

Organizing against MCAS

Kathy Greeley

MCAS and other forms of high-stakes testing were the focus of the kick-off event for the new First Wednesday Retiree Speaker Series, organized by the MTA Retired Members Committee. If you are a retired MTA member, you know just how much our schools have changed because of excessive testing, developmentally inappropriate demands on children, increasingly standardized curricula, corporate-style evaluations and teachers who are stressed, fearful and burned out.

But we are fighting back! The Nov. 1 workshop, “No MCAS: Organizing Stories and What We Can Do,” featured presentations by five organizers from around the state who are fighting high-stakes testing. Max Page, MTA president, opened the meeting and spoke briefly about the *Thrive Act* and the ballot initiative to end the MCAS as a high school graduation requirement, two initiatives that are an MTA commitment for the coming year.

Next was Lisa Guisbond, executive director of the nonprofit Citizens for Public Schools. She has been fighting the MCAS and corporate-style education reform since the implementation of MCAS in 1997 and building coalitions with a wide variety of education advocacy groups. Visit the CPS website at citizensforpublicschools.org for excellent resources for organizers.

Ricardo Rosa, director of the MTA Training and Professional Learning Division, shared his grassroots organizing work with the New Bedford Coalition to Save Our Schools (nbcosos.org). With more than 150 active members, NBCSOS has held community forums, rallies, film screenings, written Op-Eds, and more to resist charter school expansion and support public education.

Just a year ago, a group of Cambridge retired teachers came together out of their concern with standardized testing, developmentally inappropriate policies for children (like reducing nap time for four-year-olds), and other concerns. I shared their work with the local school committee, as well as plans for a community forum on what we really want for our public schools.

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Retired Members Committee

2023-2024

CHAIR

Patrick Patterson, Ipswich

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Maureen Colgan Posner, Springfield

Kip Fonsh,** Leverett

Shelly Fraser,* Framingham

Ora Gladstone, Boston

Kathy Greeley, Cambridge

Joseph Herosy,** Quincy

Andrei Joseph,** Chestnut Hill

Rick Last, Northampton

Dale Melcher, Northampton

Bernadette Murphy,**** Roslindale

Phyllis Neufeld, Burlington

Robin Smith,*** Springfield

Amy Wolpin, Florence

RETIRED MEMBERS ORGANIZER

Robert Whalen

rwhalen@massteacher.org

617-878-8206

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ASSOCIATION

2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor

Quincy, MA 02171-2119

800-392-6175 www.massteacher.org

MTA MEMBER BENEFITS, INC.

800-336-0990 www.mtabenefits.com

MTA MEMBERSHIP DIVISION

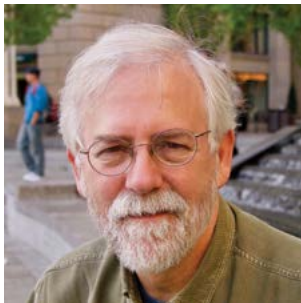
617-878-8118

800-392-6175

- * Elected by the Board
- ** MTA Board of Directors
- *** President's Designee
- **** Appointed Active Member

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Patrick Patterson



MTA RMC Chair
Patrick Patterson

A lot has happened since my last message.

The last issue of the *MTA Retired Reporter* was devoted to the upcoming Gathering. We had a number of workshops planned to cover a variety of topical issues and were looking forward to sharing them with all of you. Unfortunately, the number of people who signed up was not enough to hold an in-person event.

The reason for the low numbers undoubtedly was due in part to the continuing prevalence of the COVID-19 virus. By now, most of us have had it at least once and with what we know from reading about it we don't want to get it again. As we know only too well, our age group has carried a lot of the burden of this virus.

When it became apparent that the Gathering would be canceled, rather than just simply moving on, we decided to take the planned workshops online and create a monthly speaker series. We didn't want all the preparation and care that went into the planning of the workshops to go to waste. We now have two of the scheduled workshops under our belt.

The first was a report from MTA President Max Page on the MTA legislative agenda and the signature effort underway to put a referendum on the November 2024 ballot, which would put an end to the use of the MCAS as a graduation requirement. The good news is that, as of now, enough signatures have been collected to put the referendum on the ballot next fall. Of course, the signatures will require official certification.

The second workshop was on the MCAS itself and contained a number of reports from various activists about organizing to put an end to the use of standard tests. See the article on Page 1 in this issue of the

Reporter by Kathy Greeley, of the MTA Retired Members Committee.

The next session will cover an important element of our legislative agenda: "Legislating for a Dignified Retirement." I don't need tell you that what you receive in your retirement has not kept up with inflation. This event, scheduled for Dec. 6, will report on what the MTA is doing about this at the state level and provide an update on the fight against the federal Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset (WEP/GPO).

The First Wednesday Retiree Speaker Series is on the first Wednesday of every month from 3 to 4:30 p.m., on Zoom. We are working to post recordings of the events on the MTA's YouTube channel. For more information about the different topics and how to register for the events of the series, please see Page 11 in this issue of the *Reporter*.

As for other news on the labor front, things are heating up and looking good. Our union siblings at the United Auto Workers, after striking for 46 days, were able to win a contract that returned the UAW to its old fighting days. And several other automakers have since announced significant pay increases for their workers. Unions set the standard for what others get.

As I write, the Andover Education Association recently won a strong contract after a strike of several days. This has special significance for me because it was the public school system that I taught in before I retired. The Wisdom Warriors play an active role in supporting local contract struggles. You can sign up for the Wisdom Warriors by emailing your interest to mtawisdomwarriors@gmail.com. We try to post news about locals and their labor actions. To show your solidarity, please try to attend a rally in support of our active members! ■

IF YOU HAVE SOME NEWS

from your local retired group that you wish to share, please send it to Robert Whalen at rwhalen@massteacher.org.

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR NEWS, make sure to visit and bookmark [massteacher.org/retired](https://www.massteacher.org/retired).

