

Massachusetts Republican Party

2014 Platform

Respectfully Submitted, February 21, 2014,
by
the Massachusetts Republican Party Platform Committee

For the Majority

Amy Carnevale, Chair
Peter Buckley
Brock N. Cordeiro
Patricia Doherty
William Gillmeister
Joyce Kelly
Deborah Martel
Horace Mello
Mike Potaski
Ron Kaufman, Republican National Committeeman
Chanel Prunier, Republican National Committeewoman

In the Minority

Christina Bain
Kirsten Hughes, MassGOP Chair
Jeanne Kangas
Mindy McKenzie-Hebert
Matthew R. Sisk
The Honorable Donald H. Wong, State Representative

PREAMBLE

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts was founded to protect the community that is Massachusetts, to secure the rights of the individuals who make up this community, to promote life, prosperity, and happiness, and to ensure that the laws by which we govern ourselves are fair and faithfully executed.

Today, the Massachusetts Republican Party's goal is to restore the promise of our Commonwealth: that we can lead the nation in liberty, prosperity, education, and good government. We are blessed with people of industry and intellect, imagination and principle.

ECONOMY

The Obama and Patrick administrations have coincided with statewide unemployment rates between 6.4 percent and 8.7 percent, higher than at any time in the past 20 years. Massachusetts had enjoyed a somewhat better unemployment rate than the national average, but recently that gap has all but disappeared.

As one of America's greatest engines of innovation, Massachusetts can do better. Our technology sector, supported by the world's finest universities and teaching hospitals, develops lifesaving biomedicines, innovative software applications, and incredible new materials that transform manufacturing around the world. We attract the world's best minds, but they frequently go elsewhere to start groundbreaking companies with the ideas they develop here. That must stop. We must make Massachusetts as attractive for business as it is for research.

The kind of thinking that leads to innovation and tremendous economic growth is inherently incompatible with heavy-handed regulation. Our most innovative entrepreneurs are developing entirely new economies, as they did during the biotechnology and internet booms. If Massachusetts forces them to ask for permission, they will go elsewhere instead.

Gone are the days when a "mom and pop" could simply open a store and begin earning a living, creating jobs, and building a community. That world has been replaced with one in which almost any prospective entrepreneur must navigate a labyrinth of regulation and a forest of licenses, permits, health codes, labor laws, and taxes. Massachusetts' current solution to this mess is to offer a dozen different types of counseling to entrepreneurs. Our solution is to make the process far simpler by cutting regulations and making it easier to start a business in the first place, allowing workers to provide for themselves and their families.

The drive that keeps an entrepreneur working 20-hour days for years in pursuit of a dream is at the heart of Massachusetts' economic engine. Many entrepreneurs are small business owners trying to build a better life for their families, while others are passionate about their work.

We support a moratorium on new, non-emergency state regulations, fee increases, and business taxes.

We support streamlining permitting and zoning processes.

We support diversifying our economic base and attracting businesses from around the country and around the world.

We support the development of a world-class workforce through world-class education.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Government exists to serve, not prey upon, the people it represents. Massachusetts must set and live up to the highest of standards for its elected officials and all public employees. We need strong ethics rules with serious penalties and vigorous enforcement.

We support authorizing the Ethics Committee to investigate allegations of ethics violations upon the receipt of a letter signed by 20 House members. The current rule requires the Ethics Committee to investigate and evaluate allegations of ethics violations, at the direction of the Speaker, made through sworn written statements, or by a majority vote of the members appointed to the Ethics Committee.

We support requiring the Ethics Committee to file a report with the Clerk of the House and Senate disclosing the number of complaints received, the number of complaints determined to have merit, the number of complaints determined to be without merit, and the dates of all committee meetings held during the session. Identifying and personal information would not be disclosed to maintain confidentiality.

We support replacing the current, lopsided partisan balance on the Ethics Committee with an even balance, with 4 members appointed by the Speaker and 4 members appointed by the Minority Leader instead of the current 7-4 split.

We need transparency throughout government, so that citizens can see what funds are collected, where the money goes, how contracts are awarded, and whether programs are being managed efficiently and effectively. We support frequent, comprehensive audits and the full disclosure of financial information online. We support requirements that all legislation be posted online for a full day before it is to be voted on. We support a requirement that the results of all committee polls be posted online. We support truth in testimony requirements to ensure that witnesses before legislative hearings disclose any state funding or financial interest in the matter at hand.

