



**Chris Dempsey for State Auditor
SEIU Local 888
Questionnaire Responses**

Submitted: March 16th, 2022

Please use the space below to describe the values that drive your campaign, your aspirations to this office, and your previous experience in public service.

My campaign is driven by the desire to make state government work better for the residents, taxpayers, and workers of the Commonwealth. As the son of public-school teachers who dug into their own pockets to pay for school supplies for their students, I have seen first-hand how we underfund critical needs like public education and public health. I have also seen that when decisions in state government are made with a lack of public accountability and transparency that they often benefit special interests in the business community at the expense of the common good. As the co-founder of No Boston Olympics, I fought back to protect the public interest and preserve our public resources for more important civic priorities than the Boston 2024 bid. I was named "[Bostonian of the Year](#)" by the Boston Globe Magazine in 2015 for my volunteer work leading that grassroots campaign, which succeeded despite being outspent 1,500-1 by some of the most powerful business interests in the state.

But I have also worked in the executive branch of state government -- which is the focus of the Auditor's office -- and I am the only candidate in the race with such experience. I served as Assistant Secretary of Transportation for Governor Deval Patrick, where I co-founded [the MassDOT open-data program](#), which launched [smartphone applications](#) that tell transit riders when their bus or train is going to arrive, [saving taxpayers and farepayers millions compared with more costly and cumbersome alternatives](#). These solutions have been especially valuable for bus riders, who are too-often forgotten in our transportation system in Greater Boston and statewide. I will be an Auditor who will ensure a fair, efficient, effective, and equitable state government both for those who serve in state government and those who rely on state government services.

I believe deeply in public service and the power of government to improve peoples' lives. I have worked to advance my community as an elected Town Meeting Member since 2012, and for many years as Chair of the Brookline Transportation Board. I have been at the head of the table for hundreds of hours of public meetings, where we listened to all stakeholders, and where I drove consensus as we made our community stronger and more equitable.

My experience in public service has always been about finding ways to make government more effective while ensuring we are serving those who are often forgotten or who bear the brunt of inefficient or inequitable government. I have experience building grassroots coalitions, tackling complex financial problems, and standing up for our most important priorities, and I will bring that experience with me to the Auditor's Office.

The State Auditor plays a unique role within state government, with a special focus on holding the executive branch accountable to state law and finding ways to make state government work better. I bring a proven track record of reforming the executive branch of state government and standing up to protect the public interest. I firmly believe I have what it takes to be the Commonwealth's next Chief Accountability Officer and a watchdog to ensure that government is working fairly and effectively for residents, taxpayers, workers, and other stakeholders.

I live with my fiancée, Anna, in the first floor of a triple-decker a few blocks from where I grew up and where my parents still live. Anna and I are looking forward to starting a family together, and we want to do that in a Massachusetts that is the best that it can be. That's why I'm running for State Auditor.

Top Three Issues:

Massachusetts residents face a number of pressing challenges, from the high cost of housing, to a broken transportation system, to health care that is neither cost effective nor accessible, to an education system that produces vastly different outcomes for students depending on their zip code. The State Auditor's Office can help improve all of these areas of public policy and more. Our campaign was the first in this race to issue policy plans for how we wanted to approach the office. Our first three policy papers addressed these three topics:

