

MTA REPORTER

RETIREED *The Voice of MTA Retired Members*

2020 MTA VIRTUAL RETIRED GATHERING

Rafael Moure-Eraso, MTA Retired Members Committee



For the first time, the annual Retired Gathering went virtual! The 2020 MTA Virtual Retired Members Gathering was a resounding success. Participants filled workshops on building your “emotional pension,” advice for new retirees, the 2020 election, a presentation on women’s suffrage, institutional racism and social justice, fighting climate change across generations, COVID-19 impacts on public education, retiree activism in a time of pandemic, and neoliberalism and the underfunding of public education.

Read more about the workshops starting on Page 4.

OPENING SESSION

The Gathering started with a report by **MTA Retired Members Committee Chair Patrick Patterson**. The committee decided not to postpone this year’s Gathering because of the pandemic, but to plow ahead entirely online. And it worked! Almost 240 retirees registered, and all sessions had more than 50 participants. The opening session had more than 110. All sessions were free for MTA members. There were “lunch” meetings every day, during which open discussions on the themes of the morning workshops were hosted by the presenters. In addition, a short National Education Association documentary on the struggle to eliminate racial segregation in the founding of the NEA was screened on Oct. 21.

MTA President Merrie Najimy welcomed participants, celebrating retirees as the foundation of the MTA’s fight for public education in our union. She pointed out that while our elected officials want to maintain the illusion of “normal education,” what we are experiencing is actually “pandemic education.” The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education wants us to think that it is business as usual, she said, but it is not. She reminded

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RETIREED MEMBERS COMMITTEE 2020-2021

CHAIR

Patrick Patterson, *Ipswich*

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mary Cowhey, *Florence*
Seth Evans, *Brookline*
Kip Fonsh, *Leverett*
* Sonia Fortin, *Framingham*
* Silvia Golijov, *Ashland*
** Jacqueline Gorrie, *Randolph*
** Andrei Joseph, *Chestnut Hill*
Richard Liston, *Everett*
* Jen Meagher, *Ashland*
Rafael Moure-Eraso, *Medford*
Ana Maria Nogueira, *Ashland*
Bonnie Page, *Tewksbury*
*** Robin Smith, *Springfield*
** Anne Wass, *Carver*

RETIRED MEMBERS ORGANIZER

Robert Whalen
rwhalen@massteacher.org
617.878.8206 ■ 800.392.6175, ext. 8206

AFFILIATE SERVICES COORDINATOR

Renee Gatewood
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MASSACHUSETTS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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MTA MEMBER BENEFITS, INC.

800.336.0990 ■ www.mtabenefits.com

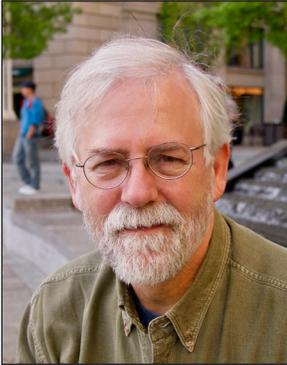
MTA MEMBERSHIP DIVISION

617.878.8118 ■ 800.392.6175, ext. 8118

- * Appointed Active Member
- ** MTA Board of Directors
- *** President’s Designee

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Patrick Patterson



MTA RMC Chair Patrick Patterson

The Gathering this year was a huge success! Almost 240 members signed up, and each workshop had more than 50 people attending. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

For those who missed the Gathering, go to Page 1 for a masterful summary by Retired Members Committee member Rafael Moure-Eraso. And

please stay tuned for coming events, such as the Spring Brunches. Just as we didn't postpone the Gathering, we are working to not postpone the brunches and are discussing a shift to a virtual format.

The MTA Wisdom Warriors now have a Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/368561644272210>, and an email account: MTAWisdomWarriors@gmail.com. Now you can easily find out about an action in your area, along with reports on events that have occurred. For those who don't already know, the Wisdom Warriors are retired educators who support the work of active educators by showing up with energy, wit and (sometimes) song. They welcome all MTA Retired members as an important way of staying involved with our beloved union!

