

## Mass. Gov. Deval Patrick's term included effective investments, management failures, observers say

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BOSTON - During his eight years in office, Gov. Deval Patrick turned Massachusetts into a national leader in energy efficiency, developed industries like life sciences and advanced manufacturing, and invested in transportation infrastructure.

Patrick, a Democrat, also faced major challenges, ranging from the 2008 recession to his administration's mismanagement at the Department of Children and Families and the Health Connector.

Patrick's mixed record gives fodder to critics and supporters. As Patrick finishes his term, political observers paint a picture of a governor who invested in top priorities and was willing to raise taxes to do so, who had management failures but worked to rectify them, and who accomplished significant reforms, even as he felt short on some priorities.

"The governor has made very clear and explicit since the first day he ran that his goal was to govern for the long term and invest in ourselves," said John Walsh, executive director of Patrick's political action committee, the Together PAC. Under Patrick, Walsh said, "There are areas where Massachusetts has moved into significant national leadership."

But Kirsten Hughes, executive director of the Massachusetts Republican Party, said Patrick's legacy will be a "questionable one," pointing to scandals at the Department of Children and Families and the Health Connector. Hughes said Patrick is "saddling future Massachusetts residents with higher taxes and bigger government."

From the start, Patrick laid out as his priorities education, innovation and infrastructure. Many of his biggest initiatives have been in these areas.

One area that illustrates both Patrick's accomplishments and his challenges is transportation.

Richard Dimino, president of the transportation advocacy group A Better City and a member of Patrick's 2006 transition team, said from the beginning, Patrick wanted to modernize fragmented and disjointed transportation agencies.

Patrick allowed the use of civilian traffic flaggers over the more costly police officers serving in that capacity. In 2009, he overhauled the Department of Transportation, eliminating the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, moving MBTA employees to the state's health insurance plan, and consolidating transportation services. For that average citizen, that means, for example, that the agency overseeing state highways can better coordinate with

the MBTA on busing when a highway project disrupts service.

Advocates say Patrick made a difference in numerous small ways, though he did not have one signature project. For example, as part of an effort to accelerate bridge replacement, the administration ran a "93 Fast 14" project that fixed 14 bridges over 10 weekends, while limiting traffic disruption. The initiative won multiple awards from transit and labor-related associations.

In 2013, Patrick championed a major transportation funding initiative, hoping to raise \$1 billion a year for transportation by raising gas and cigarette taxes and the income tax. His administration published a **five-year plan** for using that money. This led to a dispute with the legislature over taxes, which Patrick wanted to raise more than lawmakers did. Lawmakers ultimately passed, over Patrick's veto, a smaller transportation funding bill, increasing taxes on gasoline, cigarettes and computers software. After public outcry, the "tech tax" was repealed. Gas tax indexing to inflation was repealed by voters in November.

Experts say the law now will generate around \$500 million a year.

Michael Widmer, president of the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, said the result of that effort shows the "disconnect between his focus and his vision on the one hand and the funding to support it on the other." Widmer called Patrick's transportation record a "disappointment." He said Patrick's decision to promote an income tax increase that was "dead on arrival" in the legislature resulted in a law that will not meet the state's needs.

However, Dimino said Patrick deserves credit for trying to provide additional resources and more broadly, for improving the structure of transportation services in innovative ways. "I've got to give Governor Patrick a lot of credit for trying to take on the safety issue in an innovative way and making progress making our bridges safe throughout the Commonwealth, for dealing with governance and organization challenges by creating a new DOT, then driving efficiencies and reforms so tax dollars are more effectively spent," Dimino said. "There's more work there, but it's a good start."

Another area that was a focus for Patrick was developing jobs in specific fields. Patrick participated in numerous trade missions. With state support, jobs have increased in industries like life sciences, clean technology and advanced manufacturing. Patrick started a collaboration between industry and government to support advanced manufacturing, through things like workforce training grants and loans. The state promised to invest \$1 billion over 10 years on life sciences projects. Patrick set goals for the use of renewable energy and put money toward those goals.

"In many ways, he cemented Massachusetts' place as a center for innovation for new company development, particularly in areas like software and biosciences," said Chris Geehern, a spokesman for the business group Associated Industries of Massachusetts.

Geehern said Patrick raised the profile of manufacturing and "did a good job making sure Massachusetts was a player in the global marketplace."

Yet Patrick also faced criticism for not doing enough to reduce business costs and regulations. Patrick supported a minimum wage hike and a ballot question that mandated earned sick time, both of which increase business costs. He reformed unemployment insurance, but not by cutting the length of benefits, as some businesses hoped for. "Look at cost of living and cost of doing business, we're **among the worst**," said Paul Craney, executive director of the Massachusetts Fiscal Alliance, a conservative fiscal policy group.

Massachusetts also endured challenges. Patrick steered the state through the 2008 recession, cutting the state budget – and local aid – while maintaining the state's rainy day fund and keeping unemployment generally at or below the national rate. He established at-times contentious licensing processes for the state's first casinos and medical marijuana dispensaries.

Management problems at state agencies contributed to the expensive failure of the state's **Health Connector website** and to problems at the Department of Children and Families, brought to light after a **5-year-old boy went missing** and later was found dead.

David Tuerck, executive director of the Beacon Hill Institute for Public Policy Research, a limited government economic policy institute at Suffolk University, said those types of problems "show a lack of control at the top." "These episodes will diminish his legacy, as they should," Tuerck said.

Yet Walsh said every governor faces problems; the important thing is how he resolves them. At the Department of Children and Families, the commissioner resigned, the administration increased funding for staff and technology, and it is working to address specific problems identified by audits. Patrick brought in new management and a new technology firm to fix the Health Connector website, which is now largely working. "The governor's focus has always been to find them, face them, acknowledge them publicly, then get to work fixing them," Walsh said.

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