

## MTA RETIRED GATHERING IN SEPTEMBER WILL CELEBRATE HONOR OUR OWN AWARDS

Mary MacDonald

### Honor Our Own Award recipients



*Beverly Saccocia*



*Mary Cowhey*

In late September, MTA Retired members will have an in-person event together for the first time in more than two years.

The Retired Gathering is scheduled for Thursday, Sept. 29, at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel in Westborough. Online registration will be available at [massteacher.org/retired](https://massteacher.org/retired).

The agenda for the event was still being finalized as the *Retired Reporter* went to press — but one highlight will be the Honor Our Own Award presentation, which will take place during lunch.

This year, two recipients will be honored:

- **Beverly Saccocia**, an MTA Retired member who worked as an Education Support Professional and was a long-active member of the Bridgewater-Raynham Education Association.
- **Mary Cowhey**, who retired after 22 years as a first- and second-grade teacher and a Title I math specialist in Northampton. She was a member of the Northampton Association of School Employees.

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Retired Gathering information flyer on page 5*

## RETIRED MEMBERS COMMITTEE 2022-2023

### CHAIR

Patrick Patterson, *Ipswich*

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Seth Evans, *Brookline*

\*\* 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*

Rafael Moure-Eraso, *Medford*

Phyllis Neufeld, *Burlington*

\*\*\* Robin Smith, *Springfield*

### RETIRED MEMBERS ORGANIZER

Robert Whalen

[rwhalen@massteacher.org](mailto:rwhalen@massteacher.org)

617.878.8206 ■ 800.392.6175, ext. 8206

### FIELD & ORGANIZING COORDINATOR

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617.878.8208 ■ 800.392.6175, ext. 8208

### MASSACHUSETTS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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Quincy, MA 02171-2119

800.392.6175 ■ [www.massteacher.org](http://www.massteacher.org)

### MTA MEMBER BENEFITS, INC.

800.336.0990 ■ [www.mtabenefits.com](http://www.mtabenefits.com)

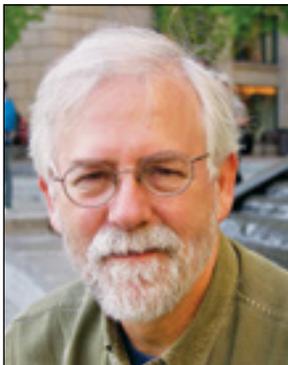
### MTA MEMBERSHIP DIVISION

617.878.8118 ■ 800.392.6175, ext. 8118

- \* Elected by the Board
- \*\* MTA Board of Directors
- \*\*\* President's Designee

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Patrick Patterson



MTA RMC Chair Patrick Patterson

The legislative session came to an end and one of the provisions in the budget that passed was an increase in the cost of living from 3 percent to 5 percent for those receiving a public pension. That was the good news; the bad news was that it was limited to the first \$13,000. That certainly doesn't keep pace with inflation.

About the same time that the legislative session was drawing to a close, Governor Charlie Baker's budget office revealed the state had a \$5 billion surplus for the fiscal year that ended in June.

One has to ask why couldn't some of that surplus be used to provide an adequate cost of living for retirees? Or could it be used to provide maintenance and repairs for roads, bridges and public transportation? Even if one doesn't use public transportation, the news and photographs of breakdowns and fires that have plagued the MBTA in Boston have been hard to avoid. And finally, what about the need for the funding of public education?

But wait, isn't that what the Fair Share Amendment is supposed to address? Some have suggested that the surplus shows that the amendment is unneeded.

This looks too good to be true, and in fact it is.

Back in the era of the tax revolts of Proposition 13 in California and Proposition 2½ in Massachusetts, another law passed here that tied the growth of tax revenue to that of total wages and salaries. When the proportionate growth of taxes exceeds that of wages and salaries, the law is triggered to bring them back in line. The excess is refunded based on an individual's taxes. The more you earn and the higher the tax, the more you get back.

Both Proposition 2½ and the 1986 law restricting taxes to wage and salary growth were responding to the increase in taxes at the local and state level. And taxes were increasing at that time because of inflation, not unlike the current era. The two provisions caused a deficit in public spending, a neoliberal solution that led to privatized public services and a decline in the quality and/or elimination of public services.

