MTA
The voice of our retired members

REPORTER

WEP/GPO REPEAL

We Fought and Won

APRIL 2025

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

APRIL 2025

On the Cover Nancy Tynan Cederholm, a member of the Wareham Education Association, once expected she would lose up to $9,000 in Social Security income.

3 **IN BRIEF**
Message From the Co-Chairs

5 **GOVERNANCE REPORT**
Executive Committee / Board

7 **ACTIVISM SPOTLIGHT**
Perspective: Finding Your Power

8 **HONOR OUR OWN AWARD**
Nominations will open soon

9 **ACTIVISM SPOTLIGHT**
Social Security Fairness Act Restores Retirement Stability

10 In Memory Carol Doherty

11 **LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**
A Dignified Retirement for Educators

12 **SOCIAL JUSTICE**
Fighting Back Against Anti-Union Propaganda

13 Retiree Speaker Series

14 **GOVERNANCE**
Retired Members Committee Election Results
Annual Meeting Information

15 **MTA BENEFITS**
Spring into Savings: Discounts You Won't Want to Miss

16 **RETIRED MEMBERSHIP**

ANNUAL MEETING

Retiree Breakfast

SATURDAY
MAY 3

Hear from candidates for retired offices. Receive updates on the Retired Members Committee actions and engage in discussion about issues of relevance to retired members. And food!

Registration information will be available soon at **massteacher.org/annualmeeting**.

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

RETIRED MEMBERS COMMITTEE

CO-CHAIRS
Kathy Greeley, Cambridge
Rick Last, Northampton

COMMITTEE MEMBERS
Maureen Colgan Posner, Springfield
Kip Fonsh,** Leverett
Shelly Fraser,* Framingham
Ora Gladstone, Boston
Joseph Herosy,** Quincy
Brenda Johnson,***** Weymouth
Andrei Joseph,** Chestnut Hill
Dale Melcher, Northampton
Rafael Moure-Eraso, Medford
Phyllis Neufeld, Burlington
Robin Smith,*** Springfield
Amy Wolpin, Florence

RETIRED MEMBERS ORGANIZER
Lisa Lemieux
llemieux@massteacher.org
617-878-8206

MTA COMMUNICATIONS
Amanda Torres-Price, Director
Mary MacDonald, Editor
Veronica Sosa-Dunetz, Design
Laura Mullen, Editorial Assistant

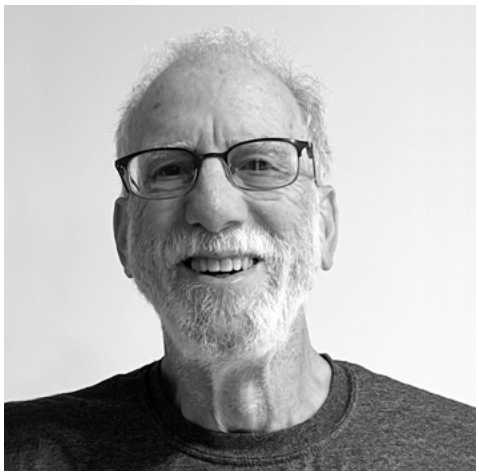
MTA MEMBER BENEFITS, INC.
800-336-0990
www.mtabenefits.com

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 Co-Chairs

Kathy Greeley and Rick Last



The political landscape is grim. Education, social justice, our planet's health and democracy itself are under attack. We must stay vigilant as we try to make sense of the first months of the Trump administration. Its blueprint for change — Project 2025 — clearly reveals its plans.

The Threat to Public Education

Project 2025 takes direct aim at public education, with policies that could devastate students, educators and communities. They include:

- Union rights under fire. Labeling the National Education Association a "radical special interest group," Project 2025 calls on Congress to revoke NEA's congressional charter. This move threatens educators' ability to unionize and advocate for their students and profession.
- Dismantling the U.S. Department of Education. Project 2025 proposes stripping the Department of Education of its resources, leaving students in low-income communities without essential services. It also seeks to cut Pell Grants, expand private school voucher programs and weaken protections for students with disabilities. "If Project 2025 succeeds in gutting this funding, students won't get the support they need," said Denise Specht, president of Education Minnesota, an AFT affiliate, in a recent NEA Today report. "And the staff delivering those services will lose their jobs. We need more support in our schools, not less."
- Eliminating early education and meal programs. Project 2025 proposes eliminating the Head Start program, which served 833,000 children in 2022. It also seeks to end universal free school meals, which provide food security for millions of children nationally.
- Nationwide censorship and book banning. The initiative pushes for increased restrictions on academic learning and book censorship, threatening free expression in schools and on college campuses.

A Broader Assault on Education and Workers

The attacks go beyond funding cuts. The administration's actions have already included:

- Threats to collective bargaining. States including Utah have already prohibited collective bargaining for public employees, including educators, weakening labor protections nationwide.
- Targeting immigrant families. Within 24 hours of taking office, Trump reversed U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement policies that protected schools and churches as safe spaces. Trump threatens to decimate American communities by targeting immigrants who are already contributing members of society and blocking new immigrants from coming lawfully to the United States.
- Attacking LGBTQ+ students. The administration's policies would erase protections for transgender and gender-expansive youth, forcing schools to disregard their identities and notify parents of any changes in pronoun or name use — regardless of the risk to the student. Additionally, so-called "patriotic education" initiatives would whitewash historical injustices.
- Purging diversity, equity and inclusion efforts. The Department of Education recently launched a public portal for submitting complaints regarding DEI practices in public, K-12 schools. This initiative is part of a broader effort to scrutinize DEI programs across government institutions, potentially affecting support systems for various student

continued pg 4

continued from pg 3

groups, including students of color, LGBTQ+ students, students with disabilities, and those from low-income backgrounds. In response, organizations such as the American Federation of Teachers and the American Sociological Association have filed a lawsuit against the Department of Education. The lawsuit challenges potential cuts to federal funding for schools and colleges that factor race into hiring, discipline policies, scholarships and other institutional decisions.

