

ROMNEYCARE AND THE MASSACHUSETTS MIRACLE

By Nick Gier

If America wants to be a healthy, smart, rich, globalized, high-tech powerhouse, we arguably have no better model than Massachusetts.

—Mark Vanhoenacker at slate.com

Romney, pummeled by charges of “Massachusetts moderate,” has run far from the state he once governed. Et tu, Mitt?

—Vanhoenacker

When Michael Dukakis ran for president in 1988, he boasted about the “Massachusetts Miracle” based on high tech and financial services. In the 1980s Highway 128 became the Bay State’s Silicon Valley with Digital Equipment Corporation, Data Central, Wang Laboratories, and Apollo Computer dominating the scene.

In an article praising his home state, Mark Vanhoenacker reports that “Massachusetts has the highest per-capita venture capital, patents, and technology licensing of 10 leading high-tech states.”

In 1986 Dukakis was voted the nation’s most effective governor by his peers, even though one could argue, just critics of Gov. Rick Perry do, that his leadership and the legislature were only part of the state’s success.

In stark contrast to Texas, the Bay State does not rely on oil, gas, and other natural resources, but it relies on its people—highly educated and

highly motivated entrepreneurs. For my thoughts on our Third World Petrostate see www.NickGier.com/perryjobs.pdf.

After Dukakis' second term (he was governor twice), moderate Republicans such as Richard Weld and Mitt Romney governed Massachusetts for the next 20 years. Massachusetts ran high surpluses in the 1990s, but by the time Democrat Patrick Duvall took over in 2008, Romney left a budget shortfall of \$400 million. (Rick Santorum's figure of \$1 billion during the primary campaign was false.) In 2011, even with the Great Recession, the budget deficit was \$273 per person, the 5th lowest in the nation.

Weld and Romney cut some taxes, and much to the distress of the business community, Romney raised corporate rates. He also applied a modest Marxist stimulus (gasp!) to the economy. Even with the GOP tax cuts, Puritan People's Republic still ranks 11th in total taxes paid.

Nonetheless, the Bay State still ranks sixth as most business friendly by CNBC. As Massachusetts native Mark Vanhoenacker reminds us, CNBC's "calculus is so ruthlessly focused on corporate competitiveness that it marked states *down* for high union membership."

Researchers from the Center for American Progress have calculated net change in jobs minus net change in labor force, and found that Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania, based on 2009-2011 data, were at the top. North Dakota was 6th, Massachusetts was 12th, and Texas was dead last.

According to a recent Pew Center study, the most economically mobile states—where those at the lowest level climb to the highest—are Blue States (except for Utah), and the least mobile are Red States, except North Carolina and Florida, but only if they remain Blue in 2012.

Maryland, New Jersey, and New York scored 3 out of 3 measures of mobility, while Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Utah score 2 of 3. Significantly and surprisingly, most Europeans are also more economically mobile than Americans in general. Rick Santorum was honest enough to admit this during the GOP Primary campaign.

Bay State students lead the nation in math and reading skills, 82 percent of freshmen graduate, and 53 percent have earned an associate degree or higher. Even more impressive is the fact that Massachusetts' students also excel by world standards: 5th in reading and 9th in math.

In 2009 teen births in Texas were 63 out of 1,000 girls (13-19) in stark contrast to 20 for Massachusetts. One might guess that these young women marry earlier in Texas, but 91 percent of them were unmarried in 2008.

At 6.1 percent Lone State girls younger than thirteen are more sexually active than the national average at 5.9 percent and Massachusetts at 5.4 percent. All data are from the Center for Disease Control.

One might counter that there are fewer teen abortions in Texas, and that number is indeed a low 13 per 1,000 girls. In 2005 there were 22 births/1,000 girls and 21 abortions for every 1,000 girls in the Bay State. Collating teen pregnancies, births, and abortions together, as the Guttmacher Institute has done, Massachusetts is 43rd lowest and the Lone Star State is fourth highest (www.guttmacher.org/pubs/USTPtrends.pdf).

In an article praising his home state, Mark Vanhoenacker states that “Massachusetts has the lowest percentage of uninsured residents—5 percent (Thanks Mitt! Mitt? You there, Mitt?), compared to 16 percent nationally, and a whopping 25 percent in Texas.”

This remarkable state leads the nation in prenatal care and lags only Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Missouri in lowest infant mortality. Contrary to widespread opinion, medical insurance premiums have risen at a slower rate than the nation as a whole.

Vanhoenacker stacks up achievement after achievement: “Worker productivity in Massachusetts (Gross Domestic Product per employed person) is the third-highest in the world. And research and development spending as a share of GDP in Massachusetts is higher than any country anywhere. If America wants to be a healthy, smart, rich, globalized, high-tech powerhouse, we arguably have no better model than Massachusetts.”

These are embarrassing truths for a former governor who cravenly turned far right to get the GOP nomination. Vanhoenacker concludes his article by observing that “Romney is already too far from home” to run on his association with the Massachusetts Miracle.

Nick Gier taught philosophy at the University of Idaho for 31 years. Vanhoenacker’s article can be read at www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2012/05/massachusetts_is_the_best_state_in_the_union_.single.html.