



News

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Green-Rainbow Rising 2009 Green-Rainbow Party State Convention

A day of inspiration,
action, and traction!

Worcester
Saturday Nov. 21
see page 7

Voter Choice ballot question would change how Bay State votes

by Peter Vickery

Tired of the rigged voting system that props up a one-party state, stifles green voices, and forces good candidates out of the race? Of course you are!

Well, here's some good news: there's a ballot question gathering steam that could blow the system open, offer the voters meaningful choices, and usher in a new era of multiparty democracy in Massachusetts.

I'm talking about the Voter Choice initiative which would ditch the current plurality voting system and replace it with a fairer system called Ranked Choice Voting—sometimes called Instant Runoff Voting (IRV). If the organizers can gather 100,000 signatures this Fall, the Voter Choice question will appear on the November 2010 statewide ballot. Volunteers will be in the field until November 18 collecting signatures.

What is Ranked Choice Voting? In a nutshell, it allows voters to rank candidates for an office in order of prefer-

ence (1 for your favorite, 2 for your second choice, etc.). Under the current plurality voting system, if your first place choice cannot win, your ballot is effectively tossed out. But under ranked choice, if your first choice candidate is eliminated, your vote then transfers to your second choice.

The existing system creates the very real risk that a candidate who is despised by the great majority of voters can actually be elected. In a four-way race, a candidate can be elected with only 26% of the vote. Under ranked choice this can't happen. You need the blessing of a majority of the voters in order to win.

Ranked Choice Voting replicates the process of holding runoff elections, a tried and true procedure for getting a solid democratic result when there are many candidates in a race. But conventional runoffs involve additional expense and inconvenience, and sometimes result in lower voter turnouts for

continued on page 4



2008: MAAPL introduces emergency foreclosure legislation [photo: Lawrence Fine]

Foreclosure crisis continues; State Legislature must act

by Eva Kerr

Always anxious to put the best face on things, federal spokespersons have been quick to trumpet any snippets of information that make it appear that the housing foreclosure crisis may be easing. But the situation in the field continues to be very serious.

While there has been an increase in home sales, housing prices continue to drop and sadder still, foreclosed properties were almost 1/4 of home sales in July. An ominous warning came from Deutsche Bank, predicting that by 2011 the percentage of U.S. homeowners who owe more than their house is worth will nearly double to 48 percent.

While the rate of final foreclosure actions has slowed down, the fact is that a good part of the slowdown is due to a 90-day legislated moratorium

and the backlog in processing the sheer volume of foreclosures.

Currently the foreclosure process may take as long as a year. The number of foreclosure filings (the initial step in the process) increased this July by almost 9% over June. The end of the crisis is not in sight, and the forecast growth in unemployment is likely to generate even more foreclosures.

MAAPL, the Massachusetts Alliance Against Predatory Lending, was founded two years ago by four Green-Rainbow Party members, along with several people from other organizations. MAAPL now consists of more than 60 organizations, among them legal service and housing counseling agencies, grassroots community

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GRP at GreenFest



Green-Rainbow volunteers Maggie May, Michael, and Cate greeted visitors to the GRP table at Boston's GreenFest, August 21

Green-Rainbow imperative: now more than ever

by Jill Stein

It's crunch time, folks. The economy, the environment, and our democracy are unraveling. What is really shocking is the speed, magnitude and totality of the meltdown—and the utter failure of the political establishment to respond. In fact, the worse things get, the more the powers that be rally to strengthen the status quo that's causing the problem.

The ravages of Wall Street bankers have wrecked people's livelihoods, sapped their pensions and savings, and homes. In response, Congress has poured trillions of dollars into the black hole of Wall Street debt—an action that serves mainly to keep the old order going a little longer until we hit the much bigger crash around the corner.

The much ballyhooed health care reform legislation, with its ever-shrinking public option, likewise represents an appalling failure to address real needs. It fails to provide guaranteed access to health care, fails to contain the spiraling costs of health care, and pushes consumers deeper into the abyss of unaffordable, complex private insurance programs. It guarantees continued overcharging by pharmaceutical companies. And it imposes a Massachusetts-type mandate forcing the uninsured to buy stripped down plans that are useless when real illness strikes.

Responding to the urgent need to address global warming, Congress gave us the Waxman-Markey climate *continued on page 5*

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CORI Reform: Will this be the year?

Attempts to reform the state's Criminal Offender Record System (CORI) may be nearing success after more than four years of intensive grassroots education and organizing. As currently conceived, CORI places an essentially permanent mark on the lives of people who run afoul of the state's legal system. In some communities, it is a burden upon the entire economy, creating unemployment and underemployment.

CORI reform legislation stalled out at the end of the 2008 legislative session. But a coalition of groups called the Commonwealth CORI Coalition (CCC) have been pressing hard for action in 2009.

Spearheading the effort is the Boston Workers Alliance (BWA), which has helped recruit over 55 House co-sponsors and 12 Senate co-sponsors for this legislation. The BWA urges everyone to speak to their legislators and ask them to act this year to provide relief from CORI. To get the latest news on CORI reform, visit

www.BostonWorkersAlliance.org



Boston City Councilor Turner at 2007 CORI reform rally

[photo: Jonathan McIntosh]

Who is guilty: Chuck Turner or the FBI? by John Andrews

It was a shocking sight last November: The cameras were rolling when the FBI slapped handcuffs on Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner and charged him with bribery. The Boston media took the FBI's word for it: Turner had been caught red-handed. They had him on tape.

Boston talk show host Emily Rooney assured her listeners that "The pictures are damning" and that it was "highly doubtful" that they were fake. She then led her panel in a discussion emphasizing that the evidence against Turner was very "strong, very solid." A follow-up story on her website drove home the point with the title "Incriminating pictures of Chuck Turner say a thousand words."

Rooney was not the only one anxious to rush to judgment. The day after Turner's arrest, the *Boston Globe* ran an editorial stressing the importance of removing bad apples like Turner from our political life.

In a column practically dripping with racist sentiments, *Boston Globe* columnist Kevin Cullen ridiculed any idea that Turner should be presumed innocent: "Now, while Chuck doesn't think much of the Constitution, given that it was written by a bunch of white guys who owned slaves, it does afford him certain rights, such as the presumption of innocence. Of course, that presumption became pretty meaningless when the FBI released the grainy video showing Chuck taking a wad of cash from their informant."

Later the *Globe* rushed out another editorial assuring its readers that "stings are not entrapment," and news stories characterized Turner's claims of innocence as a "P.R. initiative."

But to those who knew Chuck Turner best, something in the FBI charges just didn't add up. Turner began to get strong support from his 7th District constituents, from the Green-Rainbow Party, and from respected community leaders. They cited Turner's 42-year history of integrity.

They pointed out that on many occasions, when other politicians were taking campaign checks from big donors and selling out their community, it was only Chuck Turner who stood on the side of the people.