This is just the beginning. These attacks on education come amid a broader crisis:

- Economic hardship. Sixty percent of Americans live paycheck to paycheck, 85 million are uninsured or underinsured, and childhood poverty rates are among the highest in the developed world.
- Wealth inequality. A handful of billionaires — Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos and Mark Zuckerberg — control more wealth than the bottom half of U.S. society, having gained $215 BILLION since Election Day.
- Global humanitarian impact. Dismantling the Agency for International Development, or USAID, will leave thousands of people around the world without food or lifesaving medical care.
- Protecting consumers. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is a bureau that has obtained more than $21 billion in relief for wronged consumers.
- The health of our planet. Along with exiting the global Paris Agreement, Trump has unleashed a slew of executive orders with planet-heating and life-threatening consequences. He is scrapping climate science funding, wiping websites of critical information and rolling back rules for oil and gas companies.

How Do We Fight Back?

We can't afford despair. We must organize, resist and build stronger communities. Their worst fear is that all Americans unite to demand a government that represents all of us, not just the wealthy few. Now is the time to:

- SHOW UP! Get involved in the political process.
- Create new channels for communication and information sharing.
- Volunteer — not only politically, but in any way that strengthens our communities.

What's on your mind as retired MTA members? What actions should we take together? How can we support each other?

We invite you to share your thoughts with the RMC. Please submit your responses to Lisa Lemieux, the Retired members organizer, at **LLemieux@massteacher.org**. She will share them with the committee.

On the RMC Front

The Retired Members Committee has several work groups dedicated to serving our membership. We invite you to join any of these subcommittees to support our efforts. You can sign up on the Retired members webpage, at **massteacher.org/retired**, by clicking the "Join a Retired Member Subcommittee" link. An RMC member will reach out with more details.

- Wisdom Warriors: Providing solidarity and encouragement to locals in need, demonstrating union solidarity and supporting MTA sponsored initiatives.
- Retirees Against High-Stakes Testing: Fighting against high-stakes testing and supporting MTA initiatives around MCAS.
- New Member Recruitment: Organizing educators who will soon retire and bringing retired educators back to the MTA.
- Racial and Social Justice: Mentoring new and current members of color, eliminating MTEL as a barrier to aspiring educators of color, producing articles that detail the experiences of retired members.
- Retired Members Speakers Series: Continuing our successful speakers' series with new topics. Help plan future sessions.
- Dignified Retirement: Work on organizing legislative efforts on COLA and Social Security issues, including following up on our WEP-GPO victory.
- MTA Retired Reporter: Contribute to the four-times-a-year publication for Retired members.

Finally, we invite all retired delegates to our Annual Meeting Retiree Breakfast, where you'll have the opportunity to hear from candidates for retired positions, receive an update on the RMC's work, engage in discussions with fellow retirees, and, of course, enjoy some food. ▪

Contact Kathy Greeley at **kegreeley@gmail.com**. Contact Rick Last at **ricklewislast@gmail.com**.

IF YOU HAVE SOME NEWS from your local retired group that you wish to share, please send it to Lisa Lemieux at **LLemieux@massteacher.org.**

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR NEWS, make sure to visit and bookmark **massteacher.org/retired.**

Executive Committee / Board Report

Andrei Joseph

As we approach the Annual Meeting, both the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors have understandably focused on developing our budget and clarifying our goals for the coming year.

We truly have an extraordinary, democratic budget process which begins with meetings between division managers and the executive director-treasurer, travels through the Advisory Budget Committee, the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors only to place ultimate power in the members at Annual Meeting. There, each delegate is provided with a large, detailed, line-by-line proposed budget open to amendment, debate and approval. We know of no other union with this degree of transparency and member involvement.

This year's Annual Meeting will consider a proposed budget for fiscal year 2025-2026 that includes a 2.61% dues increase. That amounts to a $14 increase for full-time active members, an $8.25 increase for secretaries, clerks and custodians and a $4 increase for ESPs.

If passed, the budget will increase MTA staffing including organizers, attorneys, a communications specialist and administrative support. Some of these increased costs are offset by improving our office lease in Quincy and appropriately adjusting our pension contributions. As to retirees specifically, the current proposed budget includes $12,000 for the Retired Members Committee, $25,000 to produce The Reporter, $40,000 for retired gatherings and conferences and a salary with benefits to support a field representative dedicated full-time to retired issues.

Delegates at our Annual Meeting also will consider a policy change that would implement an annual budget with an automatic 2.5% increase. One purpose of this proposal is to provide some stability to our funding. In the past, increases have ranged from 0% to 8%, making it difficult for both locals and MTA management to plan. Further, this proposal is a recognition of continued inflation. The 2.5% increase simply covers the increased cost of salaries, utilities, etc. Under this proposal, delegates would still have ultimate power: If they choose, the Annual Meeting would be able to raise the budget beyond 2.5% with a simple majority vote or decrease it with a two-thirds vote. As with all matters financial, expect a lively debate. The Annual Meeting will be held this year from May 2-3 in Springfield.

The budget, of course, is designed to promote our agenda, which in many ways is reflected in our legislative priorities. Over 700 members offered suggestions to the Government Relations Committee, which narrowed the priorities to 23 bills organized in four buckets: funding schools; enabling high quality, debt-free higher education; ensuring a dignified retirement; and policies designed to create the schools our students deserve.