Two examples come to mind. Instead of quality public transportation, you now have the option of an Uber or a Lyft. In the case of public higher education, students go into debt and the quality declines because of the increasing precarity of the faculty. We all can provide our own examples of how much poorer public services have become, with a corresponding decline in the culture of our communities.

There was broad support for the tax laws when they passed in the 1980s, but the times have changed, and it is now obvious to most that the neoliberal experiment in remaking our society has failed.

Which brings me to the Fair Share Amendment. You knew we were going there. The amendment offers an alternative model to fund and grow the public sector. Rather than increasing the taxes of those who can't afford an increase, the amendment would increase the tax on those who can afford the increase.

The MTA and the Retired Members Committee have offered several opportunities to participate in phone banks and knock on doors and have conversations with members and voters about the amendment. Volunteer your time — it doesn't have to be that much. As the saying goes, many hands make light work. ■

► For those interested in further reading on the issue of taxes, I recommend this article in *CommonWealth Magazine*: "Could tax cap influence fight over millionaire tax?"

<https://commonwealthmagazine.org/the-download/could-tax-cap-influence-fight-over-millionaire-tax-2/>

*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](mailto:rwhalen@massteacher.org).*

## REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND BOARD – AUGUST 2022

Andrei Joseph



MTA RMC Member Andrei Joseph

### Fair Share Amendment

Question 1 on the Nov. 8 ballot, the Fair Share Amendment, will provide \$2 billion a year for public education and transportation. This ballot initiative, an amendment to the state Constitution, would tax income above \$1 million dollars annually by an additional 4 percent. Enactment of this progressive

tax on very wealthy individuals will be the major focus of the MTA until election day. Elected leadership, the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors are organizing and mobilizing our union to work for passage. There will be canvassing, phone banking, social media and television ads. Working as part of the Raise Up Massachusetts coalition of unions, community groups and faith organizations, MTA is devoting both money and staff time toward this effort. This tax on the very wealthy has a racial justice component as well. The money raised through the change will go disproportionately to poor communities and communities of color. The Retired Members Committee is an active participant in this campaign.

### Discussion of Annual Meeting

The Board of Directors held an extended discussion about the recent Annual Meeting of Delegates. While all agreed that it was a major triumph in the face of multiple challenges, several concerns were raised. First, it was extraordinarily expensive. Costs grew dramatically from pre-COVID-19 days due to inflation. Our hotel expenses increased precipitously in part because of our solidarity stance with the building trade

unions. They had asked us to withdraw reservations from the Boston Marriott Copley Place hotel. We also had to pay for enhanced technology to allow participation — and voting — from three different locations: the main room at the Hynes Convention Center, a distanced room at the center with more physical separation of delegates, and remote delegates who remained at home. The 2023 Annual Meeting is scheduled in Springfield, where costs should decrease — but also problematically, because the hotels and food services in that city are not unionized. Some board members wondered if a continued use of a hybrid model for the annual meeting would allow for increased attendance. Others argued that it would limit solidarity due to the isolation. I expressed deep appreciation for the tireless efforts of multiple staff members as they cared for our safety while maintaining a commitment to democratic and transparent procedures.

### Other Statewide Campaigns and Issues

The board confirmed its support for the MTA preK-12 ESP Bill of Rights and encouraged locals to incorporate support for it into public statements and contract negotiations. In a related issue, the Name Change Task Force will continue its work as we consider the titular implications of recognizing our membership as “educators,” not as the current, inaccurate and narrow “teachers.” There will also be a continued effort to derail the high-stakes MCAS regime — at least in its form as a hurdle that can prevent students from graduating from high school.

