



ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

As I have gone door to door over the last few months, it is clear that climate change is at the top of the list of constituent concerns. As your State Representative, I will work to advance the innovative solutions we need to fight climate change. Massachusetts must lead the nation in developing model policies and systems as well as commercially viable technology.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

To fight climate change, let's get back to the basics. Let's undertake a campaign to educate the public on ways we can conserve energy by modifying our behavior. Some examples include: turning off lights, using cold water to wash clothes and air drying them, unplugging electronics that are not being used, adjusting the refrigerator temperature, using energy efficient light bulbs, keeping your home warmer in the summer and cooler in the winter and taking public transportation. **As State Representative, I would support a public education campaign to encourage energy conservation. It is a small investment with big returns for our future.**

CLEAN ENERGY

Incentivize Energy Efficiency

Massachusetts can lead the way in setting energy efficiency standards. If the state is investing in the construction of new facilities, they should be energy efficient or better yet: zero net energy. Old infrastructure should be buttoned up to increase energy efficiency and renewable energy technology should be installed whenever possible.

Retrofitting lighting stock with new LED lightbulbs has generated savings but we must push for additional energy conservation/efficiency incentives that achieve deeper savings. Massachusetts should look for ways to incentivize the insulation of buildings and replace inefficient heating systems with clean options (e.g. Air Source Heat pumps).

The Mass Save program has played an important role in these efforts but it can do better. **As State Representative, I would explore ways to ensure Mass Save is working for all residents of Massachusetts.**

Institute Carbon Pricing

We must put a fee on fossil fuels. They're bad for our economy, bad for our health and bad for the environment. The revenue generated from the fee would be returned via rebates to households and employers, putting cash back into the pocket of residents to spend as they choose. It can also be invested in clean energy infrastructure, transportation, and technology development and deployment. **As State Representative, I would support this powerful tool to rein in emissions. This is a program that could be expanded regionally once proven successful.**

Lift the Cap on Net Metering

Net metering allows customers to send electricity generated by their solar panel system back onto the grid in exchange for a credit on future bills. In places like New England, net metering allows property owners to “bank” net metering credits when there’s more sunshine and daylight. When winter arrives, those credits can be used to lower monthly electric costs. Current regulations cap the energy that can be sold back to the grid. Because of high demand for the program, we keep bumping up against those limits. When the caps are reached, new solar customers sell their electricity back to the grid at a lower rate, leaving them with less incentive to invest in solar. **As State Representative, I would fight to lift the net metering cap to incentivize the installation of solar and continue job growth in this field.**

Encourage and Expand Community Solar

Community solar can be beneficial when there are physical or financial barriers to the installation of solar panels. If you don’t own your own home, live in multifamily housing or don’t have a suitable roof, community solar allows residents to share the costs and benefits of solar. **As State Representative, I would act to restore the retail net metering credit for community-shared and low-income solar.**

Strengthen the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS)

It is critically important to strengthen the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS). Recently the legislature voted to increase the RPS to 2%. While I am pleased with the increase, we must do more to reach our goal of 50% renewable power by 2030. **As State Representative, I would work with a broad coalition to modify the RPS to an annual 3% increase.**

Support the Green Communities Act

The Green Community Designation and Grant Program provide a roadmap along with financial and technical support to municipalities that 1) pledge to cut municipal energy use by an ambitious and achievable goal of 20 percent over 5 years and 2) meet four other criteria established in the Green Communities Act. Participation in the Program has grown steadily since the first group of 35 municipalities achieved designation status in July of 2010 to include more than half of the cities and towns of the Commonwealth. **As State Representative, I would encourage communities to pursue this designation to help meet our clean energy goals.**

Implement a Green Bank

Green Banks create public/private financing for renewable energy, energy efficiency, and conservation projects. Connecticut’s Green Bank is a successful model that provides loans to support a wide range of energy improvements, a solar lease specifically tailored for low-to-moderate income homeowners, and educational resources on incentives for installing solar. **As State Representative, I would support the establishment of a similar Green Bank program in Massachusetts.**

Oppose Biomass

As State Representative, I would oppose the construction of largescale biomass facilities. I witnessed the fight over the proposed location of a biomass facility in Springfield and am grateful for the community who organized to protect residents who were already suffering from asthma. Greenfield also fought a similar battle more recently.

