FRESH OFF THE SUFFOLK/HERALD DEBATE, NOW IT’S ...

On to the CONVENTION

- Rivals push Coakley too far left
- Kayyem could hit magic 15% mark
- What happened to scrappy Steve?
- Big winner: online debate format
The five Democratic candidates for Massachusetts governor Martha Coakley, Don Berwick, Joe Avellone, Juliette Kayyem and Steve Grossman debated at Suffolk University’s downtown television studio Tuesday, June 10, 2014. The debate, sponsored with the Boston Herald, featured questions from students, the public and moderators Rachelle Cohen, editor of the Boston Herald Editorial Page, and Suffolk University Vice President of Government Relations and Community Affairs John Nucci.
DEMS DUKE IT OUT TODAY AT 11 ON BOSTONHERALD.COM AND HERALD RADIO

STAGE IS SET

PLUS POLL: SUFFOLK’S PALEOLOGOS ON BAKER’S DILEMMA
One final, cordial Democratic debate before convention
Candidates seek to set selves apart

By Akilah Johnson | GLOBE STAFF JUNE 10, 2014

Joseph Avellone (right) took a "selfie" photo of candidates after a debate at Suffolk University in Boston.

The five Democratic candidates for governor of Massachusetts used one final debate before this weekend’s party convention to distinguish themselves from one another — even as they agreed on many of the issues in the campaign.

Tuesday’s debate, sponsored by the Boston Herald and Suffolk University, was the candidates’ final opportunity to stake out their terrain before party delegates meet in Worcester. Many of the issues — immigration, casinos, legalizing marijuana, diversity,
transportation — had been well-parsed previously.

Joe Avellone, Don Berwick, Attorney General Martha Coakley, State Treasurer Steve Grossman, and Juliette Kayyem were cordial, though there were some pointed comments directed at Coakley.

The candidates reiterated their positions on a proposed ballot question to repeal the state casino law — and the ruling by Coakley’s office that the measure is unconstitutional, an opinion now under consideration by the Supreme Judicial Court.

“Can I say something to the attorney general?” Kayyem said. “When you go after banks or use the force of the attorney general’s office for something good, you always say ‘I, I did this.’ On this issue, it’s ‘we, my office.’ This is a huge issue for this state. . . . You can’t hide behind the we of the office.”

Berwick, a staunch opponent of casinos, said he would vote to repeal the law. Kayyem would vote to keep it. Avellone said the law should stand. Grossman said if the question appears on the ballot, he would not vote to repeal the law.

The debate was moderated by John Nucci, the university’s vice president of government and community affairs, and Rachelle Cohen, the Herald’s editorial page editor. Four Suffolk students asked prerecorded questions about the cost of public transportation, affordable housing, affirmative action disadvantaging white university students, and student loan debt. Two questions were taken from Twitter about welfare fraud and legalizing marijuana.

Kayyem said she would look to Colorado and Washington for models of how to legalize marijuana, cautioning that the US government essentially gave “a wink and a nod” to those states. That could change with a new president and US attorney general making the argument somewhat moot, she said.

Coakley agreed, saying state and federal government rules are not aligned on the issue.
Grossman said he was not in favor of fully decriminalizing marijuana, pointing to the state’s problematic start to medical marijuana.

“That has been a fiasco,” he said. “The process has been absolutely mismanaged.”

Avellone, who like Berwick is a physician, said Massachusetts must be rigorous in its policies surrounding marijuana, saying the state is not ready for legalizing the drug for recreational use.

Berwick emphasized the medical benefits of marijuana to relieve nausea and pain, saying “we have to make sure we’re a compassionate state and get it done right.”

All of the candidates were vocal supporters of Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone’s recent executive order ending his city’s compliance with the federal Secure Communities program, saying the law breeds mistrust among the state’s most vulnerable communities. The law calls for holding arrested immigrants for up to 48 hours after they have posted bail or are ordered released, based solely on suspected immigration violations.

“Secure Communities is broken,” said Kayyem, a former federal and state homeland security official. She said this was part of a larger conversation on immigration that included giving in-state tuition or driver’s licenses to unauthorized immigrants.

But the candidates were not in harmony on giving immigrants in the country illegally driver’s licenses, a recent push by immigration advocates in Massachusetts and throughout the nation.

“We disagree around this table on the issue of driver’s licenses, which I do believe is a public safety issue,” said Grossman, who along with Berwick and Avellone supports the policy. “Why would you want people driving in Massachusetts without driver’s education, without [a] driver’s test, without insurance?”

Coakley softened her position on the issue of driver’s licenses in March, saying she was open to the idea after opposing efforts in the past.

On the Secure Communities Act, she blamed the federal government for being overzealous with a law that was supposed to return foreign criminal predators to their country of origin.
“The evil person here is the federal government,” she said.

There are four other candidates in the race for governor, including Republicans Charlie Baker and Mark Fisher, and independents Jeff McCormick and Evan Falchuk.

Akilah Johnson can be reached at akilah.johnson@globe.com.
ALL SMILES — Massachusetts Democratic gubernatorial hopeful Joe Avellone took a selfie of (from left) Don Berwick, Martha Coakley, Steve Grossman, and Juliette Kayyem after the Boston Herald/Suffolk University Debate Tuesday. B3
Democrats seek to set selves apart

Final debate before convention

By Akilah Johnson
Globe Staff

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Mass Democratic Governor hopefuls Don Berwick, Martha Coakley, Steve Grossman, Juliette Kayyem and Joe Avellone pose for a selfie using a cell phone after the Boston Herald/Suffolk University debate on Tuesday, June 10, 2014, at Suffolk University. (Photo by Joe Avellone /Courtesy of Suffolk University)

Mass Democratic governor hopeful Martha Coakley and Steve Grossman shake hands before the Boston Herald/Suffolk University debate on Tuesday, June 10, 2014, at Suffolk University.

Mass Agricultural and Consumer Sciences professor Alan Singer answers a question during the second gubernatorial debate held at Cape Cod Community College in Hyannis, Monday, May 19, 2014. (Photo by Matt Stone/Boston Herald)

Photo By: Matt Stone
Mass Democratic governor hopeful Joe Avellone takes a selfie of, left to right, Don Berwick, Martha Coakley, Steve Grossman and Juliette Kayyem after the Boston Herald/Suffolk University debate on Tuesday, June 10, 2014, at Suffolk University.

Photo By: Matt Stone
Gallery: Boston Herald/Suffolk University gubernatorial debate

Photo By: Ted Fitzgerald
Martha Coakley greets volunteers including Stephen Farlow, Tuesday, June 10, 2014.
Mass Democratic governor hopeful Martha Coakley speaks during the Boston Herald/Suffolk University gubernatorial debate.
Mass Democratic governor hopeful Steve Grossman listens to Juliette Kayyem as she speaks to moderators John Nucci and Shelly Cohen during the Boston Herald/Suffolk University debate on Tuesday, June 10, 2014, at Suffolk University.

Photo By: Matt Stone
Mass Democratic governor hopeful Don Berwick speaks as Martha Coakley and Joe Avellone listen during the Boston Herald/Suffolk University debate on Tuesday, June 10, 2014, at Suffolk University.

Photo By: Matt Stone
Photo By: Ted Fitzgerald

Donald Berwick shakes hands with Grossman supporters.

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GALLERY: BOSTON HERALD/SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY GUBERNATORIAL DEBATE

Photo By: Matt Stone

Mass Democratic governor hopefuls, bottom right-left, Steve Grossman, Juliette Kayyem, Don Berwick, Martha Coakley, Joe Avellone are questioned by moderators Shelly Cohen and John Nucci during the Boston Herald/Suffolk University debate on Tuesday, June 10, 2014, at Suffolk University.
Photo By: Matt Stone

Juliette Kayyem has a laugh during the Boston Herald/Suffolk University debate.
BOSTON — The five Democratic candidates for governor are trying to set themselves apart a head of this weekend’s nominating convention. But in a debate Tuesday at Suffolk University, all too often they echoed each other.

The candidates agreed on the need to create jobs and fix the Department of Children and Families. They also all pointed to the weaknesses of the federal Secure Communities immigration program and universally praised the legacy of Gov. Deval Patrick.
Attorney General Martha Coakley said the state is “totally” on the right track.

“I get to work with attorneys general around the country, they’re sick of hearing me say how great our education is, how our growth is, what we’ve been able to do,” Coakley said.

Treasurer Steven Grossman agrees, but he pointed to some management pitfalls in state government, especially with the health care website rollout.

“The [Health] Connector is a disaster. [The website] could cost us over $2 million,” Grossman said. “When the governor put out a no-bid contract on the next vendor, I said no. There will be no big, no-bid contracts under Gov. Grossman.”

Joe Avellone, the former chief operating officer of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, agreed that solid management is missing.

“I think it goes beyond technology. I think it goes to a management culture in state government,” Avellone said. “And we haven’t had a manager of large organizations as governor for a long time, and I think it shows.”

Tensions around the table did bubble on the issue of casinos.

Former Medicare administrator Don Berwick expressed his support for a potential ballot question that would repeal the state’s casino law, and insisted the state could grow jobs without casinos.

“I think I’m the only candidate before you that is against casinos and for this repeal, and I frankly do not understand why my colleagues are not joining me there,” Berwick said.

Former Homeland Security official Juliette Kayyem questioned Coakely about her word choices in describing her “office’s” opposition to the voter referendum on casinos — an issue that is currently being reviewed by the Supreme Judicial Court.

“When you go after banks or use the role of the attorney general for something good, you always say, ‘I did this, I did this.’ On [casinos,] it’s, ‘we, my office.’”

But these quibbles were rare, and the sharp tongue even rarer.

Largely echoing one another on policy, the candidates scrambled to create distinct personal narratives. Grossman described Coakley as a prosecutor, as if it was a derogatory term.
“The people of this state will ultimately decide, do they want a job creator or do they want a prosecutor? And that’s their call,” Grossman said.

But that’s the worst kind of dig candidates seem to be willing to make at this stage. In fact, when the lights dimmed, they all got together for a group selfie.

Candidates need at least 15 percent of delegate votes at this weekend’s convention in order to appear on the primary ballot in September. Grossman is expected to win the convention, and Coakley is likely to have no problem securing enough delegates. The question is who else, if anyone, will also make it on the ballot?

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Candidates' focus on student issues can win elections

By ASHLEY CULLINANE

The race for governor hits home for college students in more ways than I can count.
As a 21-year-old with my sights set on landing a professional job next year, I’m concerned with a lot more than legalization of marijuana.
Public transportation, affordable housing, student debt and Obamacare are what students are talking about.
The five Democratic candidates for governor at yesterday’s Suffolk University/Boston Herald debate were speaking to my generation when they touched on those topics — and that was a savvy political move.
There are about 250,000 college students in the Boston area and 450,000 statewide. And many of us vote! We should. We need representation as much as anyone.
When a university kicks a student out of housing after the second year, how can you take advantage of the opportunities a world-class city can offer while commuting two hours a day?
More and more young adults are choosing the workforce over higher education because the mounting cost of college is just too much to handle.
The candidates are certainly not T riders, but we are. Why are fares increasing? What about safety on the subway?
We have questions, and instead of complaining on Twitter, we need to vote for those who vow to hold the MBTA accountable.
The same goes for housing.
“This is an abomination,” said gubernatorial candidate Joe Avellone at the debate when asked about housing for students.
He advocated “coming down hard on landlords.” That’s talking to my demographic.
The next governor has to make quick decisions that affect those in college.
“Action, passion and an engaged electorate are what win elections,” Steve Grossman said yesterday.
I agree, and that can be revised: action, passion and an engaged student community can win elections.

Ashley Cullinane will be a senior this fall at Suffolk University, studying broadcast journalism.
Rivals Leave AG in Lead After Debate

Here's my No. 1 takeaway from yesterday's Suffolk University/Boston Herald debate. Looking at the five Democratic gubernatorial candidates, it's pretty clear there are no clunkers in this group. On the contrary, their experiences and accomplishments make them one of the most solid gubernatorial fields in recent history.

Here are my other takeaways from the debate:

**Martha Coakley:** The attorney general entered the room with a commanding lead and exited an hour or so later with the same commanding lead. Rivals poked and prodded her, but she emerged unscathed. Which is exactly what a front-runner is supposed to do.

**Steve Grossman:** As always, the state treasurer sounded gubernatorial and competent. But true to his low-key style, he didn't light any fires or stir much excitement. He's clearly prepared for these forums and is running a great campaign, but he's probably counting on the party convention this weekend more than the debate to give his trailing campaign some propulsion.

**Don Berwick:** The pediatrician and former Obama administration official delivered a solid performance, but seemed to frame every answer to every question on every issue around health care or the need to solve the problems of poverty. It may be a sound strategy since he's targeting the party's ultraliberal wing, but for many, it might beg the question of whether he's ready to govern on a broader range of issues.

**Juliette Kayyem:** Her performance reinforced the impressions held by many Democrats — namely that she might be the most likeable and energetic candidate in the race. The former Homeland Security official also went after Coakley on her move to try to block the gaming referendum question in November. Party delegates might have a really hard time keeping this dynamo off the ballot.

**Joe Avellone:** The former
Wellesley selectman and businessman tried very hard to be the cool voice of reason — and he succeeded somewhat. But being reasonable doesn’t energize his supporters, and that’s a fatal flaw in any campaign.

Other takeaways: The debate included the novel idea of letting candidates from the opposing parties ask videotaped questions.

Republicans Charlie Baker and Mark Fisher wasted no time ticking off the problems of the current administration — EBT card abuse, medical marijuana snafus, the DCF scandal, the Health Connector’s website woes — before asking the Democrats to respond. Hard as they tried, they couldn’t defend these mismanagement disasters, but they all vowed to do things differently if elected.

It was a preview of coming attractions in the general election.

What readers said on our message boards at bostonherald.com:

"Five Democrats were debating welfare? What were they arguing about? Was each of them claiming they could put more people on the dole than the others?"

— Arthur Jackson
Dem debaters’ winning strategies

MARTHA COAKLEY

Look composed and show leadership. If Grossman attacks, make him look desperate and overly aggressive. Challenge Grossman to disavow super PACs, but don’t get into head-to-head confrontations with any of the other contenders. She may need them on her side in the primary.

TEXT BY JON BATTENFELD

STEVE GROSSMAN

Turn the debate into a Grossman-Coakley show, and engage the attorney general whenever possible — without looking too ungentlemanly. Ignore the other three contenders in the hopes that voters and convention delegates will see the race as a one-on-one primary battle. Also, smile once in a while.
JULIETTE KAYYEM
Show yourself as a visionary outsider, much like the man who now occupies the Corner Office, Deval Patrick. Name drop Patrick as much as possible. Take on Coakley and Grossman, but ignore the other two candidates. Let your personality shine — you have the best one in the field.

DONALD BERWICK
Cast yourself as the only candidate in the race willing to take a stand and oppose casinos — before it became politically popular. Go after Coakley, because she's the front-runner. Don’t mention you helped create Obamacare.

JOE AVELLONE
Make nice to all the candidates, especially Coakley and Grossman. Maybe they will appoint you to a Cabinet position some day. Make it known you are willing to make a deal at the convention to throw your delegates.
Democratic candidates face off in Suffolk-Herald debate

The Democrats have broken out of the gate in their five-way primary race for governor and on June 10 they will hit the stage for a wide-ranging Suffolk University-Boston Herald debate.

The one-hour debate — kicking off at 11 a.m. at Suffolk’s Studio 73 on Tremont Street — will stream live on bostonherald.com and Suffolk.edu and will be carried on Boston Herald Radio.

The event will be moderated by Herald editorial page editor Rachelle Cohen and John Nucci, Suffolk’s vice president of government relations and community affairs.

Suffolk University President James McCarthy said, “We’re pleased to join our partners at the Boston Herald in presenting this important conversation with the Democratic candidates for governor. And the debate offers yet another terrific opportunity for our students to participate in the production alongside seasoned journalists and to question the candidates.”

The candidates — Joe Avloni, Don Berwick, Martha Coakley, Steve Grossman and Juliette Kayyem — will take questions from the moderators as well as Suffolk students.

Viewers and listeners will be invited to join in as well through social media and texting.

“What a great forum to hear from those who would lead our state as they outline their ideas, positions and visions,” said Herald President and Publisher Patrick J. Purcell.

