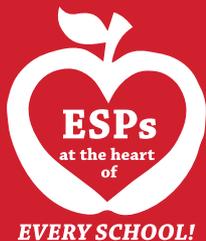


# MTA Today

A publication of the Massachusetts Teachers Association  
Volume 52, No. 2/Fall 2021

## FIGHT IS ON FOR EDUCATION'S SHARE OF FEDERAL FUNDS





2022

SAVE THE DATES

# MTA ESP CONFERENCE



Despite nearly two years of pandemic challenges, ESPs have been doing amazing work in our classrooms, on our campuses and in our union. Come to the Sea Crest Hotel in Falmouth as we reflect on the past two years and plan for the future. Please watch [massteacher.org/ESP](https://www.massteacher.org/ESP) for details.

## MTA Today

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This edition also includes the Fall issue of *The MTA Advantage*



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### MTA'S MISSION STATEMENT

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

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### ON THE COVER

The fight is on for federal funds to address the needs of crumbling preK-12 school and college buildings, as well as other education priorities. At Elm Park Community School in Worcester, persistent water damage has ruined much of the gym floor. Jennifer Cote, bottom right, a teacher at the Columbus Park Preparatory Academy, another Worcester elementary school, pointed out a covered intake grate in the building's basement, where there are several classrooms.

Air quality is a persistent concern at the school, which is more than a century old. At bottom left, Fitchburg State University Engineering Technology Department faculty members Sanjay Kaul, left, and Soumitra Basu stand near a cracked wall in the Conlon Fine Arts Center. Coverage of the ongoing fight for *American Rescue Plan Act* funds for public education begins on Page 6. Also in this edition: a story on efforts to stop an additional charter school proposed in New Bedford, on Page 8; a commentary on the increase in right-wing provocation in Massachusetts, on Page 9; coverage of the Early Career Educators Conference, on Page 14; and an article on the Virtual MTA Retired Gathering, on Page 13.



Cover photos by Chris Christo and Eric Haynes

## Quote-Unquote

**"A lot of young people seem to be going to work instead of to college. ... Will those students ever get back onto the college path?"**

**— Doug Shapiro, who leads the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, speaking to NPR about a two-year combined drop of 6 percent in undergraduate enrollment nationally**

# MTA network focuses on climate action

'We really have to, as a union, help teachers help students respond to the moment'

By Jonathan Ng

**R**oger Grande, a Brookline High School social studies teacher, is on a mission to empower students with the tools and information they need to address an unfolding planetary crisis. To him, it's personal.

Grande, who is co-teaching a new course this year on climate science and social change, is part of the MTA's Climate Action Network — a group that aims to inspire and connect with other educators who can share resources and provide support.

"In my lifetime, half of all carbon emissions from burning fossil fuels have happened," he said. But the solution is being left to younger generations, including those of his students and his daughter.

"Their future is at stake," he said. "Schools should take on the issue of climate change across the curriculum and across the grades — not just to teach about it for students to learn about it, but to begin to learn skills to address it."

Grande is one of many MTA members who have integrated climate studies into their curricula, as well as their activism. Educators say they are working to develop more resources for a subject that engages many students.

"Teachers are really hungry for this," said Michael Kozuch, a Newton South High School teacher. "We're finding ways to incorporate environmental understanding and climate work within teachers' current frameworks for their classes."

More than 250 educators are on the MTA CAN email list. And the issue is a broader focus for the union as a whole.

**I**n September, the MTA Executive Committee voted to endorse the Massachusetts Youth Climate Coalition's strike plan, as well as subsequent events this year. MTA educators, along with environmental justice allies and students, met at the Boston Public Garden and marched to the State House on Sept. 24, calling for immediate action to avert the climate crisis. In late October, many joined the call for corporations to disinvest from the fossil fuel industry.

"We really have to, as a union, help teachers help students respond to the moment," said Kozuch, who has been teaching a class on sustainability for 12 years.

The Climate Action Network has an ambitious goal of including at least one MTA educator from every district. Already, it has compiled a list of available lesson plans for preK-12 educators — ranging from an illustrated book about endangered animals to an analysis of how poverty and climate change are intertwined.

The push to incorporate climate studies into class lessons didn't come from individual school districts or the state. Rather, Grande said, it's the initiative of individual teachers.



Photo by Jonathan Ng

Youth climate activists held a rally in September to demand action on climate change. They were joined by MTA educators, along with other environmental justice allies, on a march up Beacon Hill to the State House. The action was endorsed by the MTA Executive Committee.

"At a base level, it's about students' future, and they are worried," said Michael Kozuch, a teacher at Newton South High School.

His interdisciplinary class was made possible by the Brookline High School Innovation Fund, an organization that was interested in the climate-oriented course. The fund covers the salary of one teacher for three years, Grande said, with the goal of having the local school committee make the course part of the high school's curriculum.

The recent United Nations report on climate change has made the need for such curriculum offerings even more pressing, Kozuch said. The 3,949-page document, released in August, found that global warming is increasing the severity of heat waves, storms, droughts and tropical cyclones.

"At a base level, it's about students' future, and they are worried," said Kozuch. "If they're concerned about something and we make it relevant to our curriculum, then they are going to be very engaged in what we're trying to teach them."

Educators, Grande said, need to contextualize human-caused climate change.

"In social studies, we already teach about issues of migration, the erosion of democracy, and

nationalism, to list just a few examples," he said. "These are all things that shouldn't be relegated to sort of historical case studies, because they are real now and they're intensifying."

The current movement of climate refugees — people fleeing unstable or unsustainable environments due to climate change — is one example.

"Unless we're contextualizing those topics in our current era, we're really not going to be able to adequately prepare students to meet the moment," Grande said.

Beyond science class, climate change can be introduced in English classes, for instance. Educators can access primary sources written by Indigenous people and have students write poems and short stories.

Curricula, Kozuch and Grande noted, also must focus on how racial justice is inextricably linked to environmental justice.

"People who are already being affected by climate change are those who are oftentimes the most vulnerable, those who are economically vulnerable and those who have been bearing the brunt of environmental racism for years," Kozuch said.

At the same time, he recognizes that educators must fit a lot of material into the school year. The information has to be woven into current frameworks without overwhelming teachers or students.

Please turn to **Climate**/Page 23

# Seizing the opportunity to fix what's broken

Throughout the summer and fall, MTA Vice President Max Page and I have been having deep conversations with members and others about the Fair Share Amendment as we work to ensure that the ballot measure passes next year.

In our discussions with members across the state, we reflect on the fact that public education has always been vital to our students, their families, and our communities. But as we continue to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of our schools and colleges becomes ever more clear.



Merrie Najimy  
MTA President

So what do our public schools and colleges mean to your community and to our Commonwealth? Time and time again, we

hear from MTA members and families that public education is the backbone of our society.

Our preK-12 schools are the center of our local communities. They're the places where we teach students how to become their fullest selves, learn about the world beyond themselves, and cherish and protect our democracy. School is the only place where some students feel safe. And for other children, school meals are the only food they can rely on.

Our public colleges and universities offer students the next crucial step toward satisfying and successful lives. And they are hurting, as is apparent from enrollment trends — particularly the loss of students of color.

MTA educators, when asked what resources they want to spend the money on if we win passage of the FSA, are envisioning what the future could hold. They see the possibility of more staff across the board to support our students. More mental health counselors. More nurses. More staff to liaise with families who have English language barriers and economic needs. More full-time faculty at our colleges and universities. More funding for high-quality programs. A reduction in school class sizes and college students' debt. And the guarantee of a living wage for Education Support Professionals, adjunct faculty members, and other crucial public education employees.

This is a challenging moment, but also a promising one.

