



A Vision for Boston: Questions for the 2009 Mayoral Candidates

DAY 9: MANDATORY ALCOHOL AND DRUG TESTING

Do you believe mandatory alcohol and drug testing should be required for all uniformed public safety employees and EMTs and, if so, how should such testing be achieved?



Michael F. Flaherty Jr.

I am a strong supporter of mandatory and random drug and alcohol testing for all of the city's public safety personnel, as well as any employee operating heavy equipment. This is a simple matter of public safety and its implementation should not be compromised by politics. Regretfully, the city has missed crucial opportunities to implement such system-wide policies, despite the recommendations made by the O'Toole report, whose findings and recommendations I have always supported. While I do not oppose the legislation that has been proposed at the State House, I still believe we can achieve mandatory and random drug and alcohol testing through a collective bargaining process that genuinely employs fair and diplomatic negotiations, which to date, has not been attempted by the current administration.

Thomas M. Menino

I strongly believe in mandatory random alcohol and drug testing for uniformed public safety personnel.

For that reason, I have sponsored and am advocating for the adoption of state-wide legislation that would make all uniformed public safety officers and EMTs subject to mandatory random alcohol and drug testing. (House Bill 2210)

While I am supporting this legislation, in part, because of the on-going challenge of getting the Boston Fire Union to agree to random drug testing, my administration has succeeded in negotiating testing provisions with Boston police officers and the City's emergency medical technicians.

However, the current negotiation with the Fire Union demonstrates the limitation to this approach. Drug and alcohol testing is a vital preventative measure in a safety sensitive workforce. It should not be reduced to a quid-pro-quo in the bargaining process. This approach has left some cash strapped cities and towns with little hope of being able to secure drug and alcohol testing at the bargaining table. It has also left most uniformed public safety officers in the State without the benefit of this preventative safety measure.