

TO: Members and Friends of the United Parish

FROM: Stretching Into Justice Ministry Team

DATE: October 13, 2026

RE: Massachusetts Ballot Initiatives – Nov. 3 election

Voters are facing a decision on nine ballot questions on Election Day on November 3. The Stretching Into Justice Ministry Team has looked into each of the ballot questions in an effort to inform voters at United Parish about the pros and cons for each question. Attached you will find our analysis -- 1 page for each question.

We present the case on both sides of each question and offer links for further information.

We are urging a specific vote on four of the nine questions because we feel these votes involve issues of justice in line with our Christian values. These are:

- #2 – YES for collective bargaining rights for the staff of the Committee for Public Counsel Services ("CPCS") which provide critical legal support for persons who cannot afford counsel.
- #5 – NO on state revenue caps which would threaten vital services
- #6 – YES on establishment of a permanent revenue stream for a Natural Resources Conservation Fund -- from sales tax revenue from sporting goods purchases -- to protect wildlife and natural resources in our state
- #9 – YES on keeping in place Massachusetts existing gun safety laws

For your own inquiry, here are some useful links for information about each ballot question:

- Secretary of State [Voters Guide](#) on the ballot questions. This "red booklet" states the YES and NO cases for each question, provides the actual language of the proposed law, and provides reports from the Legislature's Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions.
- Commonwealth Beacon (formerly known as Commonwealth Inc.) has an excellent overview of each ballot initiative, as well as interesting data across all questions of the sources of campaign funding. [HERE](#) is a link.
- The Boston Globe tracks the sources of campaign expenditures for each question, listing each donor of more than \$1,000, which you can find [HERE](#). It is continually updated as campaign contributions continue to be made.

We hope you find this helpful.

EARLY VOTING STARTS OCTOBER 17, SO PLEASE REMEMBER TO VOTE ON OR BEFORE NOV. 3.

Question 1 – EXPANDING THE PUBLIC RECORDS LAW

Description of ballot question: The proposed law would make most records held by the Legislature and the Office of the Governor public records under Massachusetts law and thus available for public review. It would exempt from public availability documents related to the development of public policy and communication between legislators and their constituents, if those communications are reasonably related to the constituent's request for assistance in obtaining government provided benefits or services or interacting with a government agency. It would take effect January 1, 2027.

Arguments on Each Side:

- The **supporters** of this ballot question emphasize the value of transparency in good government and the fact that the Massachusetts state government consistently ranks very low or last among other states for transparency.
- The **opponents** of this ballot question, consisting almost exclusively of certain members of the state legislature, including Senate President Karen Spilka, point to the chilling effect on open communications by lawmakers in the policy-setting process, since those exemptions would cease upon adoption or rejection of a policy. They also warn the exemption of constituent communications is too narrow and could result in privacy violations.

Position of Stretching Into Justice Ministry Team: Stretching is not recommending either a “yes” or “no” on this question, because, while very important as an issue, it does not sufficiently involve an issue of justice in such a way that Christian values compel us to take a stand.

Other Information:

- GBIO urges its members to vote YES, pointing to the obstacles that currently inhibit its lobbying efforts from the lack of transparency in legislative activity.
- According to the Boston Globe ([LINK](#)), a group called Coalition for Healthy Democracy 2026 has contributed \$5,127,489 advocating a YES vote for Questions 1 and 3 combined, and an additional \$331,070 has been contributed to support Question 1 by the Committee for Transparency and Democracy, with \$150,000 of that coming from the Committee to Elect Diana DiZoglio. No funds have been raised in support of the NO vote.
- Here is Commonwealth Beacon's summary of the question: [LINK Q1](#)
- Auditor Diana DiZoglio championed the ballot measure in 2024 to audit the Massachusetts legislature. That measure was approved by 72% of voters. The State Auditor has been pushing for implementation of the approved measure while the legislature considers bills to amend the text passed in 2024.
- The House and Senate passed a new public records law in late July intended to address the transparency ahead of the ballot initiative vote. It was endorsed by the ACLU and others but criticized by the YES on #1 advocates as too narrow and an effort to make an end run around the ballot initiative.

