

OPINION

EDITORIAL

To boost turnout, make voting easier

Tuesday's voter turnout would be a depressing commentary for any city, let alone one with a storied reputation for political engagement. Only 27 percent of the city's 392,000 registered voters went to the polls. In part that's because Boston is obviously content with Mayor Marty Walsh, in part because challenger Tito Jackson never made it a competitive mayoral race.

Still, if it were easier to register to vote, more people would probably participate. To that end, Common Cause Massachusetts is pushing for automatic registration. It would work this way: When people

Another idea is same-day voter registration, which would let citizens register at their polling places on Election Day. Secretary of State William F. Galvin says that with proper funding and enough lead time, he could make either system work. Still, he thinks same-day registration would be both cheaper and less of an overall technological and administrative challenge. It would take an extra worker or two per polling place, plus a computer tie-in with the state's central voter registry, he says. Then an eligible voter could simply show up, register, and vote, all in one Election Day stop.

"From the point of view of a voter, it can't get any easier than that."

Only 27 percent of Boston's 392,000 registered voters went to the polls on Tuesday, a depressing figure for a city with a storied reputation for political engagement.

interact with the Registry of Motor Vehicles or MassHealth, they would, if eligible, automatically be added to the rolls. (The secretary of state could also include other state offices that currently help register voters under the federal Motor Voter Law.)

Ten other states and the District of Columbia have adopted such laws. The first was Oregon, where 230,000 new voters — an increase of about 10 percent — have joined the rolls as a result of that 2015 law. Some 97,000 of them cast a ballot in the 2016 election.

"It is obviously not a panacea, but it is one thing we can do to boost turnout," says Pam Wilnot, the executive director of the good-government group.

notes Galvin. But implementing either will take some time and planning, and some new dollars, the secretary of state emphasizes.

For her part, Wilnot would like to see both: automatic registration to get as many voters as possible on the rolls, and same-day registration as a fail-safe for those who aren't registered other ways.

There's not enough time left in this year's legislative calendar to properly work through the various issues. Or to decide whether to prioritize one idea over the other, or to move forward with both. But with some 680,000 Massachusetts residents eligible to vote but unregistered, this is a subject the Legislature should dive energetically into next year.

An awkward talk that can save lives

Though treatment for testicular cancer has improved greatly in recent decades, the shocking news of Daniel Flores's death this week is a reminder of the continuing importance of early detection of what can still be a deadly disease in young men.

The 17-year-old Red Sox prospect from Venezuela, whose unusual talent and promise on the field had earned him a \$3.1 million signing bonus this summer, played as Oct. 24, in the Dominican Republic. A few days later, he traveled to Boston after experiencing lower back pain. Flores was then diagnosed with



Daniel Flores

testicular cancer that had spread to the lungs, according to a family friend. The young player died less than two weeks later.

The Red Sox issued a statement saying Flores had died of complications from cancer treatment. Out of respect for Flores's family, the team declined further comment.

Much is unknown about the exact circumstances of Flores's passing. (The case has surprised doctors, given what's known so far.) Still, his death is a grim reminder of the incidence of testicular cancer among young men: It is the most common cancer among men 15 to 34 years of age.

But it is not, for the majority of patients, a death sentence. The key is early diagnosis, and that means regular self-exams. But many men don't know what to look for, and testicular self-checking is a cause of great embarrassment to many men. (Even humorous attempts to raise awareness can backfire, if they reinforce the notion that it's a laughing matter.) Yet self-exams are the way to note a change in size, a lump, or swelling in the testicles, all very common symptoms of cancer. Other symptoms include a heavy feeling in the scrotum or pain in the lower belly or groin.

Talking about testicular cancer can be awkward, and probably ranks as just about the very last conversation most young men want to have. But the death of such a promising young athlete should be a reminder that the disease can still kill, and still requires vigilance.

