

State Representative Alice Hanlon Peisch  
14th Norfolk District  
Wellesley - Weston - Natick

# FOURTEENTH NORFOLK NEWS

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Contact Information

State Rep. Alice  
Peisch

Issue: # Email Addition

Summer 2007

Dear Friends:

It remains an honor and privilege to serve as the State Representative for Wellesley, Weston, and South Natick, and I thank the voters of the 14th Norfolk District for giving me the opportunity to serve a 3rd term. Through this newsletter I hope to keep you informed of my work at the State House. This session, I will continue to serve on the Judiciary Committee and have also been appointed to the Education Committee. As the legislature ends the first quarter of the current two year session, there is much to report.



This winter I sent a mailing to all households which included a return postcard seeking input on a number of issues. I thank everyone who responded for their thoughtful comments and suggestions. A section of the newsletter is devoted to the survey responses.

In this newsletter you will find:

- Information on Committee Assignments
- Summaries of new bills I have filed this session
- Results from a survey sent to every household in the 14th Norfolk District earlier this year
- Issues of special interest to the District
- A brief explanation of the legislative process

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I look forward to continue working on your behalf.

Sincerely,

*Alice Peisch*

#### District Information

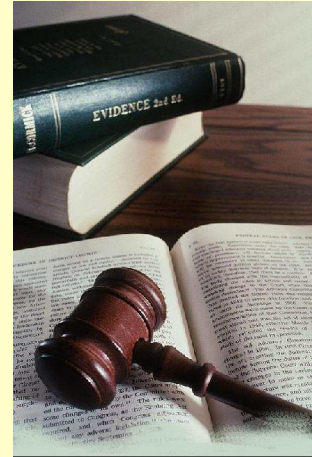
Town of Wellesley

Town of Weston

Town of Natick

#### NEW LEGISLATIVE ASSIGNMENTS

At the start of every two-year legislative session, each representative receives committee assignments. Members of the committees have the opportunity to work in depth on legislative matters that fall under the committee's jurisdiction. The representative may still advocate for bills that fall under the jurisdiction of a committee on which he does not sit and offer amendments to any bills that reach the House floor. However, committee assignments are very important because they allow members to work in certain subject areas on a day-to-day basis.



After serving on the Election Laws, Housing and Higher Education Committees, Rep. Peisch was appointed to serve on the Education Committee. This committee deals with all legislation relating to Pre-K through 12th grade. One of her top priorities since taking office has been to ensure excellent public education for all students and serving on this committee will give her a greater opportunity to influence the state's education policy.

Rep. Peisch retained her seat on the Judiciary Committee. Typically, this committee has one of the largest workloads consisting of hundreds of bills that cover a wide variety of issues. As an attorney, Rep. Peisch believes she can continue to contribute a great deal to the Judiciary Committee's work.

Her last committee assignment is the Steering, Policy, and

Planning Committee. This committee is responsible for informing other legislators of important matters before the Legislature and advocating for their timely consideration.

## NEW LEGISLATION

Listed below are a sampling of the bills on which Rep. Peisch is the primary sponsor.

### **Banning Tobacco Sales at MBTA Facilities**

H. 3594 would require the MBTA to restrict the sale of tobacco products when it leases property to vendors. The bill is consistent with the current policy of banning the advertisement of tobacco products at MBTA facilities.

### **Senior Citizen Property Tax Relief**

Many times, the extraordinarily high assessed value of property bears no relation to the economic situation of senior citizens who may have purchased the home decades ago. Currently, high property values bar many seniors from accessing the Senior Citizen Circuit Breaker Tax Credit. H.3062 and H.3061 would make the tax credit more accessible for seniors who live in high property value areas. The first bill would increase the cap on the assessed value of property for purposes of the tax credit from 600,000 to 750,000, and the second bill would increase the cap to the town's median residential property value.

### **MCAS Equity for Students with Learning Disabilities**

The current MCAS test, the state high school graduation requirement, prevents many students with learning disabilities from receiving a high school diploma, which in turn limits their ability to access further education or enter the job market. This proposal would allow students with learning disabilities to receive a "standard" high school diploma if they meet certain minimum criteria. (H.513)

### **Press Shield**

Recent high profile cases involving reporters being compelled to reveal confidential sources raise serious questions and concerns regarding freedom of the press. Many potential sources are now reluctant to share critical information with the press for fear of retaliation if identified. H. 1672 would prevent the state from

compelling the news media to reveal confidential sources unless the disclosure of such information would prevent an imminent threat of actual harm. Massachusetts is in the minority of states without such legislation.

