2018 HCR AWARD NOMINATIONS

The MTA Human Relations Committee is soliciting nominations for the 2018 MTA Human and Civil Rights Awards, which honor individuals and groups that have shown extraordinary dedication to civil rights and human relations.

The awards will be presented on Friday, June 15, at the 36th annual Human and Civil Rights Awards celebration at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Boston-Westborough.

For further information, please e-mail Mary Gilgallon, director of the Division of Governance and Administration, at mgilgallon@massteacher.org.

NOMINATIONS ARE DUE MARCH 23, 2018
Forms are available at massteacher.org/hcr

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MTA'S MISSION STATEMENT

The Massachusetts Teachers Association is a member-driven organization, governed by democratic principles, that accepts and supports the interdependence of professionalism and unionism. The MTA promotes the use of its members’ collective power to advance their professional and economic interests. The MTA is committed to human and civil rights and advocates for quality public education in an environment in which lifelong learning and innovation flourish.

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ON THE COVER

Turbulent political times are leaving immigrant and ethnic minority students and their families feeling anxious and vulnerable. But MTA members are stepping up to make sure that all students feel welcome in Massachusetts public schools. Turn to Page 6 for a story about educators such as Victor Valtikunas — pictured with student Michael DeGloria and DeGloria’s mother, Johana Rodríguez — who are helping students meet the challenges of the era. Beginning on Page 5, readers will find a story about MTA members remembering Kathleen Roberts, a much-loved former MTA president and longtime activist who passed away in September. Also this fall, educators are providing assistance to students arriving in local schools from Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. Coverage appears on Page 7.

Cover photo by Eric Haynes
Cover design by Joshua Degregorio

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Quote-Unquote

“...we know that working people speak with the strongest voice when they’re united — and the wealthy elite and the shadowy groups behind ‘Janus’ know that, too.”

— Anders Lindall, AFSCME Council 31, commenting on the case to be heard by the U.S. Supreme Court that seeks to end public-sector unions’ ability to collect fair-share fees.
Hundreds protest visit by DeVos

By Laura Barrett and Scott McLennan

Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has the dubious distinction of being the most unpopular Cabinet secretary in the Trump administration. According to a Politico poll released on Sept. 27, only 28 percent of the public gave her a favorable rating.

As if to confirm that figure, hundreds of public education supporters protested DeVos’ policies the next day outside Harvard’s Kennedy School in Cambridge, where the secretary was the featured speaker on a panel loaded with school privatization advocates. Protesters excoriated her plans to divert public funds to privately run schools and her decision to roll back Obama-era protections for sexual assault survivors on college campuses.

While MTA members, students and other education advocates were protesting and chanting outside on JFK Street, Harvard students inside the lecture hall stood up midway through DeVo’s talk and silently unrolled a series of banners, including two that read: “Education Justice Is Racial Justice” and “Protect Survivors’ Rights.” Many in the audience snapped their fingers to demonstrate their approval of the protest.

Outside, MTA President Barbara Madeloni was one of the lead speakers at the rally, which was organized on short notice by the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance and Harvard University student organizations.

Madeloni cited DeVos’ track record in her home state of Michigan, where she led a campaign to massively expand charter schools, leaving district public schools in financial shambles. Madeloni told the crowd that it is time to fight “millionaires and billionaires coming after public education.”

She also talked about the similarity between policies advocated by DeVo and Paul Sagan, chair of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. Sagan, like DeVo, is a big supporter of charter schools even though he is charged with overseeing and supporting all public schools in the state. Sagan donated $496,000 to Families for Excellent Schools — Advocacy in support of Question 2, last year’s failed campaign to lift the cap on charter schools.

In September, the Office of Campaign and Political Finance levied a record fine against FESA for failing to disclose the source of millions of dollars channeled to the Yes on 2 effort. Sagan’s donations were among the pile of “dark money” contributed through FESA.

Many MTA activists at the rally waved signs that read “Dump DeVo/Dump Sagan: Public Funds 4 Public Schools.”

“This is a fight for something bigger,” Madeloni said to cheers from the crowd. She called the privatization policies supported by DeVo and Sagan a civil rights issue.

Many of the college students present were upset about the decision by DeVo to rewrite Title IX guidance on how colleges should adjudicate rape and harassment claims.

“She can’t stack the system against the students Title IX is meant to serve,” said Amelia Goldberg of Our Harvard Can Do Better.

On Oct. 19, women’s rights activists and student plaintiffs filed suit in U.S. District Court in Boston challenging the Trump administration’s pending guidance changes.

Other higher education policies advocated by President Donald Trump and DeVo were also under attack at the Sept. 28 rally.

Zac Bears, executive director of PHENOM, the Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts, criticized the administration for suspending rules protecting students who had been defrauded by for-profit colleges, attempting to limit student loan repayment options, and trying to cut billions of dollars from federal student aid. “Betsy DeVo sided with the Trump universities of this country and against students who had been defrauded,” said Bears. “The DeVo agenda is a direct assault on the students and families who are struggling under the heavy burden of high costs and massive student debt at public colleges and universities here in Massachusetts.”

Graciela Mohamedi, a Rockland Senior High School science teacher, closed out the rally with an impassioned rejection of the DeVo agenda.

“No to rollbacks on protections for sexual assault survivors,” she said. “No to ignoring the voices of students of color. No to removing funding and accessibility to special education programs and disability initiatives. And No to turning our schools into another way for you and your billionaire buddies like Paul Sagan to further line your pockets with hard-earned taxpayer money! No! No! No! No!”
Editorial

It’s time for educators to play offense

This school year marks the last in which I will be serving as president of the MTA. When I took office, we had to play defense. We helped defeat a charter bill that had passed overwhelmingly in the House of Representatives just months before. We stopped the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in its tracks as it tried to connect licensure to evaluations. We took on Question 2 and resoundingly beat back the attempt to raise the charter cap. Those were defensive victories.

As I look toward the end of my term, I want us to be more assertive in playing offense. Our game plan starts with our legislative agenda. We are calling for a moratorium on high-stakes testing. We are fighting for recess, fair pay and benefits for adjuncts, the adjustment of retiree health benefits, the Finish Line Grant, a $15 minimum wage, paid family and medical leave and the Fair Share Amendment. With these efforts, educators are saying: We are working to build better public schools, colleges and universities — and stronger communities.

And by activating members through the All In campaign, the MTA is strategically focusing on the local struggles that will support educators and our students.

I am hopeful that we can achieve these goals in the months ahead, but I think we are more likely to succeed if we think through and discuss some of the foundational principles that guide us.

Our knowledge and vision

Our work and the narrative about it are too often dominated by the voices of those who have no background in education and who — as in the case of privatizers — do not share our interests. They ask the questions and set the frame, then demand that we respond.

It is well past time for us to reject their frame, ask our own questions and assert our vision, knowledge and expertise. I am often asked, “If we get rid of high-stakes testing, what will we replace it with?”

This is a distraction from the real issues at hand. We know that every child must have an opportunity to learn. Now we need to ask why we do not ensure that all children are fed, clothed, safely housed and secure in their well-being. Why do we allow schools to have such disparate access to resources? Why are educators not given more time to build relationships with students and each other and to share their professional knowledge? What does it mean to teach the whole child? And what should classrooms and schools look like so we could achieve that?

We need to ask why policymakers hold so firmly to standardized testing — even in the face of evidence that it does not support meaningful education and in fact distorts teaching and learning to a degree that some experience as cruel. Why are they not listening to educators, students and parents?

Educators do remarkable work every day, accessing students’ hope and imagination and letting them see what is possible in themselves and for the community. Meanwhile, policymakers fret over rankings and data points. We must assert our practice, our knowledge and our commitment to the whole child. We must demand that policymakers answer our questions.

The power of collective action

In order to meaningfully articulate and win our vision for public education — to have our questions answered — we must work together. That might seem obvious, but too frequently we find ourselves isolated.

The larger narratives of accountability, ranking and scarcity — and the day-to-day struggle to keep up with work requirements — leave us overwhelmed. As we will learn with the All In campaign, however, an intentional focus on talking to each other to identify and name problems, assert our vision, develop plans and join one another to create change will carry us forward.

To the Editor

MTA members should not be lulled by win over charter school initiative

To the Editor:

Relative to the ballot win last fall against the charter school initiative: Celebration, though deserved, should not be excessive or unduly extended. Let’s not become lax or lulled by victory. The charter school proponents will return. The recent vote is no more than a temporary delay in their plans. They will be back, probably with forcibly made and reshuffled — if less than credible — arguments.

The profiteers have addicted themselves to the narcotizing influence of money, power, dominance and control. They never have enough. They want 100 percent of everything 100 percent of the time — starting now and continuing indefinitely.

Let’s not take lightly either their avarice or ambition. The penny-sniffers are relentless. They compel us to remain constantly alert. Should we fail to do so, we and the students and our communities will be at their mercy.

If we sustain the vigilance, internal strength and unity of purpose that enabled us to turn back their recent assault, public education can improve and flourish.

Gregory K. Maravelas

MTA Retired
MTA mourns loss of Kathleen Roberts

By Jean Conley

“S he was an inspiration, a woman of great wisdom and great wit,” said one close friend. She was “kind and warm and inclusive,” said another.

Longtime friends of Kathleen Roberts struggled recently to put into words what the much-loved former MTA president — who died Sept. 24 at the age of 103 — meant to them as a mentor, friend and fellow union activist.

At the MTA, Roberts’ name was synonymous with persistence, dedication and volunteerism. Her love of public education — combined with her generous spirit, optimistic outlook and strong conviction that educators should receive the pay, recognition and respect they deserve — was a natural fit with being a union leader.

Roberts was born Kathleen Ryan in Dartmouth, Massachusetts, on Sept. 14, 1914, and was raised in Wellesley. She decided she wanted to become a teacher when she was still very young, and she would often tutor neighborhood children who were struggling with their homework.

She received her bachelor’s degree in education from Framingham State College in 1937 and a master’s degree in education from Boston University in 1954.

Her first professional teaching job began soon after her graduation from Framingham State, during the Great Depression. Roberts was the only teacher in a one-room schoolhouse in Milton, Vermont, where she taught all eight grades and was paid $14 a week.

She was married and widowed twice. Her first husband, James C. Comiskey, was head of the business department at New Bedford High School. Her second husband, Sydney Cleland Roberts, was head of the social studies department at Lawrence High School in Falmouth and a former MTA president.

Roberts was actively involved as a member and leader in the MTA and the National Education Association for nearly five decades as both a teacher and a teaching principal. And after retiring in 1984, she continued to serve the education profession for decades.

Roberts was part of a group that organized NEA-Retired in 1983. In 2003, she was honored with the NEA-Retired Distinguished Service Award.

In 1992, Roberts received an MTA Human and Civil Rights Award. In 2010, the Human Relations Committee renamed the award — which recognizes individuals and organizations for volunteerism and leadership — in her honor.

Roberts was a delegate more than 75 times to the MTA Annual Meeting and more than 60 times to the NEA Representative Assembly.

In addition, she was a member of numerous MTA and NEA committees and task forces.

Until earlier this year, she served as co-chair of the MTA Retired Members Committee with another longtime friend, Richard Liston.

Roberts was actively involved as a member and leader in the MTA and the National Education Association for nearly five decades as both a teacher and a teaching principal. And after retiring in 1984, she continued to serve the education profession for decades.

“Kay just showed me the way,” Gaskins said. “She was kind and warm and inclusive. She just put her arm around me and included me in everything. Inclusive was just the way she was.”

Roberts’ niece, Catherine Bryant, agreed, adding that her aunt’s natural empathy for those being discriminated against was heightened by her early professional experiences.

“She started teaching when she graduated from college in 1937, when there was a great deal of discrimination and prejudice against women and ethnic minorities,” Bryant said. “Starting her career in that environment, it was really important to her to work to change things.”

When Roberts was first married, she was forced to become a permanent substitute because married women were not allowed to be teachers, Bryant noted.

