



Foes take swipe at Deval Patrick Republicans: Gov holding up EBT reform

By Chris Cassidy | Thursday, February 9, 2012 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | [Local Politics](#)

House Republicans accused Gov. **Deval Patrick** of stalling efforts to stop food-stamp abuse and ease foreclosures by holding up critical appointments to special commissions studying solutions.

"It's going on about eight weeks now, and we're still waiting for the governor to appoint his person," said state Rep. Shaunna O'Connell, a Taunton Republican. "Our deadline is quickly approaching and we have a lot of work to do."

After Herald reports found taxpayer-funded EBT cards were used to buy alcohol, Lottery tickets and jewelry, outraged Beacon Hill lawmakers created a commission in December to look at the system.

That same month, authorities busted an alleged scam in Lynn, where swindlers used EBT money to buy crack cocaine at convenience stores.

O'Connell said the commission has yet to meet and that the only commissioner not appointed is Patrick's pick. It has an April deadline to report findings on how to overhaul the EBT system — and the clock is ticking, she said.

"I hope the governor is as concerned about stopping abuse of taxpayer dollars as I am," O'Connell said.

A Patrick spokesman declined comment yesterday.

But O'Connell said she received a call from the governor's office yesterday at 5 p.m. — after publicly calling on Patrick to make the appointment and after the Herald contacted the governor's office about the appointments — informing her the commission's first meeting would be Wednesday.

Meanwhile, state Rep. Geoff Diehl, a Republican from Whitman, said he, too, is waiting on Patrick to appoint a member to a special commission studying mortgage refinancing assistance.

It was created in July and eight of the nine appointments already have been made, he said.

"We're just waiting on the final governor's appointee," Diehl said.

The commission has a Dec. 31 deadline to report findings.

"It's something we could be working on now," Diehl said, "and it's a shame we're not."

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