To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives:

Pursuant to Part the Second, Chapter I, Section I, Article II of the Constitution of the Commonwealth, I am returning unsigned House Bill No. 4117, “An Act Relative to the School Department of the Town of Tewksbury.”

Under this bill, Tewksbury’s fiscal year 2008 budget would not include a part of the summer pay earned by its teachers during the fiscal year, authorizing the town to deficit spend in that amount and amortize the deficit over 15 years beginning in fiscal year 2009. I am mindful that like many cities and towns in the Commonwealth, Tewksbury faces a structural budget shortfall. Allowing Tewksbury to run operating deficits however, without bringing its expenditures and revenues into balance, will inevitably lead to greater service reductions in future years. Accordingly, this legislation establishes fiscally unwise precedent. Rather, the town should avail itself of other fiscal tools currently available to all municipalities.

I am committed to empowering cities and towns across the Commonwealth with the tools to bring them economic health, independence and development. The Municipal Partnership Act, currently being debated in the Legislature, provides additional, financially responsible, tools that all communities should consider. The
provisions of the Act would provide cities and towns with recurring streams of revenue as well as tools to control costs. Permitting Tewksbury to “deficit spend,” essentially using one-time revenues, and to amortize the deferred teachers’ pay for fifteen years, will not put the town in a better position to eliminate its structural deficit.

For this reason, I am returning House Bill No. 4117 unsigned.

Respectfully submitted,

DEV AL L. PATRICK,
Governor.