In other business, the board was pleased to receive a report that determined the MTA’s actual membership figures matched the projections used to form our budget. The finances of MTA

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### FREQUENTLY REQUESTED CONTACT INFORMATION

<b>Massachusetts Teachers’ Retirement System (MTRS)</b> <a href="http://www.mass.gov/mtrs">www.mass.gov/mtrs</a>	<b>State Board of Retirement</b> <a href="http://www.mass.gov/treasury/retirement/state-board-of-retire">www.mass.gov/treasury/retirement/state-board-of-retire</a>
<b>MTRS Headquarters</b> 617.679.6877 500 Rutherford Avenue, Suite 210 Charlestown, MA 02129-1628	<b>SBR Boston Office</b> 617.367.7770 One Winter Street, 8th Floor Boston, MA 02108
<b>MTRS Western Office</b> 413.784.1711 One Monarch Place, Suite 510 Springfield, MA 01144-4028	<b>SBR Springfield Office</b> 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](mailto:rgatewood@massteacher.org) – 617.878.8000, ext. 8208

## MTA LEGISLATIVE REPORT

### AN UPDATE FROM MTA GOVERNMENT RELATIONS



In the early morning on August 1, the state House and Senate wrapped up formal sessions for the 2021-2022 legislative session. Formal sessions are the convenings attended by all legislators where major legislation is debated and voted on. As required by the state Constitution, the House and Senate will continue to meet informally until the start of the new legislative

session in January 2023, but only to conduct minor business and to pass noncontroversial legislation that does not require roll call votes. The end of the formal sessions was met with a flurry of legislative activity, including the passage of several bills that were important MTA priorities.

Among these victories was the approval of a 5 percent cost-of-living adjustment for fiscal year 2023, on the first \$13,000 in pension benefits for members of the state and teachers' retirement systems. This measure was part of the state budget that was signed by Governor Charlie Baker on July 28. The 5 percent figure is the highest COLA percentage paid since 1992. This represents an important victory for Retired members, many of whom contacted their legislators directly over the past several months to advocate for this key priority. The MTA, in partnership with the Retired State, County and Municipal Employees Association of Massachusetts, had been advocating for a higher COLA than the typical 3 percent to help retired educators better confront the skyrocketing inflation seen this year. The COLA was included in the July benefit payment for eligible members of the State Employees' Retirement System, and it will be included in the August payment for affected members of the Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement System. As a next step, the MTA will continue to push for more substantial COLA improvements, including by fighting to raise the income amount that the COLA is applied to from the current \$13,000.

Other MTA priorities included in the final fiscal year budget are the full funding of the third year of the *Student Opportunity Act*, funding increases for public college and university campuses, and substantial investments in the MassGrant and MassGrant Plus programs, which will be

critical to increasing retention and graduation among low-income students and students of color, particularly at the state's community colleges. The budget also includes \$7.5 million for an MTA-proposed scholarship program called Tomorrow's Educators that will provide tuition grants for students attending a public college or university with the intention of becoming a public school educator, as well as \$7.5 million more for a loan forgiveness program for newly graduated educators. These programs together will help address the dual challenges of increasing the pipeline of trained and licensed educators available to work in the public schools and the urgent need to expand the diversity of the educator workforce.

Another victory was passage of H.4443, *An Act relative to the alternative superannuation retirement benefit program for teachers*, which was signed into law by the governor on Aug. 3. This law corrects a RetirementPlus enrollment issue that impacted certain members of the MTRS who had previous creditable service in another retirement system. The issue had previously been addressed through a lengthy and costly appeals process, but the new MTA-backed law will allow for a more comprehensive solution for up to 2,000 teachers who are potentially impacted. Dozens of MTA members called their legislators in the weeks leading up to the bill's passage to help push it over the finish line. The MTA, in partnership with the MTRS, had been fighting for this legislation since 2018, so this is a long-awaited and important victory.

Unfortunately, other pending MTA-priority bills were not passed into law by the end of the formal sessions. This includes S.2783, *An Act to provide a retirement enhancement opportunity for certain members of the Massachusetts Teachers Retirement System*, also known as the Early Retirement Bill, which was not approved despite the thousands of letters and calls sent or made by MTA members in support of it. As previously reported, S.1683/H.2623, *An Act to provide fair and affordable public retiree benefits*, also was not passed this session. Despite these setbacks, the MTA remains deeply committed to winning a fairer and more secure retirement for members.

Looking ahead to the next legislative session in January 2023, the MTA will work to build on the victories we have achieved in order to further strengthen our public schools and colleges, and to protect and enhance the rights and benefits of active and retired educators. ■

► For more information on legislative matters, please visit [massteacher.org/legislation](https://www.massteacher.org/legislation).