Question 2 – COLLECTIVE BARGAINING FOR CPCS EMPLOYEES

Description of ballot question: The Committee for Public Counsel Services (“CPCS”) is the state agency in Massachusetts responsible for providing legal representation to low-income individuals in criminal and civil cases where the law requires that counsel be provided. The proposed law would specify that employees of CPCS may engage in collective bargaining with their employer.

CPCS has approximately 500 staff attorneys, who are employees of the Commonwealth. CPCS also relies on approximately 3,000 additional attorneys (known as Bar Advocates) who are hired as independent contractors; they work as lawyers in private practice for an hourly fee. The Bar Advocates would not be affected by the proposed law. The staff attorneys are not the only employees of CPCS. It also has employees in accounting, IT, forensic science, and human services, as well as HR and administrative staff. They would all be covered by the proposed law.

Arguments on Each Side:

- The **supporters** of this ballot question point out that CPCS employees provide critical legal representation for Massachusetts residents who cannot afford an attorney, so they have access to legal representation when facing criminal prosecution. Yet, unlike other state employees, CPCS employees do not currently have the right to choose whether to organize and collectively bargain over wages, benefits and working conditions. This ballot question would allow CPCS employees to organize a union if they so choose, like employees in 180 other state agencies, covering groups like public educators, transportation workers, and state lottery employees. They argue that the ability to retain good employees with better pay and working conditions is in the long-term interest of the mission of CPCS, and that not allowing them to form a union if they so choose is unjust and short-sighted.
- The **opponents** claim that allowing CPCS employees to collectively bargain creates serious operational and fiscal risks for the judiciary, and warn that introducing collective bargaining into the CPCS system could disrupt existing management and supervisory frameworks, introduce ambiguity into lines of authority, and create operational inefficiencies.

Position of Stretching Into Justice Ministry Team: *Stretching is recommending a “yes” vote on this question.* Our research finds not only that the compensation paid to staff attorneys is inadequate, but that their workload is overbearing, with the result that these dedicated advocates routinely juggle too many cases and work very long hours. Honoring the work of public servants who advocate on behalf of “the least of these” in the criminal justice system is a Christian value.

Other Information:

- GBIO has taken no position on this ballot question.
- According to the Boston Globe ([LINK](#)), the two unions backing this ballot question -- National Association of Government Employees and SEIU Local 888 --each gave over \$500,000. There is no registered opposition to this ballot question.
- Here is Commonwealth Beacon's summary of the question: [LINK Q2](#)

Question 3. STATE PRIMARY ELECTIONS

Description of ballot question: If enacted, this proposed law would eliminate political party primaries for state elections and put in its place a single, all-party primary in which all candidates, regardless of party, would be listed on one ballot, and voters could vote for any candidate on the ballot. The two leading candidates would advance to the general election. The candidates for Governor and Lieutenant Governor would be listed jointly on the primary ballot. It would apply both to state-level elections for the governor and legislature and to federal elections for the US Senate and House. It would take effect on January 1, 2028, and would not affect the 2026 elections.

Arguments on Each Side:

- The **supporters** of this ballot question argue that insiders hold the advantage in Massachusetts primary elections, with two-thirds of the current legislature held by officer-holders who are running unopposed this fall. The proposed all-party system would make the races more competitive, allow newcomers a better chance at exposure to the voters, and result in a more diverse legislature and higher voter participation. They are represented by the Coalition for a Healthy Democracy (CHD), a group led by Danielle Allen, a Harvard University historian specializing in democracy and the classics and one time gubernatorial candidate, by former governors Charlie Baker and Deval Patrick, and by many financial investment companies and individuals.
- The **opponents** of this ballot argue that an all-party primary would allow the primary elections to be dominated by well-funded political groups, sidelining third-party and independent candidates, and candidates of color and women, who have limited financial capacity. They argue further that the proposal's limit of allowing only two candidates to advance to the general election will reduce competition and lower voter participation and narrow debate. They are represented by Voter Rights Massachusetts, and joined by several unions, as well as MassDems and Progressive Massachusetts, as well as a number of municipal elected officials.

