

Governor Baker announces fiscal 2021 Massachusetts Capital Investment Plan

The Baker-Polito Administration released its Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) Capital Investment Plan. The spending blueprint maintains existing investments and enables the Administration to continue working with stakeholders across the Commonwealth to support ongoing capital projects. The plan will ensure Massachusetts is well-positioned for short, medium and long-term COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

The capital plan also provides future flexibility by holding on pursuing new programs or funding sources due to the COVID-19 public health crisis and the related uncertainty. This purposeful investment strategy will also afford the Administration the flexibility to revisit the capital plan as the full economic and fiscal impacts of the public health and economic crisis become clear.

The FY21 plan provides capital investments in all regions throughout Massachusetts in critical areas such as transportation, housing, support for cities and towns, health and human services, higher education, and public safety. The plan also continues the administration's commitment to integrating climate change preparedness into its capital program and it considers the environmental impact and resiliency of all investments.

“During the unprecedented COVID-19 public health crisis and the resulting economic uncertainty, our administration is sustaining support for existing projects and investments while maintaining flexibility in our capital program,” said Governor Charlie Baker. “This responsible strategy will allow us to maximize response and recovery efforts, and continue working

towards key priorities in transportation, housing, health and human services, and climate change.”

“The FY21 Capital Plan allows us to continue working closely with cities and towns to carry out investment projects that benefit individuals and families throughout the Commonwealth,” said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito. “Our capital plan provides responsible and affordable investments that strengthen our infrastructure, promote economic security and growth, protect our natural environment, and maintain a high quality of life for people across Massachusetts.”

“Our capital investment plan is guided by fiscal discipline and accountability as we work to responsibly steward taxpayer resources during this period of economic and fiscal uncertainty,” said Secretary of Administration and Finance Michael J. Heffernan. “The FY21 plan maintains support for existing and long-term projects, and we look forward to working closely with our partners across state government to carry out these investments.”

The \$2.46 billion capital plan is fiscally responsible and demonstrates careful long-term planning, and is informed by numerous factors including the Debt Affordability Committee.

To view the full FY21 Capital Investment Plan, visit: www.mass.gov/capital.

As with previous plans, the FY21 plan focuses on six major themes: asset stewardship, supporting local communities, economic opportunity, value optimization, customer orientation, and climate resiliency.

These six priorities continue to be important in the era of COVID-19 amid the response to the public health crisis. By maintaining parks and green spaces, increasing access to broadband internet, promoting economic opportunity and job creation, and investing in health and human services infrastructure, the Commonwealth is continuing to provide

resources and accommodations that ensure the health and safety of the people of Massachusetts.

Responsible Asset Stewardship

Since taking office, the Baker-Polito Administration has prioritized the maintenance of the Commonwealth's existing assets and the prudent investment of capital funds, investing billions to upgrade and modernize existing infrastructure. From road and bridge maintenance to the renovation of aging court facilities to the repair of dams and seawalls, investing in maintenance allows the state to tackle infrastructure repairs in accordance with best practices, system-wide prioritization, and a comprehensive plan before they become costly emergencies.

The plan funds:

- More than \$3.7 billion in investments in the Commonwealth's transportation infrastructure
- Six major higher education projects authorized through the DCAMM higher education capital plan in FY19
- \$95 million to support maintenance and improvements at local housing authorities
- The new, state-of-the-art long-term care facility for veterans at the Soldiers' Home in Chelsea

Supporting Local Communities

The Baker-Polito Administration continues its strong partnerships with the Commonwealth's cities and towns through the capital program. More than 20 programs funded in the plan provide grants to municipalities to support important local infrastructure including roads and bridges, parks, economic development initiatives, and environmental improvements. The FY21 plan continues funding for the Body Armor Replacement program, which provides a state match to federal funding and helping cities and towns purchase bulletproof vests for police officers at no cost to the community.

