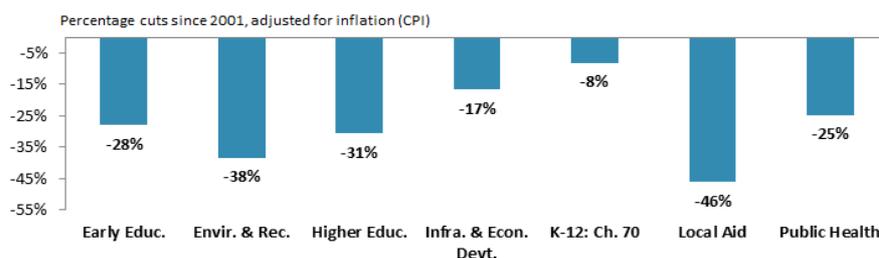
*In each section, the second question asks about your advocacy experience; you may leave it blank if appropriate—we do not expect candidates to have a record on every issue. Current or former elected officials: please outline your leadership roles, as opposed to simply your voting record.*

*Each section features a chart or graph that illustrates one facet of the issue under discussion and is not intended to be comprehensive. All images and data are from Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center ([massbudget.org](http://massbudget.org)).*

### **A. 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. It also restricts legislators' ability to pass new and visionary legislation, as there is a continual shortage of funds for existing priorities.

***Declining revenues have meant drastic cuts, limiting our ability to invest in our communities and future economic stability.***  
**Select cuts across the state budget (FY2001 - FY2012)**



\*Ch. 70 figures are adjusted using the inflation factor specified in Chapter 70

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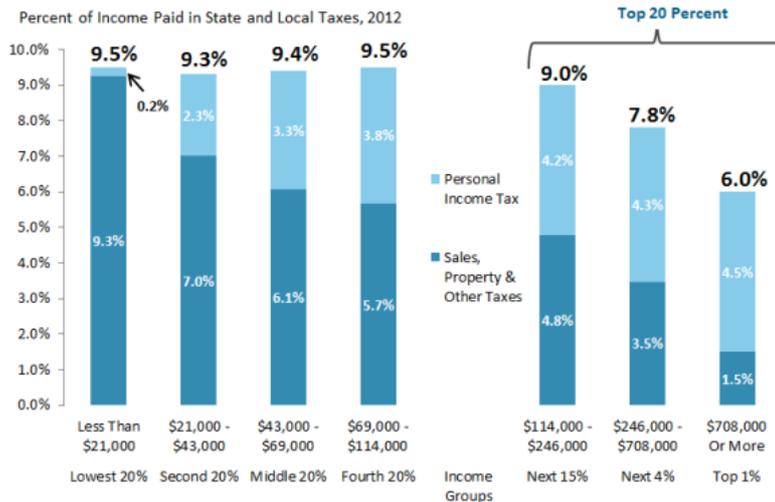
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**Massachusetts state and local taxes are regressive.**

**Top Earners in Massachusetts Pay Less of Their Personal Income in State and Local Taxes than Do Low Income Earners**



3. 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 we must first remove the corporate loopholes and then we should look to advance a new graduated tax program.

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

Please see I and IV

5. **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

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

Yes

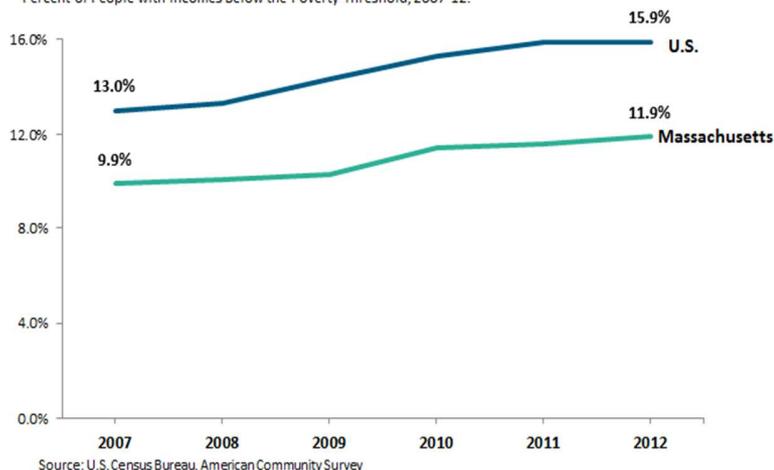


## B. Job Growth and the Economy

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.

