

# Voting by Absentee Ballot in New Bedford



by  
Michael  
Silvia

On November 8th, the residents of New Bedford will decide the next mayor, and the members of the City Council and School Committee. A preview of the election can be found [here](#).

Any time I vote, there are two quotes that come to mind:

*"Now more than ever the people are responsible for the character of their Congress. If that body be ignorant, reckless, and corrupt, it is because the people tolerate ignorance, recklessness, and corruption." – James Garfield*

*"Should things go wrong at any time, the people will set them to rights by the peaceable exercise of their elective rights."  
– Thomas Jefferson*



James Garfield's words are spot on and I think Thomas Jefferson was a bit too optimistic. Too few Americans vote at a national level and the vast majority stay home during local elections. While U.S. citizens have the option to set things right, too many choose not to.

On October 4th, 2011 only 28% of those registered to vote in New Bedford showed up to the polls. The numbers are expected to be similar for the final municipal elections held on November 8th. This means roughly 1/4 of registered voters, or 15% of the residents will decide our city's leadership for the next two years.

One of the easiest ways to increase voter turn-out is to get more people to vote by absentee ballot. It's simple, easy and ensures everyone, not just the military, is provided the opportunity to vote. According to the City of New Bedford's website, 12pm on November 7th is the last chance to file for an absentee ballot application. You can download the voting absentee ballot application [here](#). If you need a family member to request a form for you you can use this form. If you have any questions contact the New Bedford Election Commission at (508) 979-1421.

There is no excuse for not voting on November 8th. Show up to the vote, or request an absentee ballot to ensure your voice is heard. Let's not let a minority of our residents decide our future.

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# James Roy – Ward 5 City Council Candidate



*The New Bedford municipal elections will be held on November 8th, 2011. A list of the candidates can be found [here](#). New Bedford Guide does not endorse candidates and we offer our site for any candidate to publish articles. Articles can be submitted to [info@newbedfordguide.com](mailto:info@newbedfordguide.com). Here is an article submitted by the James Roy campaign. James is running for Ward 5 City Council against incumbent Jane Gonsalves. Learn more about him on his [website](#) and [Facebook page](#).*

James Roy is an aspiring lawyer, loyal husband, dedicated city servant, and part of a growing generation of young New Bedford residents who are stepping up to take an active role in the city's continued renewal.

Despite a challenging upbringing in the city – marked by

financial hardship, an often unstable home life, and the loss of his parents (Kathy Roy and Michael MacMullen)- James found direction and a sense of hope through a transformative experience at New Bedford High School. There, he immersed himself in the school's award-winning music and theatre arts programs. The surrogate family he formed through the drama club and chorus gave him a sense of belonging and kept him off the streets.

Unfortunately, not having parents around or anyone in his family that attended college, James found it difficult navigating the college application/financial aid process. So, he went to work. In his late teens and early twenties, James manufactured circuit boards in a factory, audited orthopedic implants across the United States, managed restaurants, and sold air -time for our local radio stations. However, as time passed and James matured, his thirst for knowledge grew. He had questions; he craved answers, so he enrolled at Bristol Community College (BCC).

James received his associate's degree from BCC and was awarded a full tuition, merit based scholarship to the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth (UMD). He then graduated number one in his class from UMD, where he earned his bachelor's degree in History and Political Science. Currently, James is pursuing graduate studies at Roger Williams University School of Law. There, he has been recognized as a Leadership Scholar – a testament to his service in the community and his achievement. James will earn his Juris Doctorate in the Spring of 2012.

It was during his time at UMD that James realized his calling to public service. He was inspired by the brave patriots that founded our republic, the social movements of the 1960's, and a generation once thought to be the most apathetic, unite to elect the first African American president. After receiving his undergraduate degree, James landed a great job working for the City of New Bedford. As the program director for the city's Community Alcohol Prevention Program, James worked with

a tight budget to successfully develop strategies to keep the youth of our community safe and healthy. There, he learned the power of community organizing and volunteerism and gained invaluable insight into New Bedford's daunting problems and incredible potential.

James is active in the community: He serves his hometown through community service, leading by example in his work with organizations ranging from the Hunger Commission of Southeastern Massachusetts to Operation Clean Sweep. He sings with the Occasion Singers at fundraiser events like Relay for Life and is a member of the Little Theatre of Fall River. He is also a member of Roger William University's Pro Bono Collaborative.