The plan also funds:

- \$200 million in Chapter 90 funding for local road and bridge repairs
- \$10 million for the Municipal Small Bridge Program
- \$10 million for the Complete Streets Program
- \$3 million in Community Compact information technology grants
- \$2 million for the Municipal ADA grant program, which enables cities and towns to improve accessibility to municipal facilities for people with disabilities

Economic Opportunities for All

The plan provides critical investments that help encourage economic growth across Massachusetts, including:

- \$100 million for the MassWorks program, which funds local infrastructure improvements that pave the way for major economic development projects
- \$40 million for the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center capital program
- \$11.3 million for the final phase of a major harbor dredging project in New Bedford
- \$9.7 million for the Broadband Last Mile infrastructure program, for Western Massachusetts towns that lack residential broadband service

Customer Orientation

Through capital investments in MBTA infrastructure, affordable housing, recreational trails, public parks, rinks and playgrounds, the Baker-Polito Administration has worked to prioritize projects that provide direct, tangible value to people across Massachusetts. The Commonwealth also continues to make significant technology investments to improve the customer experience at various agencies such as the Registry of Motor Vehicles, where technology improvements are helping optimize appointment-based operations.

The plan funds:

- \$42.5 million for infrastructure transformation and modernization, in order to transform and improve IT networks and better deliver government services
- \$27.6 million to improve and maintain Department of Conservation and Recreation facilities
- \$6.7 million to continue implementing a new technology platform at the Registry of Motor Vehicles, improving customer service for residents and businesses across Massachusetts

Value Optimization

The FY21 plan supports construction and maintenance across various infrastructure, grants and programs that impact every municipality. Throughout all of these initiatives, the Administration remains committed to investing strategically and sustainably, using data, collaboration, leverage from additional funding resources, and planning to provide a holistic approach to solving problems and preparing for the future in partnership with cities and towns.

The plan funds:

- \$16.3 million for the Massachusetts Manufacturing Innovation Initiative, a matching federal grant program that supports research centers around emerging manufacturing technology
- \$15 million in Workforce Skills Capital Grants, awarded to educational institutions that demonstrate partnerships with local businesses and align their curriculum with industry demand
- \$1 million for the Massachusetts Food Trust program, which leverages private funding to expand healthy food access in underserved communities

Preparing for a Changing Climate

The Baker-Polito Administration is committed to carefully addressing climate change mitigation, adaptation, and

resiliency throughout its capital planning program. The FY21 plan makes considerable investments in Commonwealth-owned assets to ensure they are more resilient to climate change. As our local cities and towns are on the front lines in the fight against climate change, the Administration is continuing to take a communities-first approach. The capital plan continues to make state-owned facilities more efficient by supporting energy projects at hospitals, public colleges and universities, public safety facilities, and office buildings. These investments will help to put the state's assets on a path to meet the Governor's newly announced goal of net-zero emissions by 2050.

The plan funds:

- \$12 million for the repair of Inland Dams and Seawalls
- \$11 million for grants to cities and towns to help plan for climate change resiliency and implement priority projects through the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program
- \$5 million for sustainability and resiliency improvements in public housing
- \$3.3 million for the Greening the Gateway Cities tree-planting program

Indoor dining set to resume in Massachusetts on Monday

Matt Murphy
State House News Service

Restaurants that have been serving patrons on patios and sidewalks for the past two weeks will be able to welcome diners indoors beginning Monday as Gov. Charlie Baker

announced Friday that he was triggering the next stage of his economic reopening plan.

In the midst of a heat wave, no less.

Baker, at a State House press conference, also said offices would be able to bring back to work more employees and increase their capacity from one quarter to 50 percent of their workforce. And close-contact personal services offered at nail salons, massage and tattoo parlors and personal training can resume on June 22.

The progress through the phases of the Baker's administration's reopening strategy comes as Massachusetts has continued to see downward trends in hospitalizations, which are now under 1,000, and positive test rates, which have fallen to 2.3 percent.

"Reopening Massachusetts is working," Baker said. "Business is coming back, people are regaining that sense of purpose that was lost. I know it can't happen fast enough, but people in Massachusetts are proving that we can reopen and continue to bring the fight to the virus when we all do our part."

