

**REPORT OF THE  
COMMISSION  
ON TAXATION**

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Report of the Commission on taxation by Various

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**VARIOUS**

**REPORT OF THE  
COMMISSION  
ON TAXATION**



REPORT  
OF THE  
*Massachusetts*  
COMMISSION ON TAXATION,

APPOINTED UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF CHAPTER 129  
OF THE RESOLVES OF 1907,

TO INVESTIGATE THE SUBJECT OF TAXATION AND  
TO CODIFY, REVISE AND AMEND THE  
LAWS RELATING THERETO.

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JANUARY, 1908.



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A. S. A.



# CONTENTS.

PART I. :—	PAGE
Letter of Transmission, . . . . .	5
Commission on Taxation, . . . . .	6
Resolve providing for the Appointment of the Commission, . .	7
Report of the Commission:—	
I. Introductory Statement, . . . . .	9
II. The Distribution of the Corporate Franchise Taxes of Railroad, Telephone and Telegraph Companies, . .	12
III. Distribution of the Franchise Taxes paid by Domestic Business Corporations, . . . . .	13
IV. Returns by Foreign Corporations, . . . . .	21
V. Taxation of Intangible Property, . . . . .	22
VI. Supervision of the Assessment of Property for Taxation, . .	73
VII. The Compensation of Assessors, . . . . .	74
VIII. Exemption of County and Municipal Bonds from Taxation, . . . . .	75
IX. Municipal Taxation and Finance, . . . . .	76
X. Tax on Transfers of Stock, . . . . .	78
XI. Taxation of the Property of Educational Institutions, . .	79
XII. Codification and Revision of the Laws relating to Taxation, . . . . .	79
Appendices:—	
A. An Act relating to Certain Corporate Franchise Taxes, . . . . .	83
B. An Act relative to the Distribution of the Franchise Tax of Business Corporations, . . . . .	83
C. An Act relative to Certificates and Returns of Foreign Corporations, . . . . .	84
D. An Act establishing a Uniform Tax on Certain Classes of Personal Property, . . . . .	85
E. An Act to provide for the More Effective Administration of Laws relating to Taxation, . . . . .	93
F. An Act relative to the Powers of the Tax Commissioner, . . . . .	95
G. An Act relative to the Compensation of Assessors, . . . . .	95
H. An Act to exempt from Taxation Future Issues of Municipal and County Bonds, . . . . .	96
I. Table showing the Distribution of Railroad, Telephone and Telegraph Taxes; also, the Apportionment of the State Tax for 1907 to Each City and Town, . . . . .	96
J. Table showing the Distribution of the Entire Corporate Franchise Tax of 1907, . . . . .	103
K. Table showing the Amount of Corporate Franchise Tax paid by Business Corporations in Certain Cities and Towns, together with the Amount of Such Tax returned to the Same Cities and Towns, . . . . .	107
L. Statistics of Municipal Debts and Taxes, . . . . .	110
 PART II. :—	
Codification of Laws relating to Taxation, . . . . .	113

## Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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BOSTON, Jan. 8, 1908.

*To the Great and General Court.*

In accordance with the provisions of chapter 129 of the Resolves of 1907, we have the honor to transmit the following report of the Commission on Taxation.

## COMMISSION ON TAXATION.

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### SENATE MEMBERS.

Hon. GUY W. COX of Boston, *Chairman*.  
Hon. WILLIAM J. BULLOCK of New Bedford.

### HOUSE MEMBERS.

Rep. CHARLES V. BLANCHARD of Somerville.  
Rep. SAMUEL H. MILDRAH of Boston.  
Rep. CLARENCE J. FOGG of Newburyport.  
Rep. RICHARD S. TEELING of Boston.

### MEMBERS APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR.

CHARLES J. BULLOCK of Cambridge.  
BERNARD EARLY of Newton.  
H. HUESTIS NEWTON of Everett.

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HENRY S. AMES, *Secretary*.



RESOLVE TO PROVIDE FOR A REVISION OF THE  
LAWS RELATIVE TO TAXATION.

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*Resolved*, That a commission, to be called the commission on taxation, shall investigate the whole subject of taxation in this Commonwealth, including state, county and municipal taxes, and shall codify, revise and amend the laws relating thereto, and shall report in print to the general court on or before the first day of December, in the year nineteen hundred and seven, with such recommendations for legislation as it may deem expedient. The commission shall have a room in the state house assigned for its use; is authorized to employ such assistance, clerical or otherwise, as it may require; and shall receive such sums for its compensation and such amounts for its expenses, travelling and otherwise, necessarily incurred, as shall be allowed by the governor and council. It shall give such public hearings as it deems necessary. The commission shall be constituted as follows: two members of the present senate to be appointed by the president of the senate; four members of the present house of representatives to be appointed by the speaker of the house; and three persons, experts on the subject of taxation, who shall be appointed by the governor. The report of said commission shall be printed by the Commonwealth, and a copy thereof shall be mailed in the month of December, nineteen hundred and seven, to each person elected to the general court for the year nineteen hundred and eight. [*Approved June 28, 1907.*]



## REPORT OF THE COMMISSION.

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### I. INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT.

The resolve providing for the appointment of the commission gave it broader powers and scope than were ever given to other committees or commissions created for similar work, and at the same time required the work to be completed in a shorter time. The committee of last year stated that the time at its disposal was too short for any committee of any Legislature to study comprehensively the problems of taxation, yet its time was almost double that given to this commission.

Under the circumstances, it was necessary to adopt a plan of procedure calculated to be most effective in results within the given time; and after a general hearing, it was determined to confine the work chiefly to a few important questions of policy affecting methods of taxation, and to leave details both of system and administration to the usual legislative action. We believe this method of procedure should be followed in any attempt to improve permanently the general system of taxation in Massachusetts. The problem is not primarily one of revenue, for under almost any system of taxation sufficient revenue can be raised to carry on the functions of government in our Commonwealth; it is not one of rate alone, for, if the system be good, it is simply a matter of balance of revenue and expenditure; it is not one of economic theories alone, for we must deal with an actual workable system, which is the product of history and environment, — factors which cannot be ignored.

The taxation system of Massachusetts proceeds from two constitutional sources: one being the authority to impose and levy proportional and reasonable assessments,