

Whose interests will the super committee members represent?

Fact Sheet: Sen. John Kerry (D-MA)

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The deal to raise the debt ceiling set up a bipartisan “super committee” comprised of six members of the House and six members of the Senate tasked with finding \$1.2 trillion to \$1.5 trillion in additional budget savings over the next 10 years. Everything from raising taxes to cutting Social Security and Medicaid will be on the table.

Super committee member Sen. John Kerry has championed a balanced approach to reducing the deficit that relies on new revenues and reduced spending. It is no surprise because so many of his constituents have a great deal at stake if the “cuts only” approach prevails.

Massachusetts residents, after all, are having a hard time making ends meet:

- One out of every four residents is living on a low income and barely has enough money to regularly pay the bills.
- One out of every seven children under age 5 is living in poverty and one in five families is dealing with hunger and fear of not being able to feed their children.
- The state lost more than 23,000 construction jobs and more than 27,000 manufacturing jobs since August 2008.

Fortunately, social insurance and safety net programs have been able to help families in their time of need:

- More than a quarter of all Massachusetts households live on income from Social Security.
- More than one-third of all Massachusetts residents receive health care partially funded by the federal government.¹
- Nearly 400,000 Massachusetts residents had their take-home incomes boosted by more than \$730 million in earned income tax credits.
- Food stamps/SNAP provided critical nutrition assistance to more than a quarter of a million Massachusetts households.

Income inequality in Massachusetts is stark:

- For every one person who earned \$200,000 or more, 13 individuals earned \$50,000 or less. These higher-income earners represent 4.4 percent of all state residents.
- Individuals earning \$200,000 or more—4.4 percent of the state’s residents—claimed 93 percent of the capital gains tax breaks. Their tax liability was reduced by \$6 billion.
- Special tax breaks on dividend earnings decreased the taxes the wealthiest state residents paid by \$2 billion.

We encourage Sen. Kerry to consider these statistics for Massachusetts and pursue an agenda that protects the most vulnerable and asks wealthy individuals and corporations to pay their fair share.

The hard facts for Massachusetts

Massachusetts families are struggling:

- Poverty rate: 11.4 percent
- Percentage of residents getting by on low incomes²: 24.9 percent
- Percentage of families struggling with hunger³: 20 percent
- Number of people without health insurance: 285,717
- Percentage of renters spending more than 30 percent of their income on rent and utilities: 50.8 percent

Social insurance and safety net programs help keep constituents afloat:

6.3 million Massachusetts residents make up 2.5 households

- Households receiving food stamps/SNAP in the past 12 months: 288,633
- Households receiving income from Social Security: 688,651
- Households receiving Supplemental Security Income: 155,237
- Medicare recipients: 996,574
- Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program recipients: 1,586,983
- Training program participants⁴: 27,445
- Total earned income tax credit dollars flowing to the state: \$720 million
- Number of people benefiting from the earned income tax credit: 390,289

Massachusetts residents lack access to quality jobs:

- Unemployment rate: 7.4 percent
- Construction jobs lost since August 2008: 23,200
- Manufacturing jobs lost since August 2008: 27,300
- Minimum wage worker's full-time annual income compared to poverty level for a family of three: 87.4 percent
- Median hourly wage for workers without a college education: \$17.13

Massachusetts children face major challenges:

Total number of children in Massachusetts: 1.4 million with 366,335 children under 5

- Poverty rate for children under age 5: 15.1 percent
- Number of children receiving federal aid to boost student achievement in schools that educate low-income students (Title I program): 300,995
- Number of students enrolled in the Head Start Program⁵: 13,769
- Children eligible to receive special education services under the federal IDEA program: 167,297
- One-year cost of public four-year college for in-state residents: \$9,488
- Pell Grant recipients: 136,870

Sources

Data on population, poverty, health insurance, housing, SNAP, Social Security, SSI, and Head Start is from the 2010 American Community Survey, available at <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.

2007 data on Medicaid, Medicare, and the Children's Health Insurance Program is from the Kaiser Family Foundation, available at <http://www.statehealthfacts.org/>.

2010 food hardship data is from the Food Research and Action Center analysis of the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index. Food and Research Action Center, "Food Hardship in America 2010" (2011), available at http://frac.org/pdf/aug2011_food_hardship_report_children.pdf.

The median hourly wage without an education is from Center for American Progress analysis of CEPR Current Population Survey ORG data.

Data on children in schools receiving federal aid under the Title I program is from EDfacts, which used 2009 data from state education agencies.

Data on EITC and inequality is from 2009 and is from the Internal Revenue Service.

Information on Pell Grants is from unpublished 2011 data from the U.S. Department of Education.

IDEA numbers come from the National Center for Education Statistics, or NCES, available at <http://nces.ed.gov/>.

Data on state unemployment rates, construction jobs, and manufacturing jobs comes from the 2011 Bureau of Labor Statistics's local area unemployment statistics and current employment statistics, or CES, data releases, available at <http://www.bls.gov/>.

The cost of four-year public education is from The College Board, "Trends in College Pricing" (2010), available at http://trends.collegeboard.org/downloads/College_Pricing_2010.pdf.

Data on the minimum wage is from the U.S. Department of Labor, available at <http://www.dol.gov>.

Endnotes

- 1 To calculate this, we added the number of Medicaid enrollees, the number of Medicare enrollees, and the number of Children's Health Insurance Program enrollees. We then subtracted out any dual eligibles in the Medicaid and Medicare programs. We then divided that number by the state's total population.
- 2 Households living below 200 percent of the federal poverty line, about \$44,500 for a family of four in 2010.
- 3 Families indicating that, in the last 12 months, they haven't had enough money to buy food for themselves or their families, are experiencing food hardship.
- 4 Workforce Investment Act training program participants; 2009 data from the U.S. Department of Labor.
- 5 We estimated the number of Head Start participants using 2010 American Community Survey data. Their methodology for this estimation can be found in: Lynda Laughlin and Jessica Davis, "Who's in Head Start? Estimating Head Start Enrollment with the ACS, CPS, and SIPP" Working Paper 2011-15 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011), available at http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/child/Who's%20in%20Head%20Start_WP2011_15.pdf.