Turner's constituents knew that Turner was one local leader who consistently spurned the party invitations from the City's well-heeled powerbrokers and spent his evenings meeting with his low income constituents in church basements

and in his storefront district office. To many of his black and Latino constituents, Chuck was the only honest politician they had ever seen. He was the only one they could trust. They had a hard time reconciling the FBI accusations with the person they had known for years.

The press seemed willing to condemn Turner without carefully reading the 11-page FBI affidavit submitted to justify Turner's arrest. That document, far from documenting Turner's guilt, casts serious doubt upon the FBI's credibility and motives.

The most striking aspect of the affidavit is that it shows that Turner never solicited any money from the FBI's informant. Nor did Turner promise to do anything for the informant based on an offer of money.

Basically, the FBI informant just started his hidden camera and shoved a wad of unsolicited bills into Turner's hands. That act fails to meet the definition of bribery, which requires that the public official solicit money in exchange for performing an official act.

The FBI did not catch Chuck Turner committing a crime, as the Boston media so consistently reported. Cash donations are not a crime. In fact, every politician on Beacon Hill has probably been handed some cash by a constituent who wishes to show support for their reelection campaign. Cash donations up to \$50 are perfectly legal. Donations more than this have to be made by check to facilitate reporting. If the donation is more than \$50, as the FBI claims, then the usual practice is to return all except \$50 and request that a check be written. No one has ever been threatened with 20 years in prison for accepting cash donations—until now.

Then there is the tape that the FBI did NOT release to the media. The affidavit states that on September 12, FBI informant Wilburn came to Turner's City Hall office in a second attempt to get Turner to commit an offense. According to the affidavit "The CW was unable to discretely provide the cash to TURNER while TURNER's assistant stood nearby." But if Turner were really on the take, why didn't he ask the assistant to leave

or invite Wilburn to meet privately in his office, or suggest a place to rendezvous later? It appears that Turner's assistant, and Turner himself, were not interested in facilitating a cash transfer from the witness. This certainly runs counter to the FBI's thesis that Turner was engaged in hot pursuit of illegal cash.

When shorn of speculation and innuendo, the FBI affidavit is a decidedly unconvincing document. The crime it claims to have observed was entirely orchestrated by the FBI without any encouragement or active participation from Turner. But if Chuck Turner is really a remarkably honest public figure, and is clearly reluctant to do anything illegal, why would the FBI go after him?

To understand that, we have to understand an important aspect of the story that has never been mentioned in the *Boston Globe*. For several years Turner has been one of the most visible and highly placed critics of FBI infringements upon civil liberties. In addition to his criticism of police powers granted under the PATRIOT Act, Turner has been a speaker at rallies calling for the release of Leonard Peltier, a leader of the American Indian Movement who was convicted in the 1977 killings of two FBI agents at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Turner agrees with those who say that Peltier's trail was tainted and that the FBI may have targeted him in order to make an Indian Movement leader pay for the deaths of their agents. The FBI has actively exerted both legal and political pressure to keep Peltier behind bars. When it appeared in 2000 that President

Clinton was considering pardoning Peltier, the FBI Agents Association organized a 500-agent protest at the White House and FBI director Louis Freeh sent a letter opposing the pardon. Anyone like Turner, who speaks at pro-Peltier rallies, surely has been identified by the FBI as a supporter of groups targeted by the FBI.

Then in 2005, an FBI sniper killed Puerto Rican separatist leader Ojeda Rios by shooting him through his kitchen window after an aborted attempt to storm his house. Because they let Rios lay on his kitchen floor without medical help for 18 hours, there was widespread anger in Puerto Rico among people who believed that the FBI had deliberately sought his death.

A rally was held outside the FBI's Boston offices to demand an investigation into the shooting. Two Boston City Councilors spoke at the rally. One was Felix Arroyo. The other was Chuck Turner. It would be quite naive to assume that the FBI did not have undercover agents at that rally carefully recording the names of all speakers.

Citing the irrelevance of the prosecution to law enforcement, the Green-Rainbow Party asked the Department of Justice to investigate the FBI motives in staging the arrest of Turner. Rather than launching its own independent investigation, Justice referred the request back to the FBI. Within a week the FBI, citing no evidence, issued the conclusion that they had done nothing wrong.

According to Green-Rainbow co-chair Eli Beckerman "The refusal to take seriously the possible violation of civil rights in the Turner case is disturbing.

"If the FBI is free to manufacture criminal charges against public officials who question possible FBI abuses, it silences those who would speak up in defense of our civil rights."

Turner never solicited money from the FBI informant or promised to do anything based on an offer of money.

Green-Rainbow Party News

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Did you just write something that should be seen by more people? Can you attend events and take photographs for us? Want to put your graphic design skills to work for a good cause? We welcome contributions to the GRP newsletter and to the GRP website. To get involved, contact communications-director@green-rainbow.org.

Subscribe to our Free Newsletter

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GRP calls for clean-up on Beacon Hill

Following the indictment of former Speaker of the House Sal DiMasi, the Green-Rainbow Party called for a "deep overhaul" of the political system on Beacon Hill.

Party Co-chair Eli Beckerman called the indictment "the tip of the iceberg," asserting that "influence peddling is a way of life on Beacon Hill, and very little of it ever results in an indictment. It's costing taxpayers billions of dollars and crippling the ability of state government to effectively deal with mounting problems in virtually every sector of public life."

"Urgently needed legislation gets sidetracked while legislative leadership puts their greatest efforts into doing favors for their friends,"

Beckerman noted. "Catching one of them in an illegal act once in a while doesn't address the massive flow of money that goes from special inter-

ests into campaign accounts.

This money is shaping the state budget, tax policy, and the laws under which we live. It creates an atmosphere of corruption that inevitably undermines the public interest."

John Andrews, communications director of the Green-Rainbow Party, recalled that "In 1998, the voters of Massachusetts tried to clean up Beacon Hill when they voted by a 2-1 margin for the Clean Elections Law. After stalling for several years, the Legislature repealed that law in an unrecorded voice vote. That act of arrogance ensured that dirty money

would continue to control the legislative agenda. It's time to revisit the question of Clean Elections and ask how we can ensure that legislators aren't trading the power of their offices for campaign donations and personal political gain."

Green-Rainbow Co-chair and former gubernatorial candidate Jill Stein commented that "When I ran for governor, I refused to accept donations from lobbyists or corporate officers who employed lobbyists.

"I felt it was something that I had to do if I was sincere about serving the people who elected me.

"How can politicians ask people to trust them if they've been accepting

gifts to their campaign warchests in private—and incurring obligations to special interests with agendas to push? We desperately need to restore the promise of public service, and government in the public

interest."

Stein noted that "Some people want to just walk away from state government in disgust. But we can't afford to do that. We've got too many problems at the crisis stage - such as skyrocketing health care costs, an unfair tax system, a floundering economy, and environmental meltdown.