Given the dynamics of the Legislature, it is very rare to have an actual bill passed. Nonetheless, filing the bills, assembling sponsors and lobbying for their passage can influence the state budget. Our retirement overtures will emphasize raising the base on which our COLA is calculated and attempting to allow educators a second chance to enroll in RetirementPlus, given that some were unaware or misled when the time came to make a decision.

As to the policies section, the Executive Committee voted to elevate demands to increase educator pay to a statewide minimum of $55,000 for Education Support Professionals and $70,000 for classroom teachers, to require a mandatory recess of 30 minutes/day for K-8 students and to provide paid family and medical leave for all educators.

I advocated to also include making it a priority to advocate for "right to strike" legislation but lost at the Executive Committee level by a vote of 3 to 7. The opposition was not so much ideological as arguing that other issues were more likely to prevail and that lobbying for too many priorities was not practical.

This coming year we will have to protect our Question 2 victory, which

continued pg 6

continued from pg 5

quashed the MCAS graduation requirement. We have already beaten back several local attempts to reinstitute the onerous standard. And a plan for an Opt-Out Campaign for the remainder of the test will be brought for consideration at the Annual Meeting.

We held an intriguing discussion regarding the possibility of further ballot initiatives. While undeniably expensive, we have a track record of success: opposing charter schools, approving the "millionaire's tax" and eliminating the MCAS graduation requirement. Given the difficulties with the Legislature, is this a method we want to continue to embrace? If so, with what issue(s)? We will survey members to gauge their interest, including their willingness to actually work on a campaign. There is some immediacy to this as initiatives that would appear on the November 2026 ballot must be filed by August 6, 2025.

The ascendance of an authoritarian regime in Washington has prompted an examination of what role our union can take in helping to protect the most threatened and marginalized communities we serve. Truly horrific attacks are coming or have already arrived: eliminating PELL Grants, defunding higher education, ending federal support for institutions if they retain diversity initiatives, eliminating the U.S. Department of Education itself.

On a national level, the NEA has provided resources. Here in Massachusetts, we have already distributed over 100,000 "Know Your Rights" cards through our locals while also holding trainings for our staff and educators. We have purchased simultaneous translation equipment to aid meetings and supported a growing number of local demonstrations. I offered Wisdom Warrior support as another method of expressing solidarity with those most threatened. This new political landscape also prompted discussion as to whether new formations are necessary. Which coalitions should we work in? Should we put a serious amount of money into a political action committee? Is a new political party called for?

There continues to be a determined line of guest speakers who wish to address our Board meetings. Many, but not all, have wanted to address issues related to MTA and its connection to the developments in Israel/Gaza. Once, 61 people signed up! This has provided us with the challenge of how to encourage democracy, respect member participation and still balance that with the need to have adequate time to address our agenda. We have modified our guest speaker policy to limit the length of time offered to each speaker. These changes were motivated by an effort to ensure that anyone who took the trouble to come to speak (or join by video) would be heard and to guarantee that different voices and perspectives were considered.

The actual issues regarding MTA and Israel/Gaza fell into two areas: pension funds and the curriculum resources available on our website. A motion that originally required all MTA staff pension funds to be divested from businesses that provided arms or other forms of military assistance to the state of Israel was amended to eliminate the specific reference to Israel. I voted to support the amendment. The subsequent amended motion instructing that our staff pension funds be divested from all forms of military assistance passed overwhelmingly. I voted for this too. Guest speakers and some Board members spoke fervently that the MTA should remove the curriculum resources regarding Israel/Gaza. Guest speakers and some Board members spoke fervently that MTA must retain these resources while trusting educators to use them appropriately. A motion to take down the resources failed by approximately a 1:4 ratio. I voted on the prevailing side to retain the resources.

Also noted:

- The MTA Summer Conference will be held in Amherst from Sunday, July 27 through Wednesday, July 30.
- The Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee (EMAC) has changed its name to the Ethnically Marginalized Affairs Committee (EMAC).
- We clarified the charges for the Safe Schools Task Force, the Pension Task Force and the Climate Action Task Force.
- An external audit gave us a clean report. We have no material weaknesses, no instances of fraud or illegal acts. No uncorrected misstatements were noted.
- Channeling the wisdom, advice and encouragement of retired member Jackie Gorrie, I brought forth a policy change improving reimbursement policies for delegates to NEA-Retired meetings. It passed unanimously.
- Cellphones in the classroom are an increasing issue. No one likes them there.
- Multiple Executive Session meetings have addressed hiring and personnel issues.

We are negotiating a new lease for our Quincy headquarters. For the next three years, we will remain there while continuing to explore the possibility of buying a building in another location. ■

Contact Andrei Joseph at **ajoseph@rcn.com**.

