



AHEM News

Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts, Inc.

Volume 10 • No 3 • Spring 2013

**What
you
need
to
know
when
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know
it**

State House Day

Tuesday, April 9, 2013

Join AHEM for a fun day in Boston visiting the State House and visiting the Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum!

10:00 AM – noon Visiting Legislators

2013 brings a new group of legislators to the State House, so to encourage Massachusetts homeschoolers to meet their representatives, AHEM is sponsoring an event on **Tuesday, April 9, 2013** for homeschoolers to visit the State House and meet with legislators.

Meet at the Grand Staircase on the second floor of the State House to check in and peruse handouts and displays about homeschooling in Massachusetts. AHEM representatives will be available there between 10:00 AM and 12:00 PM, but we encourage you to arrive as close to 10:00 AM as possible.

Consider calling or writing your representatives to make an appointment to meet them while at the State House. You are more likely to meet them instead of an aide if you make arrangements in advance. If you're not sure who your representatives are, you can find out here: www.wheredoivotema.com/bal/myelectioninfo.aspx. Find a template in .pdf format for a letter or email here: www.ahem.info/Documents/WritetoYourElectedOfficialsTemplate

Cost: Free, but we can plan better for the event if you take the time to pre-register, so we strongly encourage registering in advance.

Tip: This State House visit would nicely complement the *AHEM Unit Study on Massachusetts History and Government*. For information on the *Unit Study* and how to request it, visit www.ahem.info/UnitStudy.htm

10:15 AM Talk by Rep. Chris Walsh

Rep. Walsh will give a short talk. Students will be able to ask questions. The talk will be followed by a photo opportunity of the Representative with our group. You can find out more about Rep. Walsh here: www.malegislature.gov/People/Profile/CJW1

Cost: Free, but please register in advance. Space is limited and we may not be able to accommodate all who are interested.

11:00 AM State House Tour

Tour our magnificent State House, a building which Oliver Wendell Holmes called "the hub of the solar system." The oldest building on Beacon Hill, the State House is brimming with history, art, and culture. Within its grandiose architecture are statues, paintings, flags from almost every town and city in Massachusetts, and, of course, legislators from the same. The tour lasts approximately 30 – 45 minutes and includes an overview of the history and architecture of the State Capitol.

Cost: Free, but please register in advance.

12:00 – 1:30 PM Lunch on your own

1:30 – 2:30 PM Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum

The Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum Tour Experience takes one hour and features full-scale replicas, artifacts and interactive elements throughout. Our group will have a personalized "colonial character" host that will guide us through this never-before-seen museum experience. We'll "meet" Sam Adams, we'll participate in the re-enactment of the

destruction of the tea; we'll be invited to board a tall ship, we'll marvel at one of only two known surviving tea crates and we'll be inspired by the film *Let It Begin Here* in the Minuteman Theatre.

Our private guided group tour will begin promptly at **1:30 PM** and will last approximately 1 hour. Specific info on where to meet will be sent once you register.

Cost: Adults \$21.00; Children (13-18 years old) \$13.00; Children (12 years and younger) \$11.00; Children (3 years and younger) free. May fill.

How to register

We're glad that you are interested in joining us on April 9!

To register, please:

- Download a registration form in .pdf format here: www.ahem.info/Documents/StateHouseDay2013registrationform.pdf
- write check to AHEM for any payment due and
- return it all in an envelope addressed to AHEM, PO Box 1307, Arlington, MA 02474.

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The information in this newsletter does not constitute legal advice; it is provided for informational purposes only. AHEM is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Donations are tax-deductible.

Space for Rep. Walsh's talk, the Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum, and the State House tour is limited; spots are allotted in the order registrations are received. **Registrations must be postmarked no later than March 15, 2013.** No refunds after March 15, 2013. Registration confirmation will be sent via email (preferred) or enclose a SASE.

Current State Scene . . .