In the August-September edition of *The Reporter*, I referred to the extreme inequality of income and the need for redistribution. There is now a more concrete proposal on the legislative table. Raise Up Massachusetts, a grassroots coalition of community organizations, religious groups and labor unions that is committed to building an economy that works for everyone, has mounted the Invest in Our Recovery campaign. Raise Up is the group that organized

the campaign to impose an additional 4 percentage point tax on annual income above \$1 million. The initiative was set to go to the ballot in 2018, until Governor Charlie Baker's Supreme Judicial Court ruled it unconstitutional in the form it was written. It is now rewritten and headed for the ballot in fall 2022.

Invest in Our Recovery has three proposals: 1. Increase the tax rate on profitable corporations. 2. Tax profits that are shifted overseas to avoid taxation. 3. Increase the tax on unearned investment income, such as capital gains. On Nov. 10 there was a trial run of the third proposal in a vote before the Massachusetts House, and the results were not good. An amendment to the budget to raise the tax on unearned income from 5 percent to 9 percent was rejected. The current tax is significantly lower than in surrounding states — and it would *still* be lower at the new rate. Especially disappointing were the many “no” votes by representatives who are supportive of progressive causes.

That there is a need for revenue goes without saying: This summer, the state's unemployment compensation trust fund ran so low that the state — along with several others — requested federal funds because of the increasing number of those without work. Loss of a job leads to loss of health insurance, which leads to an influx of people without health insurance to MassHealth.

And then there is public education, which at least seems to be on stable footing for the coming fiscal year. But what about next year? The failure to make up for the loss of revenue makes Raise Up's Invest in Our Recovery Campaign even more important. For more details, go to <https://www.raiseupma.org>. Sign the petition on the website and write to your legislators, urging them to support a tax increase on those who can most afford it. ■



UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION TODAY TO

**Get an MTA Retired
face mask**

Send your updated email address, mailing address and preferred phone number to

RETIRED@MASSTEACHER.ORG

2020 MTA VIRTUAL RETIRED GATHERING *Continued*

participants of the need for continued pressure to obtain the goals of the Fund Our Future campaign. She also noted the need to continue the collective fight against voter suppression, emphasizing that retiree activism in and outside of the MTA is contributing to MTA successes. This includes testifying in the Legislature and lobbying for retiree needs, such as economic security and health care.

MTA Vice President Max Page also addressed the Gathering, stating that the MTA’s political actions have been most successful when there has been strong MTA retiree presence and support. He stressed that there is a lot to protect and defend, but also a lot to win. He added that the MTA should protect its members from COVID-19, but also from the fickleness of DESE and the Massachusetts governor in perpetuating inequities. He reminded participants that the struggle for the *Cherish Act* – which addresses the chronic underfunding of public higher education – is still on, as are goals such as the fight for fair and progressive taxation in the Commonwealth. Page said the MTA is committed to supporting the legislative priorities of retirees, and he ended by reminding us of the words of Emily Dickinson: “We turn not older with years but newer every day.”

Andrei Joseph, a member of the MTA Executive Committee representing Retired members, observed how times have changed. Communication for some of our generation was once based on mimeographed documents and ink stains on our fingers. Today, he noted, we use Zoom to interact in virtual meetings with hundreds of participants. He reported on the difficulties of school openings during the pandemic and on MTA’s efforts to prioritize safety. He stressed the important role retirees play in working to support elections through direct activities such as phone banking. He also reported on his work on the MTA Executive Committee, including on the successful internal MTA collective bargaining negotiations with the Field Services Organization and the continuing efforts in the Legislature to win cost-of-living increases for retirees.

2020 ‘HONOR OUR OWN’ AWARD

Judy Babb, an MTA Retired member and a former member of the MTA Board of Directors, was announced as the 2020 recipient of the “Honor Our Own” Award. Babb was selected by the Retired Members Committee over the summer, and the award was presented virtually by **Jackie Gorrie**, former RMC chair, who described Babb’s

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Top: MTA President Merrie Najimy addresses over 110 virtual participants during the Plenary Session of the 2020 Virtual Retired Members Gathering.