## **MEMBERS GATHERING**

*Sponsored by the MTA Retired Members Committee*

**IN-PERSON EVENT!\***

**DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel**  
5400 Computer Dr., Westborough



**9 – 10 a.m.**

**Registration, exhibitors and breakfast**

**10 – 11:15 a.m.**

**Session 1: four workshop options**

**11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.**

**Lunch and recognition program for the  
2022 Honor Our Own Awards**

- Greetings from MTA leadership
- Recognizing the 2020 Honor Our Own recipient, Judy Babb
- Recognizing the 2021 Honor Our Own recipients, Craig Slatin and Richard Liston
- Award and recognition of the 2022 Honor Our Own recipients, Mary Cowhey and Beverly Saccocia

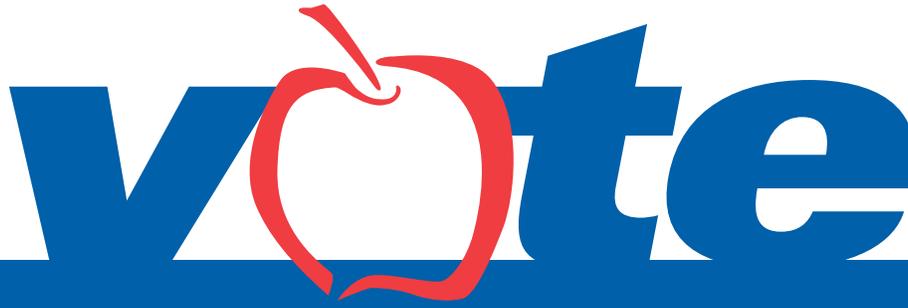
**1:45 – 3 p.m.**

**Session 2: four workshop options repeat**

**3 p.m. Adjournment**

**\* COVID-19 protocols will be followed:  
More information and registration will  
be available at [massteacher.org/retired](http://massteacher.org/retired).**

*Stay tuned for registration information*  
**[www.massteacher.org/retired](http://www.massteacher.org/retired)**



**VOICE OF TEACHERS FOR EDUCATION**

## Elections matter.

*They also cost money.*

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

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

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

*Your generous contribution to the  
VOTE PAC will help us stand with  
elected officials who will stand with us.*

Contributions can be made in any amount up to \$500 annually. You may contribute online by visiting [massteacher.org/votepac](https://massteacher.org/votepac).

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

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

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

[\*\*massteacher.org/votepac\*\*](https://massteacher.org/votepac)

## OUR LEGACY PROJECT

### Jackie Gorrie

**F**or almost a year, I have been asking those of us who participated in a strike to contribute to our Legacy Project. Thank you, Janet O’Connell, for taking the time to talk with me about the Woburn strike. Here’s her story.

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*When reading the latest issue of the MTA Retired Reporter, I found an article about the Legacy Project written by Jackie Gorrie. I thought that Woburn should be a part of the Legacy Project since we were the first community with a strike where the top union leaders were arrested and jailed!*

*In September 1969, four young teachers were elected as officers by the Woburn Teachers Association membership. I don’t think any of us realized what we were getting ourselves into. None of us knew much about negotiations or when they took place! We didn’t even have a copy of the contract. Shortly after we were elected, we contacted the Massachusetts Teachers Association for help. Fred Lambert, then-director of field services, assigned field staff member Bruce McDonald and part-time representative Jim Long to Woburn. In addition, Lou Vangel, an NEA negotiator, was assigned to help us.*

*Over the next six months we negotiated three or so times a week, notifying our membership after each session. We’d write a newsletter, print it using an old mimeograph machine and had it delivered to all 15 schools the next morning! We also kept the Woburn Daily Times “in the loop” so we hopefully would get fair treatment of our contract problems.*