We support the public ballot initiative as a way for the people of Massachusetts to work their will independently of a legislature and an executive branch that fail to listen. We especially support initiatives repealing taxes, setting term limits, and slowing the expansion of government.

We support yearly performance reviews for all state programs and agencies, as well as zero-based budgeting that requires justification for every dollar.

We support requiring a balanced budget at the beginning of each fiscal year, and suspension of legislative salaries whenever this requirement is not met.

We support a requirement that bills removing money from the state's rainy day account be approved by two-thirds of the members of each body.

COMPASSIONATE GOVERNANCE

As Republicans, we believe in a limited government; and we believe that our government has a duty to help and serve the most vulnerable among us. In protecting these most vulnerable – be they children, the disabled, homeless or others – we have an obligation to provide the assistance that is most beneficial to them, at a responsible cost to the taxpayers.

We are a solution-oriented Party and support tackling problems rather than adding funding to programs without an understanding of whether money will actually solve the problem.

We believe the government should be a helping hand and a safety net, dedicated to preserving the rights and dignity of all for whom it cares. Services should aim to empower people and propel them towards self-sufficiency and independence whenever possible. No one aspires to be reliant on government support; the government shouldn't aspire to keep anyone reliant on it either.

Under recent Republican governors, the number of homeless families who have had to live in hotels and motels because no shelter or housing was available was reduced to zero. Under Democratic leadership, that number has grown to over 2000 families, at a cost to the state of over \$50 million.

We support reallocating resources to help prevent families from becoming homeless to get them out of motels and into more permanent and suitable housing. Our goal is to assist those who are able, to get back on their feet so they can ultimately provide their own housing, rather than remain dependent on the state.

The government also has a responsibility to ensure the funds allocated for helping individuals and families actually goes to serve those populations. We support rooting out fraud and abuse so that taxpayer funds can be spent on those who truly need it.

We believe that when it comes to caring for the most vulnerable among us, our state government must be held to the highest possible standards. We applaud the ethic of the majority of state workers whose job it is to ensure the safety of at-risk children. However, we believe that the repeated failures of management, of leadership, and of transparency are unconscionable when it comes to ensuring the health and safety of our most vulnerable citizens. It is deplorable that Massachusetts ranks near the bottom of all states in national measures designed to assess the performance of states in protecting children. We support fundamental changes at the Department of Children and Family Services in order to better protect children in potentially abusive situations and in foster care.

The Republican Party has a strong history of leading on policy issues to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities. Milestone achievements include the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) both signed into law by

President George Herbert Walker Bush. However, many in the disability community have not realized the full promise intended by these laws, whether it be the family of a child with autism who is thrown into the tangle of special education or a wounded soldier returning to high unemployment and uncoordinated resources. We see disabled individuals as Americans looking to participate in the American Dream. This view contrasts with the historic view of disability of dependence too often resulting in paternalistic programs dictating care.

Nationally, 67% of working age people with disabilities are unemployed according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Yet, we know that 80% of people with disabilities want to work. We believe in programs that focus on “can” rather than “can’t.” We support a system that provides flexibility to fit the needs of the individual rather than command and control from Washington or Beacon Hill. We see people with disabilities as an untapped pool of talent from which society can benefit. This attitude is in sharp contrast to the idea that we must only take care of people with disabilities.

Under current law, the federal government is authorized to fund up to 40 percent of the additional cost of educating students with disabilities. However, federal contributions have never approached that goal, reaching a high of only 18.5 percent. We support increasing the federal contribution to fund IDEA and building upon the law to better account for the transition to independence.

We support efforts to address the problem of disability employment through innovative employment first policies which require that employment be the first consideration in service planning for working age adults with disabilities.

EDUCATION

Massachusetts’ colleges and universities are the envy of the world. Some of our public school systems underperform. Our colleges and universities compete globally, and succeed. For too long, our public schools have been insulated from competition – and many have fallen behind as a result. Our children will have to compete globally; we owe it to them to provide the best education we can.

We believe parents can make the best decisions for their children. We support parents’ right to choose where to educate their children: in a public, private, or charter school, or through home schooling. We believe that the cap on charter schools should be lifted.

We support high standards and rigorous testing for students, teachers, and administrators, with meaningful consequences for excellent or substandard performance.