“That meant she got to do the exact same job while having her pay and benefits cut,” she said. “Being in the MTA allowed her to fight to level the playing field.”

But Bryant said that Roberts felt she received even more in return than she gave to the association.

Louise Gaskins, a longtime MTA activist who served as the association’s first minority NEA director in the mid-1970s, said she will never forget how touched she was when Roberts reached out to ask her to take on leadership roles.

When Gaskins became an NEA director in 1976, she joined Roberts and the other MTA NEA directors in Washington, D.C.

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Educators welcome all students

“Public education is for all students. It is one of the only places left in America that will still take your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free. And it will provide those masses with the freedom and opportunity that come from a quality education. Do you know why, Betsy? Because we will teach them all!”

— Rockland teacher Graciela Mohamedi at a Betsy DeVos protest rally in Cambridge on September 28

Immigrant and ethnic minority students — and others who belong to groups disparaged by President Donald Trump — have been feeling more vulnerable and anxious than usual since the 2016 election. MTA members are fighting back to make sure all students feel safe and welcome in our schools.

Pablo Frias-Mota, an adjustment counselor in Worcester, said there were two early flashpoints for immigrant students — first when Trump was elected and then right after his inauguration.

“When he was elected, many students were scared and some didn’t come to school the next day,” Frias-Mota said.

“At first there was some bullying of kids who were immigrants, but we took action right away to stop that. I tell students that we all came from somewhere else. Even Native Americans. Even Donald Trump. Our superintendent sent a letter home explaining that the schools will educate all students and will never ask their legal status.” Despite reassurances, students whose families lack documentation face real risks.

“In school we provide students with breakfast because we know that the brain doesn’t work well if they have empty stomachs,” Frias-Mota said. “How are children supposed to learn if they are worried that their parents can be deported at any time?”

Lauren Harrison, an elementary school English as a Second Language teacher in Watertown, said that election time was stressful, even for young students.

“One kindergartner came to me and said, ‘I hate Donald Trump,’” Harrison said. “That student had been having nightmares that Trump was chasing her and her family and destroying her home.”

The stress has also been significant for students participating in the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. The DACA program provides temporary legal status to some immigrants who were brought to the U.S. when they were young.

Saul Ramos, a paraeducator in Worcester, was inspired to act when Trump announced on Sept. 5 that he was ending DACA in six months.

“A government history teacher was explaining DACA when one of the students blurted out, ‘I’m a DACA recipient,’” said Ramos. “All the other students were surprised. ‘What do you mean?’ they asked. ‘You only speak English.’”

“The student explained that he was brought to the U.S. from Brazil when he was 2 years old. He has never been back and doesn’t speak the language. The other kids were sympathetic and upset that he might be sent back to a country where he has no family or connections.”

Responses by MTA members to the trauma include classroom discussions, political action and family outreach programs.

Classroom discussions

After the student announced he was a DACA recipient, Ramos worked with the Educational Association of Worcester and the MTA to produce “I Support DACA” stickers for staff and students to wear on Oct. 5, the deadline to apply for a DACA extension.

“In my school the kids were all over the stickers,” said Ramos, who is the NEA Education Support Professional of the Year. “They wanted to show support for their friends.” The stickers also led to discussions as people asked what DACA was and why the wearer supported it.

Nyssa Patten, a high school ESL teacher in Watertown, said that discussing big issues is important for making students feel supported.

“After the election and the Muslim travel ban, I brought in school resource officers to explain that, at least in Watertown, police would not be knocking on doors to take people away,” said Patten.

Despite precautions, some students still faced hostility.

“There was an incident in the library, where they were projecting the inauguration,” Patten said. “We also happened to have a shelter-in-place order at the time so students couldn’t leave. Some students started chanting, ‘Build the wall! Send them home!’”

Patten talked about the incident with her students. She believes that open discussion can increase understanding and reduce prejudice.

One of her colleagues, Heidi Baildon, a middle school ESL teacher, has incorporated lessons from Facing History and Ourselves, a nonprofit educational and professional development program.
Providing a vital link for students from Puerto Rico

By Laura Barrett

I have one student who came here from Puerto Rico after the storm,” said Yahaira Rodriguez, a paraeducator at the Sullivan Middle School in Worcester. “The language barrier is the hardest part. He doesn’t speak any English. I translate for him and other students.

“Also, the school systems here and in Puerto Rico are very different. In Puerto Rico the schools are smaller and students don’t go from class to class — they just stay with one teacher. Here, it is easy to get lost and confused. It’s hard to process everything that’s going on in school.”

Her new student, a seventh-grade boy living in Worcester with his aunt, is one of more than 800 students from the island who have enrolled in public schools in Massachusetts since Hurricane Maria struck on Sept. 20, killing at least 51 residents, destroying homes and uprooting lives.

As of late October, about 80 percent of the island’s residents were still without power. Many did not have clean drinking water or cellphone reception, and there were long lines for everything — from getting money out of an ATM to obtaining food and fuel.

According to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the largest numbers of these “internal refugees” from Puerto Rico enrolled in schools in Springfield, New Bedford, Worcester, Lowell, Holyoke, Lawrence and Boston.

Rodriguez can relate to the stress that many from the island are feeling. Her own family is still living in a mountainous region of Puerto Rico and she can only communicate sporadically with relatives.

“I tell teachers in my school I know you can be sympathetic but it’s not the same thing as having experienced it,” she said, referring both to newcomers and longtime residents who still have family members on the island. “Their body is going to be in school but their mind is not going to be there. They worry that their family doesn’t have the luxury of those basic needs of electricity, water and food. I let them know I understand. My family is there, too.

“After the storm I came down crying,” she said. “The students sympathized with me and I sympathized with them.”

Rodriguez added, “I have a very big family. My grandfather is 97. They don’t want to leave. They are afraid that if they leave, people might try to steal what little they have left.”

School systems such as Worcester’s rely heavily on bilingual paraeducators to translate for students and to help them become assimilated.

“Getting assimilated is a slow process,” Rodriguez said. “Some people don’t understand how difficult it is to be in a classroom when you don’t understand the language. You can be sympathetic, but until you are in that position you don’t know what it is like.

“It’s not just the language, but also the culture that is different,” she continued. “Here kids are from everywhere. They talk different languages and have different cultures. In Puerto Rico, everyone is from Puerto Rico. Even the lunches are different. There they mostly eat rice, beans and chicken for lunch. Here it is something different every day.”

Rodriguez said she is available to help families uprooted by the storm to connect with services, such as signing up for MassHealth. As a paraeducator, she wishes that the pay and respect that education support professionals receive matched their responsibilities and skills — skills that must be fully deployed when crises strike and newcomers arrive in the middle of the school year.

Visit massteacher.org/hurricanes to find opportunities to donate to the victims of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria.

‘It’s so bad, even the introverts are marching’

Continued from previous page

organization, into her curriculum. One unit included reading a story about a bear that hibernates and wakes up to find that a factory has been built on top of him. Suddenly, he is being identified as a worker and no longer as a bear. This fostered a discussion about identity.

Baildon also makes sure that her students have access to positive images from varied cultures, including those in a graphic novel with Mexican superheroes to show that heroes aren’t all white English-speaking males.

Political action

Baildon, Patten and Harrison were among the MTA members who attended a Sept. 16 rally in Boston in support of DACA.

Patten described herself as an introvert, noting that she had never been to a protest march before Trump was elected.

“I talk to my students a lot about acting on their beliefs,” Patten said. “Up until now my way of participating has been teaching and telling others what to do. But that’s no longer enough. I have to do something. I’ve shown them pictures of me marching. They are really touched because they know I’m marching for them.”

Harrison added with a laugh, “It’s so bad, even the introverts are marching.”

Cheryl Olson, a math teacher from Gloucester, also felt compelled to attend. “Gloucester was built on waves of immigrants,” she said. “The more diversity in the world, the more interesting it is.

“I cannot sit and be silent,” Olson continued. “That’s what a lot of people did in Nazi Germany. Even though you get battle fatigue, you have to be out there. You have to speak out if you want a voice.”

Family and community outreach

In response to high dropout rates among Latino students, Waltham High School hired Mary Jo Rendón in 2012 as the school’s dropout prevention specialist. As a result, Waltham has several programs in place that help students and families navigate the system in the Trump era.

“I’m a cultural broker in many cases,” said Rendón, who immigrated to the U.S. from Guatemala when she was a child.

She helped launch the Waltham High School Newcomers Academy for recent immigrants who need extra support. “Some of these students are illiterate in their own languages, so it is especially challenging for them to learn to read in English,” Rendón said.

She also has started a Family and Community Engagement program to create a welcoming climate at the high school for immigrant families. One strategy has been to organize monthly Saturday workshops at which educators and guidance counselors describe programs and resources offered at the high school.

“It’s taken about five years to build collaboration with families,” Rendón said. “At first I had no parents, then one, and then three.” To get more families there, she spent hours on the phone and met them in coffee shops on their own turf. Now she has about 15 parents and guardians, mostly mothers, who
Madeloni testifies for bill seeking coal industry divestment

By Laura Barrett

Addressing the main concerns about the bill, several people testified that previous divestment efforts in tobacco and South African products were successfully implemented without hurting pension fund investment returns.

long-term negative impact that greenhouse gas emissions have on the environment.

She also noted that educators are preparing to welcome an influx of Puerto Rican students who are fleeing their island because it was ravaged by Hurricane Maria, one of several monster storms that climate scientists say were caused or worsened by global warming. Madeloni called these Puerto Rican families “internal climate change refugees.”

President Donald Trump, on the other hand, has called climate change a hoax. And Pruitt, his appointee heading the agency charged with safeguarding the environment, is a longtime champion of the fossil fuel industry. Pruitt repeatedly sued the EPA when he was the attorney general of Oklahoma.

In announcing the plan to roll back emissions regulations, Pruitt claimed that “the war against coal is over.” Massachusetts, California, New York and other states have vowed to challenge the rollback, citing the huge and growing damage caused by carbon dioxide emissions.

Addressing the main concerns about the bill, several people testified that previous divestment efforts in tobacco and South African products were successfully implemented without hurting pension fund investment returns. MassDivest released a written statement that concludes, “Investment professionals are increasingly concerned about financial risk associated with the fossil fuel industry. The cost of extracting gas and oil is trending upward, while yields are trending downward.”

To read New Business Items adopted by the 2017 Annual Meeting of Delegates, go to www.massteacher.org/2017amnbis.
Legislators urged to rethink testing

By Laura Barrett

Educators, parents, students and legislators testified recently on Beacon Hill in favor of a bill that would make significant improvements in state education policy, including imposing a three-year moratorium on high-stakes testing and requiring the state to fully fund the recommendations of the Foundation Budget Review Commission.

“This bill provides a blueprint for a better way to educate our students,” MTA President Barbara Madeloni said during a hearing Sept. 12 on Senate Bill 308, “An Act strengthening and investing in our educators, students and communities.”

One of the stars of the hearing was Kenza Wahman, a sixth-grader from Hull, who opted out of the MCAS last year because she said it “doesn’t show who I am.” She also spoke passionately against depriving students of recess as a punishment.

“We look forward to recess like adults look forward to a coffee break,” Kenza said, noting that “even prisoners get to walk the yard for an hour a day.”

The lead sponsors of S. 308 are Senator Michael Rush (D-Boston) and Representative Marjorie Decker (D-Cambridge).

“This comprehensive education legislation is based on concerns that educators and parents express about our current education system,” said Rush. “This bill takes a hard look at the effects of high-stakes standardized tests, updates the foundation budget formula, mandates recess for grades K-5, encourages more learning time in history and civics, and promotes community collaboration for underperforming schools.”

The bill has broad support, including 105 co-sponsors in the Legislature and strong backing by the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance, a coalition of parent, educator, student, labor, community and civil rights organizations that helped lead the charge against last fall’s charter school expansion ballot initiative, Question 2.

