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Changes usher in a new era in politics, and construction

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The weather isn't the only thing changing in Massachusetts; there's change in the air on Beacon Hill, as 25 new legislators - as well as a new governor, new attorney general and new senate president - get ready to assume their responsibilities in January. At ASM we look forward to building good relations and working cooperatively with the new Administration and legislative leadership in the coming year. It's a time of cautious optimism, as we wait to see what effect all the changes on Beacon Hill will have on our industry and the business community, and whether the development and construction that are reshaping Boston and Cambridge will have a ripple effect and lead to heightened economic activity in other regions of the state.

During the recent elections, ASM collaborated with other business and industry groups in defeating Ballot Question 3 that would have killed planned casino projects in Everett, Fall River, and Springfield. With that issue settled, it opens the door for those projects to move ahead, creating an estimated 10,000 jobs in the process, including many in construction - in areas of the state of that are most in need of good new jobs.

The results of two other ballot questions are firmly on our radar, as well. The passage of Question 4 (earned sick time) has raised questions and concerns for contractors as well as other employers. You can expect ASM to hold an informative seminar on this new law in the coming weeks, to answer questions and assist contractors with compliance. And we'll be watching with curiosity to see how Massachusetts budgets for critical infrastructure projects, now that the indexed gas tax has been repealed.

For ASM, the most welcome change this fall is the implementation of the new "5% retainage law," which took effect Nov. 6. While the 5% limit itself is easy to understand, there will likely be a learning curve for owners, architects and contractors alike in adjusting to the new process and timelines for closing out projects. ASM is already playing a key role in educating the industry on the new law, and showing how it benefits everyone, not just by speeding up payment, but by accelerating the work itself.

But even during this time of transition, don't expect ASM to rest on its laurels: we're already preparing for the next challenges - addressing needed improvements to the state's lien law, and seeking relief from unfair risk transfer terms in construction contracts. It promises to be a busy year ahead, and we can't wait to get started!

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