Middle: Andrei Joseph, member of the Retired Members Committee and the Retired member of the MTA Executive Committee, updates the virtual attendees on the status of their pension COLA.

Bottom: The cover slide for one of the virtual presentations, “MTA Responses to COVID-19 Pandemic.”

2020 MTA VIRTUAL RETIRED GATHERING *Continued*

impressive accomplishments as a teacher in Wakefield. Babb accepted the award and thanked participants at the Gathering. She will be formally honored as the 2020 award recipient at the next in-person Gathering.

WORKSHOPS

“How to Build Your Emotional Pension” was an informative and engaging workshop from **Henry Quinlan** (lawyer and publisher) combined with a practical presentation by **Robert Whalen** (MTA Retired Member/Student Member Organizer) on *“Understanding Medicare.”* Quinlan explored non-financial retirement issues that are unavoidable and that can often prevent seniors from leading a meaningful and rewarding life. The change from working to retirement can lead to a loss of identity and loneliness, Quinlan said, and he stressed the need to maintain social connections. He described the United Kingdom’s establishment of a Minister of Loneliness to systematically address this issue. Forty-three percent of retirees admit to feeling lonely, leading to depression and the realization that success at one’s former job does not translate into success in retirement, he said. Quinlan then made thoughtful recommendations of ways to address these issues.

In the second half of the workshops on retirement issues, Robert Whalen described the federal regulations governing Medicare and the need to become informed about these policies when entering the community of retirees.

“Polarization Is Boring: Elections in Exceptional Times/Unexceptional Dynamics” was a data-driven presentation and discussion of the 2020 elections presented by: **Joshua J. Dyck and John Cluverius**, political science professors from the University of Massachusetts Lowell’s Center for Public Opinion. Professors Dyck and Cluverius discussed forecasting election models for the 2020 elections, polling and polling aggregations, voting by mail, voter fraud and the dynamics of the current presidential campaigns during the COVID-19 pandemic. They reported that they warned in 2016 of the possibility of a Democratic defeat and of the ugly, mean-spirited, polarized campaign four years ago that is being repeated today. The presenters underlined that polarization has become the default form of politics in the U.S., so much so that it has become boring. Their analysis described how politics has become an exercise in anxiety, terror and anger. One interesting insight was the decline of the telephone survey as the basis for making



Andrei Joseph, a member of the Wisdom Warriors and MTA Board of Directors, joined other retirees in supporting Brookline educators at a rally held after their one-day strike Nov. 3 to protest the school district’s refusal to commit to six feet of social distancing in classrooms.

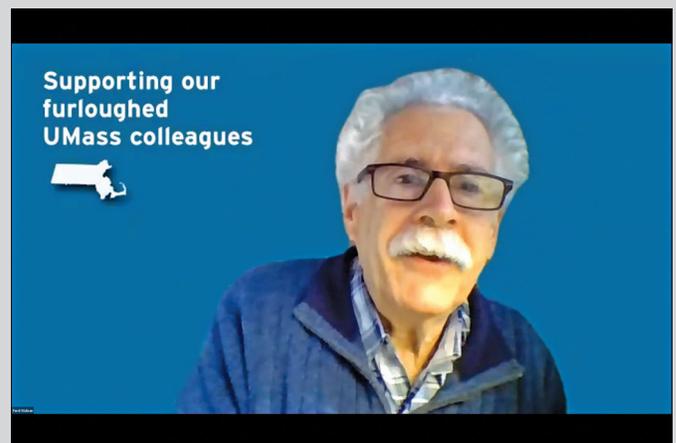
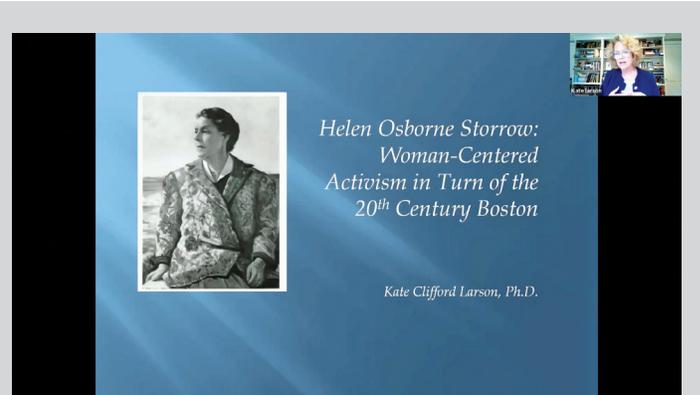
2020 MTA VIRTUAL RETIRED GATHERING *Continued*

