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## By Globe Staff

NOVEMBER 09, 2014

As the winner in last week's election, Charlie Baker, like every new governor, inherits a to-do list of problems that includes the intractable and the newly minted, the complex and the confounding, the life-changing and potentially life-threatening.

Repairing a troubled department dedicated to the welfare of children; regulating the state's soon-to-rise casinos; making Massachusetts more hospitable to small businesses and entrepreneurs: Each of these issues was campaign trail fodder, as were stubbornly recurrent problems such as nightmarish commutes, unemployment, and underperforming city schools.

The prize for Baker, who takes office in January, is that these mountains are now his to climb or to fall short in the attempt.

Globe reporters fanned out across Massachusetts to get a sense of what some in the state are looking to the new governor to do. Their report starts in Beverly, where a husband and wife wonder how long he can handle an exhausting and exasperating daily trip to work. It is a burden and frustration shared by thousands.

## Transportation: Make public transit reliable to ease traffic nightmares



MATTHEW J. LEE/GLOBE STAFF

**Werner Bahlke.**

When Yule Heibel and her husband, Werner Bahlke, moved back to Massachusetts in 2012, they settled in Beverly — the same town they had left a decade before.

The town was still lovely, but getting there no longer was.

“When we came back, we couldn’t believe the volume of traffic,” Heibel said, particularly on Route 128. Her husband’s drive to Waltham for work was agonizing — “I’m going to die if I have to do this every day,” he told his wife. So when Bahlke took a software development job in Cambridge, he started riding the commuter rail.

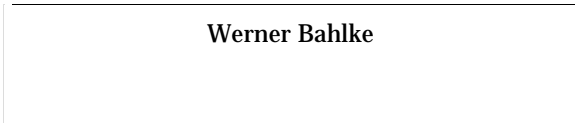
But that daily jaunt comes with its own indignities.

Across Greater Boston, the road to a smooth commute seems to have fallen off the map.

Governor Deval Patrick’s five-year, \$12.4 billion state plan to invest in transportation is in its infancy. A measure to unlink gas

“

*‘We’re all saying we have to be grateful we have the trains. But my God, why can’t we have a little bit better service?’*



taxes from the rate of inflation, which opponents argued will make it harder to fund repairs, was approved by voters at the same time Baker was elected. And 42 percent of the state’s roadways are in poor or mediocre condition, according to a 2013 study by the American Society of Civil Engineers.

At least the trains are new, clean and always on time.

Yeah, right.

“I talk to a lot of people,” Bahlke said. “We’re all saying we have to be grateful we have the trains. But my God, why can’t we have a little bit better service?”

Included on their list of gripes is that the trains are too-often old, tardy, questionably managed, and shoddily maintained. What is most vexing is that there aren’t nearly enough of them.

“In the evening, if I don’t make a 6:45 train, then the next one is 7:40,” Bahlke said.

“It’s just astonishing how many problems there are, and how people grin and bear it,” said Heibel, a writer and blogger who focuses on urbanism, transit, and smart growth. She hopes Baker will “really think about how public transportation serves the city. It’s not a question of getting a free ride — we’re not.”

Making public transportation more reliable and efficient for people in communities such as Beverly, she said, will take pressure off such roads as 128 and provide workers access to companies in Cambridge and the Innovation District of Boston when they cannot afford to live nearby. Increasing spending on public transit, though it took some revenue from roads, “saved New York City,” she said.

Bahlke, who worked for six years in Munich without a car before moving to the United States, said he is dreading his first winter of commuting on the train and the T before the short walk to work (the private shuttle his company provides from the station is reliably stuck in snarled traffic).

“Boston is such a great place,” he said. “If we had better transportation, more people would take it and we’d get people off the street.”

**TRAVEL TIME TO WORK**

|                      | Mass. residents | Boston residents |
|----------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Less than 10 minutes | 11.6%           | 7.9%             |
| 10 to 14 minutes     | 12.7%           | 9.1%             |
| 15 to 19 minutes     | 13.4%           | 12.9%            |
| 20 to 24 minutes     | 13.1%           | 13.7%            |
| 25 to 29 minutes     | 5.9%            | 6.5%             |
| 30 to 34 minutes     | 14.4%           | 19.2%            |
| 35 to 44 minutes     | 7.9%            | 9.4%             |
| 45 to 59 minutes     | 9.9%            | 10.6%            |
| 60 or more minutes   | 11.1%           | 10.6%            |

SOURCE: US Census Bureau, 2011-2013 3-Year American Community Survey  
PATRICK GARVIN/GLOBE STAFF

NESTOR RAMOS



DEBEE TLUMACKI FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

**“Recruit good people,” said former foster child Maria Medina (pictured, with her children). “I feel I was blessed with the people I got.”**

### **Child Welfare: To fix DCF, find leaders who will hire caring workers**

Maria Medina, a former foster child and now a married mother of two, considers herself a success story of the child welfare system; good social workers and foster parents provided the lifelines that saw her through troubled times.

