

HOUSE No. 00189

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Bruce J. Ayers

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the passage of the accompanying bill:

An Act assuring that polling places are accessible to elderly and physically challenged voters..

PETITION OF:

NAME:

Bruce J. Ayers

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

1st Norfolk

HOUSE No. 00189

By Mr. Bruce J. Ayers of Quincy, petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 00189) of Bruce J. Ayers for legislation to assure that polling places are accessible to handicapped and elderly voters. Joint Committee on Election Laws.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE
□ HOUSE
□ , NO. 556 OF 2009-2010.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand Eleven

An Act assuring that polling places are accessible to elderly and physically challenged voters..

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. Chapter 10 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2008 Official Edition, is
- 2 hereby amended by inserting after section 35W the following new section:—
- 3 Section 35X. There is hereby established on the books of the commonwealth a separate fund
- 4 known as the Polling Location Accessibility Fund, to promote improved involvement in the
- 5 electoral process by physically-challenged and elderly individuals. Said fund shall consist of all
- 6 monies appropriated therefore in each fiscal year and any funds donated to the commonwealth
- 7 and designated for this purpose. All monies appropriated to said fund shall be made available for
- 8 distribution upon appropriation.

9 All revenues credited under this section shall remain in said Polling Location Accessibility Fund
10 to assist cities and towns of the commonwealth in paying all or part of any costs associated with
11 local initiatives to improve the physical condition of polling locations that may contain obstacles
12 to access, or impediments to movement for elderly and physically-challenged residents wishing
13 to vote. Said fund may also be distributed to fund all or part of the costs associated with
14 programs designed to increase the number of overall percentage of elderly and physically-
15 challenged voters casting ballots at a state or federal election. All grants from this fund shall be
16 made on a competitive basis pursuant to rules and regulations published by the office of the state
17 secretary and all monetary awards shall be granted only at the discretion of the state secretary.

18 The state treasurer shall deposit the fund in such a manner that will secure the highest interest
19 rate available consistent with the safety of the fund and the requirement that all amounts on
20 deposit be available for immediate withdrawal. All monies appropriated to said fund but
21 unexpended at the close of the fiscal year shall not revert to the general fund but shall remain
22 designated within said fund and be available for expenditure in subsequent fiscal years for use
23 consistent with this section. The fund shall be expended only for the purposes herein stated at the
24 direction of the state secretary.

25 SECTION 2. Chapter 54 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2004 Official Edition, is
26 hereby amended by inserting after section 10 the following new section: —Section 10A: The
27 state secretary is hereby authorized and directed to establish a grant program for the purpose of
28 assisting cities and towns in paying all or part of any costs associated with local initiatives to
29 improve the physical condition of polling locations that may contain obstacles to access, or
30 impediments to movement for elderly and physically-challenged residents wishing to vote.
31 Grants made pursuant to this section shall include but not be limited to the substantial alteration

32 and remodeling of a polling location for the specific purpose of better accommodating elderly
33 and physically-challenged residents exercising their right to vote on election day. The state
34 secretary may also make grants to increase the number or overall percentage of elderly and
35 physically-challenged voters casting ballots at a state or federal election. All grants from this
36 fund shall be made on a competitive basis pursuant to rules and regulations published by the
37 office of the state secretary and all monetary awards shall be granted only at the discretion of the
38 state secretary subject to available appropriations in the Polling Location Accessibility Fund
39 established pursuant to section 35R of chapter 10 of the General Laws.