Today, James is proud to call Ward 5 home – a place where he has chosen to start a family with his wife Cynthia (herself a public school teacher). He continues to be an advocate for public education, youth empowerment, and the economic and environmental health of our city. Like our great city, James Roy has faced a number of challenges throughout his life. He has shown that he can persevere – and he believes that our city can as well. His wealth of experience, his youthful energy and creativity, and his passion for New Bedford and its people make him an ideal candidate for Ward 5 City Councilor.

James will move New Bedford forward by:

- Fostering a Climate that Attracts Businesses: The City Council sets the tone that investors listen to. In order to attract investors, increase our tax base, and create jobs, the Council must compliment the Economic Development Council, support aggressive job creation efforts like Tiff agreements, and foster a pro-business climate by being cooperative, professional, and reliable.
- Utilizing Technology: Technology-like smart phone apps, text messaging, and a well-developed website, can bridge

the divide between government and the people. For example, technology can be used to educate and inform the community regarding city matters (like the Buttonwood Park Zoo expansion) and get feedback from the community before voting. Additionally, technology should be utilized to expedite the repair of city sidewalks and streets and allow constituents to report problems and track the status of their request/inquiry.

- Promoting “Walkability:” Walkable neighborhoods offer enormous benefits to our health, our environment, our finances, and our community. Therefore, James will increase the number of crosswalks, repair damaged lights and sidewalks, construct foot paths and bike lanes, plant trees, create an official dog park, and push for community policing to create a safe, walkable ward.
- ActivatingtheCommunity: By activating and mobilizing the community to volunteer and get involved in issues that are meaningful and important to them James knows we can work within the city’s budget and do more with less. Moreover, fostering civic engagement creates a sustainable government and enables the residents of New Bedford to feel personally responsible for the success of our great city.

Please know, James has been working hard to connect with the residents of Ward 5 since he first announced plans to run for the New Bedford City Council seat. He’s thrown successful fundraisers, held meet and greets on AHA! in downtown New Bedford, and held coffee hours throughout the ward. Also, James’ door-to-door campaign is underway, as of late October he knocked on an estimated 4,000 doors. James intends to knock on every door in Ward 5 to share with residents his abilities, vision, and commitment to the City of New Bedford. Most importantly, however, he wants the people of Ward 5 to know they have a choice this election year; after all, his opponent has held the Ward 5 City Council seat for a very long time: nearly two decades.

Please check out [votejamesroy.com](http://votejamesroy.com) to read more about ways James plans to move our city forward and to see campaign event photos. Also, don't hesitate to email James at [jamesmichaelroy@gmail.com](mailto:jamesmichaelroy@gmail.com) with any questions. He would love to hear from you.

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# Mayoral Candidate Jon Mitchell



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Several months ago I decided to run for Mayor of New Bedford because I believed New Bedford is at a pivotal point. We can keep up the positive momentum we've built up over the past

several years, or we can slip back and lose the progress we've worked hard to achieve. I don't want us to slip back, and neither do you.

Here is what I offer as a candidate:

For almost ten years, I was a federal prosecutor, pursuing drug dealers, white collar criminals, and corporations that broke the rules.

I went after the polluters responsible for the Buzzards Bay Oil Spill, and I was the prosecutor on the team that hunted mobster Whitey Bulger. Over the years, I led teams of federal agents in many complicated investigations, including several right here in New Bedford. In all these cases, my job was to sort out complex problems, to exercise sound judgment, and to make decisions.

I believe New Bedford needs a Mayor with precisely those skills.

As Mayor, I will make to you the following commitments:

First, I will fight at every point to bring jobs to New Bedford. In my previous job, I sat across the table from corporate executives on multi-million dollar issues and fought successfully to reach agreements. I didn't back down then, and I won't back down as Mayor.

Second, I won't rest until today's deep, pervasive problems in our schools are a thing of the past.



As the son of two public school teachers, I want the children in our school system, including my own children, to receive an education that puts them on a path to success. To do that, we need to restore confidence and accountability throughout our school system, and it is long past the time for talking about our drop-out problem. We need to become much better at identifying at-risk kids at an early age and giving them the help they need to stay in school.



We won't get far in growing our economy or improving our schools if we don't have safe streets. No one wants to live or come to a place where they feel insecure. As someone who has spent a career in law enforcement, believe me: I am the last person the criminals want to see in the Mayor's Office.