### **Domestic Violence Confidentiality**

Many victims of domestic violence do not report the abuse for fear of the information being made public through police logs. Rep. Peisch worked with the MA Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence (Jane Doe) and the MA Chiefs of Police to craft a bill that would encourage those being domestically abused to report the incidents to the authorities by keeping the issue out of police logs. Weston Police Chief Shaw brought this matter to the attention of the Representative, and Wellesley Police Chief Cunningham was instrumental in the creation of this bill. (H.1673)

## STATE AID TO TOWNS

The recently passed FY08 budget contains substantial increases in state aid to the towns of Wellesley, Weston, and Natick. In FY08 all three towns will receive double-digit percentage increases over FY07 state educational aid figures (Ch. 70). The increases in local aid reflect a commitment to provide real relief to local governments.

As we go to press, the Governor recently signed into law two measures that provide additional relief to cities and towns. The laws would allow municipalities to join the state's group insurance plan, and require poorly performing pension funds to be rolled into the state's pension fund. For some municipalities, these options will produce significant savings.

## HOME RULES SIGNED INTO LAW

### **WELLESLEY HOME RULE**

A Wellesley home rule petition filed by Rep. Peisch, Sen. Cynthia Stone Creem (D-Newton), and Sen. Scott P. Brown (R-Wrentham) was signed into law by Governor Patrick. The bill, House Bill 2015, allows the Town of Wellesley to seek voter approval to temporarily assess taxes for the purpose of funding

Wellesley's Group Insurance Liability Fund. Once the liability is fully funded, the assessment will cease. Under the new law the Town of Wellesley will have the authority to ensure the long term financial stability of the Group Insurance Liability Fund without unduly burdening its residents.

The home rule petition, which was approved by Wellesley Town Meeting last year and enacted by both legislative chambers in 2006, fell victim, along with 144 other home rule petitions, to a pocket veto when the outgoing Governor failed to take action on the measures prior to the end of the legislative session. The Wellesley delegation made it a top priority to advance this home rule quickly through the Legislature. It was signed into law by Governor Patrick on March 14, 2007.

### **WESTON HOME RULE**

A home rule petition sponsored by Rep. Peisch and Senator Susan Fargo (D-Lincoln) allows the Weston Town Meeting to award and execute all contracts for designer services and construction of town buildings. The Weston Town Committee approved the home rule petition in 2006. Legislative approval was required because the enabling legislation that created the Town Manager position in Weston did not provide such authority. The bill is now codified in Chapter 390 of the Acts of 2006.

### **SUBURBAN LEGISLATIVE COALITION**

Along with Rep. Jamie Eldridge (Acton), Rep. Peisch formed the Suburban Legislative Coalition to better represent the interests of suburban communities in the Legislature, and to educate all members of the House of the particular needs and viewpoints of suburban communities. The group has met several times this year, and has received strong support from suburban legislators throughout the state.

The Suburban Legislative Coalition has an ambitious agenda which includes increasing Chapter 70 and other forms of local aid, approving cost savings plans for municipalities, protecting

the environment, open space and state parks, increasing affordable housing while reforming Chapter 40B, improving public transportation, roads and bridges, and fast-tracking Home Rule petitions through the Legislature. The Coalition was successful in its advocacy for increased local aid and in working to give towns alternatives to increasing property taxes.

## HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

The following are status reports on the issues mentioned most frequently in the responses received from the survey.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

#### **Route 9/16 Bridge**

A topic of great concern to Wellesley residents is the completion of the reconstruction of the bridge at the intersection of Routes 9 and 16 in Wellesley Hills. In May, Mass Highway issued a Notice to Proceed to SPS New England Inc., and SPS began work on the bridge in June. After a frustrating year of inactivity due to the non-performance of the original contractors, Rep. Peisch met with the Secretary of Transportation, Bernard Cohen, and the Highway Commissioner, Luisa Paiewonsky, to communicate to them the high priority that she puts on the expeditious completion of this project. The new contractor expects to transfer the traffic to the west bound lane in July, and start reconstruction work on the east bound lane. Relocation of utilities in the east bound lane is scheduled to occur this fall before the construction season ends in the winter.

#### **Worcester-Framingham Commuter Rail Line**

The lack of dependable commuter rail service was frequently mentioned as one of the top issues in the survey. One of the major causes of delays is the conflict between commuter rail and freight. At the time of publication of this newsletter, Rep. Peisch and other representatives whose districts are served by the Worcester-Framingham commuter rail line have requested a meeting with MBTA General Manager Grabauskas to collectively work to improve the line's performance.