Deborah McCarthy, a fifth-grade teacher and president of the Hull Teachers Association, testified about the negative impact that high-stakes testing is having on students. “Public education is under siege,” she told legislators, adding: “I want to hold you accountable for the 11 days of high-stakes testing my students endure. Every year our school becomes a warehouse for testing.”

McCarthy said that students’ schedules are uprooted for three months a year in preparation for the testing. “Many were frustrated, anxious and depressed when faced with developmentally inappropriate test questions,” she said.

Jack Schneider, an assistant education professor at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, said, “We claim that test scores measure school quality when they really measure family income.”

A national leader in working to create alternatives to high-stakes testing, Schneider was asked by the committee chair what single measure he would look at to assess school quality if he could look at only one.

“The first thing I’d look at is teacher turnover not due to retirements,” he said. “Who knows their schools better than the people who work there? If teachers are leaving, that’s a powerful indicator.”

Dan Monahan, a Cambridge math and science teacher and president of the Cambridge Education Association, testified that the focus on math and English language arts test results narrows the curriculum.

“As a former science instructional coach, I saw science relegated to one or two short periods a week in our elementary schools, and it was usually the first subject to go if something had to be cut,” he said. “In addition, many schools and teachers have done away with interdisciplinary projects to focus on just what will be measured on the tests.”

Many people testified in favor of the increased funding that would be required under S. 308.

“Chances that my students have for success should not depend on their ZIP code,” said Deborah Gesualdo, a Malden music teacher and president of the Malden Education Association.

“It’s time to resource all schools so students have the one-on-one support they need, learning opportunities that begin by age 4, modern tools and textbooks, inviting classrooms, and well-rounded curriculum,” she added.

“All of our schools in Massachusetts should provide support services to the school community that include nutrition, health and after-school programs for the students and families who need them. Public schools that are resourced are an investment in the future of America.”

Maureen Colgan Posner, president of the Springfield Education Association, said, “Lack of funding and high-stakes testing are forcing districts like Springfield to make decisions that are harmful to our students.”

Mary Cummings, a retired Arlington special education teacher and MTA Senate district coordinator, also testified about testing. “We need appropriate assessments that show teachers not only what students know but also how they communicate and use that knowledge to solve problems,” she said. “Assessments should be varied and include real 21st-century tasks. There are several alternative and more effective methods of assessing students’ skills and knowledge. We need to take at least three years to carefully consider those methods and develop one or more of our own.”

Madeloni concluded, “We need real innovation in education. The innovation we seek requires loosening bureaucratic constraints, providing schools with adequate funds to meet their students’ needs, committing to teaching the whole child, and unleashing educators’ creativity by giving them more autonomy and respect.”

What the bill does

Among other measures, S. 308:

- Implements the funding recommendations of the Foundation Budget Review Commission, which determined that public schools are underfunded by at least $1 billion a year.
- Mandates a three-year moratorium on the use of standardized testing to make high-stakes decisions (for example, in the educator evaluation system and to assess the performance of schools and districts).
- Establishes a commission to make recommendations about better assessment methods.
- Promotes child development by mandating at least 20 minutes of recess a day in grades K-5 and by giving districts more latitude in deciding how to educate English language learners.
- Shifts the focus of school and district accountability from sanctions to support, including a requirement that the state provide targeted resources to schools whose students are struggling before taking punitive action.
- Promotes workplace fairness by maintaining employment rights for teachers of struggling high-need students to ensure that experienced, capable educators are involved in school improvement efforts.

Kenza Wahman, a sixth-grader from Hull, told legislators why she opted out of the MCAS and why recess should be mandatory. Also testifying were Hull teacher Deborah McCarthy, left, and state Representative Joan Meschino (D-Hull).
ESPs speak out for higher minimum wage

By Scott McLennan

Educators joined other workers, business owners, economists, students and community activists at the State House on Sept. 19 to support legislation that would boost the state’s minimum wage to $15 per hour by 2021.

“I am making the same amount of money now as I did in 1985 when I was a dental assistant,” Malden paraeducator Sharon Solano told the Legislature’s Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development. “We need compensation aligned with our responsibilities.”

Solano and Worcester paraeducator Deborah Young both testified before the committee. They were supported by fellow education support professionals who came from around the state to attend the hearing.

Many MTA members also visited legislators to seek their support for House Bill 2365 and Senate Bill 1004, both of which are backed by the Raise Up Massachusetts coalition, of which the association is a member.

The ESPs explained how their jobs have changed over the years. “We are co-teaching,” Solano said. “We’re not just tying shoes and wiping noses.”

MTA President Barbara Madeloni also testified, explaining that the bills are significant in their inclusion of public employees in a state minimum wage increase. The last Massachusetts minimum wage hike — to $11 per hour — did not include public employees.

Madeloni pointed out that there are more than 30 school districts with salary steps below $11 per hour and more than 100 districts in which some employees make less than $15 per hour. “The educators working most closely with the neediest students are in some cases not making a living wage. That is an outrage,” Madeloni said.

Educators also see firsthand the impact that economic insecurity has on students, which is key to why the MTA strongly supports measures to improve wages for families now struggling with poverty.

Young, who works with special needs students in the Worcester Public Schools, told the panel that she loves her job and is dedicated to her students. She relayed the financial hardships she faced when an illness forced her to take a leave of absence, telling legislators, “I was crushed.”

Raise Up Massachusetts — which is made up of numerous community, labor and faith groups — is tackling the minimum wage effort not only with legislation, but also with a ballot initiative in case the proposal stalls or fails in the Legislature.

In photo at left, Kathleen Meltsakos, an MTA education support professional, pays a visit to state Representative Leonard Mirra (R-West Newbury) in support of the Fight for $15. At right, ESPs Deborah Young, left, and Sharon Solano testify in favor of House Bill 2365 and Senate Bill 1004.

According to state Representative Dan Donahue (D-Worcester), the lead sponsor of H. 2365, approximately 932,000 low-wage workers in Massachusetts would benefit from an increase in the minimum wage to $15.

Several business groups, including Business for a Fair Minimum Wage and the Alliance for Business Leadership, dismissed the argument that increasing the minimum wage would kill job growth in the state.

A panel of economists testified along the same lines, stating that a growing economy such as the one in Massachusetts supports an increase in the minimum wage.

Anabel Santiago of Raise Up told the legislators that increasing the minimum wage to $15 per hour by 2021 is “not an unsubstantiated request.”

Rather, Santiago said, “It is a necessity.”

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Teacher of the Year makes science ‘cool’

By Scott McLennan

Cara Pekarcik is the 2018 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year because she was in the right place at the right time. Sort of.

Pekarcik already had a very good reputation as a dynamic teacher who had a knack for engaging students in the study of science.

But her involvement in an educational expedition to Antarctica and the way she shared that unique experience with students and colleagues back at North Quincy High School really highlighted her teaching gifts right when nominations were due for the statewide honor.

In 2016, Pekarcik, a member of the Quincy Education Association, participated in the PolarTREC program, joining a team of other educators and scientists on an icebreaker that served as a floating laboratory in the Southern Ocean.

Over the course of the six weeks she spent on the expedition — which overlapped with the start of her 11th year as a teacher — Pekarcik kept a journal that her students and other school staff could read online, and she was able to have a video of her at work live-streamed to the high school’s auditorium. She stayed in touch with her own students, whom she had yet to meet, and crafted assignments that took advantage of her unique “classroom.”

When Pekarcik returned to her normal duties, high school Principal Robert Shaw sat in on a couple of her classes.

“Basically, I saw how different it was — what she brought to the staff, to the students and to the community,” Shaw said. “I was looking for a way to recognize that and remembered QEA President Allison Cox saying to me that Cara’s work might make her a good candidate for Teacher of the Year.”

Cox said that Pekarcik demonstrates the passion that public school educators bring to their work.

“Cara was willing to travel halfway around the world to enhance her own knowledge. And she is able to share that experience in such a way that everyone she connects with benefits from it,” Cox told MTA Today. “We are very fortunate in Quincy to have Cara and so many other wonderful, dedicated educators who provide high-quality instruction and are great role models for our students each and every day.”

In May, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education announced that Pekarcik had won the honor, staging a presentation ceremony with students and colleagues at her school. Pekarcik was also honored at the State House.

“I don’t see this as being the greatest teacher, but the award conveys that I represent great teaching,” Pekarcik said during an interview over the summer. “Believe me, I never claimed to be the best or perfect or someone who doesn’t make a mistake.”

Still, some may find it remarkable that someone who did not originally set out to be a teacher is now recognized as an outstanding representative of the profession. Pekarcik grew up in Western Pennsylvania and knew from a young age that she wanted to be a marine scientist. Upon completing college, Pekarcik worked at the Whale Center of New England in Gloucester.

But she felt stuck in her career and grew more interested in education; in fact, Pekarcik traces her background in research and offered the aspiring educator the job she holds to this day.

“She pursued a teaching degree and then sent out a bunch of applications. Mary Young, then the science department head at North Quincy High School, liked Pekarcik’s background in research and offered the aspiring educator the job she holds to this day.

“I thought to myself, ‘What! Are there no other applicants?’” Pekarcik joked. “But she was confident when I was not.”

Pekarcik knows that many of the students she teaches will not end up in fields where they need to directly apply the scientific knowledge she imparts. But she does see immense value in using a science curriculum to teach students how to grow confident in forming and sharing their own views.

“The most important thing I can do is to encourage my students to explore,” she said. “I have a number of students who, through our writing and our projects, come out of their shell. They tell me, ‘I’m not going to be a scientist, but science is cool.’”
The Just for New Teachers conference featured a panel discussion presented by the New Member Committee. From left to right in the photo at left are committee members Kathryn Procter, Michelle Keane, Nikki Roberge, Gene Reiber and Rose Bell. The conference was held in tandem with a PD day for ESPs. At right, Ed Jacoubs of the Plymouth County DA’s office presented a workshop for ESPs on dealing with students undergoing trauma.

PD opportunities draw new teachers and ESPs

By Scott McLennan

In dispensing advice to early-career educators at the 2017 Just for New Teachers conference, their veteran colleagues reiterated the importance of staying connected, seeking opinions and sharing ideas, and avoiding self-imposed isolation.

Those words of wisdom — offered during a New Member Committee panel discussion — were put into practice during the Nov. 4 event as about 200 new and aspiring teachers gathered at Worcester Technical High School for a day of career development and social activities.

For the first time, the MTA fall regional professional development day for education support professionals was held in tandem with the conference. Though the new teachers and the ESPs participated in different workshops, they had the opportunity to enjoy lunch together. When MTA Vice President Erik J. Champy pointed out that National ESP Day would be celebrated on Nov. 15, the teachers responded with a round of applause for ESPs.

Both groups emphasized the value of ongoing professional development.

One ESP session dealt with helping children undergoing trauma in their lives. “We are dealing with these issues day after day, so a training like this makes it easier to help our students,” said Nicole Jdey, an ESP who works in Walpole.

JFNT workshops covered subjects ranging from classroom management to meditation and other self-care techniques. But before they began their sessions, participants were treated to the panel discussion, which was led by committee member Kathryn Procter. The Agawam educator posed questions to...
MEJA calls for ouster of BESE chair

By Laura Barrett

The MTA and other members of the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance have called for the ouster of Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Chair Paul Sagan for violating the public trust by failing to disclose nearly a half a million dollars he had contributed to the Yes on Question 2 campaign, on top of a $100,000 contribution he did publicly acknowledge.

MEJA — the coalition of educator, parent, social justice and labor organizations that was behind the No on 2 campaign — has posted a petition calling for Sagan’s removal.

Sagan has stated that he followed the letter of the law and that the organization he contributed to is responsible for not disclosing the millions of dollars in contributions it received and passed on to the campaign to lift the cap on charter schools. But MEJA and others have said that Sagan violated the public trust by failing to acknowledge how much he’d contributed even when the issue was being debated throughout the state in 2016.

When Sagan’s $100,000 contribution to the campaign came to light in September 2016, Governor Charlie Baker called the ensuing controversy a “nothingburger.” When Baker made that comment, Sagan had already contributed an additional $496,000 in undisclosed funds to Families for Excellent Schools — Advocacy.

