



Legislative Update

As the two-year Massachusetts legislative session rolls to a close, both chambers gird for change as Senate President Therese Murray hands the gavel to her longtime colleague, Majority Leader Stan Rosenberg, and both House and Senate brush past outgoing governor Deval Patrick to welcome his incoming Republican successor, Charles Baker. Baker, who failed in a 2012 bid to unseat Patrick, this year blocked the majority Democrats from promoting Attorney General Martha Coakley to the corner office.

The upcoming realignment would seem to favor Speaker of the House Robert DeLeo, the only member of the current triumvirate to survive the transition. But Rosenberg is a 24-year veteran of the collegial Senate, and Baker too knows his way around the State House, having served under prior Republican governors as both Secretary of Administration and Finance and Secretary of Health and Human Services. A numbers guy, "Charlie" Baker earned props after his swing through state government by turning around one of the state's largest health insurers, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, which was failing fast until he took the reins in 1998. This year, he convinced enough Massachusetts voters that his still-steady hand deserved their trust – despite that bothersome "R" after his name – and with it an opportunity to guide the ship of state for the next four years.

During the 2013-14 session, Serlin Haley lobbied on 14 bills for MVMA, covering 7 unique topics. Most dealt with animal cruelty issues, such as Sen. Bruce Tarr's "PAWS Bill" (SB 1914¹), which ultimately was enacted in both chambers as HB 4388²; MVMA's language on mandatory reporting remained intact in the final version. In addition, the legislation creates an Abuse Cruelty Task Force. MVMA has submitted Dr. Lauren Atkins to fill the Veterinarian seat. We are currently waiting to see if Governor Patrick will make appointments to this task force or hand the task to incoming Governor Baker.

Another important bill signed in the current legislative session was SB 1172³, protecting household pets and service animals in the event of natural disasters.

Three bills that Serlin Haley lobbied on for MVMA stalled in either the House or Senate Ways & Means committees, and have remained there since both chambers went into informal session on August 1. Of these, one was a House bill on veterinary technology (HB 246)⁴, while the other two were House and Senate bills on farm animals (HB 4008⁵ and SB 2232⁶). The most recent reincarnation of the perennial "dangerous dogs" bill, SB 969⁷, this year was referred to "study" after hearings before the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government.

If the status quo holds and none of the stalled bills are revived as the current session closes, the legislature will hit Reset on January 7th as a new legislature takes its seats and, as usual,

files more than 5,000 new bills to launch the new two-year term. Baker's Republican allies picked up two seats in the 40-member Senate and, pending one last recount, gained six in the 160-member House.

Democrats still retain overwhelming margins in both chambers, however, which will force Governor Baker to repeatedly flash his bipartisan *bona fides* in support of his 2015 legislative agenda. For this very reason, for example, we expect the new Republican administration to prove *more* aggressive than Patrick's on some issues, especially those arising from environmental concerns. We also see Baker's recruiting of prominent Democrats to his team – including Chelsea Town Manager Jay Ash and, more recently, Rep. Carlo Basile as the new governor's legislative liaison – as signs that Baker plans an ambitious legislative agenda and expects to make significant accommodations to key Democrats, especially DeLeo and Rosenberg, to get it enacted.

Next month, as a new Democratic legislature becomes acquainted with a new Republican governor, it will be important to monitor developments both in the legislative and executive branch. Many of the bills that stalled in the legislature this year will likely be reintroduced, and while we do not expect Governor Baker to take a radically different course, it will be interesting to see to what extent his administration supports or opposes animal-related initiatives coming out of the new legislature.

1. <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/188/Senate/S1914>
2. <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/188/House/H4388>
3. <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/188/Senate/S1172>
4. <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/188/House/H246>
5. <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/188/House/H4008>
6. <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/188/Senate/S2232>
7. <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/188/Senate/S969>