Baker, however, urged people to continue to socially distance, wear masks and practice proper hygiene, and said if people can still work from home they should "for a little longer" to limit crowding on public transit. He said he was leaving the current work-from-home structure for executive branch government employees in place.

"We should keep in mind that COVID doesn't take the summer off. We cannot nor should we become complacent," Baker said, noting spikes in cases and hospitalizations in other parts of the country.

Baker entered Massachusetts into the second phase of his reopening plan on June 8, but divided it into two parts. While some businesses have had to wait two weeks longer to reopen

than they expected, restaurants were allowed to start with outdoor dining, and are now transitioning to full service.

The rules for indoor dining do not include capacity limitations, but do require tables to be six feet apart from each other and for parties to be limited to six or fewer guests. Seating is also prohibited at the bar.

Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito said the move into the second part of Phase 2 also means clothing retailers can open fitting rooms by appointment.

To assist with reopening, Polito also announced a new \$225,000 grant program for non-profits and community organizations to apply for up to \$25,000 to help restaurants and other businesses set up outdoor seating and sidewalk retail.

The application process for grants through the new "Resurgent Places" program, as well as the previously announced \$5 million "Shared Streets and Spaces" program for municipalities, will open on Monday, Polito said.

Massachusetts Fiscal Alliance spokesman Paul Craney said Friday's move was welcomed, but leaves Massachusetts behind other states.

"Despite today's positive announcement from the Governor, Massachusetts is becoming well known for being far behind the curve compared to the rest of New England. If you are a small business owner in Massachusetts, you have to wait the longest to re-open. That's the message business owners, their workers, and customers constantly hear from the Governor and today's announcement reaffirmed this," Craney said.

Craney said businesses like gyms, indoor recreation and theaters need more information about what to expect in Phase 3, which Baker said he was delaying until at least early July.

"The introduction of additional surprise sub-phases and

shifting businesses to phase 4 should not continue going forward,” Craney said, referring to how bars were quietly moved from Phase 3 to Phase 4.

When Baker initially rolled out his four-phase reopening plan, he said each phase would last a minimum of three weeks. He stuck to that schedule when he entered Phase 2 on June 8, but the wait for Phase 3 will be longer.

Baker said he wants at least two weeks of data from indoor dining before deciding on the next step, which would push the reopening of gyms, movie theaters and other larger indoor spaces beyond June 29.

National Federation of Independent Businesses of Massachusetts Director Christopher Carlozzi said small businesses had been “extremely disappointed” when Baker carved the second phase into two parts.

“Outdoor dining proved overly restrictive with many eateries lacking adequate outdoor space and becoming dependent on favorable weather conditions. Hopefully consumers will once again choose to dine in some of the fine eating establishments around the Commonwealth and help one of the industries hardest hit by the pandemic,” Carlozzi said in a statement.

Though Baker acknowledged the frustration and financial pain being felt by many small business owners, he said the sacrifices being made now are in an attempt to avoid or reduce the impact of a second wave, or “echo,” in the fall.

That’s why, the governor said, he continues to invest in testing and contact tracing to make sure the positive progress made in containing the virus so far doesn’t reverse itself.

Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders said that the administration was rolling out a digital awareness campaign to promote testing, and will begin taking applications from providers who can either run new testing

sites, or provide mobile testing options in places where testing has been more scarce.

The state also added a page to its website, www.mass.gov/gettested, that will provide information on testing with a link to the state's locator to find the most convenient site.

Friday was also the final day for free testing at the more than 50 pop-up sites set up by the administration to make tests available to people who had recently been in large gatherings, including any of the more than 300 protests of police brutality around the state that attracted 100 people or more.

Sudders said that since Wednesday nearly 16,000 people had been tested at these sites, and she expected results in the next couple of days.

Meanwhile, Sudders said later Friday the state would release new data on the reach of COVID-19 into communities of color, with more comprehensive race and ethnic data on infections and recommendations on how to mitigate the impact.

