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COMMON CAUSE: YOUR VOICE FOR REFORM

BY BETH LOWD COMMON CAUSE MASS BOARD MEMBER

Nearly every week, readers of area newspapers see Common Cause Executive Director Pamela Wilmot speaking out for open and accountable government.

It was Common Cause that called for the U. S. Attorney to investigate former House Speaker Thomas Finneran for perjury. No other organization dared to challenge the powerful Speaker, despite his obvious and deliberate misstatements. And it was far from the first time. Common

Cause speaks up to tell the truth to power, regardless of whether friend or foe is involved.

Common Cause was founded as a "citizen's lobby", to counter the vast influence of special interests. Our initiative petitions helped create the open meeting laws and several campaign finance reforms. Less widely known are Common Cause's efforts to keep the legislature from enacting laws that would weaken the Inspector General's office (2001), raise the limits on cam-

paign contributions (2003), politicize the judicial branch (2004), or weaken citizens' ability to place questions on the ballot (2004).

This year Executive Director Pam Wilmot has testified on over 70 pieces of legislation.

When you write your check to Common Cause/MA this year, remember the importance of our mission -- and the voice that you can always count on to speak out about government reform or office-holders' wrongdoings.

ELECTION DAY REGISTRATION

Election Day Registration just might be enacted in Massachusetts this year. If so, we will join 9 states, including Maine and New Hampshire in allowing voters to register to vote-- and fix any problems with their registration-- on election day.

Currently Massachusetts voters must register to vote 20 days in advance of any election. If a voter moves, or a registration card gets lost, or otherwise mishandled, he or she is usually out of luck.

Young, very mobile voters, who change their address frequently would be most affected by the change.



Election Laws Committee Co-Chair and EDR champion Sen. Ed Augustus and Pam Wilmot

In a report released as this newsletter goes to press, Common Cause Massachusetts interviews election administrators in election day registration states. They are even more enthusiastic about the reform than we had expected.

"Because many voters do not get invested in an elec-

tion until close to the election, the process has proven to be immensely popular with the voters.... While some have been worried about voter fraud, especially related to student voting, this does not seem to be a problem." said the New Hampshire elections department.

The EDR bills (S. 446, H. 646) were heard in Committee in May and were supported by a wide range of groups and Secretary of State Galvin.

Please call your legislator to register your support! It really makes a difference!



NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE

On September 19th, the Election Laws Committee heard enthusiastic testimony from Common Cause, lawmakers, national leaders, other good government and civil rights groups, and citizens in support of a new proposal to ensure that the winner of the national popular vote is elected President. No one testified against.

"The current system is arbitrary, accident-prone, and untenable," said Jamie Raskin, professor of Constitutional Law and Maryland State Senator. "It is time for the American people to elect the president the way we elect every other office in the country-- the candidate with the most votes should win."

"The way we currently elect our President leaves voters in most states without a



Representative Charley Murphy (D-Burlington), Professor and Maryland state Senator Jamie Raskin, Pam Wilmot, and NPV President Barry Fadem talk with reporters.

voice," said Charley Murphy (D-Burlington), one of the lead sponsors. "We want to make all votes equal-- regardless of whether a voter lives in Massachusetts or in Ohio or Florida."

The National Popular Vote

legislation is not a constitutional amendment, nor is one required. Rather, it is an interstate compact that would become effective only when states with a majority in the electoral college have passed identi-

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TOWNS RECEIVE OPEN GOVERNMENT AWARD

Common Cause Massachusetts presented the 2007 E-Government award to 73 towns and cities that posted six key records (governing body's agenda and minutes, budget, by-laws or ordinances, and

town meeting warrants and results) on their websites, at a State House ceremony on March 15.

Although the websites varied from basic to glitzy, they stood out from the

other 278 cities and towns for providing basic information about local government that is so missing in most communities.

When Common Cause

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2007 AWARDS BRUNCH

On Sunday June 10th 2007, Common Cause Massachusetts honored Marty Meehan with the 2007 John Gardner Public Service Award and Karla de Steuben with the



Pam presents the award to Marty Meehan

CC/MA Distinguished Service Award.

The event drew about 80 supporters to the lovely Gore Place in Waltham for brunch and a lively auction conducted by our very own **Scott Harshbarger**.

Marty Meehan was honored for his signature effort in Congress – the successful fight for campaign finance reform legislation.

