

THE AUDITOR'S REPORT



News & Updates

from the Office of the State Auditor Suzanne M. Bump

Making government work better



Suzanne M. Bump
State Auditor



Dear Friend,

If you have visited our website recently, you have probably noticed things look a bit different. Last month, we launched a new website to better highlight the work of our office and demonstrate the ways it makes government work better.

Our website revamp aims to:

- ensure visitors can quickly find the information they are seeking;
- demonstrate the value of the work of our office;
- improve the language used to discuss our work; and
- break down digital silos inside our agency and across state government.

One of my priorities as Auditor is our work to address barriers individuals face when attempting to access government services. With this in mind, our new website and our reports are also more accessible to individuals with visual impairments.

If you have not done so already, I hope you will take some [time to visit the new Mass.gov/Auditor](#). If you have a great idea for a new feature or have any difficulty navigating the new site, [let us know about it](#).

Thank you,

Suzanne M. Bump
Auditor of the Commonwealth

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Recent Audits/Reports

[Sex Offender Registry Board](#)

[Claims submitted to MassHealth by HopeHealth Massachusetts Inc.](#)

[Department of Veterans' Services](#)

[Determination of Whether Net State Tax Revenues Exceeded Allowable State Tax Revenues in Fiscal Year 2017](#)

[Claims submitted to MassHealth by Dr. Hooshang D. Poor](#)

[MassDOT Aeronautics Division](#)

[Claims submitted to MassHealth by Lawrence Family Doctors](#)

[Bunker Hill Community College](#)

[View more audits](#)

Upcoming Events

[Auditor Bump Testifies in Support of the Revenue Accountability Act](#)

Tuesday,
October 31, 2017
1:00 p.m.
Massachusetts State House
Hearing Room B1



The Office of the State Auditor recently released an audit of the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) which found DVS could improve its efforts to reach more veterans in the Commonwealth.

OSA Focus: Barriers to Access

From the Revolutionary War through the current conflicts in the Middle East, Massachusetts residents have a proud history of military service to our nation. In 2015, the U.S. Census estimated that more than 327,900 veterans lived in the Commonwealth, representing approximately 6.1 percent of its adult population.

As a state, we recognize our responsibility to make sure that when these brave men and women return home after their service, they have access to food, housing, medical care, and a decent quality of life. It is with this in mind that our state has established programs that provide assistance to veterans and their families in financial need so that we can ensure that we do not falter on this responsibility.

However, [a recent audit of the Department of Veterans' Services](#) found that inter-governmental silos and a lack of data created barriers that hindered efforts to reach veterans to ensure they are aware of the services and benefits that are available to them. DVS works with local Veterans' Service Agents who conduct outreach to veterans in their communities to provide them with assistance and referrals to resources that are available to them.

We used our data analytics tools to determine that 13,769 MassHealth members identify as veterans; however, only 1,460 currently receive [cash and medical assistance](#) through the Chapter 115 benefit available to veterans. Further analysis showed that 7,938 of the remaining members of MassHealth identified as veterans may also qualify for this assistance, but do not receive it. Additionally, the audit notes that DVS provides Veterans' Service Agents with a statewide census of the veteran population, however it does not provide populations for individual communities, despite the fact that the Secretary of State's Office provides the information. By collaborating with MassHealth, and other state agencies to establish data sharing agreements, the Department of Veterans' Services could more effectively reach these individuals to let them know of the services available to them.

This audit was the latest from our office that identifies barriers that individuals face when attempting to access public benefit programs, and provide recommendations to address these areas. It is critical that state agencies that provide public benefits—particularly those serving veterans—take proactive steps to address the barriers that prevent them from providing needed assistance, and examine their processes to identify ways they can better serve these individuals.

OSA's Work Makes Headlines

[Sex Offender Setback](#)

In response to an audit from the Office of the State Auditor, the Boston Herald calls on the Sex Offender Registry Board to take action to improve information sharing, and better track convicted sex offenders.

[Grand jury indicts 2 Springfield women for allegedly stealing \\$14K intended to aid the homeless](#)

The OSA's fraud investigation unit (the Bureau of Special Investigations) partnered with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and the Office of the Attorney General to bring charges against two Springfield women for public benefits fraud, as the Springfield Republican reports.

