



et your voice be heard! On Wednesday, March 23, join your colleagues, representatives of the MTA Retired Members Committee and guest presenters for the 2022 MTA Retired Spring Brunch. Due to scheduling uncertainties brought on by the pandemic, the five annual Retired Spring Brunches are again being combined into one virtual event this year. Visit *massteacher.org/retired* for updated information.

With three morning discussion topics, the 2022 Spring Brunch will follow the format of the highly successful 2021 MTA Virtual Spring Brunch. The event will feature an expert on the COVID-19 virus and vaccine, who will lead a discussion on the latest research and advice for dealing with the ongoing pandemic, its effect on our senior population, and our progress in the fight for a safe return to schools and colleges.

There will a second discussion topic about the MTA's Fair Share Amendment campaign, and what retirees can do to help. And the final discussion topic will be the presentation of the RMC's awarding of a PR&O Grant that will provide a unique opportunity for MTA Members, especially retirees, to receive a stipend to help in efforts to organize and recruit new retired members.

Registration will begin soon at *massteacher.org/retired*. A tentative outline of the Virtual Spring Brunch agenda follows.

10 – 10:15 a.m. Welcome and Introduction from MTA President Merrie Najimy and MTA Vice President Max Page

> 10:15 – 11 a.m. COVID-19 Discussion

11 – 11:30 a.m. MTA's Fair Share Amendment Campaign

11:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Retired Members Committee: Public Relations & Organizing Grant Rollout

# R E T I R E D M E M B E R S C O M M I T T E E 2 0 2 2 - 2 0 2 3

CHAIR Patrick Patterson, *Ipswich* 

#### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\* Nancy Aykanian, *Newton* Mary Cowhey, *Florence* Seth Evans, *Brookline* Kip Fonsh, *Leverett* \*\* Jacqueline Gorrie, *Randolph* \*\* Andrei Joseph, *Chestnut Hill* Dale Melcher, *Northampton* Rafael Moure-Eraso, *Medford* Phyllis Neufeld, *Burlington* Bonnie Page, *Tewksbury* \*\*\* Robin Smith, *Springfield* \*\* Anne Wass, *Carver* 

#### **RETIRED MEMBERS ORGANIZER**

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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**



ver the summer, taking advantage of a lull in the number of COVID-19 cases, the Retired Members Committee met in person at MTA headquarters for our annual retreat. The previous year's retreat was canceled because of the pandemic. We all were vaccinated, masked and assured that the ventilation

MTA RMC Chair Patrick Patterson

system was up to snuff. The retreat is used to plan for the upcoming year, and it was a pleasure to be meeting in person instead of in the virtual world of Zoom.

One result of the retreat is a project that begins to address the perennial problem of educators who retire but choose to not continue as members of the MTA. This is a loss of experience and of people who could play an important role in making changes that are needed in public education and beyond. Their continued engagement will be especially important in the upcoming campaign for the Fair Share Amendment. To address the issue, the Committee members discussed a number of proposals. One proposal was to write a grant to fund the creation of a retired members organizing project. RMC Member Dale Melcher and then-RMC Member Sonia Fortin are to be commended for writing a grant to create the project and member Andrei Joseph for shepherding it through the approval process. Please read the full description of this project below and consider applying for one of the positions.

The Committee has set the date for our annual Spring Brunch, for Wednesday, March 23. With the presence of a high level of the omicron variant of COVID-19 in the community, and concern for the health of our members, it will take place via Zoom as it did last year. Rather than going through the usual litany of spread and numbers, the Committee has decided to invite a speaker to address the psychological implications of living though the pandemic. The program will also include presentations on the Fair Share Amendment and the new Organizing Project. You can expect to hear further details as the time approaches.

# **PUBLIC RELATIONS AND ORGANIZING GRANT**

#### Earn a Stipend to Help Build and Engage Retired Membership

The MTA Retired Members Committee announces an exciting one-year pilot project designed to increase the retired membership of the MTA. In the fall the RMC received a Public Relations & Organizing grant to create a cadre of retired membership organizers to help recruit new retired members from across Massachusetts.