electoral predictions, given the less than single-digit rates of response from landline surveys. This has led to the use of “representative” panels of voters who are surveyed and have now become the new predictors of outcomes.

“Women’s Suffrage: The Biography of Boston Suffragist Helen Osborne Storrow,” presented by **Kate Clifford Larson**, an historian and Harriet Tubman scholar. Dr. Larson presented the results of her historical research of a Boston suffragist from the Progressive Era (1914-23). Helen Osborne Storrow, although born into wealth and privilege, dedicated her life in the 1920s to providing an education to the many immigrants in Boston’s North End. She rejected the accepted tendency to train working-class children — especially girls — in “servant schools” so they could become servants of the rich. Instead, she put together a more emancipatory education curriculum for immigrant girls that included training in skilled trades such as carpentry, photography and pottery. She opened libraries for girls with resources equal to what was provided for boys. She founded the Women’s City Club of Boston for immigrants to parallel Men’s Clubs, providing a social space for girls to meet, study and relax (there was dancing!) after working six days a week. Helen Osborne Storrow was a pioneer educator for women. She and her husband, James, a prominent Boston philanthropist, are the Storrrows for whom Storrow Drive in Boston is named.

“Institutional Racism and Social Justice at the MTA: A Panel Discussion” featured six of MTA’s former and current leaders and activists: **Louise Gaskins, Anne Wass, Josephine Bernard, Robin Smith, Carol Doherty and Edith Cannon**. The six members of the panel represented MTA leadership and activism on race matters for at least the past 30 years. They described how together they were instrumental in leading the MTA’s consistent and ongoing commitment to eradicating institutional racism and advancing social justice within the organization. They shared their experience as leaders and activists among educators in the NEA Affirmative Action Committee, the NEA Black Caucus, ALANA (African, Latino, Asian and Native American Educators), and other collectives inside the union. They described the process of stewarding the struggle against racism forward. They discussed lessons learned and advice for Retired members on how they can support and assist the MTA during what is currently a tumultuous time for race relations and social justice issues.

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Top: Introduction to Kate Clifford Larson’s fascinating historical research on Boston philanthropist and women’s suffragist Helen Osborne Storrow.

Middle: MTA leader and activist Louise Gaskins mesmerizes the virtual audience with her stories of MTA’s past.

Bottom: MTA retiree and activist Ferd Wulkan discusses the massive furlough of employees at UMass Amherst.

REPORT FROM THE BOARD

Andrei Joseph



MTA RMC Member Andrei Joseph

It has been a year like no other. The threat of COVID-19 infection looms everywhere. On top of deep health concerns, there is economic insecurity. One million Massachusetts residents go hungry each day. Many are faced with layoffs and evictions. Twelve hundred workers are furloughed from UMass Amherst alone. Remote learning creates new challenges

and the need for multiple lesson plans. Educators are exhausted, and we don't have the resources that we need.

The work of the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors, the president and vice president, indeed, our entire union, has been overwhelmingly concentrated on trying to deal with the impact of COVID-19 on our members, our students and our communities. Lacking coherent leadership and compassionate concern from either the governor or the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, it has been the MTA that has led the fight for safety and realistic educational alternatives during these difficult times.

Neither safety nor continued education can be achieved without adequate funding. Under pressure, the governor has agreed to level fund public education. This is an achievement for us given the difficult economic situation, but it remains inadequate. We need to continue to demand that the *Student Opportunity Act* be fully funded, the *Cherish Act* supporting higher education be passed and progressive taxation be enacted.