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE / BOARD REPORT

Andrei Joseph

After a rich and robust discussion, the Board of Directors confirmed that our Annual Meeting this April in Springfield will include both a hybrid option and an area on part of the main floor that will require masking. Many issues were raised during the debate, including, is the cost worth it? The technology to provide a hybrid option costs the MTA \$85,000. Does hybrid participation increase democracy by allowing those who need safety accommodations a means to participate – as well as those who cannot travel easily because of expense or child care issues? Or does the hybrid technology decrease democracy by limiting our face-to-face contact and the opportunity to build relationships and organize? It is tricky to measure the impact on attendance that a hybrid option creates. Multiple variables are involved: Is the meeting in Boston or Springfield? Is it an election year for MTA President and MTA Vice President? What are the infection levels of COVID-19? Last year, 62 of 140 MTA Retired delegates participated remotely.

Our union is in powerful shape – both politically and financially. Politically, we are pursuing our campaign to eliminate the unjust graduation requirement of the MCAS test. Over 130,000 signatures have been gathered to ensure that this will become a ballot question next November. And we are gathering allies as we make a parallel effort to eliminate the graduation requirement through the Legislature.

The annual audit, with which we are required by law to comply, has documented that we are in a strong position with adequate reserves and a well-funded pension plan. There was no evidence of fraud and no untoward issues discovered. The fluctuating interest rates impact our position momentarily, but, overall, we are financially sound. Mike Fadel, our Executive Director – Treasurer, is beginning a study to develop a long-term reserves policy.

At our last Annual Meeting, delegates approved a budget which allowed for increased staff positions to expand support of members and pursue even deeper organizing. This has been occurring and our Fair Share Amendment campaign, PreK-12 ESP Bill of Rights and support for locals willing to engage in job actions have attracted national attention. Job openings at MTA receive applicants from throughout the country and organizers currently working for other unions want to join us as they see an opportunity to use their skills. It is an exciting time as we supplement our roster.



MTA RMC Member
Andrei Joseph

“Our union is in powerful shape – both politically and financially. Politically, we are pursuing our campaign to eliminate the unjust graduation requirement of the MCAS test.”

—MTA RMC Member Andrei Joseph

Our Climate Action Network is trying to steer us to carbon zero by 2030. There are multiple areas in which we can reduce carbon impact: our facilities, the transportation we use, materials and waste, and how we coordinate and produce our events. The network is always interested in attracting members to support these efforts: <https://www.massteacher.org/current-initiatives/mta-climate-action-network>.

The Executive Committee voted unanimously to have MTA sign a labor petition calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. The petition echoes our existing resolution regarding Education for Peace (I-13), recognizes the terrible civilian casualties on both sides, calls for the immediate release of hostages and demands that President Biden call for a ceasefire. We stand with other local and state unions in this call: <https://secure.everyaction.com/w1qW7B3pek2rTtv9ny5bqw2>.

Our union work continues on many fronts. I encourage everyone to attend the EMAC Conference on December 1 and 2 in Framingham. Bettina Love, Ph.D., will be the keynote speaker. The Early Career Educators Conference was held in Worcester. Staff DEI work with Loretta Ross continues and we elected board members to help oversee our MTA Benefits programs. In addition, holiday season is coming – take advantage of all the discounts available to you! ■

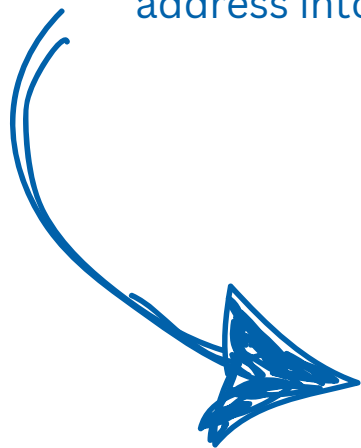
LEGISLATIVE REPORT: An Update From MTA Government Relations

Contact Your Legislators!

Use the directory below to call your legislators and urge them to support **Senate bill 1638 and House bill 2505** for an increased COLA and a secure and dignified retirement for retired educators.

If you need to look up your legislator, go to www.malegislature.gov/Search/FindMyLegislator

or scan the QR image below with your cell phone and enter your address into the field provided.



If your legislator's name is in a green box it means they **are already a co-sponsor** of S.1638/H.2505 but please still place a call to them to thank them for their support and urge them to continue to advocate to pass this important legislation.

To learn more about this legislation go to www.massteacher.org/legislation.

Title	Name	District	Phone Number
Rep.	James Arciero	2nd Middlesex	617-722-2575
Rep.	James Arena-DeRosa	8th Middlesex	617-722-2810
Rep.	Jennifer Armini	8th Essex	617-722-2140
Rep.	Shirley Arriaga	8th Hampden	617-722-2582
Rep.	Brian Ashe	2nd Hampden	617-722-2304
Rep.	Bruce Ayers	1st Norfolk	617-722-2220
Rep.	Ruth Balser	12th Middlesex	617-722-2199
Rep.	Christine Barber	34th Middlesex	617-722-2396
Rep.	John Barrett	1st Berkshire	617-722-2960
Rep.	Jay Barrows	1st Bristol	617-722-2100
Rep.	Donald Berthiaume	5th Worcester	617-722-2090
Rep.	David Biele	4th Suffolk	617-722-2460
Rep.	Natalie Blais	1st Franklin	413-362-9453
Rep.	Nicholas Boldyga	3rd Hampden	617-722-2810
Rep.	Antonio Cabral	13th Bristol	617-722-2017
Rep.	Daniel Cahill	10th Essex	617-722-2020
Rep.	Peter Capano	11th Essex	617-722-2020
Rep.	Daniel Carey	2nd Hampshire	617-722-2396
Rep.	Gerard Cassidy	9th Plymouth	617-722-2015
Rep.	Simon Cataldo	14th Middlesex	617-722-2000 x8676
Rep.	Tackey Chan	2nd Norfolk	617-722-2370

