

MTA RETIRED REPORTER

The Voice of MTA Retired Members



Let your voice be heard! Join your colleagues, representatives of the MTA Retired Members Committee and guest presenters for the 2021 MTA Retired Spring Brunch. Due to scheduling uncertainties brought about by the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine, the annual Retired Spring Brunches are being combined into one virtual event this year. Watch massteacher.org/retired for the date of the event and more information.

With morning and afternoon sessions, the 2021 Spring Brunch will follow the format of the highly successful 2020 MTA Virtual Retired Gathering. Learn about issues of interest, including MTA-backed legislation to ensure a fair and dignified retirement and the state budget. A panel discussion will focus on the COVID-19 vaccine, its effect on our senior population, and our progress in the fight for a safe return to schools and colleges.

Registration begins soon at massteacher.org/retired. A tentative outline of the Virtual Spring Brunch agenda is below.

10 – 10:30 AM

Welcome and Introduction from MTA President Merrie Najimy and MTA Vice President Max Page

10:30 – 11:45 AM

Morning Session: COVID-19 Panel Discussion

11:45 AM – 12:30 PM

Lunch Breakout Rooms

12:30 – 1:15 PM

Afternoon Session: MTA Legislative Agenda

RETIRED MEMBERS COMMITTEE 2020-2021

CHAIR

Patrick Patterson, *Ipswich*

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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

RETIRED MEMBERS ORGANIZER

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

AFFILIATE SERVICES COORDINATOR

Renee Gatewood
rgatewood@massteacher.org
617.878.8208 ■ 800.392.6175, ext. 8208

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

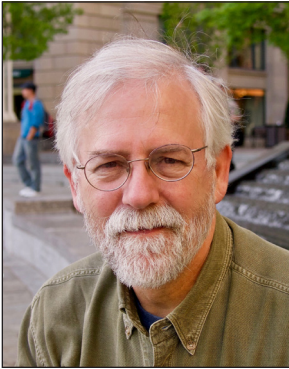
MTA MEMBERSHIP DIVISION

617.878.8118 ■ 800.392.6175, ext. 8118

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

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Patrick Patterson



MTA RMC Chair Patrick Patterson

We can celebrate a number of victories at the MTA. For K-12, the funding promised since the *Education Reform Act* passed in 1993 was finally realized with the *Student Opportunity Act*. Union activism was the driver that got the SOA passed in the Legislature and signed into law.

Unfortunately, Governor Baker

has failed to follow the timeline of the law and is a year behind schedule for funding. Better late than never, Charlie?

The second part of the MTA's Fund Our Future campaign is the *Cherish Act*, which focuses on higher education. That remains to be done!

In higher education, the pandemic has been used as an opportunity by local campus administrators to impose cuts, close programs, and lay off faculty and staff. These actions have been taken despite the existence of adequate reserves to cover costs throughout the pandemic.

One could charitably understand these moves if one took into account the continued failure at the state level to provide adequate funding for higher education. But the actions were taken by administrators *in anticipation of* cuts by the state. In other words, administrators chose to impose a premature austerity on top of an austerity that was already in place. Grudgingly, one can give them credit for accurately anticipating Governor Baker's latest budget, which cuts funding for community colleges and

state universities, cuts scholarship aid and freezes funding for the University of Massachusetts system.

Quite simply, funding for public colleges and universities has not kept pace with inflation over the years. Costs have been reduced by increasing reliance on adjuncts and shifting the cost burden to students through increases in tuition and fees. It is no wonder that there has been a steady growth in precarity among part-time faculty and students!

In an attempt to find additional sources of income, colleges and universities have increasingly relied on the private sector, which favors disciplines that can be monetized, thus further eroding the principle of universality that grounds institutions of higher education.

So, what is to be done? The MTA is working on a proposal that draws upon the model of a foundational budget contained in the *Student Opportunity Act*. Under the SOA, specific funding levels are set and must be met under the law. In this way, K-12 education has a reliable flow of funding. The MTA proposal seeks to do the same for higher education.

There is, of course, the question of a reliable source of funding. The MTA's legislative priority of raising progressive revenue to fund our future remains in place.