As of this writing we still do not have a yearlong state budget. This has prevented the COLAs from being applied to our pensions. But the good news is that the proposed versions of an eventual budget all include these COLAs, and they would be implemented retroactively to July. Stay tuned.

We are fully engaged in an "Only When It's Safe" campaign. Our situation is complicated: Some members feel no danger, while others feel that there is no way to be safe. As school systems attempt in-person learning, the calculation of risk versus benefit is difficult and may vary from member to member, family to family. As there is no simple consensus, we are emphasizing the need for local control. Each district, union members working in collaboration with parents, should determine its wisest and safest path.

Commissioner Riley and the DESE have failed to solve problems, failed to support adequate financing or safe

buildings. We need the necessary personal protective equipment, building repairs and the hiring of more staff. We need consistent scientific benchmarks and widespread surveillance testing for students and educators. We need to stand alongside the families of our students as they demand access to child care, emergency paid sick time and protection against eviction.

Our response as a union is taking several different forms. Locals are developing Contract Action Teams to build support for strong, negotiated Memorandums of Agreement to supplement existing contract language. We are engaging with parents to develop plans in partnership. Some locals have resorted to public demonstrations to demand safety for their members and their communities. And there is growing support for canceling MCAS testing for this year. A majority of legislators in both chambers of the Legislature hold that position; only calcified "leadership" stands in the way.

The MTA Environmental Health and Safety Committee is supporting members and locals. We are searching for the best approaches to surveillance testing and vaccine distribution, updating both scientific and legal information for bargaining and regional member meetings. You can see the committee's work at <https://massteacher.org/about-the-mta/committees/environmental-health-and-safety-committee>.

We cannot allow the pressure of the moment to force us to turn on one another. Rather, we need to empathize with our colleagues who are more vulnerable. As retirees, we can safely join in social media posts, letters to the editor, communication with parents and the wider community, as well as socially distanced public demonstrations. Recently, the retired Wisdom Warriors showed up to support the Brookline Educators Union in its struggle for a safe return.

I would also note that both the new Executive Committee and the Board of Directors have developed a healthy racial and ethnic composition that reflects the diversity of our Commonwealth. The Board has recently settled contract negotiations with the Field Staff Organization, monitored budget expenditures and completed the hiring of some new staff. These developments help to build a stronger MTA in these challenging times.

Finally, as your representative on the Executive Committee, I am interested in communicating with groups of retirees. If the local where you previously worked has an organized group, please reach out to me. When it is safe for all of us, I'd appreciate the chance to visit, have coffee, and listen to your concerns. Thanks. ■

ELECTION OPPORTUNITIES FOR MTA RETIRED MEMBERS

An overview

Our union's strength comes from full participation of all members, including retirees, in MTA and NEA election processes at the local, state and national levels. Please consider the following opportunities to engage the democratic processes of our union. Share with other retirees, and let's grow 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 2021 NEA Representative Assembly (NEA-RA) is scheduled for July 2 through July 6, in Denver, CO. This is the meeting of representatives from all NEA state associations. At this meeting, policies are voted on and set regarding a range of issues critical to educators from testing to economic and racial justice, to national political initiatives, and more. It is an opportunity for democratic engagement and making national connections to build our movement and strength. At this time, no decisions have been made with regard to holding the NEA-RA live or virtually. When determined, elected delegates will of course be notified.

Elected NEA-RA delegates are always strongly encouraged to attend the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting, taking place immediately before the NEA-RA in Denver. 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. 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.

MTA provides funding to the winners of the MTA Statewide, Regional, and Retired elections to the NEA-RA, subject to accountability requirements (up to \$1600 per delegate).

Those interested can access the online nomination form at www.massteacher.org/nomform. The nomination deadline is Friday, January 8, 2021, at 5 pm.