READERS' FORUM

Boston then and now — and yet to be

City's comeback was a regional thing, driven by '60s fiscal forces

I read with interest "The great Boston comeback story" by Ira A. Jackson (Opinion, Nov. 2). Although one can certainly accept the explanations Jackson offers for Boston's comeback as credible, it would be a mistake to ignore some crucial and relevant economic factors at play during the 1960s.

At that time, I was a doctoral student in economics at Brown University. In my course in urban economics, each student chose a US city to analyze in terms of the factors contributing (or not contributing) to its growth.

This was the whole assignment for the term, and we were to write a major paper on our chosen city. I chose Boston because, at the time, the city was growing after a long period of decline.

I identified three key factors in its growth in the '60s:

1. The large numbers of unemployed or underemployed, and consequently relatively low-wage skilled and semiskilled workers in the metropolitan Boston labor market.

2. A continuing source of graduating students from Boston's highly regarded colleges and universities, many of whom wanted to stay in the area.

3. The construction of Route 128, which opened up relatively empty land for industrial development and commuting routes from city and suburb, and provided for rapid transportation for high-end tech products sent in both directions through Logan Airport.

Of course, there were important changes in the political and social culture of Boston during the period starting in the 1970s, but a major facilitating factor was the economic emergence of the Boston area from the doldrums.

This expansion of the regional high-tech economy was just that — in a region, not just a city. I don't think we can talk about Boston's comeback

and ignore this fact.

TOM DUSTON
Chesterfield, N.H.

The writer is professor emeritus of economics at Keene State College.

White's vision would not have federal, state help

Ira A. Jackson knows whereof he speaks, since he was present at the creation of the new Boston. But Kevin White's heavenly vision could not have taken earthly form without the tens of billions of federal dollars that bought and poured the concrete. Those dollars were sliced into Boston by Tip O'Neill, Joe Moakley, and Ted Kennedy.

O'Neill, the speaker, and Moakley, chairman of the Rules Committee, controlled the House cash spigots, and Kennedy performed miracles of legislative legerdemain in the Senate. Boston's transformation from 1968 on, seeded by the efforts of previous mayors John Hynes and John Collins in the 1950s and '60s, was the result of decades of diligent political groundwork by our legislative and executive legions in Washington and on Beacon Hill, as well as in two city halls, the old and the new.

Mayor White deserves high praise for egging on a calcified local culture, but the DC troika of O'Neill, Moakley, and Kennedy, and their legislative colleagues, merit hosannas for bringing home the bacon.

GARY KAPLAN
Canton

We need a bolder master plan from Mayor Walsh

Ira A. Jackson's "The great Boston comeback story" identifies three keys to Boston's turnaround under Mayor Kevin White: vision, major infrastructure investment, and inclusivity. All three are relevant as Boston's population, economy, and growth prospects rise, requiring a proactive city to

guide the growth. Although Boston is not on the ropes as it was in 1967, all three factors are critical now as they were then.

Rudolph Kass's Nov. 4 letter notes the role White's predecessor, John Collins, played in Boston's rebirth. A key Collins action was the 1965 master plan, which established transformational policies and projects: major public initiatives, from housing to transportation; rebuilding Boston's neighborhoods and downtown; and tackling blighted areas that had been beset by economic change and lack of services. White intensified implementation of this master plan.

Fifty years later, Boston needs the vision Jackson calls essential to keeping the city successful and "good" for all. In his first term as mayor, Martin Walsh created a new master plan, Imagine Boston 2030, but this plan needs bolder action to keep pace with growth. Most of the strategies are already underway, and little has been added to excite and inspire.

Contrary to the 1965 plan, Imagine Boston 2030 fails to prioritize regional infrastructure initiatives (transit, specific plans for job centers, flood protection, etc.) and does not include enough of what Jackson terms "bold multi-year public investments" needed for equitable growth and to keep Boston strong. We should start as White did, with a bolder and more specific master plan.

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