

Thoughts on our Special Election

The commonwealth held a special election this month and we will soon be sending a Senator to Washington who is, in some ways, the political opposite of his predecessor. Some have lamented this outcome, but I cannot abide the long faces. The late Senator Kennedy would tell *all of us* to congratulate the winner on his hard won victory, learn from that victory, and extend a hand wherever possible.

The election results provide important news for everyone in government: voters told us to create jobs with a future, support small business, and make accessibility to quality public education and healthcare our top priority. The middle class is angry because folks are tired; tired of working hard day in and day out and ending up with very little financial security and very big apprehensions about the future. Let's all understand that unless we commit to a strong middle class we threaten our country's economic recovery.

I wish our new Senator the best of luck. His success will be ours. Voters are clearly tired of backbiting, posturing and endless stalemate. Perhaps Scott Brown can help the art-of-compromise stage a political comeback.

In my first year at the State House, I have worked with Republican colleagues on local and state issues and find that all of us, equally, are looking for the best possible solutions. I work directly with my Co-Chair on the Elder Caucus as we deal with the impact of this economy on our seniors. It would be terrific if our new Senator could help take some of the "lock" out of "gridlock."

It doesn't take a new representative long to observe that legislators who spend a lot of time railing against customs, protocols, institutions and their own colleagues are often unable to deliver legislatively. I make it a point to look to those who are getting things done to be my role models. I align myself with colleagues who work to help their districts, their kids, their seniors, their hard working families, their small businesses and their most vulnerable citizens. In doing so we become the change we want to see.

While we are at it, we need to face certain facts. Everyone who serves in the Massachusetts Legislature knows that our homegrown health care reform initiative cannot survive in a bubble. The decision we made to ensure health insurance coverage for 97% of our citizens needs the regulatory and financial structure provided by a national system. I am certain our new Senator knows this and I ask that he think about it as he approaches his new job.

One of the most important lessons I learned this year is that real political power is not accumulated by cooking up vats of fear and loathing for distribution to the public. That power is almost always short-lived. Real power comes from the people: it is accumulated and nurtured by building the goodwill of your colleagues and using that goodwill to enact effective public policies.

The State House's recent passage of the veterans' and education bills speak to the kinds of issues where voting as a party is much less important than delivering, as a whole, for the people of the Commonwealth. I hope some of that spirit can travel, with the Senator-elect, to Capitol Hill. Godspeed.

Kate Hogan is the State Representative for the Third Middlesex District, and represents the towns of Bolton, Hudson, Maynard and Stow on Beacon Hill.