As State Representative, I would be interested in the expansion of anaerobic digesters.

Anaerobic digesters use microorganisms to convert biodegradable material into biogas to produce renewable energy and fertilizer. The anaerobic digester at Bar-Way Farm in Deerfield features a 660,000-gallon capacity tank and will co-digest 9,125 tons of manure and 36,500 tons of organic food waste annually. This offsets 5,500 lbs. of CO2 emissions daily. The 7,700

MWh of renewable energy produced by the Deerfield Anaerobic system is equivalent to the needs of 1,600 homes.

Grid Modernization

The more we can localize energy production the better off we'll be. **As State Representative, I would support community-based, owned, and controlled energy production.**

Massachusetts should require electric utilities to create resilient "smart" grids – both macro and micro. Smart-meters can enable utilities to charge different prices depending on when the customer uses power.

FOSSIL FUELS

Fossil Fuel Infrastructure

Methane is significantly more dangerous than CO2 in our atmosphere. There were 16,000 gas leaks in MA at the end of 2015, costing ratepayers \$50 - \$128 million annually. We have to stop the leaks for public safety, for our environment, for our health, and for savings. **As State Representative, I would work to ensure that companies, not customers, are responsible for the financial costs of sealing leaks.** They should be investing in the efficiency of their existing infrastructure, not building new.

Fracked gas from Marcellus shale is not a bridge fuel. It takes us backward – not forward. I saw firsthand the impact the proposed Northeast Direct project had on residents and businesses and believe that their collective advocacy served as a wake-up call to the industry. **As a result of these experiences, I would oppose pipeline expansion as State Representative.**

Taxpayer Financed Pipeline Expansion

In a 2016 decision, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court halted the public financing of new pipelines. I agree with this decision. **As State Representative, I would lead the fight to ensure that taxpayer dollars are never used to finance the expansion of pipeline infrastructure.**

Initiate DPU Reform

As Congressman McGovern's staffer, I advised him on the Northeast Direct project and liaised with our state elected officials, local communities, landowners and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

The federal disregard for constitutional provisions (Article 97) that the Commonwealth put in place to *protect* land from exactly this type of development was extremely discouraging. And to be frank, the DPU let us down. They

- routinely side with the fossil fuel industry
- fight to curb renewable energy
- push to charge consumers to fund pipeline expansion, and
- reject meaningful public participation in its decision-making processes

While the FERC is the lead agency for interstate gas pipeline siting and approval, states retain important roles in the financing and permitting of these projects. The Department of Public Utilities (DPU) reviews and approves the pipeline capacity contracts that utilities enter into with pipeline developers. These contracts are the financial foundation for pipeline projects.

Approved contracts are the primary (if not only) factor that FERC considers in establishing whether there is a "need" for a pipeline.

As State Representative, I would support legislation that enhances the review of these contracts and addresses other needed reforms identified over the course of proceedings for previously proposed pipeline expansions. Such legislation would:

- Allow for more involvement from impacted communities and ratepayers in DPU proceedings
- Protect ratepayers against self-dealing by energy conglomerates
- Require consideration of siting impacts and detailed alternative analysis, including protections to conservation lands
- Codify the August 2016 ruling by the Supreme Judicial Court, which found that a proposal by MA DPU violated the 1997 Restructuring Act and put consumers at risk
- Protect landowners from avoidable intrusion by pipeline companies