Medina, 27, remembers a constellation of people, including Vickey and Faith, her favorite social workers, and Aida and Julie, two foster mothers who gave her stable homes for many years from preschool on when her parents could not.

Her advice for Baker to address the deep problems of the Department of Children and Families: build leadership that emphasizes the hiring — and retention — of people like the ones who helped her.

**“Recruit good people,”** Medina said in the living room of her New Bedford apartment as her two girls, ages 6 and

2, played nearby. “I feel I was blessed with the people I got. They showed real love. It wasn’t just a job.”

She recalled times when her father was incarcerated or her mother was on drugs when social workers bought her restaurant meals using their own cash. When one of her social workers died about seven years ago, the woman arranged through a relative to have her bed, TV, and sofa donated to Medina.

Medina knows that not every adult within DCF can be expected to show that level of generosity and that the kind of individual attention she treasured is difficult with so many thousands of children in the agency’s care. This year, DCF has about 42,000 children in its caseload, including about 8,200 foster children.

Medina said she is proud of the fact that, after a childhood of leaning on the government, she and her husband of 10 years, Hiram Ramos, are financially independent. She said Ramos works as an assistant manager at a tire store, while she watches the children and serves as a deacon and youth teacher at her Pentecostal church.

She said she wants Baker to remember the extra needs of foster children as they “age out” of the system, typically when they turn 18. Medina, who was the subject of a Globe [report about foster children](#) at the cusp of adulthood, said so many foster teens like her had no money or family support to lean on as they stepped out into the adult world.

She said she believes the next leader of DCF should have had experience working with children from distressed families, so that they know what it is demanded of social workers and foster parents and why it is so important to hire and support the best.

“Go with someone who has the background to understand these kids,” she said.

PATRICIA WEN

## **Unemployment: Bring more jobs, with better pay, to help urban families**

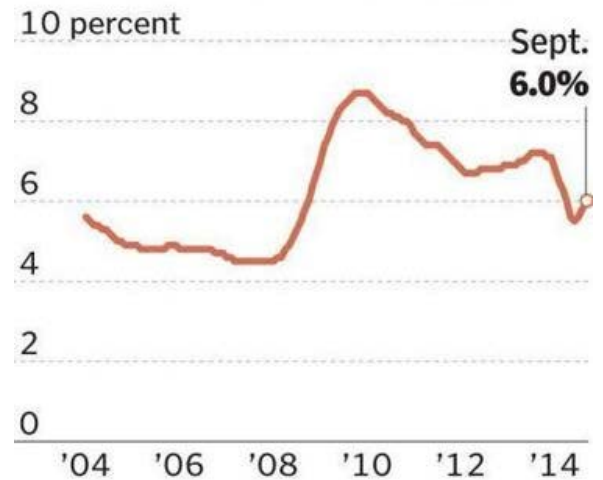
Massachusetts emerged from the recession better than most states. But in Lawrence, an old mill city dotted with abandoned storefronts and loan agencies, unemployment remains rampant at 12.3 percent, more than twice the state average.

Felix Bernabel spent 18 years and 6 months working at Malden Mills, the textile company that gave the world Polartec. The company survived a devastating 1995 fire but stumbled through two bankruptcies before being bought out by a private equity firm.

After he was laid off, Bernabel found a temporary job doing maintenance and street work for the Department of Public Works.

But that lasted just three months, and he has been out of work since October. On Friday, wearing his Polartec vest, he was back

## MASSACHUSETTS UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



September number is preliminary.

SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics

PATRICK GARVIN/GLOBE STAFF

with his resume at the Greater Lawrence Community Action Council Inc., a social service organization that works to help families achieve self-sufficiency.

Yes, he has applied for other jobs — at New Balance and other factories, where he might drive a fork lift. But the calls are not coming.

“A lot of job opportunities out there — people get hired because they know somebody,” Bernabel said through a translator.

He has picked up short-term jobs with no health insurance but he wants something steadier to reliably provide for his second wife and three children — ages 8, 10, and 13. (Three others are grown and out of the house, working at an auto parts store, a restaurant, and a collection agency.)

