

PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS

2014 LEGISLATIVE RACES QUESTIONNAIRE



CANDIDATE:

Steve Ultrino

Democrat for State Representative

33rd Middlesex

ultrinoforrep.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?

I am running for office because I was raised to serve people and to believe that public service is an important way to help others. I have a solid record of public service guided by the values instilled in me by my family, Malden's community leaders and my friends and neighbors. I will make thoughtful decisions on Beacon Hill based on what my community and people throughout the state need to help and protect them and their families.

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

I have served on the Malden School Committee and currently serve on the Malden City Council. I am a board member of the Monsignor Neagle Housing complex and served as a board member and board chairman at the Malden YMCA. I am an educator by profession, and currently work at the Middlesex House of Correction leading inmate education programming. I know that government can change lives, and I want to be sure that the voices of all people are heard on Beacon Hill. I believe I can help.

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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.

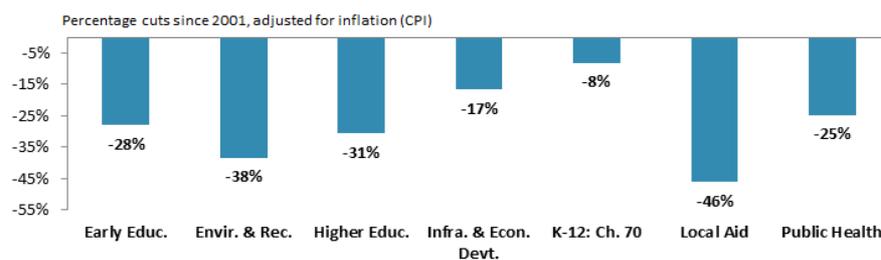
In each section, the second question asks about your advocacy experience; you may leave it blank if appropriate—we do not expect candidates to have a record on every issue. Current or former elected officials: please outline your leadership roles, as opposed to simply your voting record.

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).

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)

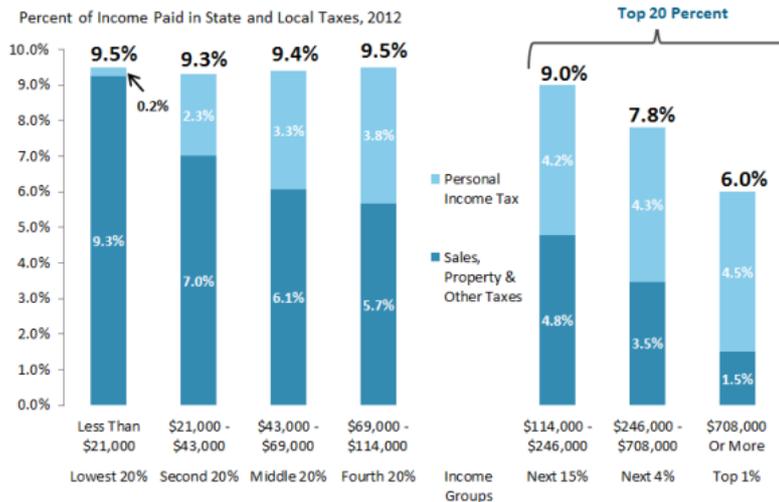


*Ch. 70 figures are adjusted using the inflation factor specified in Chapter 70



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 would support raising the income tax to 5.95%, provided it included an increase in the personal exemption for low- and middle-income families. I also support an expansion of the Bottle Bill to include a wider variety of beverages for the environmental benefits as well as additional revenue. I would also seek to ensure that lottery revenues are appropriately distributed at the local level, so that less affluent communities receive a proportionate allocation. Further, I would support raising the tax rate for investment income primarily earned by wealthier taxpayers, as long as it included exemptions for low and middle income families and individuals. I would seek to channel some portion of any income tax increase to public education.

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).
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

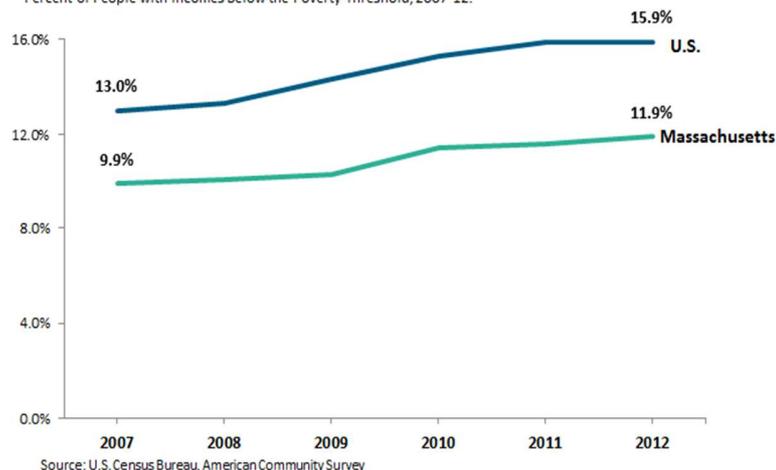


B. Job Growth and the Economy

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.

