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Industry org promotes incentives, job creation

Scout & About: Massachusetts 2012

By TODD LONGWELL

In 2005, a collection of local industry craftspeople and business owners founded the Massachusetts Production Coalition (MPC) to urge the state legislature and then-Gov. Mitt Romney to create a 25% film and TV tax credit program.

That program went into effect in 2006 (and was modified in 2007), attracting a wealth of production to the state, but the MPC discovered its work was far from over.

The credit "is kind of like a newborn baby that has to be fed," says MPC president Don Packer, co-owner of Engine Room Edit. "We've had to (explain) its value to the entire state."

When current Gov. Deval Patrick proposed adding a \$50 million annual cap to the program in January 2010, MPC members lobbied state Senate and House and leadership and pitched stories highlighting its economic benefits to media outlets. Then, in that March, the MPC put together three panels to testify against a bill that would have rolled back the credit to 20%. In the end, the program remained intact.

Opposition to tax credit has been fueled by a series of negative reports from the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, the latest of which said each production job that went to a state resident cost taxpayers \$325,000. The MPC -- which has seen its membership rise from 22 at its founding to more than 300 today -- has countered with reports of its own, the next of which is due in January, highlighting anecdotal evidence of production's trickle-down benefits to restaurants, hotels and other non-showbiz support services.

"The value of a film that you don't see is the \$25,000 spent at Sean Harmon's hardware store in Lowell or the \$100,000 spent to renovate the town-owned cottage at Centennial Grove in Essex," Packer says. "We tell them, 'Look, all boats rise in the tide. When the money comes in (from production), it comes in for everyone.'"

Scout & About: Massachusetts 2012

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