"The corrupting power of money in the Legislature is blocking urgently needed action. We need a state government that will help us solve these problems—we can't afford to have a government that works only for the well-connected few."

"Some people want to just walk away from state government in disgust. But we can't afford to do that."

— Jill Stein

Massachusetts voted by a 2-1 margin for the Clean Elections Law. After stalling for years, the Legislature repealed that law in an unrecorded voice vote.



RUN FOR OFFICE!

Voters deserve to have candidates worth voting for. And you can ensure that they get one by putting your name on the ballot as a Green-Rainbow candidate. The GRP Candidate Development and Legal Committee (CDLC) wants to hear from people who are ready, willing and able to run for office in 2010 and beyond. One priority of the GRP for 2010 is to elect people to the Massachusetts House of Representatives, and we are especially interested in talking to you about House races. The CDLC can help you understand what is required, let you know what help you can get from the Party, and give you help in deciding whether or not to run. If you can't run, send us the names of people you think would make good GRP candidates, and telling us why. CDLC members will be pleased to go with you to talk to them about running.

GRP sets sights on 2010 races

by Dave England

An Electorate in search of alternatives

This is the year of dismay for those who gave the Democratic Party their time, money, and faith, hoping for "CHANGE," only to see business-as-usual continue in crisis areas such as health-care, the economy, war, and climate protection. Meanwhile, here in Massachusetts, the Democrats have engineered regressive tax hikes, hikes to public transportation fares, painful cuts to education and social programs, and worked with real estate interests to disempower local land use planning. More is coming since the stop-gap measures used to balance the budget promise another budget crisis next year.

The people of Massachusetts know that Beacon Hill is not getting the job done. In a poll earlier this year, 87% of residents stated that they were either "very concerned" or "somewhat concerned" about the influence of lobbyists and special interests on state government. Almost half of the electorate has refused to register under the banner of any political party - which shows a high level of disengagement. But no matter how badly Massachusetts politicians perform, there is little chance that the voters will hold them accountable at the polls because two-thirds of incumbents run unopposed.

The tactical challenge: a voice in the Legislature

In 2010, the Green-Rainbow Party

will offer an alternative to more of the same. The GRP State Committee recently approved a new campaign strategy that makes its first priority the running GRP candidates in potentially winnable legislative House races. These House races take place in districts of manageable size, where face-to-face contact with voters can be decisive. Good candidates can overcome any disadvantages they may have with regard to money or pre-existing infrastructure.

Even with the best strategy, the GRP anticipates that it will take more than one campaign cycle to win a district legislative race in most districts. When candidates run for the second time, they have an established infrastructure of volunteers and donors that

gets them rolling quicker. By making a commitment to running repeatedly in districts where voters are ready for change, "Green strongholds" will be established that will make 2010 a precursor to even stronger showings in 2012.

A strategic challenge: the campaign for Governor

The 2010 gubernatorial race is likely to feature three male corporate-serving candidates (Deval Patrick, Charlie Baker, and Timothy Cahill) who will all agree that single-payer health care is off the table, public education should yield to expansion of charter schools, go-slow policies on climate change are acceptable, community plan-

ning should be weakened to help developers, spending on social programs should be cut, gambling casinos should proliferate, and that a progressive income tax is out of the question. A GRP candidate would remind the people of Massachusetts that options being kept off the table may be critical to solving our problems. And putting a GRP candidate into the mix would help focus attention on the proposed 2010 referendum question that would establish an instant runoff voting (IRV) system in Massachusetts. (See "Voter Choice..." on page 1).

People power: the key to change

The GRP electoral strategy is built upon the concept of grassroots engagement by ordinary citizens who know that politics is too important to be left to the politicians. The freely-offered skills of GRP volunteers offer a critical antidote to money-driven politics. Volunteers collect signatures to put GRP candidates on the ballot and work to make GRP candidates visible in their local communities. And of course we are always on the lookout for people willing to run for public office. If you haven't yet been directly involved in the Party, this is an ideal time to join up.

Dave England is the co-chair of the GRP Candidate Development and Legal Committee.



Real health care reform not yet on the table

It's been a grand show in Washington where Democrats and Republicans have spent the summer firing salvos at each other over President's Obama's health care proposals. Right wingers have trumpeted a warning that Obamacare is a socialist power grab. Democratic Party operatives have touted it as the greatest reform since the New Deal.

Here's the truth: whoever prevails, insurance companies will win and the American people will lose. That's because Obamacare started out by excluding the only real hope for a health care solution: the single-payer option. From there, it continued to slide back further by the day, trying to accommo-

date critics.

The proposal that is now emerging would constitute little more than a giant taxpayer-funded life-support system for private for-profit insurance corporations. It would protect drug company profits by maintaining the Bush ban on bulk purchasing of prescription drugs. The plan would impose mandates, forcing millions of people to become unwilling customers for the very insurance companies that have been overcharging consumers for decades. The "public option" which was intended to ensure competition will probably be either eliminated or watered down to insignificant proportions.

The debate in Congress is ignoring the fact that the rest of the developed world has a solution that works. They have adopted a Medicare-for-all approach that covers everyone, eliminates the insurance company bureaucracy, and greatly cuts health care costs. Under single-payer, private physicians and hospitals remain private. After treating a patient, instead of sending a bill to one of several hundred insurers, HMOs, or agencies (each with its own different and complex requirements), they send the bill to a single agency—hence 'single-payer'—for reimbursement.

Americans support single payer: Polls show that 59% of Americans want a

by John Andrews

national health insurance plan. But this is the one solution that the insurance companies *don't* want to see put on the table. And the Democrats and Republicans, obedient to the big money lobbyists, are working in concert to keep single-payer advocates out of the debate.

But non-solutions like Obamacare won't make single-payer go away. The Green-Rainbow Party and dedicated reformers across the nation will continue to work to see that Americans get real health reform. Stay tuned.

We thank the Green Party of the United States for some of the material included in the above article.

A climate bill written by and for polluters

by Maggie Zhou

In June of this year, the House of Representatives passed the American Clean Energy & Security Act (ACESA), also known as Waxman-Markey.

This bill, which started out as an extremely weak and compromised measure, was further watered down during its journey through the House. In fact, much of the bill was written directly by corporate lobbyists.

The final result? A thoroughgoing "polluter protection bill" that, in the words of the nation's top climate scientist, Dr. James Hansen, will "do more harm to the environment than doing nothing at all."

Here are some of the key problems with ACESA.

- ACESA is built upon a so-called cap-and-trade mechanism that allows enormous numbers of questionable "offsets." Experience has shown that this is one of the least effective and most fraud-prone schemes for controlling carbon emissions (more about this later).

- It sets extremely weak emission targets. The scientifically sound target for atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations is no more than 350 parts-per-million (ppm). ACESA will fail to meet that goal. In fact, ACESA does not even require that we target 450 ppm, the outdated target which many industrialized countries have been considering. And the 450ppm target itself offers less than 50% odds of averting catastrophic global warming.

