

Retired Members Committee Election

Four candidates for the Retired Members Committee were declared elected by waiver because the number of candidates did not exceed the number of openings.

The newly elected, or re-elected, members are as follows:



Kathy Greeley, Cambridge



Ora Gladstone, Boston



Rick Last, Florence



Rafael Moure-Eraso, Medford

Each will serve a two-year term beginning July 1 and ending June 30, 2026. Greeley, Gladstone and Last now sit on the committee and were re-elected. Moure-Eraso is a former committee member who was elected to a new term.

Greeley will serve her second term on the committee. She wrote in her biographical statement, submitted as part of the election process: "Retirees have been an under-tapped political force. We have the time, energy, experience, wisdom and knowledge to fight for our public schools and our profession."

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Retired Members Committee

2024-2025

CHAIR

Patrick Patterson, Ipswich

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Maureen Colgan Posner, Springfield
Kip Fonsh,** Leverett
Shelly Fraser,* Framingham
Ora Gladstone, Boston
Kathy Greeley, Cambridge
Joseph Herosy,** Quincy
Andrei Joseph,** Chestnut Hill
Rick Last, Northampton
Dale Melcher, Northampton
Bernadette Murphy,**** Roslindale
Phyllis Neufeld, Burlington
Robin Smith,*** Springfield
Amy Wolpin, Florence

RETIRED MEMBERS ORGANIZER

Lisa Lemieux
llemeux@massteacher.org
617-878-8206

MASSACHUSETTS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor
Quincy, MA 02171-2119
800-392-6175 www.massteacher.org

MTA MEMBER BENEFITS, INC.

800-336-0990 www.mtabenefits.com

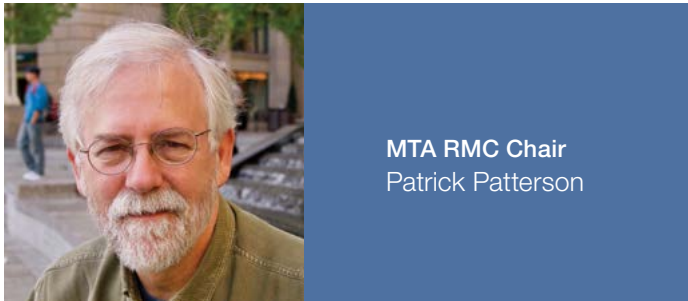
MTA MEMBERSHIP DIVISION

617-878-8118
800-392-6175

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

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Patrick Patterson



This will be my last message as chair of the Retired Members Committee.

My term will end at the end of June, and so the next issue of the Retired Reporter will have a message by a new chair, or co-chairs.

I assumed this position in the summer of 2020 when things were shutting down because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee quickly moved events online and we were able to maintain a degree of connection for the retired members. The fall Gathering and the spring Brunch continued and were quite well-attended. Since then, things have returned to normal, but not really. Last fall, we planned a live Gathering with a number of workshops on various topics. But not enough people registered to justify it. We were able to repurpose the workshops into the First Wednesday Retiree Speaker Series, and it has been highly successful. Who knows? Maybe the committee will decide to continue with the speaker series next year and drop the Gathering altogether. Members should let the committee know the direction that they want to go!

In my first message I characterized the disruption of the pandemic as a kind of stress test that could force us to confront the social problems that in normal times were simply ignored. There were certainly steps taken that, in part, addressed unmet needs. At the federal level a vaccine was quickly developed, and household income was supplemented through the CARES Act. State programs that the MTA fought for were won. The Fund Our Future campaign, which passed prior to the pandemic, was initially stalled by the Legislature but eventually fully funded. The passage by referendum of the Fair Share Amendment raised the marginal tax rate by 4 percent on those with taxable income of \$1 million or

more and created a pool of money for public education and transportation.

Unfortunately, much of it was given back to precisely those who it was taken from in legislation passed by the Legislature and signed by Governor Maura Healey. That is money that could have been used to fund the *Cherish Act*, which would have addressed longstanding needs of public colleges and universities, as well as those of students and faculty.

That is a pattern in the positions taken at the State House and by the governor in Massachusetts. This can be seen particularly in legislators' rejection of the right to strike by public school educators. Recent strikes that began with Dedham, and included Newton, all occurred as a last resort after months of stalled bargaining. Once strike action was taken, things started to move.

Two things are important to note:

First, money was certainly an issue, but equity was central, as well. Compensation for paraprofessionals and support staff has hovered at the minimum wage level. All the strikes directly addressed this issue, bringing the level of compensation for these members more in line with teachers. Was it enough? No, but at least it has improved. Two, there was strong community support revealing that school and finance committees were out of step with the constituency that they claim to represent. Educators at all levels are the ones who know what is needed, and how to organize the process of education. School and finance committees remain narrowly focused on money and other abstract metrics, which follow the corporate model of shareholder capitalism but substitute local citizenry for stockholders. The alternative is to listen to educators who have real experience in how to provide quality education. The support that educators received in their strikes indicates that people in these different communities would agree.