The citizens of New Bedford should know this: New Bedford means a great deal to me. This City is not only my home. It is where my roots are. My family's story is the same story as thousands of others who worked hard in the mills and on fishing boats, sacrificed for their children, and helped make New Bedford the great place it is today.

This is where my wife Ann and I are raising our three girls. As a father, I want a future for my children where they hold good jobs and live happy, full lives right here in New Bedford. I am committed to being the kind of Mayor that makes that same future a reality for all the children of our City. To do it, I am going to need your help. That is why I am asking for your vote on November 8th.

*Stay tuned for our interview with Jon Mitchell next week!*

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# Jane Gonsalves – Ward 5 City Council

I grew up in the west end of New Bedford in a family that was always interested in politics. Local affairs were a regular topic for discussion at our dinner table. My father served on the Redevelopment Authority in the 1960s, and so my siblings and I learned at an early age what was going on in our city. As a result, I have always had a keen interest in serving my community, although I never thought that I would run for office when I grew up!



I returned to New Bedford after graduating from Providence College with a B.A. in Economics. I was lucky to find a job locally in insurance and have worked in that industry until recently. Several of my friends were also living in New Bedford and over time, one by one, they seemed to gravitate toward public service. In 1992, I volunteered for Mark Montigny's first campaign for State Senate. I got very involved and spent most of my free time doing campaign work. I really enjoyed it and realized that I was learning valuable skills. The next year, in 1993, I ran for the Ward 5 City Council seat and was elected from a field of 5 candidates. It has been a wonderful experience, despite the stress that sometimes accompanies public service. I know that I have made a difference for people and neighborhoods during my tenure. I'm not afraid to say what I think and that sometimes results in criticism, but my constituents know that I will fight for them whenever they need me to. Residents who have contacted me by phone or email, or through my Facebook page or website,

know that I am accessible and responsive. They also know that I'm relentless in seeking solutions and getting action on their behalf. I get things done!

I have had the opportunity to do a lot of small things for a lot of residents in the time I have served as Ward 5 Councillor, like getting trees removed and planted, sidewalks repaired, and zoning issues resolved, to name a few. These may seem like small things, but have made a big difference to the people who needed my help. This is a big part of the role of City Councillor and I find it rewarding to act as a resident's champion in City Hall. Not only have I solved problems for individuals, I have also had the chance to vote on bigger issues as well that affect the entire city. First and foremost in my mind is always what is best for New Bedford.

I'm proud to say that I have practiced fiscal responsibility. I've chaired the Finance Committee for four years and requested that the meetings be televised so that city taxpayers would know how the city was spending its money. I've sponsored many budget cuts annually to ensure that our city departments are run efficiently. I've questioned spending requests made by the administration for things like capital improvements and pay raises. The Finance Committee is responsible for voting on bonding requests and I make sure that, before any vote is taken, the committee has all of the necessary information, including the reason the bonding is needed as well as the cost of that borrowing. These actions have contributed to the maintenance of the city's superior credit rating from Moody's.

I've always believed in the importance of New Bedford's unique neighborhoods and the necessity to maintain them by being vigilant on quality of life issues. I continue to advocate strongly for historic preservation in the city, and worked over several years to slow down the rush to demolish historic properties, through the passage of a demolition delay

ordinance. The ordinance requires a public hearing, and a delay of several months before granting a demolition permit. This has forced real estate developers to find alternatives to demolition. The property now owned by the Waterfront Historic Area League (WHALE) at 38 So Sixth St is one of the properties saved from demolition by this process. I've also sponsored several other amendments to zoning ordinances to strengthen the integrity of our residential neighborhoods. Roadway improvements to Rockdale Ave, Hawthorn St and Brownell Ave were completed recently to improve traffic flow and public safety in that important travel corridor, a project that I lobbied strenuously for. I was also a driving force behind the extension of the walking path around Buttonwood Park, which is enjoyed by so many citizens on a daily basis. I have also supported the building of new schools, which will improve educational opportunities for our children, and will be reimbursed by the State at a substantial savings to the city. I have voted for funding for AHA night, the Zeiterion and other creative economy projects so that residents and visitors can enjoy arts and culture in local venues.