Perspective: Finding Your Power

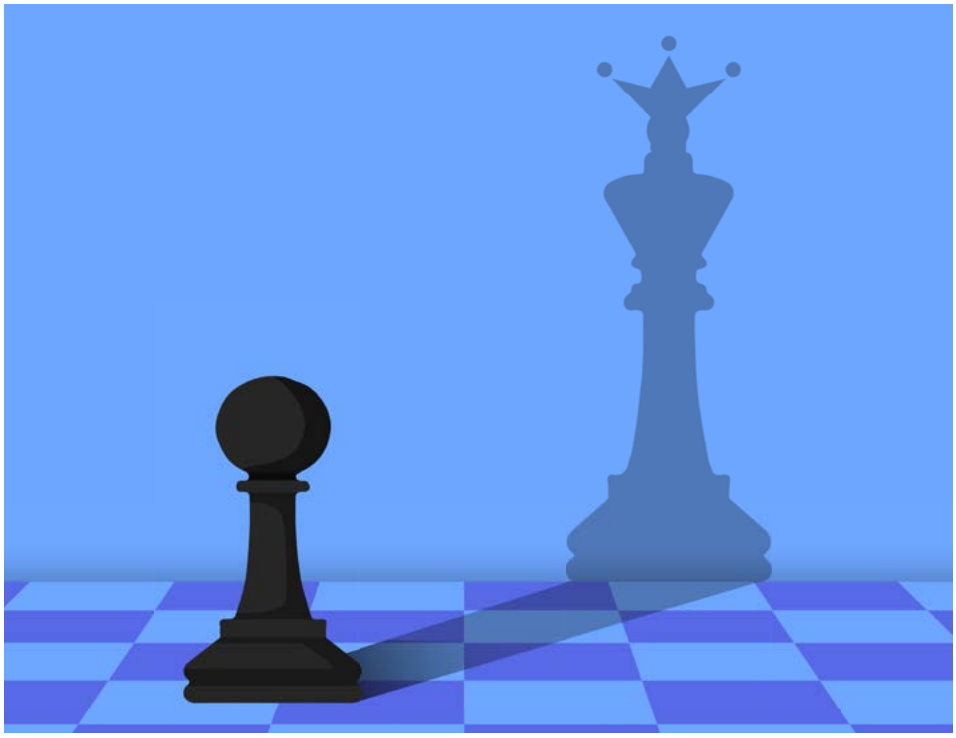
Sylvia Galván

In the early 1980s massive tax cuts across Massachusetts due to Proposition 2½ legislation caused schools to lay off hundreds of teachers and staff. By 1985, cities and towns began to recover as state and federal funds started flowing again into schools, targeting populations with large numbers of non-English speaking, low-income and special needs students. Holyoke, a Gateway community with a large Latino population – mainly Puerto Rican – was starting a new Transitional Bilingual Education model program.

My first year of teaching coincided with my school hosting the program for the first time. There was one bilingual classroom per grade. I was hired as a first-grade bilingual teacher one week before the school year began. The day before the start of school I met my English as a Second Language partner. She had previously been a parochial school teacher for 21 years before applying for a teaching position with the Holyoke Public Schools.

Our classroom was in the basement. We had a very large space that used to be the lunchroom and it had two children's bathrooms, which were a great advantage for students and class activities, and a door to the outdoors. It also allowed us to have two separate areas with materials, round tables and chairs, where we could teach simultaneously in two languages without disturbing each other.

Most white, mainstream teachers were cordial, a few were friendly. Yet the bilingual teachers still felt unwelcome around the school, given the stares, body language and a reluctance to have meaningful conversations with us.



Early on, I learned not to hang out in the teacher's lounge except to drop off and pick up my lunch from the refrigerator. It was obvious that the regular teachers did not like the presence of Spanish-speaking teachers or students in their school. Every time I entered that room, or walked through the hallways, the cafeteria, or any other place in school speaking Spanish with students, or another bilingual teacher, either the room went silent or we were stared at like we were breaking the school rules or committing some crime. The environment felt pretty toxic for the new bilingual team of teachers.

Twice, during the first week of classes, I was called out of my classroom to go up to the main office to interpret for parents who came into the school office or were on the phone with questions about the school or their children – not my students, mind you, but the school office had no Spanish speakers, so they called me out of class. This continued two and three times a week for the first month. The other bilingual teachers in the building also were called out of their classroom duties to interpret in the main office and the nurse's room.

My ESL partner was a good teacher, we got along when planning lessons and sharing materials, but she never directly talked to me about the animosity the staff felt toward the bilingual program in the school. Sometimes she would imply that Spanish should not be spoken outside the classroom because, during lunch in the teachers lounge, "she'd heard

continued pg 8

> **“I stated as politely as possible that my contract did not specify which languages I could, or could not, speak outside of my classroom.”** Sylvia Galván

continued from pg 7

rumors that it was not nice.” After a number of such comments, I told her that I was hired as a bilingual teacher and my contract did not stipulate that I should only speak Spanish in the classroom. She did not bring it up again.

Then early one morning, shortly after this conversation, I was called into the principal’s office. While she sat at her desk and I remained standing, the principal proceeded to tell me that some teachers felt very uncomfortable when I and the rest of the bilingual teachers spoke Spanish around them, and implied that “we” ought to try our best to only use English outside of the classroom. Although I was very upset, I stated as politely as possible that my contract did not specify which languages I could, or could not, speak outside of my classroom. I added that next time I got a call from the office to interpret, I was not going to show up. Then I asked her if she knew what civil rights were all about. She got up from her chair and was standing closer to me, but did not say anything. By then, students were beginning to walk to their classrooms, so I quickly walked to the closest classroom with a bilingual team and briefly explained the incident to them, which they shared with another team.

For the next three weeks, none of the bilingual teams answered the office calls for interpreters. We all informed our students that their parents could talk to their teachers before or after school. By the fourth week a bilingual staff member was newly hired for the main office.

As the school year progressed, regular teachers realized that the Spanish-speaking students and teachers were in the school to stay. The open hostility diminished and the “Good mornings” and “How you doing?” in the hallways became more common.

I made working partnerships with a handful of regular teachers, especially with one with whom, together, we developed fun, bilingual science projects that could be used in either classroom. Over time, the mainstream teachers came to accept us as hardworking equals, but sometimes we just had to put our foot down and remind them. ▪

Sylvia Galván is a retired member who previously taught in the Holyoke and Springfield districts and has been an MTA member continuously since 1985. She has been involved in community organizing in Holyoke for over 30 years. She grew up in Mexico City, but in 1976 she moved to western Massachusetts where she began working in social services. She obtained her bachelor’s degree and certificate of advanced graduate studies from UMass Amherst and holds a master’s degree in educational administration from Cambridge College. She is married and has raised two children. Whenever she can, she returns to visit her beloved Mexico.

