

# Senator Elizabeth Warren to introduce wealth tax legislation

United States Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) will join the United States Senate Committee on Finance in the 117th Congress. She also announced plans to introduce legislation implementing a wealth tax on fortunes over \$50 million. The Finance Committee's jurisdiction covers taxation and revenue policy, including oversight of the Internal Revenue Service. The senator's legislation reflects her 2020 campaign proposal to impose a two cent tax on every dollar of individual wealth over \$50 million, with an additional surtax on every dollar of wealth over \$1 billion. Warren will remain on the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, the Senate Armed Services Committee, and the Senate Special Committee on Aging. She released the following statement:

"I'm very pleased to join the Finance Committee, where I'll continue to fight on behalf of working families and press giant corporations, the wealthy, and the well-connected to finally pay their fair share in taxes. I look forward to being a progressive voice at the table to secure meaningful relief and lasting economic security for struggling families, including as an aggressive advocate for accomplishing much of our agenda through the budget reconciliation process.

"Our to-do list is long. We must provide immediate relief for families struggling under the weight of twin health and economic crises. We must make health care in America a human right and expand public programs like Medicaid and lower the Medicare eligibility age. And we must ensure those at the very top actually pay their fair share to keep America strong – including a wealth tax on fortunes over \$50 million to fund needed investments for working families.

“I also welcome the opportunity to engage as a member of the Finance Committee on other longstanding priorities of mine, like reforming our trade practices, expanding Social Security, lowering drug prices, advancing racial equity, and enforcing our tax laws. And I will continue to fight on issues like college affordability, cancelling student loan debt, adequate funding for K-12 schools, and racial equity in education. There’s a lot of work to do and I look forward to working with Chairman Wyden and the entire Committee.”

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## **Warren Questions Robinhood About Abruptly Imposed Trading Restrictions Amid GameStop Fluctuations**

United States Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) today sent a letter to Robinhood regarding the company’s decision to restrict stock trading and impose other limits on its customers during the last week’s fluctuations in GameStop and other stocks. Robinhood abruptly changed the rules for these individual investors with no warning or recourse while hedge funds and other wealthy Wall Street institutions continued to trade.

“In addition to putting customers’ finances at risk, Robinhood’s actions revealed a new set of questions about its relationship with large hedge funds and other financial institutions, and follows past criticisms of Robinhood’s insufficient investor protections,” Senator Warren wrote. “Robinhood has a responsibility to treat its investors

honestly and fairly, and provide them with access to the market under a transparent and consistent set of rules. It is deeply troubling that the company may not be doing so.”

In her letter, Senator Warren asked Robinhood to disclose the circumstances behind Robinhood’s decision to restrict trading, including any influence its hedge fund investors or other financial services partners like Citadel with significant stakes in these trades, may have had on Robinhood’s decision making:

“The public deserves a clear accounting of Robinhood’s relationships with large financial firms and the extent to which those relationships may be undermining its obligations to its customers,” Warren wrote. She also asked whether “Robinhood engag(ed) in any discussions with Citadel businesses or affiliates prior to Robinhood reaching its decision to institute restrictions on trading for GameStop and other stocks.”

Senator Warren raised questions about Robinhood’s adherence to regulatory requirements – citing emergency cash infusions from bank loans and investors amid GameStop stock volatility – and its contractual obligations to its retail investors. She also raised concerns about Robinhood’s forced arbitration requirements, which could prevent its customers from seeking judgements and remediation in court.

“Secretive arbitration processes deny customers a fair hearing, undermine public accountability, and hamper efforts to assemble a thorough and complete understanding of events. Investors harmed by Robinhood’s trading restrictions should be able to argue their case in court, rather than in closed-door proceedings that are too often rigged against claimants,” Warren wrote.

In order to better understand how Robinhood plans to account for its recent actions and ensure that retail investors are

treated honestly and fairly, Senator Warren asked the company to respond to her inquiries by February 9th.

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## **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts alerts members about COVID-19 vaccine fraud schemes**

("Blue Cross") is reminding members to be vigilant as scammers seek to take advantage of the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines.

"There is such a pent-up demand for the vaccine and the roll-out is going to be limited for a while because of manufacturing capability – this provides an environment ripe for fraud," said Jennifer Stewart, senior director for fraud investigation and prevention at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts.

Stewart cautions that scammers have already created websites similar to Massachusetts' official vaccine appointment website in an attempt to collect health insurance and financial information.

"What they've done is change one letter of the website name so that it looks almost identical to the legitimate state website," said Stewart. "This is a good reminder to not click on email links but instead visit [www.mass.gov](http://www.mass.gov) or your health care provider's website and navigate from there to be safe."

### **Offers of early vaccine access**

Email phishing scams are also rampant, offering recipients the

chance to “preregister” with a public health department to receive a vaccine.

“Right now there is no preregistration in Massachusetts and any site offering that is a scam,” Stewart said. “What they are looking to do is collect health insurance and financial information, which they then use for their schemes or to sell on the dark web.”

While health care providers may reach out when an individual is eligible to be vaccinated, they are not going to reach out unsolicited offering early access to the vaccine while making requests for payments or soliciting personal health insurance and financial information, Stewart stressed.