Position of Stretching Into Justice Ministry Team: Stretching is not recommending either a “yes” or “no” on this question, because, while very important as an issue, it does not sufficiently involve an issue of justice that compel us to take a stand.

Other Information:

- GBIO has taken no position on this ballot question.
- According to the Boston Globe ([LINK](#)), supporters have raised \$6.92 million, largely from financial investment firms and Danielle Allen’s CHD coalition. Opponents have raised \$166,000 from the State Democratic Committee and Local 509 of the SEIU union.
- Here is Commonwealth Beacon’s summary of the question: [LINK Q3](#)
- [HERE](#) is a link to the Yes on 3 website.
- [HERE](#) is a link to the No on 3 website.

Question 4. ELECTION DAY REGISTRATION

Description of ballot question: If enacted, this proposed law would permit eligible individuals to register to vote or update their voter registration address on Election Day. This law would take effect January 1, 2028.

Arguments on Each Side:

- The **supporters** of this ballot question believe same-day registration makes our democracy truly representative, secure and modern. It serves young people who move frequently and enhances election security with verified proof of residence documentation. Supporters are represented by The YES on Election Day Registration Committee and include Secretary of State Bill Galvin, the Massachusetts State Democratic Committee, the Massachusetts ACLU, and the Massachusetts AFL-CIO.
- The **opponents** of this ballot question argue that same-day registration invites vote fraud and doesn't allow state officials enough time to review a registrant's identity, residence and eligibility, leading to the possibility of detection of false statements only after a vote has already been cast. The opponents are organized by the Massachusetts Republican Party.

Position of Stretching Into Justice Ministry Team: Stretching is not recommending either a "yes" or "no" on this question, because, while very important as an issue, it does not sufficiently involve an issue of justice in such a way that Christian values compel us to take a stand.

Other Information

- GBIO has taken no position on this ballot question.
- According to the Boston Globe ([LINK](#)):
 - Supporters have to date raised \$160,000 from the Bill Galvin Committee (Secretary of State); several unions; Eastern Bank President Bob Rivers; and the re-election committees for US Congresspersons Kathryn Clark and Richard Neal, and
 - Opponents have not raised any funds.
- Here is Commonwealth Beacon's summary of this question: [LINK Q4](#)
- 21 states and the District of Columbia allow same day voting registration.
- Here is a [LINK](#) to the YES on Question 4 website.
- There is no website dedicated to a NO vote. Here is the statement of the Republican Party: "Same-day registration opens the door to administrative errors, fraud, and a logistical nightmare that can undermine the integrity of our elections."

Question 5 – STATE REVENUE LIMIT & REBATE

Description of ballot question: This proposed revision to existing law would limit the revenue the state can collect in a given year. to the net amount of *actual* state revenue from the year before, *rather than the previous year's cap*, increased by a percentage equal to the average growth of wages and salaries in Massachusetts over the most recent three years. If revenue collected by the state in a given year exceeds that limit, the excess amount must be refunded to taxpayers the following year. In calculating the limit, the proposed law would include all revenue from the surtax on incomes over \$1 million. The law would take effect July 1, 2027.

Arguments on Each Side:

- The **supporters** of this ballot question argue the proposed tax cap would create stronger fiscal guardrails, promote accountability in budgeting and spending and, would not cut state spending for important services like education, transportation, or healthcare. Furthermore, they argue that taxpayers are more likely to get money back than is the case currently, helping to offset the state's high cost of living. The supporters are sponsored by the Massachusetts Opportunity Alliance, the Massachusetts High Technology Council, and other business groups.
- The **opponents** argue that programs and services that ordinary citizens have come to rely on, in basic areas like healthcare and education, will inevitably be reduced due to the change. They also argue that the calculation of the tax cap and resulting refunds will favor high-income taxpayers more than middle-class and lower-income taxpayers even as essential services are being cut back. The supporters are sponsored by the Raise Up coalition, which led the effort to pass the millionaires' tax in 2022, and Protect Massachusetts' Future, and are joined by the League of Women Voters, Senate President Karen Spilka, and several unions.