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

Honor Our Own Award Nominations

Did you work with someone in public education who was special, who connected with students or colleagues in a way that made them stand out?

Nominations will be accepted soon for the 2025 Honor Our Own Award, which is bestowed annually by the Retired Members Committee. This award is open to educators who have retired from careers in public schools, in preK through higher education.

NOMINATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED THROUGH JULY 7.

For more information, visit **massteacher.org/honorourown.**

Social Security Fairness Act Restores

RETIREMENT STABILITY

Mary MacDonald Photographs by Eric Hayes

MTA retired members throughout Massachusetts are starting to find a good surprise in their bank accounts.

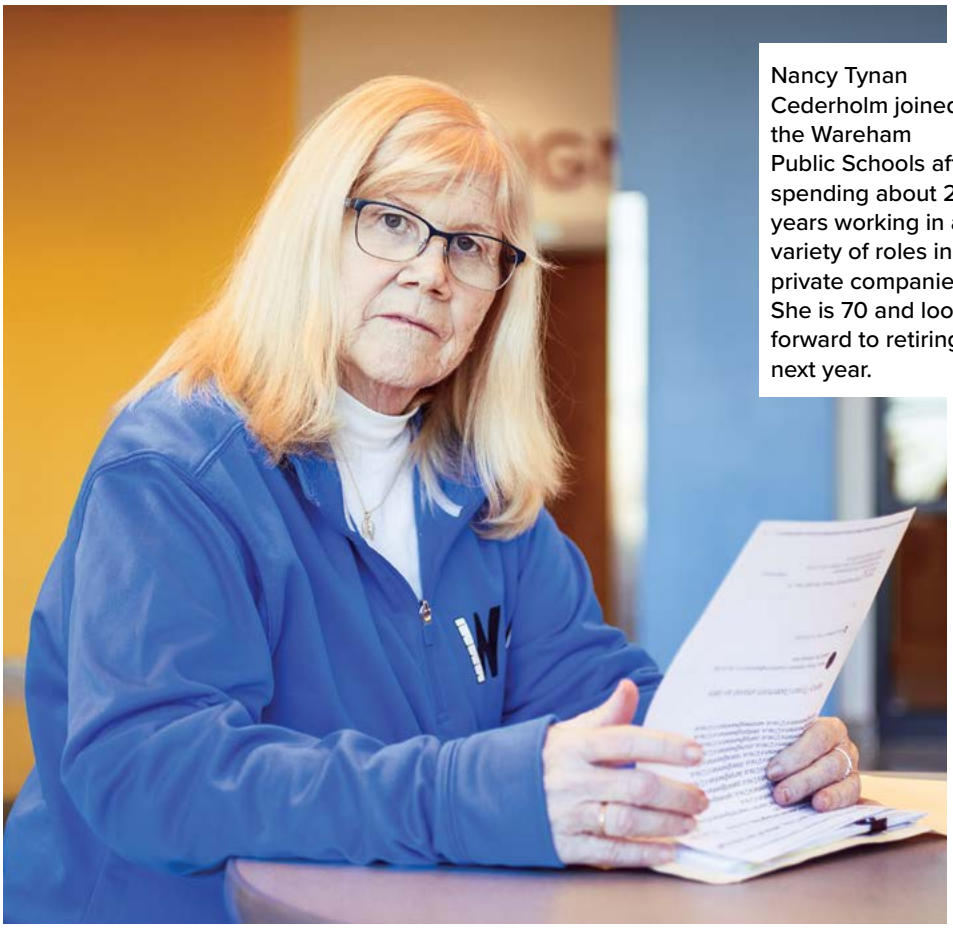
More than 2 million Americans have had their Social Security payment adjusted since January to reflect the repeal of the Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset laws. Retroactive payments have started arriving in recipients' accounts, including many MTA members whose benefit amounts had been reduced by the now-repealed laws.

Nationally, about 71 percent of Social Security adjustments have been completed, according to a recent update by the Social Security Administration.

In addition to helping retired members whose benefits were unfairly reduced, the repeal of WEP-GPO has changed the timetable for active MTA members who had delayed their retirements.

Nancy Tynan Cederholm, who has worked in the Wareham schools since the late 1990s, expects to retire next year with more security. She's 70, and eligible to retire, but is waiting to do so until her husband reaches his full retirement age.

Like many MTA members, she tuned in to C-SPAN and watched as then-President Biden signed the Social Security Fairness Act into law on Jan. 5. Without the repeal, she expected to lose about $9,000 annually. She worked for 25 years in private employment before joining the Wareham Public Schools, and so had accumulated Social Security benefits that would have been reduced by the Windfall Elimination Provision. The Government Pension Offset affected survivors whose spouses had a public pension.



Nancy Tynan Cederholm joined the Wareham Public Schools after spending about 25 years working in a variety of roles in private companies. She is 70 and looks forward to retiring next year.

"When I retire," Tynan Cederholm said. "I won't have the two-thirds taken off."

continued pg 10

continued from pg 9

Many educators have been impacted by both laws – losing Social Security earnings through their own education careers and then survivor benefits from spouses who had died.

Retroactive payments of about 14 months are being made back to January 2024, when the bill to repeal WEP-GPO was filed. Those payments were expected to be processed through March, and the SSA advises retirees to wait until April to inquire if their retroactive payment hasn't arrived.

By the end of April, benefits going forward will be recalculated to reflect the new amounts for most people who had their retirement income reduced by WEP or GPO. Recipients should receive letters from the SSA, explaining the new calculations.