“He was taught to work and work hard for what he needs,” said Sasha Mena, translating for Bernabel, who emigrated from the Dominican Republic nearly three decades ago and is now a US citizen. “He just needs a job. He doesn’t want benefits to give him, like, here’s a certain amount of money so you can eat, because at the end of the day, when that money finishes, they’re hungry again. So what he needs is a job so he can earn that money that he brings home.”

What would he ask of the governor?

“Just bring in different jobs,” he said through Mena. “The jobs that are here — most of them are already taken. Bring more job opportunities into the cities.”

STEPHANIE EBBERT



STEVEN G. SMITH FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

**“You can see and feel there’s a different energy and a different atmosphere,” said Clayton Roberson (pictured, with his daughter, Kalia).**

## **Charter Schools: Dropping statewide cap can lead to rise in opportunities for underserved students**

A lifelong resident of Springfield, Clayton Roberson, 52, said he has watched the quality of the city’s public school systems decline over the years.

When his daughter, Kalia, finished fourth grade 2½ years ago with C’s in what should have been her strongest subjects, Roberson decided she would not reach her potential in public schools — at least not here.

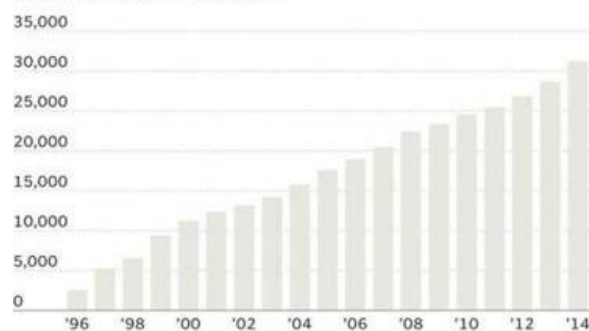
He put her name in the running for a charter school in nearby Holyoke, and when she was selected, he was overjoyed.

And to hear Kalia, that joy was justified.

“There’s more of a community here than just a bunch of people who don’t really care what you do,” she said, sitting with her father after school Friday in the Holyoke Community Charter

### CHARTER SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

The number of students enrolled in charter schools in Massachusetts, by fiscal year:



SOURCE: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

PATRICK GARVIN/GLOBE STAFF

School library. “It’s challenging. . . . but I’m able to do the work and to keep my grades up,” she added.

But Kalia, now a 12-year-old seventh-grader, may soon have to return to the Springfield school system because a cap on charter schools has prevented her current school from expanding to add grades 9-12.

For Clayton Roberson, a single father and Springfield police officer who has Kalia and her twin brother, Jamir to look after, private school is not an option. (He also has three adult sons.)

“My daughter wants to go to college, that’s all she talks about and that’s what I’m saving up for,” he said. “Right now, all my savings are for her and her brother to go to college.”

Kalia wants to go to Smith College in Northampton, but she said she worries that returning to public school will jeopardize her plan.

“If I have to go to a Springfield high school, I know I’m not going to be getting as good of an education,” she said.

Public school advocates worry that competition from charter schools drains away much-needed funds and higher-performing students. It is a political and policy dispute, with strong arguments on both sides, but one that Kalia and her family do not have time for; their focus has to be on her needs, now. At her charter school, she said, the expectations are rigorous and the results are clear.

“You can see and feel there’s a different energy and a different atmosphere,” her father said.

The state Senate last summer overwhelmingly rejected a bill that would have raised the cap on charter schools in low-performing districts such as Holyoke. But charter school advocates are weighing the possibility of pursuing a ballot initiative to raise the cap. And Baker has said he wants more charter schools.

Clayton Roberson said he hopes Baker makes it happen, even if a charter high school does not open in time for his daughter to attend.

“I’m a parent and an advocate, and I’ll be in support of this even after she’s out of high school,” he said.





STEVEN G. SMITH FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

**“They say, ‘We can’t afford these payments that we promised.’ They hold the state government hostage,” said Steve Abdow (pictured), a casino opponent.**

## **Casinos: Keep gaming industry from holding jobs hostage to get state tax breaks, bailouts**

Deval Patrick is the governor who fathered the Massachusetts casino industry, but Baker will be the one left to raise it.

Steve Abdow never liked the idea of state government midwifing the casino industry into Massachusetts, but if it is coming he wants a governor who isn’t afraid to say no if the industry someday cries for a handout.

Six months or so after Baker is sworn in this January, Penn National Gaming will switch on the state’s first slot machines at the Plainridge Racecourse in Plainville, making Baker the first to govern Massachusetts as a casino state. Pricey gambling resorts by MGM in Springfield and by Wynn Resorts in Everett should open in roughly three years, about the time the new governor begins campaigning for reelection.

