

THE PEISCH POST

Volume 11, Issue 1

Spring 2004

A Message From Your Representative

April, 2004



Dear Friends,

While the media has focused on the constitutional debate over same sex marriage many other important issues have come before the Legislature in the past several months. The following pages contain brief summaries of legislative actions that I believe are important to the voters in this district.

As this newsletter goes to press, the House of Representatives is beginning to debate the Fiscal Year 2005 budget. I will do my best to see that the budget supports those programs that service our most vulnerable citizens (children, the elderly and the disabled) in the most fiscally responsible manner.

I remain committed to being an effective independent voice for Wellesley, Weston and Natick. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns regarding a matter pending before the legislature.

Sincerely,

Alice Hanlon Peisch

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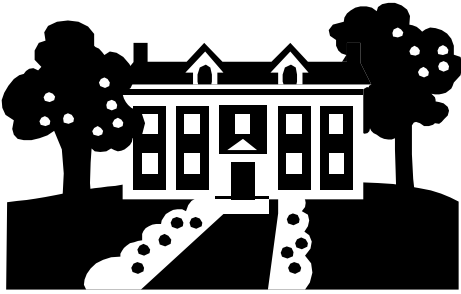
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Senior Property Tax Relief

Property tax relief could be coming to seniors as early as this summer, if a bill currently before the Legislature is implemented.

Lawmakers are currently considering a broad based tax relief bill that will help more seniors qualify for property tax relief.

The House and Senate have approved legislation exempting senior citizens from Proposition 2 ½ overrides.

The bill includes sections pertaining to enhanced property tax deferral, a local option 10 percent property tax exemption and increasing the assessed property value that determines

eligibility for the senior "circuit breaker" income tax credit from \$432,000 to \$600,000.

The differences between the House and Senate versions are currently being worked out.

"Seniors living on fixed income, simply cannot afford additional taxes," stated Rep. Peisch. "These measures will provide relief to many seniors who wish to remain in their homes."

Additionally, the Taxation Committee has proposed a broader package of tax law changes with a local option framework that helps more seniors to qualify for tax relief. Some of the bill's highlights include:

- Making owners of homes valued up to \$750,000 eligible for the so-called circuit breaker tax credit. The bill also indexes the eligibility stan-

dards to housing rather than consumer price indexes. The current eligibility threshold is \$432,000.

- Allowing municipalities to exempt homeowners who qualify for the so-called circuit breaker tax credit from increases in property taxes resulting from Proposition 2 ½ overrides. To qualify for the circuit breaker credit, a person must be 65 or older, and would need to own a home with an assessed value of \$700,000 or less.

- Allowing cities and towns to charge less than the mandated 8 percent interest rate to attract more eligible seniors to an existing property tax deferral program.

This bill is currently being considered by the legislature.

HOUSE PROPOSES \$14 MILLION INCREASE IN SENIOR DRUG PROGRAM

Rep. Alice Peisch is pleased to announce that the House of Representatives has recommended a \$14 million increase from FY04 for the Commonwealth's Senior Prescription Advantage Program in the FY05 Budget.

"The House is committed to providing Massachusetts seniors with affordable prescription drugs," said Rep. Peisch. "Expanding funding in the first-in-the-nation prescription drug program, despite an economic recession, is evidence of this unwavering commitment."

This budget recommendation follows the adoption of a House Resolution stating the House's intention to fund \$110 million for the Senior Pharmacy Program. The program was only level funded in the Governor's budget recommendations, leaving little opportunity for additional enrollment opportunities.

Peisch further commented, "I was proud to support a Resolution that clearly states that no senior should be forced to choose between prescription drugs or food and shelter. Prescription Advantage addresses the immediate needs of a very vulnerable population."

Representative Peisch has also co-sponsored an amendment that would mandate an open enrollment for the Prescription Advantage Program so that more seniors can take advantage of this program.

Massachusetts launched the prescription drug insurance plan in April 2001. It currently gives more than 90,000 state residents who are 65 years or age or older, as well as persons with disabilities, access to comprehensive prescription drug coverage. The program serves as a national model for other states to successfully implement the delivery of inexpensive prescription drugs.

PEISCH LEADS PENSION REFORM FIGHT

Files Amendment to Protect Taxpayers by Closing Loophole for Elected Officials

Alice Peisch is leading the fight to eliminate a loophole in the state pension law that allows elected officials to receive a full year's pension credit for only one day's work.

Currently elected officials receive a full year's pension credit for any amount of time served during a calendar year. Representative Peisch filed an amendment to the House Ways and Means FY05 Budget Recommendations to close this loophole.

"This is common sense reform," said Peisch. "Elected officials should not be getting a year's credit for working only one day. The reform I have proposed would end this 'perk' for elected officials."

Representative Peisch's reform amendment has attracted bipartisan support, having been co-sponsored by legislators on both sides of the aisle.