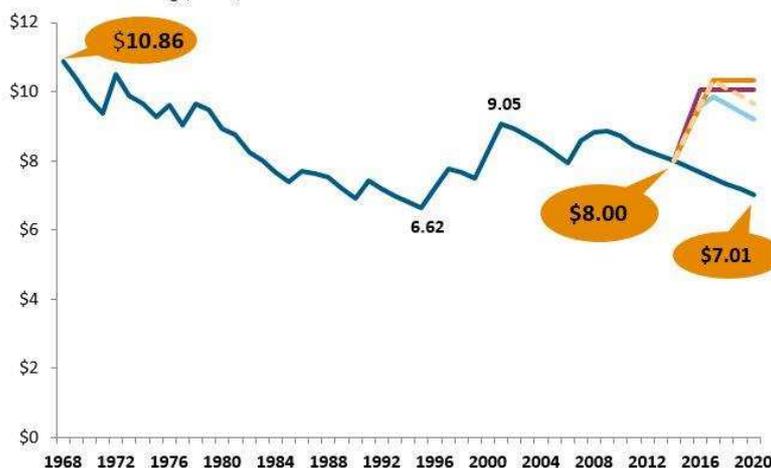
### Poverty Rates Still Elevated Since Onset of Recession

Percent of People with Incomes Below the Poverty Threshold, 2007-12.



### The Minimum Wage loses value every year to inflation; it is currently 24% lower than 1968 levels.

MA minimum wage, 2014 \$s



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7. 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?*

Well certainly the recent decisions by the Supreme Court have done little to support Unions and or women, those that may be attempting to 'plan' the growth of their families, their care etc.

I believe we must encourage small business; support their growth efforts by finding ways to lower health costs and make it affordable for them to set up shop in our Commonwealth, especially those small business that offer 1 to 50 good paying jobs. I also believe we need to stop the corporate hemorrhaging of our tax dollars by eliminating tax write-offs when clearing we reap no defined benefits in return. I believe we must support our local unions and make sure companies in the private sector are paying fair 'living' wages to their employees.

It is clear by all statistical information that the demise of our Unions has contributed to the loss of income equality and economic security which is why I support strong Unions and their right to Unionize.

8. *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).

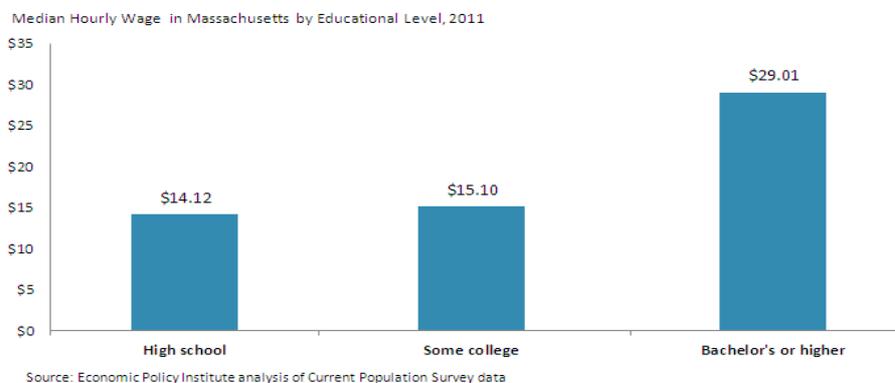
See question 2 and final comments.



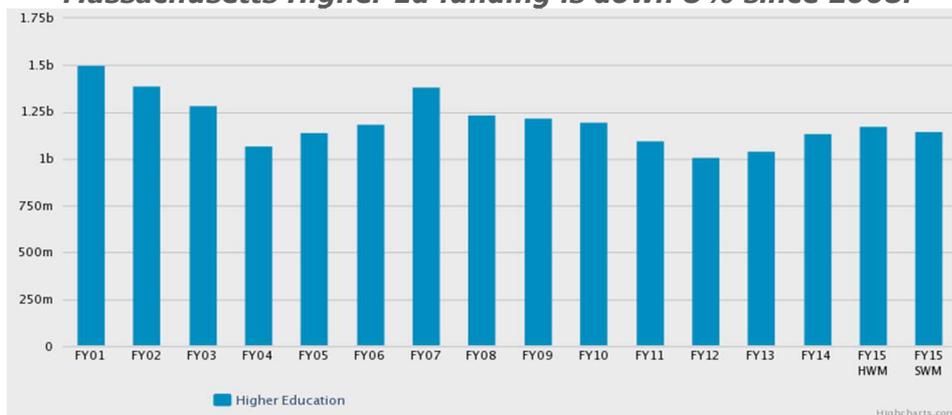
### C. Education and Workforce Development

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.