*By February 1970 we had filed for and been through mediation. The teachers and support staff were now picketing at City Hall, in front of School Committee members’ homes and places of work. We were also buying full-page ads in the Daily Times letting the public know that the School Committee was not negotiating in good faith and that we were fighting for textbooks (to eliminate sharing), classes for students who did not speak English, specialty teachers (art, music, gym, library) and money. Since no agreement was reached on these four items, we filed for fact-finding. We also told the School Committee we would agree to the fact-finder’s report so we could settle the contract. The*

*School Committee refused! The teachers bought another full-page ad in the paper which said that the School Committee leaves us no choice but to go on strike the day the contract expires.*

*The teachers in Woburn went on strike on April 1, 1970, the date the contract expired. Four members — President Arthur Hurley, Vice President Sally Potter and secretaries*

*Susan Brennan and Janet Bellizia — led approximately 450 teachers and support staff out on the picket lines outside the 15 city schools. On the first day of the strike, we closed 14 of 15 schools.*

*On the evening of April 1, we held a general meeting to let the staff know how the negotiations were going and to continue rallying the teachers. Our MTA and NEA staff were with us “youngsters.” Three of our officers were third-year teachers, and I was the youngest — a 22-year-old, second-year, first-grade teacher. While our meeting was in progress, a sheriff from Suffolk County came into the room and served the union officers with restraining orders and ordered us to appear in court the following morning.*

*On April 2, day two of the strike, we were back on the picket lines again and this time we closed all 15 of the schools. After picketing, our MTA and NEA staff members drove us to Boston where we appeared before Superior Court Judge Robert Sullivan who told us we were in contempt of court for defying a cease-and-desist order. He gave us three choices: go back to work and tell the teachers to go back and end the strike, to resign as teachers in the Woburn school system, or go to jail. The four of us chose to go to jail rather than end the strike. We believed in what we were doing and more than that, we believed in the teachers in Woburn. As an aside, my father, walked over from the State House, where he worked, and sat in the courtroom when the judge gave us our “choices.” As we walked by my father on our way to jail, he said: “Go to jail. Go directly to jail. Do not pass Go. Do not collect \$200.”*



MTA Retired Member Jackie Gorrie

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## MEET SOME OF THE NEW FACES ON THE RETIRED MEMBERS COMMITTEE

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**Shelly Fraser, Framingham**

Shelly Fraser, an expat of South Africa has been a member of the MTA for the past 18 years. They are a teacher in the Wayland Public School district as the K-12 adaptive physical education teacher.

Shelly is a member of the MTA Board of Directors representing region 15D. Shelly was approved by the MTA board to be the representative to the Retired Members Committee.



**Ora Gladstone, Boston**

Ora came to teaching later in life after spending many years in higher education working in student leadership development and coordinating an interfaith dialogue. Working in the Waltham schools she was a music teacher and the music therapist to the special needs elementary school population. While teaching in Waltham she became her school's union representative.

In addition to teaching, she has been involved in social justice work including the Boston Ujima Project, the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization and a women's shelter.

Ora is currently co-chair of the New England Jewish Labor Committee and is part of the leadership committee in her synagogue's Understanding Racism initiative. She is an avid swimmer, yoga practitioner and has been a member of one chorus or another for most of her life.



**Kathy Greeley, Cambridge**

Kathy Greeley has worked in the Cambridge Public Schools for 37 years, initially as a seventh- and eighth-grade humanities teacher, then as middle school program developer, and finally as a literacy coach.

Kathy represented her school on the executive committee of the Cambridge Education Association for many years, served on three contract committees, and sat on the superintendent's advisory committee for three years. She helped found the Cambridge Education Association Political Action Committee and has actively fought against the MCAS and other abuses of education reform since the 1990s.

She was active in the Cambridge Rainbow Education Task Force in pushing to address issues of racism in Cambridge schools beginning in the early 1990s. She wrote the book, "Why Fly That Way: Linking Community and Academic Achievement," and is currently writing a semi-memoir, "The Life and Near Death of an American Educator."

She was elected this spring to the Retired Members Committee and is active with the Wisdom Warriors. Kathy has lived in Cambridge for 43 years and raised her two wonderful daughters there.



**Rick Last, Northampton**

Rick Last lives in Northampton with his wife of 41 years and his cute, 13-year-old dog. He retired after 28 years as a teacher at elementary schools in Holyoke and Amherst and then as a professional development consultant for the Collaborative for Educational Services in Northampton.

