



MMA Legislative Package for 2025-26 session

MMA bills, listed by policy committee

Fiscal Policy Committee

Municipal and public safety building authority (re-file): This bill would establish a new independent state authority, the Massachusetts municipal and public safety building authority, which would assist municipalities with the construction of or improvements to public safety or municipal buildings and facilities.

Local-option meals tax (re-file): This bill would increase the local-option sales tax on meals from 0.75% to 1.5% upon approval by vote of the local legislative body. Receipts from the tax would continue to be for the municipal general fund.

Local-option excise on alcohol for substance abuse prevention and public health programs (re-file): This bill would allow cities and towns to adopt a sales tax of up to 2% on the retail sale of alcoholic beverages, including sales in bars, restaurants, package stores and other non-pouring establishments. Approval would be by vote of the local legislative body. The revenue would be dedicated to local substance abuse and other public health programs.

Transparency and accountability in charter school finance (new): This bill would cap the basic “foundation” assessment on individual cities, towns and regional school districts used to finance charter school tuition payments at the statewide average required local contribution amount calculated under Chapter 70. This proposal would not change how tuition is calculated; any tuition amount above the cap payable to a charter school would be funded through state appropriation.

Senior property tax exemption, local option (new): This bill would allow cities and towns to grant an additional property tax exemption to qualifying seniors, at local option, based on the state’s senior circuit breaker income tax credit. Criteria for exemption would include owning and living in the subject home, having durational residency, and qualifying based on certain other income and asset levels. The amount of the exemption would be determined locally and provided for within the residential class.

Policy Committee on Energy and the Environment

Sustainable water resource funds (re-file): This bill would clarify and strengthen the authority of cities and towns to establish water, stormwater, and wastewater utility fees to support the cost of expanded or upgraded water infrastructure, protect public health, and meet federal Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act requirements and other state and federal environmental requirements.

Extended producer responsibility for paint (re-file): This bill would require producers of paint to submit a plan for a post-consumer paint collection and stewardship program and would direct the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection to promulgate regulations related to enforcement procedures and to post plan information on its website.

Protecting water systems through the labeling of flushable wipes (re-file): This bill would require manufacturers of disposable products — such as diaper wipes, toilet wipes, household cleaning wipes, personal care wipes and facial wipes — to label products as non-flushable if they do not meet performance standards for flushing. The bill would also set standards for required labeling, require manufacturers to test products and verify that they meet performance standards, set penalties for violations, and allow the attorney general to enforce the law.

Municipal Fossil-Fuel-Free Building Demonstration Program Expansion (new): This bill would expand the Municipal Fossil-Fuel-Free Building Demonstration Program beyond the existing cap of 10 municipalities. The program could promote fossil-fuel-free infrastructure development via local option, while enabling the initial communities to participate, navigate more stringent development requirements, and establish best practices.

Policy Committee on Municipal and Regional Administration

Permanent option for remote public meetings (re-file): This bill would create a permanent option for remote meetings and participation. Members of public bodies participating remotely would be considered present when determining a quorum, and would participate as full members. Meetings of public bodies held remotely or in hybrid format would be required to make provisions to ensure public access and that any party entitled or required to participate by law, local ordinance or bylaw may do so through remote means as well. The executive body of a municipality would be required to adopt standards and guidelines for remote participation prior to any remote meeting being held.

Local-option increase of civil penalty (re-file): This bill would allow a municipality to increase, at local option, the cap for civil penalties under Chapter 40, Section 21D, from up to \$300 to up to \$500 to account for cost-of-living increases since this law was last updated.

Shared services and regionalization bonus points (re-file): This bill would direct the Division of Local Services to work with all state agencies to assign bonus points to rural communities that, as part of an application process for a discretionary grant or incentive program, indicate that they intend to share services or regionalize with another community in order to be eligible for the grant. For the purposes of this bill, rural communities are municipalities with a population density of fewer than 500 persons per square mile.

Legal notices (re-file; update): This bill would give municipalities more options to satisfy the publication requirement for legal notices, including, but not limited to,

publication on its own website, and/or the website of a local, regional or statewide online newspaper that does not maintain a print publication.