Position of Stretching Into Justice Ministry Team: *Stretching is recommending a “no” on this question*, because the preservation of programs substantially benefiting our less advantaged neighbors is well in line with our Christian values.

Other Information:

- GBIO urges its members to vote NO, pointing to the cutbacks in essential state services that are likely to result while millionaires would receive frequent tax refunds.
- According to the Boston Globe ([LINK](#)), the supporters have raised \$566,000 from various business organizations and the opponents have raised \$715,000 from several unions and the Massachusetts Teachers Association.
- Here is Commonwealth Beacon's summary of the question: [LINK Q5](#). Click on “The Breakdown” for a useful illustration of fiscal impact.
- Click [HERE](#) for an analysis of fiscal impact by a policy center at Tufts University.

- Quick background on tax caps:
 - Voters in 1986 approved a ballot question setting a limit on how much Massachusetts can collect in taxes. Under that law refunds have happened twice: once in 1987 for \$29 million, and again in 2022, when the state had to issue rebates totaling \$2.94 billion.
 - The Senate voted 31-8 in July to revise the revenue cap to a more liberal calculation of 7.5% of the state's income tax collections, and placed it into the still pending economic development bill, which is now in conference committee where further action is unlikely until after the election. The impact on state budgeting if the ballot initiative passes, in light of this action by the Senate, is unclear.

Question 6. NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION FUND

Description of ballot question: If enacted, this proposed law would dedicate up to \$100 million in taxes already being collected on the sale of sporting goods to create a Nature for All Fund for natural resource conservation. The actual receipt of these tax revenues into the Fund would still be subject to appropriation by the Legislature, so this funding would not be guaranteed. The Fund would be governed by a 15-member board consisting of five state officials and ten members of the public which must include representatives of underserved communities and indigenous peoples. The Fund could accept private donations as well as public funds. Its work would be supported by a staff hired by the State Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. This law would take effect July 1, 2027, when 50% of the targeted tax revenues would go into the Fund; beginning July 1, 2028, 100% of the revenues would go into the Fund.

Arguments on Each Side:

- The **supporters** of this ballot question believe the permanent dedication of state tax revenues will help clean water and air, preserve wildlife habitats, open space, and forests, protect family farms, and create and improvement of parks, trails and green spaces for public use. This measure will not impose new taxes, but re-allocate up to \$100 million of each year's existing taxes on sporting goods and related sales, which amounts to a tiny portion – only 0.16% -- of the state's \$63.4 billion annual budget. Supporters include Governor Healey and include Mass Audubon, the Conservation Law Foundation, and other environmental groups.
- The **opponents** of this ballot question have no sponsoring organization, but the legislature's Special Committee on Initiative Petitions recommends against the question arguing it would require reduction in funding for other state programs and raise constitutional questions on how state funds are managed. Others have questioned whether it is appropriate for a public ballot measure to mandate state budgeting in this way, noting that it could lead to uncontrolled public interference into the state budgeting process.

Position of Stretching Into Justice Ministry Team: *Stretching is recommending a "yes" vote on this question.* The protection of our natural resources is a matter of good stewardship of our God-given natural environment and in line with our Christian values.

Other Information

- GBIO has taken no position on this ballot question.
- According to the Boston Globe ([LINK](#)), supporters have to date raised \$2.64 million from Mass Audubon, the Nature Conservancy and many individuals. Opponents have not raised any funds.
- Here is Commonwealth Beacon's summary of the question: [LINK Q6](#)
- Other states, including Virginia, Georgia and Texas have dedicated a similar sporting goods sales tax for conservation purposes.

- The measure could help protect family farms by expanding the Agricultural Preservation Program which pays farmland owners to keep their farms operating. See [LINK](#) here to a description of the program.