Maybe a strike could move legislators and the governor. The lack of equity among higher ed faculty, specifically between tenured and adjunct faculty, is different, yet similar, to that in public schools between teachers and paraeducators. Students would have an interest as well because one of the demands could be to reduce the cost of getting a college education. All of these demands are part of the *Cherish Act!* And if you think I am being naive I would ask you to look at the example of the systemwide strike at the state colleges in California. It can happen here, too! ■

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE / BOARD REPORT

Andrei Joseph

The righteous struggle of the Newton Teachers Association to win a just contract has been front and center, capturing the attention of our entire organization. After 16 months of management insincerity at the negotiation table, the local voted overwhelmingly to go on strike. Fifteen calendar days later, Newton members won a tremendous victory. The Board of Directors received a report covering the remarkable determination of the local, the support of parents and the Newton community and the specific achievements at the bargaining table. Salaries for Education Support Professionals will increase between 16 and 28 percent. All members will receive paid parental leave. Social workers will be provided for nearly every school. And, internally, the local has developed a powerful level of involvement, democracy and self-worth. I am proud to report that Retired members from the Wisdom Warriors, a program of the Retired Members Committee, were present on the picket lines each and every day demonstrating our unity with the local. And some of those days were pretty darn cold! Solidarity!

REORGANIZATION

The Board approved a reorganization plan offered by Mike Fadel, our Executive Director-Treasurer. Three previous divisions — Government Relations, Grassroots Campaigns and the Center for Education Policy and Practice — have been combined into the new division, Legislation, Policy and Political Action. Mike argued that this reorganization better reflects the interrelationship of our multiple approaches, more effectively aligns our efforts and increases our power. The Board agreed by a 43-2 vote. I voted yes.

MTA BUDGET

Creating a budget for an organization with hundreds of employees and 115,000 members is a challenging task. Our process is remarkably complex, transparent and democratic. First, the Executive Director-Treasurer meets with division managers to assess the work ahead. These perspectives are brought to a member-laden Advisory Budget Committee (ABC), which in turn brings a recommendation to the Executive Committee, which in turn brings a recommendation to the Board of Directors. Ultimately, the power to determine our dues and spending lies with the elected delegates at Annual Meeting. On Feb. 29, the Executive Committee voted unanimously to propose an annual dues increase of \$33 for teachers,



MTA RMC Member
Andrei Joseph

\$20 for clerical and \$10 for ESPs. The monies raised will cover the costs of inflation (salaries, wages, health and dental insurance, utilities and operating expenses), as well as allowing for the hiring of three more regional organizers and six new lead field representatives. This consensus was both a tribute to the successful hard work of the past year and a recognition of our needs moving forward with expanding militancy. While not insignificant, this proposed increase still leaves MTA dues below a range of comparative states and essentially is consistent over time as a percentage of our member's earnings. At the Board of Directors meeting of March 22-23, the proposed dues increase passed by a vote of 37-17. I voted yes.

GAZA/ISRAEL

The tragic events in the Middle East reached the Executive Committee and then the Board, resulting in three different motions. I helped to introduce the first at the Executive Committee. It said we should join a labor petition calling for a ceasefire that had been circulated nationwide. It advocated for a ceasefire and the immediate and unconditional return of hostages. This motion passed unanimously. Later, two more motions were approved by the Board in December. The first involved developing curriculum resources for educators from a variety of perspectives. This passed overwhelmingly. I voted yes. The second instructed the president of the MTA to urge the president of the NEA to pressure the president of the United States to stop sending weapons and funding to the Netanyahu government. More controversially, it referred to Israel's "genocidal war on the Palestinian people." This motion, too, passed by a large majority vote. With some

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE | BOARD REPORT

Andrei Joseph *continued from pg 3*

reluctance, I voted yes. These motions have produced a variety of spirited responses from members. Subsequent Board meetings have brought a long list of “guest speakers,” (our policies allow members two minutes to address the Board) both demanding that we retract the motion and that we affirm it.

Not to personalize this issue but I have an obligation to report my position and explain my votes to the retirees I represent. It was correct for us to address this issue: The immoral slaughter of innocents – on both sides – cannot go unaddressed. We are educators. We care about children – everywhere. Our tax dollars are involved. Stop the violence. And, yet the MTA is not the forum to craft a long-term political solution to the Middle East crisis. We are not equipped, nor is it our role, to determine whether there should be a one-state or two-state solution. Or how to interpret the “right of return.” The term “genocide” is so laden with history that it was guaranteed to divide our union. Instead, let us search for common ground: families reunited and living in peace and dignity, a condemnation of both antisemitism and Islamophobia, a defense of educators and academic freedom, a reallocation of resources from war and violence to education and community. The texts of the various motions can be found here: <https://www.massteacher.org/mta-membership/meeting-agendas-and-alerts/ec-and-board-motions>

MONEY

The required annual audit of our books was completed, and we are in good shape. There were no irregularities noted and we are proceeding in a fiscally sound, responsible fashion. On a broader financial front, we received a report from Dennis Naughton and Bob Brousseau, our representatives on the Pension Reserve Investment Management (PRIM) Board. This, too, was positive. The fund has 300,000 beneficiaries, nine trustees, \$95.2 billion in assets, a 7 percent assumed rate of return and a plan to resolve unfunded liabilities by 2036. However, a more questioning and critical approach to investing in private equities, and concerns about how returns are calculated, was offered by Matthew Scheffler from the MTA Investment Committee. And it is that committee that will continue to examine these issues.

