

HOUSE No. 148

By Mr. Ayers of Quincy, petition of Bruce J. Ayers for legislation to assure that polling places are accessible to handicapped and elderly voters. Community Development and Small Business.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand and Seven.

AN ACT ASSURING THAT POLLING PLACES ARE ACCESSIBLE TO ELDERLY AND PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED VOTERS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 10 of the General Laws, as appearing in
2 the 2004 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after
3 section 35W the following new section:—

4 Section 35X. There is hereby established on the books of the
5 commonwealth a separate fund known as the Polling Location
6 Accessibility Fund, to promote improved involvement in the elec-
7 toral process by physically-challenged and elderly individuals.
8 Said fund shall consist of all monies appropriated therefore in
9 each fiscal year and any funds donated to the commonwealth and
10 designated for this purpose. All monies appropriated to said fund
11 shall be made available for distribution upon appropriation.

12 All revenues credited under this section shall remain in said
13 Polling Location Accessibility Fund to assist cities and towns of
14 the commonwealth in paying all or part of any costs associated
15 with local initiatives to improve the physical condition of polling
16 locations that may contain obstacles to access, or impediments to
17 movement for elderly and physically-challenged residents wishing
18 to vote. Said fund may also be distributed to fund all or part of the
19 costs associated with programs designed to increase the number of
20 overall percentage of elderly and physically-challenged voters
21 casting ballots at a state or federal election. All grants from this
22 fund shall be made on a competitive basis pursuant to rules and

23 regulations published by the office of the state secretary and all
24 monetary awards shall be granted only at the discretion of the
25 state secretary.

26 The state treasurer shall deposit the fund in such a manner that
27 will secure the highest interest rate available consistent with the
28 safety of the fund and the requirement that all amounts on deposit
29 be available for immediate withdrawal. All monies appropriated to
30 said fund but unexpended at the close of the fiscal year shall not
31 revert to the general fund but shall remain designated within said
32 fund and be available for expenditure in subsequent fiscal years
33 for use consistent with this section. The fund shall be expended
34 only for the purposes herein stated at the direction of the state sec-
35 retary.

1 SECTION 2. Chapter 54 of the General Laws, as appearing in
2 the 2004 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after
3 section 10 the following new section:—

4 Section 10A: The state secretary is hereby authorized and
5 directed to establish a grant program for the purpose of assisting
6 cities and towns in paying all or part of any costs associated with
7 local initiatives to improve the physical condition of polling loca-
8 tions that may contain obstacles to access, or impediments to
9 movement for elderly and physically-challenged residents wishing
10 to vote. Grants made pursuant to this section shall include but not
11 be limited to the substantial alteration and remodeling of a polling
12 location for the specific purpose of better accommodating elderly
13 and physically-challenged residents exercising their right to vote
14 on election day. The state secretary may also make grants to
15 increase the number or overall percentage of elderly and physi-
16 cally-challenged voters casting ballots at a state or federal elec-
17 tion. All grants from this fund shall be made on a competitive
18 basis pursuant to rules and regulations published by the office of
19 the state secretary and all monetary awards shall be granted only
20 at the discretion of the state secretary subject to available appro-
21 priations in the Polling Location Accessibility Fund established
22 pursuant to section 35R of chapter 10 of the General Laws.