One year later, on Sept. 11, 2017, the Office of Campaign and Political Finance issued a disposition agreement requiring FESA to pay $426,466 for “receiving contributions from individuals and then contributing those funds to the Great Schools Massachusetts Ballot Question Committee in a manner intended to disguise the true source of the money.”

In an op-ed published online by The Boston Globe on Oct. 16, MTA President Barbara Madeloni wrote, “Campaign finance laws have been greatly eroded in recent years, but the ones that still exist are crucial to public integrity. As Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis famously stated, ‘Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants.’

“In the case of ballot questions in Massachusetts, it is vital for voters to know who is funding the campaigns that are trying to influence their opinions on important public policy matters. ‘Follow the money’ is sound advice where such issues are concerned. In the case of the campaign supporting Question 2, the money was a record-shattering $26 million, nearly twice as much as opponents spent.”

Most of the money for Question 2 came from extremely wealthy individuals, investors and corporate interests, including the Waltons of Walmart fame. Millions of dollars for the campaign came from out-of-state corporate interests, while millions more came from wealthy Massachusetts donors.

Sagan has stated that he followed the letter of the law and that the organization he contributed to is responsible for not disclosing the millions of dollars in contributions it received and passed on to the campaign to lift the cap on charter schools. But MEJA and others have said that Sagan violated the public trust by failing to acknowledge how much he’d contributed even when the issue was being debated throughout the state in 2016.

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Holes in safety net need patching, retirees testify

By Laura Barrett

Educators and other public servants deserve a secure retirement, but there are holes in the retiree safety net that need fixing.

Retired MTA members went to Beacon Hill on Sept. 19 to testify in favor of an MTA-backed measure, Senate Bill 1481, that would help fix those holes and bring greater fairness to the system.

“Imagine yourself retired and living on a modest fixed income when one day the amount you pay for health insurance has doubled overnight,” said MTA President Barbara Madeloni, addressing the Legislature’s Joint Committee on Public Service. “This bill would provide our retirees with a level of economic security and would help avoid these sudden and extreme increases in health insurance premium costs.”

Retired Arlington educator Ann Tierney testified about the high costs for educators like her who are not eligible for Medicare because they began work in the public sector before 1986. As a result, their health insurance costs are much higher than the costs for those on Medicare.

“During my time in Arlington I was active in the union, serving in leadership positions,” she testified. “I see the union as a vehicle to aid someone like me when my voice needs to be heard. Unfortunately, the voice of public employees was not heard in the mid-1980s, when a decision was made to include only some teachers in Medicare.”

She described the plight of a cousin with multiple health problems who was hit with $3,290 in copayments last year.

The MTA-backed bill, “An Act to provide fair and affordable public retiree benefits,” addresses three shortcomings in the system:

● It would cap out-of-pocket expenses for retirees who are not eligible for Medicare at $2,500 for individuals and $5,000 for families.

● It would increase the cost-of-living-adjustment for all retirees in the state and teacher retirement systems from $390 per year to $480. That’s still below inflation, but better than the modest increase now allowed.

● It would freeze a municipal retiree’s health insurance premium contribution share at the percentage the employee paid on the day he or she retired.

Retired Malden educator Gerard Ruane illustrated the problem this bill addresses by describing the financial...
Retirees donated numerous items for Barnstable elementary school students. From left to right in the photo at left are Barnstable Teachers’ Association member Meghan Welsh, MTA Retired Members Committee Vice Chair Julia Monteiro Johnson, BTA President Brooke Styche and Retired Members Committee Chair Richard Liston. At right, among the Springfield retirees who were recognized with the Honor Our Own award were, from left to right, Chris O’Connor, Ronnie Tillman, Chris Williams, Dawna Jenne, Carol Alminas, Nancy Meyer and Sue Fielding.

Gathering focuses on retirees’ impact on education

By Scott McLennan

Although most of them are no longer in the classroom, the MTA’s retired members are still having a significant impact on public education, as they showed when they attended a conference in Hyannis on Oct. 17 and 18.

Now in its 16th year and expanded to a two-day format, the MTA Retired Gathering was held at the Cape Codder Resort.

The event, organized by the MTA Retired Members Committee, offered those who attended numerous workshops and opportunities to socialize. The conference also demonstrated the many ways in which retirees are still contributing to public schools, colleges and universities.

A call had gone out in advance asking MTA Retired members to bring items such as soccer balls and jump-ropes to be donated to the Barnstable United Elementary School. As is the tradition at each gathering, a school or district is selected to receive items that the educators there say will benefit their students.

The Barnstable Teachers’ Association wanted to emphasize the value of recess by making sure that students have equipment for games and activities. The retirees responded with an assortment of basketballs, soccer balls and kick balls (more than 60 in all), duffel bags to store the equipment and about a dozen jump-ropes, as well as classroom supplies and monetary donations.

Another important annual tradition is the Honor Our Own award, which recognizes outstanding work by active or retired MTA educators. This year the award went to the members of the Springfield Education Association’s Committee of Retirees in recognition of their successful Tools 4 Teaching program.

The committee started Tools 4 Teaching in 2013 to collect materials from educators who were retiring or changing grade levels and get them — at no cost — into the hands of colleagues who could use them.

The committee has expanded Tools 4 Teaching to the point where it leases space in a municipal building to house books, furnishings and many other useful classroom items.

SEA educators can visit the “recycling store” to pick up items when it opens twice a month. The committee also actively solicits donations such as pens, notepads and binders from private businesses and other sources to keep them from ending up in the trash. “We wanted to help teachers, help students and help our planet,” said SEA retiree Chris Williams. The goal now, she said, is to see Tools 4 Teaching replicated in other districts.

Those recognized with the award were Nancy Meyer, Sue Fielding, Dawna Jenne, Carol Alminas, Chris O’Connor, Ronnie Tillman, Norma Alejandro, Jean Haley, Gail Healey, Linda Kingston, Mary Scherpa, Pat Sullivan and Williams.

Christine Blower, a leader in Britain’s recently constituted National Education Union, offered a keynote address that touched upon the valuable role of public education in a healthy society and the challenges facing trade unionists.

The NEU was formed from the merger of two large teachers’ unions, and Blower stressed the value of solidarity in accomplishing goals. “Ask not what your union can do for you, but what you can do for your union,” she said, borrowing from President John F. Kennedy’s famous quote.

Her comments also touched upon the MTA’s All In campaign. Blower said that membership in Britain’s trade unions has been completely voluntary since the era of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. One of the main guides her members use to ensure robust and active membership is titled “No One Ever Asked Me.”

“When we talk to teachers who do not belong to the union and we ask why, the most common answer is, ‘No one ever asked me,’” Blower said.

In emphasizing the importance of fighting for well-funded public schools and respect for educators, Blower stated: “Education is a human right, a civil right and a public good.”

Richard Liston, chair of the Retired Members Committee, thanked conference attendees for their continued activism throughout the years, saying that many retired educators are as active now in union initiatives as they were when they were in the classroom. He noted retirees’ continuing commitment to assisting new educators, giving a nod to a mentoring program between MTA retirees and student members.

“Massachusetts’ public schools are the best in the country because we did a great job,” Liston said, adding that retirees continue to support new and future educators. “Their success will be our success.”

Liston also expressed the sorrow of many in the room for the death of Kathleen Roberts, his
UMB cuts loom over higher ed bargaining

By Scott McLennan

Two UMass Boston unions are girding for dozens of layoffs as they and a third union anticipate even more cuts — exacerbating an already frustrating round of contract negotiations with the administration of Governor Charlie Baker.

Almost all of the MTA’s higher education units representing members at state universities, community colleges and UMass campuses are currently bargaining new contracts. But the situation is particularly acute at UMass Boston, where the UMass Board of Trustees is demanding massive spending cuts based on the claim that the campus has to contend with deficits totaling more than $30 million.

As MTA Today went to press, the Classified Staff Union and the Professional Staff Union were bracing for layoffs of between 40 and 70 employees. The Faculty Staff Union is not facing layoffs, but it has already lost several adjunct positions.

The CSU, PSU and FSU argue that the deficit numbers are not accurate and that the university’s debt is related to the cost of repairing buildings and other structures that were poorly built in the first place.

At a meeting on Oct. 31, PSU and CSU leaders urged members to stand in solidarity and fight back. The unions are focusing on a “one person, one job” campaign to emphasize the impact of the cuts as they occur. “The layoffs are unnecessary and they will hurt students,” said PSU President Tom Goodkind.

Members of the three locals and UMass Boston students were preparing to attend an upcoming meeting of the trustees’ Administration and Finance Committee at which they planned to urge the trustees to use UMass reserve funds to cover deficits.

“We are being punished for a problem that we did not create,” said CSU President Janelle Quarles.

Professional Staff Union President Tom Goodkind spoke to union members on Oct. 31 about layoffs and budget cuts expected at UMass Boston. The unions on campus have argued that UMass trustees should not be forcing deep cuts in order to pay for costs associated with necessary construction and repairs.

On the same day that UMass Boston staff employees were meeting, members of the Massachusetts State College Association and the Association of Professional Administrators held a demonstration at a meeting of the Board of Higher Education at Westfield State University.

The state university locals conveyed their disappointment about the slow pace of negotiations.

Please turn to Higher ed/Page 29

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Nomination papers available

MTA members who intend to seek election to MTA office at the 2018 Annual Meeting of Delegates or to run for NEA Director may now request nomination papers.

Annual Meeting elections will take place in May for President, Vice President, 17 District Director seats on the MTA Board and the At-Large Director for Ethnic Minority Membership.

Four members of the Retired Members Committee will be elected.

There are three NEA Director seats (two for three-year terms and one for a one-year term) and two Alternate NEA Director seats up for election. Ballots will be sent to the active membership in March.

Requests for nomination papers for MTA office must be submitted in writing to the office of the Executive Director-Treasurer, MTA, 2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor, Quincy, MA 02171-2119, or by e-mailing MTAGovernance@massteacher.org. Although there is no deadline for requesting them, nomination papers for MTA office must be filed with the Executive Director-Treasurer by 5 p.m. on Friday, March 2, 2018, regardless of postmark.

Nomination papers for the NEA Director posts may be requested in the same manner, but must be filed no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 12, 2018.

No person may be a candidate for more than one office. Each candidate must specify the office sought, the term of the office, his or her MTA individual membership ID number (which can be found on the MTA membership card), home and school addresses, telephone numbers, fax numbers, e-mail addresses and local association affiliation.

All candidates must comply with the nomination and election provisions of the MTA Bylaws and policies, which will be made available to candidates.

President and Vice President*: The President and Vice President will be elected for two-year terms commencing July 15, 2018. A candidate must be an active MTA member** or a retired MTA member within the Statewide Retired District. A local affiliate shall not be represented on the MTA Board of Directors by more than one officer (President or Vice President). Nomination papers must be signed by at least 200 members, with no more than 50 from any one local affiliate and no more than 100 from any one electoral district.

At-Large Director for Ethnic Minority Membership*: The At-Large Director for Ethnic Minority

Membership will be elected to a three-year term beginning July 1, 2018. Any active** ethnic minority member of the association is eligible to be a candidate for this Board seat. Under Article VII, Section 5, of the MTA Bylaws, ethnic minority shall mean American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Chicano/Hispanic, or Cape Verdean.

Nomination papers must be signed by at least 200 active association members, with no more than 50 from any one local affiliate and no more than 100 from any one electoral district.

District Directors — MTA Board*: The terms for the 17 District Director seats will be for three years beginning July 1, 2018. The open districts are 7B, 9B, 10B, 35C, 42C, 14D, 28D, 32D, 30E, 23F, 19G, 44H (two seats), 46H and 47H. Each candidate must be an active MTA member** and must be employed in education within the electoral district in which the candidate seeks office. Nomination papers must be signed by at least 50 active members from the candidate’s district.