Available Opportunities for MTA Retired Members:

- *MTA Retired Delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly*
- *Statewide Retired District Delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting**
- *MTA Retired Members Committee**

**Nomination forms available online at www.massteacher.org/nomform*

Statewide Retired District Delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting

The 2021 Annual Meeting of Delegates is scheduled for April 30 and May 1 at the Mass Mutual Center in Springfield, MA. 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. At this time, no decisions have been made with regard to holding the Annual Meeting live or virtually. When determined, elected delegates will of course be notified.

The Statewide Retired District Delegates will be elected by ballot provided to the retired membership in conjunction with the NEA delegate/director elections in February. Nominations are open to all eligible MTA/NEA retired members through a self-nomination process. The 2021 allocation of retired delegates and successors will be based on the number of MTA/NEA retired members as of January 15.

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

Those interested can access the online nomination form at www.massteacher.org/nomform. The nomination deadline is Friday, January 8, 2021, at 5 pm.

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ELECTION OPPORTUNITIES FOR MTA RETIRED MEMBERS

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MTA Retired Members Committee

Four members of the Retired Members Committee will be elected by the Statewide Retired District Delegates at the 2021 Annual Meeting. This committee plans the statewide retiree conference and serves as an important voice of retirees within the MTA. The committee seats have terms of two years, starting July 1, 2021.

Those interested can access the online nomination form at www.massteacher.org/nomform. The nomination deadline is Friday, March 5, 2021, at 5 pm.

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: www.massteacher.org/2021Governance

MTA Retired Elections Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding the nomination or election process, please feel free to contact Governance Specialist John Connelly 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. ■

Please note that paper forms are available in this issue of the MTA Reporter, but we strongly encourage you to use the online nomination forms at www.massteacher.org/nomform

FREQUENTLY REQUESTED CONTACT INFORMATION

Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement System (MTRS) www.mass.gov/mtrs	State Board of Retirement www.mass.gov/treasury/retirement/state-board-of-retire
MTRS Headquarters 617.679.6877 500 Rutherford Avenue, Suite 210 Charlestown, MA 02129-1628	SBR Boston Office 617.367.7770 One Winter Street, 8th Floor Boston, MA 02108
MTRS Western Office 413.784.1711 One Monarch Place, Suite 510 Springfield, MA 01144-4028	SBR Springfield Office 413.730.6135 463 Dwight Street, Room 109 Springfield, MA 01103

Questions regarding your MTA Member ID Card or Calendar can be directed to:
 Renee Gatewood – rgatewood@massteacher.org – 617.878.8000, ext. 8208

RETIRED MEMBERS COMMITTEE

2021 NOMINATION FORM

This nomination form must be received by 5 PM on Friday, **MARCH 5, 2021**, regardless of postmark.

AN ONLINE SELF-NOMINATION FORM IS AVAILABLE AT 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 FAXED TO: **JOHN CONNELLY, 617-570-4908, OR 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 5, 2021, 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 **2021** 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 _____

**ONLINE NOMINATION FORMS
AVAILABLE AT**

WWW.MASSTEACHER.ORG/NOMFORM

**ONLINE NOMINATION FORMS
AVAILABLE AT**

WWW.MASSTEACHER.ORG/NOMFORM

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Updates on MTA Priority Legislation

MTA Retired Legislative Priorities: 2021-2022

In response to a call for proposals from the MTA Government Relations Committee, the Retired Members Committee submitted its list of legislative priorities for the coming legislative session. The RMC requested that legislative priorities from the previous legislative session in 2019-2020 be filed. These include:

A Fair and Dignified Retirement:

- An increase in the COLA base from \$13,000 to \$18,000
- Freezing municipal retiree health insurance premium contribution rates at the rate the retiree paid on the date of retirement
- A cap on out-of-pocket expenses for non-Medicare-eligible retirees

An Act Relative to the Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement System:

- Fix the RetirementPlus enrollment issue impacting certain members of the Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement



System who have service from another Massachusetts contributory retirement system.