Our entire curriculum has to change, as well, to truly reflect the diverse identities of our students. We need antiracist, anti-bias education. We must transform our pedagogy, our curricula, our instructional practices, our culture and climate, and how we assess students — which means taking down the MCAS and adopting a more holistic framework and a democratized system. Our curricula must be centered around the rich backgrounds and genuine needs of our students, and it must value and affirm who they are.

We must reject the call from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to “accelerate” and “catch kids up.” Instead, we have to spend the precious time we have with our students helping them rebuild a sense of wholeness.

Already, we are seeing cries from our communities — student revolts against the status quo and demands to transform our schools — in places such as Quincy, Danvers and Braintree.

Another indication of the depth of social, racial and economic injustice is present in our community colleges, where enrollment has declined sharply for first-year Black and Latinx students — falling by nearly 30 percent during the pandemic.

We know that communities of color had inequitable access to public higher education due to disinvestment long before COVID-19 hit and that the pandemic has only exacerbated the inequity. The state's unconscionable solution is to fail to fully support our public colleges and universities.

What we really must do is to invest heavily in BIPOC and low-income communities to ensure they have what they truly need in preK-12 schools — and have a strong bridge to help students go on to college.

Overall, we are at a crossroads. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought social, racial, economic and gender justice to the forefront. This moment calls for us to grab the pendulum and swing it out of the accountability movement and toward education justice.

One critical opportunity is to win the FSA campaign, which is rooted in the broader concepts

of fairness and equity. When the Commonwealth invests in the public good, we all share in prosperity.

The FSA provides a chance to restart the meaningful and positive relationships that educators have with our students, their families, our communities, and other stakeholders. The year ahead is filled with the opportunity to re-engage with everyone we talk to about a renewed vision for public education and how money gets spent to support our public schools and campuses, as well as to shore up our transportation systems.

And contrary to the divisive and raucous views that sometimes seem to dominate the debate, there is a deep reservoir of support for public educators like you, as a recent Axios-Ipsos poll shows. From our own polling, it is clear that most people understand that this is a moment for clarity and forward momentum: Parents like our vision for the kind of curriculum our schools need. Moreover, two-thirds of Massachusetts residents understand that our jobs have become even harder during the pandemic, and their opinions of educators are very favorable.

As we fight for the FSA in the months ahead, we also need to ensure that the *Cherish Act* or a similar bill will be enacted to increase spending for our public colleges and universities. And we need to ensure that funding from the *American Rescue Plan Act* will supplement the education resources guaranteed by the *Student Opportunity Act*.

This is a challenging moment, but also a promising one.

You and your co-workers have made it clear that a fully resourced public education system, from preK to 16, is central to our communities — and that this is the moment everything must come together.

A lot is at stake, and our battles will be significant. But they are winnable. We must seize this opportunity to fix what's broken.

## Letters policy

MTA Today welcomes letters to the editor from MTA members. Letters should be no longer than 200 words. Each letter submitted for publication must address a topic covered in *MTA Today*, must be signed and must include the writer's telephone number for confirmation purposes. Opinions must be clearly identified as belonging to the letter-writer. We reserve the right to edit for length, clarity and style. To submit a letter, mail it to *MTA Today*, 2 Heritage Drive, 8th floor, Quincy, MA 02171-2119, or email it to [mtatodayletters@massteacher.org](mailto:mtatodayletters@massteacher.org). For additional information, please refer to the guidelines posted on [www.massteacher.org](http://www.massteacher.org).

**Get involved!**  
Volunteer to serve on an MTA committee

MTA committees are vital to the work and mission of our association. Serving on an MTA committee is an ideal way to get involved with your union at the state level. If you are interested in volunteering to serve, we would like to hear from you!

→ Visit [massteacher.org/committees](http://massteacher.org/committees) to learn more

# A living wage: a right for ESPs

*'I am so angry at what I see, and I have the power to say something'*

By Mary MacDonald

The call for all educators to receive a living wage is being heard throughout Massachusetts this year as Education Support Professionals push for real gains in salaries and benefits.

Many say they're tired of being told to be patient. How much longer should they wait for recognition that a living wage is a right for ESPs, as well as for other school and college employees?

"I am so angry at what I see, and I have the power to say something," said Noreen Christie, president of the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association, which is active in the fight for a living wage.

Shrewsbury paraprofessionals have been particularly vocal this year, holding standouts and rallies, speaking at public meetings and spreading the word about their unacceptable salaries, which force many to take on two or three more jobs just to make ends meet.

Most Shrewsbury ESPs earn about \$22,000 — and all work in Worcester County, where the living wage is more than \$31,000. The administration last proposed a 2.25 percent raise, which would not even come close to meeting the threshold.

One afternoon in late October, more than 60 ESPs stood under umbrellas in a drizzle outside Shrewsbury Town Hall, holding signs and waving at passing cars. One sign put the proposed increase in context: "\$12.60 More a Week Doesn't Pay Our Bills."

Anne Monopoli, a longtime paraprofessional, is 69 and can't afford to retire.

"After 25 years, I make \$18.84 an hour," she said. "I love what I do; I love the kids. We don't do it for the money, that's for sure. But now I'm at the point where they're being so hostile to us that I'm feeling stupid that I stayed for 25 years."

"Not stupid — but taken advantage of," Monopoli added.

In recent months, many other MTA ESP locals have been raising their collective voices and gaining public support.

Instructional assistants who are members of the Andover Education Association have been trying for more than a year to get the School Committee to return to the bargaining table. They've worked through the pandemic without a contract.

Recently, members unfurled a petition scroll with more than 1,000 names at a meeting of the committee.



Paraprofessionals and their supporters held a rally on Oct. 27 outside Shrewsbury Town Hall to spread awareness about how little they earn as educators. Pictured from left to right are Mala Ganeson, a special education paraprofessional; Nerida Vargas, a high school paraprofessional; Noreen Christie, president of the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association; and Theresa Foley, a special education teacher. Members throughout the state are currently engaged in a campaign for the MTA PreK-12 ESP Bill of Rights.

Photo by Bob Duffy

In Haverhill and Somerville, ESPs offer an example of persistence paying off.

Somerville ESPs secured a contract last year that included a 20 percent increase in base pay, to \$25,000, and permanent status after four years. The union — the paraprofessionals unit of the Somerville Educators Union — had fought for the salary increase for more than a year.

Haverhill paraprofessionals also recently succeeded in making significant gains under a new contract.

"We made huge strides in getting that living wage," said Maureen Zuber, the lead negotiator.

The Haverhill contract increased the starting pay for ESPs from \$19,000 to \$23,000, and it simplified the step structure. Paraprofessionals now move through three levels, based on experience as well as education.

"Education is a fantastic thing to have, and it's valuable. But so is experience," Zuber said.

Such gains are achievable by members uniting together and being persistent, according to organizers and union leaders.

Haverhill ESPs were able to get building administrators on board, and they used social media and spoke at public meetings to raise awareness of the problem. They borrowed ideas from other locals and became creative.

At one point, they presented School Committee members with beautifully wrapped gift boxes with nothing inside.

The contents — or, rather, the lack thereof — represented "the free gift of uncompensated work that ESPs did," Zuber said.

Locals that want to make significant gains need to frame the ESP campaigns for what they are, she said. "This isn't a campaign for raises," Zuber noted. "This is a campaign for a living wage, which I think really changes the narrative."

At the Shrewsbury rally, MTA President Merrie Najimy said that work done by ESPs is essential and should be recognized and rewarded.

Without ESPs, teachers cannot be the teachers they need to be, and students cannot get the education they deserve, she said.

"You are on the front lines in so many ways," Najimy told the crowd, noting that ESPs are always ready to help their students. "You are on the front line of the classroom door — the first face our students see — and that is priceless."

"You're also on the front line for the union struggle," she concluded.