The state's crisis standards of care, which were developed in anticipation of the surge earlier this spring, have also been rescinded. Those guidelines were intended to standardize decisions about who gets access to life-saving treatment like a ventilator if a hospital were to become overwhelmed with COVID-19 cases and run short on supplies and staff.

Baker didn't join other governors at the White House today

Matt Murphy

State House News Service

President Donald Trump had a discussion with governors at the White House Thursday about reopening small businesses, but Gov. Charlie Baker wasn't among them.

The president's schedule released Wednesday night included the 3 p.m. roundtable with governors in the State Dining Room. A senior aide to Baker said on Wednesday the Republican from Massachusetts will not be traveling to Washington, D.C. On Thursday. Baker has not released a public schedule of his own for Thursday, but has been taking criticism from some business groups and conservative lawmakers about the pace of his reopening strategy.

"I would just say to people that the folks who went fast on reopening in many parts of the country are now dealing with a second set of significant issues with respect to growth rates and their positive tests," Baker said Thursday. "Some of them are now testing at a positive level that's above anything that they were dealing with previously."

It's not clear if all of the nation's governors were invited to Thursday's meeting. The slow-and-steady reopening message from Beacon Hill contrasts with messaging from the White House, where Vice President Mike Pence is calling fears of a second wave of COVID-19 infection overblown and chalking up the surge in cases in southern states like Florida, Texas and Arizona to increases in testing.

St. Anne's Credit Union Promotes Nancy Wordell to Residential Mortgage Manager

Eileen M. Danahey, President & Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of St. Anne's Credit Union, along with its Board of Directors, are pleased to announce the promotion of Nancy Wordell to Residential Mortgage Manager.

In her new position, Nancy will oversee the day-to-day operations for the Credit Union's residential department including responsibility for the origination, underwriting and servicing of loans.

"Nancy has 32 years of vast lending experience and a comprehensive background in customer service," said Senior Vice President and Chief Lending Officer, Carlos DaCunha. "She will strengthen our mortgage lending processing team, ensuring we provide our members and prospects looking to finance a home with the best lending experience from start to finish, as we continue to expand our reach throughout the communities we service."

Nancy began her career with St. Anne's in 1988 where she has served as Branch Manager for several of the Credit Union's offices, most recently working as Branch Manager at the Credit Union's Main Office in Fall River.

St. Anne's Credit Union Promotes Deborah Dion to Senior Vice President/Chief Information Officer

Eileen M. Danahey, President & CEO of St. Anne's Credit Union, along with its Board of Directors, officially announced the promotion of Deborah Dion to Senior Vice President/Chief Information Officer. Ms. Dion has been employed by St. Anne's since 2016, most recently serving as Vice President of Information Services, leading and executing on the vision, strategy and operations of St. Anne's Information Technology (IT) team to better allow the Credit Union to serve more than 55,000 members. In this role, Dion will be responsible for all enterprise-wide IT initiatives with a focus on driving innovation to accelerate growth and achieve efficiencies that will put St. Anne's in the best position to continue enhancing the financial lives of the members they serve. Dion will build upon the solid foundation of operational excellence within the IT function and across the organization, as well as collaborate with the leadership teams to ensure that St. Anne's consistently incorporates the most advanced technology solutions to achieve the Credit Union's business goals.

"Deborah is a highly-experienced executive and a tremendous leader with a longstanding history of putting the member at the forefront of today's digital transformation," said Eileen M. Danahey, President & CEO of St. Anne's Credit Union. "She will continue to play an instrumental role in driving our growth strategy, aligning technology initiatives with strategic goals, further enhancing our cybersecurity posture and leading planning efforts on how to best leverage digital solutions to help support our members and employees. Possessing a unique combination of experience, knowledge,

technology, and operations prowess, her expertise will allow St. Anne's to harness the technologies available today and plan for the cutting-edge technologies of the future."

With more than 25 years of experience in IT and strategic leadership roles for prominent financial institutions, Deborah has a strong record of accomplishment in leveraging technology-based solutions to drive value. She obtained her Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Roger Williams University, is a graduate of the Bank Administration Institute's School of Operations and Technology – Owen School of Management and a Graduate of the Mass Bankers' School for Financial Studies at Babson College. Actively involved in the community, she serves as a volunteer at Our Lady's Haven in Fairhaven as well as a volunteer for the Freetown Historical Society.