Full coverage and analysis will be provided before and after the event on Boston Herald Radio.
Lights out for hopefuls who don’t shine in debate

Win, or go home.
That could very well be the key storyline of tomorrow's Suffolk University/Boston Herald debate. When the klaxon lights click on, it might very well be one of the last times that some participants get to call themselves candidates for governor.

That's because the bottom tier of the field is facing elimination just a few days later when the Democratic Convention is called to order in Worcester on Saturday. If the convention delegates don't give Juliette Kayyem, Joe Avellone or Donald Berwick the necessary 15 percent of their votes, then summer vacation will start early for these three. That makes their debate performance tomorrow critical. They need to step it up big time.

Each has demonstrated that they are capable and qualified to be the next chief executive of the state. None of them would have too much difficulty finding a job in either the public or private sector given their backgrounds and qualifications. But polls show that they have simply not clicked with the voters in any meaningful way. They all have dedicated supporters and have broadened their bases a bit, but they need something to happen soon to give them a breakaway moment.

And a debate might be just what the doctor ordered to provide one or more of them that opportunity.

Likely voters look forward to debates. Casual voters sometimes tune in. But the politically active crowd that will spend a gorgeous June Saturday in a crowded Worcester convention hall absolutely live and die for debates. Diehard supporters gravitate to debates — in this case, clicking onto the Boston Herald and Suffolk University websites or Boston Herald Radio — and root for their candidates to score points. They also hang on their rivals' words hoping for a gaffe that might do some damage.

Tomorrow, Kayyem, Avellone and Berwick might be looking for one of those big debate “moments” that could put them on the radar of the average voter, but more importantly to make some convention delegates perk up and take a look. Those who have been following the race closely, as convention delegates tend to do, already know the candidates' stump speeches by heart.

The candidates might feel that simply regurgitating the same old thing won't change the dynamic of the race enough.

Instead, any of the candidates — to include top rivals AG Martha Coakley and State Treasurer Steve Grossman — might look to do or say something different, even controversial. But the more likely scenario is that one of the three trailing candidates fighting for survival will seize this opportunity to grab some attention. And why not? They've worked hard and want to continue their fight beyond the convention. Tomorrow's debate gives them an opportunity to make their cases before a broad audience.

Campaigns are about drawing distinctions among the candidates. Debates offer an ideal opportunity to show what a candidate stands for and why he or she is better prepared to lead the state. Suffolk University and the Boston Herald are presenting the stage — now it's up to the candidates to take full advantage of it. It's an opportunity wasted not to do so.

Tomorrow. 11 a.m. Tune in.
"Can I say something to the attorney general — when you go after banks, you always say, 'I did this.' On this issue, it's 'we.' ... You can't hide behind the 'we' of the office."

— JULIETTE KAYYEM

“We haven’t had a manager of large operations in state government in a long time — and it shows.”

— JOE AVELLONE
Candidates clash on casinos, welfare at Suffolk-Herald debate

First showdown before Saturday's Democratic convention

By: Chris Cassidy

The five Democratic candidates for governor clashed on casinos, illegal immigration, and photo IDs on welfare cards during lively exchanges at today's Boston Herald-Suffolk University debate -- the last before this weekend's high stakes convention.

Attorney General Martha Coakley was put on the defensive over her office's attempts to block a ballot question to repeal casino gambling in Massachusetts, where the case is currently before the state Supreme Judicial Court.

"They're not going to rule against me," said Coakley, adding it's her office, not she personally, who is fighting the repeal efforts and the SJC that will ultimately decide.

"Can I say something to the Attorney General -- when you go after banks, you always say, 'I did this.' On this issue, it's 'we,'" said Juliette Kayyem. "This is a huge issue for the state ... You can't hide behind the 'we' of the office."

Donald Berwick -- citing Herald/Suffolk polling data showing growing support for repealing gambling in Massachusetts -- said he's the only candidate who opposes casino gambling, arguing it will "cannibalize the Lottery," create a mental health burden, add to petty crime, and hurt small businesses.

"It's a bad deal for the state," said Berwick. "I think voters are showing they recognize that."

The candidates also clashed on welfare reform, including photo IDs on state-issued EBT cards.

Coakley touted her office's prosecution of fraudulent convenient store owners. Kayyem said Democrats, who implement social services like welfare, should be the first to be outraged when the programs failed, and lamented the "20th century technology" they use.

Grossman said the state can't make the 800,000 Bay Staters on food stamps into scape goats. "This about compassion and social justice," he said.

Berwick said he has fought Medicare and Medicaid previously but wouldn't put barriers in the way of people seeking services.

Joe Avellone separated himself from the other Democrats by being the only one who said he opposes tying the state gas tax to inflation, calling it "a backdoor tax without people's real knowledge."

"What people don't like is escaping leadership and relying on sleight," he said.

Asked about easing marijuana restrictions, Kayyem, who was the only candidate to freely admitted she has smoked pot, said she's looking toward states like Colorado and Washington to see how their efforts go. Coakley warned the federal government's look-the-other-way policy toward state implementation "could change overnight" with a new presidential administration.

Grossman pointed out the state's implementation of medical marijuana has been "a fiasco."

When asked by GOP frontrunner Charlie Baker in a pre-recorded video question, all five Democrats said the state is headed in the right direction. But Grossman pointed out that case loads at DCF need to be eased and that the Health Connector, charged with implementing Obamacare in Massachusetts is a "disaster." Coakley said states where Republicans dominate "have a high poverty level, they don't have a good education, they don't have good job growth."
The debate came just a day after a Boston Herald/Suffolk University poll showed Coakley with a commanding -- but dwindling -- lead over the rest of the pack.

She holds a 32-point edge over Grossman, but analysts said she had to show debate watchers that she's recovered from her devastating defeat during the 2010 Senate race to Scott Brown and has the passion to mount a fierce fight against presumptive GOP nominees Charlie Baker.

The candidates squared off with the Democratic state convention set for this weekend in Worcester, where activists and party loyalists will determine which of the five candidates will clear the 15 percent hurdle needed to make the September primary ballot.

Political observers expect Grossman to capture the most delegates on Saturday, but many other delegates are undecided, and today’s debate was a final chance for the candidates to appeal directly for their vote.

The debate was held at Suffolk University’s studio on Tremont Street, where Boston Herald Radio was broadcasting live, and moderated by Herald Editorial Page Editor Rachelle Cohen and Suffolk University John Nucci. Sign-holding campaign supporters for both Coakley and Grossman stood outside Suffolk.
Chabot: Rivals land few punches on Coakley at Suffolk-Herald debate

AG and Democratic candidate for governor Martha Coakley walks to the studio for this morning's Suffolk University Boston Herald debate.

Tuesday, June 10, 2014

By: Hillary Chabot

Gubernatorial frontrunner Martha Coakley’s toughest rivals kept their swords sheathed during a Boston Herald/Suffolk University debate today — blowing their opportunity to shake up the race and boost their own candidacy days before the Democratic convention.

The chummy table chat means that candidates finished the 75-minute debate in roughly the same competitive spot as before the event — leaving Coakley a big winner for breezing through the debate unscathed.

Coakley spent nearly all of the debate focusing on areas of agreement with the Democratic candidates Treasurer Steve Grossman, Juliette Kayyem, Don Berwick and Joseph Avellone.

"I think we all agree that the federal government didn’t do it’s job," said a relaxed Coakley when asked about the Secure Communities Act.

The attorney general, who is the Democratic front runner in the race by double digits, sat comfortably between lesser-known candidates Berwick and Avellone at a round table and often cracked jokes while taking questions from Suffolk University’s John Nucci and the Herald’s Rachelle Cohen.

The one time Kayyem tried to take Coakley to task the former homeland security official’s body language showed extreme discomfort. Kayyem failed to make eye contact and turned her body away as she sought to slam the front-runner for being hypocritical on the casino repeal ballot question.

"You can’t hide behind the ‘we,’ of office," said Kayyem, accusing Coakley of trying to duck blame for ruling that a casino repeal ballot is unconstitutional.

Kayyem pointed out that Coakley takes personal credit for many accomplishments in her office, but shuffled blame to her office on the ballot question.

"You always say, ‘I did this,’ (but) On this issue, it’s ‘we,’ or ‘my office,’” said Kayyem.

But criticisms like that were few and far between, leaving Coakley unharmed and the other candidates serving up largely forgettable performances.

Grossman, who ramped up his rhetoric against Coakley over the past week as he prepares for a convention win, landed nearly no blows on the woman he recently suggested should reassess her candidacy.

Grossman briefly sought to tweak Coakley on her lack of activist support and the fact that he will likely win the upcoming Democratic Convention, but the rest of the discussion featuring welfare abuse, the Department of Children and Families, as well as public transportation found most of the candidates agreeing.

"We do disagree around this table on the issues," said Grossman during a rare critical moment.

Mr. Treasurer, you wouldn’t guess it listening to today’s debate.
FOUR RACING TOWARD SATURDAY SHOWDOWN

By CHRIS CASSIDY and MATT STOUT

Juliette Kayyem is hoping her aggressive attacks on Martha Coakley at the Suffolk University/Boston Herald debate yesterday will help vault her onto the Democratic gubernatorial ballot, even as Treasurer Steve Grossman looks to topple the front-running attorney general at the party’s convention this weekend and boost his lagging poll numbers, according to political experts.

“She’s on the cusp — she could go either way,” Paul Watanabe of the University of Massachusetts Boston said of Kayyem. “Ironically, if we were having a primary right now, she could probably get 15 percent of the public’s vote. The group she has to appeal to is the one that’s made up of party insiders.”

Those insiders are gathering Saturday in Worcester, where the five gubernatorial rivals are bidding to collect at least 15 percent of the delegates to make it onto the Sept. 9 primary ballot. There are 6,000 delegates — many already committed — but political experts say the number of undecideds is larger than usual.

Coakley and Grossman are locks to make it onto the ballot, with the attorney general looking to deal the state treasurer a crippling blow by handing him a second-place finish. But some say that’s not guaranteed because among the delegates that they like them all. If you’re close, I think the number of undecideds helps you. I could see a higher number of undecideds helping those just under 15 percent.”

Kayyem continued to take the offensive against Coakley even after yesterday’s showdown.

“You cannot simply hide behind the role when you’re afraid or too cautious to take a stand,” Kayyem said of Coakley and her state AG post. “Caution is not going to win the governorship for the Democrats. So say what you mean, say what your opinion is, and don’t hide behind the office.”

That jab came after Kayyem accused Coakley during the debate of bragging about her office’s achievements when it’s politically helpful, but distancing herself from them when they’re unpopular, including her efforts to block a casino repeal ballot question from the Nov. 4 election — a matter before the state Supreme Judicial Court.

Grossman, meanwhile, took shots at Coakley before and after the debate — but not during — saying the state “needs a progressive job-creator and not a prosecutor as the next governor.”

Coakley committed no major gaffes and declared pride in her record as attorney general, which amounts to a win for the party’s undisputed front-runner.
"Can I say something to the attorney general — when you go after banks, you always say, 'I did this.' On this issue, it's 'we.' ... You can't hide behind the 'we' of the office."

— JULIETTE KAYYEM

“We haven't had a manager of large operations in state government in a long time — and it shows.”

— JOE AVELLONE

DEBATE CLUB: From left are Martha Coakley, Don Berwick and Joe Avellone, debate moderators Rachelle Cohen and John Nucci, and Juliette Kayyem and Steve Grossman.
Don't miss the replay!

Go to bostonherald.com for a replay of the Suffolk University/Boston Herald debate.

Also, take the poll and vote for who you think won the showdown between the five Democratic gubernatorial candidates.
Gubernatorial candidates tangle before convention

State House News Service | Posted: Wednesday, June 11, 2014 3:00 am

BOSTON — In their final tune-up before this weekend’s state party convention, the five Democrats running for governor jousted over illegal immigration and casino gambling during a debate Tuesday that also reflected broader philosophical agreements on many issues facing the candidates.

Attorney General Martha Coakley, leading in the polls, faced several barbs from her rivals over her previous opposition to driver’s licenses for undocumented immigrants and her office’s decision to disqualify a potential ballot question that would repeal the state’s casino law.

All five candidates also agreed that Massachusetts was on the “right track” after eight years with Gov. Deval Patrick at the helm, but they didn’t hesitate to describe issues with the Department of Children and Families, the Health Connector and the rollout of medical marijuana as “fiascos” and management failures of his administration.

The debate was the last matchup between the Democrats running for governor before the nominating convention in Worcester this weekend when one, or maybe more, may fail to win enough support among party insiders to qualify for the ballot. Coakley came into the forum riding high in the polls, even though Grossman is widely expected to win the convention’s delegate vote.

The latest Suffolk University-Boston Herald poll showed Coakley leading Grossman with 44 percent to the treasurer’s 12 percent. The debate, streamed live on the Internet, was moderated by Suffolk University’s John Nucci, a former city councilor, and Herald editorial page editor Rachelle Cohen.

“I’m going to make the argument that this state needs a progressive job creator, not a prosecutor as the next governor,” Grossman said after the 90-minute debate.

With the struggles of past attorneys general to ascend to the governor’s office, Grossman seemed to
use the word “prosecutor” as a negative to describe his chief rival for the Democratic nomination. “Martha Coakley is a prosecutor. That’s fundamentally what she is,” Grossman said. Asked to explain what he meant, Grossman said, “She spent her life as a prosecutor. We need a job creator.”

Coakley said she was not paying attention to the poll numbers, and she said her career as a prosecutor in Middlesex County and at the state level was not a detriment to her campaign. She noted her fights against bank home foreclosures and challenging the Defense of Marriage Act.

“I’ve always focused on families, people who need a voice, people who need someone to speak for them. I’ve done that as a prosecutor, I’ve done it as AG. I will be the voice for people as their governor,” Coakley told reporters.

All five Democrats said they supported Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone’s recent decision to sign an executive order limiting the city’s cooperation with the Secure Communities program, which partners local police with federal authorities to hold undocumented immigrants for possible deportation.

“Anyone who is in public safety know that communities have to have trust and faith in their law enforcement, otherwise they will not come forward whether it’s domestic violence or drugs,” said former homeland security official Juliette Kayyem.

Coakley said the program was designed to help federal authorities remove threats to public safety from communities. “We know it’s gone far too far,” she said, by targeting many undocumented immigrants with no criminal background.

Grossman described Secure Communities as a “blunt instrument,” but he quickly pivoted to knock Coakley for opposing drivers’ licenses for undocumented immigrants, which he called a public safety issue. Coakley has opposed such licenses in the past, but during the campaign said she would be open to the idea because the federal government has failed to enact comprehensive immigration reform.

Both Grossman and Kayyem said they would support drivers’ licenses and in-state tuition rates for undocumented immigrants.

Dr. Donald Berwick, a pediatrician and former Medicare and Medicaid administrator under Obama, also sought to differentiate himself from the pack with his support for single-payer health care and his opposition to casino gambling.
Coakley’s liberal luggage weighs her down vs. GOP

The biggest loser in the showdown at Suffolk is Martha Coakley.

Not because the attorney general performed badly in the Boston Herald Radio debate — she actually did fine. Coakley’s the loser because as the likely Democratic nominee, she’s stuck with a stack of far-left positions she’s adopted to appease liberal activists who dominate her party’s convention and primary.

The five-way debate yesterday handed Charlie Baker and Republicans a reel of ready-made attack ads they can use to portray Coakley and Democrats as out of step with independent voters.

Coakley’s for the new gas tax measure that’s going to raise prices at the pump for years. So are all the candidates except one lone holdout, Joe Avellone. How’s Coakley going to explain her position to regular voters who have to commute to work and can’t bike or take the T?

Then there’s Coakley’s flip-flop on Secure Communities, the law allowing cops to check the status of suspected illegal immigrants. She’s the top cop in the state and won’t back the law because it’s not politically correct among Democrats. Avellone compared the law to a “police state.”

When Treasurer Steve Grossman accused Coakley of being an early “cheerleader” for Secure Communities, you’d think the attorney general would proudly accept the title. No way. She denied it.

Coakley also wholeheartedly joined the chorus of praise for Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone for welcoming illegal immigrants to his city. Curtatone could have been nominated for sainthood by the Dems.

And Coakley was downright apologetic for once opposing giving drivers licenses to illegal immigrants.

Then there was the question posed by poor Lauren Berube, a Suffolk University student who had the gall to say that she and others are concerned that affirmative action was unfair to white students like her. You’d think Berube had just asked why the candidates didn’t support slaughtering baby seals.