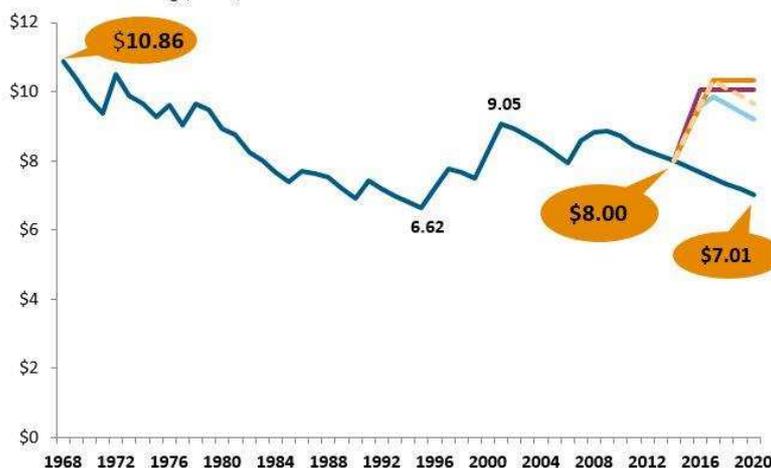
Poverty Rates Still Elevated Since Onset of Recession

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?

We made a good start on improving the economy and economic security by increasing the minimum wage. We can take that a step further by indexing it to inflation so that the lowest earners aren't left behind as essential costs increase. I support earned sick time for all full-time workers and would like to see some proration of the same policy for those who work part-time, since so many workers are forced to cobble together a meager living by working several jobs. We also need to extend a supportive hand to local small business, which is a critical component of a healthy economy. We have to be careful to ensure that we don't impose requirements that make compliance impossible and thereby choke off the small business economy and the jobs that go with it.

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).

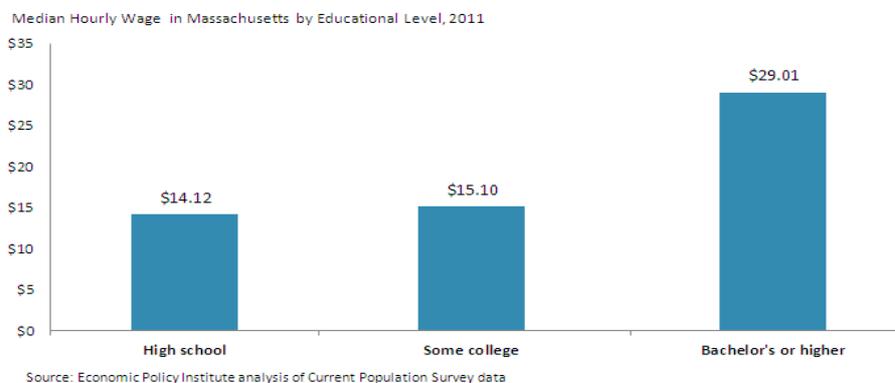
On the local level, I work with the Mayor's office and his team to ensure that Malden is a city that is friendly to business, and that their workers are safe and treated fairly. I work with my colleagues in city government and the community to attract and retain businesses that reflect the diverse culture of our city and contribute to the community in meaningful ways.



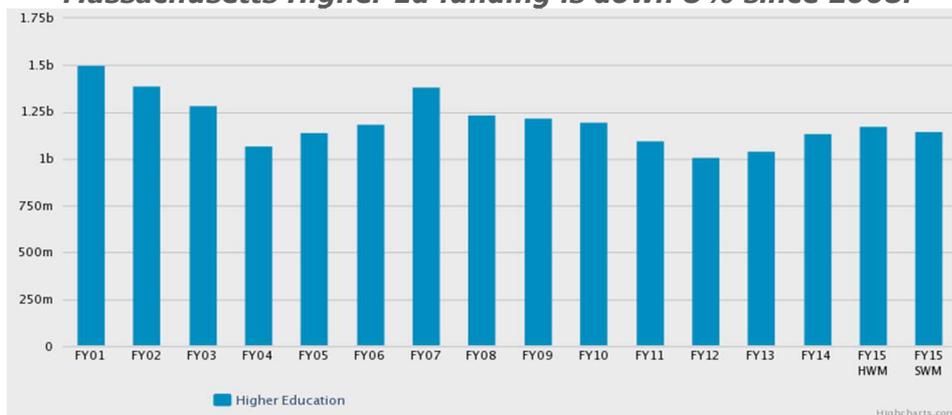
C. Education and Workforce Development

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.