THE STATE HOUSE

Work continues apace to achieve our legislative goals. The battle against the MCAS graduation requirement is

being fought simultaneously through a ballot initiative (we have filed over 100,000 signatures) and a legislative initiative that, if successful, would make the ballot referendum unnecessary. We are supporting the *Cherish Act*, which would provide debt-free higher education, recruit and retain high-quality faculty and staff, increase student support and encourage green, healthy and safe buildings. The bills related to retiree issues, including COLA improvement and the possibility of revisiting Retirement-Plus decisions, have been “extended.” This is a status much preferable to the dreaded “sent for study” which essentially means “dead.”

NAME CHANGE?

The Name Change Task Force reported back to the Board. Over the last year, there has been an increased sensibility that the MTA represents not just “teachers” but also ESPs, bus drivers, administrative assistants, counselors, etc. We are all “educators,” and some thought the name of our organization should be changed to reflect that. Much work was done surveying the membership including straw polls about possible alternative names. However, ultimately, it became clear that there was not a groundswell of support to change our name. Money would have been required for everything from changing our logo to rewriting all our legal contracts. As such, we remain the Massachusetts Teachers Association.

While our official name remains unchanged, the Board did vote to add the slogan: “A Diverse Union of Educated Workers” as a subheading where possible to our stationery, logo, etc. I supported this.

ANNUAL MEETING

MTA staff encouraged the Board to make decisions about upcoming Annual Meetings. They suggested it would allow for more efficient planning and an advantageous position when negotiating contracts with potential venues. Not surprisingly, the re-occurring issues of COVID health and how to encourage democratic participation entered the discussion. I spoke in favor of, and voted for, a motion committing the MTA to a hybrid option through 2028. This motion passed. Hybrid Annual Meetings with a remote participation option will take place in Springfield in 2024 and 2025, Boston in 2026 and 2027, and Worcester in 2028 (with Springfield as a backup).

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LEGISLATIVE REPORT: An Update From MTA's Legislation, Policy and Political Action Division

The first several months of 2024 have been busy on Beacon Hill, with several important developments to share related to the MTA's budget and legislative priorities for the rest of the 2023-2024 legislation session. Please also regularly visit [massteacher.org/legislation](https://www.massteacher.org/legislation) for the latest updates and to continue to take action in support of the MTA's legislative agenda.

FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET UPDATE

In January, Governor Maura Healey released her annual budget recommendation, which kicked off the Commonwealth's FY 2025 budget process.

The governor's budget proposal authorizes the typical 3 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on the first \$13,000 in pension benefits for retired members of the state and teachers' retirement systems. Importantly, however, the proposal also would create a special commission to study the COLA system. This would include the development of potential policy changes to increase the COLA base and to fund such increases, with a report due to the Legislature by Feb. 1, 2025. While we continue to strongly urge that more immediate steps be taken to strengthen the COLA this year, the proposed commission is a meaningful step and one that reflects the incredible advocacy that MTA Retired members have been applying to this issue in recent years, especially over the past few months. The MTA will be urging the House and Senate to include this proposed commission in their respective budgets, but also to provide more immediate relief in FY25.

The governor's budget proposal also serves as a reminder of how important it was that the MTA, other unions, community groups and so many others campaigned in 2022 to win passage of the Fair Share Amendment. This constitutional amendment taxes multimillionaires and billionaires a little bit more to pay for crucial investments in public education and transportation, including universal school meals, free community college for adults 25 and older, significant new scholarship funds for all public college and university students, and much more. In a year when ordinary revenue is barely growing, Fair Share has enabled the governor to propose new initiatives to support the mental health and social and emotional well-being of students and educators who are working effectively to teach all students to read. The budget also provides funds, in line with the *Cherish Act* for public higher education, to build and repair campus



Retired Members Patrick Patterson and Phyllis Neufeld, from left, as well as MTA President Max Page and Vice President Deb McCarthy delivered COLA advocacy cards to the Legislature's Joint Committee on Public Service.

buildings to meet the needs of students, staff and faculty, and meet the Commonwealth's climate goals, not to mention funding for an improved MBTA, regional buses and repairs to city and town roads and bridges. MTA members made these investments possible.

Overall, however, the budget proposes only modest steps toward making sure that all of our public schools have the resources they need to help all students to thrive, and for a public higher education system that makes debt-free, high-quality public higher education possible for all students in our community colleges, state universities, and at the University of Massachusetts. As a state, we need to keep pushing forward to make that future a reality.

We will look to make further progress as the House and Senate debate the budget in the coming months. The House is expected to release and pass its budget proposal in April, with the Senate expected to follow in May. The goal is always to have a final budget passed by

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LEGISLATIVE REPORT: An Update From MTA's Legislation, Policy and Political Action Division

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both the House and Senate and signed into law by the governor in time for the start of the new fiscal year on July 1, although that timeline has not always been met in recent years.