We support a strong focus on the fundamentals: reading, writing, math, science, history, civics.

We support local control over educational standards and curriculum; and reject federal attempts to impose federal standards and curriculum, such as Common Core.

ENERGY

Our economy depends on energy. Massachusetts has a diverse energy portfolio. We believe that a strong and resilient economy depends on maintaining energy diversity. We recognize that economic growth requires developing new sources of energy and more efficient ways of harnessing that energy.

We support a policy of private, free market-driven development of new energy sources, especially those that are sustainable, renewable, efficient, and clean. We oppose quotas, subsidies, taxes, and similar attempts to tilt the playing field in favor of particular energy sources or individual projects.

We support streamlining energy project permitting, and placing permitting decisions under local control.

We support an “all of the above” energy policy that relies on the free market to maximize energy output while minimizing public expenditure.

We oppose any attempt to enact or increase energy taxes.

ENVIRONMENT

Conservation is inherently conservative. To leave the world a better place for our children, it is vitally important to preserve, protect, and conserve the environment of Massachusetts and the surrounding ocean. We have seen that clear property rights – and the long-term thinking and sense of stewardship that they create – are the best incentives for conservation.

We support local control and enforcement of prudent environmental laws, instead of passing new laws or the creation of new regulations.

We support a broad discussion of strategies for protecting our fisheries, in order to ensure the long-term viability of our fishing industry.

We support all reasonable and economically sound solutions to address proven sources of pollution, especially through the private sector or through public-private cooperation.

We support measures to promote working forests, farmland, and recreational land.

HEALTHCARE

Massachusetts is home to world-class physicians, specialists, and hospitals that provide our citizens with the highest quality health care. These providers play a vital role in our state’s economy and deserve a health care system that allows them to continue this important work without unnecessary government interference.

The federal government's takeover of health care is eroding the progress we have made. People are losing their insurance, premiums are going up and an ineffective bureaucracy is failing to find solutions. Everyone in Massachusetts should have access to quality, affordable health care.

We believe Massachusetts knows best how to care for our own citizens. Because we have a proven record of insuring our residents, we should be able to maintain control of our own health care system, rather than being subject to a federal system which has thrown our system into disarray.

We support replacing the Affordable Care Act with solutions that make more sense for the Nation and for Massachusetts. As a minimum measure, we support providing a waiver for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

We need to reduce the cost of health care in Massachusetts. A lack of transparency about health care costs prevents consumers from making informed decisions about their care.

We believe that market-based solutions -- not government mandates -- hold the key to driving down the cost of health care in our state. In particular, increasing pricing transparency in the health care market will help keep costs down for consumers by providing the information needed to make smart decisions and encouraging real competition among insurers and providers.

TAXES AND SPENDING

Our Commonwealth has amazing economic strength which derives from a long history of industriousness and ingenuity. Our present economic opportunity is stifled by the extraordinarily heavy burden of taxes and spending. It was estimated in 2013 that Massachusetts's taxpayers worked the fourth longest of taxpayers in any state to pay their total tax bill.

We support lowering all taxes to encourage economic growth and attract businesses.

We support a reduction in the state sales tax, and demand that our legislature comply with the voter-mandated reduction of the state income tax to five percent.

We oppose the indexing of any tax to the rate of inflation.

In order to prepare for inevitable lean economic years, it is necessary to restrain spending and reduce the size of government during years of better economic growth. To this end, we support streamlining government to make necessary programs work more effectively and efficiently. We also support the outright elimination of programs that are duplicative or that can no longer be justified.

A two-thirds vote of the Legislature should be required in order to raise taxes.

JUSTICE

We believe that the state and federal Constitutions are the most basic of our guiding documents.

We embrace a deep and profound respect for the law enforcement professionals who risk their lives to keep us safe, and we are committed to supporting their vigorous action against crime.

We believe that the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court's decision striking down the possibility of life without parole for juvenile murderers goes too far. This decision is particularly unfair for the families of victims. Brutal killers who were sentenced to life in prison now are becoming automatically eligible for parole. We support legislative efforts to increase the minimum prison term for first degree juvenile murders beyond the current 15 years.

We support the court's option of imposing the death penalty, with strict safeguards, in first degree murder cases.

