



2013-14 Selected Legislative Priorities

Each legislative session, we choose several bills that represent public interest reforms, and we work with the chief sponsors and cosponsors to promote them. Below please find our legislative priorities for the 2013-14 session.

Moving Toward Zero Waste

MASSPIRG: Janet Domenitz, Executive Director

The bottle bill is the most successful recycling tool we have—over 80 percent of containers with a deposit are redeemed or recycled, while the same is true for only 25 percent of containers without a deposit. With Massachusetts burning or burying 6 million tons of trash every year, we need to expand the bottle bill to cover more containers.

✓**Bill Title: *An Act Updating the Bottle Bill, SD 522, HD1105***

Bill Sponsors : Senator Cynthia Creem and Representative Jonathan Hecht

The Updated Bottle Bill adds bottled water, sports drinks and other beverages to the current bottle deposit system so these containers would get recycled instead of littered or trashed.

Improving Statewide Transportation

MASSPIRG: Kirstie Pecci, Staff Attorney

Massachusetts is the 6th worst in the nation for traffic congestion, demand for transportation alternatives is skyrocketing, and we are driving on crumbling and unsafe roads and bridges. It's time to invest in trains and buses, fix our roads and bridges, and make our cities more walkable and bikeable.

✓**Bill Title: *Transportation Investment Act, SD 1670, HD 3119***

Bill Sponsors: Senator Katherine Clark and Representatives Tricia Farley-Bouvier and Carl Sciortino

The legislation will guide transportation investment to build a financially stable, safer, equitable and more modern transportation system in every corner of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

✓**Bill Title: *MBTA Debt Relief, HD 2609***

Bill Sponsor: Representative Carl Sciortino

In 1990, when work started on the Big Dig, the Commonwealth entered into an agreement to build Boston area public transportation projects to mitigate pollution caused by this highway expansion project—the biggest in history. Adequate funding has never been appropriated, and as the MBTA took on new construction, it assumed debt it never should have had to assume. This legislation requires the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to pay the debt service obligations of the MBTA.

✓**Bill Title: *Vehicle Miles Traveled Pilot Study, HD2619***

Bill Sponsor: Representatives Carl Sciortino and Tricia Farley-Bouvier

The legislation establishes a voluntary vehicle miles traveled (VMT) pilot program to identify alternatives and supplements to the gas tax.

Government Spending: Transparency and Accountability

MASSPIRG: Deirdre Cummings, Legislative Director

Last year Massachusetts spent \$770 million on special business tax breaks for economic development, and most of these tax subsidies lacked basic accountability measures to determine how successful the spending is. Increasing transparency and accountability is critical for allowing citizens and civil servants to make informed choices.

✓Bill Title: *An Act to Promote Efficiency and Transparency in Economic Development, SD 1119, HD 2636*

Bill Sponsors: Senator James Eldridge and Representative Carl Sciortino

The bill promotes efficiency, accountability and transparency by improving the tracking, reporting and evaluation of the tax breaks. Businesses are held accountable by requiring them to return the money if they fail to deliver on their job creation or retention commitments (also known as a “clawback”).

✓Bill Title: *An Act Relative to Transparency of Economic Development Spending, SD 1120, HD 2634*

Bill Sponsors: Senator James Eldridge and Representative Carl Sciortino

The bill requires the administration to present the total picture of all economic development spending – by both the state and by cities and towns – in one unified budget.

Lowering the Cost of Health Care

MASSPIRG: Deirdre Cummings, Legislative Director

Massachusetts has the highest health care costs in the country and the rising costs of prescription drugs are a significant part of overall health care spending. One way to keep costs down is to stop the \$6 billion per year that pharmaceutical companies spend on direct marketing to physicians, which raises costs and potentially influences doctors to prescribe unnecessarily expensive medications.

✓Bill Title: *An Act to Reduce Healthcare Costs by Promoting Non-biased Prescriber Education, SD 1160, HD 701*

Bill Sponsors: Senator Mark Montigny and Representative Jason Lewis

Health care providers today rely on pharmaceutical sales representatives as their primary source of information about the medications they prescribe. This bill would act as a counterweight to the industry’s commercial detailing and gift-giving marketing efforts. The bill establishes a non-biased prescriber program funded through fees assessed by the Department of Public Health on each pharmaceutical and medical device company that registers with the Department annually.

✓Bill Title: *An Act to Define Modest Meals and Refreshments in Prescriber Educational Settings, HD 683*

An Act to Prevent Undue Influence on Prescriber Behavior, SD 1381

Bill Sponsors: Representative Jason Lewis, Senator Mark Montigny

These bills prohibit drug and medical device companies from paying for lavish meals or alcohol for doctors and prescribers at educational and marketing forums by only allowing for “modest meals” outside the provider setting.

Protecting Consumers From Toxic Chemicals

MASSPIRG: Janet Domenitz, Executive Director

Most chemicals are treated by our government regulators as if they were safe until proven otherwise. Approximately 80,000 chemicals are currently licensed for use, and yet the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that fewer than 10 percent of the industrial chemicals produced in the largest quantities (over one million pounds per year) have undergone even a limited set of tests to assess their health effects on humans. As part of the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow, a statewide coalition working for reforms, MASSPIRG understands that the world cannot be “risk-free.” But we also know that there are safer alternatives to many toxic chemicals currently found in consumer products.

✓***Bill Title: Healthy Families and Businesses Act, SD 998, HD 2891***

Bill Sponsors: Senator Ken Donnelly and Representative Jay Kaufman

This bill will improve our health by reducing our exposure to toxic chemicals through the creation of a pragmatic and flexible program to replace toxic chemicals with safer alternatives, wherever feasible.

Building a Better Democracy

MASSPIRG: Janet Domenitz, Executive Director

Our democracy relies on the public’s engagement in the democratic process and on their voices being heard above those of the special interests.

✓***Bill Title: An Act to Modernize Our Voter Registration System, SD 1096***

Bill Sponsor: Senator James Eldridge

This bill includes several provisions to modernize elections including audits of election equipment, pre-registration of 16 year olds, Election Day voter registration, early voting, and more.

✓***Bill Title: An Act to Establish Election Day Registration SD 1139, HD 3060***

Bill Sponsors: Representative Gloria Fox and Senator Cynthia Creem

This bill increases voter participation by allowing citizens to register to vote on Election Day. This reform will increase voter participation, ensure that votes are counted, and extend this most fundamental of rights—the right to vote—to new constituencies.

✓***Bill Title: An Act Relative to Disclosure of Political Spending SD 1082***

Bill Sponsor: Senator James Eldridge

Special interest money has long had a corrosive effect on our politics. But in 2010, the Supreme Court's Citizens United decision inaugurated a new era of unprecedented spending in elections by a handful of millionaires and corporations. This bill requires disclosure of corporate-sponsored political advertising, prevents 'dummy organizations' that give cover to corporate contributors, and increases reporting of political spending by corporations.

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