LEGISLATION UPDATE

Thank you to all of you who filled out and returned the COLA advocacy cards that were sent out in November. In January, MTA leadership and member-leaders from the Retired Members Committee delivered more than 1,300 cards to Representative Ken Gordon and Senator Mike Brady, who serve as the House and Senate Chairs of the Joint Committee on Public Service, respectively. In addition, more than 1,200 emails have been sent to legislators over the past year urging an increase in the COLA base. As noted previously, your continued advocacy to highlight the urgency of a state and teacher pension COLA increase is sending a loud and clear message to state leaders that action is needed, as evidenced by the proposed commission mentioned in the FY25 budget update.

We also recently passed an important date in the legislative calendar – the Joint Rule 10 deadline, or the deadline by



Photographs: Eric Haynes.

when joint committees are required to act on legislation under their jurisdiction. The deadline, which fell on Feb. 7, resulted mostly in extension orders for the MTA's priority bills, including the MTA-backed bill to increase the COLA base and the *Thrive Act*, which means that the committees have given themselves more time to review the proposals over the coming weeks and months. As of this writing, we are awaiting further updates on the latest status of the *Cherish Act*. Unfortunately, two MTA priorities, An Act uplifting families and securing the right to strike for certain public employees and An Act relative to educator pay, were sent to study at the deadline, effectively ending their chances for this legislative session.

Also of note, in December, the MTA – in partnership with parents, families, community members and other allies – successfully collected 101,511 certified signatures endorsing our ballot initiative to replace the high school graduation requirement tied to the MCAS. That initiative is now before the Legislature for consideration. This milestone shows that the public is with MTA educators in wanting an education system that focuses on real teaching and learning and that does not use a single, high-stakes test to block students from receiving a diploma. Our first opportunity to accomplish this goal is through the Legislature passing the *Thrive Act*, which represents a transformative opportunity to reshape our educational landscape. However, should the Legislature fail to act in a way that aligns with the aspirations of students, educators and communities, the MTA is firmly committed to winning at the 2024 state election ballot. ■

To get involved in this campaign and our campaign to pass the *Cherish Act* for public higher education, please visit massteacher.org/takeaction. In addition, please continue to contact your legislators in support of a COLA increase. If you need to look up your legislator, please go to www.malegislature.gov/Search/FindMyLegislator.





HONOR OUR OWN



AWARD

NOMINATION FORM

NOMINATION MATERIALS DUE JUNE 30, 2024

IS THERE AN MTA RETIRED MEMBER WHO:

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

HONOR OUR OWN



AWARD

NOW IS THE TIME TO RECOGNIZE THESE CONTRIBUTIONS.

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

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

Nominees must be Retired members of the MTA. Retired preK-12, ESPs and higher education members are eligible.

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

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

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

1. Complete the nomination form.
2. Attach a written explanation about why the nominee meets the guidelines for the award. Follow the award guidelines listed above.
3. Mail or email the completed application. Materials must be received no later than June 30.

Honor Our Own Award
Attn: Lisa Lemieux, MTA
2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor | Quincy, MA 02171-2119
HonorOurOwn@massteacher.org

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



1

Complete the nomination form.

Nominee Information:

- Nominee is a member of MTA Retired.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Email _____

Submitted By:

(Please check one)

- Member of _____ Association

- MTA Retired

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Email _____

This form may be printed and mailed or completed electronically and emailed. For best results, view the PDF in Adobe Reader.[®] Complete any fillable areas by typing in the fields or clicking on check boxes. Save a copy to your computer for your records.

2

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

3

Mail or email the completed application.

Honor Our Own Award
Lisa Lemieux, MTA
2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor | Quincy, MA 02171-2119
HonorOurOwn@massteacher.org

Materials must be received by the MTA no later than June 30. The decision of the Retired Members Committee is final.

Recent Recipients of the Honor Our Own Award

2022

Beverly Saccocia, *Bridgewater-Raynham Education Association*

Nominated by MTA Retired member Lois Powers

“She demonstrated the union leader’s activism with her strong work ethic and commitment to the union and to the community.”

Mary Cowhey, *Northampton Association of School Employees*

Nominated by MTA Retired member Dale Melcher

“Mary is the whole package; a teacher, grassroots organizer, parent, union activist, writer, community gardener and winner of numerous awards for teaching.”

2021

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

Nominated by MTA Retired member Rafael Moure-Eraso

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

Richard Liston, *Everett Teachers Association*

Nominated by ETA President Kimberly Auger

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

2020

Judith Babb, *Wakefield Education Association*

Nominated by MTA Retired member Maura D. Buckley

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

2019

Louise Gaskins, *Ayer-Shirley Regional Education Association*

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

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

2018

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

Nominated by UMass Lowell professor Craig Slatin

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

**Questions About the
Honor Our Own Award?**

Lisa Lemieux, MTA
2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor | Quincy, MA 02171-2119
ph: 617.878.8206 | HonorOurOwn@massteacher.org

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

PERSPECTIVE: We must establish a support system that invites educators to share and be supported

Bill Coleman

Editor's Note: This is the first in a series of commentaries by Retired members of color, reflecting on their personal experiences in public education.

It's been said it takes the whole village to raise a child. This African proverb is important today in public education and reflective of the many educators who have paved the way. Retired educators of color still have something to say and lessons to teach and we would do well to invite these retirees to tell their stories of challenges and triumphs. I'm here to start us off.

