

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
**MASSACHUSETTS SENATE**  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

**Anne M. Gobi**  
**STATE SENATOR**  
Worcester, Hampden,  
Hampshire & Middlesex

Tel. (617) 722-1540  
Fax (617) 722-1078  
E-Mail: Anne.Gobi@masenate.gov

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
**Friday, August 03, 2018**

**CONTACT: Derek Silver**  
**PHONE: 617-722-1540**

### **SENATOR GOBI AND THE MASSACHUSETTS LEGISLATURE PASS SWEEPING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BILL INVESTING IN WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAMS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS**

*Also reforms intellectual property laws to protect employees from non-compete contracts and defend entrepreneurs against “patent trolls”*

BOSTON — The House and Senate passed a sweeping \$1 billion Economic Development Bill late Tuesday night, calling for targeted investments in workforce training programs and job creation through ambitious public infrastructure projects.

The bill authorizes millions of dollars in grants to workforce training programs and public infrastructure projects across Massachusetts, including:

- \$75 million in competitive grants for technical education and workforce training programs.
- \$250 million in bonds to the MassWorks Infrastructure Program that will support thousands of jobs rebuilding roads and bridges, restoring historic ports and completing community revitalization projects.
- \$500 million in local economic development aid.

When asked for comment on the bill’s passage, Senator Gobi had this to say, “It was extremely important to me to make sure that my district and other more rural areas of the State were well represented. Economic opportunities need to be there for everyone and this bill reflects that.”

Senator Gobi advocated successfully for the following local programs which were included in the final version of the bill to be sent to the Governor:

- \$4,000,000 for water infrastructure improvement projects in the town of Warren

- \$880,000 for broadband infrastructure projects in the town of Petersham
- \$250,000 for improvements to the Templeton Police Department
- \$1,000,000 for construction of a police station for the town of Hardwick
- \$1,000,000 for construction of a public safety complex in the town of West Brookfield
- \$2,000,000 for costs associated with land acquisition and development of housing in the town of Holland
- \$1,870,000 for construction of a fire station in the town of North Brookfield
- \$1,000,000 for bridge infrastructure improvements in the town of Monson

Gobi also submitted the following amendments to benefit rural towns in the district:

- Amending the eligibility requirements for the Small Town MassWorks Grant- removing the language that limited small towns (populations under 7,000) from applying more than once every three years.
- Creating the Mill Building Revitalization Task Force to assist communities in the reuse and redevelopment of old Mill buildings.

The technical education grants will provide funding for new lab equipment such as microscopes, robotics training kits and 3D printers in classrooms across the state, allowing for new programs in robotics and other high-tech vocational fields.

In addition to workforce development, the bill also invests in the state’s cultural economy, promoting the arts and tourism industries.

The compromise bill also establishes a two-day sales tax holiday this year, which will take place on Aug. 11 and 12 ahead of the back-to-school shopping season.

“This bill sends a strong statement that the Massachusetts legislature will continue to fight to promote an equitable economic environment that works for everyone,” said **Senate President Karen E. Spilka (D-Ashland)**. “This legislation will help grow our innovation economy; support small-businesses throughout the Commonwealth; and enact strong protections for workers, consumers, and our economic infrastructure.”

Legislators also made two major reforms to practices that have disadvantaged smaller entrepreneurs and employees.

First, it reforms the state’s non-compete laws, establishing conditions on the enforcement of noncompetition agreements to improve worker mobility and free employees to pursue their careers.

The bill also includes new protections for entrepreneurs by enforcing a ban on making bad faith assertions of patent infringement, a practice known as “patent trolling.” Such claims entangle new small businesses in costly lawsuits that hamper the companies’ productivity and sap their early funds.

Looking ahead to future economic developments and challenges, the House and Senate also proposed new measures on cybersecurity and autonomous vehicles.

In light of high-profile cyber incidents like last year's Equifax breach, the bill authorizes \$2.5 million in bonds to support the Massachusetts Cybersecurity Innovation Fund, investing in infrastructure needed to address threats and expand the employment pipeline.

The legislature also tasked the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative with conducting a study and issuing recommendations on how to advance the state's competitiveness in the autonomous vehicle industry.

The Economic Development Bill now goes to the Governor's desk for his signature.

###