*For more information on the living wage campaign and the MTA PreK-12 ESP Bill of Rights campaign, please visit [massteacher.org/esp](https://massteacher.org/esp).*



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The MTA is an Equal Opportunity Employer. We value our diverse workforce and welcome applications from minorities, women and persons with disabilities.

# Fighting for education's share of funding flowing into state

By Scott McLennan and Jonathan Ng

The lower level of Conlon Hall at Fitchburg State University houses a number of excellent programs in film and video production and theater arts. It is also home to other humanities offerings and to engineering classes.

But the official campus tour is unlikely to include a lower Conlon stop for prospective students.

Massachusetts State College Association members, however, are eager to bring visitors to the building, where they point out severely cracked walls and floors, splashes of black tar that seep down from a courtyard after a heavy rain, and water-damaged ceilings that are flaking off dusty debris.

Guides on the MSCA "tour" stop in to assistant professor J.J. Sylvia's communications classroom, a stuffy, subterranean space where he runs a portable HEPA air purifier to improve health and safety conditions for his 20 students.

"We called the MTA Health and Safety Committee to have air quality tests done down here," noted Rala Diakit , president of the MSCA chapter at Fitchburg State. "Twelve rooms were tested and only four passed."

The poor conditions visible in Conlon Hall offer just one glimpse of the roughly \$30 million in needs resulting from deferred maintenance on the state university campus.

"It's shameful and criminal to make students attend classes in buildings that are not safe," Diakit  said.

Across the Commonwealth, students attending public schools and colleges are spending their days in classrooms, studios, libraries and other learning spaces in buildings in dire need of repairs and upgrades. When asked to submit photos documenting problems in their buildings, MTA members who work at preK-12 schools, colleges and universities responded with a flood of images depicting mold, water damage and structural deficiencies that rob students of everything from adequate gymnasium space to usable classrooms.

The photos are part of an MTA effort to persuade the Legislature to allot a portion of the \$5 billion that the state has received under the federal *American Rescue Plan Act* to address critical health and safety needs in public schools and on public college and university campuses.

As *MTA Today* went to press, the Legislature had not crafted a compromise bill that aligned ARPA spending between the versions passed by the House and Senate.

MTA members have outlined three key educational priorities for the state's ARPA funds.

The first is to provide resources to address urgent health and safety needs in school and college buildings.



Another advocacy point is to increase financial aid for students attending public colleges and universities and provide debt relief for graduates of state colleges and universities who want to become public school educators.

The MTA is also calling on the Legislature to use ARPA funds to establish pay equity and access to health insurance for adjunct faculty members working in public higher education.

MTA President Merrie Najimy said the state has ample federal funds to address the needs.

Fitchburg State University MSCA members Mary Baker, Petri Flint and Soumitra Basu, left to right, are advocating for improved health and safety conditions on campus. They work in Conlon Hall, a heavily damaged building that shows the effects of long-standing neglect.

Photo by Chris Christo

"The many inequities within our public education system — from preK through higher ed — that existed before the pandemic became all the more glaring once we grappled with schools and colleges closing because of COVID-19 and then working on ways to safely reopen them," Najimy said. "It is completely unjust to have schools where the air is unsafe to breathe and the books are covered in mold.

"The underfunded schools in our state, the schools most likely to be in communities with mostly Black and brown students, are putting children at risk of illness and injury. The state must step up and address this immediately."

The same responsibility exists for the needs of public higher education, Najimy said.

The Columbus Park Preparatory Academy, a public elementary school in Worcester, illustrates her point.

The preK-through-sixth-grade school has 370 students, a majority of whom are Latinx, according to state data. The structure has visible evidence of disrepair.

Pieces of exterior molding routinely fall off the facade of the building, which is more than 100 years old. The concrete steps leading to the main entrance are riven with wide cracks.

"And this is after they have been repaired," said Roger Nugent, president of the Educational Association of Worcester, who joined members of the local's Health and Safety Committee on a visit to the school on a recent afternoon.

While exterior damage at the school is unsightly and could lead to a child getting hurt, the interior conditions of the building are particularly worrisome to educators at Columbus Park.

There are several classrooms in the building's basement, which educators say was never designed to be used for student instruction. The few windows have narrow panes located high on walls, requiring the staff to use special sticks if they want to open them to allow fresh air into the musty rooms.

In a strange twist, educators report that air quality actually became worse in the building after a renovation project was completed that involved replacing some windows and doors.

Continued on next page



Photos by Eric Haynes and Chris Christo

Rusting pipes at the Columbus Park school in Worcester and the damaged ceiling in Fitchburg State University's Conlon Hall clearly show the results of years of deferred maintenance. Conditions in both buildings illustrate the systemic decay that is going unaddressed in Massachusetts public schools and colleges. The state now has the funding available to address such problems without further delay.

# Schools and colleges have urgent needs

Continued from previous page

Educators Rachel S. Henry and Jennifer Cote, who serve on the local's Health and Safety Committee, said that "buttoning up" the building but not addressing the poor quality of the school's HVAC system has created more problems.

Lead and asbestos particulate are present in the building, EAW Health and Safety Committee members say, and water damage is visible on the walls and ceilings in several rooms.

Henry said she worries that conditions can lead to or exacerbate respiratory illnesses for both students and staff.

**A**s school districts strategize to maintain in-person learning amid the persistent presence of COVID-19 infections among students and educators, they can be undermined by the problem of poor indoor air quality.

"There are a lot of respiratory issues here," remarked Rigo Sanchez, a sixth-grade teacher at Elm Park Community School, which is also in Worcester. "Once the winter hits and we close the windows, we see a lot of allergic reactions."

A tour of the school revealed cracked skylight windows, taped doorknobs — to prevent anyone from becoming locked inside rooms — and stained and damaged ceiling tiles.

But that level of disrepair paled in comparison to the condition of the gym.

Only a small section of the wooden floor is usable because a persistent water leak has destroyed the floor. The boards are in disarray, and a large section is cordoned off as educators continue to wait for repairs.

"Kids shouldn't have to experience this," Nugent said. "The money is available and we need to get this work done immediately."

MTA members continue to tell their state legislators about the need to use ARPA funds to address immediate health and safety needs in the places where they work and where their students learn.



Roger Nugent, president of the Educational Association of Worcester, left, stands with members Michael Robbins, center, and Rigo Sanchez in the gym at Elm Park Community School, which has long been plagued by water leaks. Many Massachusetts schools suffer from unmet needs.

A tour of the school revealed cracked skylight windows, taped doorknobs — to prevent anyone from becoming locked inside rooms — and stained and damaged ceiling tiles. But that level of disrepair paled in comparison to the condition of the gym.

In her testimony to state legislators who were seeking input at various public hearings this fall, Najimy said: "Twenty months into the pandemic, a survey of MTA local presidents found that nearly two-thirds of locals have identified ventilation upgrades that are necessary to ensure health and

safety. There is work ready to be done — and the state must include school and campus facilities in upcoming appropriations of ARPA funds.

"Only the Commonwealth can provide the resources and leadership to address building deficiencies," she continued. "Investing in building infrastructure is a one-time investment that does not add to the state's operating budget, is directly responsive to the pandemic, and can have an immediate and transformative impact on our schools' buildings — especially if those funds can prioritize Gateway Cities, low-income communities, and Black and brown communities."

*For more information and updates, please visit [massteacher.org/arpa](https://massteacher.org/arpa).*

# Proposed charter would drain district funds

By Scott McLennan

Educators and community activists have sprung into action to oppose the opening of a new charter school in New Bedford.

The state is considering the application for the Innovators Charter School, which would have 735 students in sixth through 12th grades at full capacity. The proposed charter would siphon about \$10 million annually from districts in the region from which it would draw students, based on that enrollment, with the New Bedford Public Schools likely experiencing the greatest impact.