My name is Bill Coleman. I worked for the UMass Amherst Extension Program, teaching nutrition to families that qualified for food stamps and those in recovery programs. There were 14 women and me, all among the lowest paid in the UMass system. I qualified for food stamps, just like the families and individuals I was teaching. Minority employees in a predominantly white culture often are judged differently. Latino and Black educators made up the bulk of the nutritional teachers in my program.

Educators of color who are looking for opportunities to advance may pay a price if they advocate for righteous working conditions, as I did. I was the only male in an environment with supportive women colleagues, but the administrators were not happy with my activism. I would be called on the carpet for suggesting changes. I was told by my colleagues that the administration would talk to them about my activism, and that if you want to achieve something, 'go slow.' My feeling was the administration had stifled their thoughts, to the point where all they could say to me was: I have a job. Don't upset the bosses." Such a disparity existed in minority representation – I could see no people of color in management and there was an atmosphere of 'us versus them.'

Community groups gave me outstanding evaluations. When I showed them to my boss, I was asked if I had requested that they write the evaluation. That made me feel like I was invisible – that my net worth did not matter. The one boss who did support me initially was "talked to" by her superiors when she communicated about the great job I was doing. She never promoted me, although there were any number of times she could have. I was basically ignored. This seemed to me to be a combination of gender bias, a response to my advocating for union rights and racial discrimination.



MTA Retired member
Bill Coleman

My evaluations were always 'adequate,' no matter the input from the groups I worked with. My dad grew up on a tobacco farm in the South. Sharecroppers didn't make much money. They were given the same message as we were: "Don't complain. Do what they tell you and you will get a good review." Not much has changed.

It was often very obvious to me that my colleagues and I were judged by race and gender. But every time I spoke up to try and combat the racism, I would be directed to long-term employees of color who defended the institution to protect their status. I felt that my experience was being denied and I was led to believe that this was all in my mind. I never got credit for the good things I accomplished. In my working group, we had no permanent space to do our work. We needed a 'home' location. I found a minority-owned building and created a partnership with the owner to rent space. A deal was established and my reward from the administration was: "Great, now don't push activism on better pay." The administration would let the other employees know that my type of activism was frowned upon. The threat – the possibility of layoffs – never came through, but this made the employees regroup and not advocate for themselves.

The impact of this environment made people sit back and think, is this really worth it? Some were living in fear of losing continued employment. You put limits on your abilities if you believe that the more you do, the less you'll be recognized. If you do excel, you get compliments in words, but not compensated or promoted in position. If you advocate for employee or union rights, you get neither.

After I retired from UMass, I substituted in the Worcester Public Schools. I met educators of color who wanted to do

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Retired Members Committee Election

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Gladstone has been on the committee for more than two years. She is a co-chair of the Northeast Jewish Labor Committee and a former music teacher and music therapist in the Waltham schools. She wrote in her biographical statement: “(I am) deeply committed to inclusion and building MTA retiree membership.”

Last is the coordinator of the Western Wisdom Warriors and is a member of the Retired Members Speakers Series and an MTA MCAS subcommittee. “We need a dignified retirement,” he wrote in his biographical statement. “Our experiences can help shape the direction of our union.”

Moure-Eraso is a retired professor at UMass Lowell and originally from Colombia. He retired after a 23-year career as a professor in Massachusetts. He previously served two terms on the Retired Members Committee and has represented the committee on the MTA Environmental Health and Safety Committee since 2000. ■

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: BOARD REPORT

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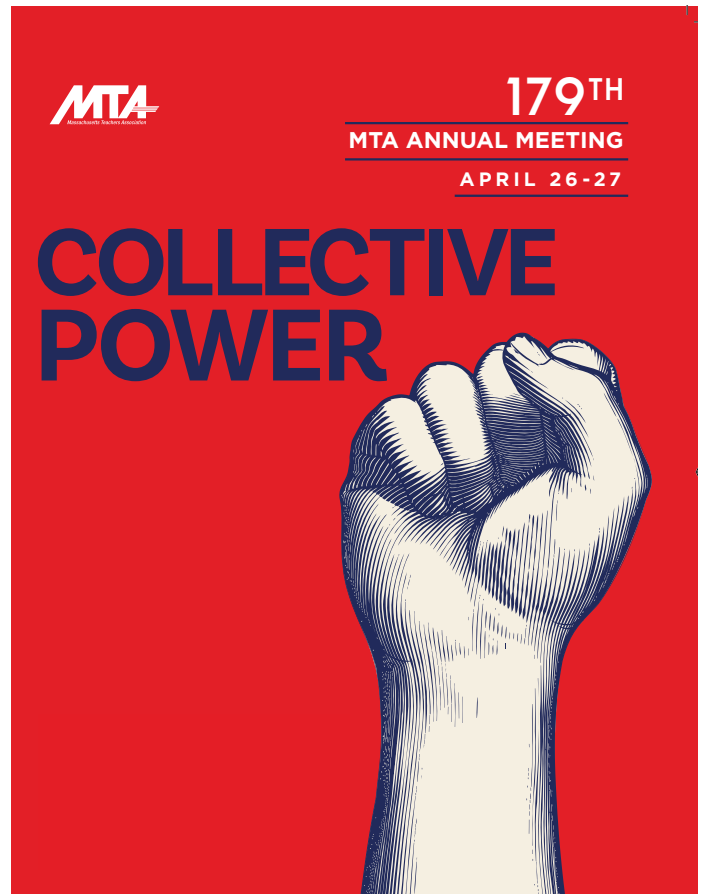
Special Rules for Annual Meeting: Regulations regarding procedures at Annual Meeting are long-standing in our Policy Book. But, they have to be adapted to work within our current hybrid model. Appropriate modifications were offered to allow for full democratic participation and secure voting. I voted yes to the changes.

