

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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**JOURNAL OF THE SENATE.**



**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2026**

[23]

## JOURNAL OF THE SENATE

Wednesday, March 18, 2026.

Met at twelve minutes past twelve o'clock noon (Mr. Brownsberger in the Chair).

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The Chair (Mr. Brownsberger), members, guests and staff then recited the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

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Pledge of  
allegiance.

### *Reports.*

The following reports were severally received and placed on file, to wit:

Report of the Worcester District Attorney (pursuant to Section 99 of Chapter 272 of the General Laws) submitting its annual report of wiretap interceptions for the 2025 calendar year (received March 16, 2026);

Worcester DA,--  
wiretap FY25  
report.  
SD3765  
DER,--  
Unemployment  
Trust Fund March  
FY26 report.  
SD3766

Report of the Department of Economic Research (pursuant to Section 14F of Chapter 151A of the General Laws) submitting its Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund data for February 2026 (copies having been forwarded to the Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means and the Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development) (received March 16, 2026);

DTA,-- Payment  
Error Rate  
Reduction FY26  
report.  
SD3767

Report of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (pursuant to line item 4400-0709 of Section 2 of Chapter 73 of the Acts of 2025) submitting its Department of Transitional Assistance Payment Error Rate Reduction March 2026 report (copies having been forwarded to the Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means and the Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities) (received March 16, 2026);

EOTC,-- rental  
protections  
February 2026  
report.  
SD3768

Report of the Executive Office of the Trial Court (pursuant to Section 15(c) of Chapter 239 of the General Laws) submitting its report summary statistics on eviction filings, actions, and dispositions from January 2025 through February 2026 copies having been forwarded to the Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means and the Senate Chairs of the Joint Committee on Housing and the Joint Committee on the Judiciary) (received March 6, 2026);

OSA,-- Bureau of  
Special  
Investigations Q1  
& Q2 FY26 report.  
SD3769

Report of the Office of the State Auditor (pursuant to line item 0710-0200 Section 2 of Chapter 9 of the Acts of 2025) submitting its first and second quarter fiscal year 2026 report of the Bureau of Special Investigations from July 1, 2025 – September 30, 2025 and October 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025 (a copy having been forwarded to the Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means) (received March 16, 2026);

MBTA  
Certification  
Dedicated Sales  
Tax Revenue FY27  
report.  
SD3770

Report of the Office of the Comptroller (pursuant to Section 35T of Chapter 10 of the General Laws) submitting its March 2026 MBTA Certification for fiscal year 2027 Dedicated Sales Tax Revenue report (a copy having been forwarded to the Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means) (received March 16, 2026);

DPH,-- Essex  
Correctional  
Alternative Center  
Inspection report.  
SD3771

Report of the Department of Public Health (pursuant to 105 CMR 451.403) submitting the inspection report for the Essex County Correctional Alternative Center, the Plan of Correction (POC) from the facility and the POC acceptance letter from the Division of Environmental Health Regulations and Standards (EHRS) (received March 17, 2026);

**UNCORRECTED PROOF.**

Report of the Plymouth County Sheriff (pursuant to Section 84 Chapter 69 of the Acts 2018) submitting its Criminal Justice Reform fourth quarter 2025 report (copies having been forwarded to the Senate Chairs of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary and the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security) (received March 17, 2026); and

Report of the Department of Mental Health (pursuant to line item 5046-0000 of Section 2 of Chapter 9 of the Act of 2025) submitting its Distribution of Funds FY26 report (a copy having been forwarded to the Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means) (received March 16, 2026).

PCS,-- Criminal Justice Reform Q4 2025 report. SD3772

DMH,-- Distribution of Funds FY26 report. SD3773

*Resolutions.*

The following resolutions (having been filed with the Clerk) were considered forthwith and adopted, as follows:-

Resolutions (filed by Messrs. Rush, Payano and Tarr) “commending the Admetech Foundation on recognizing the seventeenth annual Prostate Cancer Awareness Day on March 24, 2026.”

Admetech Foundation.

*Recess.*

There being no objection, at fourteen minutes past twelve o’clock noon, the Chair (Mr. Brownsberger) declared a recess subject to the call of the Chair; and, at one o’clock P.M., the Senate reassembled, Mr. Brownsberger in the Chair

Recess.

*Communication.*

The Clerk read the following communication from the Secretary of the Commonwealth, to wit:

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS SECRETARY OF THE  
COMMONWEALTH STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Secretary of the Commonwealth,-- return of votes.

March 18, 2026

*To the Honorable Senate:*

I have the honor to lay before you the return of votes cast at the special election held in this Commonwealth on the third day of March 2026 for Senator from the First Middlesex District, together with the schedules showing the number of ballots which appear to have been cast for each person.

These returns have been duly canvassed by the Governor and Council, and are now transmitted for examination by the Senate, as required by the Constitution.

Very truly yours,  
WILLIAM FRANCIS GALVIN,  
*Secretary of the Commonwealth.*

FOR STATE SENATOR IN GENERAL COURT  
FIRST MIDDLESEX DISTRICT  
*(to fill vacancy)*

Vanna Howard of Lowell (Democrat).....4306 votes  
(and appears to be elected)  
Sam Meas of Larence (Republican).....1699 votes  
Joe Espinola of Dracut (Unenrolled Independent).....1379 votes

**UNCORRECTED PROOF.**

All others.....	16 votes
Blank.....	<u>19 votes</u>
Total Votes Cast 7419	

*Orders Adopted.*

On motion of Mr. Keenan,--

*Ordered*, That the returns of votes for Senator to fill a vacancy in the First Middlesex district be referred to a special committee to canvass the votes.

Canvass votes for Senator.

Senators Creem, Brady and O’Connor were appointed the committee.