Juliette Kayyem called it a “depressing” question and other candidates gave a condescending lecture to Berube. Coakley, to her credit, did not.

“The concern is this young woman feels she is not being treated fairly,” Coakley said.

That was a rare moment when Coakley diverted from the typical liberal script. She needs to do this more often if she wants to win the general election, when voters who don’t care about conventions or party platforms will be casting a ballot. Even Berube said after the debate she was impressed by Coakley’s answer and would consider voting for the AG.

And Berube is a Republican. Imagine that.
TOUGH ROAD AHEAD: Attorney General Martha Coakley, the Democratic front-runner for governor, participates in yesterday's debate.
A look into the future of debates

It's politics-on-demand in an On Demand world. So no surprise that Web debates are gaining more and more viewers, according to Bob Rosenthal, chairman of Suffolk's communication and journalism department.

"Web debates are becoming a very important part of the process, especially since the people who watch the Web debates right now tend to be the more educated, the more inner circle, the party regular," Rosenthal said.

Yesterday's debate, which took place at Suffolk's Studio 73, came across almost like a coffee klatch. Three high-definition cameras were trained at eye level on the five candidates as they sat elbow-to-elbow at a conference table, with a fourth ceiling camera that allowed for dramatic cutaways.

All in all, it made for a conversational give-and-take, as opposed to the usual stiff and formal deliveries from candidates behind podiums and under klieg lights in old-school TV forums.

In another unconventional twist, Republicans Charlie Baker and Mark Fisher and independent candidate Jeff McCormick tossed pre-recorded questions at the Democrats.

The debate was slated to go an hour and 15 minutes but ended up running 7 minutes over. That, too, would never happen on TV, which has to adhere to a strict programming schedule.

"You can go a little longer, which means you get better answers, they can debate a little bit more, rather than a half-hour or even an hour," Rosenthal said. "It also reaches an audience that TV may not — a younger audience."
THE NEW NORMAL: Suffolk TV studio manager Jerry Glendye, top right, said webcasts like yesterday's debate, above, are going to become the norm rather than the exception.
On to the convention: Kayyem could hit magic 15 percent mark

Massachusetts Democratic gubernatorial hopeful Joseph Avellone, right, takes a "selfie" photo of the entire group of hopefuls following a debate at Suffolk University in Boston, Tuesday, June 10, 2014. The five Democrats running for governor met in their final debate, sponsored by the Boston Herald, prior to this weekend's state party convention, which will determine who qualifies for the September primary. From left Don Berwick, Martha Coakley, Steve Grossman, Juliette Kayyem and Avellone. (Staff photo Matt Stone)

By: Chris Cassidy, Matt Stout

Wednesday, June 11, 2014

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Coakley and Grossman are locks to make it onto the ballot, with the attorney general looking to deal the state treasurer a crippling blow by handing him a second-place finish. But some say that's not guaranteed because Grossman — who said he's personally called a majority of the delegates — could reap the benefits of his legwork and collect 45 percent of the vote.

Don Berwick — the former Obama administration official who's courting the party's ultra-left by pushing so-called "single-payer" health plans — boasted after the debate he'll make the cut, saying: "We'll be on the ballot for sure."

That leaves Kayyem and Joe Avellone fighting for the leftovers.

Political watchdogs say Kayyem could be the fourth winner this weekend, especially if Grossman swings a few delegates her way to chip away at Coakley's lead in the polls and make it a crowded field.

The last time more than three candidates made it onto the Democratic primary ballot was in 2002 — when five made the cut, including Grossman.

None of the candidates landed game-changing blows during the debate, making the legions of undecided delegates that much more valuable.

"There's a much higher number of undecided voters than normal at this year's convention," said Democratic strategist Scott Ferson. "There's a general sense among the delegates that they like them all. ... If you're close, I think the number of undecideds helps you. ... I could see a higher number of undecideds helping those just under 15 percent."

Kayyem continued to take the offensive against Coakley even after yesterday's showdown.
“You cannot simply hide behind the role when you’re afraid or too cautious to take a stand,” Kayyem said of Coakley and her state AG post. “Caution is not going to win the governorship for the Democrats. So say what you mean, say what your opinion is, and don’t hide behind the office.”

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More On: Suffolk University/Boston Herald debate

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Other hopefuls take aim at ‘right track’ comments

The other candidates for governor ripped into their Democratic rivals for what they slammed as status quo answers at yesterday’s Suffolk University/Boston Herald debate — specifically after all five said they thought the state was on the “right track.”

GOP candidates Charlie Baker and Mark Fisher and independent Jeff McCormick offered up pre-recorded videos for the debate, but had more to say after the event was over.

The Democrats had Baker and others scratching their heads, despite nagging problems at the state Department of Children and Families, at the Health Connector, at the Probation Department and with the medical marijuana rollout.

“(Martha) Coakley is turning a blind eye to the serious shortcomings of state government, specifically DCF, the $450 million debacle that is the Health Connector and the probation department scandal, because she is out of touch,” Baker spokesman Tim Buckley said in a statement, focusing his shots at the attorney general and Democratic front-runner.

McCormick said in a statement he didn’t hear any “new, fresh solutions” to create jobs and said he “strongly” disagrees with their assessment of the state’s direction.

“If voters want business as usual that is what they will get from the current Democratic candidates,” he said.

In his question, Tea Party candidate Mark Fisher touched on what he called skyrocketing food stamp costs and welfare fraud — enough that he says the Bay State is becoming “Detroit-achusetts.”

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More On: Suffolk University/Boston Herald debate

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DEBATE GIVES
DEM CHANCE TO SHINE

By CHRIS CASSIDY

It's crunch time for the Democratic candidates for governor as they face off today for the last time before this weekend's convention, where some of them will be sent packing and front-runner Martha Coakley needs to show she's ready for battle, analysts said.

It all begins at 11 a.m. as the Suffolk University/Boston Herald debate is webcast live from the college. Observers expect it will be a lively showdown.

"They can say whatever they want and make their last-ditch effort," said political science professor Erin O'Brien of the University of Massachusetts Boston. "This is their last chance to get into activists' heads what they think the defining issues are in the race."

With many delegates still undecided, all five Democrats squaring off this morning at Suffolk University have a chance to make gains that could rocket them out of Saturday's state convention with game-changing momentum. Coakley needs to show she's also ready for battle.

"Democratic primary voters still like her very much, but they're concerned about how she'll contrast with (Charlie) Baker given the Scott Brown race in 2010," said Democratic consultant Scott Ferson. "She needs to show she's a little higher-energy than last time, that she's passionate."

Coakley enters the debate with a 32-point lead, according to yesterday's Suffolk/Herald poll, but she's expected to finish behind Steve Grossman at Saturday's convention.

"There have been lots of polls with this race and there will be plenty more," Coakley told the Herald. "They're a snapshot."

Struggling with name recognition, Grossman may have the most to gain with a commanding performance today, said Ferson.

"Grossman's got to win," said Ferson. "Being acknowledged the winner of the debate leading up to his expected win at the convention will be a good one-two punch just to get on people's radar screens."

Grossman noted Coakley's support is still below 50 percent.

"There's a clear passion gap out there for her," Grossman said. "... I see (the debate) as a gateway to this weekend and everything that comes after it."

Donald Berwick, Juliette Kayyem and Joe Avolone, who all polled under 5 percent yesterday, may be facing their last real chance to salvage their campaign, though many expect...
Berwick to clear the 15 percent required to make the primary ballot.

Kayyem said she expects to stand out: “Democrats will only win the Corner Office by being bold and not being cautious.”

Avellone said he sees the debate as a chance to talk to uncommitted delegates about the jobs he’s created.

Meanwhile, Republican Charlie Baker said he was pleased with poll numbers showing he’s closed the gap with Coakley to 7 points.

“I’m encouraged by those results,” said Baker. “They represent the work we’ve been doing and the message we’ve got.”

— chris.cassidy@bostonherald.com

What readers said on our message boards at bostonherald.com:

“31-19! Number of Republican Governors vs. Democratic Office holders! Time to get back to our leadership roots!”

— Astrojet

“Martha is in favor of ObamaCare to this day. Not thrilled by RINO Baker, but I’ll take him over her any day since he wants no part of ObamaCare.”

— tonykphoto8

“Has anyone told Charlie Baker he might be the republican candidate for governor? He seems so disinterested.”

— Runs With Scissors
Dems to face off in Suffolk/Herald debate

The stage is set for Tuesday's Suffolk University/Boston Herald debate, when the five Democrats vying for governor will face off just days before their all-important party convention.

Suffolk's John Nucci and the Herald's Rachelle Cohen will moderate the 75-minute webcast, beginning at 11 a.m., live from the university's Studio 73 on Tremont Street.

Candidates Martha Coakley, Steve Grossman, Juliette Kayyem, Don Berwick and Joseph Avellone will make their pitches and take questions from the moderators and students.

Their potential Republican rivals, Charlie Baker and Mark Fisher, and independent Jeff McCormick will even get into the action, posing questions by video.

Voters will have their say as well, by submitting questions on Twitter through the hashtag #MAgov.

Will front-runners Coakley and Grossman mix it up? Will Kayyem get the traction she needs heading into the convention? Will Berwick and Avellone show something special to break out of the pack? And will the Republicans stump their Democratic rivals?

Watch the debate at bostonherald.com and suffolk.edu. Listen on Boston Herald Radio, where there will be complete coverage before and after the streaming event.

And don't forget to pick up the paper and see how its political team scores the candidates.

— HERALD STAFF
STAFF FILE PHOTO, ABOVE, BY MATT STONE. STAFF PHOTO, RIGHT, BY MATT WEST

HOPEING TO MAKE A STATEMENT: Democratic gubernatorial hopefuls Donald Berwick, above, and Joe Avellone, right, hope that a strong performance today will propel them to a place on the primary ballot.

STAFF PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER EVANS

BOLD, NOT CAUTIONOUS: Juliette Kayyem has expressed the idea that taking chances is the way to win the Corner Office.
Gov hopefuls to go head-to-head

The five Democratic candidates for governor will face off in the Suffolk University/Boston Herald debate tomorrow at 11 a.m., just days before the party convention that will determine who makes the September primary ballot.

Watch the 75-minute live webcast at Bostonherald.com or Suffolk.edu. Listen live on Boston Herald Radio, with complete coverage before and after the debate. Candidates Martha Coakley, Steven Grossman, Juliette Kayyem, Donald Berwick and Joseph Avellone will take questions from students and the moderators, Suffolk’s John Nucci and the Herald’s Rachelle Cohen.
Tune into Herald Radio for coverage

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Democratic candidates Martha Coakley, Steve Grossman, Juliette Kayyem, Donald Berwick and Joe Avellone will take questions from students and the moderators, Suffolk's John Nucci and the Herald's Rachelle Cohen.

Questions will also come from Twitter followers. Just submit your question using the hashtag #magov. Twitter questions will be pitched after the first break.

Call in before the debate to Herald Radio, where your questions could also be used during the debate.

You can also follow the debate on the Herald's free news app or the free TuneIn Radio app.

And vote afterward at bostonherald.com on who you think won the debate.
Democratic debate scorecard

Best personality

By JOE BATTENFELD

Juliette Kayyem

She's the clear winner here, though admittedly there's not much competition. She is the youngest and most vibrant of the Dems and, let's face it, who would you rather have dinner with, Kayyem, Martha Coakley or Steve Grossman? That's an easy one. Let's hope Kayyem is around for the whole campaign.

Best answer

Attorney General
Martha Coakley

Her response to Suffolk University student Lauren Berube's question about whether affirmative action is unfair to white students was surprisingly compassionate. Coakley showed sympathy and didn't dismiss Berube's concerns. Even Berube, a Republican, was impressed.
Worst answer

Juliette Kayyem

She wins this dubious award for her answer to Berube, calling it a “depressing” question and proceeding to lecture her on the benefits of affirmative action. She then offered to take Berube for a cup of coffee — not to hear her concerns, but to “explain.” No thanks, Juliette.

Best moonbat

Don Berwick

This is a tough call. They pretty much all battled to be crowned King of the Left Wing, except poor Joe Avelone, who has no chance. In the end, Don Berwick wins this category for supporting not just Obamacare, but complete government-controlled “single-payer” health care. This will play well at the party convention, where moonbats rule.

Biggest personality change

Steve Grossman

What happened to the amped-up Grossman, who called out Coakley before the debate and said if she didn’t win the convention, she should re-examine her candidacy? Instead, Grossman offered up only one lame swipe at Coakley and had no energy during the whole debate. More coffee next time, Steve.
Coakley needs strong debate showing to avoid 2010 redux

He's no Scott Brown, but Treasurer Steve Grossman could still deliver a 2010-style blow to Democratic front-runner Martha Coakley with his expected Democratic Convention blowout win.

Coakley, who's spent years trying to win back the goodwill of Dems still surly after her loss to Brown, must pounce on tomorrow's Suffolk University/Boston Herald debate as her last chance before the convention to cut Grossman down to size to offset a potentially humiliating and campaign-bruising convention loss.

"She's got to look like she's got a little spark. She's got to give the sense that she's passionate in some way," said Democratic consultant Scott Ferson, bemoaning the 2010 Coakley who appeared aloof and uninterested in wooing voters. That Coakley suffered national embarrassment after her historic defeat to the little-known Brown.

"Democrats don't want to see that Coakley," Ferson said. At stake for both top-tier gubernatorial candidates at tomorrow's debate, moderated by Suffolk University's John Nucci and the Herald's Rachelle Cohen, is the momentum leading up to the convention. A solid debate win for Grossman followed by an overwhelming convention victory could change the direction of the race for governor.

A similar campaign shake-up happened in 2006, when Deval Patrick's unexpected convention triumph jump-started his campaign past front-runner Tom Reilly.

Few believe Grossman, a longtime party insider, will get the same kind of momentum that Patrick received. Coakley has a double-digit lead in the polls and has expertly blunted expectations about her convention showing.

But Grossman has a chance to make a case that he is the better candidate to take on Republican Charlie Baker in a debate.

Any whiff of doubt in her ability to take on Baker during the unscripted showdown would be devastating, and
could re-open deep wounds with Democratic voters left by Brown's stingy 2010 win.

"Grossman needs to knock her down a peg and feed into concern about whether she'll be able to take on Charlie," said Ferson. "People will say, 'If she can't even take on Grossman how can she take on Baker?""

It won't be easy for Grossman. He'll have to battle to be heard amid three other lesser-known Democrats struggling to make their mark and attract voters' attentions during the 75-minute debate.

Coakley, likely to be the target of all four opponents, will have to exude confidence and know-how in a way that proves she can back up her front-runner status with more than just name recognition.
Not time for scrappy Kayyem to hold back

Hillary CHABOT

The crowded Democratic gubernatorial field is stacked against long shot Juliette Kayyem, but the newcomer hasn't been afraid to throat-punch her rivals in her quest for the Corner Office.

Now it's time for this 44-year-old upstart to turbo-channel Chuck Norris. The June 15 Democratic convention looks to be playing out strictly by the numbers, with Attorney General Martha Coakley looming as the front-running heavyweight and Treasurer Steve Grossman flexing his insider muscle in hopes of scoring a convention win.

So Kayyem, a former Homeland Security official, needs to go SEAL Team 6 at Tuesday's Suffolk University/Herald debate, then do it again days later at the party convention, to shove her way onto the ballot. A California native who has copped to smoking pot, she may come across as a peace-and-love hippy type, but those paying attention know she's got plenty of Walker, Texas Ranger in her. Kayyem has been willing to throw a sharp elbow in a state where Democratic primaries are filled with touchy-feely nice guys too afraid to disagree.

She refused to buckle under intense Democratic pressure from the beginning, even as hand-wringing party honchos leaned on her to bow out and let Coakley carry the banner as the sole female gubernatorial candidate.

Since then, Kayyem hasn't backed away from smack talk. While other Democratic niche candidates, such as ultra-progressive Don Berwick or fiscally moderate Joe Avellone, are content to ignore their rivals and carve out their turf, Kayyem lays out her policy stances — she champions prison reform, a cleaner environment and better treatment for veterans — with a side of knuckle sandwich for her competitors.

At a Boston rally last month, Kayyem mockingly summed up Coakley's candidacy as too "few campaign appearances, few tough stands, no bold ideas."

Then without batting an eye she pivoted to Grossman, saying, "Endorsements from old political friends and calling in political IOUs doesn't create jobs, or improve schools or give a kid who made a mistake a second chance."