New Bedford Educators Association President Thomas Nickerson and Fall River Educators' Association President Keith Michon have criticized the proposal as lacking innovation. Instead, they note, it will copy existing programs and take away resources from students attending public schools.

"Beyond duplicating existing programs, Innovators brings with it all of the troubling aspects of charter schools that voters in Massachusetts overwhelmingly rejected in 2016 when the charter industry went to the ballot seeking a massive expansion in our state," the local presidents wrote in a joint statement.

State education officials have received the full ICS application, which was under review as *MTA Today* went to press. A hearing is expected soon.

Educators and their allies in the New Bedford area most recently fought the expansion proposal by the existing Alma del Mar Charter School to take over a public building and automatically enroll students from designated neighborhoods. Although activists beat back Alma del Mar's attempt to convert a public building for a privately operated school and guarantee its enrollment, the charter received approval for a large expansion.

The coalition that took on that privatization scheme, however, has remained in place and is aggressively challenging the Innovators proposal on several fronts.

The New Bedford Coalition to Save Our Schools, co-chaired by MTA Executive Committee member Cynthia Roy, a city resident, has been regularly canvassing in neighborhoods, explaining the harm the proposed charter would cause by draining funds from local districts.

Both the NBCSOS and educators' unions have been revealing the illusion of the so-called "innovations" promised by the charter school.

While ICS proponents are promoting early access to college courses and credits at no cost to students, such programs already exist and are expanding in the New Bedford and Fall River public schools. The charter school's attempt to pull away students interested in early access to college, coupled with the expected draining of resources, threatens to

undermine early college opportunities for the larger population of students attending the districts' public schools.

In a commentary published in regional newspapers, Roy, an educator at Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical School, sharply criticized the lack of services anticipated for students with special needs, pointing out that the school says in its state application that it will only hire one part-time counselor and two adjustment counselors. In comparison, a similarly sized school in New Bedford has about 40 staff members on-site who are dedicated to addressing student behavior and special needs.

Yet the ICS application is spearheaded by former public school administrators and supported by well-connected political and business figures in the region.

MTA President Merrie Najimy condemned this further privatization attack on schools in the New Bedford area.

"New Bedford public schools have been grossly underfunded for decades, and thanks to the effort by educators and public education advocates to win passage of the *Student Opportunity Act*, millions of dollars in state aid are finally flowing into the public schools that serve largely Black and brown populations," she said. "It is completely reprehensible that a group of politically connected education privatizers is now trying to rob these resources from the students and the community."

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<sup>1</sup> The American Heart Association, "Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics – 2008 Update," January 29, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> National Safety Council, "Injury Facts" (2015).



# The fight for education is a fight for democracy

By Maurice Cunningham

Parents Defending Education. Parents United. The National Parents Union. Massachusetts Parent Action. Massachusetts Parents United. It feels like you can't cross the street anywhere in Massachusetts nowadays without tripping over a new group with a similar name and a similar claim. A new right-wing-funded, phony and not-at-all representative of parents group, to be precise.

Take Parents Defending Education, recently in the news for bringing a lawsuit against the Wellesley Public Schools. PDE says it is grassroots but it's really part of a national network of right-wing provocateurs aiming to spread chaos throughout public education.

The president of PDE is professional Koch network operative Nicole Neily. As president of an organization called Speech First, Neily pulled down \$161,000 in 2018 and \$150,000 in 2019, according to Speech First's Form 990 tax returns.

It's good money since the major role of Speech First seems to be accepting large donations from right-wing funders and passing them along to the law firm Consovoy McCarthy, which then sues colleges over issues touching upon race. In 2018, Consovoy McCarthy took in \$950,000 from Speech First. In 2019, the amount was \$750,000, also recorded in the Form 990s.

So who is being paid by PDE to bring the lawsuit against Wellesley? Why it's Consovoy McCarthy, of course. The lawsuit largely attacks Wellesley for the sin of offering Asian American students an affinity space for discussion following the murders of six Asian American women and two other people in the Atlanta area.

For a newly hatched parents group, PDE sure seems to be sitting on a pile of money. William Consovoy is in the Federalist Society, was a law clerk for U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, and has represented Donald Trump during a congressional investigation.

His firm sought to intervene on behalf of Trump in a case before the Supreme Court in which the Pennsylvania GOP sued to stop the 2020 presidential vote count. In defending Trump from a New York investigation, Consovoy told the court that Trump,

while president, could not be charged with a crime if he shot someone on Fifth Avenue.

PDE employs veteran pro-privatization writer Erika Sanzi. Form 990 tax return records indicate that before the PDE gig, she was being paid about \$120,000 per year from the billionaire-funded *Education Post*. In a 2017 story in the *Post* that appeared beneath a smiling picture of the two privatization pals, Sanzi wrote of Massachusetts resident Keri Rodrigues, "I consider her a partner in this work. And a friend."

The name Keri Rodrigues may sound familiar. She was the state director and a spokesperson for Families for Excellent Schools Inc. during the fight over Question 2, the 2016 Massachusetts ballot campaign that unsuccessfully sought to lift the cap on privately run charter schools.

As Families for Excellent Schools collapsed, Rodrigues slid over to "found" Massachusetts Parents United, which from 2017 to 2020 was deluged with more than \$2.1 million from the anti-union Walton Family Foundation, plus additional sums from Boston-based foundations favoring school privatization. From 2017 to 2019, the related group Massachusetts Parent Action brought in \$695,000 from unknown donors. Rodrigues' compensation from the two "parent" groups in 2018-2019 added up to \$378,522, according to Form 990 tax returns and Walton Family Foundation annual reports.

One must not stifle ambition, so in 2018 Rodrigues pitched a new idea to the Walton Family Foundation — setting up an organization to be named the National Parents Union. The stated concept was to aim the group's activities toward the 2020 Democratic presidential primaries and, more specifically, "to take on the unions in the national and regional media, and eventually on the ground in advocacy fights."

The Walton-funded internet site *The74* cast the launch of the NPU with a headline reading in part: "Two Latinas Gave Birth to a National Parents Union." And then, another miracle, the money came raining down: from the Waltons, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, City Fund (a vehicle for billionaires John Arnold and Reed Hastings), the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, and Charles Koch.

NPU hired the international communications firm Mercury LLC and Echelon Insights, the Waltons' pollster. While the money poured in, the parents didn't. My research found only four parent organizations represented — including Massachusetts Parents United — and mostly participants from the charter school industry.

Then we have Parents United, another entity formed in Massachusetts. The first thing to ask is: Who is funding you? *The Boston Globe's* Yvonne Abraham asked that of Ashley Jacobs, the new group's mom founder (it's always "moms"). Jacobs not only wouldn't answer but didn't seem to know what the concerns of her own group were or who was putting them forward. In just a few months, Parents United was holding an expensive conference in Boston.

Rodrigues is furious that other groups are crashing the "parents" brand, as is apparent to anyone who follows her overheated Twitter feed. The NPU tries to present itself as championing parents of color, but along come Sanzi and Parents Defending Education, preaching white backlash, and Parents United doing heaven knows what.

That doesn't matter to Koch and the Waltons since both take approaches that seek to create chaos in public education — and that help the wealthy privatizers; a little bedlam only harms students, parents, educators, school committee members, superintendents and principals. The bottom line here is the destabilization of public education, the decimation of unions, and oligarchy over democracy.

What stands in the way of all this is us — educators and other union members acting collectively for the good of our communities. Koch, the Waltons and their many allies in disruption hate collective action but we need it if our democracy — what Abraham Lincoln called "such an inestimable jewel" — is to survive.

We must all fight for our democracy.

*Maurice Cunningham retired earlier this year after a long career as an associate professor of political science at UMass Boston. He is the author of "Dark Money and the Politics of School Privatization," which was published recently by Palgrave Macmillan.*

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# MTA locals win with innovative approaches

By Scott McLennan

At the first MTA Bargaining Summit, a vice president of the St. Paul Federation of Educators talked about the days when his members looked at the union the same way as they looked at a soda machine.