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Climate change puts Environmental Justice (EJ) communities who are already suffering from environmental hazards at additional risk. These communities are disproportionately affected by fossil fuel pollution. We saw this firsthand with the attempt to locate a biomass facility in Springfield, where air quality standards were already low and asthma rates high. We must ensure that communities have a voice in decisions around emissions reduction, renewable energy infrastructure and disaster protection and recovery. **As State Representative, I would support an Environmental Justice panel and a Supplemental Environmental Project bank to fund projects in EJ communities.**

STATE BUDGET AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The Franklin County Chamber of Commerce is one of 16 Regional Tourism Councils across the state. As the Executive Director of this agency, I have fought to position the region as the outdoor recreation capital of Massachusetts. Visits to our region for outdoor recreational purposes generates tax revenue and jobs. Access to the incredible outdoor resources that we enjoy has the additional benefit of promoting a healthy lifestyle and benefit both mental and physical health.

Fund our Environmental Agencies

Our state environmental agencies play a critical role in protecting the natural resources that benefit our public health and fuel the economy. Funding for our environmental agencies has been cut significantly over the years. In 2001, they received 1% of the state's operating budget. Today they receive 0.5%. This has led to dramatic cuts in staffing to make ends meet. Staffing at the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is down 30%. Among many other things, the DEP is responsible for monitoring water quality, developing water pollution control plans, and issuing water supply permits. DCR manages state parks and oversees more than 450,000 acres throughout Massachusetts. The agency protects, promotes, and enhances the state's natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

Employees at DCR and DEP choose to work at these agencies because they care deeply about our environment. They are stretched to the limits – doing everything they can to support their agency's missions - with fewer and fewer resources. We have to invest in these agencies and

support the public servants who care so deeply about these issues. **As State Representative, I would fight to allocate 2% of our state budget to our environmental agencies.**

LAND CONSERVATION

Conserving our land not only ensures the beautiful landscapes that benefit our local economy but also protects animal habitat and water quality. According to the Trust for Public Land, every \$1 of state spending on land conservation leverages \$1.23 in additional public and private contributions. Additionally, our forests play a significant role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions by cycling and capturing carbon pollution.

Massachusetts is a national leader when it comes to land protection – 25% of our land is protected. Approximately 450,000 acres are state-owned land. We need to do more.

As your State Representative, I would:

Increase Capital Funding for Land Protection

If we want to protect our forests, working farms and increase access to parks, we must support these goals financially. Capital investments have fallen from a high of approximately \$50 million to \$37 million annually. We cannot rely on the federal government to continue its support of land protection programs. **As State Representative, I would increase funding for this program to at least \$60 million.**

Increase Funding for the Community Preservation Act (CPA)

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a smart growth tool that helps communities preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities. CPA also helps strengthen the state and local economies by expanding housing opportunities and construction jobs for the Commonwealth's workforce, and by supporting the tourism industry through preservation of the Commonwealth's historic and natural resources. **As State Representative, I would increase the state match for CPA funding from 17% to at least 35%.**

Support the Conservation Land Tax Credit

This tax credit leverages private investment in conservation and has helped to conserve 12,000 acres of land, including working farms and forests. **As State Representative, I would increase the annual cap from \$1 million to at least \$5 million per year.**

Advance a Healthy Soils Initiative

In California, farmers are receiving a subsidy to utilize different techniques to sequester carbon in the ground. For example, one farmer received \$50,000 to put composted manure around the trees and planting clover between the trunks as ground cover. By storing carbon in the soil, we limit the carbon emitted into the atmosphere. **As State Representative, I would support legislation to promote healthy soils.**

Amend the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program (PILOT)

There are approximately 450,000 acres of state-owned land in Massachusetts. This land protects the beauty of our Commonwealth and valuable animal habitat but takes money off of local tax rolls. The PILOT program is intended to reimburse municipalities for this loss of revenue.

The program has never been fully funded. It would take \$42 million to pay existing protected acres. Currently, there is \$28.5 million in the budget.