This past week, however, Kayyem seems to be softening her stance — the exact wrong tack to take ahead of a high-profile debate and what promises to be a bruising convention.

If Kayyem needs a reminder how to be tough, she need look no further than her recent appearance on Boston Herald Radio.

"This is not a consolation prize. There's no lifetime achievement award for having been a politician forever," she said in a thinly veiled slam at Coakley, who famously lost a Senate race to Scott Brown — and Grossman, a lifelong party apparatchik.

"This is a fight for the Democratic Party, for the future of Massachusetts."
FIGHTING CHANCE: Gubernatorial candidate Juliette Kayyem attends a clean energy forum in February.
Other hopefuls take aim at 'right track' comments

By MATT STOUT and CHRIS CASSIDY

The other candidates for governor ripped into their Democratic rivals for what they slammed as status quo answers at yesterday's Suffolk University/Boston Herald debate — specifically after all five said they thought the state was on the "right track."

GOP candidates Charlie Baker and Mark Fisher and independent Jeff McCormick offered up pre-recorded videos for the debate, but had more to say after the event was over.

The Democrats had Baker and others scratching their heads, despite nagging problems at the state Department of Children and Families, at the Health Connector, at the Probation Department and with the medical marijuana rollout.

"(Martha) Coakley is turning a blind eye to the serious shortcomings of state government, specifically DCF, the $450 million debacle that is the Health Connector and the probation department scandal, because she is out of touch," Baker spokesman Tim Buckley said in a statement, focusing his shots at the attorney general and Democratic front-runner.

McCormick said in a statement he didn't hear any "new, fresh solutions" to create jobs and said he "strongly" disagrees with their assessment of the state's direction.

"If voters want business as usual that is what they will get from the current Democratic candidates," he said.

In his question, Tea Party candidate Mark Fisher touched on what he called skyrocketing food stamp costs and welfare fraud — enough that he says the Bay State is becoming "Detroit-achusetts."

— matthew.stout@bostonherald.com
Kayyem seizes opportunity to call out Dem front-runner

If Juliette Kayyem does not get 15 percent of the delegate count at the state Democratic Convention this weekend, it has nothing to do with her performance during yesterday's Suffolk University/Boston Herald debate.

Kayyem managed to not only effectively fight for airtime during the debate with four other candidates, but she managed to take a swipe at the front-runner — Attorney General Martha Coakley.

It was supposed to be anti-casino candidate Don Berwick who was expected to attack Coakley on this issue after her office sent a ballot question on repealing the casino law to the state Supreme Judicial Court. She says her office found it unconstitutional.

Berwick fell flat, but Kayyem was ready and waiting to swing — not on Coakley's actual position but her cryptic messaging as a candidate.

"Can I say something to the Attorney General — when you go after banks, you always say, 'I did this.' On this issue, it's 'we,'" said Kayyem. "This is a huge issue for the state... You can't hide behind the 'we' of the office."

If there was one candidate that Coakley didn't want to see do well during the debate, it was the other accomplished female in the race. Coakley might want a wider field than just her and state Treasurer Steve Grossman after Sunday, but her third pick isn't Kayyem.

Grossman also got a taste of what his summer will be like sitting next to Kayyem during yesterday's debate. At one point he tried to interrupt her and Kayyem managed to bulldoze right over him. Clearly, she's proven not to be a shrinking violet.

With less money and little name recognition, Kayyem knew she had to come into this debate prepared and ready to go after the top-tier candidates. She certainly accomplished that goal.

If she lives to campaign for another week, she needs to be more willing to criticize Gov. Deval Patrick on his management failures.

Let's see if the delegates like Kayyem's spirit.

Jaclyn Cashman co-hosts "Morning Meeting" on Herald Radio.

ON THE ATTACK: Juliette Kayyem fought for airtime and took aim at presumed front-runner Martha Coakley during yesterday's debate.
Hard-hitting Grossman turns soft on Coakley

What happened to scrappy Steve?
State Treasurer Steve Grossman, who's been ramping up the rhetoric against front-runner Martha Coakley, quickly morphed from hard-charging terrier to lap dog as soon as the cameras went live during yesterday's Suffolk University/Boston Herald debate.

Gone was the candidate who suggested Coakley — who has a double-digit lead in the polls — reassess her candidacy if she doesn't win the upcoming Democratic convention. Gone was the cocksure delegate hustler who threw out one-liners like, "Do you want a prosecutor for governor, or do you want a job creator?"

Once he sat down at the round table at Suffolk University's 73 Tremont Street studio with the four other candidates, Grossman let Coakley slide on several issues and only offered up half-hearted criticisms.
The most pointed barb came during a discussion of the Secure Communities Act. All the candidates agreed the measure, which feeds alleged criminals' immigration status to federal officials, needs to be changed.

"The attorney general was a cheerleader of secure communities," Grossman protested as Coakley voiced concerns about the program. That was as pointed as his critiques got.

Coakley voiced concern for the current state of the Department of Children and Families and heartbreak over the death of Jeremiah Oliver, a 5-year-old Fitchburg boy who went missing and died while under DCF watch.

Grossman stayed silent on the fact that Coakley is defending the embattled agency in court.

Coakley signaled support for the gas tax index, which means drivers will face steeper taxes on gas every time the consumer price index goes up with inflation.

Grossman failed to mention that Coakley didn't even know what the gas tax was when quizzed on the issue.

Grossman missed one opportunity after another to tweak Coakley, and potentially knock the front-runner off her game and provide a real debate moment.

"We do disagree around this table on the issues," protested Grossman during the debate. Next time, Steve, prove it.
Berwick should bet it all on his casino stance

Democratic gubernatorial hopeful Donald Berwick may not want to be known as a one-issue candidate, but it should be his sole focus and winning strategy for today's Suffolk University/Boston Herald debate.

This is the last chance for the candidates to sell their message to voters, and more importantly to delegates ahead of this weekend's state Democratic Convention.

The poll reveals growing disdain for casinos in Massachusetts. The results show Bay State voters oppose casinos 47 percent to 37 percent. This is a big swing compared to February's poll, which showed voters favoring casinos 51 percent to 37 percent.

Berwick needs to capitalize on his anti-casino stance. He is the only candidate in the race firmly against gaming in the commonwealth.

Now is not the time to talk about his single-payer health plan for Massachusetts.

Most importantly, Berwick needs to target frontrunner Martha Coakley. After all, the attorney general is the roadblock for a ballot question this fall that would ask voters if they want to repeal the state's gaming law.

Her office found that the ballot question was not constitutional. Now the state Supreme Judicial Court will make the final call this summer.

In fact, Coakley should let Berwick get in a few cheap shots because her campaign would benefit from having more candidates on the ballot. Throw him this bone. It's not like he has a real shot at winning in the primary.

Just keep him around so Berwick's supporters don't go to her biggest Democratic rival, Steve Grossman. That way she could continue enjoying a double-digit lead.

Grossman wants it to be a two-horse race so he can pick up support from the three other candidates in the race and some undecideds.

Berwick needs to paint the picture that if he were governor he would do everything possible to keep casinos out of Massachusetts. Berwick should give the sob story of how Coakley doesn't want to give voters a voice on this very important issue.

Listen in to Herald Radio before the 11 a.m. debate, where you will hear from the candidates. Berwick, I bet, won't let this opportunity slip away.

Jaclyn Cashman co-hosts "Morning Meeting" from 9 a.m. to noon on Herald Radio. Follow her on twitter at @jaclynCashman.
Entering today’s showdown, Coakley shows vulnerability

By JOE BATTENFELD

A new Suffolk University/Boston Herald poll shows for the first time some cracks in Attorney General Martha Coakley’s front-runner armor, giving an opening for her Democratic gubernatorial rivals to attack in a crucial debate showdown today.

Coakley still holds a commanding 32-point lead over her closest competitor, Treasurer Steve Grossman, but has lost some ground over the last few months due to defections from some supporters to the undecided column, the Suffolk/Herald poll shows.

The attorney general’s lead over likely GOP nominee Charlie Baker has also been sliced from 13 to seven percentage points in a trial general election heat, providing some hope for Republicans looking to take back the Corner Office.

The findings in the new poll come as the five Democratic rivals meet face-to-face in an 11 a.m. debate at Suffolk University that voters can see or listen to live on bostonherald.com and Boston Herald Radio. Debate coverage starts at 9 a.m. on Herald Radio’s “Morning Meeting” show and continues with post-debate reaction and analysis on “Trending Now.”

The Suffolk/Herald poll shows Coakley holding a 44-12 percent lead over Grossman among a sample of 450 likely Democratic primary voters. Former Obama administration health care official Donny Berwick is at just four percent, while former federal homeland security assistant secretary Juliette Kayyem and former Wellesley selectman Joseph Avolone check in at 2 percent each.

In the GOP primary race, the poll shows Baker beating his only opponent, the Tea Party’s Mark Fisher, by a whopping 65-5 percent margin.

With Grossman separating himself from the bottom of the Democratic pack, he’s likely to try to make the debate a one-on-one showdown with Coakley, according to pollster David Paleologos, director of Suffolk University’s Political Research Center.

A strong performance by Grossman could further erode Coakley’s lead and possibly knock out the last of the Democratic field at Saturday’s party convention.

“He has to engage Coakley,” Paleologos said. “Always think in terms of Coakley and me.”

The Suffolk/Herald poll shows Coakley does have one potentially potent issue — her strong condemnation of super PACs. Fifty-five percent of all voters said they oppose super PACs. The independent expenditure groups often backed by special interests and allowed to spend unlimited funds.

Two-thirds of voters support efforts to impose stricter regulations on super PACs, and voters were three times more likely to say they would back a candidate who opposed the free-spending organizations.

“Coakley will be all over that issue,” Paleologos said. “It’s a winner in the polls.”

The Suffolk/Herald poll shows the race for lieutenant governor is still wide open, with none of the four Democratic candidates breaking 5 percent. In the race for attorney general, first-time candidate Maura Healey holds a surprising 21-18 point lead over former state senator and gubernatorial candidate Warren Tolman.
Democratic gubernatorial candidates mostly civil in final debate before state convention

Boston Herald Democratic Debate
State Treasurer Steve Grossman speaks after a debate featuring the five Democratic gubernatorial candidates at Suffolk University (Garrett Quinn, MassLive)
Garrett Quinn | gquinn@masslive.com By Garrett Quinn | gquinn@masslive.com
Follow on Twitter
on June 10, 2014 at 1:55 PM, updated June 12, 2014 at 9:13 PM

BOSTON — The five Democratic gubernatorial candidates vying for a spot on the September ballot met Tuesday for the final time before this weekend's state convention in a joint Boston Herald-Suffolk University debate.

The tune-up before the all-important convention was a more relaxed meeting than previous ones, with the candidates seated at a roundtable in a TV studio, away from a live audience.

The five candidates are currently in the final stages of jockeying to secure the required support of 15 percent of delegates at this weekend's state party convention in Worcester. The two front-runners in the race, Attorney General Martha Coakley and Treasurer Steve Grossman, were on the receiving end of the most of the jabs thrown by the three other other candidates.

All five of the Democrats said that they supported Somerville Mayor Joe Curtatone's recent move to stop participating in the federal deportation program known as Secure Communities, though they disagreed over how far the state should go in accommodating immigrants living in the country illegally.

Former Medicare administrator Don Berwick and Grossman lavished praise on the decision, saying that it was the right thing to do because the program causes people to live in fear of interacting with law enforcement.

"I have never met an illegal person," said Berwick, noting that controversial term often used to describe people living in the country illegally.

Attorney General Martha Coakley said program has gone "too far" and that the federal government is the real "bad guy" in the Secure Communities program because it has not addressed broader problems with the immigration system.

Former Boston Globe columnist Juliette Kayyem and Grossman took issue with Coakley's support for the program and her opposition to support driver's licenses for immigrants living in the state illegally. Grossman said Coakley has acted like a "cheerleader" for Secure Communities in the state.
All of the candidates except former health care executive Joe Avellone oppose a ballot question calling for the repeal of the state law that ties all increases in the state gas tax to the rate of inflation.

Berwick was the only candidate to express support for the ballot question calling for the repeal of the state law that legalized resort style casino gambling in the state. Berwick has made opposition to casinos one of the centerpieces of his campaign. The other four candidates were less than enthusiastic about repealing the law.

"I will not vote to repeal it in this state, though this kind of enterprise is not where I would go for development," said Coakley.

Kayyem noted that the state budget currently factors in money coming from potential gambling revenues and that it would be difficult to make up that money from other sources.

"Much of the money going to the casinos will come from residents going to Mohegan Sun and Foxwoods," said Grossman.

The state's implementation of medical marijuana was an issue that none of the candidates were particularly pleased with. Grossman described the licensing process as a "fiasco" while Coakley called it a "total disaster."

The candidates discussed Republican frontrunner Charlie Baker, as well as the other Republican in the race Mark Fisher, only briefly when asked a question about Massachusetts being on the right or wrong track.

In order to make the ballot this fall, candidates must obtain support from a minimum of 15 percent of convention delegates over the weekend.

Treasurer Steve Grossman and Attorney General Martha Coakley, the two statewide officeholders in the race, and former Medicare administrator Don Berwick, are widely seen by party insiders as the safe locks going into the convention this weekend, while former Boston Globe columnist Juliette Kayyem and health care executive Joe Avellone are still striving to secure the crucial 15 percent of support from convention delegates this weekend. Boston Magazine's informal poll of convention delegates showed Berwick, Coakley, and Grossman making the ballot but had Kayyem and Avellone falling just short.

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Democratic gubernatorial candidates debate days before convention

The Lowell Sun

UPDATED: 06/10/2014 06:36:49 PM EDT

BOSTON (AP) -- The five Democrats running for governor met Tuesday for a final debate before their party's state convention, with all agreeing that Massachusetts was on the right track while acknowledging major problems in state government.

Attorney General Martha Coakley, state Treasurer Steven Grossman, business executive Joseph Avellone, former federal health-care administrator Don Berwick and former homeland-security officer Juliette Kayyem discussed issues for about 90 minutes during the Boston Herald/Suffolk University debate.

About 6,000 delegates are expected at Saturday's convention in Worcester. Each candidate needs at least 15 percent support to advance to the September primary.

In a twist, the debate included videotaped questions from other gubernatorial candidates, including Republicans Charlie Baker and Mark Fisher. Baker, the 2010 GOP nominee, listed several managerial issues currently vexing state government and asked the Democrats if they believed Massachusetts was on the right track under Gov. Deval Patrick.

Grossman said state government was on the right track, "but we have to acknowledge when we are not doing things well and fix them." He cited examples including high caseload among social workers at the Department of Children and Families, and the failure of the state's health exchange website.

Berwick said he was proud to live in the first state with universal health-insurance coverage and marriage equality, among other things.

"This is a great state to be in. I can't wait to lead it," said Berwick. "The biggest problems remain inequity and inequality and poverty in the state."

Avellone applauded Patrick for having the "right vision," but pledged to bring new management tools to state government.

Coakley and Kayyem tried to turn the tables on the Republicans, with Coakley contending that states dominated by Republican governors or Legislatures have less job growth and more poverty. Kayyem noted there were past "systemic administrative problems" under GOP governors in Massachusetts.

"Who ever lived in a world that there weren't problems?" Kayyem asked, adding that she would fix them.

The debate was mostly cordial, though Coakley, who has led in early polling, was occasionally criticized. Grossman called her a "cheerleader" for the federal Secure Communities law, which allows police to detain individuals over their immigration status.

Coakley said she initially considered the law a tool for helping remove dangerous criminals, but now believes it has gone too far.

"We all agree that the federal government hasn't done its job and the states ... are going to have to step up," she said.

Kayyem chided Coakley for suggesting that it was the decision of her office, and not her personally, to bar a casino-repeal question from the ballot.

Berwick, the only Democrat calling for repeal of the casino law, took Grossman to task after the treasurer said he'd oppose repeal of the law despite concerns about the impact of casinos on the state lottery.
"I don’t think that’s leadership," said Berwick. "I think leadership is declaring on the merits whether casinos belong in this state."

Avellone got in the last word on the subject: "Leadership is driving us forward to create jobs and it’s not the instability of repealing things and changing the landscape every year."

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Governor candidates debate

By Matt Murphy, State House News Service

UPDATED: 06/11/2014 08:50:14 AM EDT

BOSTON -- In their final tune-up before this weekend's state party convention, the five Democrats running for governor jousted over illegal immigration and casino gambling during a debate Tuesday that also reflected broader philosophical agreements on many issues facing the candidates.