The proposed expansion of the Buttonwood Park Zoo is an issue that will affect the residents of Ward 5 and the city as a whole for a long time into the future. I've been vocal in calling for further study of the proposed expansion and chaired a task force made up of volunteers who developed a compromise plan for the Zoo. However I know the residents of Ward 5, and in particular, the neighbors of Buttonwood Park, want to be sure that we carefully consider the impact on the neighborhood, the park and the animals before any shovel is put into the ground and any more green space is taken. I continue to work with both the Zoological Society members and the Friends of Buttonwood Park to seek alternatives to expansion that will allow us to improve one of the best small zoos in the country, while maintaining green space for all of our residents to enjoy.

I believe a strong local economy needs strong small businesses. Therefore, I sponsored an effort to assist our struggling fishing industry by requesting a summit with federal officials be held in New Bedford to address changes to the current fisheries management regulations. I also drafted an amendment to existing zoning ordinances to allow recreational facilities to locate in renovated mill buildings. I have supported tax increment financing agreements to encourage businesses to expand or relocate to New Bedford.

Looking forward, I know that my work to improve New Bedford, and in particular the neighborhoods that comprise Ward 5, is not done.

In the next term, I will work with the School Committee to improve educational opportunities for our children and to reduce the dropout rate. An educated workforce is central to attracting new businesses to New Bedford, which will provide job opportunities and expand our commercial tax base.

I will work on making New Bedford more attractive to businesses and aggressively pursue opportunities to get new businesses to locate here and existing businesses to thrive and expand.

I will work to finish the plans for a dog park in New Bedford.

I will also seek to use Community Development funds to work with the neighborhood on a plan to update the Hathaway Courts playground. I will encourage the completion of a request for proposal for the redevelopment of the parcel at 478 Union St, which has finally been cleared and is ready for sale.

I will continue to lobby for the re-establishment of Community Policing as a means of reducing crime in our neighborhoods.

I will work with City staff to develop a plan for regular maintenance and replacement of city trees and sidewalks in

order to make our neighborhood beautiful and safe for pedestrians.

If you would like more information about my campaign, please visit [www.janegonsalves.com](http://www.janegonsalves.com).

I am running for re-election because I have a passion for New Bedford and for serving its citizens. I ask for your vote on November 8<sup>th</sup> for Ward 5 Councillor.

*All candidates running for office in New Bedford are provided the opportunity to submit articles for publication. Candidates should submit relevant articles to [info@newbedfordguide.com](mailto:info@newbedfordguide.com). The final municipal election election will be held on November 8th, 2011. Check out our 2011 New Bedford Elections Page for articles, interviews and other useful information.*

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## 2011 New Bedford Municipal Election Preview



by  
Michael  
Silvia

The first round of debates are over and the 2011 New Bedford preliminary election results are in. The disappointing part of the election was the 28% voter turn-out. There are 50,117 registered voters in New Bedford, but only 14,259 voters shows

up to the polls on October 4th. While better than the 2009 elections, New Bedford is yet again letting a minority of residents decide the city's leadership and future.

For those new to local politics, the preliminary elections decide which candidates move on to the final municipal elections. In New Bedford the final municipal elections will be held on 8 November, 2011. The preliminary elections narrow down the candidate field down from as many candidates that qualify to two candidates for mayor and for each ward city council seat. If there are two or less people running for office they skip the preliminary elections and automatically move on to the final municipal election. City council-at-large and school committee have more seats up for grab and allow a larger field to move on to the final municipal election. Here is a break down of the races:



**Mayor's Race**



There were five candidates that qualified for the preliminary elections; Antonio Cabral, Jon Mitchell, Linda Morad, E. Michael Janson and Thomas Pina. The results were:

**Antonio Cabral (5,296)**

**Jon Mitchell (4,787)**

Linda Morad (3,863)

E. Michael Janson (171)

Thomas Pina (78)

Antonio Cabral and Jon Mitchell finished as the top two candidates and move on to the November 8th election. This effectively removed Linda Morad from elected office for 2012. You can't run for city council and mayor at the same time, so Linda Morad will not represent Ward 1 unless she pushes for a write-in campaign. Who will Linda's supporters vote for in November? That answer will likely tell us who becomes our next mayor.