“You put some money in, and something comes out. Instead of a Coke, they expected a contract,” he said, noting the deficiencies of traditional bargaining practices and behaviors.

MTA President Merrie Najimy was also at that first summit, held in 2015, and at the time was president of her local in Concord. The MTA was embarking on a mission to revamp the way locals approached bargaining.

“We came out of the summit with a strategy and got our best contract ever,” Najimy said in her opening remarks to the 2021 MTA Bargaining Summit, which was held remotely on Nov. 13.

Nowadays, the MTA does not need to bring in speakers from Minnesota or other states to tout the benefits and successes of using expanded bargaining and coalition organizing to win better contracts for educators. The union’s own locals possess a great deal of experience — and many successes — to discuss. This year’s summit featured leaders from Haverhill, UMass Boston, Springfield



and elsewhere, as well as representatives from the American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts, leading conversations and workshops for about 150 participants.

Democratizing union work and building solidarity — be it across bargaining units or among many different unions — were the main themes of the event.

Maureen Zuber of the Haverhill Education Association discussed the contract campaign waged by the HEA’s Education Support Professionals unit. Inspired by the contract victory achieved by the ESPs in Somerville, the Haverhill ESP unit engaged more members in bargaining-related activities and formed robust alliances with the community’s teachers.

“We knew we would be stronger all working together,” Zuber said. “Now more members know

about the details of the contract. Members are much more willing to bring forward problems at their jobs. And members feel more respected.”

Annetta Argyres, president of the Professional Staff Union at UMass Boston, talked about the benefits — and challenges — of bargaining in a coalition, particularly when there are more than 8,000 workers represented by 10 different unions and 25 local associations.

“We’ve won some pieces of our demands,” Argyres said. “But the most profound change has been the change in our awareness of the industry we work in and who the decision-makers are.”

Now the coalition has a better handle on how each unit is being treated at the bargaining table by UMass management, and union members can better challenge inequities and disparities.

In Springfield, union educators used bargaining and organizing to drive an ongoing racial justice movement in the public schools.

Tracy Little-Sasanecki, the first Black president of the Springfield Education Association, led a delegation of members who described the slow and steady work of empowering educators of color and how that has led to powerful alliances between the SEA and community organizations. Those relationships, in turn, are yielding ways to hold elected

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# Retirees called 'the first organizers and activists'

By Jonathan Ng

The 2021 Virtual Retired Members Gathering offered a mix of socializing, activism, education, and celebration.

The program, held Oct. 19-20, featured workshops on topics ranging from teachers' strikes over the decades to climate change. MTA leaders spoke about issues of concern to educators, and



two dedicated unionists were recognized for decades of service.

In her welcoming address, MTA President Merrie Najimy praised retired members for their years of service to public education and their continued activism in the union.

Najimy said retirees are reliable activists through their involvement in advancing the MTA's legislative priorities. They can and will be counted on to step up again, she said, for initiatives ranging from the campaign for the Fair Share Amendment to the battle for more resources for retirees. Najimy also urged participants to share their experiences with others.

"I love listening to Anne Wass tell the stories that she tells me of what it was like in the 1960s when we first earned our rights to collective bargaining and what the first MTA strike wave was about, and how it was mostly women on the front

lines," Najimy said, reflecting on the experiences shared by the former MTA president. "That's a history that our members don't necessarily know.

"And so you, as the keepers of institutional knowledge and the first organizers and activists to be on the front lines, have a really crucial role in building the relationships with the local — either from the union that you retired from or the local in the town where you live," she continued. "Help them really understand what union power can be, what union power is, how the MTA started off by building union power — and give them the support that they need, with the expectation that they also show up for the specific retiree issues that you will need."

MTA Vice President Max Page offered an overview of the Fair Share Amendment, saying retired members have an influential voice in their communities. "The key to victory is us, as educators, speaking our truth to our fellow members in our community, to our family and friends and to the broader community, because people trust MTA members on public education policy," Page said.

"You are the people who helped build these schools and colleges," he added. "You can say, 'I want to defend what we helped build over these many years.'"

The "Honor Our Own" award, a highlight of the Gathering each year, is decided on by the Retired Members Committee, which evaluates materials that



Honorees Richard Liston, left, and Craig Slatin.

outline the accomplishments of nominees who are put forward by fellow educators.

The Retired Members Committee found two nominees to be especially deserving of such recognition this year, said member Jackie Gorrie.

"The committee did something that Congress doesn't seem to have the courage to do: We compromised for the group as a whole, and we named two honorees," Gorrie said.

Two distinguished recipients, Richard Liston and Craig Slatin, were recognized, a first in the Gathering's history.

Liston, a retired special education teacher and former president of the Everett Teachers Association,

Please turn to **Retirees**/Page 25

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# New educators urged to build trust with students

By Jonathan Ng

**B**uilding authentic relationships with students — relationships that extend beyond academics to understanding what each child needs — is a practice that Jennifer Hedrington shared recently with early career educators as one of her regular goals.

Hedrington, the 2021 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year, who is now an assistant principal in Cambridge, was among the panelists speaking at the MTA Early Career Educators Conference. The annual event is designed for preK-12 teachers, paraprofessionals and higher education members in their first five years of practice.

The one-day conference, held virtually on Nov. 6, presented early career educators with the opportunity to reflect and get information on various topics that are relevant to their work.

Hedrington talked about the importance of building relationships of trust with students.

“What I find is that when a child knows that the person in front of them loves them and sees them, they’re more willing to open up to the academics,” Hedrington said. “Because at the end of the day, if you think about your favorite teacher, it wasn’t the teacher who taught you the Pythagorean theorem. It wasn’t a teacher who taught you how to use a comma. It was a

relationship, right? There’s something about that teacher that was not academic.”

Attendees included numerous Education Support Professionals, MTA higher education members and new teachers.

Alex Hoyt, a Hudson social studies teacher who serves on the MTA New Member Committee, moderated the opening panel discussion, which covered such issues as union organizing, teaching strategies and mentorship.

Susan Soares, the 2021 MTA Education Support Professional of the Year and an Arlington educator, remarked that joining the MTA had given her a sense of belonging.

“I always tell new ESP members what we didn’t have before and how much the union has helped paraprofessionals,” she said, adding that the issues go beyond salary and benefits and focus on respect.

ESPs are working alongside teachers and students every day.

“It really has helped people feel like, ‘I can stay here because it’s not just a little low-paying job,’” Soares said. “There’s a community here.”

Jessica Birthisel, an assistant professor at Bridgewater State University, said the pandemic gave educators a chance to think anew about pedagogy and what students need. She also stressed

the importance of finding allies. Birthisel was the recipient of the 2021 BSU Online Teaching Innovation Award.

“You can’t underestimate the value of finding mentors who share your philosophies, and you might not know your philosophies yet,” Birthisel said. “As you get more and more classroom experience — finding champions, finding people on campus who are doing the work that maybe feels scary to you — I think is really advantageous.”

Conference participants also spent time during the event in professional development workshops and small-group discussions. Topics included mindfulness, climate change and culturally responsive teaching practices.

MTA President Merrie Najimy called on the early career educators to be active unionists.

“Your presence here today and your participation today also speaks to your commitment to your profession, to your students, and to your union,” Najimy said. “One of your most important jobs as an educator is actually to be the strongest unionist that you can possibly be.”



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# Nomination papers available

**M**TA members who intend to seek election to MTA office at the 2022 Annual Meeting of Delegates or to run for NEA Director or Alternate NEA Director may now request nomination papers.

Annual Meeting elections will take place in May for President, Vice President, four regional Executive Committee seats, 15 District Director seats on the MTA Board, and two Statewide Retired seats on the MTA Board.