- It pre-empts existing EPA power to regulate carbon pollution under the Clean Air Act.

- It grandfathers in dirty coal power plants and permits numerous new ones to be licensed for years to come without emission restrictions. Under ACESA, tens of billions of dollars would be invested in the illusive and unproven Carbon Capture & Storage technology. And ACESA would allow coal mining and coal waste to continue to destroy the environment.

- ACESA subsidizes "renewable energy" generation from biomass and trash incineration - techniques that release more CO₂ and other pollutants per megawatt-hour than does a coal plant. Biomass incineration threatens to decimate our forests as trees are cut to feed the power stations.

The cap-and-trade system that ACESA would set up was favored by polluting industries and financial interests mainly because it requires so little change in business as usual, while creating a whole new securities market for Wall Street to gamble with and profit from.

Previous experience with cap-and-trade in Europe and elsewhere has shown that it is not an effective way to reduce emissions. As embodied in ACESA, it is extremely complex and non-transparent. It requires oversight

on tens of thousands of emitting entities, takes years to implement, and can be undermined by false reporting and the creation of bogus offsets. The massive carbon trading market it would create will almost certainly be financially unstable and subject to manipulation by security firms, discouraging needed long-term investments in emissions reduction.

Peter Orszag, director of the Office of Management and Budget, testified before a Congressional Hearing that ACESA's free allowances "would represent the largest corporate welfare program that has ever been enacted in the history of the United States."

Because free allowances are tradable, they represent immensely valuable securities that become part of the capital of the recipients. Often this results in rate increase approvals because utilities now have more capital invested in generating each watt of energy.

A superior alternative to cap-and-trade would be a revenue-neutral carbon tax (or "revenue neutral carbon dividend") that charges for carbon at the source of extraction or importation. This would be simple, robust, transparent, cost effective, equitable and just, and would avoid the inherent risks of a highly volatile carbon market. It has proven to be economically viable and environmentally sound in places such as Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, and British Columbia.

Unlike cap-and-trade, such a measure would create incentives to reduce all emissions, not just those for which companies lacked permits. A carbon tax is considered the superior option by most economists, as well by the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office. But if ACESA goes forward, it would probably effectively block any carbon tax scheme.

The Senate was expected to deliver its

version of the bill in September. At this writing, reports indicate that it will be even weaker than ACESA. Sadly, some environmental groups that signed on to pass a climate bill this year are still working to pass ACESA, turning a blind eye to its flaws. If ACESA passes, it will block real climate action for years.

That's why a group of 26 organizations in the environmental, social justice, and peace communities have come together under the banner Climate SOS to sound the alarm on ACESA. While ACESA is just the kind of loophole-laden corporate welfare bill that Congress likes to pass, it is not what Planet Earth needs. It's time to speak up for a real climate protection bill. Further information can be found at

securegreenfuture.org
and
climateSOS.org

voter choice continued from page 1

the second round of voting. Ranked Choice Voting lets voters go to the polls once and still get the benefits of having a runoff. The runoffs take place "instantly" when the computers count the voter rankings. Even though there may be two or three rounds of counting, there's only one round of voting.

What problem does Ranked Choice Voting solve for the voter? One voter dilemma that we've all faced occurs when the candidate you really want to support, say, a GRP candidate, is running third in the polls. If one of the two frontrunners is really distasteful to you, you face a dilemma: if you vote for the candidate you really support, you effectively give up your right to influence which of the two frontrunners will be elected. But if you vote for the frontrunner you find least distasteful, you're rebuffing the candidate you really want and give a false mandate to someone you really don't support.

With Ranked Choice, that problem disappears. Your real assessment of the candidates can be reflected in your rankings, and the mediocre candidate can't claim a false mandate that allows him or her to ignore your real feelings.

back to constitutional basics and the historical notion that victory should go to the candidate who has the support of the majority (and not just a plurality) of the voters.

Ranked Choice Voting could be the key to progress in a number of areas. Legislation to advance ranked choice voting has languished for years in the Massachusetts Legislature. That's why voters themselves are taking the initiative. A non-partisan ballot committee called Citizens for Voter Choice has been formed to oversee the referendum effort.

Organizations that have signed on in support of Voter Choice include Common Cause, the Massachusetts League of Women Voters, the Green-Rainbow Party, and MassVote.

Volunteers are out in force collecting signatures in every county in Massachusetts. If successful, the Voter Choice referendum will have national impact and will undoubtedly be copied by voting reform advocates across the nation.

BE PART OF THE VOTER CHOICE MOVEMENT!

Help put Voter Choice on the 2010 ballot by collecting voter signatures in your community between now and November 18. Time is short, so act today. Send an email to—

info@voterchoicema.com

—we can put you in touch with people in your area. For more information, go to—
www.voterchoicema.org/

The funny thing is, Ranked Choice Voting is both radical and conservative at the same time.

It's radical because it goes to the root of the problem, namely the flawed plurality system that restricts political participation and gives rise to arrogant one-party rule.

But it's conservative because it goes



Relocalization and the new way forward

By Eli Beckerman, Dick Vaillette, and Sheryl Vaillette

For years, you've seen the bumper stickers reminding us all to "Think Globally, Act Locally." Maybe you've seen some new ones around Massachusetts, reading "Be a Local Hero: Buy Locally Grown." Or noticed that restaurants are now catering to a new breed of creatures calling themselves "localvores." And if you live in the greater Pittsfield region, you may well have used "Berkshire Bucks," the local scrip.

Farmers markets and Community Supported Agriculture, local currencies and land conservation movements—all are part of an emerging *relocalization movement* in Massachusetts bubbling up from below and promising fundamental changes in how we relate to the planet and to each other.

This movement, with neither a scripted ideology nor an appointed leader, is already proving capable of challenging the massive but unsustainable economic, social, and political systems of our time.

"Relocalization" means replacing globalization by putting the emphasis back on local and regional flows of energy and production, creating smaller-scale enterprises under local control.

It's a radical concept, in that it gets to the very root of our problems, and a revolutionary concept as well, representing a "turning back" to traditional community-based living.

Rather than importing foodstuffs from halfway around the world, relocalization draws on backyard gardens, farmers markets, and community-supported agriculture. It replaces nationwide HMOs with community-owned healthcare, transnational banks with local credit unions and co-ops, online shopping and distribution with buy-local campaigns, and wholesale addiction to fossil fuels with renewable energy production.

In short, the quantity of production and consumption is de-emphasized in favor of quality of life. And it's pro-business as well—creating economic opportunities for companies willing to become a part of the community, and not to just dump goods on the local market.

Relocalization provides a practical, hands-on framework for citizen action. You don't have to wait for Congress to reform itself—you can begin taking matters into your own hands.

Relocalization is also the answer to

the current unsustainable economy that is spiraling downward as it encounters the fundamental limits to growth. All economies depend ultimately on the natural resources of the physical world.