St. Anne's Credit Union lends nearly \$500,000 to Steppingstone, Inc

St. Anne's Credit Union, a single source for financial services, financing options and resources for individuals and businesses, announced today that they are financing nearly \$500,000 to support the expansion of Steppingstone, Inc.'s operational and development efforts by providing customized financing options for the nonprofit organization to secure the purchase and renovation of their new office building at 111 Durfee St. in Fall River, MA. This effort will assist them in increasing their support of the clients in need of their services as they work to provide an array of treatment

services to combat mental health disorders and homelessness.

Carlos DaCunha, St. Anne's Senior Vice President and Chief Lending Officer, said "St. Anne's is committed to investing in the communities that surround us and our team is proud to provide financing to a local nonprofit that is working to enhance quality living experiences for community members. This transaction is another example of our ability to secure extremely favorable financing – because of the power of our local lending team and commitment to quality – on behalf of clients that are looking to add value to their organizations. As a top leading financial institution, we are proud of the long-term relationship we have with Steppingstone and look forward to supporting its continued growth and positive impact as this relationship exemplifies our continued commitment to community development."

"Steppingstone does a commendable job in Fall River and New Bedford to offer a variety of services and programs that help individuals and families build a strong foundation for recovery. They have been serving the community since 1972 and this expansion will contribute to their growth for years to come. As Treasurer of the Board of Directors of Steppingstone for 10 years and employed by St. Anne's for over 25 years, I am proud to be associated with both organizations as they seek to strengthen the areas that we all live and work in", said Michelle Marcos, St. Anne's Senior Vice President of Human Resources.

Kathleen Schedler-Clark, Steppingstone's Executive Director stated, "St. Anne's has been a wonderful community partner of ours for many years. In 2014, when we moved the First Step Inn to a larger building, St. Anne's stepped up to the plate with a \$30,000 grant to allow us to accommodate additional beds and serve more of the homeless population. With this financing, the St. Anne's team made the transaction seamless, quick – and offered an unbeatable rate. This space is the pivotal piece to allow us to build an accessible, safe, and welcoming office

building to serve even more people in need. The lending from St. Anne's allows us to focus on what matters: offering our clients only the best. Like St. Anne's, we are committed to community, that's why we choose to bank with them. They make us feel comfortable and their friendly demeanor is always consistent. We are forever grateful to them for their ongoing pledge to support our nonprofit and clients in our times of need."

Massachusetts bars quietly moved to last phase of reopening

Chris Van Buskirk
State House News Service

Looking to grab a drink at your favorite watering hole? Unless it provides seated food service, you'll have to wait until Phase 4 after administration officials delayed the reopening timeline for bars.

Bars were originally slated to open in Phase 3 of Gov. Charlie Baker's restart plan but were moved to Phase 4 after administration officials determined that if they do not provide seated food service, they are more akin to nightclubs. Dance clubs and nightclubs aren't allowed to resume operations until Phase 4, which the administration has said will require a vaccine or effective treatment for COVID-19. It is unclear when the change was made.

Wineries, beer gardens, breweries, and distilleries all opened as of Monday with some restrictions in place if they provide

seated food service. Bars with licenses to serve food can also open in Phase 2 under the state's restaurant reopening guidelines. State guidance prohibits seating customers at a bar, but it does allow restaurants to reconfigure the area to accommodate table seating.

A Housing and Economic Development spokesman said the list of businesses and activities is subject to revision based on the latest public health data and the issuance of sector-specific guidelines. As of Monday afternoon, a downloadable copy of the reopening plan on the state's website still lists bars under Phase 3. An FAQ page on the same website categorizes bars under Phase 4.

Governor Baker visits Lawrence to tour New Balance's PPE production line

Today, Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito joined New Balance chairman Jim Davis for a tour of New Balance's Lawrence factory, a facility that has helped the company produce more than 1 million masks in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency. The tour highlighted the company's face mask models, including a new version being rolled out to consumers in the coming weeks, and a new surgical mask model for frontline health care workers.