This is a much faster turnaround than originally expected. Automation has accelerated the processing time.

MTA retired members who listened to a recent First Wednesday Retiree Speaker Series on retirement security heard updates about the process, and asked many questions. Speakers included Shawn Duhamel, chief executive officer of the Massachusetts Retired State, County and Municipal Employees Association (Mass Retirees), who explained that the processing is taking place in a random order, and the administration is completing tens of thousands of recalculations each week. ▪

The video of the retirement speaker series event will soon be made available at **www.massteacher.org/retired.**

In addition, all of the Social Security Administration updates are available on its website at **www.ssa.gov.**

MTA RETIRED

MEETING SCHEDULE 2025

April 8	Raynham
April 15	Middleton
April 16	New Bedford
April 22	Hyannis
April 23	Fall River
April 28	Silver Lake Region

Visit us at **massteacher.org/retired** or call 508-436-0774

IN MEMORY

CAROL DOHERTY

The MTA expresses its sincere condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Carol Doherty, an ardent supporter of public education, who died on Feb. 15.

Carol was a state representative in Massachusetts since 2020 and a former president of the MTA, serving for two terms from 1980 to 1984. She previously was the president of the Taunton Education Association and served on the Taunton School Committee. Carol knew firsthand the challenges educators face having taught and worked as a guidance counselor for many years.

As a state representative for a district that includes Taunton and Easton, she sponsored many education bills, and this year was a co-sponsor of legislation that would ensure greater transparency and disclosure of fees in 403(b) retirement plans.

"A dedicated unionist, she fought tirelessly for working families, ensuring that preK-16 educators had a voice in shaping Massachusetts' public education system," said MTA President Max Page and Vice President Deb McCarthy, in a statement. ▪

To read the complete obituary of the late Carol Doherty, please visit **https://www.hathawayfunerals.com/obituary/carol-doherty**.

CAROL DOHERTY
State Representative

A Dignified Retirement for Educators

Mary MacDonald

The legislative priorities of the MTA fall into four broad categories for 2025-2026. Along with legislation and policies that would address a fiscal crisis facing public schools throughout the state, the union is advocating for high-quality, debt-free public higher education, preparation for students that will set them up for success throughout their lives, and protection and support for educators' retirement.

The platform is contained in more than 20 bills that have been filed in the 2025-2026 legislative session, as well as in feedback to legislative leaders on Governor Maura Healey's budget proposal.

Fiscal Crisis

Priority bills include fixing the Chapter 70 inflation glitch, to ensure that funding for public schools keeps pace with real costs. The legislation would require that state funding to public school districts keep pace with inflation over time. Absent this fix, Chapter 70 will not account for actual inflation above the current 4.5 percent inflation cap.

Debt-Free, High-Quality Public Higher Ed

Legislation includes a bill that would declare free public higher education as a right of all residents of Massachusetts, provide free tuition and fees for all students and create a grant for students who meet the income eligibility for federal Pell Grants that will cover the additional costs of attendance, including room and board, books and supplies, transportation and personal expenses.

Education advocates, including members of the MTA and AFT-Massachusetts, gathered together on Lobby Day at the State House in February.

Creating Schools Our Students Deserve

A variety of bills would address educator salaries and student learning conditions, including legislation to set a minimum salary level for Education Support Professionals at $55,000 and for teachers at $70,000, and requiring all public school districts to adopt the MassCore requirements for students in high school, a platform that includes four years of English, four years of math and three years of a lab-based science.

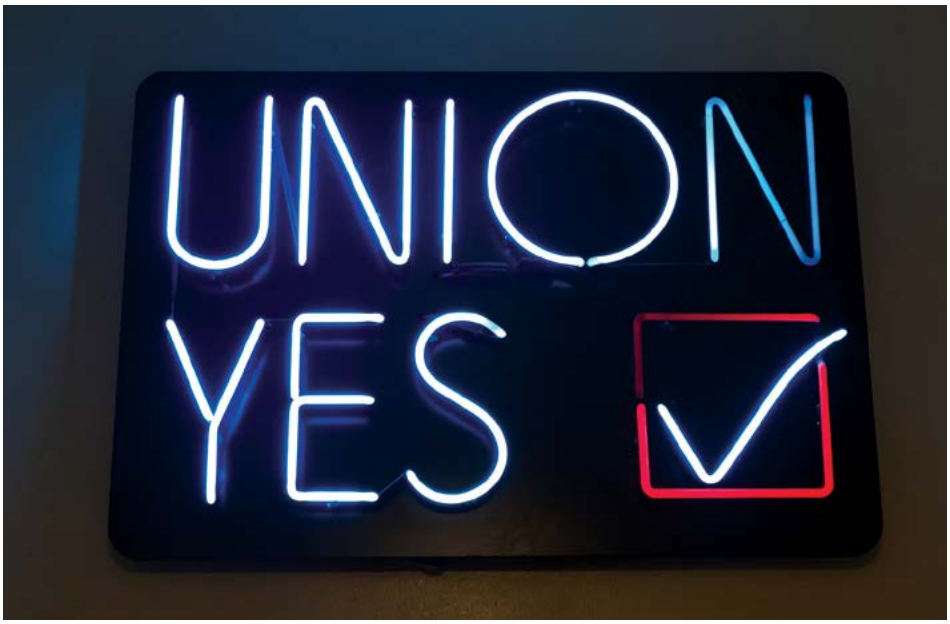
Fighting for a Dignified Retirement

The COLA received by retired educators on their state pension has not kept up with inflation, and one of the reasons why is it's calculated on a base of $13,000 that hasn't budged in a decade. One of the bills introduced on behalf of the MTA would raise that threshold to $18,000 and ensure that it increases over time. In addition, the union is backing legislation that would give active members another chance to enroll in RetirementPlus. Flaws in the original rollout process left many members behind inadvertently, and this would allow active members to have a one-time opportunity to opt-in to the program. Members would have to have been hired before July 1, 2001, and make a buyback payment that makes up for the amount they would have paid into retirement, had they been making 11 percent contributions. ▪

To read all of the legislative priorities for the 2025-2026 session, please visit **massteacher.org/legislation**.

