

Time for Government Transparency in Massachusetts

Do you know what your State Representative's voting record is on issues you care about or how they vote in committees? Neither do we. The Massachusetts State House is broken and has a dismal "Open States Project" score of F. There is little access to Committee votes where bills go to die.

Legislative leadership favor "yea" or "nay" voice votes with no record kept. Currently it takes 10% (16 members) of the House Representatives to get a recorded vote. Most states have a much lower threshold while in the U.S. Congress it is half this at 5%. Finally, time to review legislation prior to a vote is limited to only 24 hours. This is too short and no way to run a democracy. "Act on Mass", an organization advocating for open government, has developed a "Transparency is Power campaign" endorsed by the Carlisle Democratic Town Committee. We ask Commonwealth Legislators to update State House rules as summarized below:

1. Make all committee votes and testimony public via the Legislature website
2. Bills are public for 72 hours prior to final vote
3. The threshold for public floor vote is reduced to 8 state reps

As recently as last November 2020, Ballot Question 4 (*non-binding*) asked voters "Shall the representative for this district be instructed to vote in favor of changes to the Legislature's rules that would make the results of all votes in Legislative committees publicly available on the Legislature's website?" - 90% said Yes.

Why is this important? Legislation with broad voter support has been held up in the State House for years including Same Day Voter Registration (16 years), Comprehensive Climate Crisis Legislation (12 years), Safe Communities Act (8 years), Progressive Taxation (20 years).

The Carlisle Democratic Town Committee urges townspeople to contact our State Representative Tami Gouveia to support her efforts to back Legislative transparency and responsive government. We also encourage you to reach out to your friends in other district to contact their House Representatives to vote in February for government transparency rules.

Daniel Cook, CDTC Member, Cross Street
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