

# MassSenate

## 2025–2026 SESSION IN REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS

### ***Government Transparency & Accountability***

The Massachusetts Senate has undertaken a wide-ranging set of reforms aimed at ***strengthening transparency, accountability, and efficiency across state government***, reflecting a commitment to ensuring residents have clearer insight into public decision-making and fiscal stewardship.

#### **Expanding Public Records Access**

Under our bill, the Senate, House and Governor would be explicitly required to comply with public records requests for the first time. We mandate disclosure of legislative records including voting histories, salary information, ethics filings, operating expenditures, and specific categories of contracts. We also create an independent appeals process to help members of the public resolve disputes over access.



#### **Strengthening Transparency Through Updated Senate Rules**

In our Senate rules, we require the publication of all committee votes taken by Senators in joint and Senate-only committees. We also mandate that written and in-person testimony submitted to committees be made publicly available online; direct committees to publish plain-language bill summaries online; and require cybersecurity training for all Senators and staff in addition to ethics, harassment, and implicit bias training mandates.

#### **Reforming Joint Rules for Efficiency and Accessibility**

The Legislature adopted comprehensive joint rules this session that modernize and streamline lawmaking. We require committees to post plain language bill summaries online, provide earlier public notice of hearings, and publish committee attendance and voting records. These reforms empower committees to take independent action on bills originating from their respective chambers while allowing formal lawmaking to continue throughout the full two-year session—providing greater flexibility and more time for thoughtful policymaking.

#### **Balancing Constitutional Safeguards with Legislative Accountability**

In response to a Supreme Judicial Court order, we adopted a resolution to provide documents related to our financial operations in four requested areas to the Office of the State Auditor. We also created a new public web page to provide real-time financial data to the public.

#### **Promoting Long-Term Stability and Fiscal Oversight**

We continued to make significant fiscal decisions aimed at improving long-term efficiency and stability. The final Fiscal Year 2027 budget dedicates an additional \$51 million to the Commonwealth's Stabilization Fund, raising its balance to a historic \$8.2 billion. We also took steps to strengthen fiscal oversight of some aspects of state government to ensure responsible stewardship of public resources while enhancing transparency. And we did it all without raising taxes or fees.

# MassSenate

## 2025–2026 SESSION IN REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS

### Government Transparency & Accountability

#### Signed Into Law

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##### **FISCAL YEAR 2027 BUDGET FUNDING FOR STABILIZATION FUND**

Adds \$51 million to the state's 'Rainy Day' Stabilization Fund, which is projected to reach a historic \$8.2 billion balance by the end of Fiscal Year 2027.

*Bill H.5555 | [Bill Text](#) | [Fact Sheet](#) | [Press Release](#) | Signed into law on July 9, 2026*

##### **FISCAL YEAR 2025 CLOSEOUT SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET POLICY PROVISION ON SHERIFFS**

Directs an investigation into sheriffs' Fiscal Year 2025 spending deficits to include analyses of compliance with state finance law, spending on programs that are outside-required operations, and payroll changes over time. Funds no-cost phone calls program and Section 35 treatment programs for people with alcohol and substance use and withholds funding the remainder of the sheriffs' deficit until the Inspector General (IG) reports on sheriff spending. The IG issued a final report on June 1, 2026.

*Bill H.4761 | [Bill Text](#) | [Press Release](#) | Signed into law on November 25, 2025*

##### **AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE 2026 STATE PRIMARY ELECTION DATE**

Sets the 2026 state primary election date for Tuesday, September 1, 2026; ensures the primary date complies with state and federal requirements and that local clerks are given necessary time to send and process vote-by-mail ballots for Massachusetts residents; gives election officials the ability to meet a required federal timeline for sending ballots to military servicemembers and citizens overseas.

*Bill H.4531 | [Bill Text](#) | [Press Release](#) | Signed into law on September 23, 2025*

##### **FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET FUNDING FOR STABILIZATION FUND**

Invests \$33 million in the Stabilization Fund. Since 2017, when the Fund's balance was \$1.3 billion, the Legislature has grown the account by 523 per cent as of FY24.

*Bill H.4240 | [Bill Text](#) | [Fact Sheet](#) | [Press Release](#) | Signed into law on July 4, 2025*

##### **JOINT RULES OF THE 194TH GENERAL COURT**

Ensures committee votes are made available online, sets earlier deadlines for committee reports, requires publicly posted bill summaries, and requires added review time for conference committee reports. Gives members of the public lengthier notice periods ahead of hearings and guaranteed livestream access.

*[Joint Rules Text](#) | [Fact Sheet](#) | [Press Release](#) | Adopted on June 26, 2025*

##### **AN ACT EXTENDING CERTAIN COVID-19 MEASURES ADOPTED DURING THE STATE OF EMERGENCY**

Extends the hybrid public meeting option, allowing cities and towns to offer remote participation through June 2027. The extension applies to public bodies and representative town meetings. Hybrid meetings enable more civic participation by residents who otherwise might have limited access to public meetings.

*Bill H.62 | [Bill Text](#) | [Press Release](#) | Signed into law on March 28, 2025*

##### **SENATE RULES FOR THE 194TH GENERAL COURT**

Improves transparency, public participation, and efficiency by making committee votes and testimony publicly accessible online, requiring bill summaries to be posted by the Ways and Means Committee, and mandating regular cybersecurity training for all Senators and staff.

*[Senate Rules Text](#) | [Fact Sheet](#) | Adopted on February 13, 2025*

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## 2025–2026 SESSION IN REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS

### ***Government Transparency & Accountability***

#### ***In Final Deliberations***

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##### **AN ACT PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC ACCESS IN STATE GOVERNMENT**

Promotes freedom of information in the Executive and Legislative branches of government by providing new, greater levels of access to public records that are created by the Governor’s Office, the Senate, and the House of Representatives. The transparency measures would take effect at the start of the new term in January 2027.

*Bill H.5469 | [Bill Text](#) | [Fact Sheet](#) | [Press Release](#) | Passed by the Senate on July 30, 2026*

##### **AN ACT IMPROVING CAMPAIGN FINANCE REPORTING BY STATE BALLOT QUESTION COMMITTEES**

Brings accountability to ballot question campaigns and holds them to the same standard of disclosure already followed by candidates for office. The legislation would remedy a current void of nearly a year leading up to an election during which the ballot question campaigns are not required to report any financial data in a timely manner.

*Bill S.2898 | [Bill Text](#) | [Press Release](#) | Passed by the Senate on January 15, 2026*

#### ***Passed by the Senate***

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##### **RESOLUTIONS RESPONDING TO THE SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT’S ORDER OF MAY 7, 2026, AND ENHANCING GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY**

Affirmed the Senate’s intention to provide the Office of the State Auditor with documents related to its financial operations in response to the Supreme Judicial Court’s order on May 7, 2026, which specified that the Auditor’s request was limited to four Senate-specific financial areas: budgets, audits, balance-forward transactions, and monetary settlement agreements. The Senate committed to sharing these records while reserving its constitutional rights, particularly regarding the separation of powers. The resolution covers fiscal years FY21 through FY24

*Resolution S.3104 | [Resolution Text](#) | Passed by the Senate on May 28, 2026*