Under the grant, district-based member organizing teams will focus their efforts on two groups: MTA active members who are preparing to retire, to encourage them to continue their membership and activism postretirement; and former MTA members who already have retired, to promote active retired membership in the MTA. Working in teams of three, the retired membership organizers will collaborate with Robert Whalen, retired and student member organizer, and a subcommittee of the Retired Members Committee to develop organizing plans and strategies to increase our MTA Retired members.

How can you help? The RMC is seeking candidates for retired membership organizers. The goal is for each three-person team to include an active member, an Education Support Professional member or a retired ESP member, and a Retired member. This is a one-year pilot that will run from April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023. Each retired membership organizer will receive a \$750 stipend for the project with an expectation of a 20 hours-per-month commitment.

If you are interested or know an MTA member who might be interested in this opportunity, please contact Robert Whalen at *rwhalen@ massteacher.org* for a copy of the position expectations for retired membership organizers.

# **OUR LEGACY PROJECT**

### **Jackie Gorrie**



n our last MTA Retired Reporter, I invited those of us whose locals went on strike to participate in a Legacy Project. This project was an idea that was born from a workshop at our October Gathering, entitled "A Perspective on Teacher Strikes at MTA Over the Decades!"

MTA RMC Member Jackie Gorrie

Thank you to all who took the time to respond to my invitation. We received several contributions from our members who went on strike and would like to share with you one Legacy story:

The Holyoke Teachers Association voted to strike in January 1995. The work stoppage under the leadership of the late President Jim Sullivan lasted one week. Association members picketed in the intense cold while Sullivan and Mayor Bill Hamilton negotiated privately a resolution of the issues. The superintendent of schools chose to remain on the sidelines. In addition to salary matters,

the main controversy centered on the agency fee. The school committee wanted to make its payment optional and would no longer tax a teacher's pay for agency fee collection. Teachers feared that could jeopardize the survival of our association. Teachers ultimately were successful in preserving the fee and protecting the HTA! I was an HTA director in 1995 and my son was in his first year as an untenured physical education teacher. Now in his 28th year, he also survived the strike, along with the agency fee and the HTA.

#### -Gerry Girouard

Our Legacy Project is ongoing, and we would love to hear your stories. Simply provide the name of your local, the date of your strike, the name of your local president at the time, the size of the local (small, midsize, large) and the main issues or circumstances of interest which led to the strike.

It's not too late to be part of this archival project. Please send your story to Bob Whalen at RWhalen@ massteacher.org, and get involved again.

## FINANCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMS FROM MTA BENEFITS

### A Message From MTA Benefits

ecuring your personal information online is important, but with all of the identity theft protection products available, it can be challenging to decide which one is best for you. MTA members can choose from two different providers for coverage. LifeLock has three identity theft plans to choose among - Standard, Advantage or Ultimate Plus - or opt for a membership that includes Norton Security. MTA members save 35 percent off the first year's membership cost. Securus ID is another option, with discounts of up to 60 percent off the regular rate. Individual plans start as low as \$3 per month and family plans start at \$5 per month.

No matter how trivial the issue, when you're in need of an attorney, the cost can be exorbitant. MTA members are eligible to join LegalShield, which has no hourly fee or retainer. You'll have access to legal assistance for large or small issues, including for an IRS audit, if a landlord enters your apartment without permission, or a friend or neighbor is injured on your property. For a discounted fee of \$20.95 per month, you can get the legal advice you need all year long.

Online estate planning is a great way to make your final wishes known in an accessible way to those who need it. With Gentreo, you can create or upload your will, trust, power of attorney, pet power of attorney and more to the digital vault and allow access for selected loved ones. MTA members receive a 15 percent discount on the annual membership.

Don't forget that with a family membership, your family members can take advantage of these savings too! Visit www.mtabenefits.com for information on all programs.

### **MTA CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK'S CLIMATE CHAMPIONS CAMPAIGN**

### A Place for Retirees Who are Climate Activists

re you concerned about the climate emergency? Would you like to see the MTA, the largest union in Massachusetts, join in the climate justice movement's efforts to prevent the worst consequences of catastrophic climate change? Then consider getting active in MTA's Climate Action Network (CAN).

