

The Votes are in, so what happens now?



The third question concerned gambling or rather prohibiting gambling.

On November 4th, residents from all over Massachusetts turned out and voted in many statewide and local races. One especially notable result of this election has made Charlie Baker, a Republican, the new state governor. Baker had surprised many in recent days when polls showed the race between him and Coakley tightening, and even him pulling a bit ahead of his Democratic opponent. As to what is next none can say for sure, although we can surely expect that Baker will attempt to make good on his past promise of making the government more efficient.

Additionally residents voted on four statewide ballot initiatives. The first was the repeal of indexing on the gas tax, which adjusted the tax to inflation perpetually. Of course it passed surprising no one, although what was surprising was how close the race was at about 53 for repeal

and 47 opposed. What this result means is that the gas tax no longer increases automatically, and the gas tax remains in effect at its current value. Charlie Baker, our new governor-elect, had previously stood out against indexing on the gas tax so it is possible that future action to raise this tax may be hindered by his administration.

Another of the measures that was voted upon was the expansion of the Bottle Bill, which failed. This initiative sought to expand the 5 cent deposit already paid on most soda bottles and cans to other bottled and canned drinks such as water and Gatorade. Additionally the 5 cent deposit on drinks would be indexed, meaning that it would increase to match changes in the consumer price index. Even with the failure of this expansion though, the current 5 cent deposit on soda bottles and cans remains in effect. If my time with the MassPIRG activists on campus is any inkling however, I don't expect that supporters will give up anytime soon and are sure to try again.

The third question concerned gambling or rather prohibiting gambling. The actual measure if passed would have kept our state's gaming commission from issuing licenses to casinos and other gaming establishments. Additionally it would have canceled out any such licenses issued before the law's passage, however ultimately this measure failed as well. Massachusetts gaming laws are unchanged, which clears the way for the casinos that had sought to be built in our state.

Question 4, the last of the statewide ballot initiatives, sought to give earned sick time to workers. Depending of course on the size of the business, workers earn and can use up to 40 hours of paid or unpaid sick time. Since it has passed, starting July 1st of next year people who are employed will begin earning 1 hour of sick time per 30 hours of work, and yes those hours do carry over from year to year, however they cannot exceed 40 total hours. Again this is notable because Charlie Baker had made it well known over the course

of his campaign that he was for earned sick time, but under much stricter conditions. Namely the conditions of the law make it so that only employees working for businesses with ten or fewer employees qualify for unpaid, rather than paid leave. Baker is on record for wanting businesses with up to a maximum of 49 employees to have their workers sick time be unpaid time. So whether or not he can or will use his new powers as governor to change or nullify this legislation is in question.

So now hopefully you have some idea of the effects of these ballot initiatives and what they will or will not do in the near future. As to what effects these decisions will have on statewide issues like the economy, infrastructure, and recycling, well we'll have to wait and see. Whatever the case though, if your unsatisfied with the results there's always the next election cycle just around the corner.