Question 7. SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES

Description of ballot question: If enacted, this proposed law would allow single-family homes to be built statewide in residentially zoned areas as long as the land on which it is to be constructed is at least 5,000 square feet, has at least 50 feet of land bordering a public way, and has access to public sewer and water services. It is intended to stimulate housing production currently inhibited by large-lot zones of 1 or more acres in many suburban locations. The law would allow cities and towns to reasonably regulate certain aspects of the homes, such as height, open space, and distance from neighboring buildings, and it would call on the Executive Office of Housing and Livable communities (EOHLC) to issue guidance or regulations.

Position of Stretching Into Justice Ministry Team: Stretching is not recommending either a “yes” or “no” on this question, because, while housing and its affordability are very important issues, this action it does not sufficiently involve an issue of justice in such a way that Christian values compel us to take a stand.

Arguments on Each Side:

- The **supporters** of this ballot question argue that, because of its typical large-lot zoning in many, mostly suburban, housing markets, homes are too expensive for too many Massachusetts residents, especially young people and seniors looking to downsize out of their long-held single-family homes, and many households are leaving the state to find more affordable places to live. The large lot sizes required in many local zoning codes drives up the cost of land, making houses expensive beyond the means of most of the state’s population. Reducing minimum lot size requirements to 5,000sf – a size more typical of suburbs nationwide – in locations with sufficient water/sewer infrastructure, will make more homes available for young families and seniors. The supporters are represented by a real estate interests, like the Greater Boston Real Estate Board, as well as organized housing advocates. Governor Healey has also announced her support for this ballot question.
- The **opponents** of this ballot question argue that this is the wrong approach to the affordable housing problem because it overrides local control of land uses. They contend that local zoning boards, consisting of local residents, working with planning and zoning municipal staff, are best suited to regulate housing development in their communities. Some housing advocates also question whether it would stimulate sprawl in place of more environmentally efficient multi-family housing development, and point out that it will not make housing in high-cost communities like Brookline and Newton because of the high cost of even small parcels of land. The primary representative for the opposition is the Massachusetts Municipal Association, and they are joined by the Republican Party of Massachusetts.

Other Information:

- GBIO has taken no position on this ballot question.
- According to the Boston Globe ([LINK](#)) , supporters have raised \$1.7 million, both from real estate and financial interests like the Greater Boston Real Estate Board and some developers and banks, and opponents have raised no campaign funds.
- Here is Commonwealth Beacon's summary of the question: [LINK Q7](#)
- [HERE](#) is a description in Boston.com of the arguments for and against the question.
- [HERE](#) is the case in favor of Question 7 as articulated by Abundant Housing of Massachusetts.

Question 8 – PROHIBIT RETAIL SALE OF ADULT RECREATIONAL USE MARIJUANA

Description of ballot question: The proposal would change the type and amount of marijuana that may be legally possessed in Massachusetts by repealing the laws (passed a decade ago) that legalize, regulate, and tax the retail sale of adult recreational use marijuana in Massachusetts. It would limit persons 21 years and older to possess no more than one ounce of marijuana or no more than 5 grams of marijuana in the form of concentrate.. Persons found to be possessing between one and two ounces would be subject to a \$100 fine, surrender of that marijuana, and complete of a drug awareness program and community service

Arguments on Each Side:

- The **supporters** of this ballot question argue that this question is primarily based on public health and safety. They point out that surveys show that 85% admit to driving on the same day after using the substance, with 53% of that 85% indicating that they drive within an hour of use. They claim that employers are experiencing increased costs from more workplace injuries, higher healthcare costs and greater turnover. They state that modern concentrates and edibles have been linked to mental health and psychiatric issues especially in adolescents and young adults.
- The **opponents** argue that passage of this ballot question would create serious public health and safety problems by repealing existing regulations over the production and sale of marijuana, and return this substance to the illicit market where no safeguards exist. They claim the question would dismantle an industry that employs some 20,000 jobs in Massachusetts, grossed more than \$1.6 billion in 2025 and generated nearly \$300 million in state tax revenue in fiscal year 2025.