NEA Directors and Alternate NEA Directors*: Two NEA Director seats will be filled by vote of the active members in March and April, in tandem with NEA statewide and regional delegate elections. The term for each is three years, beginning Sept. 1, 2018, and expiring Aug. 31, 2021, in accordance with the NEA’s fiscal year. In addition, the active membership will elect one NEA Director to fill a vacancy for the remainder of an unexpired term (Sept. 1, 2018, through Aug. 31, 2019). Vacancies for Alternate NEA Director seats will also be filled. Each candidate must be an active NEA member**, as determined by the NEA Constitution and Bylaws, for at least two years immediately preceding the election. Nomination papers must be signed by at least 200 active members, with no more than 50 from any one local affiliate and no more than 100 from any one electoral district. The policy on eligibility and procedure for the direct election of NEA Directors and

* Please turn to Procedures/Page 20

Fall 2017 17
2018 NOMINATIONS

THIS SELF-NOMINATION FORM IS ALSO AVAILABLE AT MASSTEACHER.ORG/NOMFORM. THE FORM CAN BE USED FOR THE FOLLOWING POSITIONS:

- Delegates to the NEA RA
- Regional Ethnic Minority Delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting
- Statewide Retired District Delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting

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

A candidate must file a nomination form with the Executive Director-Treasurer by 5 p.m. on Friday, January 12, 2018, regardless of postmark.

NAME OF CANDIDATE: ____________________________________________________________

MEMBER ID #:  __________________________________________________________________

E-MAIL:  _______________________________________________________________________

HOME ADDRESS:  ________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

PHONE: ________________________________________________________________________

WORK E-MAIL: __________________________________________________________________

SCHOOL ADDRESS:  ______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

WORK PHONE:  __________________________________________________________________

LOCAL ASSOCIATION (leave blank if retired): __________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

DISTRICT/REGION/RETIRED:  _______________________________________________________

PLEASE CHECK THE BOX TO INDICATE THE ELECTED POSITION YOU ARE SEEKING
CANDIDATE MUST FILL OUT A SEPARATE NOMINATION FORM FOR EACH POSITION SOUGHT. Please check one box only.

- Retired Delegate to MTA Annual Meeting
- Regional Ethnic Minority Delegate to MTA Annual Meeting*
- Regional Delegate to NEA RA
- Statewide, Non-Supervisor Delegate to NEA RA
- Statewide, Supervisor Delegate to NEA RA
- Retired Delegate to NEA RA

POSITION/MEMBERSHIP STATUS

- Teacher or Education Support Professional
- Administrator or Supervisor
- Retired Member

*Candidates for Regional Ethnic Minority Delegate to Annual Meeting, please indicate your ethnic minority designation:

- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Cape Verdean

INSTRUCTIONS

1. MTA Policy: Each candidate may submit by the deadline a headshot photograph and biography/statement containing no more than 50 words. Note: Only the first 50 words will be printed. The Credentials and Ballot Committee reserves the right to edit all bios.

2. Write out your statement on a separate piece of paper first, and then fill out the grid.

3. Type or print clearly, using both upper- and lower-case letters, as you expect the final statement to appear.

4. Insert only one word per box.

5. Do not combine words or numbers with hyphens or slashes.

6. “An,” “a” and “the” constitute one word.

7. Abbreviations such as “NEA-RA” and “MTA” count as one word.

8. Insert punctuation in the same box immediately after the word that you want it to follow.

9. A date represented as “October 1, 2017” shall constitute three words. The same date represented as “10/1/17” is only one word.

10. Send this entire nomination form and photo to: MTA Governance and Administration Division, 2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor, Quincy, MA 02171-2119. Only submissions received by January 12, 2018, will be published with the ballot. A photo the MTA has used within 2 years may be reused.

BIO/STATEMENT GRID — PLEASE PRINT — OR UTILIZE THE ONLINE FORM AT MASSTEACHER.ORG/NOMFORM

PLEASE SELECT FROM THE FOLLOWING AND CHECK THE APPROPRIATE BOXES:

- 50-word (maximum) bio/statement grid enclosed.
- I have e-mailed a photo to jconnelly@massteacher.org (high-resolution JPEG – 300 dpi).
- Use my 2016 or 2017 photo.**
- I am not submitting a bio/statement grid.
- I am not submitting a photo.

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

SIGNATURE: _____________________________________________________________________________________ DATE:_______________________________________________

**MTA can only use past photos if published for 2016 or 2017 elections

ADDITIONAL FORMS MAY BE REQUESTED OR THIS FORM MAY BE DUPLICATED. FORMS MAY BE FAXED TO JOHN CONNELLY AT 617.570.4908.
Delegates to be elected for NEA RA

S\ntatewide, regional and retired delegates from Massachusetts to the 2018 NEA Representative Assembly will be elected by the membership during February, March and April.

The nomination period for delegates is now in process and will close at 5 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 12. Nominees are encouraged to use the self-nomination form available online at massteacher.org/nomform. The form may be submitted electronically. Alternatively, a paper form can be found on Page 18 of this issue of MTA Today.

The election period for statewide and regional delegates runs from March 5 through April 27. Ballots for statewide and regional delegates will be sent to eligible active MTA/NEA members and will be accompanied by bio/statements and photos of candidates who submit them.

For active members, the delegate categories include regional non-supervisor, statewide non-supervisor, and statewide other/supervisor.

The MTA will be notified by the NEA in January of the number of delegates allocated to Massachusetts. The allocation of statewide and regional delegates will be based on electoral regions A, B, C, D, E, F, G and H. A list of local associations by electoral region is available upon request.

The distribution of statewide and regional seats will be voted on by the MTA Board of Directors at its meeting in February; candidates will be informed of the final allocation plan and will be given an opportunity to alter the designation for the level they seek to represent.

The allocation of regional ethnic minority delegates is based on MTA electoral regions and equal to the number of District Directors from each region. No more than one delegate from each district within a region will be elected, with the exception of 44H, which has three Directors, and 45H, which has two.

There will be 50 seats for regional ethnic minority delegates. All terms will last for one year.

The regional vacancies are: Region A, seven vacancies; Region B, five vacancies; Region C, seven vacancies; Region D, five vacancies; Region E, five vacancies; Region F, six vacancies; Region G, six vacancies; and Region H, nine vacancies. Each candidate must be employed in education within the region in which the candidate seeks office.

Inquiries concerning procedures for the nomination and election of NEA delegates may be addressed to John Connelly in the MTA Division of Governance and Administration at 617.878.8305. His fax number is 617.570.4908, and his e-mail address is jconnelly@massteacher.org.

Regional ethnic minority delegates to be chosen

R\n egional ethnic minority delegates to the 2018 MTA Annual Meeting will be elected by members in each region in March and April in conjunction with NEA delegate/Director elections.

The nomination period for regional ethnic minority delegates is now in process and will close at 5 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 12. Nominations are open to all eligible ethnic minority members through a self-nomination process. Nominees are encouraged to use the self-nomination form available online at massteacher.org/nomform. The form may be submitted electronically. Alternatively, a paper form can be found on Page 18 of this issue of MTA Today.

The election period runs from March 5 through April 27. Ballots for regional ethnic minority delegates will be sent to active MTA members, accompanied by bio/statements and photos of candidates who submit them.

The MTA provides reimbursement of up to $450 for eligible expenses incurred by each regional ethnic minority delegate to the Annual Meeting.

The allocation of regional ethnic minority delegates is based on MTA electoral regions and equal to the number of District Directors from each region. No more than one delegate from each district within a region will be elected, with the exception of 44H, which has three Directors, and 45H, which has two.

There will be 50 seats for regional ethnic minority delegates. All terms will last for one year.

The regional vacancies are: Region A, seven vacancies; Region B, five vacancies; Region C, seven vacancies; Region D, five vacancies; Region E, five vacancies; Region F, six vacancies; Region G, six vacancies; and Region H, nine vacancies. Each candidate must be employed in education within the region in which the candidate seeks office.

Inquiries regarding procedures may be directed to John Connelly in the MTA Division of Governance and Administration at 617.878.8305. His e-mail address is jconnelly@massteacher.org, and his fax number is 617.570.4908.

Bylaws and Rules Committee now accepting proposals

T\he MTA Bylaws and Rules Committee will soon begin reviewing proposed amendments. A proposal to amend the Bylaws addresses the governance of the association or the primary characteristics and functions of the MTA. A proposal to amend the Standing Rules addresses the procedures of the Annual Meeting of Delegates, nominations and elections or government documents.

Filing process and deadline: Proposed changes to the Bylaws must be received in writing by the MTA Bylaws and Rules Committee by 5 p.m. on Jan. 12.

Proposed changes to the Standing Rules only may be submitted in writing to the MTA Bylaws and Rules Committee up to the opening of the first business session of the May 4-5 Annual Meeting in Boston. However, early submission by the Jan. 12 deadline provides an opportunity for a full hearing by the committee, consideration by the MTA Board and presentation at the April preconvention meetings.

It also allows advance publication in the Spring issue of MTA Today.

Submitters will be informed of hearing dates and will be expected to meet with the committee to discuss the language and intent of their proposals.

Proper format: Please use the following format for each proposed amendment. A template is available from the MTA Division of Governance and Administration upon request.

1. Specifically cite all articles, sections and lines of the Bylaws or Standing Rules that are to be changed or affected.

2. Set forth your proposal in two columns, comparing the proposed text opposite the present text. In the proposed language, underline text opposite the present text. In the proposed text, make your proposals evident with underlining.

Please turn to Guidelines/Page 21
Proposed revisions to MTA Resolutions are now being accepted.

Resolutions are the organization’s statements of principle on issues relating to members, public education, the welfare of students and human and civil rights.

A proposal for a new resolution or revision of an existing one may be submitted by any member.

The initial deadline for submissions to the Resolutions Committee is Friday, Jan. 12.

Proposed resolutions may also be submitted prior to the end of business on Friday, May 4, at the Annual Meeting of Delegates. The committee may also propose resolutions.

All resolutions submitted are considered by the Resolutions Committee, and those submitted by the January deadline are also brought before the Board of Directors.

To become the official position of the MTA, a resolution must be adopted by the delegates to the Annual Meeting.

For a copy of the current MTA Resolutions, please visit massteacher.org/resolutions.

Nominations are now open for the election of members to the MTA Candidate Recommendation Committee.

The committee is responsible for making recommendations to MTA members to support candidates for state and federal office. Elections will be held to fill the following seats on the Candidate Recommendation Committee: one seat each in Congressional Districts 1, 4, 6, 8 and 9 and two seats each in Districts 3 and 7.

Terms on the committee last for three years. The committee member must reside in the congressional district to be represented.

Any MTA member interested in running for the CRC should obtain the nomination form online at massteacher.org/nomform or contact John Connelly in the MTA Division of Governance and Administration. He can be reached by calling 617.878.8305 or e-mailing jconnelly@massteacher.org.

The nomination form and a biographical statement of not more than 100 words must be received by Dec. 28.

Those eligible to vote for CRC members are delegates to the past year’s MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates who reside in the specified congressional district. Upon request, candidates will be provided with a list of MTA Annual Meeting delegates for the congressional district, along with names and addresses.

If the number of candidates is equal to or less than the number of positions to be filled, elections may be waived and the candidates declared elected to the positions in question.

Ballots including the candidates’ biographical statements will be sent to the electorate on the first Friday in February (Feb. 2) and must be returned no later than 5 p.m. on the last Friday in February (Feb. 23).

The CRC terms will begin on March 15, 2018. Members are eligible to be elected for two consecutive three-year terms. In no event can a person hold one of these positions for more than six consecutive years.

Electoral process starts for Statewide Retired District delegates

MTA Statewide Retired District delegates to the 2018 MTA Annual Meeting will be elected in conjunction with the NEA RA retired delegate elections.

The nomination period for Statewide Retired District delegates is now in process and will close at 5 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 12. Nominations are open to all eligible MTA/NEA retired members through a self-nomination process.

Nominees are encouraged to use the self-nomination form available online at massteacher.org/nomform. The form may be submitted electronically. Alternatively, a paper form can be found on Page 18 of this issue of MTA Today.