Subsequently, Ms. Creem, for the committee, reported, that from an examination of the returns, it appears the Honorable Vanna Howard, of Lowell had been duly elected to said district.

**The report was read and accepted and the committee was discharged.**

The President in the Chair, on motion of Ms. Friedman,--

*Ordered*, That a committee of the Senate be appointed to wait upon Her Excellency the Governor, Maura T. Healey, Constitutional officers and the Honorable Council and inform them that the Senate is in session and awaits their presence for the swearing in of Vanna Howard as Senator from the First Middlesex District.

Senator elect Vanna Howard,--  
oath of office.

Senators Comerford, Lewis, Edwards and Fattman were appointed to the committee.

Subsequently, Ms. Comerford, for the committee, reported that Her Excellency Maura T. Healey, Governor, and the Honorable Council would immediately attend upon the Senate. The committee was discharged.

Soon after Maura T. Healey, Governor, and the Honorable Council came into the Senate Chamber under the escort of the Sergeant-at-Arms.

The Governor briefly addressed the Senate as follows:

Thank you President Spilka, members of the Senate, Clerk and court officers – and a special welcome to the family and friends of Senator Vanna Howard.

Senator: Congratulations once again on your election. Thank you for your five years of distinguished service in the House, and for the commitment you make today to the people of the 1st Middlesex Senate District and the people of Massachusetts.

Congratulations, too, on becoming the first Cambodian-American ever to hold the position of State Senator – not just in Massachusetts, but in the United States. You are a pathbreaking leader who has inspired and brought hope to many by sharing your story of resilience, including by surviving both political and domestic violence. With this experience you have a unique ability to understand the struggles of your constituents and strengthen the work of this body.

Public service is a high calling. Our democracy depends on people of good character who are willing to step forward and represent their communities. We reflect on that truth in this 250th anniversary year of American independence and the birth of a democracy that started right here in Massachusetts.

Senator Howard, you and your colleagues will help write the next chapter in this history, in the bills you advance and the decisions you make. You have the opportunity to move us forward, correct past wrongs, and bring more people into our story. We have made progress, but there is much more to do: to lower costs for our residents, stand up to the Trump Administration, and make Massachusetts the best state for everyone to live, work and learn in.

I look forward to working with all of you, as we continue to serve our state and honor our oaths of office. Congratulations, Senator Howard.

**UNCORRECTED PROOF.**

The Honorable Vanna Howard, at twenty-nine minutes past one o'clock P.M., on Wednesday, March 18, 2026, before the Governor and Council, did take and subscribe the oath of office as State Senator from the First Middlesex district.

After taking the oath of office, Senator Howard briefly addressed the Senate.

*Remarks of Senator Vanna Howard.*

Good Afternoon.

Thank you. Thank you Madam President. Thank you Governor Healey.

Thank you all for being here today.

I am honored to be standing here today as your new state senator for the First Middlesex district. I am honored that the voters and supporters of Lowell, Dracut, Dunstable, Pepperell, and Tyngsborough have entrusted me with this immense responsibility. Although I am the one standing here, this moment belongs to all of us. I want to thank the volunteers and supporters throughout the five communities and beyond that worked hard through a winter campaign, knocking doors on thousands of doors in sometimes minus 5 degree weather to get the message out about our campaign. We did the work because it was important.

This is a historic day. I came to this country as a refugee at 11 years old, fleeing the communist Khmer Rouge genocide. I lost my father, three of my brothers, and my grandparents. After escaping war-torn Cambodia I came to the United States not knowing a word of English. Back then I could have never dreamed of being in elected office. The journey was not easy but this community raised me up, supported me, and inspired me to give back. Anything is possible if you work hard and have the support of your family and community are willing to fight for it.

I want to recognize my predecessors who have served this district with distinction. I want to thank former senator Steven Panagiotakos for joining us today. I especially would like to pause to mention my friend, the late Senator Ed Kennedy. I was proud to work alongside him during my time in the House of Representatives and I am committed to continue his work in the Senate. Shortly after we lost Ed, we also lost another former senator from Lowell, and another good friend, Phil Shea. I look up to their example as senators for the First Middlesex district and am grateful for the opportunity to take on this role.

I do not stand before you today without the support of my friend, mentor and former boss Congresswoman Niki Tsongas. She taught me what it truly means to be a public servant

I also want to recognize my family. Here in the chamber with us is my husband Greg, my daughter Suzy, my son Max, my brothers, Sam and Capitol, and my cousins Youra and her son, Ronny for their love and support.

In closing, I would like share a quote from the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. "Fight for the things you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you"

Thank you all for you joining me on this journey!

Onward!

**On motion of Mr. Collins, the remarks were ordered printed in the Senate Journal.**

*Order Adopted.*

On motion of Mr. Gomez,--

*Ordered*, that when the Senate adjourns today, it adjourn to meet again tomorrow at eleven o'clock A.M., in a full formal session with a calendar.

Time of meeting.

PAPER FROM THE HOUSE.

An engrossed Bill establishing a sick leave bank for Sally Desrosiers, an employee of the department of correction (see House, No. 4962, amended), having been certified by the

Sally Desrosiers,--  
sick leave.

**UNCORRECTED PROOF.**

Senate Clerk to be rightly and truly prepared for final passage and containing an emergency preamble,-- was laid before the Senate; and, a separate vote being taken in accordance with the requirements of Article LXVII of the Amendments to the Constitution, the preamble was adopted in concurrence, by a vote of 18 to 0.

**The bill was signed by the President and sent to the House for enactment.**

On motion of Senator Brownsberger, at sixteen minutes before two o'clock P.M., the Senate adjourned to meet again tomorrow at eleven o'clock A.M. in a full formal session with a calendar.