



# *The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

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July 27, 2006

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CANDARAS URGES COLLEAGUES TO SUPPORT  
BIG DIG INVESTIGATIVE COMMISSION**

**BOSTON**—State Representative Gale D. Candaras (D-Wilbraham) today sent a letter to her colleagues urging them to support legislation proposed by State Senator Marian Walsh (D-Suffolk and Norfolk) that would create an independent, seven-member Emergency Investigative Review Board to examine possible unsafe practices and mismanagement on the part of contractors and government officials with regard to the construction of the Central Artery Project. Candaras encouraged her colleagues to join her as a co-sponsor of Senator Walsh's legislation.

“Unlike the ongoing investigations into the Central Artery Project, the commission proposed by Senator Walsh is the most effective way of ensuring a thorough, independent investigation of this process that is beyond the influence of gubernatorial and presidential politics,” reads an excerpt from the letter. “Studies have shown that accidents such as the collapse of ceiling panels that led to the loss of Milena Del Valle's life frequently have their roots in a web of political considerations, fiscal irresponsibility, and general mismanagement, which we must unravel and redress in order to prevent similar tragedies in the future and restore the confidence of the citizens of the Commonwealth.”

The letter goes on to remind House members of the work of the Ward Commission in the late seventies and eighties, which was convened in order to investigate flaws in the public construction contract bidding process. Many of the commission's recommendations were ultimately enacted into law. The letter suggests that establishing a similar commission to investigate the Big Dig would result in reforms to the process that allowed \$14.6 billion to be spent on a project that is rife with leaks and other construction failures and that has resulted in the death of one person.

“We should remember the success of the Ward Commission, and apply its lesson: an independent investigatory body free to operate outside the realm of politics can address and begin to remedy severe lapses of good governance,” it reads. “We must restore the public’s trust in our ability to construct a safe, state-of-the-art highway system.”

In related news, Candaras is the lead House sponsor of a letter drafted by State Senator Edward M. Augustus, Jr. (D-2<sup>nd</sup> Worcester) to Governor Mitt Romney, Secretary of Transportation John Cogliano and Massachusetts Turnpike Authority (MTA) board members in opposition to a proposed toll increase on the Turnpike and Metropolitan Highway System which has been suggested to pay for costs associated with investigation, auditing and repair of construction defects in the Central Artery Project.

Candaras has expressed concern that such an increase would be unfair to taxpayers and commuters, especially in Western Massachusetts, whose tolls have already been diverted for the last decade to help finance the Central Artery project.

The MTA, in a common condition for toll road bonds, is legally required to collect 15 percent more than the projected annual cost of paying off principal and interest on the \$2.3 billion of Metropolitan Highway System bonds and to put the extra 15 percent into special funds for maintenance and repairs. Candaras, along with Augustus and a bipartisan group of nearly 70 legislators, urged the MTA to draw upon the \$182 million already collected in this fund to finance reconstruction and repair costs, rather than increase tolls.

“I fully appreciate the enormous challenges we all face in the continuing oversight of the Central Artery Project,” said Candaras. “However, I would prefer that the MTA exhaust their reserves rather than balance the costs of reconstruction and repair on the backs of Western Mass constituents.”