

Municipal workforces BY ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN

JUST ABOUT EVERY community in the Bay State is trying to make do with less, but there are huge differences in the sizes of their municipal payrolls in relation to their population sizes. Statewide, there were 393 municipal employees for every 10,000 residents in FY 2008, according to the state Department of Revenue. But the ratio ranged from 28 in Phillipston (five employees for a population of 1,787) to 3,253 in the island chain known as Gosnold (27 employees for 83 people). Boston was almost exactly in the middle, ranking 171st of the 336 cities and towns with available data; it reported 23,755 city employees for a population of 609,023.

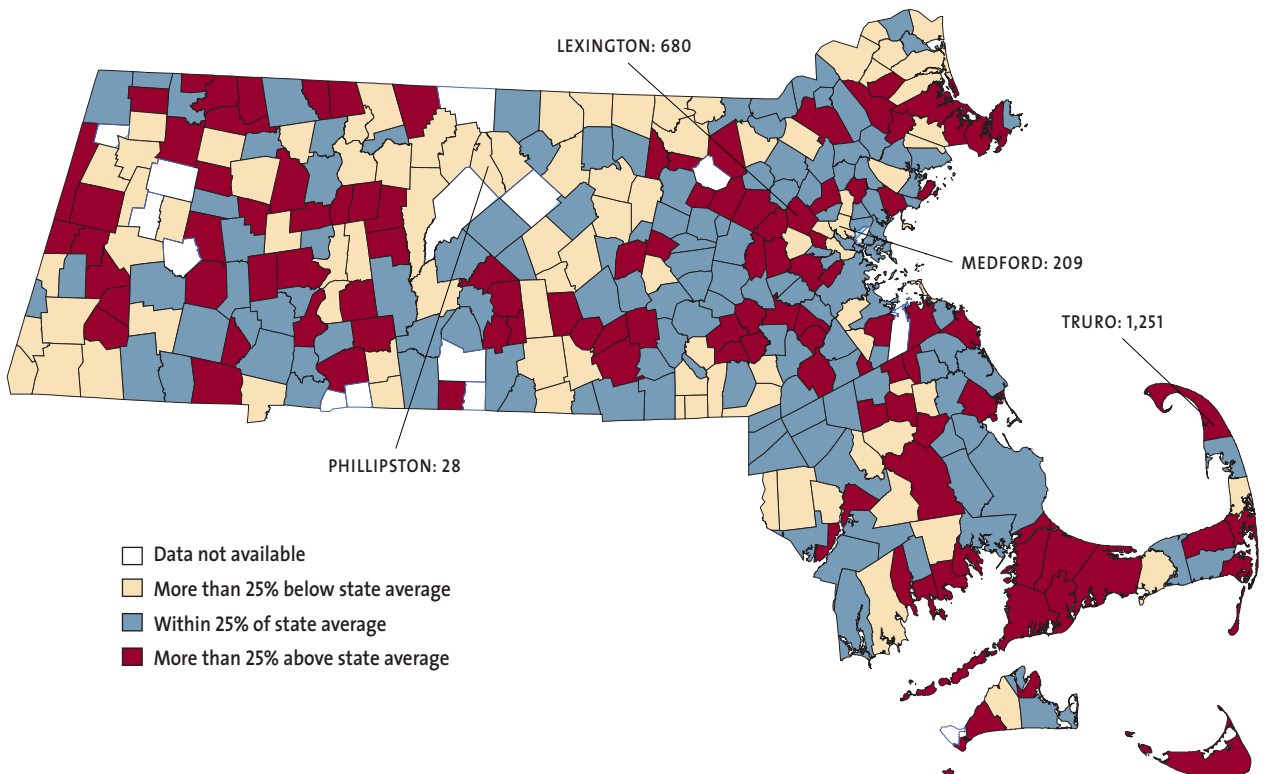
As shown on the map below, the biggest rosters on a proportional basis were in resort towns, where safety officials must deal with day-trippers and seasonal residents, and in affluent suburbs that spend a lot on schools. For example, Lexington, which had the highest ratio of municipal employees to residents among places of at least 30,000 people, spent \$2,202 per resident on education in FY 2008,

far above the state average of \$1,269.

Small workforces were especially common in exurban towns with recent population gains. But among places with at least 50,000 people, Medford had the smallest workforce per capita: 1,160 employees for 55,573 residents. Still, that doesn't mean the northern suburb had the lowest payroll costs: Medford ranked the highest among large cities in the average pay for its employees, at \$61,623 per year. (Most of the highest earners were police officers; Medford spent \$815 per resident on education, well below the state average.)

Taking into account salaries as well as the raw numbers of employees, Nantucket spent the most on the public payroll (\$3,154 per resident), with both struggling Holyoke and affluent Wellesley also near the top of the list. The town of Colrain was at the bottom (\$178 per resident), and a slew of Worcester County towns (including Charlton, Dudley, and Spencer) were also at the frugal end of the continuum. **CW**

MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES PER 10,000 RESIDENTS, FY 2008



Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services (www.mass.gov/dls)

Incomplete Grade: Massachusetts Education Reform at 15



DID YOU KNOW THAT:

- Without education reform, the achievement gap would be wider than it is today
- There has been a dramatic growth in the share of low-income student in some school districts
- The disparities in spending per student have been reduced following the Massachusetts Education Reform Act

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