Title	Name	District	Phone Number
Rep.	Michelle Ciccolo	15th Middlesex	617-722-2210
Rep.	Mike Connolly	26th Middlesex	617-722-2240
Rep.	Rob Consolvo	14th Suffolk	617-722-2030
Rep.	Manny Cruz	7th Essex	617-722-2011
Rep.	Mark Cusack	5th Norfolk	617-722-2320
Rep.	Josh Cutler	6th Plymouth	617-722-2013
Rep.	Angelo D'Emilia	8th Plymouth	617-722-2488
Rep.	Michael Day	31st Middlesex	617-722-2396
Rep.	Marjorie Decker	25th Middlesex	617-722-2130
Rep.	David DeCoste	5th Plymouth	617-722-2460
Rep.	Kip Diggs	2nd Barnstable	617-722-2013
Rep.	Carol Doherty	3rd Bristol	617-722-2014
Rep.	Mindy Domb	3rd Hampshire	617-722-2877
Rep.	Kate Donaghue	19th Worcester	617-722-2060
Rep.	Daniel Donahue	16th Worcester	617-722-2637
Rep.	Paul Donato	35th Middlesex	617-722-2520
Rep.	William Driscoll	7th Norfolk	617-722-2020
Rep.	Michelle DuBois	10th Plymouth	617-722-2017

Title	Name	District	Phone Number
Rep.	Patricia Duffy	5th Hampden	617-722-2013
Rep.	Rodney Elliott	16th Middlesex	617-722-2080
Rep.	Tricia Farley-Bouvier	2nd Berkshire	617-722-2676
Rep.	Kimberly Ferguson	1st Worcester	617-722-2100
Rep.	Dylan Fernandes	Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket	617-722-2230
Rep.	Ann-Margaret Ferrante	5th Essex	617-722-2380
Rep.	Michael Finn	6th Hampden	617-722-2014
Rep.	Carole Fiola	6th Bristol	617-722-2430
Rep.	Chris Flanagan	1st Barnstable	617-722-2080
Rep.	Brandy Fluker Oakley	12th Suffolk	617-722-2430
Rep.	Paul Frost	7th Worcester	617-722-2489
Rep.	William Galvin	6th Norfolk	617-722-2692
Rep.	Sean Garballey	23rd Middlesex	617-722-2090
Rep.	Judith Garcia	11th Suffolk	617-722-2582
Rep.	Denise Garlick	13th Norfolk	617-722-2070
Rep.	Colleen Garry	36th Middlesex	617-722-2380
Rep.	Carmine Gentile	13th Middlesex	617-722-2810
Rep.	Jessica Giannino	16th Suffolk	617-722-2011

Title	Name	District	Phone Number
Rep.	Susan Gifford	2nd Plymouth	617-722-2100
Rep.	Carlos Gonzalez	10th Hampden	617-722-2230
Rep.	Ken Gordon	21st Middlesex	617-722-2240
Rep.	Danielle Gregoire	4th Middlesex	617-722-2140
Rep.	Patricia Haddad	5th Bristol	617-722-2380
Rep.	Richard Haggerty	30th Middlesex	617-722-2080
Rep.	Ryan Hamilton	15th Essex	617-722-2090
Rep.	James Hawkins	2nd Bristol	617-722-2013
Rep.	Chris Hendricks	11th Bristol	617-722-2305
Rep.	Natalie Higgins	4th Worcester	617-722-2014
Rep.	Kate Hogan	3rd Middlesex	617-722-2600
Rep.	Russell Holmes	6th Suffolk	617-722-2220
Rep.	Kevin Honan	17th Suffolk	617-722-2470
Rep.	Vanna Howard	17th Middlesex	617-722-2060
Rep.	Steven Howitt	4th Bristol	617-722-2305
Rep.	Daniel Hunt	13th Suffolk	617-722-2380
Rep.	Bradley Jones	20th Middlesex	617-722-2100
Rep.	Hannah Kane	11th Worcester	617-722-2810
Rep.	Kristin Kassner	2nd Essex	617-722-2000 x7905

Title	Name	District	Phone Number
Rep.	Patrick Kearney	4th Plymouth	617-722-2014
Rep.	Mary Keefe	15th Worcester	617-722-2017
Rep.	Sally Kerans	13th Essex	617-722-2210
Rep.	Kay Khan	11th Middlesex	617-722-2230
Rep.	Meghan Kilcoyne	12th Worcester	617-722-2396
Rep.	Michael Kushmerek	3rd Worcester	617-722-2396
Rep.	Kathy LaNatra	12th Plymouth	617-722-2575
Rep.	John Lawn	10th Middlesex	617-722-2430
Rep.	David LeBoeuf	17th Worcester	617-722-2305
Rep.	Jack Lewis	7th Middlesex	617-722-2582
Rep.	David Linsky	5th Middlesex	617-722-2810
Rep.	Kate Lipper-Garabedian	32nd Middlesex	617-722-2810
Rep.	Jay Livingstone	8th Suffolk	617-722-2011
Rep.	Marc Lombardo	22nd Middlesex	617-722-2460
Rep.	William MacGregor	10th Suffolk	617-722-2460
Rep.	Adrian Madaro	1st Suffolk	617-722-2060
Rep.	John Mahoney	13th Worcester	617-722-2575
Rep.	Ron Mariano	3rd Norfolk	617-722-2500
Rep.	Christopher Markey	9th Bristol	617-722-2676