The proposed *Fair Share Amendment* is on track to be on the ballot next year, and it is expected to pass. That leaves proposals to increase the tax on unearned income and the recovery of taxes from off-shored corporate income. Come to the MTA Retired Spring Brunch to find out what you can do to get these legislative proposals passed! As retirees, we have the time and the numbers to do the lobbying to get progressive funding proposals passed! ■



UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION TODAY TO

**Get an MTA Retired
face mask**

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

RETIRED@MASSTEACHER.ORG

VOTE: Electronic Donations Coming Soon!

Jacqueline Gorrie



Jacqueline Gorrie

Since its inception in 1980, VOTE (Voice of Teachers for Education), MTA's Political Action Committee fund, has been accepting donations from our members and supporters. Donations that are not mailed to the MTA Government Relations Division in Boston have been collected by MTA Retired members at all MTA functions. But as a sign of

the times, VOTE is going electronic.

VOTE focuses on supporting candidates for statewide and legislative office who demonstrate a commitment to issues that matter to educators, students and public education. The voluntary donations to the fund have made it possible for the MTA to contribute to candidates who have stood up and advocated for educators and for public education — and promise to do so in the future — by supporting the

MTA's legislative priorities and by fighting for fairness and dignity for public-sector employees.

Our 2021 legislative package is robust. It highlights the priorities of retirees, Education Support Professionals, preK-12 and higher education members. It speaks to fairness and social justice for our communities. It is sound and ambitious.

Make a contribution to VOTE to help us turn our legislative priorities into law. Stay tuned for details on electronic donations. In the meantime, here's how you can give to VOTE.

Send your contributions to:

VOTE PAC

**MTA Government Relations Division
20 Ashburton Place, 3rd Floor
Boston, MA 02108**

SHOP SAFELY WITH MTA BENEFITS

A Message From MTA Benefits

MTA Benefits' nationwide discount partner, Access, has what you need to stay safe as we continue the battle against COVID-19.

HelloFresh delivers premeasured, farm fresh ingredients and easy-to-follow recipe cards so that you can cook a nutritious meal at home. Save 50 percent off your first box and 15 percent off every other box for the next year. Similarly, **Green Chef** offers \$90 off and free shipping on your first box, or 15 percent off every box for a year for existing customers.

Keep yourself and your family members safe while you're out with masks from **Rafi Nova**. The "smile mask" was designed by speech pathologists to promote inclusivity and increase the effectiveness of communication. Save 20 percent on your purchase. Another great option is **SewCal**

Masks. Choose from several solid colors, or custom design your own! Save 10 percent on your purchase.

Shop for your furry friends at **Chewy.com** and save \$15 off your first order of \$49 or more — and get free shipping! Stay organized, inspired and focused with **The Happy Planner**. Their customizable planners will help the creativity flow to help you stay on track in 2021. Save \$10 off a purchase of \$50 or more.

If you need to ship an item, whether it's a gift to a loved one or to return an item to a store, **ShipMagic** will help you save 40 percent on shipments with UPS, FedEx or USPS — and you can do it all right from home.

These offers were valid as of January 2021. Please visit www.mtabenefits.com/access for all discounts. ■

RETIREES OFFER A SOUNDTRACK FULL OF WISDOM



The Wisdom Warriors bring not only spirit and experience to the challenges that educators face — they also bring song.

The activists have become a familiar presence at MTA member actions, putting a twist on member engagement by performing songs and leading singalongs wherever they show up.

Rather than stick to the classic protest song canon, they write humorous parodies to fit the situation at hand. “The issues we address are serious, but there is always a side of ridiculousness to it,” said Elaine Koury, a founding member of the group. “Our job is to find the ridiculousness and to sing about it.”

Patrick Patterson, chair of the MTA Retired Members Committee, is a Wisdom Warrior. “I’m a musical kind of guy,” Patterson said. “I like the way we can relate to the political issues with a sense of humor.”

The group has dozens of members in Eastern Massachusetts but hopes to add more in Central and Western Massachusetts.



“Our purpose is first to support the actions of members in need, second to support the MTA’s legislative agenda, and third to have fun with our friends,” Koury said.

To alert the Wisdom Warriors about actions or to volunteer to join the group, send a message to wisdomwarriors@massteacher.org. ■

‘HONOR OUR OWN’ AWARD

Each year, the MTA Retired Members Committee sponsors the “Honor Our Own” award. The award honors a Retired MTA member for his or her outstanding influence on students, beginning educators and association members. Think now about whom you will nominate. Guidelines include demonstration of 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

the association; and examples of how the nominee has improved the image of public education. ■

The nomination form, which is due May 28, will be included in the March/April issue of the *Reporter* and can be found at www.massteacher.org/honorourown.