## **School Committee**

The New Bedford School Committee consists of seven members; six elected to the committee and the mayor who serves as the chairman. Every two years three school committee members face re-election. In the preliminary election seven candidates qualified for the ballot, but only the top six candidates move on to the November 8th election. The 2011 New Bedford School Committee election results:

**Thomas Clark (6,044)**  
**Marlene Pollock (5,281)**  
**Jill Marie Ussach (5,108)**  
**Joaquim Livramento (4,195)**  
**Erik Andrade (3,044)**  
**Guillermo Gonzalez (1,947)**  
Adrienne Wilkins (1,591)

Adrienne Wilkins was eliminated and the other six candidates move on. Of note, the three incumbents received the top votes. It appears that the incumbents are looking strong for November. In 2009, the cut off for school committee was 5,088. Unless something drastic happens, New Bedford will be re-electing all three incumbents.

**Ward City Council Races** – Learn more about the New Bedford City Council [here](#).

## **Ward 1**





Will Linda Morad  
run a write-in  
campaign for Ward  
1 city council?

Ward 1 was vacated by incumbent Linda Morad. Here are the results for 2011 New Bedford Ward 1 City Council:

**James Oliveira (1,213)**

**Nelson Ostiguy (932)**

Frank Ribeiro (466)

Robert Rebello (451)

Randy Santos (284)

James Oliveira and Nelson Ostiguy finished as the top two candidates and move on to the November 8th election. There is a good chance Linda Morad will run as a write-in candidate.

## **Ward 2**

Incumbent Steven Martins is running unopposed so there was no need to have a preliminary election for Ward 2. Unless there is a write-in candidate (unlikely) Steven Martins will be re-elected to Ward 2 for another 2 years.

## **Ward 3**

Here are the results for 2011 New Bedford Ward 3 City Council:

**Henry Bousquet (551)**

**Kathy Dehner (456)**

George Rodgers (402)

Christopher Barros (297)

Henry Bousquet and Kathy Dehner finished as the top two candidates and move on to the November 8th election. These results are a little surprising as Kathy Dehner the incumbent finished in the top two, but finished second. Not great results for an incumbent with the final elections just a month away. Expect this race to be close in November.

#### **Ward 4**

Bruce Duarte Jr. and Dana Rebeiro are the only candidates running for Ward 4 City Council so there was no need for a preliminary election. This election is a repeat of 2009. Bruce defeated Dana 972 to 618. Expect a close race in November.

#### **Ward 5**

Jane Gonsalves and James Roy are the only candidates running for Ward 5 City Council so there was no need for a preliminary election.

#### **City-Council-at-Large**

The City-Council-at-Large is not ward specific and is elected by residents city-wide. There were not enough candidates to force a preliminary election so all qualified candidates move on to the final municipal elections on November 8th. The top five candidates will serve City-Council-at-Large. The candidate list:

David Alves (I)

Brian K. Gomes (I)

Deborah Coelho (I)

Denis Lawrence, Jr. (I)

John T. Saunders (I)

Jan Baptist

Naomi Carney

John Moniz

Derek Sylvia

Chuck Dade

### **Assessor**

Marty Treadup is running unopposed.

### **In conclusion ...**

New Bedford Residents have until October 18th, 2011 to register to vote in the November 8th elections. If you already registered for the primary elections there is no need to register again. Read my article on registering to vote [here](#). New Bedford Guide will soon present a Political Survey System to help voters get educated before they vote. Voters have just over a month to get informed on the candidates before voting. Let's hope for a better turn-out of informed voters on November 8th. Until then stay tuned to New Bedford Guide as we push out important news and information on the candidates. Check out our election page with interviews, links and other useful information on all the candidates.

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# **New Bedford Political Survey System**



by  
Michael  
Silvia

Who are you voting for in the 2011 New Bedford elections? Not sure? If you already know who you are voting for, how did you come to that conclusion? Are you certain it is the right choice?

The biggest problems regarding elections are that too many people do not vote (20% voter turnout in the 2009 New Bedford elections) and those that do vote are not always informed. The result is elected officials voted into office by a minority of the city and elected officials put into office that are not the most qualified. New Bedford deserves more than that.



Soon New Bedford Guide will launch a Political Survey System that will allow voters to take a survey to find out which candidate they match up best with. Think of it as an eHarmony type service for politics.