Attorney General Martha Coakley, leading in the polls, faced several barbs from her rivals over her previous opposition to driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants and her office's decision to disqualify a potential ballot question that would repeal the state's casino law.

All five candidates also agreed that Massachusetts was on the "right track" after eight years with Gov. Deval Patrick at the helm, but didn’t hesitate to describe issues with the Department of Children and Families, the Health Connector and the rollout of medical marijuana as "fiascos" and management failures of his administration.

The debate was the last matchup between the Democrats running for governor before the nominating convention in Worcester this weekend when one, or maybe more, may fail to win enough support among party insiders to qualify for the ballot. Coakley came into the forum riding high in the polls, even though Grossman is widely expected to win the convention's delegate vote.

The latest Suffolk University-Boston Herald poll showed Coakley leading Grossman with 44 percent to the treasurer's 12 percent. The debate, streamed live on the internet, was moderated by Suffolk University's John Nucci, a former city councilor, and Herald editorial page editor Rachelle Cohen.

"I'm going to make the argument that this state needs a progressive job creator, not a prosecutor as the next governor," Grossman said after the 90-minute debate.

With the struggles of past attorneys general to ascend to the governor's office, Grossman seemed to use the word "prosecutor" as a negative to describe his chief rival for the Democratic nomination. "Martha Coakley is a prosecutor. That's fundamentally what she is," Grossman said. Asked to explain what he meant, Grossman said, "She spent her life as a prosecutor. We need a job creator."

Coakley said she was not paying attention to the poll numbers, and said her career as a prosecutor in Middlesex County and at the state level was not a detriment to her campaign.

She noted her fights against bank home foreclosures and challenging the Defense of Marriage Act.

"I've always focused on families, people who need voice, people who need someone to speak for them. I've done that as a prosecutor, I've done it as AG. I will be the voice for people as their governor," Coakley told reporters.

All five Democrats said they supported Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone's recent decision to sign an executive order limiting the city's cooperation with the Secure Communities program, which partners local police with federal authorities to hold undocumented immigrants for possible deportation.

"Anyone who is in public safety know that communities have to have trust and faith in their law enforcement, otherwise they will not come forward whether it's domestic violence or drugs," said former homeland security official Juliette Kayyem.

Coakley said the program was designed to help federal authorities remove threats to public safety from communities. "We know it's gone far too far," she said, by targeting many undocumented immigrants with no criminal background.

Grossman described Secure Communities as a "blunt instrument," but quickly pivoted to knock Coakley for opposing drivers' licenses for undocumented immigrants, which he called a public safety issue. Coakley has opposed such licenses in the past, but during the campaign said she would be open to the idea because the federal government has failed to enact comprehensive immigration reform.
Both Grossman and Kayyem said they would support drivers' licenses and in-state tuition rates for undocumented immigrants.

Dr. Donald Berwick, a pediatrician and former Medicare and Medicaid administrator under Obama, also sought to differentiate himself from the pack with his support for single-payer health care and his opposition to casino gambling.

A Suffolk University poll released Monday showed that only 37 percent of likely voters now support casino gambling in Massachusetts.

"It's time to backpedal," Berwick said.

While the other four candidates said they would oppose repeal if the Supreme Judicial Court certifies a question for the November ballot, Berwick said casinos would not only "cannibalize" the Lottery and cost the state jobs but also lead to addiction and medical health problems for the population.

"Frankly, I do not understand why my opponents are not joining me," Berwick said.

Joseph Avellone, a biopharmaceutical executive, said he fears that "referendum government" can lead to an unstable business environment, and argued for allowing the state's 2011 law to play out.

Avellone is against a single payer system, saying it will cost jobs, and opposes indexing the gas tax to inflation, another law that could be repealed in November.

Avellone called the indexing provision included in last year's transportation financing plan a "backdoor tax," though he said he would likely try to make the case to voters in the future for further increases in the gas tax to support investments in public transit and infrastructure.

Grossman said the Legislature in 2013 made a "modest downpayment" of $600 million in new revenue to support transportation, but criticized the likely Republican nominee Charlie Baker for opposing gas tax indexing. "I would challenge Charlie Baker to say where on earth are you going to get the $1 billion we're going to lose over the next 10 years," he said.

The candidates also discussed patronage in state government, affordable housing for students, the need for more public transportation, affirmative action, student debt and the possibility of legalizing marijuana. All five candidates said they would prefer to wait and see how the medical marijuana experiment in Massachusetts and the new legalization laws in Washington and Colorado work before deciding on legalized marijuana.

Avellone and Coakley said they would support student loan forgiveness for graduates entering certain professions, while Grossman called for a four-year tuition freeze at public universities and Berwick said making health care affordable will help graduates pay their loans. Several also noted their support for U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren's bill, pushed by the president on Monday, to allow students to refinance their education loans at lower rates.

In a unique twist in addition to presenting questions from Suffolk students and Twitter, the moderators allowed independent Jeff McCormick and Republicans Baker and Mark Fisher to pre-record questions for the Democrats.

While McCormick asked how they would create jobs and Baker asked if Massachusetts was on the right track in light of recent struggles with DCF and the Affordable Care Act website, Fisher pointed to evidence of welfare fraud and illegal immigration as evidence that the state is on track to become "Detroitchuckets." 

Avellone, Berwick and Grossman all touted their private and public sector experience running businesses and large federal agencies, while Kayyem said a governor can lead on job creation by investing in areas like transportation and the maritime industry, while Coakley said she wanted the governor's office to be a one-stop portal for small business owners to seek help growing their companies.

While all five acknowledged some of the recent let-downs under Gov. Patrick's watch, the Democrats agreed that the most important thing was to recognize mistakes and fix them, not to place blame for problems that inevitably arise under Democrat and Republican administrations.
Another poll gives Coakley the edge

By Matt Murphy

STATE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE

BOSTON -- Attorney General Martha Coakley continues to hold a commanding lead over her four rivals for the Democratic nomination for governor, according to a new Suffolk University poll that also shows voter opinion shifting dramatically against the state's nascent casino industry.

As the Democrats running to succeed Gov. Deval Patrick enter a critical week of campaigning ahead of the Democratic Party Convention in Worcester this weekend, Coakley leads her nearest rival, Treasurer Steve Grossman, by 32 points with a 44 percent to 12 percent advantage.

Though support for Coakley has fallen from 56 percent since the last Suffolk University Polling Center survey in February, Grossman's backing has remained relatively flat with over 32 percent of voters indicating that they are still undecided in the race.

Meanwhile, the overall opinion of casino gaming in Massachusetts has flip-flopped over the past four months, according to the poll. While a majority of Bay State voters approved of casino gaming in February, 47 percent now disapprove of casinos compared to 37 percent who still favor casino gaming. Support for the industry is down from 50.5 percent in February.

The Massachusetts Gaming Commission is poised to decide Friday whether to award the state's first casino license to applicants MGM who hope to build a facility in Springfield. The commission is also considering applications in eastern Massachusetts.

The poll arrives ahead of a Herald/Suffolk debate with the five Democratic candidates planned for Tuesday at 11 a.m. The debate will be moderated by Suffolk University's John Nucci, a former city councilor, and Herald editorial page editor Rachelle Cohen. It will be streamed live on Suffolk.edu, Bostonherald.com, and the newspaper's internet-based station, Boston Herald Radio.

"The race is a little bit closer in the Democratic primary but it's still Coakley's," said Suffolk University polling director David Paleologos. He said "Coakley's numbers have dropped a little bit not to anyone else's benefit."

Grossman told the News Service that Coakley's campaign is suffering from a "passion gap," and predicted that he would begin to close the deficit in both support and name recognition later in the summer when his campaign begins airing ads on television.

"When I saw that poll, frankly, I saw Martha Coakley at 44 percent and I said 'whoa.' If you are the clear front-runner, if you’re the acknowledged front-runner, and you can’t make it out of the 40s in a poll that’s a serious challenge and when you have this passion gap to boot with your activists, those are serious, serious challenges," Grossman said.

While only one license for a slot parlor has been issued so far in Massachusetts, the Gaming Commission is getting close to issuing a casino license in western Massachusetts where MGM is the lone bidder for a license in Springfield. The commission is also considering applications in eastern Massachusetts.
Massachusetts for a casino in either Everett or Revere, and the Supreme Judicial Court is expected to rule soon whether a proposed ballot question repealing the expanded gaming law is eligible for the ballot in November.

Only 18 percent said they thought it made sense to locate a casino in Revere, while 5 percent said Everett made sense as a location for a Greater Boston casino. Fifty-six percent said neither spot made sense to them.

The shifting opinions on casino gaming could create an opening in the gubernatorial race for former Obama health official Dr. Donald Berwick, who is the only Democrat in the field to oppose casinos and express his support for repeal. After polling at less than 1 percent in February, Berwick saw his numbers in this latest Suffolk survey tick upward slightly to 4 percent, putting him in third place.

Democrat Juliette Kayyem, a former state and federal homeland security official, captured just over 2 percent in the poll, while Wellesley biopharmaceutical executive Joseph Avellone had under 2 percent.

While nearly 37 percent of voters said they were not following the governor's race very closely or at all, those numbers would probably be significantly higher in the other statewide races where undecided voters make up the clear majority.

Democrats Stephen Kerrigan and Leland Cheung tied at 4 percent in the four-way race for lieutenant governor with more than 85 percent of respondents indicating they were undecided.

Former assistant attorney general Maura Healey leads former state Sen. Warren Tolman 21 percent to 18 percent, with 59 percent undecided, while former Brookline Selectwoman Deb Goldberg (11 percent) led both her Democratic opponents Sen. Barry Finegold (8 percent) and Rep. Thomas Conroy (4 percent).

As Democrats prepare to gather in Worcester for the party's nominating convention, Grossman is widely expected by party insiders to win the delegate vote despite trailing Coakley in the polls.

Coakley, however, remains the only candidate in the race currently polling ahead of expected Republican nominee Charlie Baker.

Coakley leads Baker 36 percent to 29 percent in a hypothetical matchup, while Grossman trails Baker 27-24, within the 3.5 percent margin of error. Coakley's seven-point lead over Baker is down from 13 points in February, while Grossman has narrowed the gap slightly with Baker that was five points at the time of the last poll.

The independents in the race for governor - venture capitalist Jeff McCormick and health consultant Evan Falchuk - are barely registering with less than 2 percent of likely voters.

"What it says is that there's a 'passion gap' in her campaign that is, I think, very, very potentially damaging to her," Grossman said of his perceived edge at the convention. "Yeah, she has the lead in the polls. When you have 95 percent name recognition, you're going to have a lead in the polls, but I'm not worried about that."

Despite a barrage of negative attention for Gov. Deval Patrick over the past several months, the two-term governor's approval rating remains strong with 57 percent approving of the job he is doing as governor and 48 percent saying they think Massachusetts is heading in the right direction.

Asked about the Department of Children and Families and told that there have been nearly 50 deaths since 2006 of children under DCF supervision, 38 percent of respondents to the poll blamed Patrick while 27 percent saw the tragedies as on par with what happens in other states and 35 percent were unsure.

President Barack Obama's approval rating in Massachusetts was about level with 45 percent approving and 44 percent disapproving of the job the president is doing, while 49 percent believe the Affordable Care Act is generally good for Massachusetts compared to 40 percent who view it as generally bad.
This Week On Beacon Hill

by: State House News Service

JUNE 9, 2014
BOSTON, Mass.

The State House Dome on Beacon Hill in Boston, Mass.
(Photo Credit: State House News Service)

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BOSTON, Mass.

The State House Dome on Beacon Hill in Boston, Mass.
(Photo Credit: State House News Service)

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BOSTON, Mass.
The Supreme Judicial Court on Wednesday is poised to see one of its own, Ralph Gants, confirmed to succeed chief justice Roderick Ireland, which will open up an opportunity for Governor Deval Patrick to nominate a seventh person to sit on the high court.

House Democrats are gearing up to push through legislation calling for a significant overhaul of gun laws, part of an effort to reduce gun violence. Public Safety Committee members faced a Saturday deadline to vote on Speaker DeLeo’s gun bill, and his new job creation bill is also on the move as Economic Development Committee members were voting on it Friday afternoon and lawmakers were put on notice that the jobs bill would move to the floor on Wednesday.

Beacon Hill Democrats have 55 days left to find common ground on an extensive agenda and next week will feel the pull of politics, as the Democratic Party is set to hold its election-year nominating convention Saturday in Worcester. As a warmup, the Democrats running for governor will meet in a debate on

https://nepr.net/news/2014/06/09/this-week-on-beacon-hill/
Tuesday morning at a Suffolk University TV studio, a day after Suffolk plans to release new poll results. And low-income workers who are pressing to raise awareness of income inequality issues are set to hold protests in Boston, Worcester and Springfield Thursday.

For Susan Kaplan’s conversation with Matt Murphy about the week ahead on Beacon Hill, click the audio player above.

Keywords: Gubernatorial Candidates
Poll: Coakley maintains lead among Democrats, voters losing interest in casinos

By Matt Murphy STATE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE

Attorney General Martha Coakley continues to hold a commanding lead over her four rivals for the Democratic nomination for governor, according to a new Suffolk University poll that also shows voter opinion shifting dramatically against the state's nascent casino industry.

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Meanwhile, the overall opinion of casino gaming in Massachusetts has flip-flopped over the past four months, according to the poll. While a majority of Bay State voters approved of casino gaming in February, 47 percent now disapprove of casinos compared to 37 percent who still favor casino gaming. Support for the industry is down from 50.5 percent in February.

The Massachusetts Gaming Commission is poised to decide Friday whether to award the state's first casino license to applicants MGM who hope to build a facility in Springfield. The commission is scheduled in late August or early September to award a casino license in the Boston area.

“The race is a little bit closer in the Democratic primary but it's still Coakley's,” said Suffolk University polling director David Paleologos. He said “Coakley's numbers have dropped a little bit not to anyone else's benefit.”

Grossman told the News Service that Coakley’s campaign is suffering from a “passion gap,” and predicted that he would begin to close the deficit in both support and name recognition later in the summer when his campaign begins airing ads on television.

“When I saw that poll, frankly, I saw Martha Coakley at 44 percent and I said 'whoa.' If you are the clear front-runner, if you're the acknowledged front-runner, and you can't make it out of the 40s in a poll that's a serious challenge and when you have this passion gap to boot with your activists, those are serious, serious challenges,” Grossman said.

While only one license for a slot parlor has been issued so far in Massachusetts, the Gaming Commission is getting close to issuing a casino license in western Massachusetts where MGM is the lone bidder for a license in Springfield. The commission is also considering applications in eastern Massachusetts for a casino in either Everett or Revere, and the Supreme Judicial Court is expected to rule soon whether a proposed ballot question repealing the expanded gaming law is eligible for the ballot in November.

Only 18 percent said they thought it made sense to locate a casino in Revere, while 5 percent said Everett made sense as a location for a Greater Boston casino. Fifty-six percent said neither spot made sense to them.

The shifting opinions on casino gaming could create an opening in the gubernatorial race for former Obama health official Dr. Donald Berwick, who is the only Democrat in the field to oppose casinos and express his support for repeal. After polling at less than 1 percent in February, Berwick saw his numbers in this latest Suffolk survey tick upward slightly to 4 percent, putting him in third place.

Democrat Juliette Kayyem, a former state and federal homeland security official, captured just over 2 percent in the poll, while Wellesley biopharmaceutical executive Joseph Avellone had under 2 percent.

While nearly 37 percent of voters said they were not following the governor’s race very closely or at all, those numbers would probably be significantly higher in the other statewide races where undecided voters make up the clear majority.
Democrats Stephen Kerrigan and Leland Cheung tied at 4 percent in the four-way race for lieutenant governor with more than 85 percent of respondents indicating they were undecided.

Former assistant attorney general Maura Healey leads former state Sen. Warren Tolman 21 percent to 18 percent, with 59 percent undecided, while former Brookline Selectwoman Deb Goldberg (11 percent) led both her Democratic opponents Sen. Barry Finegold (8 percent) and Rep. Thomas Conroy (4 percent).

As Democrats prepare to gather in Worcester for the party's nominating convention, Grossman is widely expected by party insiders to win the delegate vote despite trailing Coakley in the polls. Coakley, however, remains the only candidate in the race currently polling ahead of expected Republican nominee Charlie Baker.

