THE AUDITOR'S REPORT

News & Updates

from the Office of the State Auditor Suzanne M. Bump

Making Government Work Better

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Dear Friend,

Since 1980, our Division of Local Mandates (DLM) has been a resource for communities seeking to identify and address unfunded mandates from the state. Sometimes though, laws passed by the Legislature don't meet the legal threshold to qualify as an unfunded mandate despite the fiscal burdens they carry. Already under pressure from ever-tightening local budgets, municipalities can be faced with very difficult decisions as they determine how best to provide resources to their communities while also implementing provisions required of them by the state.

Last week, DLM released a report examining all legislation enacted from 2011 to 2015, with an eye toward the fiscal impact on municipalities. In all, staff reviewed 1,560 statutes, and identified 97 that had significant financial impacts on cities and towns. In many of those instances, municipalities have nowhere to turn for relief.

To address this problem, the report makes legislative recommendations to further protect communities from these impacts in the future. As a former legislator, I have a deep appreciation for the role DLM plays in developing legislation that works not just in theory, but in practice.

The diligent efforts of DLM enables cities and towns to continue to deliver the high quality of services residents expect and that make Massachusetts a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

Thank you,

Suzanne M. Bump
Auditor of the Commonwealth

Recent Audits

- Standardbred Owners of MA
- Eastern DA's Office
- Bourne Recreation Authority
- Fall River Line Pier

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Recent Press Releases

- DLM Reviews Fiscal Impacts on Cities and Towns
- Women's History Month
- Auditor Bump Announces New Deputy and General Counsel
- Auditor Bump to Represent Massachusetts on Federal Working Group

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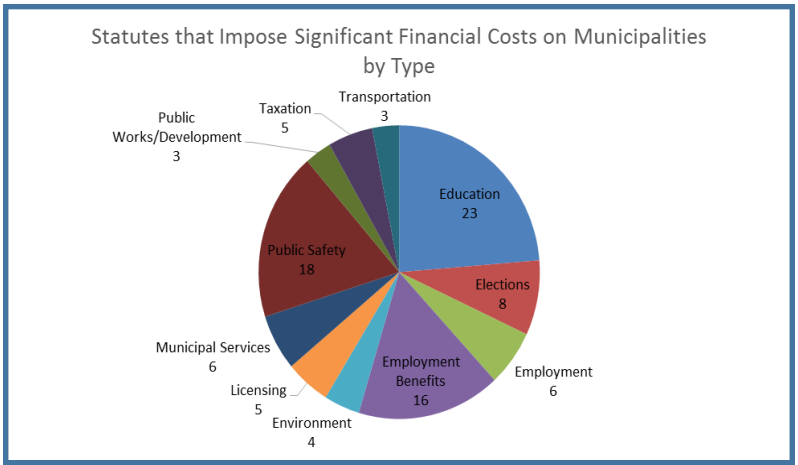
OSA Focus: DLM Makes Recommendations to Help Cities and Towns



This chart, found in the Five-Year Fiscal Impact Report, illustrates the policy areas of the 97 statutes that placed financial burdens on cities and towns.

Established in 1981 as a part of Proposition 2 1/2, the Division of Local Mandates (DLM) is an invaluable resource for cities and towns, and upholds the Local Mandate Law, which aims to protect municipalities from state imposed laws, regulations, or policies that have adverse fiscal impacts on the local level. In doing so, the division responds to written requests to determine whether a state law, rule, or regulation triggers the Local Mandate Law. The responses can be either opinion letters or cost determinations. Staff also offers phone consultation. Approximately 70 percent of these requests come from municipal officials. While most of the remainder of requests originate from the Legislature, a number come from state administrative agencies as well.

This week, DLM released its 5-year review of legislation impacting municipalities, which includes recommendations for addressing these types of impacts. The report looked at 1,560 statutes enacted by the Legislature between 2011 and 2015, and identified 97 that have significant financial impacts for cities and towns. Those identified provisions fell into four main areas—education, employment benefits, public safety, and elections. It also included an examination of trends in municipal finances during the five-year period.