Title	Name	District	Phone Number
Rep.	Joseph McGonagle	28th Middlesex	617-722-2012
Rep.	Joseph McKenna	18th Worcester	617-722-2810
Rep.	Paul McMurtry	11th Norfolk	617-722-2080
Rep.	Rita Medes	11th Plymouth	617-722-2400
Rep.	John Meschino	3rd Plymouth	617-722-2092
Rep.	Aaron Michlewitz	3rd Suffolk	617-722-2990
Rep.	Rady Mom	18th Middlesex	617-722-2637
Rep.	Sam Montaña	15th Suffolk	617-722-2460
Rep.	Frank Moran	17th Essex	617-722-2180
Rep.	John Moran	9th Suffolk	617-722-2460
Rep.	Michael Moran	18th Suffolk	617-722-2300
Rep.	David Muradian	9th Worcester	617-722-2240
Rep.	Mathew Muratore	1st Plymouth	617-722-2488
Rep.	James Murphy	4th Norfolk	617-722-2220
Rep.	Brian Murray	10th Worcester	617-722-2400
Rep.	Tram Nguyen	18th Essex	617-722-2680
Rep.	Jim O'Day	14th Worcester	617-722-2090
Rep.	Norman Orrall	12th Bristol	617-722-2090
Rep.	Steve Owens	19th Middlesex	617-722-2460

Title	Name	District	Phone Number
Rep.	Jerald Parisella	6th Essex	617-722-2370
Rep.	Francisco Paulino	16th Essex	617-722-2060
Rep.	Sarah Peake	4th Barnstable	617-722-2040
Rep.	Kelly Pease	4th Hampden	617-722-2305
Rep.	Alice Peisch	14th Norfolk	617-722-2783
Rep.	Edward Philips	8th Norfolk	617-722-2396
Rep.	Smitty Pignatelli	3rd Berkshire	617-722-2692
Rep.	Angelo Puppolo	12th Hampden	617-722-2006
Rep.	Adrienne Ramos	14th Essex	617-722-2140
Rep.	Orlando Ramos	9th Hampden	617-722-2430
Rep.	Estela Reyes	4th Essex	617-722-2060
Rep.	David Robertson	19th Middlesex	617-722-2210
Rep.	David Rogers	24th Middlesex	617-722-2263
Rep.	John Rogers	12th Norfolk	617-722-2450
Rep.	Jeffrey Roy	10th Norfolk	617-722-2030
Rep.	Daniel Ryan	2nd Suffolk	617-722-2460
Rep.	Lindsay Sabadosa	1st Hampshire	617-722-2304
Rep.	Aaron Saunders	7th Hampden	617-722-2320
Rep.	Adam Scanlon	14th Bristol	617-722-2210
Rep.	Margaret Scarsdale	1st Middlesex	617-722-2130

Title	Name	District	Phone Number
Rep.	Paul Schmid	8th Bristol	617-722-2210
Rep.	Danillo Sena	37th Middlesex	617-722-2014
Rep.	Dawne Shand	1st Essex	617-722-2400
Rep.	Alan Silvia	7th Bristol	617-722-2230
Rep.	Todd Smola	1st Hampden	617-722-2100
Rep.	Michael Soter	8th Worcester	617-722-2305
Rep.	Priscila Sousa	6th Middlesex	617-722-2460
Rep.	Thomas Stanley	9th Middlesex	617-722-2810
Rep.	William Straus	10th Bristol	617-722-2400
Rep.	Alyson Sullivan-Almeida	7th Plymouth	617-722-2488
Rep.	Jeffrey Turco	19th Suffolk	617-722-2263
Rep.	Chynah Tyler	7th Suffolk	617-722-2060
Rep.	Steven Ultrino	33rd Middlesex	617-722-2070
Rep.	Erika Uytterhoeven	27th Middlesex	857-264-1096
Rep.	Andres Vargas	3rd Essex	617-722-2370
Rep.	Marcus Vaughn	9th Norfolk	617-722-2263
Rep.	David Vieira	3rd Barnstable	617-722-2230
Rep.	Tommy Vitolo	15th Norfolk	617-722-2220

Title	Name	District	Phone Number
Rep.	Thomas Walsh	12th Essex	617-722-2410
Rep.	Susannah Whipps	2nd Franklin	617-722-2090
Rep.	Bud Williams	11th Hampden	617-722-2430
Rep.	Donald Wong	9th Essex	617-722-2488
Rep.	Chris Worrell	5th Suffolk	617-722-2460
Rep.	Steven Xiarhos	5th Barnstable	617-722-2488
Rep.	Jonathan Zlotnik	2nd Worcester	617-722-2582

Title	Name	District	Phone Number
Sen.	Michael Barrett	3rd Middlesex	617-722-1572
Sen.	Michael Brady	2nd Plymouth & Norfolk	617-722-1200
Sen.	Will Brownsberger	Suffolk & Middlesex	617-722-1280
Sen.	Nick Collins	1st Suffolk	617-722-1150
Sen.	Jo Comerford	Hampshire, Franklin & Worcester	617-722-1532
Sen.	Cynthia Creem	Norfolk & Middlesex	617-722-1639
Sen.	Brendan Crighton	3rd Essex	617-722-1350
Sen.	John Cronin	Worcester & Middlesex	617-722-1230
Sen.	Julian Cyr	Cape & Islands	617-722-1570

Title	Name	District	Phone Number
Sen.	Sal DiDomenico	Middlesex & Suffolk	617-722-1650
Sen.	Peter Durant	Worcester & Hampshire	617-722-2000
Sen.	Lydia Edwards	3rd Suffolk	617-722-1634
Sen.	Jamie Eldridge	Middlesex & Worcester	617-722-1120
Sen.	Ryan Fattman	Worcester & Hampden	617-722-1420
Sen.	Paul Feeny	Bristol & Norfolk	617-722-1222
Sen.	Barry Finegold	2nd Essex & Middlesex	617-722-1612
Sen.	Cindy Friedman	4th Middlesex	617-722-1432
Sen.	Adam Gomez	Hampden	617-722-1660
Sen.	Patricia Jehlen	2nd Middlesex	617-722-1578
Sen.	John Keenan	Norfolk & Plymouth	617-722-1494
Sen.	Ed Kennedy	1st Middlesex	617-722-1630
Sen.	Robyn Kennedy	1st Worcester	617-722-1544
Sen.	Jason Lewis	5th Middlesex	617-722-1206
Sen.	Joan Lovely	2nd Essex	617-722-1410
Sen.	Paul Mark	Berkshire, Hampden, Franklin & Hampshire	617-722-1625
Sen.	Liz Miranda	2nd Suffolk	617-722-1673
Sen.	Mark Montigny	2nd Bristol & Plymouth	617-722-1440