Four members of the Retired Members Committee will be elected.

There are also two NEA Director seats and five Alternate NEA Director seats up for election. Online voting instructions will be sent to the membership in March.

Requests for nomination papers for MTA office must be submitted in writing to the office of the Executive Director-Treasurer, MTA, 2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor, Quincy, MA 02171-2119, or by emailing [MTAGovernance@massteacher.org](mailto:MTAGovernance@massteacher.org). Although there is no deadline for requesting them, nomination papers for MTA office must be filed with the Executive Director-Treasurer by 5 p.m. on Friday, March 4, 2022, regardless of postmark.

Nomination papers for the NEA Director posts may be requested in the same manner but must be filed no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 14, 2022.

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

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

**President and Vice President\*:** The President and Vice President will be elected for two-year terms commencing July 15, 2022. A candidate must be an active MTA member\*\* or a retired MTA member within the Statewide Retired District. A local affiliate shall not be represented on

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<b>MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional Ethnic Minority Delegates</li> <li>Statewide Retired District Delegates</li> </ul>	
<b>NEA RA (Representative Assembly)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statewide, Regional and Retired Delegates</li> </ul>	
<b>NEA Directors and Alternate NEA Directors</b>	
<b>AMENDMENT DEADLINE — JANUARY 14</b>	
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<b>Board of Directors</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10B, 33C, 36C, 41C, 29D, 39E, 40E, 12F, 13F, 16G, 17G, 20G, 45H, 48H, and 49H</li> </ul>	
<b>Statewide Retired District Directors</b>	
<b>Retired Members Committee</b>	
<b>NOMINATION DEADLINE — APRIL 8</b>	
<b>NEA RA Student Delegates</b>	

the MTA Board of Directors by more than one officer (President or Vice President). Nomination papers must be signed by at least 200 members, with no more than 50 from any one local affiliate and no more than 100 from any one electoral district.

**Regional Executive Committee members\*:** There will be four seats up for election for Regional Executive Committee positions. The seats are for Regions B, D, E, and H and have three-year terms. A candidate must be an active MTA member\*\* and must be employed in education within the electoral region in which the candidate seeks office. Nomination papers must be signed by at least 100 active members from the

candidate's region, with no more than 25 from any one local affiliate.

**District Directors — MTA Board\*:** The terms for the 15 District Director seats will be for three years beginning July 1, 2022. The open districts are 10B, 33C, 36C, 41C, 29D, 39E, 40E, 12F, 13F, 16G, 17G, 20G, 45H, 48H, and 49H. Each candidate must be an active MTA member\*\* and must be employed in education within the electoral district in which the candidate seeks office. Nomination papers must be signed by at least 50 active members from the candidate's district.

**Statewide Retired District Directors\*:** There will be two State-

wide Retired District Director seats up for election on the Board. The terms last for three years. Any retired member may be a candidate by submitting a self-nomination letter to the office of the Executive Director-Treasurer by 5 p.m. on March 4.

**NEA Directors and Alternate NEA Directors\*:** Two NEA Director seats will be filled by a vote of the active members in March and April, in tandem with NEA statewide and regional delegate elections. These members serve on the NEA Board of Directors and concurrently on the MTA Board. The term is three years, beginning Sept. 1, 2022, and expiring Aug. 31, 2025, in accordance with the NEA's fiscal year. Vacancies for five Alternate NEA Director seats will also be filled. Each candidate must be an active NEA member\*\*, as determined by the NEA Constitution and Bylaws, for at least two years immediately preceding the election. Nomination papers must be signed by at least 200 active members, with no more than 50 from any one local affiliate and no more than 100 from any one electoral district. The policy on eligibility and procedure for the direct election of NEA Directors and Alternate NEA Directors is available upon request.

For information on nominations and elections, please contact John Connelly of the MTA Division of Governance and Administration by calling 617.878.8305, emailing [jconnelly@massteacher.org](mailto:jconnelly@massteacher.org) or faxing inquiries to 617.570.4908.

\*In accordance with Article IX, Section 2B of the MTA Bylaws, all members of the Board of Directors (including officers; Regional, Statewide Retired and At-Large Executive Committee members; District, Statewide, and At-Large Directors; and NEA Directors) will be delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates. Election as delegates will occur simultaneous to, and by virtue of, election to the offices as indicated.

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



# Delegates to be elected for NEA RA

Statewide, regional and retired delegates from Massachusetts to the 2022 NEA Representative Assembly will be elected by the membership during February, March and April.

The nomination period for delegates is now in process and will close at 5 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 14. Nominees are encouraged to use the self-nomination form available online at [massteacher.org/nomform](https://massteacher.org/nomform). The form may be submitted electronically. Alternatively, a paper form can be found on Page 16 of this issue of *MTA Today*.

The election period for statewide and regional delegates runs from March 7 through April 22.

Online voting instructions for statewide and regional delegates will be sent to eligible active MTA/NEA members.

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

The MTA will be notified by the NEA in January of the number of delegates allocated to

Massachusetts. The allocation of statewide and regional delegates will be based on electoral regions A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H. A list of local associations by electoral region is available upon request.

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

The election period for retired delegates runs from Feb. 7 through March 11. Online voting instructions for retired delegates will be sent only to retired and retired life NEA members.

Retired members receive an allocation of RA delegates in proportion to their membership, and candidates for those seats are elected by the retired membership.

Tentative dates for the RA are July 2 to 6. The statewide, regional and retired delegates from

Massachusetts will attend, in addition to delegates elected by local associations.

The Credentials and Ballot Committee has adopted procedures for the election that call for online voting instructions to be sent to each NEA member in Massachusetts.

Those who prefer to vote by paper ballot may request one by following the instructions that will be sent to all voters.

Voting is by secret ballot, and the election and tabulation are conducted under the supervision of the Credentials and Ballot Committee.

There will be a \$1,600 travel stipend for statewide, regional, retired and student delegates.

Elected delegates are expected to comply with the accountability requirements set forth by the MTA. Funding will not be provided unless accountability requirements are met.

The policy procedure for the election of MTA delegates to the RA should be reviewed carefully by anyone considering candidacy.

## Regional ethnic minority delegates to be chosen

Regional ethnic minority delegates to the 2022 MTA Annual Meeting will be elected by members in each region in March and April in conjunction with NEA delegate/Director elections.

The nomination period for regional ethnic minority delegates is now in process and will close at 5 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 14. Nominations are open to all eligible ethnic minority members through a self-nomination process. Nominees are encouraged to use the self-nomination form available online at [massteacher.org/nomform](https://massteacher.org/nomform). The form may be

submitted electronically. Alternatively, a paper form can be found on Page 16 of this issue of *MTA Today*.

The election period runs from March 7 through April 22. Online voting instructions for regional ethnic minority delegates will be sent to active MTA members. The MTA provides reimbursement of up to \$450 for eligible expenses incurred by each regional ethnic minority delegate to the Annual Meeting.

The allocation of regional ethnic minority delegates is based on MTA electoral regions and equal to the number of District Directors from each region.

No more than one delegate from each district within a region will be elected, with the exception of 10B and 44H, which each have two delegate seats.

There will be 50 seats for regional ethnic minority delegates. All terms will last for one year. The regional vacancies are: Region A, seven (7) vacancies; Region B, six (6) vacancies; Region C, seven (7) vacancies; Region D, six (6) vacancies; Region E, five (5) vacancies; Region F, six (6) vacancies; Region G, six (6) vacancies; and Region H, seven (7) vacancies. Each candidate must be employed in education within the region in which the candidate seeks office.

## Resolutions Committee accepting proposals

Proposed revisions to MTA Resolutions are now being accepted. Resolutions are the organization's statements of principle on issues relating to members, public education, the welfare of students, and human and civil rights.