"I am pleased that my colleagues in both parties are joining me in protecting Massachusetts taxpayers from paying for extra benefits for legislators," commented Peisch. "I look forward to working with them during the budget debate on behalf of this important reform amendment."

PEISCH BACKS MAJOR REFORM TO SCHOOL BUILDING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Representative Peisch has announced she supports major reforms to the School Building Assistance (SBA) program. The SBA program requires immediate attention due to existing commitments of state assistance which total \$5.5 billion over the next 20 years. The Commonwealth's share of construction costs is \$4.1 billion and its share of interest may add another \$4.8 billion. The waiting list now stands at 420 projects and extends for 10 to 15 years. One-third to one-half of effected communities have already issued short-term notes to begin construction.

The reform plan would address these problems by dedicating a penny of the sales tax, phased in over seven years, and issuing \$1 billion in Commonwealth general obligation bonds (\$500 million in FY'05 and \$500 million in FY'06). Additionally, the proposal would use \$150 million from FY'04 surplus or reserves. The proposal establishes an independent School Building Assistance Authority, to oversee the program in the future.

"Under this authority, all projects currently receiving reimbursement will receive funds on time and at expected rates," said Peisch. "The current moratorium on new school construction will be lifted in fiscal year 2007; thereby accommodating communities that will need to build projects in the future."

If implemented, the reform plan would allow the Commonwealth to build over \$1 billion of new schools in addition to clearing the waiting list for current projects.

Peisch Named To Early Education Budget Task Force

Representative Peisch is pleased to announce that she has been appointed to the House Budget Task Force on Early Education.

As a Task Force member, Rep. Peisch heard testimony on early education programs. In April, Rep. Peisch and other members of the Task Force made funding and legislative recommendations to the House Committee on Ways and Means before the release of the House budget recommendations.

"Early education programs including full day kindergarten and early literacy grants have been one of my priorities, and I am pleased to have been in a position to recommend to the Ways and Means Committee on these important programs," said Peisch.

Sex-Offender Law Strengthened

In a commitment to increase public safety, the state has approved new measures to inform the public about any dangerous sexual predators. Under the new law photos of the state's most dangerous sex offenders will be posted on the Internet and requires offenders to register with the Sex Offender Registry Board 48 hours prior to being released from prison. If the offender does not comply, he/she will not be released from prison.

Approximately 3,000 incarcerated sex offenders will be affected by the provision requiring sex offenders to register 48 hours prior to their release from jail. The prior law allowed sex offenders two days after release to register, providing offenders with an opportunity to shirk their obligations.

Baby Safe Haven Bill Passes House

Provides alternative to abandonment

A bill that would allow parents to drop their unwanted newborns at safe havens has won approval in the Massachusetts House. The parents could bring their babies to emergency rooms, fire stations and police stations for abandonment without facing criminal prosecution until the newborn is more than seven days old.

The bill is aimed at preventing infants from being abandoned in parking lots and dumpsters, and ultimately saving a baby's life.

"Safe Havens creates a safety net to protect children from ever again being left to die because a parent is too frightened or confused to think of anything other than abandoning her baby," explained Peisch.

Massachusetts is currently only one of eight states that doesn't provide an option for parents that want to leave their unwanted baby in a safe place. Several Bay State communities, including Natick, have filed legislation to legalize safe havens within the town. The bill must still go to the Senate and be signed by the Governor.

Legislature Passes Initiatives to Stimulate Economy

Recognizing the need for long-term economic growth and job creation, an economic stimulus plan was approved by the General Court late last year.

The package adopts policy initiatives that target five major areas of the Massachusetts economic: job growth and workforce training; emerging technology and health care; consumers and tourism and housing; and development.

"These proposals are aimed at multiple sectors of the economy. The bill leverages Massachusetts strengths: research and technology expertise, an educated workforce and streamlines existing regulations to encourage job growth and new development," said Peisch.

Highlights of the economic stimulus package include: making the Investment Tax Credit permanent; providing a tax rebate for manufacturing jobs created in biotechnology; putting in place a one-day sales tax holiday on August 14th for back to school shopping; and legalizing Sunday liquor sales.

State DNA Database Expanded

New law will ease crime solving

Fighting crime in Massachusetts got easier this November when legislation to expand the state's DNA database was signed into law. The new law will establish a database for DNA much like the fingerprinting system that currently tracks all criminals.

All convicted felons in the Commonwealth are now required to provide a DNA sample to the state database. Under the new law, the state's DNA database is expected to grow from 20,000 samples to 100,000 in only a few years. Previously only convicted violent offenders and sex offenders were required to provide samples.

The increased DNA database will make it easier to solve crimes, identify suspects, and exonerate the innocent. The passage of this law makes Massachusetts the 28th state to broaden their databases to include all felons.

"DNA evidence has become crucial in convicting the guilty and exonerating the innocent, and I am proud to have supported this important public safety measure," said Rep. Peisch.