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LEGISLATIVE REPORT: An Update From MTA Government Relations

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Title	Name	District	Phone Number
Sen.	Michael Moore	2nd Worcester	617-722-1485
Sen.	Susan Moran	Plymouth & Barnstable	617-722-1330
Sen.	Patrick O'Connor	1st Plymouth & Norfolk	617-722-1646
Sen.	Jacob Oliveira	Hampden, Hampshire & Worcester	617-722-1291
Sen.	Marc Pacheco	3rd Bristol & Plymouth	617-722-1551
Sen.	Pavel Payano	1st Essex	617-722-1604
Sen.	Becca Rausch	Norfolk, Worcester & Middlesex	617-722-1555
Sen.	Michael Rodrigues	1st Bristol & Plymouth	617-722-1114
Sen.	Michael Rush	Norfolk & Suffolk	617-722-1348
Sen.	Karen Spilka	Middlesex & Norfolk	617-722-1500
Sen.	Bruce Tarr	1st Essex & Middlesex	617-722-1600
Sen.	Walter Timilty	Norfolk, Plymouth & Bristol	617-722-1643
Sen.	John Velis	Hampden & Hampshire	617-722-1415

From left are Retired members Marguerite Foster Franklin, Amy Wolpin, Annette Pfannebecker and Rick Last.



ORGANIZING AGAINST MCAS

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Western Massachusetts was represented by Doug Selwyn in Greenfield and Rick Last in Northampton. Doug shared his experiences in mobilizing a highly effective opt-out movement (about 60%!) in upstate New York. Rick explained how the *Thrive Act* and the ballot question for November 2024 are creating wonderful organizing opportunities to take the issue to local school committees and build connections with retired and active MTA members and community activists.

A lot of excellent organizing strategies and ideas were shared. If you would like to join the MTA Retirees Against MCAS group (we meet on Zoom every other week), send your email to Kathy Greeley at kegreeley@gmail.com.

And please join us for the next First Wednesday workshop on Dec. 6, “The MTA Agenda: Legislating for a Dignified Retirement.” For a full listing of upcoming First Wednesday sessions, please see Page 11 of this edition of the *MTA Retired Reporter*. ■

WISDOM WARRIORS

Four members of the Wisdom Warriors from western Massachusetts helped collect signatures in October for a ballot question to end the MCAS-based high school graduation test. The group gathered signatures at the Westhampton Fall Festival and outside the Big Y supermarket in Northampton.

The Wisdom Warriors is a statewide program of the Retired Members Committee. It has coordinators in both western and eastern Massachusetts.

The Wisdom Warriors provide solidarity and encouragement to locals in need, demonstrate union solidarity and engage in friendship and fun while supporting MTA-sponsored legislation and our broader mission to champion public education. While frequently injecting song and humor into otherwise challenging situations, the tone of our solidarity varies according to the issue, circumstance and the members’ needs. We welcome all retired MTA members as an important way to stay involved with our union!

We have set up an email and text list of retired MTA members who are willing to be contacted when we receive a “bat signal” request to support a local struggle or a statewide action. If you can participate in the action, that’s great. If not, don’t worry about it! To join our list, simply send an email to mtawisdomwarriors@gmail.com with your contact information. Please include where you live. You will then be contacted by the area coordinator to get you on the list. ■

RETIRED MEMBERS COMMITTEE 2024 NOMINATION FORM

This nomination form must be received by 5 PM on Friday, **MARCH 1, 2024**, regardless of postmark.

AN ONLINE SELF-NOMINATION FORM IS AVAILABLE AT [massteacher.org/nomform](https://www.massteacher.org/nomform)

WE ENCOURAGE CANDIDATES TO UTILIZE THE ONLINE FORM (or this paper form may be submitted).

Additional forms may be requested or this form may be duplicated. Forms may be mailed to the address below.

NAME OF CANDIDATE _____

MEMBER ID (listed on your MTA ID Card) _____ E-MAIL _____

HOME ADDRESS _____ PHONE _____

Please check the appropriate box.

Membership Type:

Retired Retired Life

I hereby declare my candidacy for:

Retired Members Committee

BIO/STATEMENT GRID – PLEASE PRINT – OR TYPE ONTO ONLINE FORM

INSTRUCTIONS

- MTA POLICY:** Each candidate may submit a biography/statement grid containing no more than 50 words.
Note: Only the first fifty (50) words will be printed. **The Credentials & Ballot Committee reserves the right to edit the bios.**
- WRITE OUT** your statement on a separate piece of paper first, and then fill out the grid.
- TYPE OR PRINT** clearly, using both upper and lower-case letters, as you expect your final statement to appear.
- INSERT** only **one word** per box.
- DO NOT combine words or numbers with hyphens or slashes.**
- “AN,” “A” and “THE” constitute one word.
- ACRONYMS** such as “NEA-RA” or “MTA” count as one word.
- INSERT PUNCTUATION** in the **same box** immediately after the word you want it to follow.
- A DATE** represented as “October 1, 2006” shall constitute three words. A date represented as “10/1/06” is only one word
- Send this entire nomination form to: MTA, Governance Specialist, 2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor, Quincy, MA 02171-2119. This form must be received by **Friday, March 1, 2024, regardless of postmark**, in order for the bio/statement to be published in the April *MTA REPORTER*.

Please send me a list of Statewide Retired delegates to the **2024** MTA Annual Meeting, which I will use solely for the purpose of publicizing my candidacy for election as a member of the Retired Members Committee.

My qualifications are in compliance with those of the designated position for which I am a candidate.