Coakley leads Baker 36 percent to 29 percent in a hypothetical matchup, while Grossman trails Baker 27-24, within the 3.5 percent margin of error. Coakley’s seven-point lead over Baker is down from 13 points in February, while Grossman has narrowed the gap slightly with Baker that was five points at the time of the last poll.

The independents in the race for governor – venture capitalist Jeff McCormick and health consultant Evan Falchuk – are barely registering with less than 2 percent of likely voters.

“What it says is that there’s a ‘passion gap’ in her campaign that is, I think, very, very potentially damaging to her,” Grossman said of his perceived edge at the convention. “Yeah, she has the lead in the polls. When you have 95 percent name recognition, you’re going to have a lead in the polls, but I’m not worried about that.”

Despite a barrage of negative attention for Gov. Deval Patrick over the past several months, the two-term governor’s approval rating remains strong with 57 percent approving of the job he is doing as governor and 48 percent saying they think Massachusetts is heading in the right direction.

Asked about the Department of Children and Families and told that there have been nearly 50 deaths since 2006 of children under DCF supervision, 38 percent of respondents to the poll blamed Patrick while 27 percent saw the tragedies as on par with what happens in other states and 35 percent were unsure.

President Barack Obama’s approval rating in Massachusetts was about level with 45 percent approving and 44 percent disapproving of the job the president is doing, while 49 percent believe the Affordable Care Act is generally good for Massachusetts compared to 40 percent who view it as generally bad.

[Mike Deehan and Gin Dumcius contributed reporting]
June 10, 2014

Another poll gives Coakley the edge

By Matt Murphy STATE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE

BOSTON — Attorney General Martha Coakley continues to hold a commanding lead over her four rivals for the Democratic nomination for governor, according to a new Suffolk University poll that also shows voter opinion shifting dramatically against the state’s nascent casino industry.

As the Democrats running to succeed Gov. Deval Patrick enter a critical week of campaigning ahead of the Democratic Party Convention in Worcester this weekend, Coakley leads her nearest rival, Treasurer Steve Grossman, by 32 points with a 44 percent to 12 percent advantage.

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“Another poll gives Coakley the edge” by Matt Murphy

The poll arrives ahead of a Herald/Suffolk debate with the five Democratic candidates planned for TOday at 11 a.m. The debate will be moderated by Suffolk University’s John Nucci, a former city councillor, and Herald editorial page editor Rachelle Cohen. It will be streamed live on Suffolk.edu, Bostonherald.com, and the newspaper’s internet-based station, Boston Herald Radio.

“The race is a little bit closer in the Democratic primary, but it’s still Coakley’s,” said Suffolk University polling director David Paleologos. He said “Coakley’s numbers have dropped a little bit not to anyone else’s benefit.”

• VIDEO: Scenes from the last 24 hours of Newburyport’s Brown School as it closes for good

Continued ...

SEABROOK -- Those who predicted the deal to bring US Foods to town was dead because of its pending merger with competitor Sysco Corp. appear to be wrong. Yesterday, from its Rosemont, Ill., headquarters, giant food distribution company US Foods annou
Democratic governor candidates tangle before convention

In their final tuneup before this weekend's state party convention, the five Democrats running for governor jousted over illegal immigration and casino gambling during a debate Tuesday that also reflected broader philosophical agreements on many issues facing the candidates.

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Attorney General Martha Coakley, leading in the polls, faced several barbs from her rivals over her previous opposition to driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants and her office's decision to disqualify a potential ballot question that would repeal the state's casino law.

All five candidates also agreed that Massachusetts was on the "right track" after eight years with Gov. Deval Patrick at the helm, but didn't hesitate to describe issues with the Department of Children and Families, the Health Connector and the rollout of medical marijuana as "fiascos" and management failures of his administration.

The debate was the last matchup between the Democrats running for governor before the nominating convention in Worcester this weekend when one, or maybe more, may fail to win enough support among party insiders to qualify for the ballot. Coakley came into the forum riding high in the polls, even though Grossman is widely expected to win the convention's delegate vote.

The latest Suffolk University-Boston Herald poll showed Coakley leading Grossman with 44 percent to the treasurer's 12 percent. The debate, streamed live on the Internet, was moderated by Suffolk University's John Nucci, a former city councilor, and Herald editorial page editor Rachelle Cohen.

"I'm going to make the argument that this state needs a progressive job creator, not a prosecutor as the next governor," Grossman said after the 90-minute debate.

With the struggles of past attorneys general to ascend to the governor's office, Grossman seemed to use the word "prosecutor" as a negative to describe his chief rival for the Democratic nomination.

"Martha Coakley is a prosecutor. That's fundamentally what she is," Grossman said. Asked to explain what he meant, Grossman said, "She spent her life as a prosecutor. We need a job creator."

Coakley said she was not paying attention to the poll numbers, and said her career as a prosecutor in Middlesex County and at the state level is not a detriment to her campaign. She noted her fights against bank home foreclosures and challenging the Defense of Marriage Act.

"I've always focused on families, people who need voice, people who need someone to speak for them. I've done that as a prosecutor, I've done it as AG. I will be the voice for people as their governor," Coakley told reporters.

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All five Democrats said they supported Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone's recent decision to sign an executive order limiting the city's cooperation with the Secure Communities program, which partners local police with federal authorities to hold undocumented immigrants for possible deportation.

"Anyone who is in public safety know that communities have to have trust and faith in their law enforcement, otherwise they will not come forward, whether it's domestic violence or drugs," said former homeland security official Juliette Kayyem.

Coakley said the program was designed to help federal authorities remove threats to public safety from communities.

"We know it's gone far too far," she said, by targeting many undocumented immigrants with no criminal background.

Grossman described Secure Communities as a "blunt instrument," but quickly pivoted to knock Coakley for opposing drivers' licenses for undocumented immigrants, which he called a public safety issue. Coakley has opposed such licenses in the past, but during the campaign said she would be open to the idea because the federal government has failed to enact comprehensive immigration reform.

Both Grossman and Kayyem said they would support drivers' licenses and in-state tuition rates for undocumented immigrants.

Dr. Donald Berwick, a pediatrician and former Medicare and Medicaid administrator under President Obama, also sought to differentiate himself from the pack with his support for single-payer health care and his opposition to casino gambling.

A Suffolk University poll released Monday showed that only 37 percent of likely voters now support casino gambling in Massachusetts.

"It's time to backpedal," Berwick said.

While the other four candidates said they would oppose repeal if the Supreme Judicial Court certifies a question for the November ballot, Berwick said casinos would not only "cannibalize" the Lottery and cost the state jobs but also lead to addiction and medical health problems for the population.
“Frankly, I do not understand why my opponents are not joining me,” Berwick said.

Joseph Avellone, a biopharmaceutical executive, said he fears that “referendum government” can lead to an unstable business environment, and argued for allowing the state’s 2011 law to play out.

Avellone is against a single-payer system, saying it will cost jobs, and opposes indexing the gas tax to inflation, another law that could be repealed in November.

Avellone called the indexing provision included in last year’s transportation financing plan a “backdoor tax,” though he said he would likely try to make the case to voters in the future for further increases in the gas tax to support investments in public transit and infrastructure.

Grossman said the Legislature in 2013 made a “modest down payment” of $600 million in new revenue to support transportation, but criticized the likely Republican nominee Charlie Baker for opposing gas tax indexing.

“I would challenge Charlie Baker to say where on earth are you going to get the $1 billion we’re going to lose over the next 10 years,” he said.

The candidates also discussed patronage in state government, affordable housing for students, the need for more public transportation, affirmative action, student debt and the possibility of legalizing marijuana. All five candidates said they would prefer to wait and see how the medical marijuana experiment in Massachusetts and the new legalization laws in Washington and Colorado work before deciding on legalized marijuana.

Avellone and Coakley said they would support student loan forgiveness for graduates entering certain professions, while Grossman called for a four-year tuition freeze at public universities and Berwick said making health care affordable will help graduates pay their loans. Several also noted their support for U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren’s bill, pushed by the president on Monday, to allow students to refinance their education loans at lower rates.

In a unique twist in addition to presenting questions from Suffolk students and Twitter, the moderators allowed independent Jeff McCormick and Republicans Baker and Mark Fisher to pre-record questions for the Democrats.

While McCormick asked how they would create jobs and Baker asked if Massachusetts was on the right track in light of recent struggles with DCF and the Affordable Care Act website, Fisher pointed to evidence of welfare fraud and illegal immigration as evidence that the state is on track to become “Detroitachusetts.”

Avellone, Berwick and Grossman all touted their private and public sector experience running businesses and large federal agencies, while Kayyem said a governor can lead on job creation by investing in areas like transportation and the maritime industry, while Coakley said she wanted the governor’s office to be a one-stop portal for small business owners to seek help growing their companies.

While all five acknowledged some of the recent let-downs under Patrick’s watch, the Democrats agreed that the most important thing was to recognize mistakes and fix them, not to place blame for problems that inevitably arise under Democrat and Republican administrations.
Democratic Candidates for Governor debate housing, casinos, patronage and more: find out where they stand

BOSTON—Building affordable housing on public land, funding programs with savings realized by instituting single-payer health care, potential repercussions of a casino referendum, and hiring only the most qualified candidates for state jobs were among the ideas bandied about as the five Democratic candidates for Massachusetts governor debated at Suffolk University’s downtown television studio.

The debate, sponsored with the Boston Herald, featured questions from students, the public and moderators Rachelle Cohen, editor of the Boston Herald Editorial Page, and Suffolk University Vice President of Government Relations and Community Affairs John Nucci. Video of the conversation will be available online.

Referring to the Probation Department patronage case now being tried in federal court, Steve Grossman said that, as Massachusetts Treasurer, he revamped hiring standards and has a track record proving that “every person we hire in the Treasurer’s Offices ... will be the best person for that job.” As governor, he would maintain those practices, he said.

Donald Berwick, former chief of the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, returned repeatedly to the idea that single-payer health care could return funding to programs that have been cut over the years due to the escalating cost of ensuring state employees.

“Health care has got to become more affordable,” he said as he responded to Suffolk student Joseph Presti’s question about how the candidates would make repayment of student loans more affordable. Chided by Cohen, who suggested he was changing the subject, Berwick said: “Where does the funding come from for a 59 percent increase in health care costs?” and noted that areas from parks and recreation to education feel the pinch, and “that’s why health care is pertinent.”

In discussing a citizen initiative to repeal the casino law, Attorney General Martha Coakley said the referendum question is illegal and that “if repeal passes, the taxpayers could be forced to repay.” Yet she also said that she “would not have gone to this for revenue.”

“We have a law; we should let it play out,” said businessman and physician Joe Avellone, “What I don’t like is referendum government,” he said, drawing a comparison to California, where, since Proposition 13 dramatically cut property-tax rates in 1978, voters have overturned laws, recalled a governor and made their own rules.

Berwick said that he is unequivocally opposed to casinos, arguing that they will result in a mental health burden, lost jobs, and cannibalization of the state lottery.

In response to student Taylor Cole’s question about how the candidates would make “safe and affordable housing available to college students,” Grossman propose seeking developers to build mid-priced housing on the “vast amounts of public land” owned by the state, the MBTA and other public entities. In exchange for rock-bottom leases, the developers would pledge to reduce rents, Grossman also called on colleges and universities to provide more campus housing for students.

Juliette Kayyem, former assistant secretary for intergovernmental affairs at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, focused on technology as an answer to a variety of challenges in Massachusetts, arguing that it could be used to prevent fraud in public programs and even to keep children safe.

In a discussion of the Department of Children and Families, Kayyem said that, “the caseworker goes to the door and does not have the information that’s out there.” Her solution would be to provide a tablet that DCF employees could use to review reports from schools or police and the case file.
Another poll gives Coakley the edge, but Grossman sees "passion gap"

By Matt Murphy, State House News Service
Jun. 9, 2014

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Coakley leads Baker 36 percent to 29 percent in a hypothetical matchup, while Grossman trails Baker 27-24, within the 3.5 percent margin of error. Coakley’s seven-point lead over Baker is down from 13 points in February, while Grossman has narrowed the gap slightly with Baker that was five points at the time of the last poll.

The independents in the race for governor – venture capitalist Jeff McCormick and health consultant Evan Falchuk – are barely registering with less than 2 percent of likely voters.

“What it says is that there’s a ‘passion gap’ in her campaign that is, I think, very, very potentially damaging to her,” Grossman said of his perceived edge at the convention. “Yeah, she has the lead in the polls. When you have 95 percent name recognition, you’re going to have a lead in the polls, but I’m not worried about that.”

Despite a barrage of negative attention for Gov. Deval Patrick over the past several months, the two-term governor’s approval rating remains strong with 57 percent approving of the job he is doing as governor and 48 percent saying they think Massachusetts is heading in the right direction.

Asked about the Department of Children and Families and told that there have been nearly 50 deaths since 2006 of children under DCF supervision, 38 percent of respondents to the poll blamed Patrick while 27 percent saw the tragedies as on par with what happens in other states and 35 percent were unsure.

President Barack Obama’s approval rating in Massachusetts was about level with 45 percent approving and 44 percent disapproving of the job the president is doing, while 49 percent believe the Affordable Care Act is generally good for Massachusetts compared to 40 percent who view it as generally bad.

Mike Deehan and Gin Dumcius contributed reporting.
Hard-hitting Grossman turns soft on Coakley

Gubernatorial candidate and State Treasurer Steve Grossman walks out smiling after the Boston Herald/Suffolk University debate at Suffolk University yesterday.

Read more
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By BOB SALSBERG

Associated Press June 10, 2014

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TARGET 2 DAYS LEFT
JCPENNEY EXPIRES THIS SUNDAY
PEP BOYS VALID UNTIL JUL 06

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BOSTON: Democrats debate issues days before convention | National Politics | Columbus Ledger Enquirer

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Associated Press June 10, 2014

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Another poll gives Coakley the edge

The Lowell Sun

POSTED: 06/09/2014 01:57:08 PM EDT

By Matt Murphy

STATE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE

BOSTON -- Attorney General Martha Coakley continues to hold a commanding lead over her four rivals for the Democratic nomination for governor, according to a new Suffolk University poll that also shows voter opinion shifting dramatically against the state's nascent casino industry.

As the Democrats running to succeed Gov. Deval Patrick enter a critical week of campaigning ahead of the Democratic Party Convention in Worcester this weekend, Coakley leads her nearest rival, Treasurer Steve Grossman, by 32 points with a 44 percent to 12 percent advantage.

Though support for Coakley has fallen from 56 percent since the last Suffolk University Polling Center survey in February, Grossman's backing has remained relatively flat with over 32 percent of voters indicating that they are still undecided in the race.

Meanwhile, the overall opinion of casino gaming in Massachusetts has flip-flopped over the past four months, according to the poll. While a majority of Bay State voters approved of casino gaming in February, 47 percent now disapprove of casinos compared to 37 percent who still favor casino gaming. Support for the industry is down from 50.5 percent in February.

The Massachusetts Gaming Commission is poised to decide Friday whether to award the state's first casino license to applicants MGM who hope to build a facility in Springfield. The commission is scheduled in late August or early September to award a casino license in the Boston area.

The poll arrives ahead of a Herald/Suffolk debate with the five Democratic candidates planned for Tuesday at 11 a.m. The debate will be moderated by Suffolk University's John Nucci, a former city councilor, and Herald editorial page editor Rachelle Cohen. It will be streamed live on Suffolk.edu, Bostonherald.com, and the newspaper's internet-based station, Boston Herald Radio.

"The race is a little bit closer in the Democratic primary but it's still Coakley's," said Suffolk University polling director David Paleologos. He said "Coakley's numbers have dropped a little bit not to anyone else's benefit."

Grossman told the News Service that Coakley's campaign is suffering from a "passion gap," and predicted that he would begin to close the deficit in both support and name recognition later in the summer when his campaign begins airing ads on television.

"When I saw that poll, frankly, I saw Martha Coakley at 44 percent and I said 'whoa.' If you are the clear front-runner, if you're the acknowledged front-runner, and you can't make it out of the 40s in a poll that's a serious challenge and when you have this passion gap to boot with your activists, those are serious, serious challenges," Grossman said.

