



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
House of Representatives
State House, Boston 02133-1054

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Rep. Smola supports extension of formal sessions, but calls for more transparency in scheduling, polling decisions

BOSTON – Representative Todd M. Smola (R-Warren, Ranking Member, Committee on Ways & Means) today supported an Order extending formal legislative sessions through the end of the calendar year, but expressed concerns about making sure members are given sufficient advance notice of scheduled sessions and committee polls so they can make more informed decisions before casting their votes.

The Order was adopted unanimously by the House of Representatives on July 29, just two days before the traditional end date of formal sessions. The Order, which still requires Senate approval, suspends Joint Rule 12A, which has been in place since 1995 and requires formal legislative sessions to end on July 31 during even-numbered years.

Representative Smola said he supported the extension to give the House and Senate more time to complete their unfinished business. Among the matters that are still outstanding is the development of a Fiscal Year 2021 state budget, which has already been significantly delayed due to the continued economic uncertainty triggered by the COVID-19 global pandemic.

But Representative Smola also said legislators should be properly notified when a session is scheduled and given enough time to review and respond to committee polls, which sometimes include bills that are lengthy or technical in nature. He cited a House Ways and Means poll released the same day the Order was adopted giving members just 10 minutes to respond to a poll that included four bills, including a 17-page bill on next-generation climate policy.

Prior to the Order's adoption, Representative Smola backed a pair of amendments to ensure greater transparency as the Legislature continues to meet on a formal basis. One amendment would require that any formal session occurring after July 31 "must be scheduled at least 14

calendar days prior to such formal session,” while the other would require that members be given a minimum of two hours to respond to a committee poll. Both amendments were defeated, on roll call votes of 33-126 and 51-108, respectively.

Representative Smola expressed disappointment the amendments were not adopted, saying the requests were “not unreasonable” and would have helped members better prepare for session, but also reiterated his commitment to continue advocating for the residents of the First Hampden District as the House moves forward with additional formal sessions in the coming months. For additional information please contact Representative Smola at Todd.Smola@mahouse.gov or (617)722-2100.

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