### **MASSACHUSETTS BUSINESSES**

Keeping Massachusetts businesses in the state and encouraging

new businesses to choose Massachusetts as a home is a priority for many constituents. The survey responses show three major themes for achieving the above goal - (1) tax incentives for business, (2) affordable housing for workers, and (3) investment in education to produce a highly skilled workforce.

### **Tax Incentives for Industry**

The life science industry is of vital importance to the future of the Massachusetts. Currently, the Commonwealth does not adequately provide incentives for the life science industry to grow in the state, and many of our students with degrees in the life science field are leaving. The Legislative Biotech Caucus, of which Rep. Peisch is a member, is working to develop appropriate incentives to grow the life sciences industry in the Commonwealth.

### **Affordable Housing**

Another issue that was frequently mentioned in the survey responses is the lack of affordable housing. The Patrick Administration committed to addressing the issue of affordable housing and the Legislature awaits the administration's proposals.

### **Education**

In the vast majority of the survey responses, there was sentiment that high-quality education at all levels is very important. In particular, concerns ranged from reducing the dropout rate, to improving the higher education system, to reducing class size. As a member of the Education Committee, Rep. Peisch will be able to tackle these critical issues head on.

## **GROUPS VISIT STATE HOUSE**

Any constituents that are planning a trip to the State House and wish to meet with Rep. Peisch should contact her office at 617-722-2080 to schedule an appointment. Below are several groups that visited the State House since the last newsletter was published.

### **WESTON GIRL SCOUTS VISIT THE STATE HOUSE**

On February 2, Representative Peisch hosted a group of eight 7<sup>th</sup> grade Cadette Girl Scouts from Weston for a tour of the State

House and a discussion of state government.

Caption: [from left to right, first row - Meredith Braunstein, Esther Tzau, Lexi Burkus, Erin McLaughlin, and Carolyn Shin; second row - Julia Kee, Claudia Krimsky (Troop Leader), Rep. Peisch, Julia Levinson, and Alicia Tzau]



### **ST. PAUL SCHOOL TOURS THE STATE HOUSE**



In the fall, Rep. Peisch led a group of eighth grade students from St. Paul School in Wellesley on a tour of the House Chamber at the State House. They were accompanied by St. Paul School Principal Karen McLaughlin and other chaperons. Among others, the group consisted of Natick residents Ryan Fair, Joey Collins, Chris Hills, Scott Sibley, Tomas Gutierrez, and Nelson Dillaway.

### **WELLESLEY STATE CHAMPS**

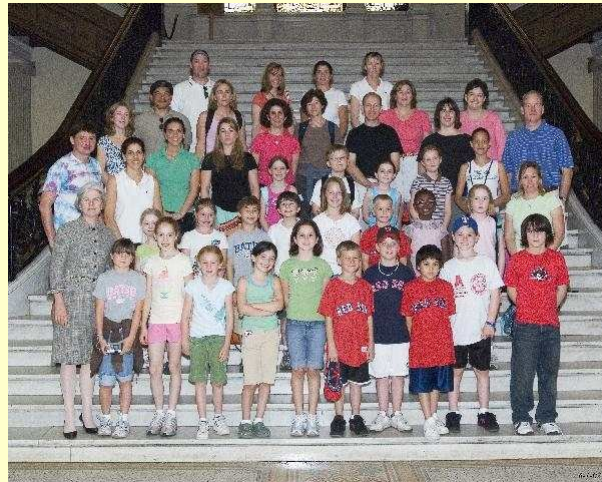
The 2006 Wellesley Girls' Hockey and Boys' Lacrosse Teams were honored at the State House last year for winning their respective Division II State Championships. Upon their arrival

at the State House, the teams were recognized in the House Chamber.

The teams were taken on a tour of the State House and attended a reception, where each student-athlete was presented with an official House of Representatives citation and recognized by the House membership.

### **WELLESLEY SCHOOLS**

Prior to the close of the school year and start of summer vacation, Representative Peisch hosted three groups of students from Wellesley elementary schools at the State House. A group of 3rd grade Bates School students, accompanied by teacher Mara Hotchberg, toured the State House on June 1st. Hunnewell School 3rd graders, with teacher Alexandra Chang, toured the State House on June 8th, while Schofield School 5th graders toured the State House on June 11th and were accompanied by teacher Leonie Nakayama.