Signature _____ Date _____

ELECTION OPPORTUNITIES FOR MTA RETIRED MEMBERS

Our union's strength comes from full participation of all members, including retired educators, in MTA and NEA election processes at the local, state and national levels. Please consider the following opportunities to engage in the democratic processes of our union. Share with other retirees, and let's grow our union power.

The election and nomination process for the seats described here are subject to MTA Bylaws and to MTA Policy/Procedures for Nominations and Elections, all of which are available upon request from the MTA Division of Governance.

MTA Retired Delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly

The 2024 NEA Representative Assembly (NEA-RA) is scheduled for July 3 - 7, 2024, in Philadelphia. This meeting of representatives from all NEA state associations is the world's largest democratic deliberative assembly! At the RA, delegates debate the vital issues that impact American public education and set association policy and activities for the year ahead. It is an opportunity for democratic engagement and making national connections to build our movement and strength.

Elected NEA-RA retired delegates are always strongly encouraged to attend the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting, typically held immediately before the NEA-RA. Information will be sent to all the elected delegates, and MTA will reimburse additional hotel and meal expenses for attending this meeting.

NEA will allocate the number of retired delegate seats to the NEA-RA for Massachusetts based on membership figures in January 2024. MTA/NEA retired members are eligible to run in the NEA Retired category for the seats allocated by NEA. Nominations are open to all eligible MTA/NEA retired members through a self-nomination process. These delegates will be elected by ballots provided to retired members in February 2024.

MTA provides funding for travel expenses to the winners of the MTA Statewide, Regional, and Retired elections to the NEA-RA, up to \$2,000 per delegate, subject to accountability requirements and reimbursement guidelines.

Those interested can access the online nomination form at massteacher.org/nomform. The nomination deadline is Friday, Jan. 12, 2024, at 5 p.m.

Statewide Retired District Delegates and Retired Ethnic Minority Delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting

The 2024 Annual Meeting of Delegates is scheduled for April 26 and 27 at the MassMutual Center in Springfield. In this meeting, delegates from across the state gather to vote on policies and set the direction for the MTA in the year ahead. Your voice matters.

The Statewide Retired District Delegates will be elected by ballot provided to the retired membership in conjunction with the NEA delegate elections in February. Nominations are open to all eligible MTA/NEA retired members through a self-nomination process. The 2024 allocation of retired delegates seats will be based on the number of MTA/NEA retired members as of January 15, 2024.

In addition, there is now an allocation of two ethnic minority delegate seats for the Statewide Retired District. As with the districts among the active membership, this allocation is equal to the number of seats per district on the MTA Board of Directors. Election of these seats will be held concurrent with the other retired delegate seats mentioned in this article. Retired members may run for Annual Meeting delegate seats in both categories, and if elected to both, must notify MTA which seat they intend to fill.

continued pg 10

AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MTA RETIRED MEMBERS

- MTA Retired Delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly
- Statewide Retired District and Retired Ethnic Minority Delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting
- MTA Retired Members Committee

Nomination forms available online at massteacher.org/nomform.

ELECTION OPPORTUNITIES FOR MTA RETIRED MEMBERS

continued from pg 8

Retired delegates to the Annual Meeting may apply for reimbursement of certain travel expenses incurred to attend Annual Meeting, up to \$450.

Those interested can access the online nomination form at massteacher.org/nomform. The nomination deadline is Friday, Jan. 12, 2024, at 5 p.m.

MTA Retired Members Committee

Four members of the Retired Members Committee will be elected by the Statewide Retired District Delegates at the 2024 Annual Meeting. This committee plans the statewide retiree conference and serves as an important voice for retirees within the MTA. The committee seats have terms of two years, starting July 1, 2024.

Those interested can access the online nomination form at massteacher.org/nomform. The nomination deadline is Friday, March 1, 2024, at 5 p.m.

ELECTION OPPORTUNITIES FOR MTA RETIRED MEMBERS

Please note that paper forms are available in this issue of the MTA Retired Reporter, but we strongly

encourage you to use the online nomination forms at massteacher.org/nomform.

Election Waiver

MTA's election waiver policy applies to the elections described in this issue. If the number of candidates is equal to or less than the number of positions to be filled, the election(s) may be waived and the candidates declared elected to the position(s) in question.

Nomination and Election Details Now on the MTA Website

In addition to the information published here and in the fall issue of *MTA Today*, all MTA and NEA election information may be accessed at the MTA website: massteacher.org/2024Governance.

MTA Retired Elections Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding the nomination or election process, please feel free to contact Governance Specialist John Connolly at jconnelly@massteacher.org.

The chair of the Retired Members Committee is also available to assist you with information on election opportunities available to retired members and the election process. Chair Patrick Patterson can be reached at ppattmwilk@mac.com. ■



HELPING STUDENTS IN NEED

The **Massachusetts Child** is a charitable corporation founded by MTA members in 1996 to help students struggling with financial need. Mass Child is a reimbursement program available to all MTA preK-12 local associations.

HOW TO DONATE

Mass Child is completely dependent upon donations. Please consider giving today via Venmo or by mailing a check to Massachusetts Child, 2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor, Quincy, MA 02171-2119. The Venmo handle is @MTA-Donations – please enter Mass Child in the “What’s It For” prompt.



FIRST
WEDNESDAY

RETIREE SPEAKER SERIES 2023-2024



All events are virtual,
on Zoom.

3 - 4:30 p.m.

Registration is
required. Zoom link
will be sent a few days
before the event.