Limits to natural resources means that the religion of "economic growth" is inherently flawed, and has to be replaced. We have to recognize that many types of growth are harmful, and are bringing us closer to economic and environmental collapse. Of course, that's a no-go for politicians serving existing corporate clients. Many are so firmly entrenched in the service of corporate interests that they seem incapable of imagining any strategy beyond "growth" and "recovery."

It's become increasingly clear that we can't model our future on outworn economic paradigms. The globalized fossil-fueled system is collapsing in the tangle of its own inherent contradictions. The "paper economy" based on leveraged debt, perpetual growth, and the commodification of anything of real value (and many invented securities of no value) has crumbled before our eyes. We've all felt the effects in our lives: oil and food prices have surged, and the

real economy was brought to its knees as credit seized up. The policy response from Washington has been to bail out Wall Street and the bankers, to leave homeowners to the whims of the market, and to throw trillions of dollars into propping up a failing system. There is literally no future in this approach.

The success of relocalization initiatives around the globe is astonishing, especially considering that state and federal policies, along with international trade organizations, are attempting to tilt the playing field toward big, remote corporate players. People are voting with their feet and their forks, and leaving the globalized Wall Street economy behind.

Many of us are already playing a role in bucking the globalization trend by making conscious efforts to buy, bank, eat, invest, and work locally. The next step is to create the political will necessary to make these alternatives available to everyone, and to assist local government in implementing them. An economy is very much a political creation. We must constantly re-define the economy so that it works for both the people and the planet.

Empowering the local economy requires building grassroots political power that can counter the economic powers-that-be. We are proud to say that the Green-Rainbow Party has long advocated localized economies that are based on justice and sustainability. We expect the GRP to be at the forefront promoting "re-localization" on the municipal, county, and state levels.

The Massachusetts Relocalization Conference will be held on Sunday, October 18th, at the Reggie Lewis Center in Roxbury. All are invited to come and learn what we can do to build sustainable local economies in our communities.

for more information, visit

www.relocalizemassachusetts.org

Taking charge of our food

Relocalization is about taking charge. Rather than holding protests against an ever more oppressive industrial food delivery system, relocalization gives people the opportunity to pitch in and build local, sustainable alternatives. One example of such action is Mass Local Food, an online food co-op recently created by Sheryl Vaillette (a member of the Nashua River Green Rainbow local) and two other Central MA women, Kelley O'Connor and Kerrie Hertel.

The co-op's mission is to create an ordering and distribution system that supports MA farmers, producers, arti-

sans and crafters and helps consumers find/purchase local food and other items.

Inspired by the very successful Oklahoma Food Coop, Mass Local Food set up an on-line shopping cart of MA products. They then organized an all-volunteer sorting and distribution service. Local food producers are allowed to post information about their products and practices online after paying a one-time \$50 membership fee. Customers go to the website to view, search and order the products. There is a monthly sorting/distribution day with three pick-up sites



in Central Massachusetts. Mass Local Food plans to eventually have sites throughout the state.

An intriguing aspect of initiatives such as Massachusetts Local Food is the way in which they exploit the power of the new online technology (websites and online shopping) to promote the local economy. For more information, call: 978-422-7669 or e-mail:

kelleyoconnor@gmail.com
www.massfoodcoop.org

Nashua River local honors two area women, promotes relocalization

by Sheryl Vaillette

The Nashua River Green-Rainbow local (NRGR) includes members from about 10 communities in north central Massachusetts. We meet monthly and plan at least one major project a year.

Recently, the Nashua River local organized an Awards Dinner which honored two area women: Donna Brownell of Westminster, for 20+ years of environmental protection, and Cathy Clark of Lunenburg for her recent efforts to oust Unitil (gas and electric provider) from the region. Members of the Worcester local joined us.

The event not only honored local activists, but served to raise public awareness of NRGR and Green-Rainbow key values. A press release was prepared and sent to surrounding newspapers and interviews were arranged resulting in three front-page articles. The dinner was held in a locally owned restaurant and the awards were hand made by local artists.

The idea of buying locally-owned and locally-produced products has been an ongoing theme of NRGR activities for the last three years. A "Buy Local" campaign was launched following the Pioneer Valley Relocalization workshop sponsored by the Massachusetts Coalition for Healthy Communities in 2007. The NRGR created a list of local

small farms, farmers' markets and farm stands. A brochure was produced and distributed at town events. State and national Green Party literature, voter registration forms, sign-up sheets, and other "buy local" handouts were included. The info was also posted on the NRGR website. New members joined NRGR because of this project and it eventually led to the formation of a regional sustainability group, which hopes to expand upon what NRGR began.

The NRGR tries to stay active in local and state campaigns by supporting Green-Rainbow candidates and by occasionally supporting an NRGR member running for local office. For example, the current Town Moderator for Lancaster is an NRGR member.

We help with state or county events by arranging sites, speakers or food whenever possible. We occasionally offer speakers and our members attend events sponsored by our neighbor local in Worcester.

NRGR tries to use our activities to increase our membership, to educate the public on Green-Rainbow values and positions, and to offer an alternative voice to business as usual. For more info, contact Sheryl Vaillette—sherylvaillette@comcast.net

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bill which is more a Trojan horse for coal and agribusiness than a vehicle for climate solutions. Its key provisions—which strip EPA of existing carbon authority, set woefully inadequate targets for emission reductions, and promote the building of innumerable new coal plants—make it far worse than having no bill at all.

After campaigning against "Bush's War" we are now deeply mired in "Obama's War." Troop numbers are surging and massive military expenditures continue to undermine our ability to solve our problems at home.

So how do we get out of this mess? One thing is clear: There is no hope that the guys that got us into this mess are going to get us out. No matter how many slick television ads they run telling us how much they care, in the end they are taking money from the big money lobbyists, spending lobbyist money to

maintain their careers, and doing lobbyist bidding when they write legislation. Issue advocacy alone has failed to alter the trajectory toward disaster—and it will continue to fail unless we can establish a new type of politics

that truly puts people and the planet first.

This is why the hour has come to dedicate ourselves to moving the Green-Rainbow Party forward as the key vehicle for all the issues that are stuck in the mud without it. Every GRP vote is a vote to invest our wealth in our communities and our future rather than squandering it on budget-busting corporate welfare.

Every GRP vote is a vote to get the profiteers, lobbyists and influence-peddlers out of the business of running our government.

Working together, in a Party with true integrity, we will break the stranglehold of big money on Beacon Hill and beyond, and begin building the healthy just future that we all deserve.



Jill Stein, 2006 GRP candidate for Secretary of the Commonwealth

Greens to Galvin: Thanks, Bill, but we're happy where we are *by Michael Horan*

There's nothing like a helpful note from the Secretary of the Commonwealth to muddy the electoral waters. In June, Secretary of State William Galvin dutifully mailed post cards to all members of the Green-Rainbow Party with this text:

Voter registration records show that you are registered enrolled in the Green-Rainbow Party. Please note that as a result of the 2008 State Election, the Green-Rainbow Party is no longer a political party and instead is a political designation. Accordingly, your voter registration record has been updated.

