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POLITICS

‘Get vaccinated’: Why this expert says you need to get the flu jab this year | Bay State Briefing

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A licensed vocational nurse administers a vaccination to a patient. (Francine Orr/Los Angeles Times/TNS, File)



By [John L. Micsek | jmicsek@masslive.com](mailto:jmicsek@masslive.com)

Good Monday morning, everyone. Hope you're all recovered from the holiday weekend and Black Friday bout of capitalism.

The holiday season is upon us, and so is what is widely expected to be a doozy of a flu season. And if Carlene Pavlos can give you a word of advice, it's this: Get your flu shot. Get your COVID-19 vaccine. And, while you're at it, get vaccinated for RSV, as well.

Prime Minister and Health Secretary visit London medical centre



Pavlos, the executive director of the Massachusetts Public Health Alliance, has spent three decades in the public health business, first at the state Department of Public Health, and now as the executive director of the Boston-based nonprofit advocacy group.

Pavlos recently took a few minutes to talk to MassLive about the state's efforts to increase access to vaccinations and to encourage people to get vaccinated, and what it's like to work in public health when the nation's top public health official is a vaccine skeptic.

This conversation has been lightly edited for content and clarity.

Q: In September, the Healey administration announced several steps to ensure safe access to vaccines. One of them was a standing order that allowed pharmacists to vaccinate eligible state residents. How has that helped?

Pavlos: This is another valuable tool that the governor and [state Public Health Commissioner Dr. Robbie Goldstein] have put in place to give access to vaccines to protect people from infectious disease.

Q: What has that meant as a practical matter? How has that worked on the ground?

A: Often, it is local public health clinics that are running various places across the state that create access for underinsured or uninsured people to get their vaccines. They also may be the most convenient geographically — particularly in the western part of the state. It may be that the local public health clinic is the most convenient geographically. So it's really nice that both [the COVID and flu vaccines] are now covered by these standing orders. It is, as I said, another tool in the toolbox.

I think the reason that something like this, at this particular political moment in our nation's history, garners attention is because, at the national level ... [U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.] is doing everything in his power to undermine public health and to raise doubt in the efficacy and importance of vaccines. And so, to have Massachusetts, the commissioner of public health and the governor both stand up and say that vaccines are critical to public health and safety, and we are going to do everything that we can to make them more easily accessible to protect the residents of the commonwealth, that's why it's important. Because it's both a real public health issue, and it is a statement and a line in the sand.

Carlene Pavlos, the executive director of the Massachusetts Public Health Alliance. Photo provided

Q: We've since seen states across the country enter into regional compacts where they're steering their own course on vaccine policy and on public health policy. As a professional who's been in this, on one level, it must seem extraordinary that states are doing this, but on another, that you are perhaps reassured that there is this interstate infrastructure in place to make sure that people get vaccinated?

A: One of the things that we've actually seen this week is that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, under the direction of Secretary Kennedy, posted false information about vaccines and autism.

And as a result of that, it is the final confirmation that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are no longer focused on evidence and peer-reviewed science, but, in fact, will put whatever the secretary instructs them to do on their website. It is dangerous. It's not simply demoralizing and untrue; it is dangerous to our public health.

Q: What's the one big thing that people need to know this year?

A: The one big thing that people need to know at this moment, when we are in the respiratory disease season, you know, it's really time for respiratory disease ... and we are getting near the holidays. We know it's going to be a bad flu season. We are already seeing signs of that. People need to get out and get vaccinated.



Gov. Maura Healey speaks about President Donald Trump's tariffs on April 9, 2025 during a news conference at the State House. State House News Service

Monday numbers

We're now a little less than a year away from the November 2026 gubernatorial election. And while much can and will change in the 11 months between now and then, a recent poll casts some light on the race for the Corner Office.