“As the distribution starts ramping up, people are going to get solicited to pay to get ahead in the line. Consumers should know that’s not possible,” she said. “The federal government has bought the vaccine, insurers are paying for administration for their members, you can’t pay to cut the line and get early access in Massachusetts. If that’s what you’re being told, that’s a scam.”

Federal agencies also have warned of vaccine-related scams, including fake ads for vaccines on social media platforms.

Consumers should always double check that sources of information are verified and legitimate and never share personal health or financial information with anyone other than known and trusted medical professionals, the agencies said.

### **Avoiding potential fraud**

Stewart’s best advice to consumers is to sit tight, wait, and make sure they get a legitimate vaccine. She also reminds Blue Cross members that their health insurance will cover the cost of vaccination with no out-of-pocket costs. Medicare will cover vaccine administration for Medicare Advantage and Medex

members when administered by any clinician who accepts Medicare.

Members with questions can call the Blue Cross COVID-19 helpline at 1-888-372-1970.

### **Reporting suspected fraud**

The Massachusetts Attorney General's Office encourages anyone with questions or concerns to call their consumer hotline at 617-727-8400 or file a complaint online.

If you believe you have been the victim of a COVID-19 fraud, you can report it to the FBI ([ic3.gov](https://ic3.gov), [tips.fbi.gov](https://tips.fbi.gov), or 1-800-CALL-FBI) or HHS OIG ([tips.hhs.gov](https://tips.hhs.gov) or 1-800-HHS-TIPS).

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# **Mayor Martin J. Walsh appoints Dennis White as the 43rd Commissioner of the Boston Police Department**

"Congratulations to Dennis White, who was sworn in today, Monday, February 1, 2021, as the 43rd Commissioner of the Boston Police Department.

Commissioner White is also the second African American to hold the role of Boston Police Commissioner.

The men and women of the Boston Police Department wish Commissioner White the best of safety and success in his new position."

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# **New Bedford Police issue \$27,500 in tickets during winter storm**

During New Bedford's emergency parking ban, the New Bedford Police Department issued 550 parking tickets totaling \$27,500 in fines. The police department did not tow any vehicles. During the last parking ban on Dec 20, 2020, **621 parking tickets totaling \$31,050 in fines and 194 vehicles were towed.**

New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell issued a city-wide parking ban that started Monday morning and **ended at 5pm the same day.** The New Bedford police department issues \$50 fines per violation and tows vehicles that disrupt snow plowing operations.

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# **Brockton Juvenile Arrested Following Car Theft and Crash Freetown**

At 12:30 P.M., Freetown police received a report that a car had just been stolen from a business parking lot. Officers arrived on scene and discovered that the vehicle had been stolen while its owner was in a restaurant. The owner had left the vehicle unoccupied with its engine running.

Officers immediately broadcast a description of the stolen

vehicle to area police departments. Shortly thereafter, a State trooper in an unmarked cruiser spotted the vehicle traveling north on Route 140. The trooper was joined by an unmarked Freetown police cruiser. The driver of the stolen car apparently spotted the cruisers and accelerated to a high speed. As the vehicle approached the Route 24 ramp, waiting State police units deployed stop sticks and the vehicle struck a guard rail.

The operator of the stolen vehicle was arrested at the scene. He was identified as a 16-year-old male residing in Brockton. He was transported to the Freetown police station where he was booked on charges of larceny of a motor vehicle, operating to endanger, failure to stop for police, and unlicensed operation. He was released to a parent.

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## **New Bedford parking ban lifted as of 5 pm today**

The citywide snow emergency parking ban, which began this morning, February 1, will be lifted as of 5:00 p.m. today, Monday, February 1, 2021.

Residents should remove their vehicles from municipal and school parking lots with the parking ban lifted at 5:00 p.m., to ensure those lots are able to be cleared after the snow accumulation.

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# **New Bedford Police arrest three juveniles on stolen vehicle charges**

Earlier this morning, New Bedford Police Department patrol officers arrested three juvenile males in relation to two stolen cars out of Brockton.

Officers located a vehicle that seemed to have hit a retainer wall at 700 Block South Rodney French Blvd. A second vehicle was located at Brock Ave and Aponnegansett St. Shortly after, three of four suspects were located at Fern and Swan streets without incident.

Two of the males in custody are from New Bedford and the third is from Brockton. A fourth male is still being sought.

There is no threat to the public.

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## **Acushnet Fire Chief: “4% of Acushnet was found positive for COVID in 1 month. January was brutal.”**

“The population of Acushnet is 10,109. This past January 415 residents tested positive for COVID 19. That is 4% of the population, positive, in one month! January was brutal.

Before anyone asks, we don't know how many were asymptomatic,

how many were hospitalized or how many were sick somewhere in between. What we do know is just in the 31 days of this past January 415 of our neighbors got the news we are all trying to avoid, news that upset their lives and worried their families.

To those 415 residents of this town, best wishes from the remaining 9,694 of us who didn't receive the call."

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## **Full distance learning announced for all New Bedford Public Schools students**

Based on the weather forecast of snow accumulation and the timing of snow arrival on Monday, February 1, NBPS will implement full distance for ALL students.

The scheduled Parent Meeting at 5:30 PM will occur as scheduled, but there will be no afterschool activities.