Bills related to these priorities will be filed as part of the MTA 2021-2022 legislative package. ■

► For a full listing of MTA legislative priorities, go to [massteacher.org/legislation](https://www.massteacher.org/legislation)

WHAT'S NEW AT MTA BENEFITS

We have some exciting new programs and discounts for you, many of which are particularly useful as we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of us have increased our online shopping over the past eight months and identity thieves are capitalizing on this opportunity. Our new program with **SecurusID** offers affordable protection starting at just \$3/month. **Gentreo** helps you protect the things you care about most by providing a digital vault where you can create, store and share your estate plan. You can authorize anyone you'd like to have access to these documents which include last will and testament, health care proxy, power of attorney and pet power of attorney — and you'll save 15% on a

membership.

Mental health is incredibly important, especially right now. **RevivingMind** is offering members a 50% discount on individual therapy sessions and a 100% discount on group session. Plus, you'll get a free 15-minute consultation to help you choose the right therapist and support group. Also beneficial to our mental health are our furry friends. The new pet insurance program through **Liberty Mutual** can help you care for your companions with coverage for accidents, illnesses and general wellness.

For information on all of these programs and more, visit www.mtabenefits.com. ■

As an MTA member, you are entitled to the discounts and programs offered by MTA Benefits.

www.mtabenefits.com

2020 MTA VIRTUAL RETIRED GATHERING *Continued*

They recounted how MTA women activists confronted a past MTA president, stating: “We don’t like the way you run our association.” That started a process of change to transform the practices of the white male recipients of privilege within the MTA into a “grassroots” focus. These MTA activists prompted participants to think about the painful cost behind the struggles of the recent past. The panel discussion was followed by a short NEA documentary film covering the history of antiracism in education since *Brown v. Board of Education* and the struggles for racial equality inside the NEA. The film chronicled the struggle for integration, from Little Rock Central High School in 1957 to the merger of the NEA and the American Teachers Association in 1966. There was always an antiracist consciousness among some sectors of the NEA, and the film described the NEA as one of the few institutions in the U.S. to protest the internment of Japanese Americans in concentration camps during World War II.

“Raising Consciousness: Structural & Systemic Racism”

Eric Bauer, MTA field representative and consultant to the MTA Task Force on Race, and Lucy Griswold, Harvard Equity in Education, conducted an interactive workshop to review common definitions of systemic, structural and institutional racism. The workshop described the ongoing realities of racism and explored racism’s individual, institutional and cultural manifestations in public education and in society. Griswold discussed institutional racism in education and described effective methodologies for not only facilitating discussions on race but on multisectoral concerns that impinge on racism, such as class and status.

“Fighting Climate Change — Across Generations”

Craig Slatin, retired professor of public health at UMass Lowell and former MTA Board member, and Ferd Wulkan, retired Massachusetts Society of Professors administrator at UMass Amherst. Both presenters are founders and organizers of the MTA’s Climate Action Network, or MTA-CAN. The presenters shared strategy and tactics of MTA-CAN in the struggle for concrete solutions to the climate crisis in education. They described three specific actions to address the issue within the MTA: Bargaining for new curriculum and direct involvement in curriculum development; harnessing the MTA’s power and influence to work with students, student organizations and others directly engaged in climate actions (such as

the Sunrise Movement, Our Climate and Boston Climate Strike); and involving the labor movement in the struggle for climate change. A presentation by **Roger Luckman and Maiyim Baron** explained the recent impacts of climate change in the U.S. and around the world, illustrating with hard data what is at stake. This included a short discussion of the details of the Green New Deal. **Eben Bein** from Our Climate and **Sarah Reyes** from the Sunrise Movement described actions in the movement for change among youth. **Seth Evans**, an MTA Retired Committee member and organizer for Elders Climate Action (ECA), explained those organization’s strategies for dealing with the catastrophic nature of global warming, and what they think their constituency brings to the fight. **Luckman, Baron and Evans** are on the Leadership Team of ECA Mass. Members of MTA-CAN moderated a lively discussion in which questions about direct action were addressed and acts of civil disobedience in ECA were explained. MTA retirees were invited to become involved and opportunities for participation were shared.