While only one license for a slot parlor has been issued so far in Massachusetts, the Gaming Commission is getting close to issuing a casino license in western Massachusetts where MGM is the lone bidder for a license in Springfield. The commission is also considering applications in eastern Massachusetts for a casino in either Everett or Revere, and the Supreme Judicial Court is expected to rule soon whether a proposed ballot question repealing the expanded gaming law is eligible for the ballot in November.
Only 18 percent said they thought it made sense to locate a casino in Revere, while 5 percent said Everett made sense as a location for a Greater Boston casino. Fifty-six percent said neither spot made sense to them.

The shifting opinions on casino gaming could create an opening in the gubernatorial race for former Obama health official Dr. Donald Berwick, who is the only Democrat in the field to oppose casinos and express his support for repeal. After polling at less than 1 percent in February, Berwick saw his numbers in this latest Suffolk survey tick upward slightly to 4 percent, putting him in third place.

Democrat Juliette Kayyem, a former state and federal homeland security official, captured just over 2 percent in the poll, while Wellesley biopharmaceutical executive Joseph Avellone had under 2 percent.

While nearly 37 percent of voters said they were not following the governor’s race very closely or at all, those numbers would probably be significantly higher in the other statewide races where undecided voters make up the clear majority.

Democrats Stephen Kerrigan and Leland Cheung tied at 4 percent in the four-way race for lieutenant governor with more than 85 percent of respondents indicating they were undecided.

Former assistant attorney general Maura Healey leads former state Sen. Warren Tolman 21 percent to 18 percent, with 59 percent undecided, while former Brookline Selectwoman Deb Goldberg (11 percent) led both her Democratic opponents Sen. Barry Finegold (8 percent) and Rep. Thomas Conroy (4 percent).

As Democrats prepare to gather in Worcester for the party’s nominating convention, Grossman is widely expected by party insiders to win the delegate vote despite trailing Coakley in the polls. Coakley, however, remains the only candidate in the race currently polling ahead of expected Republican nominee Charlie Baker.

Coakley leads Baker 36 percent to 29 percent in a hypothetical matchup, while Grossman trails Baker 27-24, within the 3.5 percent margin of error. Coakley’s seven-point lead over Baker is down from 13 points in February, while Grossman has narrowed the gap slightly with Baker that was five points at the time of the last poll.

The independents in the race for governor - venture capitalist Jeff McCormick and health consultant Evan Falchuk - are barely registering with less than 2 percent of likely voters.

“What it says is that there’s a ‘passion gap’ in her campaign that is, I think, very, very potentially damaging to her,” Grossman said of his perceived edge at the convention. “Yeah, she has the lead in the polls. When you have 95 percent name recognition, you’re going to have a lead in the polls, but I’m not worried about that.”

Despite a barrage of negative attention for Gov. Deval Patrick over the past several months, the two-term governor’s approval rating remains strong with 57 percent approving of the job he is doing as governor and 48 percent saying they think Massachusetts is heading in the right direction.

Asked about the Department of Children and Families and told that there have been nearly 50 deaths since 2006 of children under DCF supervision, 38 percent of respondents to the poll blamed Patrick while 27 percent saw the tragedies as on par with what happens in other states and 35 percent were unsure.

President Barack Obama’s approval rating in Massachusetts was about level with 45 percent approving and 44 percent disapproving of the job the president is doing, while 49 percent believe the Affordable Care Act is generally good for Massachusetts compared to 40 percent who view it as generally bad.

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In pre-convention debate, Democrats say state is on right track but problems must be fixed

By BOB SALSBERG  Associated Press
June 10, 2014 - 4:22 pm EDT

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DEMOCRATS HOLD FINAL DEBATE BEFORE CONVENTION

By BOB SALSBERG
Associated Press
Wednesday, June 11, 2014
(Published in print: Wednesday, June 11, 2014)

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By BOB SALSBERG  Associated Press
First Posted: June 10, 2014 - 4:20 pm
Last Updated: June 10, 2014 - 4:22 pm

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Coakley and Kayyem tried to turn the tables on the Republicans, with Coakley contending that states dominated by Republican governors or Legislatures have less job growth and more poverty. Kayyem noted there were past "systemic administrative problems" under GOP governors in Massachusetts.

"Who ever lived in a world that there weren't problems?" Kayyem said, adding that she would fix them.

The debate was mostly cordial though Coakley, who has led in early polling, was occasionally criticized. Grossman called her a "cheerleader" for the federal Secure Communities law, which allows police to detain individuals over their immigration status.

Coakley said she initially considered the law a tool for helping remove dangerous criminals, but now believes it has gone too far.

"We all agree that the federal government hasn't done its job and the states ... are going to have to step up," she said.
Kayyem chided Coakley for suggesting that it was the decision of her office, and not her personally, to bar a casino repeal question from the ballot.

Berwick, the only Democrat calling for repeal of the casino law, took Grossman to task after the treasurer said he'd oppose repeal of the law despite concerns about the impact of casinos on the state lottery.

"I don't think that's leadership," said Berwick. "I think leadership is declaring on the merits whether casinos belong in this state."

Avellone got in the last word on the subject: "Leadership is driving us forward to create jobs and it's not the instability of repealing things and changing the landscape every year."
Other hopefuls take aim at 'right track' comments

The other candidates for governor ripped into their Democratic rivals for what they slammed as status quo answers at yesterday's Suffolk University/Boston Herald debate -- specifically after all five said they thought the state was on the "right track."

GOP candidates Charlie Baker and Mark Fisher and independent Jeff McCormick offered up pre-recorded videos for the debate, but had more to say after the event was over.

The Democrats had Baker and others scratching their heads, despite nagging problems at the state Department of Children and Families, at the Health Connector, at the Probation Department and with the medical marijuana rollout.

"(Martha) Coakley is turning a blind eye to the serious shortcomings of state government, specifically DCF, the $450 million debacle that is the Health Connector and the probation department scandal, because she is out of touch," Baker spokesman Tim Buckley said in a statement, focusing his shots at the attorney general and Democratic front-runner.

McCormick said in a statement he didn't hear any "new, fresh solutions" to create jobs and said he "strongly" disagrees with their assessment of the state's direction.

"If voters want business as usual that is what they will get from the current Democratic candidates," he said.

In his question, Tea Party candidate Mark Fisher touched on what he called skyrocketing food stamp costs and welfare fraud -- enough that he says the Bay State is becoming "Detroit-achusetts."

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Candidates for governor scrabbling for donations 1 WEEK AGO
BOSTON (AP) — Republican candidate for governor Charlie Baker is closing the fundraising gap with Democratic hopeful Steven Grossman as candidates in the crowded field for Massachusetts governor scramble for donations. As of the end of May, Baker reported $899,710 ...

GOP candidate offers to drop suit against party 1 WEEK AGO
BOSTON (AP) — Republican gubernatorial candidate Mark Fisher said Monday he'd consider dropping a lawsuit against the state GOP over initially being denied a spot on the primary ballot. Fisher said he'd be willing to forego additional legal action ...

GOP's Baker backs minimum wage hike, tax credits 3 DAYS AGO
BOSTON (AP) — Republican candidate for governor Charlie Baker is backing an increase in the state's minimum wage to $10.50 per hour, and said Monday it should be coupled with tax breaks for low-income individuals and small businesses. The ...

Grossman: $9M spending cap on Democratic primary 6 DAYS AGO
BOSTON (AP) — Democratic candidate for governor Steven Grossman says he may spend as much as $9 million to win his party's primary. Grossman was required to submit the self-imposed limit as part of the state's public campaign finance ...
Hard-hitting Grossman turns soft on Coakley

What happened to scrappy Steve?

State Treasurer Steve Grossman, who’s been ramping up the rhetoric against front-runner Martha Coakley, quickly morphed from hard-charging terrier to lap dog as soon as the cameras went live during yesterday’s Suffolk University/Boston Herald debate.

Gone was the candidate who suggested Coakley -- who has a double-digit lead in the polls -- reassess her candidacy if she doesn’t win the upcoming Democratic convention. Gone was the cocksure delegate hustler who threw out one-liners like, "Do you want a prosecutor for governor, or do you want a job creator?"

Once he sat down at the round table at Suffolk University’s 73 Tremont Street studio with the four other candidates, Grossman let Coakley slide on several issues and only offered up half-hearted criticisms.

The most pointed barb came during a discussion of the Secure Communities Act. All the candidates agreed the measure, which feeds alleged criminals’ immigration status to federal officials, needs to be changed.

"The attorney general was a cheerleader of secure communities," Grossman protested as Coakley voiced concerns about the program.

That was as pointed as his critiques got.

Coakley voiced concern for the current state of the Department of Children and Families and heartbreak over the death of Jeremiah Oliver, a 5-year-old Fitchburg boy who went missing and died while under DCF watch.

Grossman stayed silent on the fact that Coakley is defending the embattled agency in court.

Coakley signaled support for the gas tax index, which means drivers will face steeper taxes on gas every time the consumer price index goes up with inflation.

Grossman failed to mention that Coakley didn’t even know what the gas tax was when quizzed on the issue.

Grossman missed one opportunity after another to tweak Coakley, and potentially knock the front-runner off her game and provide a real debate moment.

"We do disagree around this table on the issues," protested Grossman during the debate.

Next time, Steve, prove it. ___

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Distributed by MCT Information Services
Four racing toward Saturday showdown

Juliette Kayyem is hoping her aggressive attacks on Martha Coakley at the Suffolk University/Boston Herald debate yesterday will help vault her onto the Democratic gubernatorial ballot, even as Treasurer Steve Grossman looks to top the front-running attorney general at the party's convention this weekend and boost his lagging poll numbers, according to political experts.

"She's on the cusp -- she could go either way," Paul Watanabe of the University of Massachusetts Boston said of Kayyem. "Ironically, if we were having a primary right now, she could probably get 15 percent of the public's vote. The group she has to appeal to is the one that's made up of party insiders."

Those insiders are gathering Saturday in Worcester, where the five gubernatorial rivals are bidding to collect at least 15 percent of the delegates to make it onto the Sept. 9 primary ballot. There are 6,000 delegates -- many already committed -- but political experts say the number of undecideds is larger than usual.

Coakley and Grossman are locks to make it onto the ballot, with the attorney general looking to deal the state treasurer a crippling blow by handing him a second-place finish. But some say that's not guaranteed because Grossman -- who said he's personally called a majority of the delegates -- could reap the benefits of his legwork and collect 45 percent of the vote.

Don Berwick -- the former Obama administration official who's courting the party's ultra-left by pushing so-called "single-payer" health plans -- boasted after the debate he'll make the cut, saying: "We'll be on the ballot for sure."

That leaves Kayyem and Joe Avellone fighting for the leftovers. Political watchdogs say Kayyem could be the fourth winner this weekend, especially if Grossman swings a few delegates her way to chip away at Coakley's lead in the polls and make it a crowded field.

The last time more than three candidates made it onto the Democratic primary ballot was in 2002 -- when five made the cut, including Grossman.

None of the candidates landed game-changing blows during the debate, making the legions of undecided delegates that much more valuable.

"There's a much higher number of undecided voters than normal at this year's convention," said Democratic strategist Scott Ferson. "There's a general sense among the delegates that they like them all. ... If you're close, I think the number of undecideds helps you. ... I could see a higher number of undecideds helping those just under 15 percent."

Kayyem continued to take the offensive against Coakley even after yesterday's showdown.

"You cannot simply hide behind the role when you're afraid or too cautious to take a stand," Kayyem said of Coakley and her state AG post. "Caution is not going to win the governorship for the Democrats. So say what you mean, say what your opinion is, and don't hide behind the office."

That jab came after Kayyem accused Coakley during the debate of bragging about her office's achievements when it's politically helpful, but distancing herself from them when they're unpopular, including her efforts to block a casino repeal ballot question from the Nov. 4 election -- a matter before the state Supreme Judicial Court.
Grossman, meanwhile, took shots at Coakley before and after the debate -- but not during -- saying the state "needs a progressive job-creator and not a prosecutor as the next governor."

Coakley committed no major gaffes and declared pride in her record as attorney general, which amounts to a win for the party's undisputed front-runner. ___

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Democrats debate issues days before convention 2 DAYS AGO
BOSTON (AP) — The five Democrats running for governor met Tuesday for a final debate before their party's state convention, with all agreeing that Massachusetts was on the right track while acknowledging major problems in state government. Attorney General Martha ...

Democratic convention will be big test for Coakley 4 DAYS AGO
BOSTON (AP) — The Massachusetts Democratic Convention looms as the biggest political test for gubernatorial hopeful Martha Coakley since an ill-fated U.S. Senate campaign against Republican Scott Brown more than four years ago. Analysts say anything less than a solid ...

Candidates for governor scrabbling for donations 1 WEEK AGO
BOSTON (AP) — Republican candidate for governor Charlie Baker is closing the fundraising gap with Democratic hopeful Steven Grossman as candidates in the crowded field for Massachusetts governor scrabble for donations. As of the end of May, Baker reported $899,710 ...

Grossman: $9M spending cap on Democratic primary 6 DAYS AGO
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GOP's Baker backs minimum wage hike, tax credits 3 DAYS AGO
BOSTON (AP) — Republican candidate for governor Charlie Baker is backing an increase in the state's minimum wage to $10.50 per hour, and said Monday it should be coupled with tax breaks for low-income individuals and small businesses. The ...

Related Regional News

Chabot: Rivals land few punches on Coakley at Suffolk-Herald debate 3 DAYS AGO
Gubernatorial frontrunner Martha Coakley's toughest rivals kept their swords sheathed during a Boston Herald/Suffolk University debate today -- blowing their opportunity to shake up ...

Debate gives Dems chance to shine 3 DAYS AGO
It's crunch time for the Democratic candidates for governor as they face off today for the last time before this weekend's convention, where ...

Candidates clash on casinos, welfare at Suffolk-Herald debate 3 DAYS AGO
The five Democratic candidates for governor clashed on casinos, illegal immigration, and photo IDs on welfare cards during lively exchanges at today's Boston Herald-Suffolk ...

Coakley shuns convention-al wisdom 4 DAYS AGO
Attorney General Martha Coakley is downplaying the importance of winning this weekend's Democratic convention -- her first big political test since fumbling the 2010 Senate...
Former Attorney General Francis X. Bellotti -- one of the five former Bay State AG's in the last half-century who lost their bids for the Corner Office -- said he hopes Martha Coakley doesn't take for granted her huge lead in the governor's race as she did in her shocking 2010 U.S. Senate upset loss to Scott Brown.

"I think she has to overcome the fact she lost that Senate fight," Bellotti told the Herald yesterday. "I worked very hard for her in the primary, I raised a lot of money for her, and I made a couple of recordings for her. And then I didn't really see her after the primary. ... She was very confident she was going to win.

"And now she is about 30 points ahead," he added. "But you can’t sit on things like that. Being 30 points ahead (in June), it’s a lot different than being 30 points ahead when you win."

Coakley's role as the state's top law enforcement official has fallen squarely into the cross-hairs of her Democratic rivals, most notably Treasurer Steven Grossman, who has charged that the state needs a "job creator, not a prosecutor" as governor.

Juliette Kayyem, in Tuesday's Suffolk University/Boston Herald debate, blasted Coakley for hiding behind her office on controversial decisions, most notably her move to block a casino repeal ballot initiative.

Bellotti, who lost the 1990 governor's race to Republican William F. Weld, said the role of AG can challenge candidates, from defending unpopular decisions to beating back the prosecutor-only persona when the office carries more "affirmative" roles in civil rights and consumer protection.

"It’s something where they look at you as AG and they love you to be there, but it’s hard for them to make the switch," Bellotti said.

Coakley, for her part, said she's proud of her record as attorney general, and has repeatedly said she's not paying attention to polls like Monday's Suffolk/Herald survey that showed her 32 points ahead of Grossman.

"No one knows better than I that they are a snapshot of yesterday," she said.

Former Attorney General Thomas F. Reilly, the early front-runner in the 2006 Democratic race that was eventually won by Deval Patrick, said he doesn’t believe the office carries any ballot box "curse."

"I certainly didn’t lose in the Democratic primary because I was AG. Deval Patrick ran a brilliant campaign," Reilly said.