ALSO NOTED:

There was a successful motion to support the addition of an ESP At-Large to the NEA Executive Committee. I voted yes.

Summer Conference will be held from July 28 to 31 on the UMass Amherst campus. The food is really good. The workshops offered are even better.

Decarbonization: We’ve got a task force on this too. Between our buildings, transportation and purchases, we total about 500 tons of carbon dioxide per year. The best opportunity to decrease our footprint is to improve the use of our facilities. ■



GOVERNANCE – ANNUAL MEETING INFORMATION

The MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates is where essential MTA business takes place each year, including the election of union officers and approval of the union’s operating budget for 2024-2025.

This year, the Annual Meeting will be held at the MassMutual Center in Springfield, with a virtual component, similar to last year.

The business session begins at noon on Friday, April 26.

The agenda for the day will include action on proposed amendments to the MTA Bylaws, MTA Standing Rules and proposed new Business Items with budgetary implications.

The following day, the meeting resumes at 9 a.m. Election of candidates is scheduled to start at 11 a.m., after action on the proposed annual budget. ■

For more information, including a schedule of events and detailed information on proposed business items, visit massteacher.org/annualmeeting.

COMMENTARY: Finding lessons in the Newton strike

Jim Murphy

The recent strike in Newton brought a brutal 16-month contract negotiation to a close. For the most part, it resulted in a much better contract than what Newton's educators and students would have gotten without the Newton Teachers Association's willingness to endure the 11-day ordeal. The strike put a strain on the community, but it prompted a broader conversation about what it means to support public education. I see that as having a positive impact beyond the contract settlement itself.

The strike is settled but other stalled negotiations may prompt job actions. So it makes sense to assess where the longest strike in Massachusetts in decades leaves us as we turn to meet other potential challenges. I'd like to offer a few observations about what it indicates about the political landscape for education beyond Newton.

First and foremost, I believe the strike points toward solid support for actions that have students' best interests at



MTA Retired member
Jim Murphy

their center. Media coverage of the Newton strike focused heavily on teacher salaries, which opened the door for the usual anti-teacher, anti-public employee criticism. However, the NTA kept the Education Support Professionals and school counselors in the picture with outreach. The rallies and school-based pickets mattered, as did the willingness of NTA members to go door-to-door when not at one or the other. Seriousness and sincerity of purpose went a long way toward overcoming a critical media climate. We need to double-down where we do best: in direct conversations with the members of our communities.

Along those lines, I think the Newton Parent/Educator Collaborative (PEC) that formed during the contract dispute deserves a huge shout-out. It did absolute yeoman's work to marshal community support by holding informational meetings, encouraging community members to show up for rallies and picket lines, and perhaps most importantly, for fact-checking both the press and the mayor's office on almost a daily basis by way of a daily, no-nonsense newsletter that continually gained subscribers as the strike continued. This group made a real difference, and I'm happy to note that it will continue beyond the contract settlement. It is a model for what parent/educator cooperation can look like and what it can accomplish. It provides a model that should be emulated, and not just for specific campaigns. ■

Murphy is a Retired member and Newton resident.



STAY INVOLVED & RENEW YOUR RETIRED MEMBERSHIP TODAY

Help a friend/colleague become an MTA and NEA Retired Member.

<https://massteacher.org/about-the-mta/who-we-are/retired-members/retired-membership-and-dues>



PERSPECTIVE: We must establish a support system that invites educators to share and be supported

continued from pg 11

more – wanted to advocate for students and their schools; wanted to help students who needed more human services. When they did advocate for these expensive but necessary options, they were met with: “Okay, I’ll look into it, but I need to tell you that your contract for next year is not being renewed at this school.” I saw this happen. When you are an educator of color in a predominantly white environment, it seemed to me that you would be judged by the color of your skin. We haven’t reached the point where we are judged on our contributions.

Less than 5 percent of teachers are educators of color, according to national education statistics. When you run into students when they are older and you hear that you made a difference in their lives when they were at a low point – that’s when you get the feedback you needed during your career but didn’t get. Educators shouldn’t be afraid to write

thoughts down and share with a mentor. Team up with a mentor. We need to encourage others to stand up for their rights with the backing and support of a union contract. We must establish a support system that invites educational professionals to share and be supported.

Just because one retires does not limit one’s ability to contribute with wisdom to the challenges confronting public education today. Call on the wisdom of educators who have walked the walk and lived during the time when they were alone in their respective fields. The voices who have lived the profession must be heard and their ideas addressed.