- 1. [Climate and Environmental Justice](#):** Climate change presents a future with potentially intense, disruptive, and tragic impacts on lives across the Commonwealth: reducing carbon emissions and preparing the Commonwealth for climate change must be a priority of our next Auditor. Massachusetts residents deserve a state government that is working efficiently and effectively to prepare the Commonwealth for the inevitable impacts of climate change, and to ensure that resources are delivered to the neighborhoods and residents that already bear the brunt of pollution and more severe weather. A top priority of mine will be incorporating a climate and environmental justice lens into audits of key state agencies and programs. By including representatives of environmental-justice communities in the auditing review process, the Auditor's Office will ensure that recommendations incorporate the voices of those most impacted by pollution and climate change. We simply cannot wait any longer to take strong and decisive action.
- 2. [Auditing the American Rescue Plan Act \(ARPA\) funding](#):** ARPA funds are a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make our Commonwealth stronger than it was before the pandemic; but that will only happen if we ensure these dollars are spent well. ARPA provided \$5.3 billion for state government and \$3.4 billion to municipalities and counties. These billions that will be allocated and spent between now and 2026 present a monumental opportunity, but it also comes with significant risks. Without oversight, this unique chance to invest in the people of Massachusetts and strengthen our economy could be squandered on inefficient programs, slow bureaucratic processes, and fraud and abuse. But if these discretionary and state/local agency dollars are spent well, they can transform our communities, reduce inequities in health and education, improve our environment, and leave a lasting legacy for future generations. One of my top priorities is to work with state agencies and others receiving stimulus funds to ensure these resources are used to advance equity and help the Commonwealth build back better.

3. [Reforming the State Police](#): A top priority of mine is helping to rebuild trust in government through transparency, and the Massachusetts State Police (MSP) will be included in that effort. As State Auditor, my office will conduct a targeted audit with 15 key areas of evaluation and review including, but not limited to, reviews of supervision and accountability systems, administrative controls in payroll and human resources management, assessments of training and promotion criteria and systems, and inquiry into organizational support for the physical, mental, and emotional health of personnel. Being a State Police Trooper is a difficult job, and troopers put their lives on the line to keep the Commonwealth safe. I honor and respect their service. But the agency as a whole has developed deeply rooted problems that cannot be ignored; it has lost the public's trust. Furthermore, the MSP has long been the subject of numerous lawsuits alleging discrimination on the basis of race, gender, and sexual orientation. Government cannot function well while employees are being mistreated and do not feel comfortable in the workplace. A top priority of mine is helping to rebuild trust in government through transparency, and the MSP will be included in that effort.

What is your experience in the labor movement? How would you use the position of State Auditor to support union members and working class people writ large?

I am the son of public-school educators who met while teaching in the Boston Public Schools. My parents were AFT and MTA members their entire careers, and I know that hard-fought gains made through organizing and collective bargaining helped support my family so we could be secure in the middle class. Unions empower workers, improve the lives of their families, and make our economy and our democracy stronger.

I have also seen the power of organized labor to support pro-labor candidates. I have worked on the campaigns of Senator Kennedy (2006), Deval Patrick and Tim Murray (2006), and Congressman Joe Kennedy III (2012), all candidates who enjoyed strong support from a wide range of unions. Whether holding signs in the field or collaborating on policy proposals, I have partnered with organized labor to advance the campaigns of these candidates and ensure that they represent the perspectives of working people.

As Auditor, I will support union members and working people in the Commonwealth by using the power of the office to bring attention to places where state government is failing to provide efficient, effective, and fair services to taxpayers and residents. This includes ensuring that state government is supporting fair wages, benefits, and working conditions for state workers and the workers of vendors to state government. Taxpayers will only receive efficient and effective services when the employees who perform these services are supported and have safe and productive working environments.

Elected officials at all levels of government must work to protect workers and vulnerable residents. As State Auditor, I will pay particular attention to areas of state government where workers may be mismanaged and mistreated, and where services are not being provided properly for residents who need them. Under the Massachusetts Taxpayer Protection Act (often referred to as the Pacheco Law), the Office of the State Auditor is responsible for reviewing proposals from state agencies and various state authorities that seek to privatize a service that is currently performed by public employees. In this capacity, the Auditor plays a central role in defending taxpayers against initiatives that deliver profits to private companies, often at the expense of unionized workers. As Auditor, I will bring a keen eye to these decisions, with an understanding that the law intends and requires the Auditor to reject any proposal that does not clear a high bar on both cost and quality. I will take this responsibility seriously and commit to rejecting any proposal that does not meet this bar.

Unions and working class people need someone in the Auditor's Office that shows up every day to ensure state government is working fairly and effectively for residents, taxpayers, and workers. I bring a proven track record of creating change and standing up to protect the public interest, and will continue to do so as the next State Auditor.