[State auditor discusses certification of funds for 2018 elections](#)

WWLP-22 News in Springfield was on hand when [Auditor Bump discussed](#) the OSA's efforts, through the Division of Local Mandates (DLM), to ensure cities and towns have the financial resources they need to run local elections.



Auditor Bump recently sat down with WBZ's Jon Keller to discuss the Department of Veterans' Services audit and the OSA's ongoing work to identify barriers people face when trying to access the Commonwealth's public benefits programs. Tune into to Keller @ Large this Sunday, October 8th, at 8:30 a.m. on WBZ-TV to see their conversation.

[State auditor calls for new, focused funding to tackle federal stormwater rules](#)

In January, the OSA's Division of Local Mandates (DLM) [released a study](#) that found municipalities have water infrastructure needs of \$17.8 billion for the next 20 years. Auditor Bump wrote a Letter to the Editor of the *Boston Globe*, in response [to an editorial from the paper](#), calling for the state to assume responsibility for federal stormwater regulations.

Recent Press Releases

[Testimony Before Senate Committee on Post Audit and Oversight on the Value of the Taxpayer Protection Act](#)

[Auditor Bump Meets, Exchanges Ideas with Chinese Auditing Delegation](#)

[Audit Finds 1,769 Sex Offenders in Violation of Reporting Requirements, Nearly 1,000 Never Classified](#)

[Bump Provides Solutions to Better Serve Massachusetts Veterans](#)

[Auditor Bump Highlights Her Office's Work to Ensure Elections Resources for Municipalities](#)

[Two Springfield Women Indicted in Connection with Defrauding State Agencies, Stealing From a Women's Shelter](#)

[Auditor Bump Announces New External Affairs Assistant](#)

[Auditor Bump Proposes Regulations to Provide Guidance on the Privatization Review Process](#)

[Audit Finds Newton Doctor Improperly Billed MassHealth for over \\$200,000, Including for Services Provided While He Traveled Abroad](#)

[Auditor Bump Recommends Steps to Improve IT Practices at MassDOT Aeronautics Division](#)

[View more releases](#)

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

Accountability in Action: Breaking Down Silos

One of the frequent findings of our audits is that state government silos often prevent agencies from working together to address challenges facing the Commonwealth. State government entities that should be working together and sharing information and data, do not use the tools at their disposal to improve coordination.

Last week, [an audit of the Massachusetts Sex Offender Registry Board \(SORB\)](#) provided the latest example of these silos preventing an agency from fulfilling its mission. Our audit found more than 1,700 sex offenders that were in violation of their registration requirements, nearly 1,000 of which had never been classified by SORB. This audit also found that despite having agreements with the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) and the Department of Revenue to share information about the location of convicted sex offenders, SORB was not doing so. By examining data from DTA, our audit found 39 sex offenders who SORB previously said they could not locate.



Auditor Suzanne Bump sat down with WCVB Investigative Reporter Kathy Curran to discuss the recently released Sex Offender Registry Board (SORB) audit, the latest report from the OSA to that government silos are hindering agencies from fulfilling their missions. [See this story here.](#)

This audit shows that state government silos not only create inefficiencies in delivering services, but can put public safety at risk. The failure of a state government entity to use tools at their disposal means the public had no access to critical information about individuals in their communities.

Similarly, as noted earlier in this edition of the Auditor's Report, the Department of Veterans' Services can break down silos to better coordinate with other state entities to bolster its outreach to veterans. Additionally, previous audits by the OSA have found agencies not accessing or sharing information that would protect the public, and provide a pathway that SORB can follow to address these problems. A [2014 audit of the Board of Registration in Medicine \(BORIM\)](#) found that BORIM received only two reports of criminal activity for licensed physicians from state courts during an eleven-year period. However, the Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) system showed 82 other physicians with either a criminal conviction or continuation without finding that were not reported to the state during the same period. As a result of that audit, BORIM established a new data-sharing process in which it receives information about physician criminal activity from the Executive Office of the Trial Court.

When government commits to the taxpayers that it will provide a certain level of safety — and transparency — it has an obligation to do everything within its authority to meet that obligation. As technology and data collection continue to change and improve, our state agencies have an opportunity to utilize that change to break down the silos that have historically existed in government.



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The Auditor's Report

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