Fighting Back Against Anti-Union Propaganda

Dale Melcher



Our increasingly popular First Wednesday Retiree Speaker Series kicked off in 2025 with a talk on "Media and Bias" by Charlotte Ryan, a recently retired UMass Lowell professor and MTA member. Ryan spoke about attacks on educators, focusing on the Freedom Foundation, a right-wing organization. Her discussion of how propaganda campaigns work was particularly compelling.

Using World War I as an example, she explained how propaganda depends on big lies directed at the masses, which are meant to elicit fear, resentment, hate and dehumanize a group of people and tap into emotions such as patriotism. Through disinformation campaigns, using targeted media that selectively use facts, they build on existing prejudices and stereotypes. The Freedom Foundation's attacks on public sector educators claim we don't want accountability (i.e. we're opposed to testing and evaluation!), that we're a lazy special interest group protected by our unions, and our demands are bankrupting cities and towns. The solution it proposes is privatization (i.e. vouchers), free market competition (i.e. charter schools), and parental choice, which they claim will restore excellence and efficiency.

Ryan shared a case study of an effective response to these positions from an educators' contract campaign in 2015, in St. Paul, Minnesota. Rather than defensively counter the negative stereotypes of teachers, the St. Paul educators ran a positive image and message. Pictures of educators working with small groups of students were paired with messaging of a contract demand to decrease class sizes, giving more time for individual attention and more flexibility for parent/teacher interaction. Instead of being a special interest group, teachers made clear through images and words that they became educators because they care about children. They developed a home visit program that built close connections with caregivers based on common concerns and allowed them to directly communicate the union's goals. The takeaway – educator, parent/caregiver community coalitions and a structured campaign are a winning strategy to counter the anti-educator and anti-union propaganda. And it begins with a vision for the schools that our children and communities deserve. This is a tactic that the MTA has embraced.

Upcoming talks in the Speaker Series include "Meeting the Challenges for Educators of Color" on May 7 and "Books Not Bombs: A Look at Education Funding" on June 4. ▪

Our most recent talk, on "Dignified Retirement," had a great deal of useful information on the repeal of WEP/GPO and what that means for many retirees. The video will be made available soon on the Retired website, at **massteacher.org/retired**. This is also the link to register for our upcoming Speaker Series talks.

FIRST WEDNESDAY RETIREE SPEAKER SERIES

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.

Registration information will be posted at **massteacher.org/retired.**

MAY 7 **Meeting the Challenges for Educators of Color**

Phyllis Neufeld, Marguerite Foster-Franklin, Joe Zellner & Rhonda Hall-Reynolds

Responding as retirees to the challenges facing educators of color, the Retired Members Committee asked ourselves what we could do to help. Our conversations with retirees of color led to several actions, including a collaboration with the New Member Committee and the Ethnically Marginalized Affairs Committee to create the "Mentoring of New Educators of Color" program, which pairs each mentee with a retired educator of color mentor. Join us to hear more about our work to increase the involvement of retirees of color and the stories of our mentors and mentees as they navigate(d) the field of education.

JUNE 4 **Books Not Bombs: A Look at Education Funding**

Jonathan King, Ph.D., co-chair of Massachusetts Peace Action

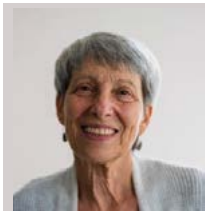
Do you ever wonder why we seem to have enough money for the military but not enough for schools? Given the historic dependence of public schools on local property taxes and state-level programs, many educators and parents are not aware of the federal funding component. Though currently smaller than state and local sources, this reflects the diversion of critical human needs investments to war and weapons budgets rather than education. The Books Not Bombs campaign identifies paths to increasing public education funding by cutting wasteful and dangerous military spending.

STAY TUNED FOR UPCOMING SESSIONS!

Retired Members Committee Election Results

Four MTA Retired members have been re-elected to the Retired Members Committee. All were re-elected by waiver because the number of candidates didn't exceed the number of openings.

The members are as follows: Maureen Colgan Posner, of Springfield; Dale Melcher, of Northampton; Phyllis Neufeld, of Burlington; and Amy Wolpin, of Florence.



Maureen Colgan Posner, Dale Melcher, Phyllis Neufeld and Amy Wolpin.

Each will serve a two-year term that begins July 1.

Colgan Posner will serve her second term on the committee. In her biographical statement, she said that retired members are a great resource for current educators, and great advocates for public schools. "I would like to represent retirees on the Retired Members Committee to make sure that those resources are tapped, those advocates are heard and our union stays strong."

Melcher has served as an RMC member for the past four years. In her statement, she said she enjoyed working on the MCAS referendum question, beginning a mentoring program pairing retirees with newer members of color, and coordinating the First Wednesday Retired Speaker Series. "I would like to continue doing this important work," she said.

Neufeld has 49 years of union experience with the MTA, including serving on the MTA Board and Executive Committee and as a local president. She's served four years on the Retired Members Committee. "The RMC has made strides working on increasing retiree membership, initiating the mentoring educators of color program and fighting for WEP-GPO repeal," she said.