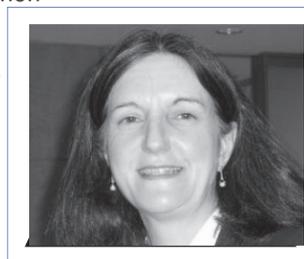
With Senators John McCain and Russ Feingold and Congressman Christopher Shays, Marty led a seven year fight to ban unlimited donations, commonly known as soft money. Marty sees this reform as the key to making progress in many other areas, although there is clearly more work to be done on the campaign finance front.



Board chair Rachel Rosenblum and executive director Pam Wilmot enjoy the day.

Attendees enjoyed good food, good company, excellent speakers, a beautiful, historic location and a glorious day, all while supporting Common Cause. Next year's brunch is currently scheduled for June 8, 2008.

Karla de Steuben was honored for her work in founding the Massachusetts Campaign for Open Government. Karla conceived of the project, created the Campaign's first website, and completed the first review of the internet postings of all 351 cities and towns



Board member Karla De Steuben, Distinguished Service Awardee

"A small group of thoughtful people can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Meade

OPEN GOVERNMENT AWARD

CONTINUED

started the Campaign for Open Government in March 2006, only 24 communities posted this important information.

Thanks to the outreach of Common Cause members and staff, that number tripled over the year, meeting our first year goal for the project. Next year we hope to double that num-

ber again.

Members can help by visiting their community's website and calling town managers to request posting of missing information.

A full audit of all websites, plus information about your rights under the open meeting and public records law is available at: www.maopengov.org

How Does Your Town Measure Up?

Visit: www.maopengov.org

NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE

CONTINUED

cal legislation.

The National Popular Vote bill is now law in Maryland, and is expected to be enacted in Illinois and New Jersey later this fall. It was also passed by the California and Hawaii legislatures, but vetoed by their governors.

"Voters dislike the current system," said Barry Fadem, President of the campaign. "What they want is two very basic things: first, that the candidate with the most votes wins. Second, they want to

see their vote and how it affects the outcome of the election. The current system does neither." Gallop polls show over 70% of the public wants a popular vote.

"This will do more than any other reform to increase voter participation in Presidential elections," said Pam Wilmot, Common Cause Mass. executive director.

"Currently, the vast majority of votes just don't count."

"All votes counting and counting equally, what a



NAACP, Black Political task Force, & MassVOTE testify at hearing.

concept," added Roscoe Morris of the NAACP.

The Massachusetts National Popular Vote legislation (H. 678, H. 710, S. 445, and S. 452) has been filed by 35 legislators.

Democracy is in Your Hands

Call your legislator today to urge them to enact a National Popular Vote.*

www.commoncause.org/ma for more information or to send a pre-written email

**State House switchboard 617-722-2000*

WHO SUPPORTS NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE

State Senate: Sen. Menard (lead sponsor) Fargo, Jehlen, Morrissey, O'Leary, Resor, Rosenberg, Spilka

State House: Rep. Charley Murphy (lead sponsor), Martin Walsh, Atkins, Balser, Bradley, Brownberger, Casey, Conroy, Eldridge, Evangelidis, Fal-

zone, Festa, Grant, Kaufman, L'Italien, Marzilli, Nangle, Patrick, Peisch, Provost, Quinn, Reinstein, Richardson, Sciback, Sciortino, Smizik, Smola, Stanley, Steve Walsh, Wallace

Citizen's Groups in Mass: Common Cause, Black

Political Task Force, MASSPIRG, MassVOTE, NAACP.

Newspapers: Berkshire Eagle, Metrowest Daily News, Patriot Ledger, New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Chicago Sun Times, Denver Post, more...

www.nationalpopularvote.com

MASSVOTERS FOR FAIR ELECTIONS JOINS COMMON CAUSE MASSACHUSETTS

MassVoters for Fair Elections, formerly MassVoters for Clean Elections, has made the strategic decision to merge into Common Cause Massachusetts, in order to build an ever stronger voice on behalf of campaign finance reform.

While we are no longer in the heady days of the

Clean Elections campaign, we continue to work for campaign finance reform through spearheading the coalition, research, and lobbying for legislation now on Beacon Hill.

Common Cause MA welcomes the strength and commitment of the members of MVFE as we move forward with

the campaign to create public funding of elections.