**BATES SCHOOL 3RD GRADERS**



## SCHOFIELD SCHOOL 5TH GRADERS

### LEGISLATION OF INTEREST

#### **IDENTITY THEFT BILL**

S.208 would give victims of identity theft greater control over their credit profiles. The legislation was recently enacted by both legislative bodies and is on Governor Patrick's desk waiting action. Rep. Peisch said, "this legislation is extremely important. In this day and age of high tech crime, consumers need to have greater controls over their credit and this bill goes a long way towards this end."

#### **SUDAN DIVESTMENT BILL**

Many constituents have expressed support for divesting state pension funds from Sudan. There is legislation pending in both the House and Senate that would achieve this end, and it is expected to be favorably acted upon.

#### **HEALTH CARE REFORM LAW**

Health Care Reform is Massachusetts' plan to reduce the number of people in our state who have no health insurance. There were 372,000 Massachusetts residents without health insurance according to a 2006 state survey.

On April 12, 2006, Health Care Reform became law. It promotes shared responsibility for a healthier Massachusetts. Health Care Reform has already worked to insure thousands of Massachusetts residents. For more information, please go to the Massachusetts Health Care Connector's website at <http://www.mahealthconnector.org/portal/site/connector/>.

### THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

Ever wonder how a bill becomes a law? The following explains the whole, long process:

Q: When are bills filed?

A: The "legislative session" is two years long in Massachusetts, beginning in January of odd-numbered years. The bill-filing deadline is early January of those years. All bills filed after that deadline are considered late-filed bills, with the exception of home rule petitions, and are less likely to make it through the entire process.

Q: How many bills are filed each session?

A: Upwards of 6000 bills have been filed in the last two sessions, although only about 500 have become law each session.

Q: Who introduces legislation?

A: Legislation can originate in either the House or the Senate, with the exception of revenue bills and the budget, which are constitutionally mandated to originate in the House. All bills are introduced by legislators or by the Governor. Each bill has a title and a number; those that originate in the House begin with "H" while those that originate in the Senate begin with "S."

Q: What happens to bills once they are introduced?

A: Once a bill receives a number, it is assigned to the appropriate committee. The committee is responsible for reviewing each bill it is assigned, holding a public hearing, reviewing testimony, and making formal recommendations to the House and the Senate as to whether the bill should pass. Committees are required to report all bills, but they are not required to conduct hearings on all of them. A recommendation of "ought to pass" moves the bill to the next step. A recommendation of "further study" generally keeps the bill in the committee.

Q: How does a bill proceed through the legislature?

A: Before a bill passes, it receives three public "readings." The First Reading occurs when a bill receives a report from a committee. Once a bill receives a report from a committee, it is generally sent to the Committee on Steering and Policy or the Committee on Ways and Means. The Second Reading of the bill occurs when the bill is released from Steering and Policy and placed on the "Orders of the Day." During the Second Reading, the bill is open to debate and amendment on the House or Senate Floor. If the bill receives approval at that time, it is sent to the Committee on Bills in Third Reading. The Committee on Third Reading checks bills for technical accuracy. The Third Reading of the bill occurs when the bill is released from that Committee.

Once released, the bill is brought before the membership for a debate and vote on "passage of the bill to be engrossed." If the bill is engrossed at that time, it is sent to the other chamber to repeat

the Three Readings Process and engrossment. If the House and the Senate pass identical versions of a bill, a vote on enactment must occur in both chambers. If there are differences between the House and Senate versions, the House and Senate must agree on one bill. A conference committee comprised of members from both chambers is appointed to produce such a bill, which can then be enacted in both chambers.

Q: What happens after the legislature enacts a bill?

A: Following enactment, the bill is sent to the Governor who may sign it into law, veto it, or return it to the legislature with recommended changes. The Governor has 10 days to decide what action to take. If the Governor does nothing, but leaves it on his desk, it will automatically become law on the eleventh day if the General Court is still in session. If the Legislature is not in session, the bill is returned in what is known as a "pocket" veto. If the Governor returns a bill with a veto, the legislature can override his veto with a 2/3 vote in both chambers.

Q: Can the Governor change a bill?

A: The Governor may only return legislation with one recommendation at a time. If he does return the bill with the recommendation of an amendment, it is open for any additional amendments to be offered.

Q: What happens to bills that don't pass?

A: Any bills that are not passed at the end of the legislative session cease to exist, and must be re-filed to be considered during the next session.