#### LICENSED CASINO GAMBLING FACILITIES IN MASSACHUSETTS



The Massachusetts gambling industry is regulated by an independent commission designed to be insulated from politics and political meddling, and Baker may have little direct say over the development of the industry.

Casino supporters, who beat back a repeal referendum on the day Baker was elected, want a governor willing to use the bully pulpit to cheer on the development projects and the thousands of jobs the gambling companies promise to create.

State lawmakers legalized Las Vegas-style casino gambling in 2011, buying into the industry's argument that it creates jobs and brings revenue into state coffers without raising taxes.

Abdow, who works for the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts, would have been far happier if the repeal had passed. He says casinos have gone back on their word in other states and he does not want it to happen here. If Massachusetts is really going to get into the casino game, Abdow said, he would urge the governor-elect to hold the line when casino lobbyists come looking for tax breaks, bailouts, or other goodies that rob from the taxpayers.

"They always do this," Abdow said, speaking of the casino industry. "They did it in New Jersey and they did it in Delaware. They say, 'We can't afford these payments that we promised.' They hold the state government hostage" by threatening layoffs. "And state government becomes addicted to the revenue and has to acquiesce."

His point is timely.

Delaware has approved givebacks to its flagging casino industry to avoid layoffs.

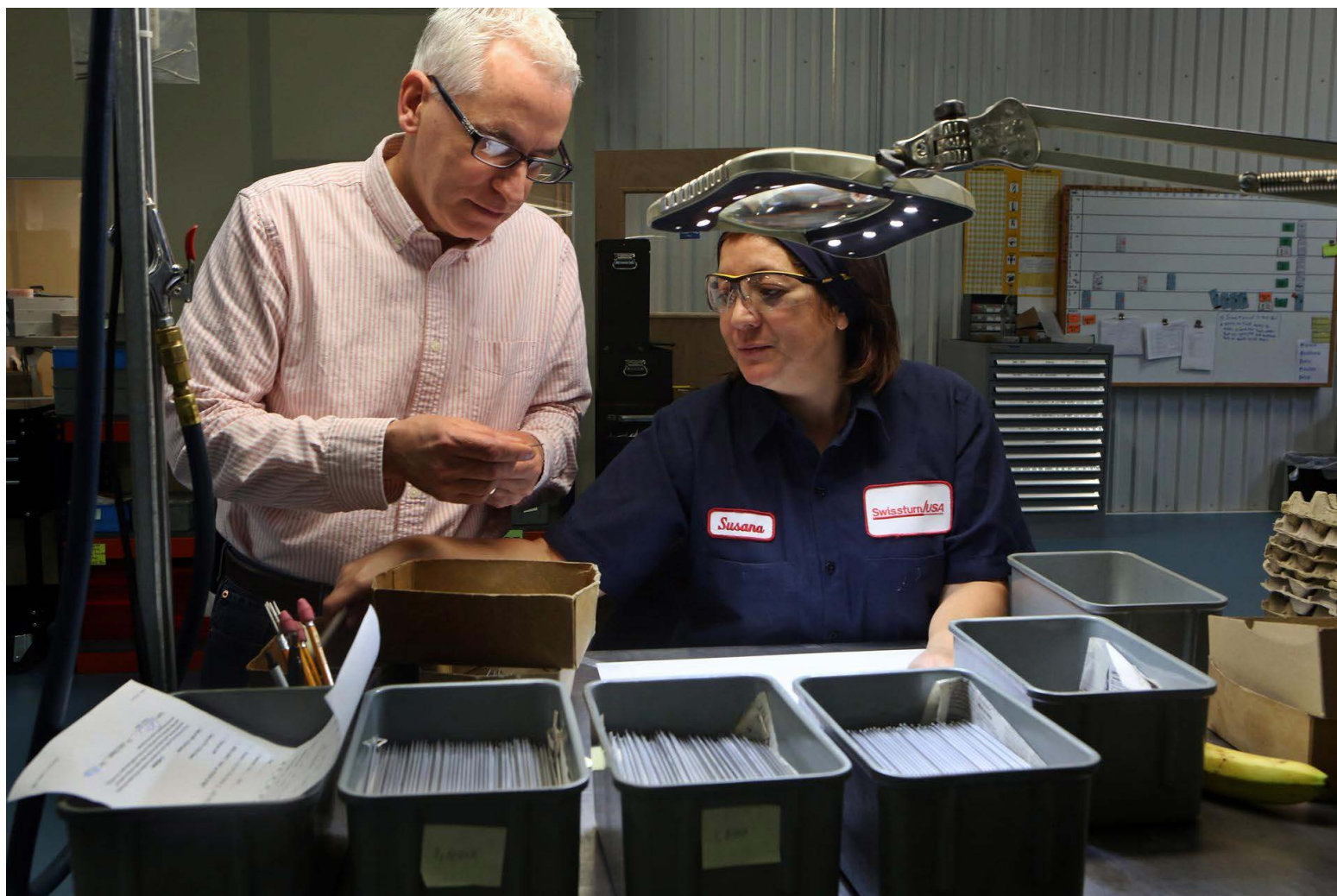
In Atlantic City, the Taj Mahal casino wants \$175 million in government assistance to fortify the struggling Boardwalk gambling house, where 3,000 jobs are at stake. It may close before the end of the year.