What other endorsements have you received?

I am proud that my candidacy has been endorsed by a labor unions statewide representing tens of thousands of workers, including the United Food & Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 791, UFCW Local 1459, the Alliance of MBTA Unions, SMART Transportation Local 0898, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, and OPEIU Local 453. These unions represent a wide range of workers in both the public and private sectors.

Additionally, our campaign has been endorsed by more than 100 local elected officials from every corner of the state, representing big cities and small towns in roles from Mayor, to Select Board Members, to Town Meeting Members.

How much money have you raised? How much do you expect to need to win this race?

Our campaign has raised more than \$390k from more than 1,400 individual contributors, both measures lead all candidates in the State Auditor race. We expect to close out March with more than \$300k cash-on-hand. We have an average contribution size of \$203, and more than 75% of our funds coming from within Massachusetts, reflecting the grassroots nature of our campaign. I am confident we will have the resources we need to win this race.

I plan on continuing to win voters one by one as our campaign visits every corner of the state. We have been successful in our fundraising so far in-part because we have attended more than 300 meetings and events. We have campaigned in-person from Pittsfield to Provincetown. I have been a part of grassroots campaigns before, and I know what it takes to win statewide.

SEIU 888 shares its members' commitment to delivering quality public services to the residents and businesses of the Commonwealth. Since the start of the pandemic, the needs of working and middle class families for public services have increased dramatically. But our members' ability to deliver these essential services to folks is dependent on adequate funding and staffing levels. How would you use the position of State Auditor to ensure that the increasing need for public services are met?

Government was not functioning well for working people before the pandemic. The last two years have only highlighted and exacerbated our shortcomings. The State Auditor must be someone who recognizes the needs of vulnerable populations and working people and who has a track record of supporting state government with sufficient resources.

The state cannot deliver services without capable and talented employees, and its employees cannot do their jobs well without proper funding, staffing, and resources. Ensuring state departments and programs are high-functioning means calling out when we need to find the money and people to deliver necessary services. It is the job of the State Auditor to find the places where services can be working better, and to show what can be done to improve the output for residents of Massachusetts. I will focus my efforts as Auditor on the parts of governments that have the biggest impact on vulnerable people and working families.

Why should the office of the State Auditor be important to union members and working class people?

The State Auditor is one of only six state officials that is directly accountable to voters, and like all elected officials, it is important that this person is committed to protecting and advocating for working people. The office conducts audits, investigations, and studies to promote accountability and transparency, improve performance, and make government work better.

As the Chief Accountability Officer for state government in Massachusetts, the Auditor should be someone who is independent, who has experience working in state government, and who has stood up to powerful business interests to protect taxpayers and the public interest. The right person can have a huge impact in this office and can help to promote a better government that works for all residents, especially underserved populations, working people, and union members. I will ensure that the Auditor's office focuses on problems that most hurt working families, underserved populations, and the most vulnerable residents.

Money has an increasingly corrosive effect on our democracy. How are you holding your campaign accountable to the interests of everyday working people instead of the interests of big real estate, billionaires, corporations and banks?

My career has been dedicated to serving the interests of the people of Massachusetts, and I have a strong track record of standing up to powerful business interests. My fundraising numbers speak for themselves: we are running a grassroots campaign with the most individual contributors and a lower average contribution size than our opponents. We have received contributions from every county in the state.

The No Boston Olympics campaign that I led was outspent 1,500 to 1 by a bid that was backed by bankers, investors, large real estate developers, and the wealthiest Massachusetts residents. The *average* contribution size to Boston 2024 was about \$100,000. But our team knew that we had the facts on our side, and we mobilized support across the Commonwealth. Our effort ensured the interests of working people and other residents were put ahead of the special interests backing the bid and asking taxpayers to cover billions of dollars of cost overruns. I have always stood up to protect the public interest. We are running a campaign that lives by those values, and I will lead those with values as the next State Auditor.