Since early 2019, the MTA Climate Action Network has been mobilizing union activism to address the climate emergency. The MTA CAN has a coordinating committee of five MTA members (two retirees and three working members) and a list of 280 MTA members who want to participate in climate action through the MTA. CAN has taken the following focus areas: 1) supporting the youth climate justice movement (our students); 2) building a library of climate crisis curricula that can be used by MTA members in their classrooms and providing climate education to other educators and in various community settings; 3) establishing and sharing contract negotiation proposals for implementing climate solutions in our schools and districts; and 4) bringing MTA into coalitions with climate, environmental justice, community, and labor organizations to maximize our power and make sure the concerns of workers and their unions are incorporated into climate demands and solutions.

One coalition emphasis for some network members has been ensuring that our pension funds are used for climate solutions and not to support the fossil fuel economy. To find more information about the MTA CAN, visit *massteacher.org* and then click on Current Initiatives and Youth Climate Strike. At the bottom of that page is a link to join CAN.

The latest project is to build a network of MTA Climate Champions across the state, starting with the goal of doing this in 20 locals this year. We are certain that there are MTA members who are already climate activists and are engaged in one or more of the CAN's focus areas. We'd like to help them get MTA support for this work and integrate it into the work of their local, the MTA, and the NEA.

#### Special Role for Retired Members Who are Climate Activists

Retired MTA members can play a special role in this effort. We know that many retired members have expertise in science and education related to the climate crisis. They also have long experience as activists in their locals, having participated on negotiating teams, taken leadership roles, supporting new members, and more. These skills could all be used to support working members who choose to become MTA Climate Champions. So, we have established a special category for retired members who wish to be MTA Climate Champions - to work closely with fellow advocates and help them with various aspects of their climate work at the local level.

Retired members can also be champions by working with other climate networks and bringing their perspective as retired educators. For instance, the organizations 350 Massachusetts and Elders Climate Action of Massachusetts could collaborate by writing climate-related letters to the editors of New Englandbased newspapers.

Indeed, activism among retirees is seen as an increasingly vital segment of the climate movement. After all, we vote, we have time, we - and particularly we educators - are concerned about our legacy, and collectively we have enormous financial power. Elders Climate Action of Massachusetts has been mobilizing elders for six years to support pro-climate legislation and policies. And last October, Third Act, a national organization dedicated to fighting climate change and protecting democracy, was launched by prominent activists. As the Third Act website states: "Experienced Americans are the fastest-growing part of the population: 10,000 people a day pass the 60-year mark. That means that bringing the power of this group into play will go a long way toward making the changes that must be made to protect our planet and our society."

For more information, please contact Craig Slatin at *cslatin@comcast.net* or Ferd Wulkan at *ferdwulkan@gmail. com* to discuss CAN and become Climate Champions. Contact Seth Evans at *setherkim@verizon.net* for information on Elders Climate Action and Third Act.





# NOMINATION FORM

NOMINATION MATERIALS DUE JUNE 3, 2022

#### IS THERE AN MTA RETIRED MEMBER WHO:

- Encouraged you professionally or personally?
- Fostered your involvement in the MTA?
- Mentored you as a beginning educator?
- Helped you as a student?

# "HONOR OUR OWN"



MTASO

### NOW IS THE TIME TO RECOGNIZE THESE CONTRIBUTIONS.

Each year, the MTA Retired Members Committee sponsors the "Honor Our Own" award. The award honors members of MTA Retired for their outstanding influence on students, beginning educators and association members. To nominate a retired educator, complete the nomination form and provide a written explanation of why you believe the candidate meets the guidelines for the award. The guidelines include demonstrated professional responsibility and achievement in one's field; displays of leadership, creativity or innovation; evidence of the nominee's impact on the school community, students and association; and examples of how the nominee has improved the image of public education.