Just about half (49.4%) of respondents to [last week's Boston Globe/Suffolk University poll](#) said they had a favorable opinion of Democratic Gov. Maura Healey as she seeks a second, four-year term. A little more than 37% of respondents said they had an unfavorable impression of the

Arlington pol, while 10.6% said they were undecided.

A nearly equal number, 46.2%, said Healey deserves reelection next year, compared to 38% who said she did not. Nearly 16% said they were undecided.

Meanwhile, nearly 6 in 10 Republican primary voters (59.1%) said they hadn't made up their minds in the GOP nominating derby pitting Baker administration alums Mike Kennealy and Brian Shortsleeve against medical device millionaire Michael Minogue.

Shortsleeve, who helmed the MBTA for former Gov. Charlie Baker, led with 21.5% support among those GOP voters who had made up their minds.

Kennealy, who was Baker's housing czar, trailed at 12.9%. Minogue, a Donald Trump donor and political newcomer, finished third, taking 6.45% support among GOP primary voters, according to the poll.

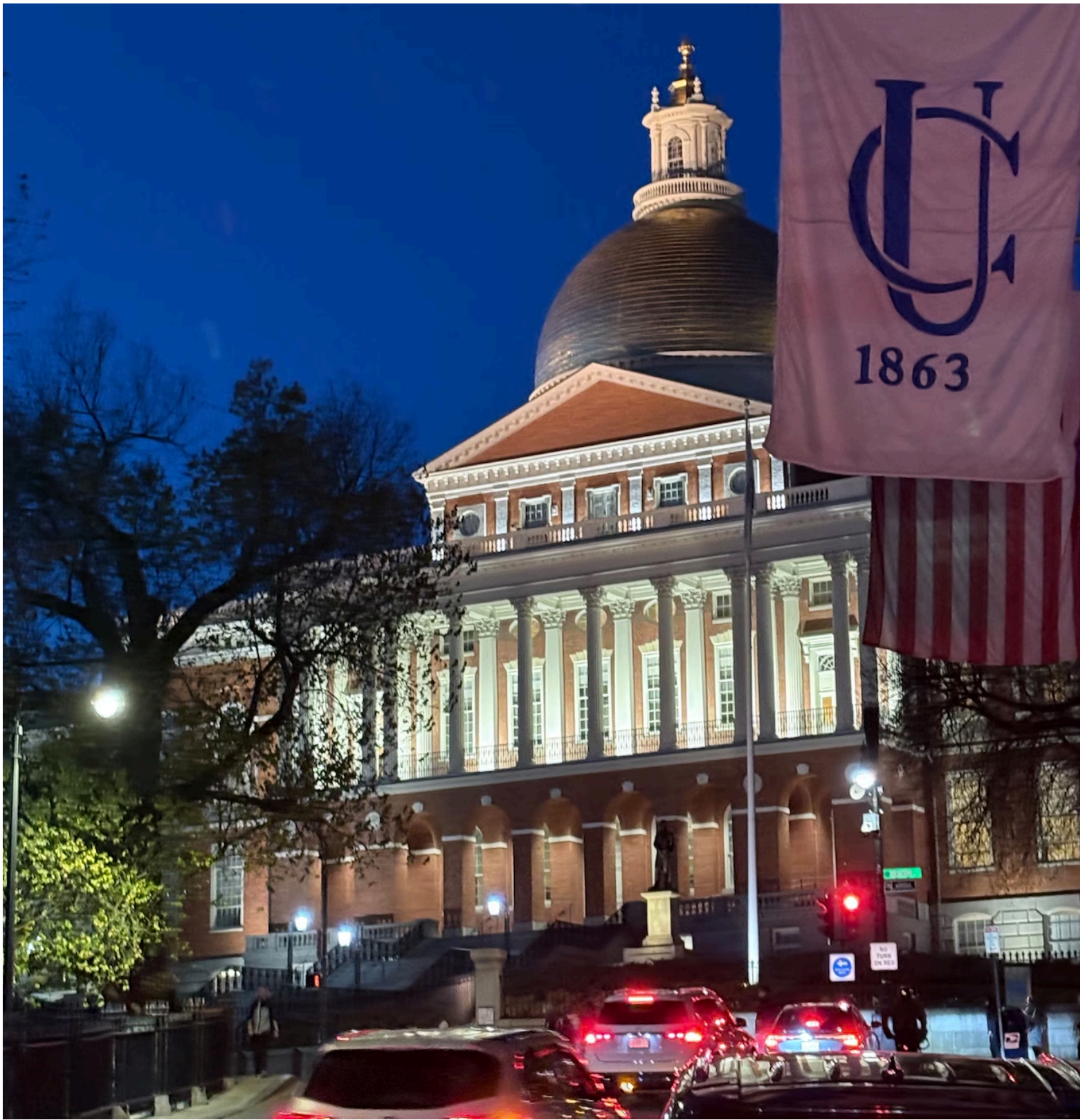
The poll of 500 registered voters was conducted from Nov. 19 to Nov. 23. It had an overall margin of error of 4.4%. A separate sample of 93 Republican primary voters had a margin of error of 10.2%.