If you would like to be involved in our BIPOC retiree project and/or share your story as a BIPOC educator, please email Retired members Phyllis Neufeld at pbneufeld@gmail.com or Ora Gladstone at oragladstone@gmail.com. ■

Wednesday
JUNE 19

11 a.m. - 2 p.m.

**JUNETEENTH
CELEBRATION**

EDWARDS HOUSE
1 Badger Road
Framingham

MTA
Massachusetts Teachers Association

The poster features a large black silhouette of a person's head in profile, facing left, with short, spiky dreadlocks. The background is white. On the left side, there is a vertical bar with three colored sections: red at the top, black in the middle, and green at the bottom. The red section contains a calendar icon and the text 'Wednesday JUNE 19'. The black section contains a clock icon and the text '11 a.m. - 2 p.m.'. The green section contains a location pin icon, the text 'EDWARDS HOUSE 1 Badger Road Framingham', and the MTA logo. The MTA logo consists of the letters 'MTA' in a bold, white, sans-serif font with horizontal lines through the 'A', and the full name 'Massachusetts Teachers Association' in a smaller font below it. In the center of the black section, there is a circular logo for the 'COMMITTEE » MTA » ETHNIC » MINORITY » AFFAIRS' with a central figure of a person's head and shoulders.

FIRST
WEDNESDAY

RETIREE SPEAKER SERIES 2024



All events are virtual,
on Zoom.
3 - 4:30 p.m.

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

MAY 1

Escalating Campaigns and Strikes – A View from the Line

This workshop will help participants have a better understanding of the unique relationship between bargaining and Contract Action Teams and the strategies used to fully engage the membership and community.

JUNE 5

A Museum for all of Boston: Welcoming and Engaging Learners

This workshop will offer an introduction to the Museum of Fine Arts' efforts to create opportunities for our audiences to engage with the visual arts.



Scan the QR code for
a full description of each
event and to register
<https://cvent.me/ggYIPZ>.

INTRODUCING LISA LEMIEUX

Lisa Lemieux, the new MTA Retired members organizer, is a longtime labor activist and organizer. She joined the MTA in 2021 after a long career organizing and representing workers in Massachusetts.

She succeeds Bob Whalen as Retired members organizer, who retired in December.

Lemieux, originally from Brownsville and Frisco, Texas, also is president of the Greater Southeastern Massachusetts Labor Council, a regional collection of unions that is part of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO. She was elected as its first Latina president in 2017.

Lemieux first joined a union in 1997, as a member of CWA Local 1051, while employed at AT&T in Fairhaven. She was elected as a steward and then as a district vice president. She joined SEIU as a union organizer in 2005, representing the interests of health care workers employed in hospitals and nursing homes and as personal care attendants.



Lisa Lemieux is the new Retired Members organizer. She is excited about helping to organize retirees to support the work of the MTA. Contributed photo.



MTA Retired Member Jim Murphy, left, and Retired Members organizer Lisa Lemieux attended the recent NEA Retired national meeting. Staff photo.

Among other volunteer positions, she is a vice president in the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, chair of the New Bedford Democratic City Committee and a member of the Executive Board for Mass Hire Greater New Bedford Workforce Board. Lemieux was elected as Parent of the Year from PACE, the Parents Alliance for Catholic Education.

She is a graduate of UMass Boston with a bachelor's degree in labor studies.

When not volunteering, she enjoys rowing, sailing authentic Azorean whale boats with the Azorean Maritime Heritage Society and spending time with her fiancé, Donald, and her four children, six grandchildren and one great-granddaughter. ■

Members may contact her to say hello or ask a question at llemieux@massteacher.org.

AN APPRECIATION OF THE LATE HAROLD CROWLEY

Kathy Greeley

I had mentioned to a colleague that I was starting to think about retirement.

“You need to talk to Harold Crowley. He knows everything you need to know,” she said.

It was the first time I had heard Harold’s name, but it would not be the last.

It would take me a few more years before I seriously began to consider retiring. Once again, when I said something to someone at school, the response was: “You need to talk to Harold Crowley. He knows everything about retirement.” So, I called him.

“Harold Crowley here,” he answered. I introduced myself and explained why I had called. “Are you planning to retire this year?” he asked. “No,” I replied. “Maybe in a year or two.” “Okay,” he said. “I can’t talk to you now. I’m swamped with people who are heading out this year. Call me in the summer and we can talk.”

When I finally did meet Harold in person, I was impressed. He must have dealt with thousands of people over time, but he was welcoming, patient and very informative. He listened to my questions and gave me straight answers. He gave me timelines, highlighting critical dates. And he gave me advice.

One of the things I valued most was his suggestion to become a life member of the MTA. He pointed out all the benefits and said the fee would pay for itself in a few years. Plus, the dues were about to go up, so join now, he said.

I took his advice, including becoming a lifelong member of the MTA. By the time I left Harold’s office, my anxieties about this upcoming transition in life had been allayed. I feel lucky and grateful that I had the good fortune to have been a beneficiary of Harold’s wisdom and experience. He was a good man. ■

Crowley, who died in January, was well known to MTA members for his work as a Retirement Consultant. To read a recent news obituary of Crowley, please visit [massteacher.org/obits](https://www.massteacher.org/obits).