Legislative Update

Our Massachusetts Legislature began its 188th Session on January 2, 2013. Several bills affecting school attendance age that died during the 187th Session have been resurrected in a flurry of new filings. Below is a summary of bills filed so far this Session that could impact Massachusetts homeschoolers. AHM will continue to monitor these and any additional education bills that may be filed during the 188th Session.

KINDERGARTEN REQUIREMENTS

H 349 – Rep. Antonio Cabral, D., New Bedford; AN ACT TO IMPLEMENT FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN This bill would amend Chapters 69 and 76 of the General Laws by requiring every child to be enrolled in a full-day Kindergarten program. The bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Education on 1/22/13. No further action has been taken.

BILLS RAISING THE MANDATORY ATTENDANCE AGE

H 524 – Rep. Martha M. Walz, D. Boston; AN ACT RAISING THE SCHOOL DROPOUT AGE This bill would amend Chapter 69 of the General Laws and require an increase in school attendance age, phased in over the next four years, from sixteen to eighteen. It would also establish programs for identifying and helping students at risk of “dropping out” of high school. The bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Education on 1/22/13. No further action has been taken.

S 208 – State Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz, D. Boston, Senate Chair of Joint Committee on Education; AN ACT RELATIVE TO DROPOUT PREVENTION AND RECOVERY This bill is essentially the Senate version of H 524. It would amend both Chapters 69 and 76 with the “age 18” attendance requirement and further establish tracking and coaching programs to identify and help students at risk of dropping out of high school. The bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Education on 1/22/13. No further action has been taken.

H 350 – Rep. Antonio Cabral, D. New Bedford; AN ACT TO REQUIRE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE UP TO AGE EIGHTEEN OR UNTIL GRADUATION This bill would amend Chapter 76 of the General Laws by requiring school attendance between the ages of six and eighteen, “having completed at least the 12th grade or whichever comes first.” The bill would take effect August 1, 2015. It was referred to the Joint Committee on Education on 1/22/13. No further action has been taken.

H 338 – Rep. Garrett J. Bradley, D. Hingham; AN ACT RAISING THE COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE AGE TO 18 This bill would amend Chapter 69 of the General Laws to state that “all children under the age of 18 shall be required to attend school if they have not graduated.” The bill was

referred to the Joint Committee on Education on 1/22/13. No further action has been taken.

H 462 – Rep. Alice Hanlon Peisch, D. Wellesley, House Chair of Joint Committee on Education; AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE MAXIMUM PERMISSIBLE AGE FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE This bill directs the Board of Education to “develop regulations to establish the maximum permissible age for school attendance, provided that such regulations shall address the types of alternative education programs or settings that are suitable for individuals who exceed the maximum permissible age of attendance who do not have a high school diploma or the equivalent.” The bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Education on 1/22/13. No further action has been taken.

H 376 – Reps. Carlos Henriquez, D. Dorchester, Edward F. Coppinger, D. Boston; AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE COMPULSORY AGE OF SCHOOL ATTENDANCE This bill seeks to increase the compulsory age of school attendance **in the city of Boston** by amending Section 1B, Ch. 69, “or section 1 of chapter 76, of the General Laws or any other general or special law to the contrary regulating the compulsory age of school attendance, the compulsory maximum age for school attendance in Boston public and private schools shall be eighteen (18). Children under the age of 18, attending a Boston public or private school, shall remain enrolled until such time as they turn 18, or upon successful completion of all coursework required to graduate. SECTION 2. This act shall take effect on July 1, 2012 [sic] and shall concern all students enrolled in Boston public and private schools for the 2012-13 [sic] school year and onward.” (Ed. Note: These are the dates stated in the current bill text on the MGC website, but may be a hold-over from last year's bill.) The city of Boston has already provided local approval. H376 was referred to the Joint Committee on Education on 1/22/13. No further action has been taken.

