

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,

It is like déjà vu. An audit was released recently that found hundreds of sex offenders required to register with the state had gone missing. It pointed to inadequate enforcement of the registration requirement as the key reason for this failure.

Sound familiar? It should. These findings, from [an audit released last week in Missouri](#), are nearly identical to [an audit of the Massachusetts Sex Offender Registry Board](#) (SORB) my office issued last year.

The similarities between these audits show that many of the struggles facing state-government agencies are not unique to Massachusetts. This means that we in the Commonwealth have an opportunity to take the lead in tackling some of the most significant challenges states face—from public safety and health care to education and the environment.

Six months after we released this audit, SORB provided an update to my office that indicated it had incorporated nearly all of our audit's recommendations. As a result, it had located hundreds of the missing offenders and strengthened its use of data to ensure individuals that are not in compliance with their registration requirements are quickly found in the future.

It's my hope that as Missouri and other states seek to develop solutions to strengthen their systems for tracking sex offenders, they will look to our progress in Massachusetts as a model.

Thank you,

Suzanne M. Bump
Auditor of the Commonwealth



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A [report released last year by the Office of State Auditor Suzanne M. Bump](#) highlighted the needs of regional school districts in the Commonwealth. A commission created by the legislature offers an opportunity to make some of the report's recommendations a reality.

OSA Focus: Back to School

As the weather cools and the leaves change colors, school buses hit the roads – and school districts face another year of trying to balance the growing cost of transporting kids to school while ensuring adequate funding for our classrooms.

School districts spent just over \$744 million on transportation in the 2016-2017 school year, according to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. As part of [a report released by the Office of the State Auditor \(OSA\) that reviewed regional school funding](#), Auditor Bump and her staff traveled across the state to speak with education leaders about their concerns with growing mandates, lack of competitive bids to provide bus services, and rising costs. From transporting homeless students and foster kids to and from their placements to finding qualified providers for students with special needs – without a reliable funding source from the state – schools dedicate significant resources to transportation that could be put into our classrooms.

Student transportation is complex, and the solutions are complex as well. Schools need more money and legislative leaders have taken important steps toward addressing the shortfalls: the fiscal year 2019 budget included modest increases for transportation costs for regional school districts and homeless students.

But schools also need creative solutions to help them better utilize those limited resources. The legislature recently authorized a commission to examine school transportation. This is an opportunity to identify not just new revenues, but new ideas. The report released by the OSA recommends exploring whether additional resources should be made available to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to help districts manage costs and whether districts should revisit opportunities for collaboration with Regional Transit Authorities. These may not be the exact solutions, but it's this kind of thinking that will help schools make better use of their dollars.

Massachusetts proudly boasts that we were the first in the nation to offer public education and we have an opportunity to continue to be a leader. Hopefully, this school year will be one filled with creativity, collaborative partnerships, and big thinking – both for students and for the leaders funding their education.



Auditor Bump was recently the guest of Senate President Emeritus Harriette Chandler on her television program, Beacon Hill Chat. They spoke about how the work of the OSA helps make government work better, and some of the recent work impacting the Worcester area. The episode will soon air on WCCA-TV.

OSA's Work Makes Headlines

[Missouri has lost track of more than 1,200 sex offenders. Other states have a similar problem](#)

A year after an OSA audit called for the state's Sex Offender Registry Board to take a more proactive approach to classifying and locating convicted sex offenders, the Missouri State Auditor's Office found similar deficiencies, *CNN* reports.

[Our view: The risks of the 'internet of things'](#)

This editorial from the *Salem News* notes that an OSA audit of the state's adoption of Internet of Things (IoT) technology is an important first step in what must be an ongoing effort to ensure coordination among agencies to protect these devices and the data they collect and distribute.

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

The *Springfield Republican* highlights the OSA's call for better data collection by the Hampden County District Attorney's Office to determine the success of its Juvenile Diversion Program.

Accountability in Action: Food for Thought

Have you ever sat in traffic at rush hour and wondered if there was a better way to get to work or to get home? This was the question that staff of the Office of State Auditor Suzanne M. Bump (OSA) pondered recently at the first *Food for Thought* brown bag lunch. At these informal gatherings, the staff of the OSA takes a step back from examining the day-to-day workings of state government agencies and contractors to reflect on the big picture challenges facing the Commonwealth.

At the inaugural gathering, representatives from Transportation for Massachusetts (T4MA) spoke about the challenges related to transportation in the Commonwealth, noting that our state is ranked 45th in infrastructure by U.S. News and World Report. The failure to make adequate investment in infrastructure has compounded the congestion that workers face every day during their commute.

During their presentation, representatives from Transportation for Massachusetts discussed their support for a pilot program to study the effects of lowering tolls for drivers that travel during off-peak travel times. The goal of the conversation was not to persuade OSA staff to take one position or another – just the opposite. We value professional development here at the OSA and giving our team the opportunity to learn from experts about the biggest challenges facing our state, and ponder their proposed solutions, helps us conduct audits that can address real-world problems.

This conversation undoubtedly helped the staff of the OSA look at the challenges related to transportation in a new way and will help to inform their efforts to make government work better in Massachusetts.

Know a group that has proposed innovative ideas to significant challenges facing the Commonwealth that you think our staff should hear from? [Tell us about them.](#)



Transportation for Massachusetts Executive Director Chris Dempsey talks about traffic in the Commonwealth and its impact on quality of life and the economy during the OSA's first Food For Thought Brown Bag Lunch held in Boston.

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