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October 2010

Issue: 2

# MetroWest

Center for Independent Living, Inc.

## Get Ready to Vote!

Dear Paul,

This second issue of our Newsletter focuses on the three Ballot Issues which will be on every MA ballot on November 2. Each of the three questions will have repercussions for people with disabilities receiving services *if the questions pass*. MWCIL, along with many candidates, government officials and organizations urgently asks you to vote No, No, No on the three ballot questions! Scroll down to get more information on the impacts of these critical ballot questions. We hope that you will share this information with your friends and family, and convince them to also go to the polls and vote NO, NO, NO!

If you think your vote doesn't matter, read this September 27 [Boston Globe](#) poll on the Ballot Questions. EVERY VOTE COUNTS.

The deadline to register to vote is today, October 13.

Contact your town hall ASAP if you need an Absentee Ballot.

from Paul Spooner, Executive Director

## Ballot Question 1

Question 1 would eliminate the sales tax on alcoholic beverages, costing the state \$110 million in tax revenue that's now dedicated to drug and alcohol treatment programs.



### VOTE NO on QUESTION 1

*Revenue generated by the alcohol tax is dedicated to maintaining services for those seeking to end addiction.* Advocates for a NO vote warn that eliminating the alcohol tax would worsen the state budget crisis and decimate recovery services in the state. It is estimated that \$115 million a year in new state revenue is being collected, and these funds help support human services. Repealing the tax will result in cuts in services to over 100,000 people each year who are struggling with substance abuse problems. For more information on the issue, and on how you can help, visit the [No On 1 website](#).

"If we don't pay for these services, people die," said Rep. Liz Malia,



### In This Issue

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### Attention Professionals

Informational Breakfast Meeting  
Monday, Nov. 8th  
9:00 AM to 10:30 AM  
Callahan Center in Framingham.

MWCIL and the MetroWest SHINE program are sponsoring an informational breakfast meeting for professionals who assist people with disabilities.

### Topics include

- Medicare changes for 2011, MassHealth options
- Training opportunities for professionals
- Advocacy issues.

R.S.V.P. by October 27th to  
Kathy Worhach, MetroWest  
SHINE Outreach Associate  
[kworhach@needhamma.gov](mailto:kworhach@needhamma.gov).

D- Jamaica Plain, chairwoman of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Committee. "It's very simple math. We're not asking for a lot. We're taxing something that needs to pay for itself in terms of the damage it does to individuals and communities." (reported by Brittany Danielson in the [Sept. 29 MetroWest News](#))

A No vote is supported by over 150 nonprofit organizations including the MA Hospital Association, Bay State Health, MA Health Council, MA Public Health Association, MA Association of Community Health Centers... These organizations argue that alcohol does not deserve a tax exemption because it is not a necessity such as food, clothing or prescription medication. And they recognize a growing understanding of the costs and consequences of drug and alcohol addiction on the state's health care system.

#### **Who is Funding the Debate?**

(From the [Taunton Daily Gazette Sept 29](#))

Predictably, package store owners and liquor wholesalers have raised more than \$750,000 to support this question.

Opponents to Question 1(a No vote) have raised just over \$110,000 (as of 9/29). Much of those funds are from social service centers and other nonprofits who assist those struggling with alcohol and substance abuse.

***Make your voice heard by voting.***

## Ballot Question 2

Question 2 would repeal Chapter 40B, which allows developers to circumvent exclusionary zoning laws to build affordable housing in communities where there is none or very few units available.

The Affordable Housing Law was passed in 1969.



VOTE NO on QUESTION 2

Massachusetts is an expensive place to live. A website for [Vote No on 2](#) provides facts on the consequences of repealing 40B. (Don't miss their extensive list of supporters - including most-if-not-all organizations supporting people with disabilities!) The Affordable Housing Law has been responsible for 80% of the affordable housing created in Massachusetts over the past decade, outside the major cities. Approximately 58,000 homes have been created for seniors, people with disabilities, and working and middle class families. Approximately 40,000 are apartments and 18,000 are home ownership. *And there are 12,000 homes in the pipeline that will not get built if this law is repealed.*

One of the biggest issues for our consumers at MWCIL continues to be affordable housing. Even with 40B, affordable housing is still not easy to find. Please, vote NO on this mean-spirited question.

A coalition has formed to support a NO vote. The No coalition includes civic, business, religious and academic leaders, as well as senior, environmental, housing, disability rights and civil rights

October - National Disability Employment Awareness Month  
President Barack Obama has declared October 2010 as National Disability Employment Awareness month. His administration is committed to providing people with disabilities equal access to jobs. The Federal Government will act as a role model, and increase their hiring of people with disabilities. Read the [whole proclamation](#) on the White House website.



October March  
10-2-10

Ethan B. Ellis joined 400,000 others. Read his thoughts on the day in his [blog at Go Next Step](#).

## ***About Us:***

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Phone: 508-875-7853  
280 Irving Street  
Framingham, MA 01702

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groups. Even the Massachusetts Association of Realtors is supporting a No vote!

***Make your voice heard by voting.***

## Ballot Question 3

Question 3 would cut the state sales tax to 3%, thereby costing the state \$2.5 billion in tax revenue which would mean even more huge state and local budget cuts.



VOTE NO on QUESTION 3

No one likes to pay taxes. Supporters have provided limited anecdotal evidence of waste with no credible plans or ideas on how the state can operate with this added \$2.5 billion loss. Read on and learn about the predicted consequences.

