



Legislative Report Card 1997

Massachusetts Audubon Society

January 1998

EXPLANATION OF 1997 ENVIRONMENTAL ROLL CALL VOTES

The following is a compilation of the 1997 environmental voting records of the members of the Massachusetts Legislature. This report card is an objective compilation of all environmental roll calls, not a subjective interpretation of legislators. It is a tool to aid the citizens of Massachusetts in determining how well their state representatives and senators are representing them on Beacon Hill on environmental issues. The annual publication of these roll call votes continues a tradition that the Massachusetts Audubon Society began in 1985.

In 1997, the Massachusetts Senate took roll calls on three environmental bills: the Cape Cod Land Bank, electric utility deregulation, and motor vehicle inspection. The House of Representatives took roll call votes on the Cape Cod Land Bank and electric utility deregulation bills.

An act establishing the Barnstable County Land Bank, S. 1821, enables municipalities on Cape Cod to vote to establish a one-percent real estate transfer tax to fund local open space purchases. The bill was needed to fund protection of natural resources on Cape Cod including drinking water supplies and wildlife habitat.

An act relative to restructuring of the electric utility industry in the Commonwealth, H. 5117, deregulates the electric utility industry. The bill reduces or kills funding for energy efficiency and conservation programs, does not require environmental representation on advisory boards, eliminates application of open meeting and public information over newly created cooperatives, and allows new power plant construction without a determination of need.

An act relative to the Commonwealth's motor vehicle inspection program, S. 2045, establishes an enhanced program for emissions inspection and maintenance of automobiles and light trucks. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency required such a program because of the failure of the state to meet air pollution standards.

SCORING METHOD

Legislators received two points for a vote supporting greater environmental protection, one point for not voting, and zero points for a vote against greater environmental protection. This method gives greater weight to votes against the environment than to absences. The points were then converted to percentages.