He has played a central role in establishing the new western Massachusetts branch of the Wisdom Warriors, engaging retirees by showing up in the support of our active members in addition to organizing retirees to support MTA initiatives.

He has been active in recruiting retired members to be delegates at the MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates and has been elected as a delegate for several years. Rick participates in the MTA Western Mass Educator Action Network and has actively engaged in several campaigns.

He is committed to supporting democracy and transparency at all levels in our union, with a racial and social justice lens. In addition to educational activism, he is engaged in social justice work in the areas of immigrant rights and refugee resettlement.

## OUR LEGACY PROJECT *CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7*

*We were very fortunate to have a back-up negotiating team that continued to work toward a fair settlement as we sat in our jail cells, or in Suffolk County Sheriff Tommy Eisenstadt's office, where we met with the MTA and NEA. Judge Sullivan ordered the Woburn School Committee to come to Boston and negotiate with our back-up team. They were able to talk to us through our MTA reps so we could let them know how we felt about the negotiations. When the team was able to hammer out a tentative agreement on Friday April 3, late in the day, we were released from jail and brought back to court where Judge Sullivan told us that we were being released to meet with the teachers and have them vote on the contract. He said that if the contract wasn't ratified, the Sheriff would bring us back to the Charles*

*Street Jail. On the night of April 3, 1970, the teachers voted unanimously to ratify the agreement, ending the first strike that sent teachers to jail (for two days, one night) in Massachusetts.*

Our Legacy Project continues. We would love to hear your stories. Simply provide the name of your local, the date of your strike or potential strike and the main issues or circumstances of concern that were in contention. Your remembrances and personal perspectives are also welcome.

Send your story to Robert Whalen, the Retired Member Organizer, at [rwhalen@massteacher.org](mailto:rwhalen@massteacher.org) and get involved again. ■

## KEEP WARM THIS WINTER WITH MTA BENEFITS

### A message from MTA Benefits

**C**old weather may feel like a distant problem, but late summer to early fall is an excellent time to find a reliable heating oil or propane supplier. Luckily, your MTA membership gives you access to two trustworthy heating sources — Heat USA and Tankfarm. Heat USA is the largest heating oil buying program in the country, while Tankfarm is a corporation dedicated to reducing the impact of carbon-based fuels on the environment. Most homeowners still use heating oil, but some either prefer propane or live in an area where propane is more prevalent.

What's the difference, you ask? Heating oil equipment generally costs less to purchase, and heating oil produces more heat per gallon than propane and it depletes slower than propane. This means you will pay less overall with heating oil, even if the per gallon cost of propane is less. However, propane tends to have less impact on the environment. Whatever you choose is based on your individual needs, and MTA Benefits mindfully offers both options.

If you use heating oil, it's easy to become preoccupied and forget to check your oil levels. Imagine how it would feel if you ran out of oil and your supplier couldn't schedule you for a few days. A few days without heat in the winter could be extremely uncomfortable. If you were to connect with a dependable oil supplier like Heat USA, you would receive 24-hour emergency service in a situation like this. In addition to emergency services, you could also take advantage of other benefits like a lifetime of free or discounted full-service contracts, free annual tune-ups and discounted equipment upgrades.

For people who prefer propane, keep in mind that you can save an average of \$300- to \$500-a-year with a supplier like Tankfarm. You would be paying less without having to sacrifice the quality of fuel or service. When you take advantage of Tankfarm's program, you benefit from advantages including tank ownership, waived fees, member-only discounts and much more.

Learn more about both providers at [www.mtabenefits.com/benefits/utilities](http://www.mtabenefits.com/benefits/utilities). ■

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

[www.mtabenefits.com](http://www.mtabenefits.com)

## REPORT FROM THE EC AND BOARD – AUGUST 2022 *CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3*

remain in solid shape. Shelley Fraser, of Wayland, was re-elected as the board's active member representative on the Retired Members Committee.

### Issues that Produced Debate

Several proposed policy changes came before the board. An amendment to Policy 50 – Committees called for every effort to be made to populate committees in a fashion that reflects the full and varied diversities of MTA membership, including race, ethnicity, gender identity, and non-classroom educators. This passed. I voted for it.