"Does it put you in difficult positions at some point? Yes it does. But you still have a job (to do). I think she (Coakley) is doing quite well. If someone is calling her 'prosecutor,' she’s a damn good prosecutor, and she’s far more than a prosecutor. ... It sounds like a desperate tactic to me." ___

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Poll shows Massachusetts governor's race tightening 6 DAYS AGO

BOSTON (Reuters) - A Republican former hospital executive is gaining ground on Democratic rivals in the
Cashman: Berwick should bet it all on his casino stance

Jun 10, 2014 - 10:41 GMT

Democratic gubernatorial hopeful Donald Berwick may not want to be known as a one-issue candidate, but it should be his sole focus and winning strategy for today's Suffolk University/Boston Herald debate. This is the last chance for the candidates to sell their message to voters, and more importantly to delegates ahead of this weekend's state Democratic Convention. The poll … (continue reading)
Electronic Coverage
the five democrats seeking the nomination in the Massachusetts governor's race. The candidates: Joseph Avellone, Donald Berwick, Martha Coakley, Steven Grossman, and Juliette Kayem, will face off at Suffolk University tomorrow morning. Taking questions from students and moderators. That debate is sponsored by Suffolk University and the Boston Herald. (pl) Time is now (x:xx)... more coverage you can count on coming up on Eyewitness News this morning... (dn) Rhode Island lawmakers once again ready to sink their teeth into some tasty legislation. Those details after the break. (pl) Then later... Nothing like some clutch hitting to snap the red sox out of their last slump. Find out how many times Big Papi has pulled this off in his Hall of Fame career. (dn) Before we head to break, here is a look at last night's winning lottery numbers. (mm)
suffolk university, and the boston herald. (dn) time is now (x:xx)... more local coverage coming up on eyewitness news this morning... (pl) massachusetts approves a new law that provides new protections for pets during emergency situations. details after the break. (dn) plus -- 3 common household items are being recalled. how they could impact your child's health. (pl) before we head to break, here is a look at last night's winning lottery numbers. (mm) it's x:xx. time for your pinpoint weather and

WCVB-BOS (ABC) 6/10/2014 4:38:33 AM
Boston, MA
Newscenter 5 Eyeopener
Local Viewership: 50,790
Local Publicity Value: $2,221.77
the end of the year. the international olympic committee will announce the host city in 2017. >> commitment 2014 this morning. suffolk university is hosting a debate for the five democratic candidates running for governor in massachusetts. that debate featuring joe and lone, don berwick, martha coakley, steve grossman and juliet kayyem will be this morning at 11:00. wcvb will be bringing that to you. you can watch it on wcvb.com as well as the mobile news apps. >> 4:38. "team 5 investigates" uncovering exclusive details. >> the bay state city with the most expensive fire and emergency medical service departments in the country.

WCVB-BOS (ABC) 6/10/2014 5:08:49 AM
Boston, MA
Newscenter 5 Eyeopener
Local Viewership: 52,765
Local Publicity Value: $2,368.26
overwhelmingly by minorities. however, the mayor says that there is more work to do. >> election season is getting rolling this morning at suffolk university. it's hosting a debate among the five democratic candidates running for governor here in massachusetts. they will face off at 11:00 this morning. we will be streaming it live. you can watch on wcvb.com as well as our mobile news apps. >> fueled by hate, ready to kill. >> the disturbing information police have revealed about an accused kopp killing puzzle and the final move from one of the victims that is so heart breaking for his family.

WHDH-BOS (NBC) 6/10/2014 5:10:37 AM
Boston, MA
7News Today in New England
Local Viewership: 19,729
Local Publicity Value: $337.96
and wishes her well. >>> the five democratic candidates for massachusetts governor face off in a debate at suffolk university. martha coakley as a lead over steve grows grass -- grossman >>> tense standoff in l.a. when a man leads police on a wild chase. >> christa: wings clipped at logan. the runway mishap that delayed a plane filled with passengers. >>> kayna: tower of terror.

WBUR (Radio) 6/10/2014 6:07:18 AM
Boston, MA
percent majority are people of color laos pledge during his campaign to hire a staff that reflected the city's diversity the five democratic candidates for governor meet for a debate at suffolk university today the debate comes ahead of this weekend's democratic convention candidates meet eighteen percent of the vote from delegates to get on the primary ballot the state gaming commission is in springfield today to begin its final evaluation of the bid by mgm to build a casino in that sake the license would be the first under the states casino law boston health officials are launching a campaign urging city residents to limit their salt intake

WCVB-BOS (ABC) 6/10/2014 6:09:20 AM
Boston, MA
Newscenter 5 Eyeopener
Local Viewership: 96,518
Local Publicity Value: $4,041.33
overwhelmingly by minors. however, the mayor says that there is more work to be done. >> election season is getting rolling. this morning at suffolk university, a debate will be hosted among the five democratic candidates running for governor here in massachusetts. joe and lone, martha coakley and juliet kayyem will face off at 11:00 this morning. we
will be streaming that as it happens. You can watch it on wcgb.com and of
course on our mobile news apps. >> nine minutes after 6:00 on this
tuesday morning. Fueled by hate and ready to kill. >> The disturbing
information police have revealed about an accused cop killing couple and
the final move from one of the
All eyes on Hillary Clinton today as her much anticipated "Hard Voices" goes on sale. It's a candid look at her achievement and setbacks as Secretary of State. Clinton sat down with NBC Cynthia McFadden who asked her whatHillary today may tell her younger self back at the White House.

Congressman Mike Michaud (ME-Show) is stepping down to run for governor. At this hour in Massachusetts - the five Democratic candidates for governor are facing off at a debate. It's hosted by Suffolk University and the Boston Herald. Attorney General Martha Coakley, state treasurer Steve Grossman, Don Berwick, Juliette Kayyem and Joe Avellone will take questions from Suffolk students. And in Rhode Island - the leading Democratic candidates for governor are set to square off in their first televised debate. They are Providence Mayor Angel Taveras, Treasurer Gina Raimondo and Clay Pell. Democratic Governor Lincoln Chafee is not seeking re-election.

Was still among the 5 Democratic candidate for governor all agree that the state is on the right track but say there are problems that need to be fixed that the bid at Suffolk University in Boston WB's It is time to 49 Sport website take on the Orioles again denied mobile more 1st pitch 7 of 5 the Spurs Game two of the NBA Finals to live in Miami series tied at one game each hour Kings Europe's away games that none of the New York Rangers after shutting out New Europe lies Snyder Madison Square Garden's Biden West neither ranges where we needed again when former world No one pick up while Fiat will operate with or

WBFZ-AM (Radio) 6/10/2014 2:50:47 PM
Boston, MA

Acaiium met in a 90-minute debate sponsored by the Boston Herald and Suffolk University. This coming before the debate in Worcester that happened Saturday. The candidates need at least 15% to qualify for the September primary ballot. >> now we know all the details. Let's get that out of the way. >> you know those candidates. >> we've got it. Let's talk about this with Tom Whalen and our political reporter Tom Whalen, history professor at Boston University.
The newscast. Jonathan? >> we'll see you then. Thanks. >>> with days before Massachusetts Democrats choose their candidates for governor, all five hopefuls met in the debate co-sponsored by Suffolk University and "The Herald." Jon Keller was there as the front-runner found herself on the defensive. >> i went after Wall Street. >> Reporter: How can you tell Martha Coakley is the front-runner? Because of events like this debate where she was the designate ed pinata on federal secure communities crackdown on undocumented law-breakers. >> There were differences. The attorney general was a cheerleader for the secure communities. I think secure communities demonstrated to be a blunt...
tampering and endangering welfare of a child. she's expected to testify against dow at his trial. >> eye oh governor seat sat down today for suffolk university for debate lot of attention paid to front runner attorney general martha coakley fox 25's political reporter sharman sacchetti was there to take it all in. sharman. mark. just we're just days before the party's convention. the five democratic candidates are making their final push. the questions ranged everything from casino to ebt cards to i will legal immigration in inspect debate front runner is always a target and today was no exception. at this debate martha coakley finding herself walking a fine line trying to please party

in polls joe says reighs confident going in this weekend. that's what the whole thing is all about. which is who can beat charlie baker in the end. debate was put on boston herald and suffolk university i will state democratic convention on saturday. and we will bring you full coverage of the candidates who make it on to the primary ballot. sharman sacchetti, fox 25 news. >> all right sharman, thank you. panic over saving for retirement is a problem a lot of us are facing. coming up a financial expert walks us through some ways you can prepare for the future in the wake of an economic crisis. >> all right maria we're still on storm watch this evening nothing severe out there right now. but doesn't mean you can't still have lightning. heavy downpours even some small hail. i'mhe couch

he's confident going into this weekend. t'what the whole thing is all about, who can beat charlie baker in the end. >> the debate was put on by the boston herald and suffolk university. i will be at the state democratic convention on saturday and we will bring you full coverage the candidates who do make it on to the primary ballot. sharman sacchetti, fox 25 news. >> shocking upset in the world of politics. house majority leader eric cantor has lost a primary election in his home state of virginia. tea party-backed economic professor dave bratt won in a stunning upset against cantor in the rich month area. until now cantor was regarded as the second most powerful
Democratic candidates in Mass. gov.'s race meet in debate

(NECN: Alison King) - It took just minutes for Martha Coakley, the frontrunner in the Massachusetts gubernatorial race, to take the first jab in a debate hosted by the Boston Herald and Suffolk University that included all five Democratic candidates.

It came from Treasurer Steve Grossman, who said, "The Attorney General was a cheerleader for the Secure Communities and I think Secure Communities as been demonstrated to have been a blunt instrument."

Grossman, number two in the race according to the polls, was referring to the controversial federal deportation program.

"The first reason Secure Communities made sense was because, for those predators, this was an effective way to get them out of the country and removes that threat," Coakley responded.

Juliette Kayyem also took a swing at Coakley. "I disagree with the Attorney General on drivers licenses. I think for public safety purposes, we need to have drivers licenses for undocumented," she said.

Four days before Democratic activists head to Worcester for the party's convention, the candidates looked to distinguish themselves, knowing that without the support of at least 15 percent of the delegates, they will be out of the race.

Among a group of mostly self-described liberals, Don Berwick says he's the most progressive because he's the only candidate to support a single-payer health care system and on casinos.

As for the subject of casinos, Berwick said he'd vote to repeal. "I think I'm the only candidate that is against casinos and for this repeal," he said.

Joe Avellone is the only candidate promoting himself as a moderate. He is the only one not to support indexing the gas tax to inflation.

"Indexing is a back door tax. It's what people resent. It's sight of hand of the legislature," he said.

The debate was for Democratic candidates only, but Republican candidate Charlie Baker managed to make a cameo appearance via video.

"Given the DCF, Heath Connector, Medicinal Marijuana and probation scandals, just to name a few, do you think state government in Massachusetts is headed in the right direction?" he said.

"Absolutely right track, but there are problems. Whoever lived in world where there weren't problems," Kayyem said.

"Totally right track I work with Attorneys Generals around the state. They're sick of me hearing me say how great our education is, how our growth is," Coakley said.

All said the Bay State is on the right track, though Berwick cited inequality and poverty as problems and Grossman had a dig at health care, calling the connector "a disaster."

For up-to-the-minute news and weather, be sure to follow us on Twitter and like us on Facebook.

Tags: Boston, Martha Coakley, Boston Herald, Suffolk University, Alison King, Steve Grossman, Juliette Kayyem, MA Governors race, Joe Avellone, Don Berwick
Attorney General Martha Coakley, state Treasurer Steven Grossman, business executive Joseph Avellone, former federal health care administrator Don Berwick and former homeland security officer Juliette Kayyem discussed issues for about 90 minutes during the Boston Herald/Suffolk University debate.

About 6,000 delegates are expected at Saturday's convention in Worcester. Each candidate needs at least 15 percent support to advance to the September primary.

In a twist, the debate included videotaped questions from other gubernatorial candidates, including Republicans Charlie Baker and Mark Fisher. Baker, the 2010 GOP nominee, listed several managerial issues currently vexing state government and asked the Democrats if they believed Massachusetts was on the right track under Gov. Deval Patrick.

Grossman said state government was on the right track, "but we have to acknowledge when we are not doing things well and fix them." He cited examples including high caseload among social workers at the Department of Children and Families, and the failure of the state's health exchange website.

Berwick said he was proud to live in the first state with universal health insurance coverage and marriage equality, among other things.

"This is a great state to be in. I can't wait to lead it," said Berwick. "The biggest problems remain inequity and inequality and poverty in the state."

Avellone applauded Patrick for having the "right vision," but pledged to bring new management tools to state government.

Coakley and Kayyem tried to turn the tables on the Republicans, with Coakley contending that states dominated by Republican governors or Legislatures have less job growth and more poverty. Kayyem noted there were past "systemic administrative problems" under GOP governors in Massachusetts.

"Who ever lived in a world that there weren't problems?" Kayyem said, adding that she would fix them.

The debate was mostly cordial though Coakley, who has led in early polling, was occasionally criticized. Grossman called her a "cheerleader" for the federal Secure Communities law, which allows police to detain individuals over their immigration status.

Coakley said she initially considered the law a tool for helping remove dangerous criminals, but now believes it has gone too far.

"We all agree that the federal government hasn't done its job and the states are going to have to step up," she said.

Kayyem chided Coakley for suggesting that it was the decision of her office, and not her personally, to bar a casino repeal question from the ballot.

Berwick, the only Democrat calling for repeal of the casino law, took Grossman to task after the treasurer said he'd oppose repeal of the law despite concerns about the impact of casinos on the state lottery.

"I don't think that's leadership," said Berwick. "I think leadership is declaring on the merits whether casinos belong in this state."

Avellone got in the last word on the subject: "Leadership is driving us forward to create jobs and it's not the instability of repealing things and changing the landscape every year."

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Mass gubernatorial candidates to debate Tuesday

Posted: Jun 10, 2014 4:56 AM EDT
Updated: Jun 10, 2014 5:24 AM EDT

BOSTON (WHDH) - The five democratic candidates for Massachusetts governor will face off Tuesday morning in a debate hosted by Suffolk University and the Boston Herald.

Recent polling has showed Attorney General Martha Coakley with a commanding lead over her nearest competitor, Treasurer Steve Grossman.

Joe Avellone, Juliette Kayyem and Don Berwick are also competing in the race.
Democrats Debate Issues Days Before Convention

By Bob Salsberg, Associated Press

June 10, 2014 1:58 PM

BOSTON (AP) — The five Democratic candidates for governor all agree that Massachusetts is on the right track but acknowledge there are problems in state government that need to be fixed.

Attorney General Martha Coakley, state Treasurer Steven Grossman, business executive Joseph Avellone, former federal health care administrator Don Berwick and former homeland security officer Juliette Kayyem met in a 90-minute debate Tuesday sponsored by the Boston Herald and Suffolk University.

The debate came just days before the Democratic state convention in Worcester. The candidates need at least 15 percent to qualify for the September primary ballot.

In an unusual twist, the debate included videotaped questions from other gubernatorial candidates including Republicans Charlie Baker and Mark Fisher, who asked if the Democrats believed Massachusetts was on the right track under current Gov. Deval Patrick.

WBZ NewsRadio 1030’s Lana Jones reports
Democratic Gubernatorial Candidate Debate Today

The five Democrats running for governor are expected to participate in a debate this morning at 11 o’clock in Boston. The event will be held on the campus of Suffolk University, which is sponsoring the event along with the "Boston Herald." The candidates will field questions from Suffolk University students.
Democrats debate issues days before convention

Posted: Jun 10, 2014 1:41 PM EDT
Updated: Jun 10, 2014 1:41 PM EDT

By BOB SALSBERG
Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) - The five Democratic candidates for governor all agree that Massachusetts is on the right track but acknowledge there are problems in state government that need to be fixed.

Attorney General Martha Coakley, state Treasurer Steven Grossman, business executive Joseph Avellone, former federal health care administrator Don Berwick and former homeland security officer Juliette Kayyem met in a 90-minute debate Tuesday sponsored by the Boston Herald and Suffolk University.

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Democrats debate issues days before convention

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BOSTON (AP) - The five Democratic candidates for governor all agree that Massachusetts is on the right track but acknowledge there are problems in state government that need to be fixed.

Attorney General Martha Coakley, state Treasurer Steven Grossman, business executive Joseph Avellone, former federal health care administrator Don Berwick and former homeland security officer Juliette Kayyem met in a 90-minute debate Tuesday sponsored by the Boston Herald and Suffolk University.

The debate came just days before the Democratic state convention in Worcester. The candidates need at least 15 percent to qualify for the September primary ballot.

In an unusual twist, the debate included videotaped questions from other gubernatorial candidates including Republicans Charlie Baker and Mark Fisher, who asked if the Democrats believed Massachusetts was on the right track under current Gov. Deval Patrick.

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