

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



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Dear Friend,

As the end of the year approaches, most of us start to think about our new year's resolutions: eat better, read more, recycle. And while I also strive for these goals of self-improvement, I find it a useful exercise to focus resolutions on how the OSA will make a deeper and broader impact in the coming year.

In the new year, my office resolves to continue to be a force for accountability in state government. We'll challenge auditees to proactively use technology to better serve their constituents and we will seek to meet this standard ourselves. We resolve to work with the Legislature to ensure that audits and reports identifying issues impacting vulnerable constituencies and local governments realize the benefits of our documentation of system failures and the recommended solutions. We resolve to bolster our work protecting important public benefit programs, such as SNAP, from bad actors who want to defraud these programs and undermine the public trust in them. We resolve to make the OSA the employer of choice for accountability professionals.

A new year provides new opportunities. As we close the books on 2018 and enter into 2019, our commitment to making government work better is stronger than ever. I'm excited to share with you all of the ways we will accomplish this in the next 365 days.

Happy New Year!

Thank you,

Suzanne M. Bump
Auditor of the Commonwealth

Recent Audits/Reports

[Berkshire County Sheriff's Office](#)

[Northwestern District Attorney's Office](#)

[Massasoit Community College Privatization Proposal](#)

[Greenfield Public Schools Mandate Determination](#)

[Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School](#)

[View more audits](#)



In 2015, Auditor Bump testified before a legislative committee, where she highlighted the success of the [Taxpayer Protection Act](#) in ensuring the interests of the residents of the Commonwealth come first if privatization debates.

OSA Focus: 25 Years of Taxpayer Protection

When state government outsources its functions, taxpayers are still on the hook. Government officials have an obligation to ensure that any privatization decisions are based on sound data and analysis, providing the best deal for taxpayers. This month marks the 25th anniversary of the Commonwealth's innovative law that ensures this is the case.

The [Taxpayer Protection Act](#), also known as the Pacheco Law, named after its lead sponsor, lays out a process for agencies seeking to privatize state services to make the business case for doing so. The law forces government agencies, unaccustomed to thinking like businesses, to explore alternatives to their current model and base decisions on costs, desired outcomes, competitive bidding, and value. It requires them to show that privatizing services will save taxpayer dollars without sacrificing the quality of the service. In addition, the law tasks the State Auditor with providing an independent analysis of whether the privatization proposal meets this standard. If it does, the privatization can move forward.

Since its inception, the law has laid out a straightforward standard for the privatization of state services, which is evidenced by the fact that over the last decade, all but one proposal to privatize state services have been ultimately approved. In fact, just last month the Office of the State Auditor approved [a proposal from Massasoit Community College to privatize aspects of its food services](#).

For a quarter-century, the Taxpayer Protection Act has ensured that the interests of the residents of the Commonwealth do not take a backseat to rigid ideology. It has required that these decisions be based on independent analysis, rather than political whims. Here's to another quarter-century of putting taxpayers first!

Recent Press Releases

[Auditor Bump Asks Municipalities to Report Early Voting Spending](#)

[In Response to Audit, Northwestern DA's Office Aims to Expand Data Collection for Juvenile Diversion Program](#)

[Audit Calls for Improvement in Board Oversight at Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy](#)

[Audit Calls on Norfolk DA to Better Track Success of its Diversion Program](#)

[View more releases](#)



Since 2013, we've released a pair of audits calling on the Department of Conservation and Recreation to do more to collect outstanding debts.

OSA's Work Makes Headlines

[More questionable spending found at Dorchester charter school](#)

The *Boston Globe* highlights an audit of the Davis Leadership Academy, a Dorchester charter school, which calls on the school to improve oversight after more than \$200K in questionable spending and improper transactions were identified.

[DCR hiring a debt collection agency](#)

Since 2013, a pair of audits have been released calling on the Department of Conservation and Recreation to do more to collect outstanding debts. As *CommonWealth Magazine* reports, the agency says it is taking action on recommendations from the OSA and is hiring a debt collection agency to help collect money owed.

[Mass. Auditor Suzanne Bump faults Northwestern DA for insufficient data collection with youth diversion program](#)

In response to an audit, the Northwestern District Attorney's Office reports it is taking steps to improve data collection and analysis related to its Juvenile Diversion Program, the *Springfield Republican* reports.

Accountability in Action: A Year of Accountability by the Numbers

2018 was another big year for the Office of State Auditor Suzanne M. Bump. The OSA has helped to improve accountability and government agency performance, combat fraud that threatens the integrity of state public benefit programs, and ensure state government keeps its commitments to cities and towns.

Let's take a look, by the numbers, at a few of the ways we've made government work better in 2018:

- **92%** of audit recommendations were implemented this year, according to reports from auditees. According to agency reports, these changes have resulted in:
 - Improved [detection of potentially serious incidents of abuse or neglect of children](#) in state custody;
 - Enhanced monitoring of [claims for drug tests and screens](#) to ensure they comply with MassHealth standards, which the agency estimates will save more than **\$2.2 million** this fiscal year;
 - Bolstered training and oversight of contractors to [ensure allegations of abuse or neglect of seniors](#) are properly reported and investigated;
 - Better data collection at diversion programs across the Commonwealth, including those administered by the [Plymouth](#) and [Northwestern](#) District Attorneys; and
 - Expanded efforts by the [Department of Conservation and Recreation to collect unpaid rent](#) for the use of state land.
- **\$1 million+** in funding was returned to local governments for 2016 early voting costs, a legislative action that resulted from a determination by our Division of Local Mandates that found the new early voting law constituted an unfunded mandate on local governments. The Legislature has also appropriated funding for [similar reimbursements for 2018 early voting costs](#).
- **\$16.9 million** in public benefit fraud was identified by OSA's Bureau of Special Investigations. This marked a 9 percent increase over the previous year and a seventh straight year of record findings by the Bureau. The increase in findings reflects increased expertise of the Bureau's fraud investigators and the value of its data analytic tools to proactively identify fraud schemes.
- **80%** of total regional school transportation costs were reimbursed to cities and towns, the highest funding level regional schools have seen in years. This funding comes on the heels of [a report from the OSA's Division of Local Mandates](#) which found that the state's failure to keep its promise to fully reimburse regional school districts for their transportation costs has strained budgets and forced painful cuts.

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The Auditor's Report

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