Nearly 100 New Balance employees are manufacturing products at the factory and a nearby distribution center in Lawrence, an effort which began in late March with the production of general-use face masks. The company has been supported by the Massachusetts Manufacturing Emergency Team (M-ERT), which

provided support around regulations and labeling for medical equipment, as well as feedback on the demand for personal protective equipment (PPE), which has risen greatly since the M-ERT's establishment in early March. The M-ERT is a coordinated effort comprised of members from academia, industry and government to address the urgent need for PPE to support health care workers on the front lines of Massachusetts' COVID-19 response.

"As the Commonwealth continues its fight against coronavirus, face coverings will remain critical to supporting public health," said Governor Baker. "Our Administration remains committed to partnering with local companies such as New Balance to ensure there is a reliable supply of PPE to protect frontline workers and the general public."

"With millions of pieces of PPE already produced by participating companies, M-ERT has played a key role in the gradual reopening of Massachusetts," said Lt. Governor Polito. "We are thankful to New Balance and the other M-ERT companies that have leveraged this program to shift to the production of life-saving gear and supplies."

New Balance was directly assisted by experts from the M-ERT team, including Ben Linville-Engler from MIT's System Design & Management Group and Haden Quinlan from MIT's Department of Mechanical Engineering (MechE), who hosted bi-weekly meetings with the company to confer over the regulatory environment for medical products, connect the company to testing resources, and deliver information regarding the demand and need for certain types of PPE. Another M-ERT expert, Dr. Michael Rein, the Senior Product Engineer at Advanced Functional Fabrics of America, provided critical guidance around product testing.

Starting today, New Balance will make available a new general-use face mask for the public, called the 'NB Face Mask V3,' a three-layer, lightweight and breathable, non-sterile physical barrier face mask with a moldable nose piece. In addition to

the masks produced directly by New Balance, the company has also repaired straps on 50,000 N95 respirator masks for Brigham & Women's Hospital, enabling them to be used by their medical staff.

Today's tour featured several prototypes the company is looking to produce, including a disposable, 3D-printed stethoscope. In addition to founder Jim Davis, the Governor and Lt. Governor were joined by several New Balance leaders who highlighted the production teams making the masks, including: Joe Preston, President & CEO of New Balance; Dave Wheeler, Chief Operating Officer; and Kevin McCoy, Vice President of Made Product Development & Manufacturing.

"The incredible passion, industrial R&D ability and innovative thinking of our associates combined with our New England manufacturing resources enabled us to pivot quickly to produce PPE for frontline workers and health care facilities facing the COVID-19 health crisis," said Joe Preston, President & CEO of New Balance. "We applaud the Baker-Polito Administration for establishing a strong and highly-engaged Manufacturing Emergency Response Team that has provided us with meaningful and expert guidance throughout our journey."

"We are incredibly proud and humbled to do our part to help so many in our health care community by producing more than one million masks in the past two months," said Dave Wheeler, Chief Operating Officer of New Balance. "We are thankful that the innovative thinking of our associates, our long history of domestic manufacturing and the work of our highly skilled teams in our factories have allowed us to quickly adapt to help meet the immense mask needs of the health care community, and now the general public."

New Balance is one of the Massachusetts manufacturers featured on a new website launched by the MassTech Collaborative that profiles nearly 20 Massachusetts manufacturers that have shifted operations to produce critical PPE and other

materials. The M-ERT effort is being managed by MassTech, the quasi-public economic development agency that oversees advanced manufacturing programs for the Commonwealth, and was devised as an emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nearly 750 companies from around the world have submitted their interest to the M-ERT, including nearly 450 from Massachusetts. Of those, 27 companies have made it through the program, producing 4 million pieces of PPE and other critical materials to date.