Scan the
QR code for
a full description
of each event
and to register

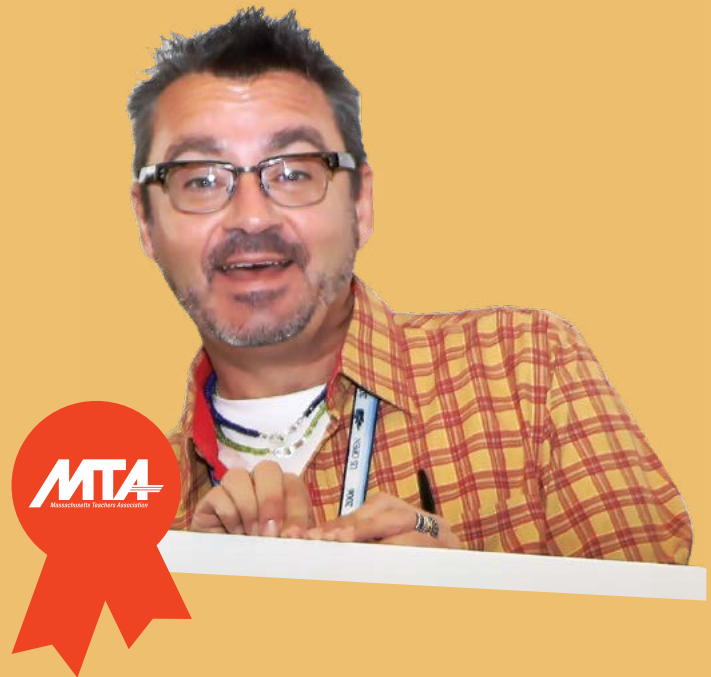
<https://cvent.me/ggYIPZ>.



- NOVEMBER 1** **MCAS: Organizing Stories and What We Can Do**
In this workshop, you will hear about five different local organizing efforts to fight high-stakes testing.
- DECEMBER 6** **MTA Agenda: Legislating for a Dignified Retirement**
Join us for an overview of the current state of the teacher pension COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) and WEP-GPO (Windfall Elimination Provision - Government Pension Offset).
- JANUARY 3** **Libraries and Liberty**
The threats to public libraries and school libraries are unprecedented. Book banning is on the rise and freedom of speech is at risk.
- FEBRUARY 7** **I'll Have What They're Having: An Update on Sexuality and Aging**
This workshop will be a fast-paced program on sex and aging.
- MARCH 6** **Before the Martha's Vineyard Migrants, There Were Reverse Freedom Rides**
Sixty years ago, white supremacist groups in the South bused Black community members north. How might those lessons be applied today?
- APRIL 3** **Responding to Global Warming: An Inter-Generational Fight**
Youth and elder climate activists will share their perspectives and explain their organizations' strategies for addressing the catastrophic nature of global warming.
- MAY 1** **Escalating Campaigns and Strikes – A View from the Line**
This workshop will help participants have a better understanding of the unique relationship between bargaining and Contract Action Teams and the strategies used to fully engage the membership and community.
- JUNE 5** **A Museum for all of Boston: Welcoming and Engaging Learners**
This workshop will offer an introduction to the Museum of Fine Arts' efforts to create opportunities for our audiences to engage with the visual arts.

TO BOB WHALEN

In appreciation on his retirement



AS CHAIR OF THE RETIRED MEMBERS COMMITTEE, I really got to know Bob Whalen well. He was always accessible to me, and we enjoyed a good working relationship and friendship. He was also there for each MTA Retired member who contacted him.

Together, Bob and I planned and presented two well attended and successful Gatherings and many Spring Brunches on topics that interested, educated and assisted our members in their retirement. But of all the good work that we accomplished, the most memorable was our work with SEAM. Bob wrote an NEA grant that funded the creation of the Retired Member-Student Member Mentoring Program. Our goal was to connect aspiring educators to our union through their student teaching experience and to attract a segment of our retired members, who were otherwise inactive, to become active with MTA through mentoring.

I could go on about Bob's dedication to MTA Retired but instead I would just like to thank him for his dedication and work on behalf of our members. I wish him what he always strived to provide for MTA Retired members: The best retirement life he can live. All the best, Bob!

JACKIE GORRIE

I REALLY ENJOYED WORKING with Bob on the Retired Members Committee. I had known him for a long time but worked directly with him on this committee. It is there that I saw firsthand what a caring person Bob is. He not only did the usual staff work in helping us with logistics and organizing events, but really cared about retirees as people. He always treated everyone with respect and made you feel like he really liked our experience as longtime members. I also saw him perform like an entertainer at ESP conferences over the years, giving out the prizes. He spent many years in different roles at MTA and it is with sadness I see him leave, but I wish him much happiness and good health in his retirement.

ANNE WASS

BOB, I HOPE THAT YOU ENJOY your much-deserved retirement. Your long, dedicated service is most appreciated. You are one of the few people left who has historical knowledge of the organization. I personally want to thank you for always making me feel welcome and feeling like an integral part of MTA Retired.

GERRY RUANE

NO ONE APPROACHES THE LEVEL OF DEDICATION that Robert has exhibited. His devotion to retirees and to our union was unique and he will long be remembered. All good wishes for a long, healthy and happy retirement.

ANDREI JOSEPH

IT WAS A PLEASURE TO WORK with Robert, first as a member of the RMC and later as the chair. I became chair at the beginning of the pandemic when everything was shutting down. The committee decided to move the Gathering online and Robert played a critical role in making that transition. He coordinated the different levels of the MTA to make what was a difficult situation a success. Robert was indispensable in organizing other events by the committee over the years as well.

I should also mention that retirees have approached me about issues they may have with navigating the various retirement systems that they are a part of, and I have referred them to Robert. I heard back that he always answered their questions and helped them with expert, realistic advice.

He will be missed. I wish him an enjoyable and happy retirement.

PATRICK PATTERSON

IT'S BEEN A PLEASURE TO WORK with Bob on several projects, including attempts to increase the number of retirees who remain members of the MTA. I appreciated his willingness to engage with members and his sense of humor throughout the process.

DALE MELCHER

MAKING MTA BENEFITS A FAMILY AFFAIR

At MTA Benefits, we know that you, as a retired MTA member, are already using your membership to save on things like museum admission, BJ's Wholesale Club membership, auto and home/renters insurance, and more. But did you know that your family members can get almost all the same benefits too?

