



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
House of Representatives
State House, Boston 02133-1054

BRADLEY H. JONES, JR.
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
MINORITY LEADER

20th MIDDLESEX DISTRICT
READING + NORTH READING
LYNNFIELD + MIDDLETON
ROOM 124
TEL (617) 722-2100
Rep.BradleyJones@hou.state.ma.us

June 24, 2003

His Excellency, W. Mitt Romney, Governor
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Room 360, State House
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Dear Governor Romney:

I write regarding the Conference Committee report on H.4004, the FY'04 state budget which is now before you. As you examine the many sections of this document, I am pleased to continue working with your staff to advise and assist you in any way I can. However, I wanted to take a moment to specifically call your attention to one particular section of the bill that is of the utmost importance to me.

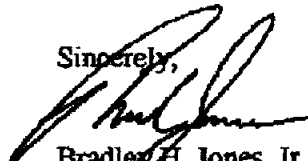
As you are no doubt aware from our conversations and correspondence, I have been engaged for the past few months in an attempt to secure a place for the Town of Reading and a number of other cities and towns on the Department of Education's School Building Assistance (SBA) waiting list. You may recall that in February, we included language which we thought would accomplish this in the FY'03 deficit reduction package. However, the Department's interpretation of the wording led them to allow only 28 of 63 towns onto the list, Reading not being one of them.

You have also been kind enough to assist me in filing legislation to allow the Town to issue a 30-year bond to help to fund its high school construction project. Meanwhile, Senator Tisei and I have succeeded in including language in Section 668 of the Conference Committee report which will unequivocally direct the Department to add Reading and the other 34 towns to the SBA waiting list if they meet certain conditions. Let me stress that this does not add *one cent* to the bottom line. I have enclosed a copy of the exact language for your review.

Governor, I *cannot emphasize enough* the importance of this language to myself, Senator Tisei, and the Town of Reading. It is by far my number one budget priority. A veto of this language would be a crushing blow to Reading and the other cities and towns, and would represent a broken promise on the part of the Commonwealth.

I appreciate your time and attention, and again would urge your favorable consideration of Section 668. If you have any questions regarding this issue, please feel free to contact me as I am at your disposal.

Sincerely,



Bradley H. Jones, Jr.
Minority Leader

Cc: The Honorable Cindy Giesspie, Chief of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs

SECTION 668. "All school facilities' capital or major reconstruction projects, which have received final municipal approval by a favorable vote by the legislative body of any municipality, subject to its charter, on or before June 30, 2003, shall be placed on the priority waiting list for reimbursement pursuant to section 10 of chapter 70B of the General Laws at the rate for which it would have been eligible on January 31, 2003. The priority categories set forth in section 8 of said chapter 70B shall not be used to restrict any eligible project from placement on the priority list but may be used to rank new projects for placement on the priority list. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the board of education shall not accept any application for the school building assistance program established in said chapter 70B of the General Laws, until after July 1, 2007.