

A Vision for Boston: Questions for the 2009 District City Council Candidates

HEALTH INSURANCE & OPEB

What steps would you take to further control Boston's annual health insurance costs for active employees and retirees? Explain why you would or would not recommend the City adopt Section 18. How will you address Boston's growing OPEB liability?



District 7

Chuck Turner

A) Given the difficulties of the federal government in controlling costs, it is difficult to see what leverage we have.

B) Without more information on the effect of a switch to Medicaid for our retirees I am not comfortable giving an opinion. We certainly have to be careful to not lower the quality of life for those who have served the city.

C) I think the lack of financial resources to cover our health and pension costs for retirees is a problem that is ultimately beyond our capabilities. With a present liability of over 3 billion, with a projected liability for this year of almost \$150 million, and with no expectation of a significant lowering of cost or raising city revenue, we need the help of the federal government. Without such help I think we are cruising into a crisis as we are in many other financial areas.

District 8

Oscar Brookins

Here I am prepared to wait and see the outcome of the ongoing debate on healthcare in Congress is settled before venturing to put forth a plan, but it is clear that our society has come to the conclusion that employees have a social obligation to provide more for their insurance and healthcare needs. Municipal government cannot afford to be more generous than the typical private firm in this realm of compensation.

Michael Ross

This spring, I helped to organize a special meeting of the LaWare Forum on Boston's fiscal future. At that meeting, Northeastern University Professor Barry Bluestone said that if the City of Boston continues to enter into contracts with municipal workers under the terms it has in the past, the city will go bankrupt in a matter of years. Boston's leaders must work with unions to reach a contract that allows our hardworking men and women to earn a decent living while recognizing the city can't afford to take on the pension and benefit liabilities it has in the past. I support shifting our workers' benefits to the Commonwealth's Group Insurance Commission. This will save the city millions of dollars while providing quality healthcare to our employees.

District 9

Mark Ciommo

The cost of health care for Boston's current and former employees is central to the ongoing fiscal health of our city. The city is working to both lower the short term cost while providing long term solutions. Continuing negotiations with insurance providers will lower the costs for both individual consumers and employers who are forced to pay annual increases mandated by the health care industry. Requiring that all future retirees enrolls in the federal Medicare program will also ensure efficient and effective health benefits to all the city's residents. The City of Boston should work with unions to provide health insurance through the state's Group Insurance Commission.