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

The deadline for submissions to the Resolutions Committee is 5 p.m. Friday, Jan. 14, 2022. Submissions must be made in writing and signed by the proposer. The committee may also propose resolutions.

As a result of a change to the MTA Standing Rules that was approved in 2021, proposed resolutions are now due by the second Friday in January and no longer may be submitted at the Annual Meeting of Delegates.

Resolutions are now due by the second Friday in January and no longer may be submitted at the Annual Meeting of Delegates.

All resolutions submitted by the January deadline are considered by the Resolutions Committee. Any resolution that receives a majority vote in favor from the committee is brought before the Board of Directors at its meeting in March.

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

*For a copy of the current MTA Resolutions, please visit [massteacher.org/resolutions](https://massteacher.org/resolutions).*

### **Procedural inquiries**

Inquiries concerning nomination and election procedures may be addressed to John Connelly in the MTA Division of Governance and Administration at 617.878.8305. His fax number is 617.570.4908, and his email address is [jconnelly@massteacher.org](mailto:jconnelly@massteacher.org).

# Bylaws and Rules Committee accepting proposals

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

**Filing process and deadline:** Proposed changes to the Bylaws must be received in writing by the MTA Bylaws and Rules Committee by 5 p.m. on Jan. 14.

Proposed changes to the Standing Rules only may be submitted in writing to the MTA Bylaws and Rules Committee up to the opening of the first business session of the Annual Meeting, which will be held May 20-21 in Boston. However, early submission by the Jan. 14 deadline provides an opportunity for a full hearing by the committee, consideration by the MTA Board and presentation at the April pre-convention meetings.

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

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

**Proper format:** Please use the following format for each proposed amendment. A template is

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

available from the MTA Division of Governance and Administration upon request.

1. Specifically cite all articles, sections and lines of the Bylaws or Standing Rules that are to be changed or affected.
2. Set forth your proposal in two columns, comparing the proposed text opposite the present text. In the proposed language, underline amended or added language. Enclose in parentheses language to be deleted. Indicate the location of completely new language.
3. Accompany each proposed amendment with a written rationale on its purpose, impact and intent.
4. Include at the end of all proposals the submitter's name and local association information.
5. Provide your full name, address, telephone number(s), email address and your MTA membership

ID number, which can be found on your MTA membership card.

**Who may submit proposals:** Individual MTA members, groups of members and local associations are eligible to submit proposed amendments to the MTA Bylaws and Standing Rules. Members wishing to use an official title representing an MTA affiliate or committee are required to submit evidence that a vote was taken by authorized representatives of the affiliate or the committee.

**Current document:** A copy of the current MTA Bylaws, Standing Rules and Resolutions is available to any member upon request and at [massteacher.org/bylaws](http://massteacher.org/bylaws).

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

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

# Statewide Retired District delegates to be elected

MTA Statewide Retired District delegates to the 2022 MTA Annual Meeting will be elected in conjunction with the NEA RA retired delegate elections.

The nomination period for Statewide Retired District delegates is now in process and will close at 5 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 14.

Nominations are open to all eligible MTA/NEA retired members through a self-nomination process.

Nominees are encouraged to use the self-nomination form available online at [massteacher.org/nomform](http://massteacher.org/nomform).

*nomform*. The form may be submitted electronically. Alternatively, a paper form can be found on Page 16 of this issue of *MTA Today*.

The election period will run from Feb. 7 through March 11.

Online voting instructions for statewide retired delegates will be sent to retired MTA/NEA members.

Those who prefer to vote by paper ballot may request one, per the instructions provided.

The MTA reimburses up to \$450 for eligible

expenses incurred by each Statewide Retired District delegate to the Annual Meeting.

The 2022 allocation of Statewide Retired District delegates will be based on the number of MTA/NEA retired members from the Statewide Retired District on record no later than Jan. 15. Terms will last one year.

*The policy procedure for the election will be sent to any Statewide Retired District Delegate candidate who requests a copy.*

# Nominations sought for Candidate Recommendation Committee

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

The committee is responsible for making recommendations to MTA members to support candidates for state and federal office.

Elections will be held to fill the following seats on the Candidate Recommendation Committee: two seats in Congressional District 1 and one seat in Congressional District 3. Terms on the committee last for three years. The committee member must reside in the congressional district to be represented.

Any MTA member interested in running for the CRC should obtain the nomination form online at

[massteacher.org/nomform](http://massteacher.org/nomform) or contact John Connelly in the MTA Division of Governance and Administration. He can be reached by calling 617.878.8305 or emailing [jconnelly@massteacher.org](mailto:jconnelly@massteacher.org).

The nomination form and a biographical statement of not more than 100 words must be received by Dec. 30. Those eligible to vote for CRC members are delegates to the past year's MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates who reside in the specified congressional district.

Upon request, candidates will be provided with a list of MTA Annual Meeting delegates for the congressional district, along with names and addresses.

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

Ballots including the candidates' biographical statements will be sent to the electorate on the first Friday in February (Feb. 4) and must be returned no later than 5 p.m. on the last Friday in February (Feb. 25).

The CRC terms will begin on March 15, 2022. Members are eligible to be elected for two consecutive three-year terms. In no event can a person hold one of these positions for more than six consecutive years.



## 2022 HCR AWARD NOMINATIONS

The MTA Human Relations Committee is soliciting nominations for the 2022 MTA Human and Civil Rights Awards, which honor individuals and groups for showing extraordinary dedication to civil rights and human relations.

The awards will be presented on Friday, June 17, 2022, at the 2022 Human and Civil Rights Awards celebration. The location will be posted at [massteacher.org/hcr](https://massteacher.org/hcr) when it becomes available.

For further information, please email Mary Gilgallon, director of the Division of Governance and Administration, at [mgilgallon@massteacher.org](mailto:mgilgallon@massteacher.org).

**NOMINATIONS ARE DUE MARCH 4**

Forms are available at [massteacher.org/hcr](https://massteacher.org/hcr)

### Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation

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a. <b>Total Number of Copies (Net press run)</b>	<b>84,448</b>	<b>85,151</b>
b. <b>Legitimate Paid and/or Requested Distribution</b>		
1. Outside County Paid/Requested Mail Subscriptions	83,645	84,426
2. In-County Paid/Requested Mail Subscriptions	N.A.	N.A.
3. Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Etc., Outside USPS	N.A.	N.A.
4. Requested Copies Dist. by Other Mail Classes Through USPS	N.A.	N.A.
c. <b>Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation</b>	<b>83,645</b>	<b>84,426</b>
d. <b>Nonrequested Distribution</b>		
1. Outside County Nonrequested Copies, Including Samples	528	450
2. In-County Nonrequested Copies	N.A.	N.A.
3. Nonrequested Copies Dist. Through USPS by Other Mail Classes	N.A.	N.A.
4. Nonrequested Copies Distributed Outside the Mail	N.A.	N.A.
e. <b>Total Nonrequested Distribution</b>	<b>528</b>	<b>450</b>
f. <b>Total Distribution</b>	<b>84,173</b>	<b>84,876</b>
g. <b>Copies Not Distributed</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>275</b>
h. <b>Total</b>	<b>84,448</b>	<b>85,151</b>
i. <b>Percent Paid</b>	<b>99.37%</b>	<b>99.47%</b>

### 16. Electronic Copy Circulation

	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Previous 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. <b>Requested and Paid Electronic Copies</b>	<b>31,279</b>	<b>31,400</b>
b. <b>Total Requested and Paid Print Copies (Line 15c)</b>		
+ Requested/Paid Print Electronic Copies (Line 16a)	114,924	115,826
c. <b>Total Requested Copy Distribution (Line 15f)</b>		
+ Requested/Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)	115,452	116,276
d. <b>Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (Both Print &amp; Electronic Copies)</b>	<b>99.54%</b>	<b>99.61%</b>

I certify that 50% of all my distributed copies (electronic and print) are legitimate requests or paid copies.

