



**Chris Dempsey for State Auditor
Young Democrats of Massachusetts
Questionnaire Responses**

Submitted: April 11th, 2022

Why are you running for office? Why have you chosen to run for this particular office and not another? (200 words)

I am running for State Auditor to make government work better for the residents, taxpayers, and workers of the Commonwealth and to stand up to protect the public interest. 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, they often benefit special interests -- especially corporate interests -- at the expense of the common good. As State Auditor, I will make the Commonwealth a more fair and equitable place to be born, raise a family, work, and grow old by making our state government more effective, more accountable, and more responsive to its people.

The Auditor must be someone who is independent, who has experience working to reform state government from within, and who has stood up to powerful special interests to protect taxpayers and the public interest. I am the only candidate in this race with a proven track record of doing that for the people of Massachusetts.

What involvement have you had with the Democratic Party? How have you supported other Democrats in your personal capacity? (200 words)

I am the only candidate in this race with a track record of working to elect Democrats and working for Democrats in government.

I was a volunteer coordinator for the Democratic Coordinated Campaign in 2006 that elected Governor Deval Patrick, Lieutenant Governor Tim Murray, Senator Ted Kennedy, and Democrats up and down the ticket. We helped elect the first Democratic Governor in Massachusetts in 16 years. In the Patrick / Murray Administration, I served as Assistant Secretary of Transportation and co-founded the MassDOT open-data program.

I was proud to serve as Policy Director for Congressman Joe Kennedy III in his first run for Congress in 2012.

I have volunteered on Democratic campaigns in Massachusetts and across the country, including in New Hampshire, Maine, Georgia, California, and Nevada. For example, in 2008, I partnered with future Boston City Councilor Tito Jackson to lead Get-Out-the-Vote (GOTV) operations at the University of New Hampshire for the Barack Obama campaign. In 2016, I assisted with GOTV operations for the Hillary Clinton campaign in Georgia. In 2018, I assisted with GOTV operations for the Jared Golden for Congress campaign in northern Maine, helping flip a red Congressional seat to blue.

What policy issues are the most important to your campaign, and what community groups are you a part of? (250 words)

We were proud to be the first campaign in this race to release policy plans about what I want to do as Auditor. These first three papers covered: (1) maximizing the opportunity from federal stimulus from President Biden's ARPA (<https://dempseyforauditor.com/arpa>), (2) climate and environmental justice (<https://dempseyforauditor.com/climate/>), and (3) accountability and reform for the State Police (<https://dempseyforauditor.com/msp/>). These plans show the broad range of issues that a State Auditor can oversee and impact.

I have served as an elected Town Meeting Member in Brookline since 2012. I also served for a decade as a Member and Chair of the Brookline Transportation Board, and have overseen hundreds of hours of public meetings to advance good policy in my local community. Additionally, I served as the Director of Transportation for Massachusetts coalition, a non-profit group that advocates for better transportation policy statewide.

How will the office you are seeking help you to achieve progress on the issues you stated above? (150 words)

As Auditor, I will track the use of ARPA funds, ensuring that they are used to Build Back Better, especially in regards to metrics that help achieve racial equity. I will also work with state and local partners to ensure effective oversight of these funds.

I will make the office the first in the country to incorporate carbon accounting into state audits and create an Auditor's Environmental Justice Commission. As we invest in climate mitigation and resiliency, we must ensure that these dollars are spent well effectively and that frontline communities benefit the most from reductions in pollution.

Further, I will conduct a 15-point audit of the Massachusetts State Police, holding the agency to a higher standard that advances transparency and accountability. We owe it to taxpayers and to troopers on the front lines to have an agency that upholds the public trust and keeps both troopers and residents safe.

If elected, how will your policies support young people in the state and how will you seek to involve young people in civic life? (200 words)

We need state policies that are more responsive to the needs of young people and young families.

I will use the Auditor's authority to provide reports on tuition rates, post-grant costs for students, and student debt burdens to ensure that higher education institutions are providing affordable education to all residents. Additionally, I will use the Office to audit whether public universities are following their sexual harassment and assault policies and supporting survivors, as well as auditing campus police for adequate responses to misconduct by officers.

I will also use the Auditor's Office to audit affordable and subsidized housing programs to see how to provide higher quality and more consistent options to those in need. Similarly, I will review the Department of Housing and Community Development guidelines in regard to zoning near MBTA stations for multifamily homes and the Chapter 40B process to see if it is possible to make housing more affordable for young and new renters and buyers.

I will work to include and involve young people in all aspects of civic life. The more we include diverse voices in our public processes, the stronger our Commonwealth will be today and in the future.

In what area could YDMA best assist your campaign? (phone/text banking, fundraising, canvassing, social media promotion, etc) (Please list, or provide a brief detailing of the methods.) (50 words)

We want your help and would value your support for the campaign! We're running a grassroots campaign with opportunities for everyone to plug-in, ranging from social media to text banking to visibility to fundraising. We also have student supporters working on policy papers, letters to the editor, and endorsement processes.