The election period will run from Feb. 5 through March 9.

Ballots for statewide retired delegates will be sent to retired MTA/NEA members and will be accompanied by bio/statements and photos of candidates who submit them.

The MTA provides reimbursement of up to $450 for eligible expenses incurred by each Statewide Retired District delegate to the Annual Meeting.

The 2018 allocation of Statewide Retired District delegates will be based on the number of MTA/NEA retired members from the Statewide Retired District on record no later than March 1. Terms will last one year.

The policy procedure for the election will be sent to any candidate who requests a copy.

Inquiries may be directed to John Connelly in the MTA Division of Governance and Administration at 617.878.8305. They may also be e-mailed to jconnelly@massteacher.org or faxed to 617.590.4908.

Procedures are outlined for candidates seeking election to MTA positions

Continued from Page 17

Alternate NEA Directors is available upon request.

For information on nominations and elections, please contact John Connelly of the MTA Division of Governance and Administration by calling 617.878.8305, e-mailing jconnelly@massteacher.org or faxing inquiries to 617.570.4908. *In accordance with Article IX, Section 2B, of the MTA Bylaws, all members of the Board of Directors (including officers; Regional Executive Committee members; the Statewide Retired Region Executive Committee member; the At-Large ESP member; District, Statewide, and At-Large Directors; and NEA Directors) will be delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates. Election as delegates will occur simultaneous to, and by virtue of, election to the above-named offices.

**RIF’d members and members who have been granted leaves of absence by their employers may be considered active members employed in education.

JOBS AT THE MTA

The Massachusetts Teachers Association is hiring. To view available job opportunities, please visit massteacher.org/jobs.

The MTA is an Equal Opportunity Employer. We value our diverse workforce and welcome applications from minorities, women and persons with disabilities.
Career development sessions draw a crowd to Worcester

Continued from Page 12

fellow committee members Michelle Keane, Nikki Roberge, Rose Bell and Gene Reiber.

“You have to prioritize all that is being asked of you,” said Keane, a member of the Harvard Teachers Association. “There’s more to it than planning lessons and being in front of the kids.”

Bell, of the Quincy Education Association, reassured the early-career teachers.

“It gets better,” she said, adding that as educators become familiar with the curriculum, they have more time and ability to get to know their students.

Roberge, a member of the Wareham Education Association, shared her story of transitioning from paraeducator to classroom teacher, and she talked about the challenge of self-assessment.

“You want to be reflective, not critical,” she said. “Not every lesson will work perfectly, but you learn to adjust and improve.”

Reiber, of the Hanover Teachers’ Association, told participants that as professionals, they have a great deal of influence. “Your influence is felt on students, parents and your colleagues,” he said. “That power grows over time, and you have to remember that you make a difference in people’s lives.”

New Member Committee Chair Erinne Silver spoke during the lunch break, reflecting on the year since the last Just for New Teachers conference was held — less than two weeks after the 2016 election. Before that election, she said, she was more concerned about the fate of Question 2, a Massachusetts ballot initiative that sought to lift the cap on charter schools, than she was about the outcome of the presidential election.

President Donald Trump’s unexpected victory — and the resulting attempts by his administration to undermine unions and promote more privatization of public education — present significant challenges, Silver said.

“What can we do as teachers? We need to think about our involvement in the MTA and to think about where our schools would be, and where we would be as a country, without our unions,” she said.

Silver urged the JNTF attendees not to miss out on the value of simply talking to each other and to the ESPs who were on hand.

“This is an opportunity to network and share ideas,” she said.

MTA GOVERNANCE POSTINGS 2018

Retired committee has four seats open

Four members of the Retired Members Committee will be elected by Statewide Retired District delegates to the 2018 MTA Annual Meeting in May.

Go to massteacher.org/nomform

Guidelines for Bylaws and Rules amendments

Continued from Page 19

amended or added language. Enclose in parentheses language to be deleted. Indicate the location of completely new language.

3. Accompany each proposed amendment with a written rationale on its purpose, impact and intent.

4. Include at the end of all proposals the submitter’s name and local association information.

5. Provide your full name, address, telephone number(s), e-mail address and your MTA membership ID number, which can be found on your MTA membership card.

Who may submit proposals?

Individual MTA members, groups of members and local associations are eligible to submit proposed amendments to the MTA Bylaws and Standing Rules.

Members wishing to use an official title representing an MTA affiliate or committee are required to submit evidence that a vote was taken by authorized representatives of the affiliate or the committee.

Current document: A copy of the current document containing the MTA Bylaws, Standing Rules and Resolutions is available to any member upon request.

Assistance: The Bylaws and Rules Committee and members of the MTA staff are available to discuss ideas for potential amendments and to provide technical assistance.

Inquiries and proposals submitted to the Bylaws and Rules Committee should be channeled through Mary Gilgallon, MTA Director of Governance and Administration. Her mailing address is MTA, 2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor, Quincy, MA 02171-2119. Her phone number is 617.878.8213, her fax number is 617.570.4908, and her e-mail address is mgilgallon@massteacher.org.

Election waiver

If the number of candidates is equal to or less than the number of positions to be filled, elections may be waived and the candidates declared elected to the positions in question.

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MTA mourns loss of a beloved former president

Continued from Page 5

“She was really very grateful for what the MTA did for her,” Bryant said. “She got a great deal of joy and satisfaction from watching the MTA grow. She was only too happy to serve.”

Mary Gilmore, like Roberts a former MTA president, said that what stood out to her was her good friend’s sense of humor.

Gilmore pointed to the fun that she, Roberts and Gaskins had over the years as the three traveled together on MTA and NEA business.

“Just taking trips back and forth with Kay was an education,” Gilmore said. “She was a woman of great wisdom and great wit. I think that she inspired a lot of people. I know she inspired me.”

Her unfailing concern for others set her apart, Gilmore added. “She was very kind to others,” she said. “She was really very brilliant in many ways. She really understood what people might need — individually and collectively.”

In 2014, Roberts, Gilmore and Gaskins stood in the spotlight at the MTA Annual Meeting as they received the prestigious Friend of Education Award for their years of activism.

Shortly after Roberts’ death, MTA President Barbara Madeloni wrote in an e-mail to MTA members: “Her courage, her generous and open heart, and her commitment to union power will live on. I was touched by her welcoming words when I was elected MTA president. She greeted me as a sister in the struggle, and for that I am forever grateful.”

MTA Vice President Erik J. Champy called Roberts “one of the most extraordinary leaders that I was privileged to call a friend.”

“Her commitment to our members and students was unparalleled,” Champy said.

He continued, “Kathleen dedicated more than 70 years of service to ensure our success. As a result of her leadership, the Massachusetts Teachers Association continues to be one of the strongest state affiliates in our nation.”

In 2013, as she was closing in on 99 years old, Roberts was asked what advice she could give to educators just entering the profession.

“Get right in there,” she said. “Participate right away. Learn what you can do to help your organization because what helps them will help you, too. And you will meet some wonderful, wonderful people.”

At the time, she was still volunteering for dozens of hours a week in her community of Raynham — some of them in the local schools, where she would don a Cat in the Hat costume and read to schoolchildren.

Over the years, she had served on her town’s Council on Aging, as president of the historical society, as a trustee of the public library and as founder of a program providing supplemental food assistance for the needy.

In 2012, Roberts received the Home Instead outstanding senior volunteer award for Massachusetts at the Raynham Senior Center.

Roberts told reporters at the event, “In my family we all believed, and my mother believed strongly, that you give back to your community, you give back for all the wonderful things that you get. You share it with others.”

Gathering focuses on retirees’ contributions to public education

Continued from Page 15

longtime co-chair on the committee. Roberts, a past MTA president and active unionist for more than 70 years, died in September at the age of 103. Many at the gathering signed a condolence book that will be given to Roberts’ family, and an MTA documentary, “Kind Kay,” was shown.

MTA leaders also addressed the gathering, acknowledging all that the retirees have done to build their union.

This is a crucial time to share wisdom with current members as the labor movement comes under attack, said MTA President Barbara Madeloni.

“As elders of the education and labor movements, you have experiences others do not have, and we need that knowledge,” Madeloni said.

She drew a comparison between the victory at the ballot box last fall that kept the cap on charter schools and the role that the MTA and other unions played in preserving prevailing-wage laws 30 years ago. “It’s not about getting one win and then it’s over. It’s a way to live,” she said.

MTA Vice President Erik J. Champy told the retirees that they “set the tone for what it means to be brothers and sisters in an association.”

“He continued, “Kathleen dedicated more than 70 years of service to ensure our success. As a result of her leadership, the Massachusetts Teachers Association continues to be one of the strongest state affiliates in our nation.”

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The upcoming holidays are an exciting time of the year. With the holidays come expenses, however. Presents, decorations and food for family gatherings all add up.

That’s why this is a great time of year to look for savings in other areas of your life — such as on insurance costs.

When you combine your auto and home insurance with Educators Insurance Agency, you get Total Household Rewards. This reward program gives you access to programs that could help save you hundreds of dollars in case of a loss — as well as guaranteed renewal of your policy.

You have invested a lot into your home and auto, and Educators Insurance is here to help ensure that you are protected.

When your auto and home insurance are combined, Educators provides the following five rewards at no extra charge:

1. **Single Loss Deductible**: This coverage benefit comes into play, for example, when both your auto and home are damaged in a storm. If there is an ice storm that causes you to have a deductible of $1,000 in damage to your home and $500 to your auto, you would pay only the higher of the two deductibles. That would put an extra $500 in your pocket.

2. **Child Passenger Restraint System Replacement**: Educators knows how important it is to keep your family safe. That’s why Educators will pay up to $300 to replace a child safety seat with no deductible if it is damaged in a covered auto accident.

3. **Guaranteed Renewal**: Life can get busy at times, and insurance might not always be the first thing on your mind. With Total Household Rewards, Educators provides you with a Certificate of Guaranteed Renewal. This certificate means that you don’t need to worry. As long as you continue to meet certain conditions, your auto and home policies will be renewed.

4. **Mortgage Extra Expense**: Total losses are the last thing anyone wants to worry about. In the unfortunate case that you have one, however, this endorsement can save you money. For example, if you have a mortgage on your replacement dwelling, it might be at a higher interest rate than your previous one. Educators will cover the additional interest expense, up to $250 a month for one year, letting you rest a little easier.

5. **Fire Extinguisher Recharge or Replacement**: Fire extinguishers can make a significant difference in the event of a fire in your home. Educators Insurance wants to make sure you always have the safety of an extinguisher, so it will pay to recharge or replace one with no deductible after the extinguisher has been used in a fire.

Licensed representatives at Educators Insurance Agency are available at your convenience, from 7 a.m. to midnight Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays. Representatives will help ensure that you have the coverage you need to protect your lifestyle while saving you money.

Please call 888.908.6822 today or visit educatorsinsuranceagency.com to learn more.

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**DID YOU KNOW?**

- The Access online discount program has saved MTA members $451,859 over the last school year.
- More than 20,000 members have saved money or received a free magazine subscription through MTA Benefits.
- A family can save more than $1,000 a year with MTAB’s new dental program through United Concordia.
- You can take advantage of more than 150 free offers listed in the Benefits & Discount Directory.
- MTAB online giveaways will award $6,000 in prizes this year.

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Visit us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram and tell us how you save with MTA Benefits.
MTA members: You deserve a checking account that works as hard as you do.

MTA members give so much of themselves. Now it’s Berkshire Bank’s turn to give back.

We are proud to offer you a special Elite Relationship Checking Account package, which is only available to MTA members and their immediate families. Features include an interest-earning account with a $10 minimum balance, no minimum service charge fees and unlimited check writing.

Giving you a chance to earn and save more is our way of saying thanks for the work you do!

Elite Relationship Checking benefits:

» FREE Debit Cards
» FREE Mobile Banking
» FREE Bill Pay
» FREE Online and Telephone Banking
» FREE eStatements
» FREE Access to MyBanker Concierge Service
» WAIVED Foreign ATM Fees When You Establish Direct Deposit.