H 368 – Rep. Marcos A. Devers, Democrat, Lawrence, Barry R. Finegold, and Frank A. Moran; AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE MAXIMUM AGE FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN THE CITY OF LAWRENCE This bill would allow the City of Lawrence, MA to establish its own maximum age for school attendance, “which shall be 18 years of age, or upon the completion of a high school diploma,” notwithstanding the mandatory maximum age otherwise established by the State Board of Education. The City of Lawrence has already approved the bill. This bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Education on 1/22/13. No further action has been taken.

BILLS CREATING A STUDY OF AGE LIMITS FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

H 378 – Rep. James J. Dwyer, D. Woburn; AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE MAXIMUM AGE OF ENROLLMENT This bill directs the Board of Education to “conduct a comprehensive review of the present age limits for student enrollment in public schools in the Commonwealth. . . .” At the end of such review, the Board shall establish the mandatory maximum age for school attendance. This bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Education on 1/22/13. No further action has been taken.

H 341 – Rep. Garrett J. Bradley, D. Hingham; RESOLVE

PROVIDING FOR A STUDY OF COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE This petition and resolution seeks to authorize and direct the Board of Education to “conduct a study relative to the establishment of ages five to eighteen years old as the period of compulsory school attendance in Massachusetts. Such study shall include, but not be limited to, analyses of the impact of the altered requirements on student’s readiness for elementary school, and on high school completion, with due attention to the experience in other states; and analyses of fiscal implications for the commonwealth and for school districts.” The Board of Education shall report the results of the study by December 31, 2013. H 341 was referred to the Joint Committee on Education on 1/22/13. No further action has been taken.

BILLS CONCERNING HIGH SCHOOL TESTING AND GRADUATION

H 432 – Rep. Bradley H. Jones, Jr., R. North Reading; **AN ACT RELATIVE TO NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT ACCESS TO THE MCAS EXAM** This bill would amend Chapter 69 to allow a non-public school student to elect to take the MCAS exam at that student’s own expense. This bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Education on 1/22/13. No further action has been taken.

H 504 – Rep. Benjamin Sawn, D. Springfield; **AN ACT TO ELIMINATE THE USE OF THE MCAS FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION** This bill would eliminate the MCAS or other state-developed, standardized test, as a component of the competency determination for high school graduation. This bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Education on 1/22/13. No further action has been taken.

H 348 – Rep. Antonio Cabral, D. New Bedford; **AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A NEW HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA** This bill would amend Chapter 69, Section 1D to allow students who pass the MCAS to receive a “Commonwealth Diploma issued by the state Department of Education. Students who have demonstrated competency under this section by meeting the academic standards and curriculum frameworks enumerated in this section by satisfying the requirements of their local school committee shall be granted a Horace Mann Diploma issued by the local school committee. Students may receive either one or both diplomas. Issuance of either the Commonwealth or the Horace Mann Diploma to a student will certify that a student has met the competency determination described in this section and will entitle a student to all the rights and privileges of high school graduation.” This bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Education on 1/22/13. No further action has been taken.

BILL IMPOSING MORATORIUM ON EDUCATION EXPENSES

H 373 – Rep. James R. Dwyer, D. Woburn; **AN ACT IMPOSING A MORATORIUM ON NEW MANDATED EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND EXPENSES** This bill would require the General Court to impose a moratorium on newly mandated education programs and expenses until July 1, 2015. The bill would presumably prevent the imposition and funding of changes to the compulsory attendance laws, or any other educational legislation described above. The bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Education on 1/22/13. No further action has been taken.

Meet Massachusetts Homeschoolers . . .



My Warbler Moment

By Ian Davies

My obsession with the natural world, and birds in particular, began the first time I went to Manomet Bird Observatory in Plymouth, MA. Since that time in August 2004, I have spent basically all my time pursuing my bird-related interests, something that was enabled by my homeschooling, as well as the boundless support of my parents.