Trump administration ordered to reconsider Mashpee Wampanoag ruling

Colin A. Young
State House News Service

A federal judge ruled late Friday in favor of the **Mashpee Wampanoag tribe** in its circuitous quest to maintain control of 321 acres of reservation land in Mashpee and Taunton, saying the Trump administration's 2018 declaration that the tribe does not qualify as "Indian" under the federal Indian Reorganization Act was "arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, and contrary to law."

U.S. District Judge Paul Friedman granted the tribe's motion for summary judgment in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia case – Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe v. Interior Secretary David Bernhardt – in which the tribe argued that the interior secretary failed to properly consider extensive factual evidence it submitted to make the case that

it should be eligible for land in trust. The judge remanded the matter to the Department of the Interior for the agency to reconsider.

In a statement, Tribal Council Chairman Cedric Cromwell said Friedman "righted what would have been a terrible and historic injustice."

"While we are pleased with the court's findings, our work is not done. The Department of Interior must now draft a positive decision for our land as instructed by Judge Friedman. We will continue to work with the Department of the Interior " and fight them if necessary " to ensure our land remains in trust," the chairman said.

The tribe's land in trust status has been under contention for years. The tribe was federally-recognized in 2007 and the Obama administration took the land into trust for the tribe in early 2016. But the Trump administration has worked to undo that designation at the same time that the tribe has worked to build a \$1 billion casino on its land in Taunton.

Sen. Marc Pacheco, who lives in and represents the city where the Wampanoag tribe hopes to build its casino, said he was pleased with Friedman's ruling.

"Throughout the course of this dispute, the tribe has consistently argued that the Department of the Interior failed to apply the correct standards in deciding to invalidate the tribe's land-in-trust – this new ruling certainly seems to validate that argument," he said. "The Court's recent decision will hopefully prevent the shameful injustice of taking land from the tribe that greeted the Pilgrims as we celebrate the 400th anniversary of their arrival here in the Commonwealth."

In March, Bernhardt ordered the tribe's land be taken out of trust status, putting the sovereignty of the tribe's 321 acres of reservation land in Mashpee and Taunton in question. The tribe is appealing another case challenging its land in trust

status, Littlefield et al. v. U.S. Department of the Interior, at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit.

In addition to the tribe trying to secure its land in trust through the courts, U.S. Rep. William Keating has pushed federal legislation that would use the power of Congress to reaffirm the 2015 decision by the Interior Department to take land into trust for the tribe, though President Donald Trump has opposed it.

In a statement Saturday, Keating said the judge's ruling was a victory for the tribe and a repudiation of the Trump administration's "policy designed to punish the Mashpee Wampanoag."

"Judge Freidman described the actions of the Administration with regard to the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe as arbitrary and capricious. I think that rightly describes the Administration's actions to remove the Tribe's land from trust during the most serious public health emergency of our lifetime — actions that defy reason and basic decency," Keating said. "I applaud Judge Friedman's decision, but given that it remands the issue back to the Department of the Interior, we must now remain vigilant to ensure that the Trump Administration does not continue with the flagrant pattern of disregard for tribal rights."

The U.S. House of Representatives voted 275-146 in May 2019 to approve that bill, titled the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Reservation Reaffirmation Act, and it has not moved since being referred to the U.S. Senate that same month.

The fate of the tribe's land in trust could also have a significant impact on the state's commercial casino industry. The Mass. Gaming Commission could still issue a license for a commercial casino in Region C — the commission's name for Bristol, Plymouth, Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket counties — but some worry that commercial casino operators might not be

willing to invest the minimum \$500 million in a project that would have to compete with a nearby tribal casino.

Plus, if the Gaming Commission opts to go ahead with licensing a commercial casino in Region C and the tribe is allowed to open its own casino under federal law, Massachusetts would receive no tax revenue from the tribal casino.

Speaking to the Gaming Commission in October, Pacheco advocated for gathering as much information as possible before regulators make any decision on Region C and suggested that any “definitive” ruling from the administration this year could be changed based on the outcome of November’s presidential election.