Casino opponents can imagine ransom demands from Massachusetts casinos: Give us what we want or the workers get it.

"Are they going to try to whittle down some of our laws?" Abdow said. "Will they say: 'This is not reasonable; we can't be successful under these circumstances?'"

“Once they’re in, they’re in charge,” he warned. “We can call the shots before they get licenses. Once they get licensed they have so much power and money and influence.”

MARK ARSENAULT



MICHELE MCDONALD FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

**“What’s important is we create a favorable environment by removing barriers,” said Kenneth Mandile (pictured, with Susana Roman at his machine shop).**

## **Business Regulation: Make growth for small businesses easier by cutting away choking thicket of rules**

Mounting state regulations weigh heavily on Kenneth Mandile’s mind, and on his bottom line.

The second-generation owner of SwissturnUSA, an Oxford machine shop, Mandile said a sea of state regulations that govern his small business has made growth a struggle.

There are so many building, environmental, and health regulations, he said, that he routinely hires consultants to interpret them. A recent move to a new location last year cost him tens of thousands of dollars in consultants hired solely to interpret state rules and ensure his compliance.

“Every time I have to spend money, that’s money coming from another investment that could have been made that somehow benefits my customers or my employees,” said Mandile, who is 55. “I wish the state would push back.”

More specifically, Mandile, a soft-spoken engineer and Tea Party activist, wants Baker to push back by streamlining state regulations that he said hurt small businesses like his.

Health care coverage for his employees is rising annually, he said. And he wants the governor to focus on education and promoting careers in vocational trades; he currently has three job openings that he is struggling to fill.

“I don’t want expensive new initiatives to subsidize businesses, I don’t want them handing out funds or playing favorites with particular industries,” he said. “What’s important is we create a favorable environment by removing barriers.”

SwissturnUSA makes tiny but precisely fashioned parts for medical devices, guns, and pocket knives. It is a tight-knit operation that employs about 50 people, from cleaners who make \$13 an hour to machinists who make more than \$30. Mandile said his father, who founded the company more than 40 years ago, taught him to clean a lathe at age 10.

Last year, the company completed a \$2 million relocation into a long-abandoned building in the town of Oxford, south of Worcester. Mandile’s father probably wouldn’t recognize the floor of the machine shop, home to 25 computerized lathes that each cost as much as \$200,000. The new shop floor is sleek, lit by skylights, and the floors are coated with a bright epoxy.

Mandile said he was baffled by the unexpected costs that arose during the renovation. For instance, a health inspector required him to build a bridge to a leaching field across a brook that is typically dry, saying it was necessary for access in the event of a septic problem. The “bridge to nowhere,” as Mandile calls it, came with a hefty price tag of \$17,000.

## FRUSTRATIONS OVER REGULATIONS

Kenneth Mandile, owner of Swissturn USA, a 50-employee machine shop in Oxford, recently undertook a \$2 million expansion. The hardest part? State regulations, he said, that made the project "a nightmare" of unexpected costs. Here are a few:

# \$8,000

to comply with state rules required installation of a "bi-directional amplifier" system to ensure firefighters will get a good radio signal in the event of a fire. Original estimate was \$40,000

# \$25,000

to repave the parking lot to state environmental standards requiring proper storm water drainage

# \$17,000

to construct a bridge over a dry brook to comply with state health laws requiring access to a leachfield

Mandile said he could have contested the requirement but that would have added more costs and time away from the day-to-day demands of his business.

Mandile said he also considered relocating outside of Massachusetts, to a region with lower costs, but he worries that he would be unable to replace his highly skilled veteran employees. His three children, including two in college, have no interest in a career in manufacturing, he said. And he does not think many would-be entrepreneurs in Massachusetts today could afford to build a business from scratch, as his father did in 1969.

“There’s just so many regulations and fees,” he said, “it’s just almost impossible.”

MEGAN WOOLHOUSE

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