The report also makes recommendations for policy changes to more effectively identify and address fiscal impacts on municipalities. These recommendations would:

- Require state agencies to file municipal impact statements with the Secretary of State's Office, DLM, and the Local Government Advisory Commission (LGAC) when adopting, amending, or repealing regulations; and
- Grant DLM the authority to provide research, assistance, and analysis to legislators, legislative staff, and legislative committees on the fiscal impact of proposed legislation on cities and towns.

The goal of these recommendations is to create greater transparency and ensure legislators and others have a full understanding of the impacts of policies when making decisions.

In the weeks and months ahead, OSA staff will be reaching out to Legislators and local officials to share the report's findings and recommendations. If you think your community is facing an unfunded mandate or have a concern about a state requirement that might present a significant cost, contact DLM at 617-727-0025.

OSA's Work Makes Headlines

State Auditor Suzanne Bump talks addiction, accountability at annual Chamber breakfast
The Greenfield Recorder covered Auditor Bump's keynote address during the monthly meeting of the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce's Legislative Breakfast at Greenfield Community College. During her remarks, the Auditor highlighted OSA's role in building the public's trust and our use of data analytics to help address some of the state's most pressing issues, including the scourge of opioid addiction.

Auditor Bump discusses the OSA's efforts to make government work better with members of the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce during their Legislative Breakfast at Greenfield Community College on March 25.

Taxpayer dollars lost to EBT fraud
This WWLP story follows up on a local case of public benefits fraud, and highlights the diligent work of our Bureau of Special Investigations in ensuring the integrity of our public assistance programs. The work of this bureau ensures that these vital services are available to the individuals and families that truly need them to help make ends meet.

Landmark Opioid Bill Signed Into Law
Auditor Bump stood with Governor Charlie Baker when he signed the Commonwealth's new opioid legislation into law. The Associated Press covered the landmark legislation's signing. Auditor Bump testified in support of the legislation and highlighted the OSA's ability to use data analytics to aid in efforts to fight addiction.

Read more coverage of OSA's work

Questions or concerns about this newsletter? Email us at media@sao.state.ma.us.

Accountability in Action: Inspiring the Next Generation

An essential part of public service is passing on to others the vital lessons and anecdotes learned in your own journey. Conversations and events built around this exchange of ideas are important all year, but the achievements of women come into special focus during the month of March, which is dedicated to honoring Women's History.

With this in mind, Auditor Bump hosted an event to create an opportunity for this exchange to happen. Auditor Bump, who herself has made history as Massachusetts' first female State Auditor, invited her fellow constitutional officers—Lt. Governor Karyn Polito, Attorney General Maura Healey, and Treasurer Deborah Goldberg, to join the conversation. On March 31, the constitutional officers welcomed a group of girls and their mentors from the Big Sisters Association of Boston to learn about the rewards and challenges of seeking leadership roles.

During the intimate conversation, the state's four constitutional officers and the participants covered a lot of ground, from overcoming adversity and following your passion, to developing the skills of leadership.

As part of the dialogue, Auditor Bump described how she approached her role as a freshman legislator after winning her first race for a seat in the House of Representatives. The challenge she faced was that she did not just want to be present in the chamber, but to have her ideas and concerns heard and considered valuable by her colleagues—the majority of whom were veteran legislators, and men.

"The women were my best sources of information, experience and wisdom in the State House, but only because I asked. And, that is sometimes a courageous act in and of itself," Auditor Bump said, highlighting the need for women of all ages to help other women learn, grow, and achieve their goals.

The event, which marked the second time Auditor Bump has hosted the program, was more than just a trip down memory lane; it was an important knowledge exchange from one generation of Massachusetts trailblazers to the next.

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