Bills & Regs

Housing H6244, the new number of the Cusack-Matthews **condo conversion** bill, is in House Ways and Means, and housing advocates hope it will stay there. This very watered-down bill (*Update*, May 5), if passed, would pre-empt stronger condo conversion restrictions in force or near enactment in at least 13 Bay State communities, including Lynn, Cambridge, Gloucester, Malden, Woburn, Framingham and Brookline.

Elders A new redraft of the **elder abuse** bill, S2162, has all the attributes of successful legislation and the Human Services Committee favorably reported it out after special efforts by Senator Jack King and others to build strong and varied support. Among the proponents are District Attorney Delahunt, DEA Secretary Mahoney, Greater Boston Elderly Legal Services, and many others. It remains in Senate Ways and Means.

Another bill concerned with elders who are exploited is S971, the **guardianship reform** bill. Selectively amending the present law, the bill provides for a "guardian ad litum" to represent the interests of the prospective ward during court proceedings and other due process protections. Senator Alan Sisitsky convinced the full Senate to overturn the Judiciarv Committee's unfavorable report. It is now in Senate Ways and Means and proponents hope to move it out. They expect a refile to be successful next year.

The **nursing home receivership** bills (filed identically as S541 and H4533) are stuck in third reading in the Senate, and in House Ways and Means respectively. These refiles of a bill pocket vetoed by Governor King last year had, until recently, good prospects of passage. According to Dick Rowland of the Mass. Association of Older Americans (MAOA), the Governor indicated that he would not veto the legislation this year. However, the fact that the Senate bill has all of a sudden stopped moving indicates to some proponents that the nursing home industry is putting on strong pressure. There is speculation that former Senate President Kevin Harrington's presence as a consultant for the Mass. Federation of Nursing Homes accounts for this turnaround.

Taxes Two tax credit bills for the high technology industry reported on earlier (*Update*, March 17) are being redrafted by Rep. Michael Barrett of the Taxation Committee and are due out by June 16. In a recent draft, H3679, offers a **tax credit** for expenditures leading to increases in research and development (R&D) personnel. H3834 is an **educational contributions tax credit** bill.

Critics point to the lack of provisions targeting minorities, women, and the structurally unemployed for new jobs and educational/training programs; the amount of revenue the credits will deprive the state (estimates approximate $16 million) during tight fiscal times; and the questionable effectiveness of tax credits as business incentives at all.

Barrett has indicated that his redraft will tie the credits to affirmative action and the creation of manufacturing jobs in the state.

The bills are likely to get a favorable report from Taxation, but observers don't think they will go far in these last few weeks of the session.

Energy Despite expectations that last year's dramatic rise in fuel costs would help fuel conservation and assistance legislation move quickly through the legislature, nearly all energy bills are stuck in House Ways and Means.

The one exception is H6215, abolishing the automatic **fuel adjustment** clause for utilities (*Update*, March 31 and May 5). Supported by a coalition led by Mass. Fair Share and the Energy Development Caucus, the bill has been engrossed (passed) in the House. It has strong support in the Senate and should make it to the Governor's desk this year. Advocates expect Gov. King to veto the bill, but there is growing support in the Senate to hold up the Gov.'s highly-prized coal conversion bill in exchange for approval of fuel adjustment.

S669, the **home heating assistance fund** (*Update*, March 31), is in Senate Ways and Means and probably won't move out this session, as it requires a $30m bond issue.

The **Senior Citizen Insulation Program** (SCIP) bill, S381 (*Update*, March 31) is in House Ways and Means. Its lead supporter, the Mass. Association of Older Americans, doesn't expect it to be reported out this session.

The conservation bill geared towards low-income people in large apartment buildings, the **multi-unit energy conservation** bill (*Update*, Guest Column, Ma7 27), H2796, probably won't move from House Ways and Means unless supporters make it an issue by calling Rep. Duffin on Ways and Means and local senators and reps.

DSS/Youth S2072, a bill strengthening mandates for the **Office for Children** (*Update*, March 31, April 14), was reported out favorably by the Human Services and Elder Affairs Committee, but still has "a huge way to go" according to a representative of OFC's Statewide Advisory Council (SAC).

The Mass. Advocacy Center called the *Update* last week to point out some misgivings about H6243, which would provide funds through a capital outlay budget to restructure **DYS secure facilities for juveniles**. The bill, which may reach the House floor as early as this week, calls for Class A buildings, which could mean maximum security buildings, the Center's representative noted. Much better, he said, would be a graded secure system. DYS's Barbara Trevett said they are asking for brick buildings; "our main concern is for the arsonists." Supporters of the bill want better and more reasonable facilities as quickly as possible.

Signed by the Governor before advocates could stop it was H5700, a **juvenile care and protection amendment** to Section 24 of Chapter 119. The bill allows a child to be placed in "care and protection" if the parents are considered "unwilling, incompetent or unavailable to provide care." The "or" replaces an "and" and might allow the courts to exercise overly broad discretion over families. One positive aspect of H5700 is that it removes an arbitrary "moral care and discipline" phrase as a qualification for parental care.

GBLS's S689 is expected to pass the Senate but not the House, as happened last year with similar legislation. The bill would **amend the CHINS statute** by decriminalizing many of the court procedures (*Update*, April 14). The bill is presently in Senate Ways and Means.

S693/H3403, a **guardianship** bill which would provide counsel to indigent families in guardianship cases with child care agencies (*Update*, March 31), "needs more help" to get it out of House Ways and Means. Advocates are wary of its chances.

Coming Attractions

Wed., June 11
- **Hispanic Families in the '80's** and **Black Families in White America**, two free lectures sponsored by the Institute on Family Life, BU's Sherman Union, 775 Commonwealth Ave., 9:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., respectively (353-4128).

Fri., June 13
- **NOW's Northeast Regional Conference**, a weekend gathering, Springfield, Mass. (check with local chapter for registration information).

Sat., June 14
- **Stop People Removal**, a day long conference on displacement sponsored by All City Housing Organization, UMass, Boston, 100 Arlington St., 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., fundraising party that evening (Jean, 426-4363).

Fri., June 20
- **Should Liberals Reconsider Their Economic Policy Positions?**, speech to Mass. Americans for Democratic Action by Otto Eckstein, Harvard professor of economics, reservations required for dinner, private home in Lexington, 7:30 p.m. (482-3648, days, or 492-4415, evenings).

Sat., June 21
- **North Shore Welfare Rights**, all-day women's conference featuring speakers, workshops, movies and food, Grace Church, 385 Essex St., Salem, 9 a.m.-6 p.m. (Joanne Duhl, 531-0767).
- **Developing An Agenda for the '80's**, conference sponsored by the Mass. Legislative Black Caucus, in the areas of housing, jobs, education, and social and human services, Lowell-Lawrence Vocational Technical High School, Andover, MA, 9 a.m. (Eric, 727-5029).

Fri., June 27
- **Grand Opening of the Boston Community Center**, formerly Boston Community School, Mass. Community Action (formerly LIPA), the Beacon Hill *Update* and other low income organizing and advocacy groups housed together at 10 West Street. Join in the festivities which include wine and cheese and a slide show sponsored by the Boston Community Center, "Moving in Boston", a slide-tape record of Black life in 20th century Boston, 10 West St., Boston, 7 p.m. (542-5351).

The next *Update* will have listings for June 25 through July 9. Please submit items by June 16.

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THE BEACON HILL UPDATE
10 West Street
Boston, MA 02111
(617) 426-6453

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