Here's how the system will work. Candidates will answer 10-20 survey questions that are important subjects like South Coast Rail, crime, education, economic development and the casino issue. The candidates will answer each question free-text. Voters will then be able to take a blind-survey (not knowing what answer belongs to what candidate), select the answers they like best and see who they match up with when it comes to the most important topics. All candidates are for economic

development, but you will be able to find out which candidate's policies match up best with your views on improving the economy. This survey system will become available next week in time for the Preliminary Election on October 4th and remain available (reset with final candidates) for the final Municipal Election held on November 8th.

For example, there are five candidates running for New Bedford mayor. Voters will be able to take the survey and see which candidate they match up best to least. We will produce surveys for the mayoral race, city council-at-large, one for each ward council race and one for school committee. Surveys questions will be a mix of overall New Bedford issues with the ward-specific races and school committee surveys having specific questions related to the specific ward or schools.

The goal of this survey system is to get voters to vote for the candidates they match-up best with and not vote for people based on party affiliation, who a newspaper endorsed or yard signs. Hopefully, this will ensure we have the best man or women for the job and a strong mayor for the next two years.

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## Registering to Vote in New Bedford



by  
Michael  
Silvia

If you haven't heard, New Bedford is having local elections in October and November. Check out our election page for timelines, who is running and other information related to the 2011 New Bedford elections.

An important part of the election process is registering to vote. New Bedford residents have until September 14th to register to vote in the preliminary elections that will be held on October 4th. Here are the key dates for New Bedford voters to keep in mind:

- 14 Sept: Last day to register to vote for Preliminary Elections
- 01 Oct: Absentee Voting (9 AM – 12 PM)
- 03 Oct: Last day to file an absentee ballot application for Preliminary Election (12 PM)
- 04 Oct: **Preliminary Election** (7 AM – 8 PM) – top two move on to the Municipal Election
- 19 Oct: Last day to register to vote for Municipal Elections (8 PM)
- 05 Nov: Absentee Voting (9 AM – 12 PM)
- 07: Nov: Last day to file for an absentee ballot application (12 PM)
- 08 Nov: **Municipal Election** (7 AM – 8 PM)

In 2009, there were 56,423 registered voters in New Bedford, but our voter registration numbers for 2011 are down 6,518 to 49,905. This decrease happened while New Bedford increased its population. It is more important than ever to bring up these registration numbers so everyone has the opportunity to vote.

## **Registering to Vote**

Registering to vote is easy!  
You can head over to the city hall and fill out a voter registration form, or you can request the form by calling (508) 979-1421 and it will be mailed to you. Here is an example of the form: front and

**Register**  
**to** **VOTE**

back. It is recommended that you get an original form vice printing out one. Once you receive the form, you can personally deliver it to the Election Commission Office in the New Bedford City Hall, Room 114 or mail it to the address on the back side of the form. If you fill out the voter registration form and mail it in, you will receive a confirmation letter in the mail detailing the best place for you to vote. If you do not receive a confirmation letter contact (508) 979-1421.

The qualifications for Registering to vote are simple: you must be a citizen of the United States, a legal resident of New Bedford and be 18 years old on or before election day.

On Thursday, September 8th from 5 – 7 p.m., New Bedford Guide will be hosting a registration drive with the New Bedford Election Commission and there will be an opportunity for people to meet the candidates for Mayor, City Council and other elected offices. The event will be held at:

BCC eHealthCareers  
800 Purchase Street (Room 126 and Lobby Area)  
New Bedford, MA

You can follow the Facebook event here:  
<http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=221097841273143>

Take a few minutes out of your busy day between now and September 14th to ensure you have the opportunity to vote in October and November. The future leaders of New Bedford will

be decided soon and you should be part of the process.

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# Bringing Them Home



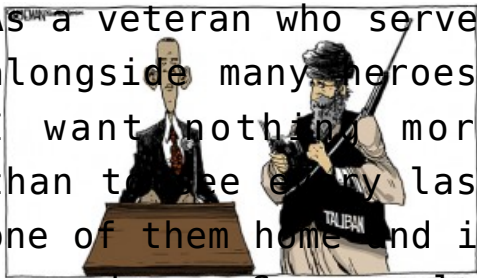
by Nate  
Winkler

On Wednesday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, President Obama addressed the nation, unveiling his drawdown plan for U.S. troops in Afghanistan. Although it seemed to be overshadowed in this area by the capture of notorious Boston mob boss James “Whitey” Bulger, this is a big story that has far reaching implications.

