



SENATOR BENJAMIN B. DOWNING

Berkshire, Hampshire, Franklin & Hampden District

OFFICIAL BIOGRAPHY

Benjamin B. Downing (D- Pittsfield) was first elected to the Massachusetts Senate on November 7, 2006 and was re-elected in 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2014. Senator Downing represents the 52 communities of the Berkshire, Hampshire, Franklin & Hampden District, proudly serving the largest Senate district in the Commonwealth.

Senator Downing serves as the Senate chairman of the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy, which is tasked with reviewing all legislative matters concerning renewable and non-renewable energy sources. He is also the chairman of the newly created Senate Committee on Redistricting.

The Senator also currently serves as vice-chairman of the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development and the vice-chairman of the Senate Committee on Post Audit & Oversight. He has held multiple leadership posts throughout his tenure in the Senate: in past legislative sessions he served as chair of the Public Service Committee (2007), the Senate Ethics and Rules Committee (2007-2008), the Revenue Committee (2009-2010), the Higher Education Committee (2010), the Senate Committee on Steering and Policy (2012) and the Senate Committee on Bills in the Third Reading (2013-2014). He is an active, ranking member of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means, and currently serves on several other Senate and joint committees.

Senator Downing is also a member of three legislative caucuses: he serves as co-chairman of the Gateway Cities Caucus and is an active participant of both the Regional Transit Authorities (RTA) Caucus and the Regional Schools Caucus.

A Pittsfield native, Senator Downing received his B.A. in Political Science from Providence College in 2003. In May 2008 he received a M.A. from Tufts University's Department of Urban and Environment Policy & Planning.

Before returning to Pittsfield, Senator Downing lived in Washington, D.C. working for former U.S. Representative William Delahunt (D- Quincy) and U.S. Representative Richard E. Neal (D- Springfield), before joining the staff of former U.S. Representative John W. Olver (D- Amherst). For nearly two years he served as senior advisor to Congressman Olver.

Senator Downing's family has a long history of public service. He is the oldest of four children (Maggie, Nate and Nick) raised by the late Berkshire District Attorney Gerard and Pamela Downing. He is married to Micaelah B. Morrill.

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LEADERSHIP POSITIONS, APPOINTMENTS & AWARDS

2015-2016 LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:

- *Chair*, Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities & Energy
- *Chair*, Senate Committee on Redistricting
- *Vice Chair*, Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts & Cultural Development
- *Vice Chair*, Senate Committee on Post Audit & Oversight
- Senate Committee on Ways & Means
- Joint Committee on Higher Education
- Senate Committee on Bills in the Third Reading
- Senate Committee on Global Warming & Climate Change
- Joint Committee on Revenue

2013-2014 LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:

- *Chair*, Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities & Energy
- *Chair*, Senate Committee on Bills in Third Reading
- *Vice Chair*, Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts & Cultural Development
- Senate Committee on Ways & Means
- Senate Committee on Post Audit & Oversight
- Senate Committee on Global Warming & Climate Change
- Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources & Agriculture
- Joint Committee on Higher Education

2011-2012 LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:

- *Chair*, Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities & Energy
- *Chair*, Senate Committee on Steering & Policy (2012)
- *Vice Chair*, Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts & Cultural Development
- Senate Committee on Ways & Means
- Senate Committee on Post Audit & Oversight
- Senate Committee on Global Warming & Climate Change
- Joint Committee on Higher Education
- Joint Committee on Housing
- Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources & Agriculture

2009-2010 LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:

- *Chair*, Joint Committee on Revenue
- *Acting Chair*, Joint Committee on Higher Education (2010)
- *Vice Chair*, Joint Committee on Higher Education (2009)
- Senate Committee on Ways & Means
- Joint Committee on Economic Development & Emerging Technologies
- Joint Committee on Consumer Protection & Professional Licensure
- Joint Committee on Veterans & Federal Affairs

2007-2008 LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:

- *Chair*, Senate Committee on Ethics & Rules (10/07- 1/09)
- *Chair*, Joint Committee on Public Service (1/07-10/07)
- *Vice Chair*, Joint Committee on Higher Education
- *Vice Chair*, Senate Committee on Bills in the Third Reading
- Joint Committee on Financial Services
- Joint Committee on Veterans & Federal Affairs
- Joint Committee on Consumer Protection & Professional Licensure
- Senate Committee on Post Audit & Oversight

2016 AWARDS & SPECIAL APPOINTMENTS:

- Honorary Doctorate of Public Service – Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
- 2016 Public Advocate of the Year – Massachusetts Food Bank Coalition
- Berkshire Community College “40 Under 40” award winner
- 2016 Solar Champion Award – Solar Energy Industries Association
- 2016 Leadership Award – Solar Energy Business Association of New England

2015 AWARDS & SPECIAL APPOINTMENTS:

- 2015 Berkshire Trendsetter Award: Under 40 Changemaker – 1Berkshire
- 2015 Fellow, CSG Henry Toll Fellowship Program
- 2015 Best Politician in the Berkshires – *Berkshire Eagle's 2015 Best of the Berkshires*
- 2015 Green Star Award – Environmental League of Massachusetts
- 2015 Western Massachusetts Champion for Children – Children’s Trust
- 2015 Good Guys Award Winner – Massachusetts Women’s Political Caucus
- 2015 Legislator of the Year – MassAccess
- *Senate Member*, National CSG Committee on Energy & Environment
- *Senate Alternate Member*, CSG Eastern Region Committee on Energy & Environment

