

IN THE NEWS



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FEDERAL FUNDS REPLACING STOLEN SNAP BENEFITS MAY EXPIRE

A federal directive to replace stolen SNAP funds is set to expire on December 20. When skimming spiked in 2022, Congress directed the U.S. Department of Agriculture to work with states to replace stolen SNAP benefits with federal dollars. That policy was passed in December 2022, and was set to expire Sept. 30, 2024. In September, Congress passed a spending bill which included an extension of the replacement of stolen SNAP benefits until December 20. A further extension is wrapped up in a larger farm bill. As of September, the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance reported issuing about \$9 million in federally funded replacement benefits to about 20,100 MA households who were victims of SNAP theft.

Credit and debit cards are more protected from skimming devices, because most use more secure chip and tap technology. Credit and debit card holders also have a right to get stolen funds replaced under the Electronic Funds Transfer Act of 1996, and other federal laws. In 1996 Congress specifically excluded EBT cardholders from federal consumer protections. In November the MA Department of Transitional Assistance launched a new "card lock" feature, that allows clients to control when their card is usable using a mobile app called DTA Connect, or their website. Massachusetts was also selected as one of five states to participate in a federal pilot with USDA for mobile/contactless pay for EBT cards in 2023. Governor Healey's administration invested about \$2 million to implement the chip or tap pay system, which DTA expects in late 2025 or early 2026. The department will explore implementation of chip EBT cards with a new vendor in the next two years, as they're currently in the middle of a vendor transition. The change will make the cards more secure, DTA says.

MA LEGISLATURE CHALLENGED RE: AUDIT APPROVAL OF QUESTION 1

On December 6 a lawsuit was filed by former state Rep. and Republican party leader James Lyons against the MA House of Representatives for "undermining" the new law (Question 1) approved by voters in November allowing the State Auditor to audit the legislature. Presently the House picks an outside auditor with approval of the chamber's own legal counsel to audit only its financial services. On November 14, less than two weeks after the passage of Question 1 the House approved a rule change that would allow the State Auditor to recommend a firm to conduct the outside financial audit limited to House financial accounts. The House business manager would provide the independent auditor with requested financial documents only, the rule says, and not the State Auditor. The suit alleges that the Auditor should have direct control over the audit as approved by the people of the Commonwealth.

MA DOR COLLECTIONS RISE IN NOVEMBER

On December 4 the MA Department of Revenue [announced](#) that revenue collections for November totaled \$2.438 billion, \$190 million or 8.4% more than actual collections in November 2023, and \$56 million or 2.4% above benchmarks. FY2025 year-to-date collections totaled approximately \$14.898 billion, which is \$805 million or 5.7% more than actual collections in the same period of FY2024, but \$124 million or 0.8% below the year-to-date benchmark. In general, November is among the smaller months for revenue collection because neither individual nor business taxpayers make significant estimated payments during the month. Typically, 6.4% of annual revenue is received during November.

GOVERNOR ESTABLISHES EPR COMMISSION

In late November as part of a comprehensive [energy bill](#) that was signed into law by Governor Healey was a section (108) that establishes a legislative commission assigned to recommend to the legislature policies for the state to establish an extended producer responsibility program by January 1, 2026.