

## Letter: Preserve our workforce

Friday, January 20, 2006

The recent study by the UMass Donahue Institute ("An economy stuck in neutral," Jan. 12) indicating that the Massachusetts economy is slowing once again is particularly troubling when combined with the news that the Commonwealth's population has declined for the straight year.

If we are to weather this economic storm, it is essential for us to invest more in workers in the MetroWest region and across the state. Unless we can increase the skills of the workers remaining in Massachusetts, unemployment will persist, companies will struggle, and economic stagnation will become the norm.

The MetroWest Daily News is exactly right in identifying the Economic Stimulus Bill currently under negotiation by a legislative committee as a key to reenergizing our sluggish economy.

Two proposals are particularly important to the goal of making our workforce more competitive and responsive to the needs of industry. First, the \$11 million Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund will train workers for the good jobs employers need to fill. Second, the Educational Rewards program will allow workers to go part-time to community college to learn skills that are in high demand.

Our skilled workforce is Massachusetts' competitive advantage. If we don't act to preserve that advantage immediately, our economy will continue to idle.

BOB BOWER,  
Marlborough