An additional policy change to 175.45 – Hiring Policy and Procedure for Management and Professional Staff called for at least 50 percent representation of people of color on Personnel Selection Team Committees. PST Committees are made up of board members who interview final candidates for managerial positions at MTA. I argued against this motion as I felt it elevated race above other marginalized group designations. And, citing U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas as an example, I proffered that the presence

of BIPOC members on a committee in and of itself does not guarantee good decision-making. My opposition went unheeded, however, and the motion passed handily.

Board members also debated Policy 10.26 Annual Meeting Minutes – Transcripts. The issue here involves who should have access to the transcripts of the meetings and under what conditions. A simple perspective favoring transparency and access has been complicated by our experience with having members leak previous documents of our private meetings to our political opponents. An involved process was agreed to that balances access with non-disclosure arrangements. I voted in favor.

Finally, especially as retirees, we celebrated the news that the Fiscal Year 2023 Massachusetts budget includes a 5 percent increase on the first \$13,000 of your retirement benefit. This is better than the 3 percent received in the past, and hopefully there is more progress to come. As of this writing, there were glimmers of hope regarding the longstanding Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset injustices. ■

## ***RETIREES, HELP SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT THE FAIR SHARE AMENDMENT!***



### *Did you know?*

- MTA members have knocked on more than 51,000 doors so far.
- More than 379,600 phone calls have been placed.
- More than 77 percent of people contacted say they will vote YES on Question 1.

Help us pass this amendment. Sign up for a canvass or phone bank today!

***FairShareMA.com***

## COME JOIN THE WISDOM WARRIORS

Calling on retired MTA members to show up to support:

- Locals and their issues.
- The MTA legislative agenda.

**W**isdom Warriors is a statewide program of the MTA Retired Members Committee. We have coordinators in both eastern and western Massachusetts!

The Wisdom Warriors provide solidarity and encouragement to locals in need, demonstrate union solidarity, and engage in friendship and fun while supporting MTA-sponsored legislation and our broader mission to champion public education. While frequently injecting song and humor into otherwise challenging situations, the tone of our solidarity varies according to the issue, circumstance, and members' needs.

We welcome all retired MTA members as an important way to stay involved with our union.

We have set up an email and text list of retired MTA members who are willing to be contacted when we receive



a “bat signal” to support a local struggle or a statewide action. If you can participate in the action, that’s great. If not, don’t worry about it!

To sign up, simply send an email to [mtawisdomwarriors@gmail.com](mailto:mtawisdomwarriors@gmail.com) with your contact information. Please include where you live. You will then be contacted by either the eastern or western coordinator to join the list.

Join us! ■

## RETIRED GATHERING & HONOR OUR OWN AWARDS *CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1*

Saccocia, who now lives in Dennis, served as an elected or appointed representative on many MTA committees, including the Candidate Recommendation Committee and the Education Support Professionals Committee. She also served on the NEA Resolutions Committee and consistently attended the MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates and the NEA Representative Assembly.

Before retiring, Saccocia was an active advocate for ESPs in the Bridgewater-Raynham association. She served as a liaison for ESPs on the local’s executive committee, as well as a negotiation chair for ESP contracts, according to MTA Retired member Lois Powers, the 2014 MTA ESP of the Year, who wrote a letter nominating Saccocia for the Honor Our Own Award.

“She demonstrated the union leader’s activism with her strong work ethic and commitment to the union and to the community,” Powers wrote. “Beverly believes that a true union leaves no member behind: Each member is entitled to the same benefits and representation, no matter who they are.”

Cowhey, who lives in Florence, was “legendary in the Jackson Street School community,” according to a nomination letter written by MTA Retired member Dale Melcher.

Over the course of her career, Cowhey became educated in and was a practitioner of trauma-informed instruction and social-emotional learning. She helped lead the introduction of school gardens, among other accomplishments.

She was among the organizers of the Western Massachusetts Educators Action Network — WEMEAN — which brings regional support to local campaigns.

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

The Honor Our Own Award recipients are selected by the MTA Retired Members Committee. ■



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