### WHO IS ELIGIBLE AND WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES FOR THE AWARD?

#### Nominees must be MTA Retired members of the Massachusetts Teachers Association at present.

Please explain why the nominee should be honored. Consider the following about the nominee when you are writing your submission:

- 1. Professional responsibilities and personal achievements.
- 2. Leadership, creativity or innovation.
- **3.** Impact of the nominee's professionalism on the school community, the students, the association and/or the community.
- 4. Advocacy for association members, the profession and public education.
- **5.** Improving the image of public education.

### HOW DO I SUBMIT A NOMINATION FOR THE "HONOR OUR OWN" AWARD?

- **1.** Complete the nomination form.
- 2. Attach a written explanation about why the nominee meets the guidelines for the award. Follow the award guidelines listed above.
- 3. Mail or email the completed application. Materials must be received no later than June 3.

"Honor Our Own" Award Attn: Robert Whalen, MTA 2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor | Quincy, MA 02171-2119 *rwhalen@massteacher.org* 

For a copy of this nomination form, please visit: www.massteacher.org/honorourown

### Complete the nomination form.

#### **Nominee Information:**

Name			
Address			
City	State	ZIP	
Home Phone	Work Phone		
Email			
bmitted By: (Please check one)			
Member of			Association
MTA Retired			
Name			
Address			
City	State	ZIP	
Home Phone	Work Phone _		
<b>—</b> "			

Attach a written explanation of 250-500 words on why the nominee meets the guidelines for the award.

### Mail or email the completed application.

"Honor Our Own" Award Robert Whalen, MTA 2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor | Quincy, MA 02171-2119 *rwhalen@massteacher.org* 

Materials must be received by the MTA no later than June 3. The decision of the Retired Members Committee is final.

### Recent Recipients of the "Honor Our Own" Award

# 2021

#### Craig Slatin, professor emeritus, University of Massachusetts Lowell

#### Nominated by MTA Retired member Rafael Moure-Eraso

"Craig Slatin is an example of the politically engaged educator who can show results for his years of organizing and advocating for an effective public education. He has educated a generation of students ... and been an effective activist in public education policy."

#### Richard Liston, Everett Teachers Association

#### Nominated by ETA President Kimberly Auger

"The impact he made on his students still resonates today, as many reach out to express their appreciation for all of his encouragement and support, long after they were students in his classroom."

# 2020

#### Judith Babb, Wakefield Education Association

#### Nominated by MTA Retired member Maura D. Buckley

"Judy recognized early in her teaching career that in order to have a quality educational system she needed to be a strong advocate for students, teachers, public education and social justice. She realized that this could be accomplished by being involved in the political process. This participation in politics throughout her years as an educator and in retirement included constantly communicating with elected officials and working on political campaigns at the local, state and national levels."

# 2019

#### Louise Gaskins, Ayer-Shirley Regional Education Association

#### Nominated by Jacqueline Gorrie and Anne Wass, MTA Retired Members Committee

"During her long career, Louise Gaskins worked tirelessly on civil rights issues and efforts to expand the power of ethnic minority educators in public education through their unions. At the state level, her work led to the establishment of the MTA Human Relations Committee, which created an annual award in her name, and the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee. In retirement, Gaskins has remained an MTA and NEA activist, playing key roles on countless committees and working groups. Gaskins has also been active on the national level as an NEA director and a delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly."

#### Dr. Charles Levenstein, professor emeritus, UMass Lowell

#### Nominated by UMass Lowell professor Craig Slatin

"Dr. Levenstein integrates his academic work with advocacy and activism, supporting healthy and safe work and living conditions. In 1987, Dr. Levenstein wrote a successful grant proposal to the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and began a New England-wide worker health and safety training consortium that has lasted for 30 years. ... His advocacy for school health and safety continued with publication of his most recent book in 2014 — *The Toxic Schoolhouse* — a collection of articles on chemical hazards endangering students, teachers and staff in the U.S. and Canadian education systems."