Additional benefits:

» Turn in your bank’s checks and we’ll replace them with a free first order.
» Receive a .50% APR discount with a Berkshire checking automatic loan payment or a .25% APR discount without an automatic loan payment.

Plus, we’ll make it even easier for you to move your account to Berkshire Bank.

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Fall 2017

bind of a former colleague named Mary, who retired in 1992 at age 63 after 40 years of teaching. (She asked that her last name not be used.)

“Economically, the best day for retired public employees is the day they retire,” Ruane said.

Because Mary’s pension hasn’t kept pace with inflation, she lives on $2,108 a month after taxes. She is not eligible for Social Security or Medicare. Out of that modest income, she has to pay 50 percent of the premium for the same kind of health insurance plan that is provided to active employees.

Giving retirees like Mary an extra $90 a year by modestly improving the COLA “is hardly too much to ask,” Ruane said. Freezing their out-of-pocket costs is also essential.

Retired Winchester teacher Stephen Gorrie, a former MTA president, described what happened to retirees in Winchester in 2012 when the town unilaterally decided to change the health insurance premium split to 50/50.

Some saw their health insurance premium costs increase sharply. In the worst-case scenario, Gorrie explained, “Those who retired before July 1, 2004, but were not Medicare-eligible who were on a family plan had their annual premium costs increased from $6,410 to $11,050, or nearly $5,000.”

“At some point,” Gorrie continued, “these retirees would have to decide whether they maintain their health insurance, keep their homes, or eat.”

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“At some point,” Gorrie continued, “these retirees would have to decide whether they maintain their health insurance, keep their homes, or eat.”
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Have you named your beneficiary?

If you’re an eligible MTA member,* you’re covered. You have NEA Complimentary Life Insurance issued by The Prudential Insurance Company of America (Prudential). It’s active right now and you don’t have to take a nickel out of your pocket to keep it active.

But you will want to take a minute or so to name your beneficiary or reconfirm the choice you already made. Making your choice can speed up benefit payments to loved ones who need them.

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*Visit us online or call for eligibility requirements.
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FREE
Educators work to help all students succeed

Continued from Page 2.

On Oct. 19, Vaitkunas and Rendón met at the home of junior Michael DeGloria, where they were greeted warmly by DeGloria’s mother, Johana Rodríguez. Rodríguez immigrated to the U.S. from Honduras when she was young, while DeGloria was born here. He was selected for the home visit program because he had found a program that he loved and a skill that he excelled at, and the staff wanted to keep him heading in a positive direction.

Vaitkunas said that his short-term goal is for Michael to continue to do well in both his written and vocational assignments.

“For the long-term goals,” Vaitkunas said to DeGloria, “when you graduate from high school, you will have to choose whether to go to college, work in a trade, or enter the military.”

Asked about his own goals, DeGloria told his teacher that he really wants to be an electrician. “I don’t like sitting still in class,” he said. “I like hands-on projects. I like walking around in electrical class and looking at what I did and saying, ‘Did I just do that?’ I want more challenging projects to work on so I can learn it all.”

Vaitkunas said that if DeGloria keeps up the good work, he’ll be one of two students recommended by Waltham High School for a five-year union apprenticeship program. He said that starting pay for an apprentice averages about $19 an hour; pay for a licensed electrician can be about $50 an hour.

Rodríguez was asked about her goals for her son.

Clearly emotional, she told Vaitkunas, “Most of all, I want him to be happy and to love what he is doing. I thank you for your commitment to my kid. I want to send a message to all teachers that everyone needs at least one person who believes in him to make it in this world. I thank God you were put in his path. You have made a big difference in Michael’s life.”
Benjamin & Sarah
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If you want to buy or refinance, call 866.475.4663(HOME) today.
Higher ed unions seek fairness from Baker administration

Continued from Page 16

and the state’s unwillingness to improve pay and working conditions for part-time and adjunct faculty members.

The Massachusetts Community College Council unit representing adjunct faculty is also negotiating a new contract. Like other MTA-affiliated unions, the MCCC has seen little movement on the state’s part to address the growing concern about the exploitation of highly skilled but poorly paid educators who typically do not receive health care or retirement benefits.

The MTA has joined several other labor unions representing public employees working without contracts or renegotiating soon-to-expire agreements in sending a letter to Baker that expresses dismay over the administration’s financial offers.

Employees noted that higher costs for health care have already lowered their take-home pay and that proposals from Baker’s negotiators do not even come close to covering cost-of-living increases.

The MTA’s locals at UMass campuses are circulating a petition asking Baker for more reasonable financial parameters.

“We respectfully ask you to acknowledge that the high quality of professional services we provide cannot be maintained without adequate funding,” the petition reads. “The quality and great reputation of UMass are at stake.”

Obituaries

Neil R. Cronin, 78, of Shrewsbury. Was an English teacher and a tennis coach at Algonquin Regional High School for 51 years. Sept. 18.

Dorene K. Griffin, 85, of Rutland. Taught in the New Bedford, Holden, Barre, West Boylston and Shrewsbury school systems and taught mathematics for many years in Millbury, where she served as the math department chair before retiring in 1992. Sept. 26.

June C. Smith, 77, of South Hadley. Taught in the Holyoke Public Schools for 30 years. Sept. 4.

Patricia G. Smith, 56, of Norwood. Was a special education teacher in the Attleboro, Westwood and Holbrook Public Schools. Sept. 10.

Deborah A. Sperre, 64, of Marshfield. Was a speech therapist in the East Bridgewater Public Schools for 30 years, retiring in 2006. Sept. 16.


MEJA calls for Sagan’s removal

Continued from Page 13

Most of the money against Question 2 came from the MTA and other labor unions, and those contributions were disclosed in a timely fashion in accordance with the law. In addition to citing the lack of transparency, the MTA and MEJA contend that Sagan’s massive contribution to the Yes on 2 campaign is one more piece of evidence that he supports the interests of privately run charter schools over the interests of district public school students. Question 2 lost by a landslide, 62 to 38 percent, winning in only a handful of wealthy suburban communities. The argument that won the day is that charter schools drain millions of taxpayer dollars from public schools while failing to serve all students. Charters typically underserve students with disabilities and English language learners.

Jay Gonzalez, one of three Democrats running for governor next year, has also strongly criticized James Peyser, Baker’s secretary of education, for his role with Families for Excellent Schools. At the Oct. 24 BESE meeting, Gonzalez hand-delivered a public records request to state education officials seeking communications between Peyser and ballot campaign organizations. According to a report by the State House News Service, Gonzalez said he wants to know whether Peyser participated in strategy sessions with the pro-charter campaign, whether he solicited funds for the campaign, and whether any state resources were used to support the campaign. Public employees are not allowed to solicit funds for ballot initiatives, and public resources may not be used to promote them.

“Jay Gonzalez is raising really important questions,” said Madeloni. “We need to find out if Baker administration officials are meeting their ethical obligations to the people of Massachusetts — and to hold them accountable if they are not.”

The MEJA petition calling for Sagan’s ouster can be found at massedjustice.org.

They couldn’t be happier!

Income protection through MTA’s disability insurance program lets you focus on what’s important.

• Guaranteed issue – no medical questions asked during open enrollment
• Short- and long-term coverage available
• Benefit payments are tax-free and 60% of salary
• Helps supplement sick days to cover an extended absence from work

Educators in Massachusetts are not eligible to collect Social Security disability benefits.

Call 888.646.1972, ext. 104, to find out if you’re eligible.

www.mtabenefits.com
At Educators Insurance
Members Matter

The holidays are just around the corner, which means special gifts could be coming your way—expensive jewelry, a new camera or other high-value items.

With this in mind, you may want to consider adding the Scheduled Personal Property Endorsement to your policy so these valuable items are covered in the event that they are lost or damaged.

Our exclusive program for MTA members includes:

- Unique group discount
- Convenience at your fingertips, including extended hours of operation
- Personalized advice from experienced insurance advisers tailored to your needs

CALL US TODAY AT 877.284.7646 to discuss your current insurance coverage and learn more about the benefits of scheduled property

We’re available from 7 a.m. to midnight Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays.
Members are All In for union solidarity

By Scott McLennan

Elaine Valk remembers what it was like to work in the Sutton Public Schools before education support professionals formed a union.

While she can list numerous beneficial changes to pay and working conditions for Sutton ESPs since they organized 10 years ago, Valk said that developing a collective voice has been the union’s greatest accomplishment.

“Having that collective voice has been the biggest benefit,” said Valk, a speech-language pathology assistant who is president of the Sutton Education Support Professionals Association. The situation today is a vast improvement over working in circumstances in which each person had to fight individually, she said.

With that in mind, members gathered a few weeks ago to work on “BRAG” statements — which help educators delineate the benefits, resources, achievements and goals of their association and spark conversations about shared interests and values.

The work is connected to the All In organizing campaign now underway in MTA locals across the state, which will provide members with the opportunity to reflect on the value of belonging to a union and talk to each other about the future — including what will happen after a case called Janus v. AFSCME is decided by the U.S. Supreme Court.

MTA President Barbara Madeloni said the fact that there will soon be a ruling in the Janus case, which seeks to eliminate the ability of public-sector unions to collect fair-share or “agency” fees paid by those who choose not to join, makes this a critical time to ensure that educators understand the importance of standing together as members.

“Membership is the source of our power,” Madeloni said. “Educators know what their students need to be successful, and we use our collective power to make sure that those needs are met.”

The Janus case will determine whether unions can continue to collect fees from nonmembers they are legally obligated to represent. Agency fees cover the cost of negotiating and maintaining the contracts that benefit all members of a bargaining unit, but they exclude the cost of activities that are related to political activities such as lobbying.

Labor leaders, including Madeloni, characterize the Janus case as yet another union-busting tactic by the right wing. It is widely expected that the Supreme Court will rule against unions’ ability to collect fair-share fees.

The All In plan involves holding one-to-one conversations between union members. Valk said that has some people moving outside their comfort zones, so members will use their BRAG statements to help guide the conversations.

“We are going to start simple,” Valk said. “I want to have short conversations that make people understand: You are the union.”

The leadership has been working to dispel the false assertion that the union is separate from those it represents. Valk likes to quote Sutton Education Support Professionals Association Vice President Charlie Petry, who tells members, “If there is something about the union that bothers you, tell us about it.”

Lately, the local has been chalking up more memorable victories than complaints. It recently renegotiated the terms of “full-time” employment, helping many workers gain access to better benefits.

“Without the union, nothing gets done when someone has a problem. We saw that for many years,” Valk said. “But with the support of the union behind members, things get done.”

For more information on the All In campaign, please visit massteacher.org/allin.
MTA Benefits launches student loan refinancing program with Citizens Bank

A recent survey by Cambridge Credit Counseling, MTA Benefits’ student loan counseling partner, shows that half of the members surveyed have student loan debt — and that half of those members have both federal and private loans.

Average student loan debt is $88,850. Staggering? Yes. Surprising? No. This fast-growing crisis is in the news every day.

Members who take advantage of Cambridge Credit Counseling’s services will learn about their options for loan repayment, refinancing and forgiveness eligibility.

If refinancing is the best option, where do they turn? MTA Benefits can now answer that question. MTAB undertook a lengthy search for a partner that could provide a student loan refinancing program that also includes favorable benefits for MTA members. In August, MTAB announced that Citizens Bank was selected as the provider.

Citizens Financial Group, Inc., is the 12th-largest retail bank in the United States. This regional financial institution, headquartered in Providence, Rhode Island, has roots dating back to 1828. Citizens has 3,200 ATMs and 1,200 branches in 11 states.