Have you been involved with YDMA before? How do you plan to stay involved with YDMA after this race? (200 words)

I attended my first YDMA event all the way back in 2009, and have been a member of the YDMA listserv and a follower of the organization since 2018. Since the launch of our campaign in the summer of 2021, I have enjoyed connecting with current YDMA leadership and am impressed with the talent, professionalism, and activism apparent in the organization.

I look forward to partnering with YDMA on this campaign, in-office, and on future campaigns. I know what it is like to be involved with and active in politics and campaigns at a young age, and I know that young Democrats have a lot to offer campaigns, our Party, and the Commonwealth.

Which office are you seeking?

- State House
- State Senate
- County Office (including DA)
- Governors Council
- Governor
- Lieutenant Governor
- Attorney General
- Secretary of the Commonwealth
- Treasurer and Receiver-General
- Auditor

For candidates for State Auditor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, if you have a directly relevant policy position or already produced in another location (such as a campaign website or press release) you can refer us to that answer rather than producing a new one here. Please reply to each question in no more than 200 words.

The state Auditors office failed its first peer review in 2011, but since then has risen and in 2014 received the highest possible rating from the National State Auditors Association. How will you ensure that this standard is upheld, and what specific elements of the government auditing standards curriculum still needs attention? (200 words)

I applaud Auditor Bump for the work that she has done to professionalize the office and make it a national leader. As Auditor, I will work to build on this success. The office must continue its observance of professional auditing standards, must embrace modern audit and financial management methods and techniques, and must continue to adhere to generally accepted principles of accounting as established by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board. I am the only candidate in this race with experience in the executive branch of state government, and the only candidate with a graduate degree in management (MBA). I know what it takes to lead organizations, hold them to a high standard, and ensure they deliver better results for residents.

In order to attract the best talent, I intend to strengthen the office's relationship with postsecondary and graduate institutions to build a pipeline of graduates for entry and second-level positions that will bring talent and ability to the office.

I believe that the Auditor's Office needs to improve on the ever-increasingly important skills of analytics, data collection, and data management in today's world.

Occasionally, the State Auditor suggests legislative fixes to the department's structure or advances an office goal requiring legislative action through the state legislature. What legislative actions do you intend to suggest, and how will you work to secure buy-in in the legislature? (200 words)

I believe the most important responsibility of the Auditor's office is to conduct audits, give recommendations, and provide support to improve the efficiency and functionality of our government. As such, I am not running to be a legislator and I suggest that any candidate for Auditor whose primary goals and policies can only be achieved through the state legislature reconsider the purpose of the office. The Auditor will have the greatest positive impact on state government when its legislative priorities derive from the work it does, and not vice versa.

With that said, I intend on using the office to help shape policy before, during, and after its implementation. The Auditor can use the "bully pulpit" as a means to make sure legislation is making government work better and more accountable. As Auditor, I will maintain a fierce independence from the legislative branch, but will also partner with legislative branch colleagues to pass legislation that leads to a stronger, more efficient government.

The tragic loss of life that occurred at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home in 2020 - where independent observers have noted other privately run homes avoided the spread of COVID-19 much more effectively - has already seen an investigation launched by the State House. How will an independent investigation by the State Auditor's Office provide more insight into this tragedy? (200 words)

I believe that what happened at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home was not only a tragedy, but a preventable one that reflects some of the failures in our facilities that predate COVID-19. An independent investigation by the State Auditor's Office of this tragedy will uncover how congregate care facilities such as Holyoke were able to consistently fail at basic infection control well before 2020 and keep these sub-par practices as standard without leading to change that likely would have prevented such an immense loss of life. A thorough investigation will mitigate future tragedies. I have met with families of the victims of the Holyoke Soldiers' Home tragedy, and those families have told me that they are not seeking revenge or retribution, but only respect, awareness, and the improvement of facilities and practices so that other families need not suffer in the way they did. My investigation into the tragedy will be about collaboration and compassion, not finger-pointing and Monday Morning quarterbacking.

What role does the State Auditor's Office have in avoiding future abuses of taxpayers' money and government resources; what actions will you take to discourage future waste and abuse? (200 words)

The Auditor is the Chief Accountability Officer for the Massachusetts state government and plays a central role in rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse. The oversight of federal stimulus is just one example of how the Auditor's Office can help prevent and discourage abuse. I will ensure that this unique opportunity to invest in the people of Massachusetts is not squandered on inefficiency, waste, or corruption. I am proposing to monitor these funds in as close to real-time as possible so that any misuse is identified before funds are depleted. The techniques we develop to track these funds can also be helpful in identifying abuse and inefficiency in traditional state programs and activities.

I have a proven track record of standing up to protect the public interest and making the executive branch of state government work better for all of us. I hope to continue that work and commitment as the next State Auditor.