



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
**MASSACHUSETTS SENATE**

STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

**SENATOR STEVEN C. PANAGIOTAKOS**

FIRST MIDDLESEX DISTRICT

ROOM 212

OFFICE TEL. (617) 722-1481

FAX. (617) 722-1022

CHAIRMAN:  
SENATE WAYS AND MEANS

Dear Colleagues:

Fiscal year 2009 will be punctuated by an economic picture that seems uncertain as we move forward. The Senate Committee on Ways and Means worked within difficult fiscal constraints to provide initiatives necessary to improve the quality of life for the people of Massachusetts.

With the continued decline of our state and our nation's economic health, the Committee's recommendations address the needs of the Commonwealth's residents in a prudent manner.

These difficult times are not just being felt at the state and national level, each of our 351 cities and towns are also struggling with a lack of sufficient revenue to cover the increasing cost of providing services. Knowing the difficulties our communities are facing, we made an early commitment to guarantee a 4.43 percent increase in local aid. This increase includes \$223 million more in Chapter 70 education funding, fulfilling year three of the 5-year reform plan. The Legislature also committed to level funding the full \$935 million municipalities receive from lottery sales despite a \$124 million shortfall.

As we continue to see an increase in violence and gang-related activity, it is critical that we continue to make public safety a priority. By funding the Community Policing Grants, including \$3 million for youth violence prevention grants and \$13 million for the Shannon anti-gang violence grants, we work toward the Committee's goal of turning the trend of violence around, and ensuring that residents feel safe within their communities.

The success of health care reform in the commonwealth is largely dependant on our ability to move forward with the second phase of health care reform, cost control. By providing the funding necessary to implement cost saving measures, such as electronic medical records and access to primary care, the Committee is reaffirming its commitment to this vital goal.

No one is protected from the downward spiral of the economy. From fuel and food costs to the unstable housing market, everyone is struggling to make ends meet. However, our most vulnerable citizens bear the brunt of this burden. Recognizing the ever-increasing struggle facing our elderly, disabled and low-income residents, the Committee provides for housing assistance, preventative care, and assistance with prescription drugs for seniors.