Expanding Charter Schools in Districts that are underperforming, (especially in the lowest scoring ten percent of the districts) does more harm to the local district because it will drive more funds out of the public school budget and impede local control of public education. Charter Schools often leave the most at-risk students out, which was not the intent when the system was established. The Commonwealth should mandate that Charter Schools focus on students with special needs, English Language Learners, and attract a more diverse student body in order to more directly reflect the populations from which they draw their students.

The expansion of Horace Mann Schools makes sense as long as the control is kept local. Collective Bargaining should remain in effect, especially if the creation of such a school is a joint effort by the School Committee and the Union.

Standardized testing is an important tool for measuring the overall performance of a school or district. However, I would argue that it is not effective for measuring the progress or performance of individual students. We must devise ways to evaluate the progress of individuals so that they get practical feedback on their performances and helpful analysis about how that should inform their future decisions.

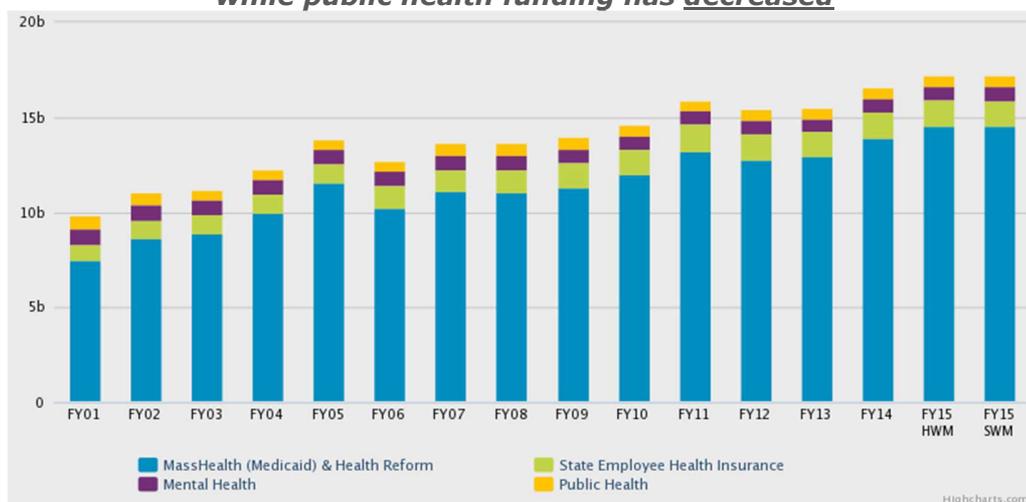
10. *Optional/As Applicable:* Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on education and workforce development (legislation, community work, published writings, etc).



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.

I would advocate for a single-payer system that would take the money out of the hands of insurers and into the hands of providers. I firmly believe this would reduce costs, place health decisions back into the hands of patients and their providers (and away from bureaucrats), and appropriately place the emphasis on wellness and prevention, rather than treatment. Doing so would reduce treatment costs in the long run, by helping to change the culture of our health system from one that reacts to disease to one that values wellness and fitness.

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

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

Yes

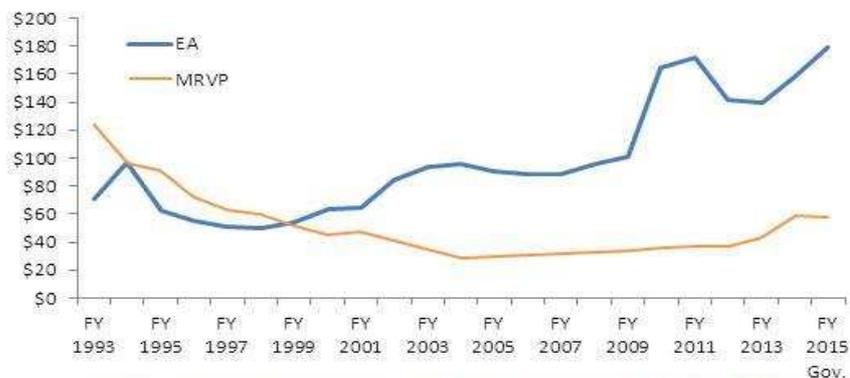


E. Housing

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)



Funding for Shelter (EA) and MRVP has moved around since FY 1993. This chart includes funding from the following line items for MRVP: 3222-9024, 3722-9024 & 7004-9024. Line items for EA include: 4403-2100, 4403-2120, 4403-2130, 7004-0101 & 7004-0103.

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?*

I would support increased funding for housing assistance for our neediest neighbors. I would also work to preserve public housing that was structurally sound and oppose efforts to weaken the state’s affordable housing statute.

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

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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.