2014 AWARDS & SPECIAL APPOINTMENTS:

- 2014 Heart of Our Mission Award – American Heart/American Stroke Association
- 2014 “Neighborly” Community Recognition Award – Northern Berkshire Neighbors
- 2014 Legislator of the Year – Massachusetts Association of School Committees
- 2014 Outstanding Champion Award - Massachusetts Office of Public Collaboration at University of Massachusetts - Boston and the Community Mediation Coalition of Massachusetts
- 2014 Legislative Achievement Award - Jewish Community Relations Council and Massachusetts Association of Jewish Federations (JCRC|MAJF)
- 2014 “Irish” Person of the Year – Hillcrest Educational Centers, Inc.
- 2014 Best Politician in the Berkshires – *Berkshire Eagle's 2014 Best of the Berkshires*
- *Senate Chair*, Natural Gas Leaks Conference Committee
- *Senate Member*, Net Metering and Solar Task Force
- *Senate Member*, Special Commission to Investigate & Study Barriers and Hindrances to “Last Mile” Connections to Broadband Internet Initiatives

2013 AWARDS & SPECIAL APPOINTMENTS:

- 2013 Legislative Leadership Award – Arts|Learning
- 2013 Legislator of the Year – Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA)

2012 AWARDS & SPECIAL APPOINTMENTS:

- 2012 Legislator of the Year – Berkshire County Central Labor Council
- 2012 Peg Howard Barrier Free Environment Award – United Cerebral Palsy Association of Berkshire County, Inc.
- 2012 Legislator of Distinction – Massachusetts LGBTQ Bar Association
- 2012 Clean Energy Champion Award – New England Clean Energy Council
- 2012 Recognition Award – Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools
- 2012 Recognition for Legislative Success – Women’s Bar Association of Massachusetts

2011 AWARDS & SPECIAL APPOINTMENTS:

- 2011 Democratic Rising Star Award – College Democrats of Boston College
- 2011 Legislative Hero Award – Massachusetts B.L.I.N.D. Advocacy Committee
- *Member*, One Economy’s National Technology Adoption Advisory Council (NTAAC)

2010 AWARDS & SPECIAL APPOINTMENTS:

- 2010 Legislator of the Year Award – Massachusetts Association of Dairy Farmers

- 2010 Legislator of the Year Award – American Resort Development Association – New England Committee
- *Senate Member*, Economic Development Reorganization Legislative Conference Committee
- *Senate Member*, Comprehensive Siting Reform for Land-Based Wind Projects Legislative Conference Committee

2009 AWARDS & SPECIAL APPOINTMENTS:

- 2009 Legislator of the Year Award – SEIU Local 509, the Massachusetts Union for Human Service Workers
- 2009 Healthy Air Award – American Lung Association of Massachusetts
- 2009 Elected Official of the Year – Tufts University Democrats
- 2009 Pride Month Special Recognition Award – Partners in Transportation Diversity Committee
- 2009 Best Politician in the Berkshires – *Berkshire Eagle's 2009 Best of the Berkshires*
- *Senate Member*, 1,000 Great Places in Massachusetts Commission
- *Senate Member*, Special Commission to Promote the Development and Use of Advanced Biofuels

2008 AWARDS & SPECIAL APPOINTMENTS:

- 2008 Legislator of the Year – Bay State Hydropower Association
- Best Legislator in the Berkshires – *Berkshire Eagle's 2008 Best of the Berkshires*
- *Senate Member*, Special Commission to Study the Siting of Energy Facilities in Massachusetts
- *Senate Member*, Special Municipal Relief Commission
- *Senate Member*, Governor's Task Force on Ethics and Lobbying Reform

2007 AWARDS & SPECIAL APPOINTMENTS:

- Best Legislator in the Berkshires – *Berkshire Eagle's 2007 Best of the Berkshires*
- Robert J. Thompson Eastern Leadership Academy Fellowship – Council of State Governments/Eastern Regional Conference, University of Pennsylvania
- 2007 Legislator of the Year – Massachusetts Association of School Committees
- *Senate Member*, Governor's Local Government Advisory Council (LGAC)
- *Representative of the Joint Committee on Higher Education*, Massachusetts Board of Higher Education's Transfer Advisory Group
- *Member*, 2007 Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Public Service Award Selection Committee
- *Member*, Senate Special Commission to Investigate Automobile Insurance Reform
- *Co-Chair*, Special Legislative Commission to Investigate and Study the Commonwealth's Liability for Paying Retiree Health Care and Other Non-pension Benefits
- *Senate Member*, Special Commission to Investigate and Study the Accessibility and Quality of Doctors who Specialize in Obstetric, Gynecological and Neurosurgical Care of Women in Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire Counties
- *Senate Member*, Commonwealth's Advanced Biofuels Task Force

LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS MEMBERSHIPS:

- *Senate Chair*, Caucus on Gateway Cities
- *Senate Co-Chair*, Rural Caucus
- *Member*, Caucus on Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs)
- *Member*, Caucus on Regional Schools

COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS:

- *Co-Chair*, Massachusetts Democratic Party's 2014 Coordinated Campaign
- *Co-Chair*, Massachusetts Democratic Party's Committee on Youth Services
- *Co-Chair*, Leadership Council to End Chronic Homelessness in Berkshire County
- *Honorary Chairman*, College Democrats of Massachusetts
- *Honorary Member*, Advisory Committee on Workforce Development for Homeless Families
- *Member*, Task Force to End Hunger in Western Massachusetts

- *Member, Massachusetts Democratic Party's Rural Subcommittee*
- *Member, Advisory Council of the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center*
- *Member, Advisory Council of Multicultural BRIDGE*
- *Member, Pittsfield Democratic Committee*