The Department of Revenue is required to re-evaluate the property every decade and in the most recent re-evaluation, forest land was valued more in some communities than in others. This variation significantly impacted local budgets.

As State Representative, I would file legislation not only to fully fund the PILOT payments but also change the source of funding for the payments. I would ensure that a requirement was put in place so that state can only spend money on land acquisition if it puts money into a trust fund to pay for the PILOT payment.

TRANSPORTATION

Our transportation system produces 40% of our state's greenhouse gas emissions, making it the largest source of pollution in Massachusetts. It is the one area of our economy where emissions have grown since 1990. If we are serious about addressing climate change, we must reduce transportation emissions.

As your State Representative, I would:

Invest in Public Transportation

Public transit is the only option for some to get to work, school, the grocery store and healthcare appointments. Chronically underfunding Regional Transit Agencies leaves them with only two choices to make ends meet: raise fares and/or reduce service. As a result, those most in need suffer. As someone with a deep knowledge of the Transportation Improvement Program and the State Transportation Improvement Program, I am uniquely qualified to advocate for our Regional Transit Agencies. **We must fully fund our public transportation system and invest in electric buses whenever feasible.**

Support Regional Ballot Initiatives

As State Representative, I would also support an effort introduced by Tim Brennan of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and advanced by MA Senator Eric Lesser to allow regional ballot initiatives to support regional transportation projects. This would enable local money raised from local communities to be spent on local transportation projects or operations.

Support a Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative-type Program for Transportation

While I believe carbon pricing is the most expeditious way to generate the revenue necessary to reduce transportation emissions, this initiative could be explored as part of a package of investments. Modeled after the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative in the electric sector, this multi-state initiative would place a price on carbon emissions from the transportation sector and utilize the revenue to invest in things like enhanced rail service, public transportation, electric buses, the adoption of electric vehicles (EV), EV charging stations and the expansion of bike paths. Carbon pricing is the preferred approach to reducing transportation emissions because of the time it could take to generate such a multi-state agreement. We cannot wait.

Encourage Investments in Electric Vehicles

The transition to electric vehicles is critical to cutting transportation emissions. It is one of the most cost-effective strategies to reduce carbon emissions. The state must utilize the \$69 million plus in funds available through the Volkswagen Environment Mitigation Trust to incentivize

investment in zero-emission vehicles and install charging infrastructure. Additionally, the state should develop a statewide rebate program and EV car sharing pilot programs.

The Commonwealth should lead by example and prohibit state and municipal purchases of fossil fuel powered passenger vehicles by 2020.

INNOVATION AND THE GREEN ECONOMY

Let's adopt a comprehensive energy plan that fuels our economy. The 2017 Massachusetts Clean Energy Industry Report reported that the clean energy sector expanded to more than 109,000 jobs between 2016 and 2017. The industry also contributed \$11.4 billion to Massachusetts' Gross State Product, representing 2.3% of the Massachusetts economy.

Massachusetts can lead the nation in clean energy innovation and jobs. We should adopt a clear path forward to do just that.

Let's partner with our institutions of higher education, challenging them to foster technology development that will drive the green economy while fighting climate change. Examples include advances in battery storage and carbon-neutral fuels. As the former Chief of Staff to the Chancellor at UMass Amherst, I am uniquely qualified to work with our public universities to identify ways to harness university research and foster startups.

In the 1840's Horace Mann observed, "Having no other mines to work, Massachusetts has mined into the human intellect; and, from its limitless resources, she has won more sustaining and enduring prosperity and happiness than if she had been founded on a stratification of silver and gold, reaching deeper down than geology has yet penetrated." Massachusetts must put our human intellect to work for our nation in the fight against climate change. We must set the example for other New England states and the nation to follow.

This position paper is meant to be the start of a conversation with voters about climate change and environmental issues in Massachusetts. If there are things I have missed or if you have suggestions for ways we can work together, please reach out to me at info@BlaisForMA.org.