

The Public Policy Institute

Strengthening the next generation of activists for social change.

My name is Judy Meredith, I live in Dorchester Massachusetts and I am Executive director of the Public Policy Institute. I am speaking today on behalf of ONE Massachusetts, a project of PPI. .

OVERALL GOALS

The overarching goal of ONE Massachusetts is to rebuild public confidence in government by promoting a positive vision of government as the place where we come together to address challenges that none of us can take on alone: educating our children, creating safe neighborhoods, building public infrastructure, protecting our environment, and other core elements of civil society.

This overarching goal is based on the ONE Massachusetts Collective Value Proposition:

We want – and recognize that all Massachusetts residents deserve – healthy lives, healthy families, quality education, safe, vibrant communities, and broadly shared prosperity in a thriving state. These are goals that we cannot achieve alone and can best accomplish by working together through a participatory, democratic government.

By joining our diverse voices, experiences and resources together, we can create the public will to build effective, fairly – funded government that achieves these goals.

The long-term strategic goals of ONE Massachusetts are the following:

- Revenue: By 2013, a fair, adequate, and stable tax system will be implemented. It will raise sufficient revenue so that state and local governments can fund the array of public structures needed to make our communities healthy and strong.
- Civic Engagement: By 2013, the voice and input of the state's multi-racial, multi-ethnic communities will create a counterweight to the currently dominant voice and will be tangibly reflected in the public decision making process.
- Government Reform: By 2013, a transparent, accessible and accountable state and local policy-making process will be in place.

For the past 4 years we have been working with a network of some 45 community based organizations and individual community leaders to accomplish those goals, and I don't have to tell you it isn't easy. Especially the rebuilding the confidence in government part.

Even experienced civic leaders and advocates like me can find themselves disillusioned with their ability to make any headway in being heard.

However we are convinced it is critical that we address this deep civic disconnect now, during these tough economic times, when cuts to community resources and political disappointments challenge the heart, mind, and energy of the average person to make change happen, and cause immigrants and the working poor to feel even more isolated.

And, interestingly enough, we can do it within the context of potential tax cuts.

One Mass, along with our colleagues at the Coalition to Save our Communities proved that in 2008 with a Vote No Campaign on Question ONE and in 2010 with a campaign on Questions 1,2,3. (Allright we failed to muster enough no votes to save the excise tax on liquor, perhaps because we stood alone with the substance abuse networks and partly because the package store industry mounted a very effective media & grassroots campaign in the last week.)

We don't have the time to mount a serious No on the Sales Tax Holiday campaign, but we're going to give it a try and hope you hear from a critical mass of your constituents asking you to reconsider making bad tax policy that will take another 20 million out our depleted revenue stream.

I have attached some facts – charts from various experts who share my opinion of the tax holiday proposal.

I have also attached some analysis of the FY budget which documents the cuts in the FY 12 budget. Big issues like higher education and little issues like the children's clothing allowance. Cuts that add up to a half a billion dollars. Painful political choices to make and to implement, Especially for those affected. Let's not make it worse.

Thank you.