Greeley, a member of the Retired Members Committee, worked in the Cambridge public schools for more than 37 years.

Photo of Harold Crowley, contributed by family.



Protect Your Information with a Complimentary Identity Theft Plan

Identity theft is now more prevalent than ever, primarily due to the advancement of technology and the rise of cybercriminals. Your personal information is at risk of getting stolen and the process to recover your identity is a lengthy — and often stressful — one. Luckily as a retired member, you can now sign up for a free identity theft plan provided by Securus ID through MTA Benefits.

With the complimentary Securus ID Identity Theft recovery plan, members get immediate access to all three of their credit bureau files and limited power of attorney for complete restoration on their behalf. Members also get multilingual and hearing-impaired services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. With the help of certified identity theft risk management specialists, enrolled participants don’t have to worry about the several hours that credit restoration may take — the company handles it all for them.

Want to extend this protection to your family members, too? After you sign up, you have the option to do so for just \$3 per month. This includes the same identity restoration services for peace of mind for you and your loved ones.

Don’t let identity theft damage your retirement. Be sure to take advantage of this complimentary plan so you can help safeguard your personal information as well as that of those closest to you. But don’t wait too long — this offer expires on Jan. 14, 2025. Register at mtabenefits.securusid.com/registration. ■

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR MEMBERSHIP: DISCOUNTS AND BENEFITS FOR RETIRED MTA MEMBERS

Retirement marks a new chapter in life, a time to explore, relax and enjoy the fruits of your labor. For retired MTA members, this phase comes with a range of exclusive benefits and discounts designed to enhance your well-deserved leisure time. From travel opportunities to essential services, here are some of the discounts offered by MTA Benefits that can help you further enjoy your retirement.

TRAVEL DISCOUNTS

One of the most exciting aspects of retirement is the freedom to travel. Whether you're dreaming of an international adventure or a cozy retreat close to home, your MTA membership offers significant savings on travel essentials. Say goodbye to full-price car rentals and costly hotel stays – with MTA Benefits, you can explore

the world without breaking the bank. From guided tours to cruise packages and hotel bookings from Access Nationwide Discounts, your retirement adventures can be made more affordable with these exclusive deals.

EMERGENCY AMBULANCE TRANSPORT WITH MASA MEDICAL TRANSPORT SOLUTIONS

Emergencies can happen anywhere, at any time. That's why the Medical Air Services Association (MASA) is a vital resource for retired MTA members. MASA offers comprehensive emergency medical transportation services, including air and ground ambulance transportation, repatriation services, and more. With no maximum dollar limit on claims, you and your loved ones can have peace of mind knowing that you're covered in unexpected situations. MASA is there to





assist when you need it most, no matter where you are in the world.

HEARING AIDS

Hearing loss affects individuals of all ages, and proper hearing aid fittings can significantly improve daily life. Through MTA Benefits' partnership with Hear In America, retired members and their families can access top-quality hearing aids at substantial savings. Enjoy discounts ranging from 30 to 70 percent, free hearing screenings, and lifetime office service. Don't let hearing loss limit your experiences in retirement – take advantage of this program to enhance communication and cognitive function.

AUTO INSURANCE

Educators Insurance Agency (EIA) offers exclusive discounts on auto insurance to MTA members and their families. While offering up to 10 percent in savings, EIA provides tailored solutions for your insurance needs. Liberty Mutual is another option available to retired members through MTA Benefits, with up to 12 percent in savings when you shop online. Rest assured that whichever carrier you choose, you'll find the right coverage at a reduced rate.

HOME/RENTERS INSURANCE

Protecting your home and assets is crucial, especially in retirement. In addition to auto insurance, EIA and Liberty Mutual both offer exclusive discounts on home and renters insurance. With flexible coverage options and personalized advice from licensed advisers, you can ensure that your home has the right protection without overspending.

SAVE EVEN MORE WITH YOUR MTA MEMBER CARD

Retirement is a time to indulge in the things you love. With your MTA member card, you can access deep discounts at various museums, bookstores, and so much more. Explore the MTA Benefits Discount Directory at www.mtabenefits.com/discountdirectory to discover exciting activities such as getting a panoramic view of the city at View Boston, skiing at Catamount Mountain Resort, and going to a play or musical at the Boch Center. At MTA Benefits, there's something for every retired MTA member, from the culture enthusiast to the outdoor adventurer.

MTA FAMILY MEMBERSHIP

Remember, your retirement benefits can extend to your family members as well. With an MTA Family Membership, you and your family can enjoy all the discounts and perks mentioned in this article. From planning a family vacation to protecting your home and assets, MTA Benefits is there to support you and your loved ones in retirement. For more information or to fill out an application, go to www.mtabenefits.com/family.

Retirement is a time to embrace new experiences, travel the world, and enjoy the freedom that comes with decades of hard work. The benefits available to you are not just about saving money – they're about enhancing your quality of life and making the most of this exciting chapter. So, as you plan your next adventure or simply relax at home, take advantage of these exclusive discounts and benefits to make your golden years some of your best yet! ■

A full list of benefits and discounts can be found at www.mtabenefits.com.



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RETIRED *The Voice of MTA Retired Members*

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