Perhaps you have a child or grandchild struggling with student loan repayment or another type of debt. They have access to student loan and debt counseling through Cambridge Credit Counseling. Financial planners at Stacey Braun help MTA members with topics such as budgeting, investing, estate planning, retirement, and more – and they don't try to sell you anything. Their services are \$140 per year for three hours of financial planning services, written summaries and financial reports. The cost for these services is about \$300/hour elsewhere – that's a savings of \$760!

With the weather getting colder, we're always looking for better ways to save on heating costs. If you use heating oil, Heat USA provides members with savings per gallon, service and labor discounts, a discounted membership fee, and more. Approximate savings using this program is \$465/year. For those who use propane as a heating source, similar discounts are available through Tankfarm, and could save you approximately \$500/year.

These few examples are just the tip of the iceberg. Additional savings include travel discounts, theme park tickets, theater shows, bookstore discounts, and so much more. Your MTA membership not only saves you money but saves your family members money as well.

Visit www.mtabenefits.com for complete benefit program and discount information, along with the application for family membership. ■



BIPOC STATEWIDE RETIRED TEACHERS WORK TOWARD RACIAL CHANGE

Ora Gladstone and members of the Retired Members Committee

Members of the Retired Members Committee met on Nov. 15 with a racially and ethnically diverse group of retired educators to discuss their teaching experiences and the profound challenges faced by educators of color.

The long-planned initiative attracted retired educators from throughout the state. Over lunch at the Unique Café in Worcester, group members began a conversation about their shared concerns and solutions that the group could work to address.

What folks shared echoed the responses the RMC received from a questionnaire used in one-to-one interviews with approximately 20 retirees of color who were personally known to RMC members. While respondents said they clearly had found teaching to be meaningful and rewarding in many ways, their responses revealed explicit and troubling details regarding their experiences as educators of color, including that they often were the only person of color in their school, or one of very few.

Many shared that they had never spoken of these issues to white friends and colleagues and that they only shared these troubling, difficult and sad details with other friends or colleagues of color. When asked if they would be willing to discuss these issues at a gathering, almost all of the respondents replied “Yes.”

The results of the interviews, shared with participants at the luncheon, created an excellent basis for discussion in small groups, over a delicious Jamaican lunch. What followed was a full-group discussion about the profound challenges teachers of color face and, equally important, the kinds of solutions we, as a group, could begin to work on.

The extent of candor, forthrightness and power with which participants spoke was both troubling and exhilarating. After the lunch discussion, members discussed what they took away from the event.

“Connecting with other retired BIPOC educators from around the state, over delicious food, was a positive experience for me,” said Carlie Tartakov, who retired after a 43-year career in teaching. “I gained new perspectives

on the regional challenges that many face. I am looking forward to working with others, as we begin to develop action plans that will help empower teachers and students – while at the same time strengthening MTA goals and objectives for inclusion and diversity.”

Rafael Moure-Eraso, who taught for many years at UMass Lowell, said: “The meeting convened a remarkable group of retirees with diverse cultural traditions. The small group setup allowed for comfortable personal conversations, and discussion from every participant to the whole group. All participants agreed to ... similar gatherings in the future.”

Robin Smith, a Retired Members Committee member and a retired Springfield teacher, said: “I thought the meeting was an excellent starting point. I look forward to our work.”

This is far from the final step. As quickly as we can organize our RMC committee, we will move forward with this initiative. We will soon be contacting the participants and developing working groups around discreet issues that were raised, especially those that lend themselves to solutions. And we will soon gather again as a group. All retired educators of color are encouraged to join!*

This will not be a short process. Decades of enshrined microaggressions and the invisibility of the harm that teachers of color live through will take aggressive, careful and persistent work to change. ■

***If you are an MTA retiree of color and would like to join in this work you will be welcomed with open arms. Please contact Phyllis Neufeld at pbneufeld@gmail.com or Ora Gladstone at oragladstone@gmail.com.**

Reaching the 2024 Ballot

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

All ballot initiatives follow a specific process in Massachusetts. The MTA has already cleared several steps in getting a ballot question before voters to end the high school graduation requirement of the MCAS, but we have several more to go.

Mary MacDonald



August 2023

The language of the question is approved by the state Attorney General.



November 22, 2023

The deadline to submit 75,000 signatures of registered voters to be certified by city and town clerks and, on Dec. 6, by the Secretary of State. To make sure we hit this mark, we will collect up to 125,000 signatures. For information on how to help with this effort, including by collecting signatures, visit massteacher.org/testing.



WE ARE
HERE



May – June 2024

If the Legislature doesn't act, MTA members and allies will collect another **13,000** valid, certified signatures. That additional number must be submitted by the beginning of July for the question to qualify for the 2024 election.

September 2023

The question is approved by the Secretary of State.



MTA members and allies collected signatures on petitions throughout the state. A campaign to spread public awareness of the initiative is well underway. As the MTA Retired Reporter went to press, we had collected **more than 130,000 signatures**, exceeding our signature goal.

December 2023 – April 2024

The Legislature will consider whether to act on the ballot question petitions.



July – November 4, 2024

We'll lead a **grassroots campaign** to educate voters about the MCAS ballot question and why it is needed, and work to ensure a strong turnout on Election Day.

November 5, 2024

ELECTION DAY!



WHAT DOES THE INITIATIVE PETITION SAY?

“The proposed law would eliminate the requirement that a student pass the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests (or other statewide or district-wide assessments) in mathematics, science and technology, and English in order to receive a high school diploma. Instead, in order for a student to receive a high school diploma, the proposed law would

require the student to complete coursework certified by the student's district as demonstrating mastery of the competencies contained in the state academic standards in mathematics, science and technology, and English, as well as any additional areas determined by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.”



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MTA-REPORTER

RETIRED *The Voice of MTA Retired Members*

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