The person who started it all by putting that living gem of a bird in my hands goes by the name Trevor Lloyd-Evans. A Welsh immigrant, Trevor came to the US in the early 1970s to work on migratory songbird stopover ecology in Manomet, and in the past 40 years he has converted dozens if not hundreds of people to a love of the natural world, and educated thousands of children about what goes on in their back yards every day. A born teacher, he will frequently appear out of thin air to regale you with tales of the most obscure facts, bad puns, or ludicrous stories. His mellow voice with an upper-class Welsh accent is lulling on a warm day, especially when waxing poetic about politics of 14th century Europe or something equally esoteric. When reaching the crucial point of a joke or story, a mischievous smile will tweak the corners of his mouth as he dry washes his hands before delivering the culmination of his masterpiece.

The creature, the bird, the spark behind all this, is commonly called in English, the Canada Warbler; in Latin, *Wilsonia Canadensis*; and in Spanish, on its wintering grounds, *Chipe de color*. Canada Warblers are small birds, weighing around 10 grams, or less than half of an ounce; one could mail two of them for the price of a stamp. This individual is partway through its biannual journey to Central or South America, a trip that is 2500-3500 miles one-way, something it will repeat again in the springtime and every year after that until the end of its life, most likely four or five years.

The location where this all went down is known as The Banding Lab, a place where over 300,000 birds since 1966 have been banded, measured, weighed, and released, in order to better understand population trends and migration patterns of birds. The lab itself has a very distinctive smell, a musty rich scent that

is so unique that every time I enter the room I feel like I'm coming home. It is full of many strange objects, ranging from magnifying glass headsets and rusty machetes in one corner, to an arrow that's presence is completely inexplicable, and massive ancient binders slowly disintegrating under the stress of frequent use.

When I showed up unannounced at the lab on that day with my mother, despite never having set eyes upon me in his life, Trevor was willing to set aside a chunk of his time and effort in order to show me just how intricate this bird was, and when he placed it in my hands to be released back into the wild, he unwittingly converted me to a lifestyle that defines who I am.

That first day I stayed for perhaps an hour. The next day I came back for three hours. The day after, six, then eight, and after that, the rest was history. I started off merely watching, but after coming back season after season, I started performing the processes myself, and after volunteering for close to four years, I began working there.

Working at Manomet I was able to benefit from Trevor's omniscience daily, as well as learn about many different facets of biology and life in general. Living in dorms with my coworkers there helped to prepare me for life in "the real world" and the experience has helped me travel and get work and internships elsewhere.

Another "consequence" of homeschooling is the freedom to travel. When I was younger I would go with my parents to such locations as Spain and Costa Rica, and before I went I would find out everything there was to know about the fauna of the region. Starting last year I've been traveling with friends, beginning with a 10-day road trip in Panama, and culminating this year in a three-month odyssey across western South America. During these trips I would occasionally be a paid guide, which

helped make contacts, and already has netted me some job offers in Ecuador that will be waiting for me at the end of college. My travels have netted me over 2,100 species of birds, a significant percentage of the approximate 10,000 species in the world, and three times as many as the 700 in the entire continental United States and Canada. My eventual goal is to see all the species in the world, but a more realistic goal would be to see 8,000 species, a feat that has been achieved by less than 10 people.

Trips and life experiences such as these would never have come to pass if it were not for my foundation of scientific and ornithological knowledge, laid down by Trevor and other kind souls at Manomet.

Ian is currently a student at University of Massachusetts Amherst, expecting to graduate with a degree in Wildlife Ecology this fall. He is still in love with travel, photography, and all aspects of nature.

Around AHM . . .

Become a Friend of AHM

Advocates for Home Education in Massachusetts, Inc. is a nonprofit, independent, grassroots, volunteer-run, educational organization that gathers and disseminates information about homeschooling in Massachusetts through education, advocacy, and events. Friends of AHM keep abreast of legislative and other issues that affect Massachusetts homeschoolers via an announcement-only email list. They get special notice of AHM events, field trips, and get-togethers. Be proactive: become a Friend of AHM. Even if your involvement is simply to stay informed, that strengthens all of us.

To become a Friend of AHM, subscribe at our website www.ahem.info/BecomeaFriendofAHM.html or fill out the form below.

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This may be your last issue of AHM News unless you act now!

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