Not surprisingly, in today’s partisan political world, it has been difficult to find anyone who whole-heartedly agrees with the plan. Most Democrats believe that the President’s plan isn’t aggressive enough, and the troops should be coming home in larger numbers at a greater frequency. Most Republicans believe it is very risky to take fighting troops out of the hands of the generals on the ground, and withdrawing too much too soon could undermine all the progress that has been made in the region over the last decade. My opinion lies somewhere in between.



As a veteran who served alongside many heroes, I want nothing more than to see every last one of them home and in one piece. Conversely, if we leave before the job is done, and instability returns to the region, then a decade's worth of blood, sweat, and sacrifice is seemingly in vain, and history will not look kindly on what "Imperialist America" so arrogantly tried to accomplish. I believe President Obama had a very difficult task of juggling those objectives, and the plan he put forth shows balance and resolve.

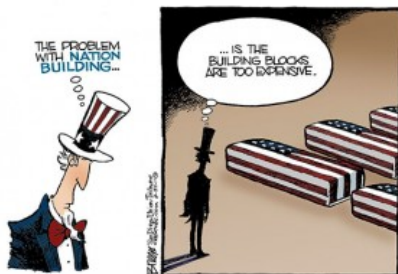


Before we can fully appreciate where we are going, let's take a quick look at where we came from. Everyone has the memory of the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 seared into their minds. I was a Marine

on active duty at Marine Corps Auxiliary Landing Field Bogue, a small airstrip between Cherry Point & Camp Lejeune on the coast of North Carolina. Even as the 2<sup>nd</sup> plane hit, we were preparing for war; before the sun set that night, we were patrolling our base with the use of deadly force authorized for the first time in my military career. Although I didn't personally know anyone who tragically perished in the attacks, I never remember feeling more sorrow than I did over those coming days. I don't remember ever feeling more patriotic and unified, either.

Fast forward a couple of weeks to October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2001, and Operation Enduring Freedom officially begins. The original intent of the invasion was to Find Osama Bin Laden & other Al Qaeda leaders and

bring them to justice, as well as remove the Taliban from power. The coalition air campaign led to the quick ouster of the Taliban from Kabul, but the subsequent insurgency has led to many ups and downs in the decade since.



Many believe the cost of the war in Afghanistan is too high.

Afghanistan took a backseat to the war in Iraq for a couple of years, and it wasn't until the controversial troop surge, initiated by President Obama in December 2009, that enough progress was made to consider an exit strategy that didn't include tails between legs.

The raid in Pakistan that led to the death of Osama Bin Laden gave the American public the sense that victory was within reach, and all indications are that the demise of the iconic leader has crippled the terrorist organization. That brings us to where we are now, with the big red circle on the calendar for 2014, and the hope that the next time we talk to one of our brothers, sisters, sons, or daughters who serve in the military, the question, 'When do you have to go back?' doesn't even enter our minds.

So now let's take a look at Obama's plan to withdraw troops. Over 10,000 troops will be home before the end of this year, and another 23,000 by the end of the summer of 2012. That seems

fairly aggressive, over a 30% reduction in essentially a year's time. This brings us back to a pre-surge troop number, after which we will begin a transition from combat to support. Afghan security forces must be ready to shoulder the load at this point. If the region remains stable politically, which is the big wild card, the drawdown will continue over the next two years until we have essentially completely withdrawn. Many would argue that even if there is instability at that point, we must cut our losses and as the President put it, "...focus on nation building here at home". With billions of dollars being spent in Afghanistan every day, and the myriad social and economic problems going on within our

borders, it's hard to disagree with that.



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employed to Afghanistan, so I can't speak first hand on to what is really going on there. I was in Iraq in 2003, and I didn't necessarily agree with my being there, but I did what I had to do in order to get home safely, and I genuinely think the world is a better place thanks to what we did there. Hopefully in a few years, we will feel the same way about our role in Afghanistan.

To draw a parallel between the two countries, it is my belief that you cannot force

uncivilized people to be civilized. It's just not that easy to convince a guy that uses his left hand as a Charmin substitute that he needs democracy. We've stayed the course for what will be 13 years if the plan unfolds as expected, which will go down as the longest continuous conflict in the history of the United States. It is safe to say at this point, we, as a nation, can look ourselves in the mirror and say we did everything we could to make Afghanistan and the world a safer place. But let's not forget, the reason we are there in the first place is to make the United States of America a safer place. Everything else is, and should be, secondary.

