

We're Number One!

You may have heard by now that Massachusetts has been ranked the number one state in the country by U.S. News & World Report. The rankings are based on a number of categories and Massachusetts scored high on many, most notably health care, technology and education. In fact, we also learned yesterday that the state's high school graduation rate reached an all-time high. Last year 87.5% of high school seniors graduated within 4 years.

The good news doesn't end there of course. We are still basking in the glow of another Super Bowl victory by the Patriots, the Red Sox are favorites to make the World Series this year, the Celtics are in first place and even the Bruins are enjoying a hot streak under their new coach.

Life is so good we even have 70 degree days in February!

But this is no time to pull out the beach chairs and lay in the sun. As sure as we are bound to see more wintry weather in March, we can also be sure that challenges to our success will always exist.

The U. S. News & World Report study noted that Massachusetts ranked 44th in housing affordability in the nation. This is a troubling statistic especially at a time when a significant portion of our workforce is aging into retirement and an influx of young people is needed to fill important jobs in technology, manufacturing, health care and elsewhere. Balancing the need for affordable housing opportunities with local opposition to 40B developments will continue to be a challenge.

The report also revealed that the Bay State was 47th when it comes to commute time and drew parallels from that to our aging infrastructure. Significant investments in roads, bridges and transit are needed to improve our ability to get people to and from work more quickly and to move freight in and out of the region more reliably. It will be interesting to see if President Trump makes good on his promise to invest in infrastructure and if Massachusetts, with an all Democrat congressional delegation, can bring any of that investment back home.

Despite leading the nation in academic achievement there is still more to be done to ensure that our students, graduating at such a high rate, have the skills needed in today's economy to be successful in college or their careers. A gap between the skills needed by employers and the skills possessed by young workers still exists, leaving people unemployed while jobs are unfilled. You can read more below about efforts to close the skills gap in our Education Brief from MBAE.

The Patriots have developed a formula for becoming number one and remaining there for the long term. Massachusetts can boast the same for now, but staying on top is what's important and therefore we must continue to identify our weaknesses and improve on them. The Chamber, working with local and state government, our school systems and the business community is committed to doing just that.