They said it

“It really makes me wonder, ‘Are we becoming California?’”

— Massachusetts House Speaker Ronald J. Mariano, D-3rd Norfolk, raises concerns about the sheer volume of ballot questions that Bay State voters could be asked to decide in 2026, and the increasing professionalization of the process.



A view of the Massachusetts State House in Boston, looking up Park Street toward Beacon Hill, on a busy evening on Monday, Nov. 24, 2025. (John L. Micek/MassLive)

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Ingrid Michaelson released her latest album, "For The Dreamers," on Aug. 23, 2024. In this photo, Michaelson performs during her New York City release party. (Rebecca J Michelson)

Turned up to 11

Singer/songwriter Ingrid Michaelson plays the Shubert Theatre in Boston on Dec. 4 ([tickets and more info here](#)). Here's her most recent single, the very seasonally appropriate "[Song for a Winter's Night](#)." You can play this one as the sun sets around 4 p.m. these days.



Song for a Winter's Night

Preview **Ingrid Michaelson**

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When Observer columnist Marie Le Conte set out to find the perfect sport, she discovered ice hockey. Scott Schild | sschild@syracuse.com

Your Monday long read

Okay, you're going to learn two things here. First, they have ice hockey in the United Kingdom. Second, it's apparently quite good.

That's what Observer columnist Marie Le Conte discovered when she [went in search of the perfect sport](#) to fall in love with this year. I'd just offer a hearty *bienvenue*. Hockey is, indeed, the perfect sport.

Here's the germane bit:

"It's hard to describe the sheer intensity of ice hockey in words, as the pace of it defies belief, but there's something so aggressively compelling about these large, beefy boys crossing the rink with the elegance of a butterfly and the speed of a cheetah on, well, speed. I couldn't take my eyes off them.

More than that: I took sides. That hadn't happened in a while. Though I've enjoyed writing this column greatly, I've often thought of myself as a David Attenborough-like figure, watching from a slight distance and staunchly refusing to get involved. Ice hockey broke that.

The Solway Sharks scored and scored again and were up 3-1, but the Romford Raiders, the home team I was sitting with, managed to score before too long. When they equalised, I screamed and clapped until the palms of my hands stung, before I realised I was doing it. Was it the first time the Essex team had a French woman bellowing “ALLEZ!” in their general direction? I’d probably take that bet.”

Honestly, that does sound just perfect. And it would make me a Solway Sharks fan too.

That’s it for today. As always, please send tips, comments and questions my way at jmicek@masslive.com. I’ll also do what I can to answer your English hockey-related queries. Have a good week, friends.

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Which of the following best describes how you feel about the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency known as ICE?

- They are important but require reform
- They should be defunded and abolished
- They are a high-performing unit doing an important job

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John L. Micek

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