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WENDY MAEDA/GLOBE STAFF

George Kearnan, 3, waited while his grandmother, Barbara Daley, right, voted in West Roxbury.

By Peter Schworm

GLOBE STAFF NOVEMBER 04, 2014

An election highlighted by a closely fought governor's race and several high-profile ballot questions, including the fate of casino gambling in Massachusetts, drew a brisk voter turnout Tuesday, with many towns and cities

reporting solid numbers.

On the North Shore, a congressional race between Republican Richard Tisei and Democrat Seth Moulton sparked strong interest, including in Manchester-by-the-Sea, where 67 percent of registered voters cast ballots.

In Boston, turnout was roughly on pace with that of 2010, when Governor Deval Patrick was reelected.

“It’s been a steady stream of voters,” said Gerry Cuddyer, who chairs the Board of Election Commissioners in Boston. “I think we’ve gotten lucky with the weather.”

Boston ended the day with 41.8 percent of registered voters turning out, down from 44.3 percent in 2010, according to statistics posted on the city website



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Photos: Voting in Mass.

Voters in the state will select their first new governor in eight years.

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At the polls, some voters complained about the length and complexity of the ballot, which included four ballot questions, some with extended summaries.

Cuddyer said that while the ballot was unwieldy, most voters were “taking it in stride.”

“They did their homework,” she said.

Ballot questions also included a plan to expand the bottle deposit law, to guarantee paid sick leave to most workers, and uncouple the gasoline tax from inflation increases.

Secretary of State William Galvin said turnout for elections that feature gubernatorial races has been consistent in recent years. In 2006, 2.2 million people voted; in 2010, it was 2.3 million. “It’s a pretty narrow range,” he said.

Galvin predicted that 2.26 million Massachusetts voters, just over 52 percent, would cast ballots in the statewide election, down from 55 percent four years ago.

But in Fall River, officials said turnout was unusually high. “This afternoon, it seems most of the booths have been filled with people, and some people have had to wait for their turn,” said Elizabeth Camara, chairwoman of the city’s board of elections. “That’s not something you see unless it’s a presidential election.”

Camara said she had seen more younger voters than usual and said the ballot questions had generated a good deal of interest.

In Springfield, turnout appeared to be boosted by the casino measure. A plan by MGM Resorts to build a casino in Springfield has won the license for Western Massachusetts.

“From the conversations I’ve heard over the counter, a lot of the interest has been driven by Question 3,” said Gladys Oyola, election commissioner for Springfield.

Other turnout figures included 47.8 percent in Somerville, 47 percent in Malden, 32 percent in New Bedford, 60 percent in Reading, and 64 percent in Concord, according to statistics posted on those communities’ websites

North of Boston, the hard-fought Sixth Congressional race energized many voters.

In Manchester-by-the-Sea, Kim Crispen, 36, split her ballot, choosing Republican Charlie Baker for governor and Moulton for Congress.

“I like that he’s a veteran and served his country and didn’t make a big deal out of it,” she said of Moulton, a Marine who fought in Iraq but did not publicly disclose he was decorated for heroism. “Tisei just seemed like more of a politician.”

Crispen, a lifelong Republican, voted for Baker as an “independent voice” over Democratic candidate Martha Coakley.

“Coakley would do whatever the Democrats want her to do,” she said.

Another voter in the seaside town, Christine Gagne, 66, threw her support to Coakley, saying she had been an excellent attorney general.

“And I didn’t like Baker’s ‘sweetheart’ comment or the story of the mysterious fisherman,” she said.

In South Boston, Anne Kelley, 82, said she cast her ballot for Baker. After eight years of the Patrick administration, it was time for a change, she said.

“I think he’s a good man,” she said outside the Curley Community Center.

William Good, 24, cast his vote for Coakley. He didn’t have a strong opinion about her, but knew he didn’t want Baker to win. Good’s mother was a teacher, and his father worked for the city, and they taught the importance of voting. “Vote or shut up,” he said.

In Allston, Lawrence Toner, 58, voted for Coakley because of her pledge to improve access to mental health care.

“There’s a lot of people out there with mental health issues that need help in this state, but it’s not really available,” he said.

Toner said he voted against expanding the state’s beverage container deposit law, lamenting how people leave a mess when they pick through trash in search of bottles.

But Stephanie Liu, 25, said she voted for the Bottle Bill expansion because it could mean extra cash for those who go around collecting bottles.

For the civic-minded, the solid turnout was cause for celebration. In Weymouth, Debbie Pennisi, 59, was happy she had to wait in line. “I vote in every election,” she said. “Maybe not on every item, but I do vote.”

Globe correspondents Matt Rocheleau and Trisha Thadani and staffers Kathy McCabe, Shelley Murphy, David Abel, Billy Baker and Meghan E. Irons contributed to this report.

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