Wolpin will be continuing into a second term on the committee. She plans to increase learning and action opportunities for retired educators, she said in her biographical statement, "and supports for current educators to fully fund our schools, fair contracts and equitable education for all our children." ▪

To learn more about the Retired Members Committee, please visit **massteacher.org/committees** and choose the Retired Members Committee link.

ANNUAL MEETING INFORMATION

The MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates is where essential MTA business takes place each year, including the election of the Retired Members Committee, Board and Executive Committee members, and approval of the union's operating budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

This year, the two Board of Directors seats representing the Statewide Retired District are up for election, to be voted upon by the retired delegates.

The 2025 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, May 2. 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 other details, visit **massteacher.org/annualmeeting.**

Spring into Savings: Discounts You Won't Want to Miss

Diamond Coleman

Spring is the perfect time to take advantage of the many perks available to MTA members. From exclusive travel discounts to complimentary identity theft protection, there's something for everyone. Here's a roundup of the most popular programs at MTA Benefits this spring.

Discounts on Car Rentals with Avis and Budget

Planning a getaway this spring? MTA members can rev up their travel plans with Avis and Budget car rentals, offering up to 35% off rental prices. But that's not all — members can also enjoy extra perks such as dollars off, complimentary vehicle upgrades, and even a free weekend day. Whether you're planning a road trip or just need a car for a weekend getaway, these discounts make traveling more affordable and convenient.

Entertainment with Broadway in Boston

Spring is a great time to catch a Broadway show in Boston, and MTA members can enjoy exclusive discounts on tickets. "Shucked," "The Book of Mormon" and "Kimberly Akimbo" are playing in the area this season. Whether you're into comedy, musicals, or classic stories with a twist, there's something for everyone on stage in Boston. Discount amounts vary depending on the show date and seat selection.

Complimentary Identity Theft Protection with Securus ID

Identity theft is on the rise, putting your personal information at constant risk. Thankfully, as an MTA member, you can sign up for a free identity theft recovery plan through Securus ID. The plan provides immediate access to all three credit bureau files and limited power of attorney for full restoration. You'll also receive 24/7 multilingual services and expert assistance from its certified identity theft risk management specialists. Want to extend this protection to your family members, too? After signing up, you can add them for just $3 per month. This ensures they receive the same identity restoration services, giving everyone peace of mind.

Travel Worry Free with Emergency Medical Transportation Coverage

Spring travels are always exciting, but you don't want to worry about unexpected emergencies along the way. With medical transportation coverage through MASA, MTA members can travel with peace of mind. MASA bridges the high-cost gap in emergency medical transport, providing coverage for any ambulance ride, ground or air, anywhere in the world. Whether you're exploring nearby or venturing abroad this season, MASA ensures you're protected, allowing you to focus on the journey instead of the unexpected.

With so many discounts and benefits available, now is the perfect time to explore what MTA Benefits has to offer. Whether you're traveling, enjoying a Broadway show, or ensuring your identity is protected, these perks are designed to enhance your lifestyle. Make the most of the season, and don't miss out on these exclusive offers for MTA members. ▪

Details on all the benefits and discounts mentioned in this article can be found at **mtabenefits.com.**

MASSACHUSETTS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

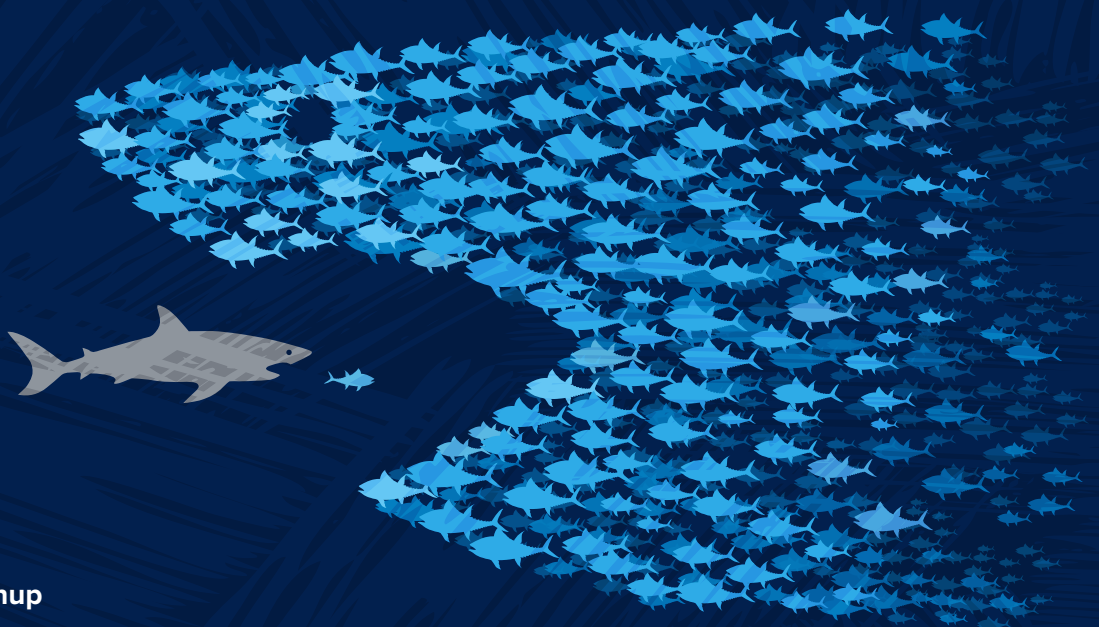
A DIVERSE UNION *of* EDUCATION WORKERS

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

FIRST CLASS MAIL
PRESORTED
U.S POSTAGE PAID
BOSTON, MA
PERMIT NO. 59604

STAY INVOLVED AND RENEW YOUR RETIRED MEMBERSHIP

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



SCAN ME

massteacher.org/RetiredSignup