Position of Stretching Into Justice Ministry Team: Stretching is not recommending either a “yes” or “no” on this question, because, while very important as an issue, it does not sufficiently involve an issue of justice in such a way that Christian values compel us to take a stand.

Other Information:

- GBIO has taken no position on this ballot question.
- According to the Boston Globe ([LINK](#)), a single organization, Smart Approaches to Marijuana (SAM), a non-profit based in Alexandria VA, has contributed \$3.48 million to support Question #8, and marijuana retailers, along with Retailers Association of MA, have contributed \$2.2 million.
- Here is Commonwealth Beacon’s summary of the question: [LINK Q8](#)
- [HERE](#) is a Globe article linking cannabis to psychiatric emergencies, and [HERE](#) is a more nuanced overview of observations of different members of the medical community.

Question 9 – FIREARMS REGULATION (a/k/a GUN LAW REPEAL)

Description of ballot question: Unlike the other ballot questions, Question 9 is a “veto referendum”, asking voters if they want to keep an existing law in place or repeal it. In this question, voters are asked if they want to retain or repeal Chapter 135 of the Acts of 2024 (“An Act Modernizing Firearms”) passed by both houses of the legislature with lopsided majorities and signed by Gov. Healey in July 2024. The 2024 law brought Massachusetts in line with a 2022 US Supreme Court ruling on gun regulation by instituting measures like a prohibition on assault-style firearms, mandatory registration of privately made firearms, and a new electronic firearms tracking system. With that law, Massachusetts became known for having some of the nation’s strongest gun control laws.

For this ballot question, a yes vote would keep in place the 2024 gun law, and a no vote would repeal those changes to the law.

Arguments on Each Side:

- The **supporters** of this question argue that the 2024 gun law revisions (summarized below) are lifesaving measures that must be retained. They claim that these measures are an essential component of our state’s attention to gun safety and gun violence prevention which results in Massachusetts having a gun death rate 70% below the national average. The supporters of a YES vote to retain the existing law include Governor Healey and a majority of the state legislature, the Massachusetts Teachers Association, and the Alliance for Gun Responsibility.
- The **opponents** to the 2024 revisions say they violate the Second Amendment and amount to bureaucratic overreach imposing already burdensome state firearms regulation on local communities. They claim the state is struggling to develop the computer system required to implement the law and argue that police time would be better spent chasing “real criminals” and not diverted to gun safety enforcement. The opponents include Smith & Wesson Brands Inc., the Gun Owners Action League, and certain sportsmen’s clubs.

Position of Stretching Into Justice Ministry Team: *Stretching is recommending a “yes” vote on this question.* We recognize that law-abiding use of firearms for activities like hunting, sport shooting and personal protection are constitutionally protected in the United States. However, the protection of human life is an essential Christian value as well as the law, and advocacy for stronger gun safety laws is a calling in our faith, exemplified by the resolution of the 1995 General Synod of the UCC calling for such advocacy, which is explained [HERE](#).

Other Information:

- GBIO urges its members to vote YES, indicating that reducing gun violence has long been a GBIO priority.
- According to the Boston Globe ([LINK](#)), many organizations, including unions, the Massachusetts Teachers Association, the Massachusetts Nurses Association, and other gun safety coalitions have raised a total of \$738,590 for the YES campaign, and Smith & Wesson Brands, as well as various gun

owners associations and many individuals, including Republican candidate for governor Michael Minogue, have raised \$372,641.

- Here is Commonwealth Beacon's summary of the question: [LINK Q9](#)
- Key provisions of the 2024 law, currently being implemented:
 - developing an electronic registration system to track firearm ownership;
 - prohibiting *assault-style firearms* (as defined in law);
 - requiring safety certificates to obtain firearm permits;
 - mandating serial numbers for firearms;
 - allowing school administrators and licensed healthcare providers to request that a court issue an Extreme Risk Protection Order;
 - permitting courts to order firearm surrender when issuing Harassment Prevention Orders.