

TOWN OF NORTH ANDOVER
OFFICE OF
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
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The Honorable Governor Deval Patrick
Office of the Governor
Room 360
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Patrick,

The North Andover Board of Selectmen commends you for the vision and determination you have exhibited since becoming the Commonwealth's Governor. We are concerned, however, that your administration is moving forward on some new initiatives such as free tuition for community colleges, expanded early education and additional classroom time, while there are many existing programs that still cry out for attention.

Chief among these matters is Special Education Funding and the Prevailing Wage Law for municipal construction projects.

Regarding special education costs, while there have been strides made through the circuit breaker law to partially address this funding crisis, what is really needed is for the Commonwealth to pay one hundred percent of special education costs. Since the state mandates the quality and level of special education services, the state should also pay for them. In North Andover's case, special education costs have gone from 21% of the school budget in FY2002 to 28% in FY2007 years, while regular education has decreased from 79% to 72% of total budget during the same period. In actual dollar amounts, North Andover is spending approximately the same amount to provide regular education in FY07 as it did in FY02. (\$21.6 million vs. \$22.7 million) It should also be noted that North Andover only receives \$5.6 million in Chapter 70 and circuit breaker funds while our special education budget alone is \$8.4 million. Clearly something must be done to address this problem.

The prevailing wage law is another example of an unfunded and unfair state mandate. Requiring all municipal construction contracts, regardless of size, to be saddled with this requirement unnecessarily drives up costs and limits competition. It is estimated that

eliminating this expensive and unnecessary mandate could save 25% of every public project construction dollar spent.

The lack of adequate state funding for education, especially special education, and the cost of complying with state mandates such as the prevailing wage law, results in the continued deterioration of municipal services and an unfair burden on property taxpayers. Because of these financial problems in recent years, North Andover has had to eliminate numerous positions and cut services resulting in compromised public safety, classrooms with upwards to 35 students and the elderly being put at risk.

Your Municipal Partnership Act, although some of its provisions would not be to our benefit, nevertheless, speaks to a governor who is aware and concerned about the precarious financial condition of your cities and towns. Please add special education and municipal construction laws to your list of "lets get this fixed first" projects before moving on to new projects. After all, it makes no sense to add an addition to your house when you really need money to be spent on a new furnace.

Sincerely,

James Xenakis, Chair
North Andover Board of Selectmen

Cc: Legislative Delegation
School Committee