#### Wages and Education



#### Massachusetts Higher Ed funding is down 8% since 2008.



9. 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,*

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*school vouchers, standardized testing and federal programs like No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top.*

As a former educator I am a strong believer in continuing education and lifelong education. I believe we as a State should support ALL efforts to administer affordable, if not free training for all ages at every juncture of our residents lives. Having attended (my entire educational life) and taught in public schools I vehemently support public schools and all they are asked to achieve, especially in light of their limited and dwindling resources. I am not a fan of standardized testing as the sole means of educational success. I believe charter schools should have to adhere to the same mandates as our public schools, otherwise where is the 'fairness' of the state sharing our public tax dollars with them?

I believe educating all people equally and well will in turn grow the economy and allow for and encourage healthy and self sustaining people and families.

Let's stop 'racing to the top' – this name signifies quickness; or suggests that how fast a community, a State, a Country achieves results is real success - actually it does not. Results come in acknowledging whether ALL students are achieving in ways that allows them to lead self sustaining, productive and fulfilling lives. Education is not a race – its about learning – and everyone learns differently. Standardized results do not tell the whole story.

10. *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).

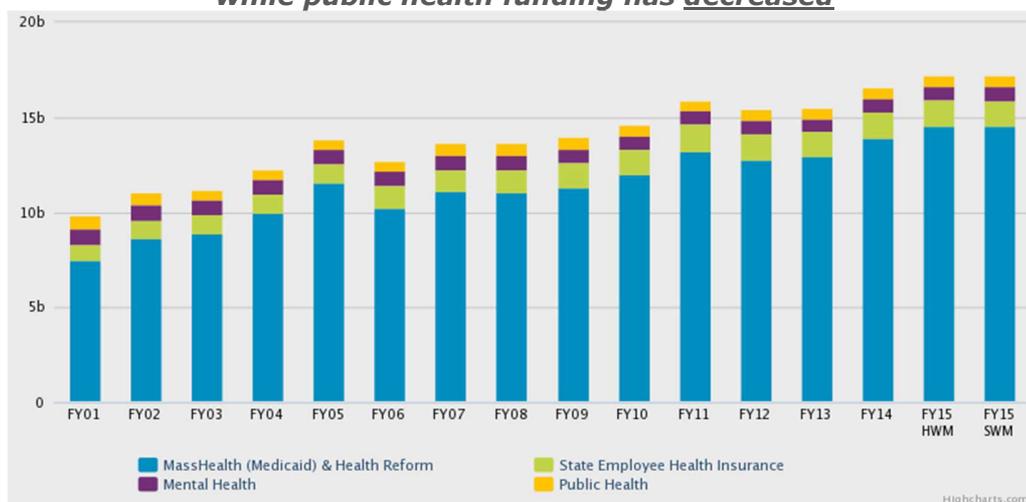
See question 2 and final comments.



**D. 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. In 2013, 43% of state expenditures were for health care, a number that is rising while other state expenditures are falling. Ultimately, a single payer system will remove complexity - and reduce costs, while providing better and more consistent care to all Massachusetts residents.

**Massachusetts Health Care spending has increased 74% since 2001— while public health funding has decreased**



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

Even though I realize that there are faults within several of our country's single payer systems, ie, Veteran Services, I believe that a single payer system if implemented correctly would offer affordable and better care to all residents of Massachusetts. I am in favor.

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

See question 2 and final comments.