MTA members will receive a special offer of up to a $1,000* credit and up to half a percentage point off the interest rate when they consolidate one or more student loans into a single low-interest-rate loan offering these benefits:

- No application, origination or disbursement fees
- Loan amounts available up to $350,000, depending upon your education level
- Payments of principal and interest beginning immediately, with a choice of repayment terms that best suit your needs
- Fixed and variable interest rates available
- Eligibility for family members (siblings, children, spouse) to apply
- Option for members’ parents to apply for the Student Loan for Parents, an alternative to the Federal Direct PLUS Loan**

“...So many of our members are looking for relief from debt and options for repayment. Our student loan counseling program, in conjunction with the Citizens refinancing option, will not only help members, it will also help parents, grandparents and other family members who may jointly shoulder the burden.”

— Maryann C. Robinson, president of MTA Benefits

Learn your options with Cambridge Credit Counseling

Before you take steps to refinance your student loans, MTA Benefits encourages you to take advantage of our student loan counseling program. Cambridge Credit Counseling is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit credit counseling agency established to ensure that borrowers are aware of their federal loan repayment options. Counselors will work with you to identify all of your options regarding student loan debt management, including repayment and eligibility for loan forgiveness programs. There is no one solution that fits everyone. Members should understand how their decisions will affect the rest of their financial obligations.
Winter is on the way

“...I moved to a new house and was inundated with solicitations from local oil suppliers. Each had a ‘special’ offer for new customers, but I was skeptical about the savings being short-lived. I decided to contact Heat USA and was impressed from the first phone call. I learned specifically how Heat USA’s pricing works, who my dealer would be and when I should expect to be contacted by the supplier. The oil company customer service staff was similarly efficient in setting up my account. An appointment was scheduled for a checkup of my tank. The deliveryman couldn’t have been more pleasant and explained everything I should look out for in the event of a snowstorm. Afterward, my Heat USA rep followed up, as he said he would, to make sure I was satisfied with the supplier and the service provided during the visit. You bet I was! I really felt comfortable knowing that I had Heat USA watching out for me.”

— Elizabeth B., first-time Heat USA member

Interest-free shopping is back!

When MTA Benefits launched its first interest-free shopping program in May 2014, it was an immediate hit with members. The program provided members with the ability to purchase large-ticket items with payment over time through automatic deductions from a checking account without incurring interest. MTAB was notified in April 2017 that the provider of the shopping program was ceasing operations. In the months that followed, we scoured the market for providers of similar programs. In August, a new program was launched through Zebit.

Unwanted purchases
MTA members can once again peruse millions of products through a convenient online marketplace with interest-free credit called a ZebitLine. The ZebitLine is credit granted to eligible members to help with unexpected and life-event purchases. You can shop, buy what you want and pay over time, interest free, with no hidden additional costs.

A range of products
The Zebit marketplace has millions of products in 15 categories including fitness equipment, appliances, furniture, electronics, toys, jewelry and books. Brands include Apple, Samsung, LG, Whirlpool, Amazon, Sony, Xbox and KitchenAid. Zebit also offers gift cards, called eCertificates, available in preselected denominations.

Simplified eligibility
An advantage of the Zebit program is that there is no waiting period for eligibility and there are no credit checks. Active and retired MTA members may apply. Credit is based on annual household income, which is subject to verification by Zebit prior to approval.

Competitive pricing
Zebit’s prices are competitive with those of retailers and lower than those offered through similar programs. If you’re looking for the biggest bargain, Zebit may not be for you. Retail sales and special promotions can offer lower prices. But when comparing costs, be sure to include any interest you might be paying on a credit card purchase when you calculate the overall product price. If the convenience of shopping at one website and getting interest-free credit extended to you is appealing, consider taking a look at Zebit.
Your guide to holiday shopping

Whether you’ll be giving clothing, housewares or tickets to a fun experience, let your MTA membership help you save!

Access, our discount partner, offers more than 350,000 discounts nationwide, including savings at many popular retailers. Be sure to download the My Deals mobile app to save while you’re on the go. No printed coupons are required! With Access, you’ll quickly cross gifts off your list and get great deals at the same time.

Apparel

No matter whom you’re shopping for this holiday season, you’re bound to find discounts on clothing that will appeal to the recipient. The Calvin Klein Outlet offers $15 off a $100 purchase. At Levi’s Outlet, take $10 off a $100 purchase or $30 off a $200 purchase. Neiman Marcus Last Call offers great value on the best selection of designers, trends and true finds. Save 40 percent on one regular-priced item. At both Tommy Hilfiger and Columbia Sportswear, you can save 15 percent off your purchase. If you’re heading to a Tanger Outlets location, you’ll receive a savings coupon book for FREE. Shop at Kohl’s and save 15 percent off your $100 purchase, including games, apparel, shoes, décor and more!

Footwear

No matter what type of footwear you’re shopping for — boots, sneakers, heels or flats — there are savings waiting for you with Access deals. If comfort is the name of the game, save 10 percent at Naturalizer Outlet and 15 percent at Rockport Outlet. Both Clarks and Clarks Outlet offer $10 off a purchase of $100 or more, and at Dr. Scholl’s, you’ll save $10 off a purchase of $50 or more. Timberland is known for the quality of its boots, but it also offers sneaker boots, shoes and boot shoes. Save 10 percent off $100 at the Timberland factory store. With TOMS’ One for One® campaign, every purchase you make helps TOMS donate shoes, water, chances for improved vision and more to those in need in more than 70 countries. Save up to $25 on your purchase. Shopping for sneakers? You’ll have many savings options through Access, including $20 off a purchase of $100 or more at Puma Outlet, $10 off a $50 purchase at Reebok, $15 off a purchase of $75 at Foot Locker and 10 percent off a non-sale shoe item at New Balance.

Baby and kids’ clothes

Stock up on cute clothes for the little ones with 20 percent off a $40 purchase at Gymboree, Gymboree Outlet and Crazy 8. Both Carter’s and OshKosh B’gosh provide rotating offers; be sure to check Access for the latest deals. Sneakers for the kids shouldn’t break the bank. At Kids Foot Locker, you’ll find many styles from brands such as Jordan, Nike, Adidas, ASICS, Converse and Vans. Save $15 off your purchase of $75 or more.

Tip Sheet

All discounts listed in the Tip Sheet can be found at mtabenefits.com.

Keepakes and memories

Meaningful gifts are always a great choice. At Things Remembered, you’re able to personalize your gifts to make them even more special. Engrave your message on items such as holiday ornaments, snow globes, piggy banks, glasses and photo frames. Save 20 percent and receive free shipping on personalized gifts. Create memories that will make you want to remember the holidays forever. JC Penney Portraits offers a number of deals, including $10 off a purchase of $25 or more; $3.99 photo sheets; a full digital album for $99, and 40 percent off additional purchases. At Shutterfly, receive a free 8-by-8-inch hardcover photo book. No purchase is required!

All of the discounts described above are available by printing out an Access coupon or showing the coupon on the Access My Deals mobile app.

Tickets

Sometimes an experience makes a better gift than a tangible item. The Benefits & Discount Directory is a great place to find discounts on entertainment, sports, theater and music tickets. Save $10 on selected 2017-18 shows and tickets for the Boston Ballet’s Nutcracker. The Boston Symphony Orchestra, Boston Pops and Tanglewood offer a 30 percent discount for BSO and Spring Pops tickets only. The Merrimack Repertory Theatre offers members half-price tickets, and members save 20 percent on tickets to the Berkshire Theatre Group. Do you know movie buffs? Take them to the Sunbrella IMAX® 3D Theater at Jordan’s Furniture, where tickets are buy one, get one free with your member card!

The Boston Celtics and Boston Bruins offer MTA members discounted tickets to selected games throughout the season. The Providence Bruins provide savings of up to 50 percent on tickets plus a free hat, popcorn and fountain drink for all children. Boston College Athletics offers discounts on its football, basketball and hockey tickets for members.

A FULL LIST OF DISCOUNTS IS AVAILABLE AT MTABENEFITS.COM
**Tours to Cuba, Italy, Ireland and China are planned**

If you’re like most of us, you intend to take trips during school vacations. But it’s virtually impossible to find the time to decide where to go and to coordinate all of the arrangements. MTAB has a great solution: group tours through Durgan Travel! We’ve selected a variety of popular destinations and great dates in 2018. These tours will fill up quickly, so select your trip and book soon!

**CUBA, February 9-16**

Cuba is one of the world’s hottest destinations and it promises to be unlike anywhere else you’ve visited. This beautiful island nation is culturally rich. Its beaches, bays, mountains, exuberant music and exquisite art will amaze you. This seven-night cruise on the Celestyal Crystal features stops in Havana, Cienfuegos and Santiago de Cuba.

**ITALY, February 17-25**

Italy is the No. 1 tour destination for Americans, as well as for Durgan Travel. This fabulous seven-night stay includes visits to Florence, Venice, Pisa, Siena, Montecatini, Lucca and Cinque Terre. Between scheduled visits, travelers have free time to visit some of the greatest museums in the world, take a gondola ride, shop and sample some vernaccia, the famous wine of San Gimignano. This tour takes place during school vacation week. Space will fill quickly.

**IRELAND, April 14-22**

This seven-night tour of the best of the Emerald Isle includes a three-night stay in Killarney, one night in Waterford, two nights in Dublin and one night in Ennis. Experience traditional pubs, with their lively atmosphere and entertainment. This tour will bring you to areas where you can delight in majestic coastal views, hidden coves, historic sites and varied mountain scenery. This tour takes place during school vacation week. Space will fill quickly.

**CHINA, July 5-15**

After a nonstop flight to Beijing, enjoy a nine-night trip exploring the wonders of China. From Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City to the Great Wall of China and the terra-cotta army museum, you’ll be in awe of the sites you see. Cruise down the Li River, learn how the Chinese socialize by dancing, singing and exercising, and experience the famous Shanghai Xiaolubao acrobatic troupe dinner show. This trip will be one you’ll never forget!

Durgan Travel Service has been serving the group travel community in New England for more than four decades. A favorite of many MTA members, Durgan features all or mostly inclusive European vacations at super low group rates. Durgan also has a full schedule of domestic and worldwide tours. Durgan is known for its incredibly low-priced European tours, developed over the last two decades.

Let Durgan Travel make it easy and affordable to experience the beauty and diversity of the world with fellow MTA members! Visit mtabenefits.com/benefits/travel and click on Vacation Center.

MTA Benefits launches student loan refinancing program with Citizens Bank

*Continued from page 1*

Citizens’ online portal makes it easy to get an estimated refinance rate as well as to apply for a loan. Receiving an estimate does not obligate a member to pursue a Citizens loan, nor does the inquiry affect one’s credit score. However, submitting an application does initiate a credit check.

Before refinancing their student loans, all MTA members are encouraged to take advantage of MTAB’s existing student loan counseling program so they can learn about all of their options regarding student loan repayment, including eligibility for loan forgiveness.

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*To qualify for the principal balance reduction, the borrower or co-signer (if applicable) must apply after 05/15/17, be approved, and disburse a Citizens Bank Education Refinance Loan through the MTA Benefits-dedicated Citizens Bank website. The principal balance reduction will be calculated as 1 percent of the amount financed, with a maximum of $1,000 for the Education Refinance Loan. The loan must be in good standing at the time the Principal Balance Reduction Benefit is applied. Only one Principal Balance Reduction Benefit is allowed per primary borrower for the Citizens Bank Education Refinance Loan. Principal reduction will be applied with an effective date equal to the loan’s first disbursement date. Principal reduction may take up to second billing cycle to display on monthly statement following the loan’s final disbursement and may be reduced if the loan amount is reduced or canceled. The Principal Balance Reduction Benefit will be processed as a reduction of principal to the loan and will not impact the required monthly payment amount or the payment due date for the loan. The value of the Principal Balance Reduction Benefit may be reported to the IRS. You are solely responsible for any taxes that may be owed as a result of the principal balance reduction earned. Please consult your tax advisor. Citizens Bank, N.A., does not provide tax advice. Citizens Bank reserves the right to modify these terms or cancel this offer at any point in the future for new applications.

**U.S. Department of Education. The loan fee is a percentage of the loan amount and is proportionately deducted from each loan disbursement. For loans first disbursed between October 1, 2016, and September 30, 2017, the origination fee is 4.276 percent.**