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## Business

# Seven things you should know about Brian Joyce

By **Beth Healy** | GLOBE STAFF MAY 18, 2014



JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

**State Senator Brian Joyce.**

State Senator Brian Joyce is chairman of the Legislature's Committee on Bonding, Capital Expenditures, and State Assets. The Milton Democrat is fond of saying that bond bills may seem unsexy, but they determine how much Massachusetts taxpayers will have to shell out for major projects today and in the future.

By the time this legislative session is over in July, Joyce's committee will have considered about \$23 billion in authorizations for new borrowing. Last week, as a \$929 million information technology bond bill was coming before him, Joyce spoke with Globe reporter Beth Healy. Here's what she found out:

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## 1

Joyce has said he wants to examine the IT bond bill closely in light of last year's high-profile problems with computer systems to manage unemployment benefits, tax collections, and the sign-up for health insurance plans under the federal Affordable Care Act , also known as Obamacare.

*“Any way you slice it, it was a significant failure of government with respect to IT spending,” Joyce said. “Why were we recreating the wheel? Why were we paying extraordinary sums of money to create software, where the functions that we are performing in state government are not unique?”*

## 2

Joyce was the first public official to suggest that the state better protect its financial interests in the development of software and the awarding of technology contracts.

*“If we are paying for the creation of intellectual property, why don't we own it? Where a vendor does not perform, why don't we sue them to recover?”*

## 3

Joyce, 51, is the youngest of eight children. He vividly remembers all of them campaigning for his father, Gerard, when he ran for state representative against the

incumbent, Joseph Manning.

*“It was 1978. I was 16 years old. We didn’t have a clue what we were doing. We just had shoe leather, and we knocked on every door in Milton and North Randolph multiple times on Election Day. My sisters were out on the corners holding signs. We leafleted every house in the district with this hokey little mimeographed sheet with a smiley face that said, ‘Good morning, it’s Election Day. Please vote for Gerry Joyce.’”*

## 4

His father lost that election by about 200 votes. But in 1997, Joyce won that same seat by defeating Manning. He moved to the Senate in 1998.

*“It was never my intent to avenge my father’s defeat. But it was pretty cool! He’s 94; it’s unbelievable.”*

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## 5

Joyce said he wants to press the administration of Governor Deval Patrick and state agencies looking to borrow money for projects to consider asking for less money — and shortening the duration of the bonds to repay the money more quickly and lower interest costs.

*“We reduced the borrowing period for the transportation bond bill from 30 to 20 years, because the length of the debt should coincide with the life of the asset. And that little change saved about \$580 million.”*

## 6

Joyce often notes that Massachusetts has one of the highest amounts of debt per capita in the country. The state ranks between first and third out of 50, depending how you calculate it.

*“Every administration wants to have its legacy projects. Part of the role here is to try to strike a proper balance, to protect future generations from inheriting this mountain of debt that could in some instances become unsustainable.”*

## **7**

The reason to pay close attention to borrowing costs, Joyce said, is so the state can afford to pay for other important needs, such as providing medical care to infants and education to children.

*“We clearly do need to invest in our capital infrastructure and capital projects. But we need to do so in a very thoughtful and deliberative way, and ensure that the taxpayers’ interests are protected. And again, not just current taxpayers, but future generations.”*

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