We believe the heart of liberty begins with the freedom of speech as defined in the First Amendment of the Constitution. Essential to our freedom is also the right to acquire, own, possess, enjoy, and dispose of private property, and we maintain that the presumption of all judicial and legislative decisions must respect and protect this fundamental unalienable guarantee.

We support and pledge to uphold the individual right to keep and bear arms as a basic right to protect one's life and property. These rights are enumerated in the Second Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America and Article XVII, Part of the First of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The rights of sportsmen should be protected.

We recognize the important contributions that immigrants have made to our state and our nation throughout history and we support all those who seek to enter our country legally. We believe our immigration system is broken. We believe existing laws should be enforced until such time as new federal legislation is enacted. We oppose the issuance of driver's licenses to illegal aliens; and driver's licenses, for holders of student visas, should not exceed the duration of their visa. We oppose granting in-state college tuition rates to illegal aliens.

The symbol of national unity to which we pledge allegiance is the American flag. The American and Massachusetts flags should be given legal protection against desecration; and we encourage the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools.

We condemn the creation and misapplication of our laws through judicial activism.

VALUES

True to the spirit of Abraham Lincoln and Ronald Reagan, Republicans believe that inalienable individual rights and the responsibilities that go with them are the foundation of freedom.

Informed by the essential guarantees of the Declaration of Independence, we affirm the inherent dignity and sanctity of human life. We believe that every instance of abortion is tragic. We advocate policies that will assist a woman during a crisis pregnancy.

We reject all forms of discrimination, intolerance and exploitation. We are opposed to modern-day slavery and human trafficking and respect the inherent dignity of all human beings and their

right to freedom. We believe the institution of traditional marriage strengthens our society. There should be no infringement on the rights of the people of Massachusetts to vote on ballot initiatives.

Our Party vocally supports religious liberty. As a Party, we support the Constitutional guarantee of individual religious freedom, and we oppose judicial and legislative attempts to eradicate faith, whether in symbol or practice, from public life.

We affirm every citizen's right to apply religious values to public policy and we support the right of faith-based organizations to participate fully in public programs without renouncing their beliefs, symbols, or hiring practices.

We support the First Amendment right of freedom of association for religious organizations, including the right of religious organizations to refrain from participation in public policies that violate their religious conviction.

Massachusetts Republican Party Platform Committee 2014

Minority Report

Respectfully Submitted on February 25, 2014 to the
Massachusetts Republican State Committee

We acknowledge the collaborative result that the majority of our 2014 Platform Committee negotiated, and the difficult compromises that the majority made. We vigorously disagree with the language incorporated into the "Values" portion of the platform, insofar as it addresses abortion and marriage.

The job of our Massachusetts Republican Party is to elect Republicans to represent the people at all levels of government in Massachusetts. As Abraham Lincoln said, “The first duty of the statesman is to be elected.” The privilege of representing stems from listening to the entire constituency and then leading into a future of more opportunity and prosperity for all.

We acknowledge the majority statement of our Platform Committee on Values is both deeply personal and heartfelt, however the language contained in that section divides rather than unites our Party and our Commonwealth.

Like the majority, we affirm the inherent dignity and sanctity of human life, but believe that describing every abortion as tragic demonstrates a judgment we are not willing to pass with such a broad brush. The language can be construed to oppose Roe V. Wade and abortion rights which a large portion of our Party and our Commonwealth supports.

We join the majority in rejecting all forms of discrimination, intolerance and exploitation; and thus we reject any discrimination against our lesbian and gay citizens. The language included by the majority is easily read to exclude the contributions made to societal strength by gay and lesbian couples and their children. Such language serves to divide, not unite and falls outside the beliefs of many within our Party and our Commonwealth.

The Platform should be a document all Republicans can look to as a road map for success in governance and in political endeavors. The Values portion of the platform, as adopted by the majority, fails to acknowledge that goal and falls well short of achieving it.

Thankfully, the Platform is only a reference document. We oppose any effort to use the terms of the Values section to discipline, deny benefit to, ostracize or denounce any Republican nominee who does not embrace the beliefs therein.

It is the task of our Republican candidates to articulate their personal social values as they campaign for office. It is not for us to dictate what those values must be.

Kirsten L. Hughes, Esq. Chairman
Matthew R. Sisk
Christina Bain

Jeanne Kangas, Vice Chairman
State Rep. Donald H. Wong
Mindy McKenzie-Hebert