

E-CIGARETTE BILL HUNG UP IN COMMITTEE: Activists pressing a variety of bills are growing anxious with formal sessions due to end on July 31 and legislative leaders focused on a dozen high-profile bill. The latest example came Wednesday morning when Tobacco Free Mass circulated a statement calling upon lawmakers to advance legislation regulating e-cigarettes. “Electronic cigarette use is exploding in Massachusetts,” said Tami Gouveia, executive director of Tobacco Free Mass, a coalition of 80 organizations. “These new nicotine delivery systems are not regulated and we call on the legislature to lead the fight to protect public health. E-cigarettes should be treated as tobacco and included in the state’s successful smoke-free workplace law. These new, dangerous products deliver nicotine directly to users, and adults and kids, believing that these products are safe, are getting hooked.” After co-chairman Rep. Jeff Sanchez filed a proposal, the Public Health Committee endorsed a redrafted e-cigarette regulation bill (H 3726) last year but it has been pending before the Health Care Financing Committee since last October. In an interview Wednesday morning, Gouveia said the committee has twice extended the time it is allotted to consider the bill, with the latest deadline coming up on Friday. She said bill supporters are communicating with committee members, sharing new information with lawmakers about e-cigarettes, and hoping the bill gets some attention now that the state budget has been signed. “We’re generally hearing that the reaction to the bill overall is very positive. We’re not really clear what the holdup is.” The bill, which does not call for taxes on e-cigarettes, is listed among those being lobbied by North Carolina-based RAI Service Company on behalf of two clients, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company and Santa Fe Natural Tobacco Company. - M.Norton | 11:51 A.M.