13. Would you support legislation to enact a single payer health care system in Massachusetts?

Yes

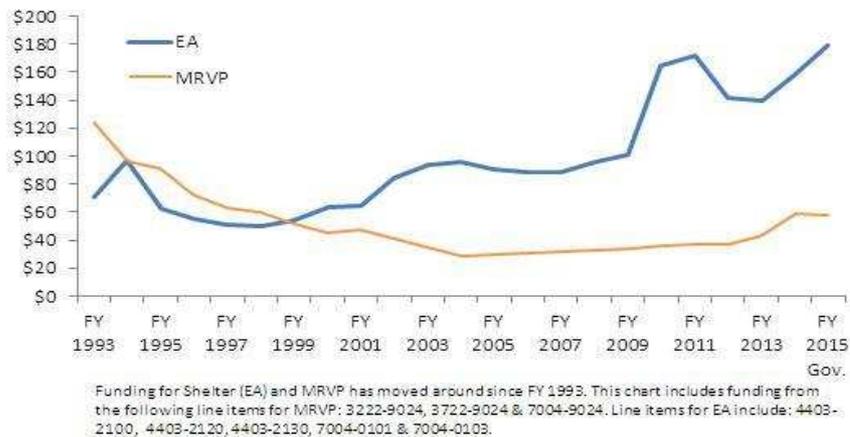


**E. Housing**

Over 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.

**Funding for housing vouchers has fallen-- costs for shelter has increased**

(inflation adjusted to 2014 dollars)



14. 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?*

The 2008 recession has left many families homeless, college graduates living with parents and our elder population moving in with their children. Foreclosures have caused numerous problems to those that quite honestly, did nothing wrong. Pensions have been decimated, student loans have created their own set of 'housing problems' for our young generation.

Developing and maintaining affordable housing can be difficult but not insurmountable. Some opportunities:

- Allocate funds to subsidize affordable housing
- Provide low-cost/no-cost loans for new initiatives
- Determine local aid amounts on a community's new and rehabed affordable housing

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- Provide tax credits and tax incentives for new affordable housing
- Provide state income tax credits for individual contributions to affordable housing
- Pass legislation to stimulate or implement affordable housing initiatives
- Support "circuit-breaker" legislation which caps the percentage of income a resident must pay for their property taxes

I'm a believer that affordable and reliable transportation goes hand in hand with affordable housing –it allows persons to find better employment and allows them better access to schools, health care, other life opportunities. I back high speed rail service to and from Western Mass and restoring our South Coast rail service and would support and encourage finding the resources and funding needed to 'activate' these services

I had an opportunity to read an Ounce of Cure

([http://www.mhsa.net/matriarch/documents/HomeStart%20-](http://www.mhsa.net/matriarch/documents/HomeStart%20-%20An%20Ounce%20of%20Cure.pdf)

[%20An%20Ounce%20of%20Cure.pdf](http://www.mhsa.net/matriarch/documents/HomeStart%20-%20An%20Ounce%20of%20Cure.pdf)) My personal opinions fall directly in line with this type of reasoning and resource. I would be fully on board to support this initiative and/or other programs that replicate this initiative.

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

Please see question 2 and final comments.

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### **Additional Comments**

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.

Why I am the best candidate:

As the 2nd oldest of 8 children - time as a single parent to my two sons - I learned early on about compassion towards persons in need, how to make important decisions under pressure, and foster a team environment in order to attain solutions.

All of my education was via public schools – I have a strong affinity for public school educators and students.

My advocacy and leadership abilities came early – 4 years HS class vice-president, advocating for Title IX dollars for a women’s sport feeder system and being instrumental in crafting policies and finances that supported the growth of women sports in North Attleboro.

As a News Director and Executive Director of the Downtown Merchants/Attleboro Chamber of Commerce I was able to view, advocate for and address the struggles of small business owners and families in the greater Attleboro Area.

I strongly advocated for Tobacco Policy and Regulations as a Field Director and Southeastern MASS Field Manager for the Mass Department of Public Health. With support from the Attleboro Board of Health I passed the first tobacco control regulations in Massachusetts.

On my ‘first run’ for Attleboro City Council – I came in 4 of 9 – winning one of 5 open seats, unseating two incumbents. I was appointed to Personnel & Human Services, Licenses and Finance. I resurrected a Personnel Board that had been absent from Attleboro for 10 years; advocacy and tenacity were my tools - helping employees through discord or job dissatisfaction was my goal. I advocated for and improved the flow of pertinent information from the Mayor to Council – transparency. I earned a reputation as the voice of the people.

I am the proud mother of 2 sons, mother-in-law to 2 wonderful daughter-in-laws, and a doting Grandmother to 4 .

I live and breathe the issues surrounding our Massachusetts residents. It is not a test I have to study for.