Please be aware that voters enrolled in political designations are not eligible to vote in party primaries. If you would like to change your enrollment as a voter, please call 1-800-462-8683 to request a voter registration form.

"Updated?" "Not eligible?" "Change my enrollment?" Huh?

The GRP immediately began hearing from members who wondered, quite reasonably, "Has the GRP disbanded?" "Will I lose my right to vote if I don't switch my party registration?" The answer to both these questions is, of course, "No." The GRP is still very much in existence, however irritating the Secretary may find the fact; nor can he abscond with any of your voting rights. While the Secretary's text implies that your registration has "been updated" in some unexplained fashion, this is in fact not the case.

Green-Rainbow voters are still enrolled as Green-Rainbow and have a right to continue in that designation and to fully participate in all Green-Rainbow activities.

The Secretary may have lacked the room—after all, it was only a postcard—to provide even a rudimentary explanation. So we will.

State election laws give "political party" status only to parties that run a candidate who receives a minimum 3% of the total vote for a statewide office in the most recent election. Because the GRP had no candidate polling 3% in the 2008 presidential elections, it was reclassified as a "political designation" rather than a "political party."

The major difference between the labels "political party" and "political designation" is that the general election candidates for political designations are not chosen by primary elections, but are selected by other processes, such as nominating conventions. That's all. This reclassification has happened before. It has never been viewed as something that would motivate voters to change their voter registration.

Nor has any change occurred with respect to the status of the Green-Rainbow Party under Federal law. The GRP is still viewed as a political party by the Federal Elections Commission, and in fact is legally required to make filings to the FEC.

So why did Democrat Galvin feel such a pressing need to send this notice, and

to none-too-subtly invite all GRP members to take the opportunity to change our registrations (to ... Democratic Party, perhaps)?

In a letter to the Secretary's office for the Party's Administrative Committee, GRP co-chair Eli Beckerman and Scott Laugenour, Membership chair, wrote:

"We are concerned that these mailings mislead the voters regarding their rights and are worded to raise questions regarding whether registration under the Green-Rainbow designation might endanger their voting rights...."

"While the exact status of the Party under the regulations of the Commonwealth may change from time to time according to how many votes were received in the most recent election, these changes do not provide any clear reason for voters to change their enrollment. Certainly they do not create a reason for taxpayer money to be used to mail notices implying that voters should reconsider their enrollment."

The Secretary's office said the postcards were merely a generous attempt to provide "voter information." But the Beckerman/Laugenour letter makes the

sub-text of Galvin's announcement all-too-transparent:

"The post cards appear to advance the partisan judgment that parties with officially recognized primaries somehow offer a compelling advantage to voters. We feel that there are many advantages of being affiliated with the Green-Rainbow Party and there are good reasons why voters decline to give their support to the Democratic or Republican Parties. The Secretary's office should not appear to use its budget or its authority to promulgate its own opinions regarding the merits of enrollment under different designations."

Oh, and just by way of coincidence—in the 2006 elections, the Green-Rainbow Party was the only party that fielded a candidate to run against Secretary of State Galvin. Because there was no Republican challenger, GRP candidate Jill Stein was the only person standing between Secretary Galvin and an unopposed reelection. Not that Galvin would take it personally. The Secretary has to treat all voters fairly, right?

CHECK YOUR REGISTRATION!

If you are enrolled as a Green-Rainbow voter, the voting rolls will show a "J" next to your name. This is the proper designation for the Green-Rainbow Party, the state affiliate of the Green Party of the United States. If you are unsure about your registration, please contact our Membership Director (Membership.Director@green-rainbow.org) for information and assistance.

Making a real change is easy

by Scott Laugenour

If you have ever switched banks, phone plans, insurance companies, or ISP providers because you were unhappy with service, you undoubtedly know the minor hassles that you experience making that change. Still, you do it. Perhaps it's because you want to make a statement about the way you've been treated. Perhaps you seek a new relationship that will provide better service.

But what about your political party? Switching your voter registration to Green-Rainbow is quicker and easier than ever. A JOIN THE PARTY link can be found on www.green-rainbow.org launching a PDF form which can be downloaded and printed.

Your town hall will need an original signature on the form, so you need to either mail it in or take it in person. Compared to the kinds of routine changes we make in other areas of modern life, making the positive switch to join the Green-Rainbow Party is easy.

Dissatisfaction with politics-as-usual is high, but people feel powerless or uncertain about what to do. When I meet voters whose values are reflected by the Green-Rainbow Party, I ask them to join us. Many do! As a party that is building momentum and excitement, it's important that we constantly invite people to register GRP. Support for our policies is far greater than our current voter registration levels would indicate. Every voter who registers as GRP strengthens the base from which we work.

In Massachusetts, many voters have expressed their dissatisfaction with the ruling parties by registering "unenrolled." In fact, over 50% of voters in Massachusetts are unenrolled, making them the largest voting bloc in the state. I can relate to this action because I took that path myself for a very short while before finding the Green-Rainbow Party. The challenge I faced with my unenrolled status is that it showed disapproval of conventional politics, but it did

not clearly reflect the values that I wanted to see in public policy. Nor was it a loud enough statement about the kind of changes I was wanted—it was too easily ignored. By registering Green-Rainbow, I made a clear statement to the power structure, and was recorded as wanting a

new kind of politics.

I hope that party members reach out to friends and neighbors with an invitation to join the GRP. To help you do this, we have a new website, new membership brochures, and a list of policy positions to help your friends and neighbors rec-

ognize that the GRP is the party for them. Just by asking, we can change Massachusetts politics one voter at a time.

Scott Laugenour lives in Lenox. He is Membership Director of the Green-Rainbow Party.

Volunteers make It happen!

Volunteering for the Green-Rainbow Party is a rewarding experience, and a good way to meet people who share your passion for positive change, justice, and saving our endangered planet.

Other parties recruit volunteers as extra hands to help the paid professionals who really run the party. The Green-Rainbow Party is completely run by volunteers as part of our commitment to grassroots democracy and openness.

We are a party of, by, and for the people—and we need you! You can get involved at many levels, from simply attending meetings of a local group to serving on statewide committees. Below are some of the volunteer opportunities available at the current time. If interested, please contact the person indicated. Or fill out the form on the volunteer page of the GRP website :

www.green-rainbow.org/volunteer.html

The Candidate Development and Legal Committee (CDLC) is responsible for candidate recruitment, candidate training, campaign support, compliance with election laws, and other legal issues. This year, CDLC is looking for people who will help assess the potential of particular races, develop campaign training materials, support candidates, and work with voter

databases. And if you're thinking about running for office, one of your first moves should be to contact CDLC.