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

if you’re looking for news, make sure to visit and bookmark massteacher.org/retired

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: 2021 GPO/WEP NEWS

As we enter 2021, the federal legislative session, the 117th Congress, begins. The bills that were filed for the 116th Congress expire and need to be refiled. During the 116th congressional session a number of bills were filed regarding the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO), often referred to by those impacted as the “Evil Twins,” from total repeal to the modification of one or both offsets. In light of the ongoing exigencies we face as a nation, nothing really happened on any of the bills regarding the GPO and WEP in 2020.

Now new bills must be filed for the new session. *The Social Security Fairness Act* has been the vehicle in Congress that would repeal both offsets for many congressional sessions. As of this writing there has not been a *Social Security Fairness Act of 2021* filed, but it is anticipated that one will be forthcoming. We will keep you posted when a bill has been filed, because it is important to be sure that members of the Massachusetts congressional delegation sign on as co-sponsors immediately. Under House rules, if a bill gets 290 co-sponsors, that bill must

come up for a vote in the House. The biggest obstacle in past congressional sessions has been that the bill gets moved “to committee” and never comes up for a vote on the House floor, where there would be a debate. At the end of 2020, the *Social Security Fairness Act of 2019* had 245 sponsors, just 45 co-sponsors short to guarantee a vote in the House.

In the past, every member of the Massachusetts delegation has co-sponsored the *Social Security Fairness Act*. There is no doubt they will do so again, but it’s important we get them to co-sponsor immediately. A House vote is the first step. During the debate, perhaps instead of repeal, the GPO and WEP can be reformed. So reaching that 290 co-sponsor threshold could provide a procedural avenue to advance the legislation.

Another bright spot, as we move into the 117th congressional session, is that part of the Biden platform is support for repeal of the WEP and GPO. The Biden plan will get rid of the benefit cuts for workers and surviving beneficiaries who happen to be covered by both Social Security and another pension. ■

STATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: ENSURING A DIGNIFIED RETIREMENT

Fair and Dignified Retirement Bill:

- Immediately increase the COLA base from \$13,000 to \$18,000 and over time raise the base to align with Social Security’s maximum allowable benefit for an individual worker (\$36,132 in 2020).
- Freeze municipal retiree premium contribution rates.
- Cap out-of-pocket expense for non-Medicare-eligible retirees.

Early Retirement Incentive Bill:

- Provides MTRS members with an option to purchase additional years in age or years of service (or a combination of the two).
- This incentive would be open to MTRS members who agree to purchase their time and retire during the limited enrollment period.
- Mandatory backfill language would be included in order to avoid teacher shortages.

MTRS RetirementPlus Bill:

- To correct a RetirementPlus enrollment issue impacting certain members of the Massachusetts Teachers’ Retirement System.



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

REPORT FROM THE MTA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Andrei Joseph



MTA RMC Member Andrei Joseph

The biggest concerns of elected MTA leadership continue to be the COVID-19 pandemic and obtaining the necessary funding for public education. While circumstances vary greatly among our nearly 400 statewide locals, there is widespread concern, even fear, about the virus and its impact on our members, our students

and our communities.

The All Presidents' Meeting on Jan. 23 documented a broad lack of trust in the governor and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. There remains a lack of safety, with issues ranging from old buildings that lack HVAC systems to inadequate distancing of students. Rather than a clear plan for early vaccinations — one that would include higher education members — the state provides moving benchmarks and a continued insistence on MCAS testing. Schools are not “closed.” In fact, there are overwhelming workloads, increased stress, frustration with teaching models and tension with parents and families who want full, in-person learning.

We continue to advocate for robust funding for public education at all levels. The pandemic cannot be allowed to interfere with investment in a public good. The Government Relations Division of the MTA is working with legislators to update the *Cherish Act* to support higher education, as the deadline to file legislation has been moved from January 15

to February 19. We will have a kickoff campaign in February. Another method for adequate funding includes a creative approach to municipalities obtaining bonds. Currently, cities and towns are charged high interest rates for municipal bonds. The state and municipalities now pay \$2 billion annually in interest. Saqib Bhatti, the co-executive director of the Action Center on Race and the Economy, presented the Cancel Wall Street Campaign to the Executive Committee. This campaign calls on the Federal Reserve to make long-term, zero percent loans to all governments and agencies. We voted to join the Greater Boston Labor Council and several SEIU locals in this national campaign. I voted yes.

