

Expanding our horizons

LIKE EVERYONE ELSE in the news business, we here at *CommonWealth* are trying to figure out a way to cover the news and cover our costs. Thanks to generous grants from the Boston Foundation and the Knight Foundation, we've come a long way over the last year.

We've expanded our staff and dramatically expanded our horizons. Our quarterly issues now offer up a tantalizing stew of investigative reports, analysis, and opinion. We take an in-depth look at hot-button issues in a way that few other publications do. Our stories are starting to have a big impact on policymakers and others in the news media.

This issue is no exception. The cover story by Michael Jonas reveals how educators and policymakers are finally discovering a simple truth: Teachers are the key to education success, and school systems need to hire and retain great teachers, help those in the middle improve, and get rid of those that can't do the job. Yet across the state we treat teachers as if they are all the same. Good teachers are paid the same as bad teachers. Nearly all get satisfactory job ratings. It's a recipe for mediocrity.

Colman Herman, as he has in the past, finds a state law that no one bothers to enforce. He takes us on a tour of the shadowy world of Internet companies and entrepreneurs who write term papers for college students in apparent violation of a state law prohibiting the practice. What's surprising is not that cheating goes on, but that cheating goes on so openly and is abetted by people in responsible positions. The online come-ons—"It's not cheating, it's collaborating"—are amusing until you realize students are hiring others to do their work.

Continuing our push for greater transparency in Massachusetts government, Jack Sullivan writes about the unfinished business of ethics reform. He reports that the ethics disclosures that all state officials are required to file are antiquated and virtually hidden from public view. To

remedy the situation, *CommonWealth* is purchasing copies of the disclosures and posting them on its website.

Thanks to their political muscle, public sector unions have always been first among equals on Beacon Hill. But with the economy in shambles, state and local governments cutting budgets, and pension scandals grabbing the headlines, Gabrielle Gurley asks whether the clout of public sector unions is on the decline.

While these stories continue a long tradition at *CommonWealth*, the next big step in the magazine's trans-

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formation will come just prior to the release of our next issue with the launch of a magazine website that will allow us to continue our reporting between issues. As many of you know, we've been doing online reporting for close to a year on our blog CWunbound. We're building an audience and starting to have an impact, whether it's reporting about defective railroad ties on South Shore commuter rail lines or fact-checking the Boston mayoral debates.

Our new website, to be called *CommonWealth*magazine.org, will allow us to do much more. Our goal is not to duplicate what the *Boston Globe* and other news media are doing, but to fill in the gaps as their news coverage shrinks. Toward that goal, we are signing content-sharing agreements with a number of news organizations.

The Boston and the Knight foundations have made this initial effort possible, but we need support from our readers to keep growing and remain strong. Thanks in advance for your support.


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REPORTING,
ANALYSIS, AND
COMMENTARY
— ONLINE,
EVERY DAY.

CommonWealth is going online

CommonWealth magazine will be ushering in the new year with a new magazine website at www.commonwealthmagazine.org. Our current blog, at www.CWunbound.org, will continue until the launch and then be incorporated into the new website along with more news, more features, a trove of public records, and more opportunities for readers to discuss public policy and politics. It will also include the complete contents of our latest print issue, as well as an archive of *CommonWealth* stories going back to 1996.

Watch for *CommonWealth* online!