“COVID-19 Impacts on Public Education: MTA Actions”

Rafael Moure-Eraso, MTA Environmental Health and Safety Committee, MTA Retired Members Committee; and Dean Robinson, a UMass professor, MTA member and a member of the EH&S Committee

This workshop summarized the technical and organizational activities of the MTA Environmental Health and Safety Committee in response to COVID-19. Actions by various local associations during bargaining over safe reopening of schools were described, as were MTA policies concerning the bargaining of environmental health and safety issues during the pandemic. A picture of the intensity of the actions related to reopening in one district (Andover Educators Association) was a typical bargaining for safe reopening of the Andover schools. The Andover School Committee accused the AEA of engaging in an “illegal strike” when teachers conducted their professional development responsibilities on school grounds outside of their school buildings, rather than in person in school buildings that were not ready to reopen safely. *The Boston Globe*—following its traditional editorial policy of being biased against public education—accused the AEA of being a “disrupter of the re-opening process.” A response from a Reader’s Forum published in *The Globe* redirected the accusation of disruption at the state, charging it to be the real disrupter with its lack of a coherent reopening plan. A

2020 MTA VIRTUAL RETIRED GATHERING *Continued*

response from the MTA president was also published. The Andover superintendent recently submitted his resignation, effective January 1, 2021. The bargaining on safe reopening concluded when the district declared impasse after a number of bargaining sessions, including a marathon mediation session that was ultimately unsuccessful. The presentation described in detail the actions of the MTA EH&S Committee to address the bargaining issues raised for reopening, including a detailed technical document to support bargaining for reopening distributed to the 400 presidents of the MTA locals in the state. Professor Dean Robinson, from UMass Amherst described in some detail the program for students and educators of testing and contact tracing during the COVID-19 pandemic. This evidence-based program for the university was negotiated with the Massachusetts Society of Professors, the MTA local representing faculty, and with other unions on campus. He expressed concern that a similar systematic approach to testing and contact tracing is not in place in K-12 in general given the reported similar risks. There is a wide range of responses on testing and contact tracing from K-12 that is difficult to evaluate statewide.

At the question-and-answer period following the presentation, there was a lively discussion examining the causes of the long-standing bias of *The Globe* against MTA and explored possible reasons for that attitude.

***“Retiree Activism in the Time of COVID-19”* Elaine Khoury, Eastern director of the MTA Wisdom Warriors, and Paul McClory, MTA Director of Grassroots Campaigns**

MTA Retired member Elaine Khoury described actions in support of locals across the state with which the “MTA Wisdom Warriors” have been involved during the pandemic. This includes participation in actions on behalf of workers laid off at UMass Lowell as the pandemic worsened. The action was to provide three cars containing

Wisdom Warriors in a caravan demonstrating in front of the homes of university administrators who did not experience any layoffs. Khoury encouraged Retired members to join the Wisdom Warriors. **Paul McClory** described new sources of funding for the Fund Our Future campaign. He then presented three proposals from the Raise Up Massachusetts campaign to increase state revenue. One would increase the tax rate on corporate profits; a second would tax profits shifted overseas by increasing the tax rate on GILTI, Global Intangible Low Taxed Income, and a third would increase the tax rate that investors pay on unearned income. All of these proposals depend on legislative approval. Finally, there is the proposed Fair Share Amendment, which would add a surtax on those earning more than \$1 million a year. The amendment is headed for the ballot in Massachusetts in 2022, and it has the support of 70 to 80 percent of the public.

***“Neoliberalism and Underfunding Public Education”* Arthur MacEwan, professor emeritus of economics at UMass Boston who served in several positions for the Faculty Staff Union, and MTA Vice President Max Page.**

In this workshop the presenters talked about the development of neoliberalism, especially as it has affected education. Neoliberalism gives emphasis to privatization and reduction of government spending on social services. The fundamental premise of neoliberalism is that private markets are more effective in providing people’s needs than is the government. There was a short discussion about what “free markets” really mean in relation to privatization and reduction of financial support for K-12 education. The Massachusetts situation has reflected the national embrace of neoliberalism and privatization at almost every level. ■

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.



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