A successful campaign for office requires more than a good candidate. It requires a whole team of people who believe in the candidate and want to help him or her succeed. Even if all you can do is distribute a few flyers or paste labels on envelopes, that contributes in a measurable way to making a new style of politics possible. We will let you know who is running in your area, and you can investigate ways of getting involved. Get in touch with

co-chair Dave England,
candidates@green-rainbow.org.

The Fundraising Committee puts together our appeals for donations and organizes fundraisers.

The Membership and Diversity Committee recruits new members, keeps in contact with current members and local chapters, and assists in the formation of new locals, chapters, and caucuses. Contact Scott Laugenour, Membership Director, membership-director@green-rainbow.org

The Communications Committee is responsible for newsletters, website, email, and media relations (including press releases). This year there is a

special need for people who will strengthen the online presence of the GRP. Yes, it's time to start blogging for change! Our communication efforts will give people a voice and provide the antidote to the corporate media. Contact Communications Director John Andrews to find out how to participate :

communications-director@green-rainbow.org

The Platform Committee examines issues, proposes Party positions, and writes the Party platform.

The Convention Committee plans our state conventions, inviting speakers, arranging for a venue, and making sure the convention is a success.

The Technical Committee designs, maintains, and upgrades our email and web services.

The State Committee is the main steering committee for the Party. They meet quarterly and adopt policy positions, set budgets, establish priorities, make appointments, and approve plans and reports. You can be elected to State Committee at a regional convention, or be appointed to an open seat.

Normally, you should be active in the Party awhile before serving on the State Committee.



Green-Rainbow Rising: 2009 Green-Rainbow Party State Convention

A day of inspiration, action, and traction!

Join us to jumpstart a Healthy Green Massachusetts!
*speakers! *workshops! *tabling!
*healthy food! *great music! *silent auction!

Open to all. Green-Rainbow registration not required for attendance.

The 2009 Green-Rainbow Party State Convention will be a springboard for an exciting electoral strategy for 2010. We'll hear from grassroots groups who are leading the way to stop the fossil fuel power plants polluting their communities, create secure green jobs in local agriculture and clean renewable energy, fight cruel evictions, and end racist CORI and drug laws. We'll hear from people who are making a difference in their communities and blazing the trail for vibrant secure local economies, community based green jobs, alternative energy, a healthy and secure food supply, and housing safe from foreclosures. And we'll learn the on-the-ground skills we need to run for—and win—office, to manage campaigns, and to advance the Green-Rainbow Party vision for the future.

The future starts now! Join us at Clark University's Tilton Hall on Saturday, November 21st. Come share the inspiration and leave empowered with things you can do in your community right now to build the peaceful, just, green future we deserve - and that is within our reach!

Hope to see you there!

Admission fee: Sliding scale (\$10-\$50— Waivers available.) Admission includes a light breakfast and a wonderful lunch.
(Note: Since we are trying to minimize waste we invite you to bring your own plates, cups, and utensils if possible)
Child care available with advanced notice. Let us know ASAP!
Check the GRP website for the latest convention news.

Admission to the Convention is open to all (with basic admission fee). However, you must be a Green-Rainbow Party member to participate in votes during the afternoon business session. It's easy to join the party—just register GRP, or if registered Unenrolled, or not registered to vote, just pay GRP dues. To help with the convention or for more information, email convention.coordinator@green-rainbow.org.

It's time to invest in democracy

The Green-Rainbow Party is gearing up to run "Clean and Green" candidates around the state in 2010. These candidates will hold incumbents accountable, exert an influence on budgets, and put badly needed legislation on the table. The GRP is already a key force in the drive for the 2010 Voter Choice referendum that will bring instant runoff voting (ranked choice voting) to Massachusetts, opening up our closed political system and creating a model electoral system for the nation.

With new, dedicated leadership in place, Green-Rainbow volunteers have written plans, reorganized committees, and developed the critical infrastructure needed to make a difference. We have a more diverse group of active volunteers than ever before, and we are finding that voters are hungry for the alternative that our Party provides.

But while volunteers are the backbone of our Party, there is another critical need: money. Money for printing and mailing newsletters and brochures, renting space for meetings and conventions, reserving tables at conferences, and maintaining a website. We also need to provide basic support for our hard-working candidates, who need training materials, media assistance, and voter lists. If we can adequately meet these expenses, our volunteers will do the rest.

Now is the time to change the legislative and political landscape in our state and country. That's why we need you to consider making a generous contribution today to the Green-Rainbow Party. It's not just a charitable contribution—it's a sound investment in a better democracy. Please give as generously as you can by returning the form accompanying this article or visiting the donation page at www.green-rainbow.org. We promise each dollar will be spent wisely on creating a better future for us all. Whatever you can afford will be deeply appreciated.

WHEN: Saturday, November 21 9:00AM - 6:00PM

WHERE: Clark University — Tilton Hall
950 Main Street, Worcester

GREEN-RAINBOW RISING - REGISTRATION FORM

2009 Green-Rainbow Party State Convention

Please send this registration form by Monday, November 9th. Otherwise, register online or at the door. By giving this donation you acknowledge that as specified by US federal law you are a US citizen or a federally recognized permanent resident.

First _____ Middle _____ Last _____

Address _____

City/Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Occupation* _____ Employer* _____

* If your total contribution is \$200 or over in a year, state law requires this information

Convention Registration fee (\$10-\$50 sliding scale) Amount _____

Dietary Restrictions: vegan vegetarian other: _____

Free childcare with notification:

Childcare for _____ children. Provide ages: _____

Volunteer to help? registration setup breakdown other _____

Total payment enclosed: Cash Money Order Check Credit Card

Make check out to Green-Rainbow Party State Fund. Amounts over \$50 must be check, money order or credit card.

Credit Card Number: _____ Expiration Date _____

Signature _____ date _____

(Billing information must match name and address provided.)

CANCELLATIONS will be accepted through Nov. 16, 2009, with full registration fee refund.



Get Back to Us!

CONTRIBUTE

Yes! I will make a one-time financial contribution of \$ _____ to help the Green-Rainbow Party*

JOIN THE PARTY

I want to be a dues-paying financial supporter of the Green-Rainbow Party
 \$10 low income \$20 regular \$30 family \$50 supporting Other _____
 Monthly Sustainer: \$ _____ per month
 My voter registration is
 Green-Rainbow "unenrolled" not registered to vote.

VOLUNTEER

I want to get involved with Green-Rainbow activities. Please let me know about opportunities.
 My specific interests are: Local events These issues: _____

Add my email address (provided below) to the GRP Announcements email list

Please provide the information below. Thank you!

First _____ Middle _____ Last _____

Address _____ Apt # _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

**If your total contribution exceeds \$200 in a year,
Federal law requires you to provide occupation and employer**

Occupation _____ Employer _____

If paying by credit card, please provide the following information**:

Credit Card No. _____ Exp Date _____

Signature _____ Today's Date _____

Important Notes

* By making a donation you acknowledge that as specified by Federal law, you are a US citizen or a federally recognized permanent resident. Donations over \$100 must be made by check or credit card.