# 2017

2018

#### Springfield Education Association Committee of Retirees

#### Nominated by SEA President Tim Collins

"The mission of the Tools 4 Teaching recycling store is to provide Springfield Public Schools teachers, especially new teachers, with quality educational materials for their classrooms at no cost. The Tools 4 Teaching store is a nonprofit organization that receives educational materials through many varied sources. Donations are received from local businesses and retiring teachers. This keeps quality and usable school materials out of landfills and puts them into SPS classrooms.... The T4T store and the social events that these hardworking, dedicated retirees manage promote unity among teachers and the community. This demonstrates to the public that we can all come together for the benefit of students — our future leaders."

Questions About the "Honor Our Own" Award? Robert Whalen, MTA 2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor | Quincy, MA 02171-2119 ph: 617.878.8206 | *rwhalen@massteacher.org* 

## **LEGISLATIVE REPORT: AN UPDATE FROM MTA GOVERNMENT RELATIONS**

he first weeks of 2022 were a busy time on Beacon Hill, with a number of important developments related to the MTA's budget and legislative priorities for the remainder of the 2021-2022 session.

#### Fiscal Year 2023 Budget

On January 26, Governor Charlie Baker released his annual budget recommendation, which kicked off the Commonwealth's fiscal 2023 budget process. Importantly, the governor's budget recommendation makes the required transfer to the state and teachers' retirement systems and authorizes a 3 percent cost-ofliving-adjustment (COLA) on the first \$13,000 in pension benefits for retired members of the state and teachers' retirement systems. In addition, the budget calls for an additional \$250 million to be transferred to the state and teachers' retirement systems should certain revenue benchmarks be met.

On public preK-12 education funding, the governor's proposal rightfully follows the six-year phase-in of the *Student Opportunity Act* (SOA) adopted by the Legislature in the fiscal 2022 state budget. However, it only partially continues the Legislature's commitment to funding certain provisions within the SOA related to charter school reimbursement and special education circuit breaker line items and does not account for the true rate of inflation in funding Chapter 70 aid to local school districts. Regarding public higher education, the governor's proposal once again fails to make the substantial investments that are needed to support students in the Commonwealth's colleges and universities, particularly students of color and working-class students, as well as campus operations.

Over the coming weeks, the MTA will be strongly urging the House and Senate to address these shortcomings and to meaningfully invest in preK-16 public education as they develop their own fiscal 2023 budget proposals. The House is expected to release and pass its budget proposal in April, with the Senate expected to follow in May. The goal is to have a final budget passed by both branches and signed into law by the governor by the start of the new fiscal year on July 1, although that timeline has not always been met in recent years. Please continue to visit *massteacher.org* for more specific information on the MTA's budget priorities as well as updates on the budget process.

#### **Priority Legislation**

February 2 was the deadline for most legislative committees to issue their recommendations on the next steps for bills under their review. This deadline is referred to by the Legislature as the Joint Rule 10 deadline. Committees were able to issue a report recommending that bills "ought to pass," "ought



not to pass," or be given a study order. Committees were also permitted to request an extension order that allows them to continue to review bills further before issuing their report. Joint Rule 10 is just one step in the legislative process that will continue through 2022 and even if a bill receives a favorable report, it will still need to clear several other hurdles prior to it potentially becoming a law.

Unfortunately, S.1683/H.2623, *An Act to provide fair and affordable public retiree benefits*, was sent to study by the Joint Committee on Public Service, effectively ending its chances for this session. However, the MTA remains deeply committed to securing a fairer and more dignified retirement for our retirees and will continue to fight for a COLA that actually meets the rising costs of living. We are grateful to the dozens of MTA retirees who contacted their legislators to support this important priority.

On a positive note, several other MTA priorities received reports of "ought to pass" and will now move on to the next step in the legislative process that will likely include a review by a second committee. These bills include *An Act to provide fair working conditions for public higher education adjunct faculty, An Act relative to the Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement System, and An Act relative to a state minimum wage for municipal employees.* To learn more about these bills and to check the status of other MTA priorities, please visit *massteacher.org/ legislation.* 

### **REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND BOARD – FEBRUARY 14, 2022**

### Andrei Joseph



The Board of Directors and the Executive Committee both continue to guide our members through the challenges and threats of the COVID-19 pandemic. The data and advice from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Governor Charlie Baker are unreliable at best. Rather, we trust the regular reports we

MTA RMC Member Andrei Joseph

receive from our own Environmental Health and Safety Committee and sympathetic scientists including Wilmore Webley, associate professor of microbiology at UMass Amherst, and Alan Geller, senior lecturer at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

Statewide meetings have been held with hundreds of members. Some concessions on mask guidelines have been achieved and local bargaining around health and safety conditions with memorandums of agreement being added to contracts are widespread. The MTA continues to support mandatory vaccination of all adults and eligible students.