Procurement parity and technical corrections to public construction law (re-file): This bill would increase the procurement cap under the Uniform Procurement Act (Ch. 30B) from \$50,000 to \$100,000, to bring all municipal purchases (not including property) in line with changes made in 2022. It would also close the RFP loophole by allowing RFP or qualifications-based selection for purchases made between \$10,000 and \$100,000.

Payment of veterans' benefits (re-file): This bill would streamline the state's system for financing benefits paid to veterans consistent with sound direct payment practices adopted by other state agencies. A single state appropriation for payment of 100% of benefits directly to veterans would simplify the financing and administration of this program with the Department of Veterans' Services. This change would reform the current law, which requires cities and towns to separately try to predict and finance the needs of the Commonwealth's veterans and adjust during the course of the year.

Extending the right of first refusal timeline (re-file): This bill would extend the right of first refusal timeline under Chapter 61A of the General Laws to give cities and towns more time to determine whether they are able to purchase the agricultural or horticultural land from the landowner before sale.

Municipal control of liquor licenses (re-file): This bill would give municipal legislative bodies the authority to create a process to set the number of liquor licenses available each year. The licensing board or other local body responsible for issuing licenses would still control the granting of such licenses. This proposal would eliminate the need to go to the Legislature with a home rule petition to gain more liquor licenses.

Alternative delivery of infrastructure projects (re-file): This bill would provide an alternative to traditional project delivery systems, in order to allow for greater private sector participation in the financing and delivery of projects, offering efficiency and innovation.

Policy Committee on Personnel and Labor Relations

Membership on State Retiree Benefits Trust Fund Board of Trustees

(re-file): This bill would add a municipal seat and a "schools" seat to the State Retiree Benefits Trust Fund's Board of Trustees. Municipalities and regional school districts would have the option to invest in the SRBTF to meet other post-employment benefit (OPEB) liabilities. This proposal would ensure that municipal and regional school district perspectives are properly recognized on the board.

Municipal unemployment insurance reforms (re-file): This bill would make teachers and professional and nonprofessional educational employees who work on behalf of a school system, but are paid through municipal budgets, ineligible to collect unemployment insurance benefits when school is not in session, by extending them a "reasonable assurance" of employment. The bill would also reduce unemployment benefits

by an amount equal to 65% of a retiree's weekly pension for retirees collecting both unemployment benefits and a pension from the same public or private employer.

Structure of the Commonwealth Employment Relations Board (re-file):

This bill would modify the membership of the Commonwealth Employment Relations Board to require that the three members include a management representative, a labor representative and a neutral party. Currently, the only stipulation for membership is that no more than two members can be from the same political party. Party affiliation, however, is not an adequate proxy for an individual's leanings toward management or labor.

Addition of Curing Period for Wage Act Payouts (new): This bill would amend the Wage Act to allow a 15-day period to cure claims of unpaid wages following a demand letter by an employee before such complaints may be brought. Since the 2022 Supreme Judicial Court decision in *Reuter v. City of Methuen*, all Wage Act violations risk treble (3x) damages, regardless of whether the employer remedies the violation prior to the filing of a suit.

Policy Committee on Public Works, Transportation and Public Utilities

Municipal authority in public rights of way (re-file):

This bill would give municipalities increased authority over utilities that operate in public rights of way. When utilities delay in relocating poles and wires, municipalities would have the authority to move them and to charge utilities for non-performance. The bill would also give municipalities the ability to assess fees and levy taxes on utilities that operate in public rights of way, and would give municipalities the ability to pass bylaws or ordinances related to the licensing and permitting of utilities in the right of way.

Assisting municipal and district ratepayers (re-file): This bill would establish a mechanism through which the state must identify and enumerate any costs, benefits and financial impacts of rules and regulations proposed by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs before they take effect. The bill would require a more detailed cost-benefit analysis than is currently required by the rule-making process.

Chapter 90 Bond Authorization (re-file; update): This bill would fund the Chapter 90 local road and bridge maintenance program for at least \$350 million per year for two years (fiscal 2026 and 2027), with timely disbursement to ensure that money is available by April 1.

Green Lights for Municipal Emergency Management Vehicles (new): This bill would allow municipal emergency management vehicles and departments of public works vehicles to mount or display flashing, rotating or oscillating green lights to promote visibility and roadside safety and regulate use.