

**Senator Michael H. Rodrigues Named “Legislator of the Year” by the  
Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators (MAVA)**

WORCESTER – Senator Michael J. Rodrigues, chair of the Massachusetts Senate Ways and Means Committee, has been recognized as “Legislator of the Year” by the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators (MAVA). Senator Rodrigues (D-Westport) received his award just prior to a Business and Government Forum on March 8 at the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce.

The award was presented to Senator Rodrigues by Steven C. Sharek, MAVA’s Executive Director.

MAVA is a professional association that advocates for high-quality career and technical education. Its 55 member schools enroll nearly 50,000 students in a host of technical programs in regional vocational-technical, comprehensive, independent, and agricultural high schools across the state.

“Senator Rodrigues has been a real champion for vocational technical education in Massachusetts,” said Ernest F. Houle, Superintendent-Director at Assabet Regional Vocational Technical High School in Marlborough. “He is someone who cares about education and is always willing to listen. MAVA really appreciates everything he’s done for our schools and our students,” added Mr. Houle, MAVA’s current president.

After receiving the award, Senator Rodrigues told a group of roughly 40-50 business and community leaders about the state of Massachusetts’ finances.

“The Commonwealth is in tremendous shape,” he said, noting that the federal government had recently pumped \$113 billion into the Massachusetts economy. He said the state’s stabilization account had jumped to \$4.5 billion – up from \$1.9 billion not long ago.

Last year, the legislature adopted a \$48 billion state budget, plus a \$4 billion supplemental budget.

In recent years, Senator Rodrigues said Massachusetts has been able to create a reserve account for expected increases in required educational spending. He said it also set aside funds to put it on track to fully fund its pension liability by 2036.

He said the Senate Ways and Means Committee is currently working on a budget for fiscal year 2023, the twelve-month period that begins July 1.

In answer to a series of questions, he touched on a wide variety of subjects. They ranged from the high costs of college education, funding for mental and behavioral health, early education and care, Early College programs, the difficulty in finding and adequately paying trained health care workers, making it easier for developers to finance projects on contaminated sites called Brownfields, offshore wind production, and controlling the costs of prescription drugs.

He said he would review a bill to make it easier for teachers to become licensed and legislation to give regional school committees the authority to enter into long-term leases.

The Senator actually learned about the “Legislator of the Year” award last fall but could not attend a MAVA meeting in October at which he was scheduled to receive it. He was held up because of pressing debate on legislative redistricting, coupled with a severe storm, but he briefly attended the event remotely by video.

Senator Rodrigues has been on Beacon Hill for more than 20 years. He began as State Representative.

He holds a B.S. in Accounting from UMass Dartmouth.

The Worcester Chamber of Commerce is led by Tim Murray, the former Lt. Governor who serves on the executive committee of the Alliance for Vocational Technical Education. Mr. Murray is also a big proponent of high-quality vocational education.

The Chamber event was sponsored by Ventry Associates, Takeda, and UniCare. Ventry Associates is a governmental relations firm that represents several clients, including MAVA.

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