The Executive Committee met on February 21 and after extensive discussion of multiple factors decided that this year's Annual Meeting will offer both in person and remote options. Many members, including a significant portion of retirees, now feel comfortable meeting in person. But others, with varying degrees of health challenges, are not comfortable with that level of risk. My criteria in supporting this decision were to maximize participatory democracy while protecting safety for all. As difficult and awkward as it will be — and it will be difficult and awkward — this hybrid format allows for maximum participation. For those attending in person, masks, proof of vaccination, and other safety protocols will be in effect. Each delegate can choose the option with which they are most comfortable. On a positive note, the board voted overwhelmingly to commit \$10 million from our reserves to the Fair Share Campaign. Planned for years, and built into the calculation of our reserves, this substantial amount will support a robust statewide campaign to win the referendum, which would create a progressive tax that targets multimillionaires, specifically people who annually earn more than \$1 million. We are part of a coalition, Raise Up Massachusetts, that also receives large donations from the AFT, SEIU and NEA. When successful, this amendment to the state constitution is expected to raise about \$2 billion each year for public education and public transportation. The board vote to commit the reserves to support the campaign was 50 - 6. I joined the majority.

As part of the challenging process of building an anti-racist, social justice union, both the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors continue to engage in education, debate, self-reflection and strategic planning. We have been honored by the willingness of board members of color to share their often-painful experiences of what it has been like to be an educator of color. Nothing is simple as we try to undo the damage of centuries of racism. It is even more problematic to deal with these issues when MTA plays the role of employer. We are on a journey that requires courage, respectful listening and the creation of trust. It won't happen overnight.

Briefly but duly noted:

• In recognition of local, reckless COVID-19 non-regulations, as well as the suppression of reproductive rights, the NEA Representative Assembly (RA) has been moved from Texas to Chicago.

• Our statewide membership has survived the challenge of the U.S. Supreme Court *Janus* decision and is returning to even stronger levels.

• The MTA pension plan for our employees is in very healthy financial shape.

• The board has held many executive sessions.

# 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

# **VOICE OF TEACHERS FOR EDUCATION**

# Elections matter. They also cost money.

The MTA's **VOTE Political Action Committee (PAC)** contributes to candidates for statewide and legislative offices who demonstrate committed support for issues important to active and retired educators, students and public education.

By pooling the contributions of MTA members, the VOTE PAC gives educators a stronger voice in helping to elect candidates who will champion the MTA's priorities on Beacon Hill and fight against anti-public employee and anti-public education proposals.

#### Please consider making a contribution to the VOTE PAC today.

Your generous contribution to the VOTE PAC will help us stand with elected officials who will stand with us. Contributions can be made in any amount up to \$500 annually. You may contribute online by visiting *massteacher.org/votepac*.

Contributions may also be mailed to: MTA VOTE PAC, 2 Heritage Dr., 8th Floor, Quincy, MA 02171.

When making a contribution, please be sure to provide your name and address, as well as your occupation and employer, if applicable.

MTA's VOTE (Voice of Teachers for Education) and the National Education Association's Fund for Children and Public Education collect voluntary contributions from members for political purposes including, but not limited to, making contributions to and expenditures on behalf of friends of education who are candidates for state and federal office. Seventy percent of contributions will be given to MTA's VOTE PAC and 30 percent will be given to the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education. Contributions are not a condition of membership or employment and are not deductible for federal income tax purposes. Federal law prohibits the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education from receiving donations from persons other than members of NEA and its affiliates, and their immediate families. All donations from persons other than members of NEA and MTA, and their immediate families, will be returned forthwith.

# massteacher.org/votepac



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