At the MTA Board level, we are committing ourselves to internal education: If we are a social justice union, how do we understand race, class and gender and their influence on each other? Can we engage in “Courageous Conversations” to examine the structure of our union and our behavior within it?

Meanwhile, we made several hiring decisions to implement the blueprint for a new, reorganized MTA. You can read more at massteacher.org.

We moved money in accounts to fund negotiated salaries and wages and spent \$6,000 on furniture for MTA headquarters in Quincy. I voted yes on all of these matters.

Finally, we are taking the necessary technological and legal steps to set up an online method of contributing to VOTE, our political action committee that supports candidates who support public education. (For details on VOTE PAC, see page 3). ■

FREQUENTLY REQUESTED CONTACT INFORMATION

Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement System (MTRS) www.mass.gov/mtrs	State Board of Retirement www.mass.gov/treasury/retirement/state-board-of-retire
MTRS Headquarters 617.679.6877 500 Rutherford Avenue, Suite 210 Charlestown, MA 02129-1628	SBR Boston Office 617.367.7770 One Winter Street, 8th Floor Boston, MA 02108
MTRS Western Office 413.784.1711 One Monarch Place, Suite 510 Springfield, MA 01144-4028	SBR Springfield Office 413.730.6135 463 Dwight Street, Room 109 Springfield, MA 01103
Questions regarding your MTA Member ID Card or Calendar can be directed to: Renee Gatewood – rgatewood@massteacher.org – 617.878.8000, ext. 8208	

MEET SOME OF THE NEW FACES ON THE RETIRED MEMBERS COMMITTEE

I am in my first year as a member of the Retired Members Committee. I taught in Malden for 30 years, first as a preschool teacher, then first and second grades, and the remainder in kindergarten.

As a member of the Malden Education Association, I served as a building representative, member of the Grievance and Negotiations committees, and as chair of the Bylaws Committee. I then became the vice president of the association and then president before retiring. I have also served on both the MTA and the NEA Board of Directors. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet with our great Massachusetts legislators to discuss issues affecting our members and students.

I live in Tewksbury with my husband, Troy Lemay, an eighth grade history teacher in the Lexington Public Schools. We love to travel and cannot wait to get back to doing that.



Bonnie Page

I retired from Amherst-Pelham Regional High School, where I taught social studies for 30 years. While there, I was a member of the Amherst-Pelham Education Association, serving several terms as president, grievance chair, Negotiations Team member and Rep Council member.

I was the education director and assistant curator at the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame and education director at the Hampshire County Jail and House of Corrections. I served as chair and as a member of the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee and am currently serving my 10th year on the Leverett Elementary School Committee.

I am on the Finance Committee of the Jewish Community of Amherst and serve on the Five College Learning in Retirement Curriculum Committee, as well as the organization's Governing Council.



Kip Fonsh

UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION TODAY:

The MTA communicates via email regularly with our retired members about topics and issues of importance, including "Save the Date" notices for retired programs, legislative updates and calls to action on issues important to public-sector retirees. It is important that the MTA have an updated email for you to keep you informed.

**UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION NOW BY SENDING AN EMAIL TO
RETIRED@MASSTEACHER.ORG.**



2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor
Quincy, MA 02171-2119

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BOSTON, MA
PERMIT NO 59604

MTA **REPORTER**

RETIRED *The Voice of MTA Retired Members*

INSIDE THE JANUARY-FEBRUARY ISSUE

DESCRIPTION	Page	DESCRIPTION	Page
2021 MTA RETIRED VIRTUAL SPRING BRUNCH	1	FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: 2021 GPO/WEP NEWS.	5
MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR	2	STATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: ENSURING A DIGNIFIED RETIREMENT.	5
VOTE: ELECTRONIC DONATIONS COMING SOON!	3	REPORT FROM THE MTA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.	6
SHOP SAFELY WITH MTA BENEFITS	3	MEET SOME OF THE NEW FACES ON THE RETIRED MEMBERS COMMITTEE	7
RETIREES OFFER A SOUNDTRACK FULL OF WISDOM.	4		
'HONOR OUR OWN' AWARD	4		