** Credit card billing information must match name and address.

Make checks payable to: Green-Rainbow Party Federal Fund
 Please return this form to:
Green-Rainbow Party, P.O. Box 470558, Brookline, MA 02447

foreclosure continued from page 1

organizations, and labor unions.

Currently, MAAPL is working on the issue in several ways. First, it is holding a series of public demonstrations designed to make the public aware of the continuing intransigence of the banks and lenders holding the mortgages. Second, MAAPL organizations and members are working locally to encourage home rule petitions addressing the crisis.

Finally, and most critically, four bills for homeowners' and tenants' relief have been filed in the state legislature; they have substantial sponsorship.

The four bills would achieve the

following four objectives: (1) prevent the eviction of homeowners and tenants except for cause; (2) institute a judicial foreclosure process that gives full legal rights to borrowers; (3) extend the moratorium period on foreclosures to 180 days; and (4) institute a foreclosure mediation process to give borrowers every chance to save their homes before foreclosure.

The bills currently languish in committee.

MAAPL is pressing the State Legislature to bring the bills to the floor for a vote. Further inaction will only allow the pain of the foreclosure crisis to spread.

LET'S SEE SOME ACTION ON FORECLOSURES!

MAAPL is asking everyone to stand by their neighbors faced with foreclosures and to urge their legislators to act on the four foreclosure bills before them. Please go to the website www.maapl.info for more information. There you can find the "Action Alert" page for information about planned actions. Also see the "Legislation" and "Documents" pages for summaries and detailed information about the bills' content and sponsors. You can check the "Municipalities" page for a list of communities which have initiated home rule petitions.

Green-Rainbow Rising 2009 Green-Rainbow Party State Convention

Worcester Saturday Nov. 21

A day of inspiration, action, and traction!

see page 7

If you get more than one copy of this paper, please call us at (617) 418-3756 or email office@green-rainbow.org — or send your labels to the return address below. If you want to receive an email when this newsletter is ready to be downloaded instead of a print version, please email us. Thanks for helping us save postage and paper!

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GRP calls for alternatives to regressive sales tax hike

In the Spring, the Massachusetts legislature increased the sales tax—by a whopping 25% overnight, soaring from 5% to 6.25%. This didn't sit well with the GRP State Committee, which adopted a proposal demanding the repeal of the increase at their July 18th meeting.

Calling the sales tax hike an unjust burden upon lower-income taxpayers, the GRP recommends that the regressive sales tax increase be replaced by more progressive taxes that would provide relief to low and moderate income families. This long-range solution to the state's perpetual fiscal crisis is not acknowledged by other opponents of the sales tax increase.

Rick Purcell, a Green-Rainbow member from Holyoke who ran for City Council in 2007, commented that "In this economy, the people in my community have their backs against the wall. For them, every dollar counts. Asking them to pay an even higher percentage of their income to the state is really going to hurt. I don't understand how the legislators can justify making our tax system even more unfair."

Purcell's not exaggerating when he calls the tax "unfair." The GRP cited studies showing that when all taxes and fees are considered, lower income residents of Massachusetts contribute to state coffers at a rate that is almost twice as high as the rate paid by the highest income brackets. One reason: lower-income people spend a much higher fraction of their incomes on items that are subject to taxation. On top of that, they also benefit less from the federal income tax deduction associated with state taxes.

Jill Stein, former Green-Rainbow candidate for Governor, noted that "Over the past few years, the Legislature has balanced the budget by turning to every regressive tax and fee in their toolkit. This is not only unfair, but it perpetuates a chronic budget crisis, with cut after cut to vital programs. We will never solve our revenue shortfalls by taxing people who are struggling to make ends meet. It's time for the wealthy to support the state at the same overall rate as everyone else. Let's start by repealing the sales tax hike and rejecting any tax hikes that increase the overall burden on low and moderate income people."

The sales tax hike does not lack for foes on the conservative side of the political spectrum. On July 29, Charles Baker, the Republican frontrunner, said, "I think we should try to figure out a way to get rid of the increase in the sales tax over the course of my term." Progressive taxation is not in the GOP playbook, so we can expect a Baker administration to use any tax cut as an excuse for cutting even more services and forcing even more fee increases.

A similar one-sided approach seems to be favored by ex-Democrat Tim Cahill. He suggests deep cuts to healthcare and education, forsaking Massachusetts' endeavor to provide health insurance for all.

On August 5 Libertarian activists took the first step to put a repeal of the sales tax on the 2010 ballot by filing ballot measure language with the Attorney General. In 2006 the Libertarian tried to eliminate the state income tax altogether.

The Green-Rainbow Party clearly distinguished itself from the usual anti-tax rhetoric that is so popular in election years by

tying the repeal to the need to "put progressive tax measures on the table." Nat Fortune, a tax policy analyst for the GRP, notes that "cutting a single regressive tax doesn't give people real relief because it just means that property taxes and fees go up to make up the revenue losses. To get real tax relief, the state legislature must use progressive tax measures, which only it can enact."

The GRP also called upon the State Legislature to enact "tax fairness legislation" similar to that on the books in Minnesota and Texas. These laws require a tax fairness study prior to enacting any major tax code changes.

Such studies make it clear how changes in tax policies will affect taxpayers in different income brackets. According to Stein, "Having an early warning when the Legislature is about to increase tax unfairness would be a big help in stopping the slide toward even more imbalance in how we fund state government."

Among the progressive tax options that have been largely ignored on Beacon Hill are the following:

- Increase the income tax rate while simultaneously increasing personal exemptions and enhancing the Earned Income Tax Credit. This provides needed revenues but shields low and moderate income taxpayers from the effect of the rate increase.

- Increase excise taxes upon things that tend to be used mostly by wealthy people. The Legislature chose to impose a huge increase in tobacco taxes, which hits people lower on the income scale.

- Tax advertising. If you can afford to barrage consumers with pleas to buy unnecessary stuff, why shouldn't you chip in and help fund something essential, like



"I don't understand how the legislators can justify making our tax system even more unfair."
—Rick Purcell

- public education?
- Tax legal services—with a suitable deduction.
- Institute a wealth tax, such as a one-half of one-percent tax on stocks and bonds. This ensures that wealthy people do not take advantage of deductions, paper losses, and accelerated depreciation allowances to hide their real income and thus avoid paying the income tax.

One of the fairest ways to raise needed revenues is to increase the income tax. But this was taken off the table before the budget debate even began when Speaker of the House Robert DeLeo told the *Boston Globe* that any idea for boosting the income tax was "dead on arrival." Legislators seem just as determined to keep the progressive income tax off the agenda.

The GRP is the only Massachusetts party that supports a progressive state income tax. Because this policy change would require a constitutional amendment, and not just passage of a law, it's not an option that could be implemented in time to address the immediate budget crisis. But as the Green-Rainbow Party becomes a more visible voice in Massachusetts politics, such tax fairness reforms will be harder to ignore.