

Press Release
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Mayors Team Up to Support Municipal Partnership Act

Lowell – Mayor William Manzi, III yesterday joined with over 20 Mayors from cities across Massachusetts to call for swift passage of the Municipal Partnership Act filed by Governor Deval Patrick and Lt. Governor Timothy Murray. The Mayors voiced their resounding support for the legislation, which would provide communities with resources and tools to reduce the local property tax burden on homeowners, diversify local tax revenues, and achieve important cost savings to help balance city budgets and protect local services.

The Mayors rallied to support the Municipal Partnership Act at a meeting of the Massachusetts Mayors' Association, a member group of the Massachusetts Municipal Association, held on March 28 in the City of Lowell. "The Mayors of Massachusetts applaud Governor Patrick and Lt. Governor Murray for their commitment to our communities," the Mayors said in a joint statement. "There are serious fiscal problems ahead for our cities and for the state, and the Municipal Partnership Act must be passed by the Legislature so we can have the real reform that is needed to face these challenges effectively, allowing us to protect local property taxpayers, provide essential services, and grow our economy."

The Municipal Partnership Act would reduce reliance on the property tax by allowing cities and towns to levy a local option meals tax of up to 2%, increase the local option lodging tax by 1%, close the gaping telecommunications property tax loophole that costs homeowners and businesses \$80 million a year, make it easier for communities to join the state employee health insurance pool if that would yield savings, have the state invest pension assets for about one-third of the local pension systems to increase investment returns, provide important relief for 13 communities facing a state-mandated classification shift that would place a greater burden on residential taxpayers, and grant additional management powers in some key fiscal and program areas. The bill is the most far-reaching municipal empowerment legislation in the past 25 years.

"The need for the legislation has become even more urgent as the state struggles with a \$1 billion state budget gap, and local aid is not where we need it to be," said Mayor Manzi. "We are asking our state legislators, our residents, our taxpayers and the members of our business community to recognize the need to pass this bill."

"Passage of the Municipal Partnership Act is a major priority this year," said Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone, the 2007 president of the Mayors' Association. "This legislation simply gives our cities the tools and options we need to balance our budgets, protect taxpayers, and promote economic development. We thank the Governor for filing the bill, and we need our Legislators to act swiftly to make it the Municipal Partnership Law."

"The bottom line is that the Municipal Partnership Act is necessary to ensure that our cities and towns are treated as equal partners with the state," said Geoff Beckwith, the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Municipal Association. "Until this partnership is made real, Massachusetts will be unable to compete with the rest of the nation for people, jobs and investment," concluded Beckwith.

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