

Beacon Hill Byline

December 25, 1997

Auld Lang Syne

Taking a look back at the year gone by seems to be a tradition of newspaper columnists everywhere. In my role as your Longmeadow News columnist as well as your legislator, I write this week's column as both a community and a governmental recap of the year.

In Longmeadow, we celebrated the reopening of Center School, a triumph of years of work at both the town and state levels. The school building complex that once served as a model of obsolescence has been modernized as a good example for the next century. That means Longmeadow High School no longer has elementary students housed in the building. The students all seemed to get along very well, but I did notice that the football team won the Super Bowl once the Little Lancers went back to Center School.

At the regional level, funding for the Basketball Hall of Fame and the Civic Center are accomplishments that stand out. Improvements to these two establishments will provide a double benefit to Western Massachusetts. First will come the construction jobs, and then will be the economic activity they generate for the region.

The change at the helm of the state government sits at the top of the list of notable events in all of Massachusetts. With the resignation of Governor Weld, Paul Cellucci, his second in command, is serving out the remainder of the governor's term. That transfer of authority could have been a major upheaval except for the close working relationship that existed in the Weld-Cellucci administration. Governor Cellucci was a full time partner for six years of the administration, and those years were preceded by several terms as both a state representative and a senator. The administration continues its policies as set, including its focus on tax cuts. That leads to my next point.

When I entered the legislature taxes had been heading only one way – up! During an early campaign for re-election we spoke of enacting six tax cuts. At this point, the reduction total is 21, and we are working on others. This year we saw the implementation of final phase of the estate tax reduction, and we continue with our phase-out capital gains taxes. Income taxes for military retirees and some at the lower end of the economic scale have been reduced, as have taxes on certain businesses.

While we move forward with tax cuts, the state revenue continues to increase beyond expectations, leading to the growing call for reduction in our income tax rate. Bills have been filed to reduce the rate to 5 percent, and a petition has been filed by Citizens for limited Taxation and Government to place a question on next year's ballot to accomplish that goal by referendum. This is the organization that gave us "Proposition 2 ½." Maybe this will become known as "Proposition 5."

This was 1997, as it ends I send my best wishes to all of you for a happy holiday season and a Happy New Year.