If this measure passes, 30 percent across the board cuts are projected in virtually all state programs, including local aid, higher education, human services, prisons, courts, environmental protection, and state parks and beaches, according to a report released by the *conservative* Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation. [Click Here](#) to read the full report. The report concludes that state leaders would face a \$4.5 billion shortfall in the fiscal 2012 budget - an already existing structural deficit of at least \$2 billion plus \$2.5 billion of reduced tax revenues by cutting the sales tax from 6.25 percent to 3 percent.

If passed, this measure goes into effect in January. Voters need to consider the fact that many state expenses and costs are mandated, and cannot be reduced, resulting in even higher cuts to discretionary spending. There could easily be 100,000 layoffs in state and local government including teachers, firefighters and police. 100,000 more unemployed residents will be devastating to our overall economy. Vote NO.

The [Vote No on Question 3 website](#) has an interactive graphic projecting how much local aid would be cut to your town, in addition to other valuable information.

The [Massachusetts Council of Human Service Providers, Inc.](#) provides the following predictions if this question passes: This measure would eliminate many human services jobs and leave vulnerable individuals without necessary services. Communities would be asked to make up the shortfall, which could include property tax increases and additional cuts to public services. It would negatively impact the economic environment of the state and could deter businesses from coming to Massachusetts.

Even business organizations are against Question 3 because they understand that economic development and maintaining a workforce of skilled employees requires strong public services.

***Of the three ballot questions, this one is the scariest. The cuts to disability services will be devastating.*** All four gubernatorial candidates and many of our elected officials in government, as well

as many candidates are against this question, and support a NO vote. This ballot question does not provide a credible or thoughtful path to reducing government's costs.

***Make your voice heard by voting.***

## Voter Tips

To find out where to vote, where to register (by October 13), where to get an absentee ballot, and who is on your ballot, visit this [website](#) by William Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth.

To find out who is on your ballot, and how each candidate has responded to specific questions, visit the [Boston Globe database](#). Fill in your address and targeted information will appear. (link provided by ADDP newsletter).

According to [Mark Mellman](#), ADA voters are a huge constituency. More than 30 million Americans with disabilities are of voting age, and 15 million turned out in 2008, despite physical impediments at over a quarter of the national polling places, according to a Government Accountability Office study. To put those numbers in perspective, the "disabled vote" is nearly as large as the African-American vote, 50 percent larger than the Latino vote and many times larger than the Jewish vote - all segments that receive substantial attention from campaigns.

note: We "borrowed" Mark Mellman's report from the [Justice for All blog](#) and newsletter!

## Accessible Technology

The House and Senate have passed the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act authored by Representative Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.). President Obama signed the Act on Friday, October 8. (Read a [report](#) from NPR) This landmark legislation will make it easier for the blind and deaf to have access to the Internet, smart phones, television programming and other communications and video technologies.

"Whether it's a Braille reader or a broadband connection, access to technology is not a political issue - it's a participation issue," said Rep. Ed Markey. "Two decades ago, Americans with disabilities couldn't get around if buildings weren't wheelchair accessible; today it's about being Web accessible."

"The ADA mandated physical ramps into buildings. Today, individuals with disabilities need online ramps to the Internet so they can get to the Web from wherever they happen to be," said Markey. "Passage of this bill is a landmark achievement in the fight for equal access to technology for all Americans. From the time of Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan - through the Americans with Disabilities Act - to closed captioning for television programming and the ability of individuals who are deaf to make telephone calls - and now to the comprehensive communications and video accessibility

bill that has passed both the House and Senate, we've made great strides."

Markey's 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (H.R. 3101 and Ref: S.3304) significantly increases accessibility for Americans with disabilities to the indispensable telecommunications and video technology tools of the 21st century by:

- Making access to the Web through improved user interfaces for smart phones
- Requires each interconnected VoIP service provider to participate in, and contribute to, the Telecommunications Relay Services Fund.
- Requires a manufacturer of equipment used for advanced communications to ensure that the equipment and software it designs, develops, and fabricates is accessible to, and usable by, individuals with disabilities, where such requirement is achievable.
- Enabling Americans who are blind to enjoy TV more fully through audible descriptions of the on-screen action
- Making TV program guides and selection menus accessible to people with vision loss
- Providing Americans who are deaf the ability to watch new TV programs online with the captions included
- Mandating that remote controls have a button or similar mechanism to easily access the closed captioning on broadcast and pay TV
- Requiring that telecom equipment used to make calls over the Internet is compatible with hearing aids
- For low-income Americans who are both deaf and blind, providing a share of a total \$10 million per year to purchase accessible Internet access and telecom services so these individuals can more fully participate in society.
- Sets forth provisions concerning: (1) enforcement and reporting; (2) deaf-blind individuals; and (3) emergency access.
- Establishes the Emergency Access and Real-time Text Advisory Committee.

Some of this information is excerpted from [TMC News](#).

## Medicaid's Compliance with Olmstead

In recognition of the six month anniversary of the health reform law, a new report from the National Senior Citizens Law Center, with support from The SCAN Foundation, calls on states to use the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to end Medicaid's long-standing bias toward funding long-term care in institutional settings such as nursing homes. You can read more at the [NSCLC website](#).

## Health Care Reform

Most of us still don't understand Health Care Reform. The Kaiser Family Foundation has developed a [short video](#) with facts instead of opinions! Disability.org provided the link.

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MetroWest Center for Independent Living | 280 Irving Street | Framingham | MA | 01702