President Trump lifts commercial fishing ban in protected area

In an announcement cheered by the fishing industry and described as an “attack on our ocean” by opponents, President Donald Trump on Friday reversed a four-year-old decision by President Barack Obama that had abruptly ended commercial fishing within a 5,000-square mile area of the Atlantic Ocean deemed a national marine monument.

Trump’s new proclamation will not alter the boundaries of the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, which is the size of Connecticut, but amends the commercial fishing restrictions on its use that Obama had put in place using powers granted under the Antiquities Act of 1906. At the time, the Obama administration said the protections would

“improve ocean resilience in the face of climate change, and help to sustain the ocean ecosystems and fishing economies in these regions for the long run.”

The president announced his decision during a visit to Bangor, Maine on Friday afternoon, where he was joined by former Gov. Paul LePage and fishing industry interests. Obama’s 2016 decision was “deeply unfair to Maine lobstermen” and “cost America’s fishermen millions of dollars,” Trump said.

“We’re opening it today,” the president said, according to a White House transcript. “We’re undoing his executive order.”

“You’re taking down a ‘no fishing’ sign and opening up fishing,” Interior Secretary David Bernhardt said. “I love that,” Trump responded.

The canyons and seamounts area is on the edge of the continental shelf, and situated about 130 miles southeast of Massachusetts.

The proclamation recognizes the monument area as a haven for seabirds, whales, dolphins, turtles, and migratory fish species such as tuna, billfish, and sharks, but also points to existing fisheries management laws and states “appropriately managed commercial fishing would not put the objects of scientific and historic interest that the monument protects at risk.”

Trump said the United States is “blessed with some of the richest ocean resources anywhere in the world,” but imports over 85 percent of the fish consumed here. A task force he’s forming will identify opportunities to open foreign markets to seafood exports, Trump said, adding that he also plans on “further cracking down on illegal harvested and imported seafood.”

“We’re going to send our fishermen out there,” Trump said. “You’re going to go fishing in that area now that you haven’t

seen for a long time. Lobstermen and seafood producers, I want to just congratulate you.”

The Conservation Law Foundation quickly announced it plans to file a lawsuit challenging Trump’s amendment to Proclamation 9496 of Sept. 15, 2016.

The monument designation protects “ancient and fragile coral communities, endangered whales, and an abundance of unique and rare marine life,” according to the foundation, which intervened in a 2018 federal lawsuit where the court ruled that the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts was created legally.

Foundation president Bradley Campbell said Trump was pandering to fishing interests at a time when people are focused on the COVID-19 pandemic and protests against police brutality and racism.

“Once again, the president is making cynical use of the national crises he has inflamed to pander to the very few New Englanders who may still have faith in his leadership,” Campbell said in a statement. “Having ravaged our economy nationally, Trump is now dismantling the few protections now in place to avert the demise of New England’s traditional marine fisheries, culture, and economy. We call on the New England delegation and the public to fight this attack on our ocean and our future by all means available.”

Maggie Raymond, executive director of the Associated Fisheries of Maine, joined Trump in Maine and said opposition to Obama’s declaration has come not only from the fishing industry but also from regional fishery management councils. The councils, she said, argue the fisheries should be managed under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and not “outside of the regular management process.”

“We don’t need the Antiquities Act to be establishing monuments that restrict fishing,” Raymond said.

Raymond also told the president that the fishing sector can't afford costs she estimated at \$40,000 a year for some vessels associated with an expected New England Fishery Management Council vote in the fall concerning at-sea monitors on vessels during all fishing trips.

"This is simply an expense that we cannot afford at this time, especially on the heels – when we'll be trying to recover from this pandemic, which has had a huge impact on the commercial fishing industry in New England," she said.

Groups pressing to restore fishing stocks have pressed for the use of monitors on vessels to guard against overfishing.

After Raymond expressed her views about the cost of at-sea monitors, Trump asked Bernhardt about the matter and he responded that it was "in process."

"Get it done," the president responded, according to the transcript. "We'll get it done. You're not going to have to –"

At the time of Obama's monument designation in 2016, the Baker administration said it was "deeply disappointed" by the decision and later raised questions about the process while expressing support for the fishing industry and resource protection.