*\*This article is not meant to be a historical recollection of Operation Enduring Freedom, but the author's opinion on the feasibility of the troop withdrawal proposal.*

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## **Holding Scott Brown Responsible**

The Massachusetts Senator's voting record on environmental issues comes into question.

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## **The New Bedford City Council**





Michael Silvia in the New Bedford City Council Chambers.

What if I told you that I had a job for you that pays a part-time salary, but you will have to put in full-time, thankless hours? Would you take it? Wait. Before you answer, it doesn't stop there. Your home phone number will be available to 93,000 people, and the angry, upset ones will call you at all hours to complain about their

problems. Not only that, but they expect results yesterday. Oh, and since this job pays little you will also have to manage a full-time career, because waitresses (minus the tips) will earn a higher hourly rate than you. Welcome to the world of the New Bedford City Council.

I've recently been exposed to the world of the City Council and I thought I'd share some insight with the rest of you. To put it bluntly, most New Bedford residents know little, if anything, about one of the most important functions of our city. I hope to change that with this article.

So what is the City Council and what do they do? I'm glad you asked. From the City of New Bedford's official website:

*The City Council, under Plan B, is responsible for setting the city budget, appropriating all funds to run the city and is responsible for confirming all mayoral appointments. The Council is primarily responsible to the citizens of New Bedford, and is responsive to the concerns of city residents on those matters which concern said residents. The City Council is responsible for making all laws (ordinances) to govern the City.*

A little research yields some basics about the City Council. There are 11 City Council members; six Ward Councilors and five "At-Large" Councilors. One of

the city council members serves as the President and has increased powers and pay. The Ward Councilors are elected by their specific wards and the Councilors-At-Large are elected by all residents of New Bedford. As a body, the combined City Council confirms mayoral appointments, approves and/or cuts the mayor's budget, and is the primary legislative body responsible for producing all laws/ordinances for the mayor's approval. In simple terms, they are the "check and balance" to the chief-executive of the city (the mayor). As a recent example of the City Council in action, on April 25th of this year the City Council confirmed David Provencher as the new Police Chief by a vote of 10-0.



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## **A PITTANCE FOR YOUR TIME**

When I first started researching the New Bedford elected offices, I found that three of the city council members ran unopposed, which I think is totally unacceptable. We deserve choice, right? There should be dozens of talented, qualified individuals lining up to become city Council members! This was my thought before I found out that city council members make less than \$15,000 a year (\$14,653 base pay to be exact) and haven't received a pay raise since 1995. The job really does require someone who cares more about

the city of New Bedford than making money. I researched the 2010 and 2011 New Bedford City Budgets and there are over 100 city employees that make over \$90,000 a year, with 51 of them making over \$100,000. If income is your primary focus, then you should become a police officer or fireman, because they are at the top of the income pyramid for city employees.

## **IN NEED OF CITY ASSISTANCE**

If you are a resident of New Bedford and need something done with the city, chances are it will be an employee at the city hall or a City Council member that will take action. All City Council members are approachable and accessible through phone. For general

issues, I recommend starting with the council member that represents your ward. For example, I live in downtown New Bedford which is Ward 4, which falls under Bruce Duarte's jurisdiction.

For specific issues, you should research the standing and special committees and contact the city council members that are part of the committee that can help with your issue.

The public city council meetings are held at the New Bedford City Hall (133 William Street, City Council Chambers – Room 214) on the first Thursday of each month and start at 7 P.M.

In general, Americans have lost interest in their state and federal governments because they are not accessible (unless

the politicians are getting re-elected). This is not the case when it comes to New Bedford municipal government. Each resident has immediate access to their city officials to include the City Council and even the Mayor. When you need assistance, start with the New Bedford City Offices (for simple issues) or the New Bedford City Council (when you need guidance or action). Just remember that while the City Council works for you, it is a part-time, under appreciated job: They don't have personal assistants and likely work full-time jobs. Enjoy some photos of our City Hall and Council Chambers!

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*Special thanks to*



City Council members Jane Gonsalves and Steven Martins for providing me access to the City Council Chambers and insight into the New Bedford City Council. Ready to run for public office in New Bedford? Read my article detailing what it takes to Run for Office in New Bedford.