17. The Statement of Ownership will be printed in the Fall 2021 issue of this publication.

18. **James P. Sacks, Editor**

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

## MTA GOVERNANCE POSTINGS 2022

### Retired committee has four seats open

Four members of the Retired Members Committee will be elected by Statewide Retired District delegates to the 2022 MTA Annual Meeting in May.

Go to [massteacher.org/nomform](https://massteacher.org/nomform)

or see the November/December issue of the *MTA Reporter* for details and the self-nomination form for these positions. The deadline for nominations is March 4, 2022. Terms last two years and begin on July 1.

### Election waiver

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

## REGIONAL RETIREMENT CONSULTATIONS AVAILABLE

The MTA provides individual retirement consultations to assist members. *Proof of membership must be submitted when requesting retirement services. This schedule is in effect from September to June except at MTA's Quincy headquarters, which is staffed during the summer and school vacations.*

*All consultations are held by appointment only during the hours listed. Members are advised to call selected MTA consultants in advance to schedule an appointment.*

**WORCESTER** — Edward Nelson: first Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Central Office, 12 East Worcester St., second floor, Worcester; call 774.239.7823 or email [enelson@massteacher.org](mailto:enelson@massteacher.org).

Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Northeast Office, 50 Salem St., Building B, Lynnfield; call 978.660.4171 or email [bcallaghan@massteacher.org](mailto:bcallaghan@massteacher.org).

**QUINCY** — Harold Crowley, Peter Mili and Raymond Thompson: Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., MTA, 2 Heritage Drive, 9th Floor, Quincy; 617.878.8240 or 800.392.6175, ext. 8240, or email [hcrowley@massteacher.org](mailto:hcrowley@massteacher.org).

**PITTSFIELD** — Ward Johnson: second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Berkshire Office, 188 East St., Pittsfield; call 413.443.1722 or email [wjohnson@massteacher.org](mailto:wjohnson@massteacher.org).

**FITCHBURG** — Karen Melanson: second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Fitchburg Teachers Association office, 245 River St., Fitchburg; call 978.660.4359 or email [kmelanson@massteacher.org](mailto:kmelanson@massteacher.org).

**RAYNHAM** — Raymond Thompson: third Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; and Lawrence Abbruzzi: second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; MTA Southeast Office, 756 Orchard St., third floor, Raynham. Contact Thompson at 617.347.4425 or [rthompson@massteacher.org](mailto:rthompson@massteacher.org); or contact Abbruzzi at 508.824.9194 or [labbruzzi@massteacher.org](mailto:labbruzzi@massteacher.org).

**HOLYOKE** — Ron Lech: third Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Western Office, 55 Bobala Road, Suite 3, Holyoke; call 413.893.9173 or email [rlech@massteacher.org](mailto:rlech@massteacher.org).

**HIGHER EDUCATION AT-LARGE** — Edward McCourt, call 781.325.2553 or email [emccourt@massteacher.org](mailto:emccourt@massteacher.org).

**LYNNFIELD** — Barbara Callaghan: third and fourth

**Note: If your association would like to schedule a retirement workshop at your school, your local president should call Harold Crowley at 800.392.6175, ext. 8240. Please be aware that the MTA consultants do not have records of your service, so members are advised to bring that information along to meetings.**

# Don't wait to plan for long-term care

“Money changes everything.” Musician Cyndi Lauper had that right. Enough money coming in when you're ill or incapacitated changes everything.

It can cover the cost of a home-based caregiver or household services that help with grocery shopping, meal prep and housekeeping. It can mean the difference between having the ability to choose a long-term care facility that you're comfortable with or being forced to choose one that accepts only Medicaid.

Money changes everything, and the time to plan for having enough is when you're young and/or healthy — when you're in command of your choices. Waiting until you're facing a serious illness or you've reached a senior age limits your options and threatens your savings.

Most of us know someone whose parent or loved one needs help with basic daily activities or custodial care or even requires around-the-clock care.

People are sometimes forced to move to a facility for assistance because they are unable to care for themselves.

When there's not enough money, the choices are limited. The most desirable facilities may not accept Medicaid, so you or your loved one could be forced to choose a less-than-ideal nursing home. If you take the time to visit some of these facilities, you may find that they're not the kind of places you want to spend time in.

Over the past century, Americans' life spans have lengthened. But more years doesn't necessarily coincide with good health. So we need to plan for our health and home care in the years when we may not be able to care for ourselves.

Do we want to become a burden on our loved ones? Think about how you will budget living expenses and medical care while living on a fixed income.

Money changes everything.

How will you fund long-term care if you need help with the regular activities of daily living?

Long-term care insurance is designed to help pay for the additional expenses that arise when you require help with necessary daily activities.



It can provide you with the money you need to change everything. It can give you the funds to choose to remain in your own home if you need help with care — something many people would prefer given the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Long-term care insurance can give you and your family the flexibility to decide which is the best place for you to live while receiving help.

And if a facility is needed, insurance can provide the financial flexibility to allow you to choose the best one for your needs. It could make the difference between living close to family members or moving a long distance away.

In Massachusetts, the monthly cost for a nursing home stay can be upward of \$12,000. If you can receive care in your home, the cost may be significantly lower.

But under either choice, your savings could be quickly drained by this recurring expense. And when the money runs out you may need to apply for Medicaid, which will affect your options and limit your control over the situation.

Planning for health care expenses and long-term care needs are basic facets of any retirement plan. They should not be brushed aside. We work hard and look forward to a comfortable retirement, but that only happens with proper planning.

Money changes everything. Working with a professional insurance agent, financial advisor or attorney is time well spent. These professionals can help you explore your financial options for long-term care and ensure that as you age, you can be the one in charge of decisions about your care, your home and your life.

MTA members are eligible for exclusive discounts, including a 5 percent association discount, a 15 percent partner discount and a 10 percent preferred-risk discount. Discounts are available through Mutual of Omaha.

To borrow a phrase, planning changes everything.

Visit [www.mtabenefits.com/longtermcare](http://www.mtabenefits.com/longtermcare) to learn more.

## New MTAB discounts — from Greenfield to Orleans

MTA members have a number of new discounts to enjoy this year — from entertainment and museums to bookstores and car care. Here are details on a few of the new discounts. Visit [www.mtabenefits.com](http://www.mtabenefits.com) for a full list.

**The Music Wagon** in Rehoboth, founded by a music educator, offers MTA members a 10 percent discount on accessories purchased at the time of initial instrument rental. Home delivery or shipping within Massachusetts is included for free.

Take in a show at **The Regent Theatre** in Arlington, where members can purchase up to 12 tickets for any event listed as “MTA Discount Available” for 25 percent off the regular price.

Both the **Captain Bangs Hallet House Museum** in Yarmouth Port and the **South County Museum** in Narragansett, Rhode Island, offer members free admission. In addition, South County Museum offers half-price admission for children if you show your MTA member card.

At **Bearly Read Books** in Sudbury, save 10 percent off your entire purchase, and at **World Eye Bookshop** in Greenfield, members save 10 percent on in-stock inventory and most special orders (excluding sale, markdown items and certain special orders).

And members save 5 percent on tires when shopping at **Cape & Islands Tire Co.**, with locations in East Falmouth, East Wareham, Hyannis and Orleans.

# Pressure builds for meaningful assessments

By Scott McLennan

Pressure is building for Massachusetts to end its reliance on the high-stakes standardized MCAS exams and adopt broader, democratically crafted frameworks to assess students and schools.

Legislation emerged this year that would end the use of MCAS scores as a graduation requirement and establish a process that allows communities to create multiple pathways for students to demonstrate their subject knowledge.

MTA President Merrie Najimy and MTA Vice President Max Page provided testimony when the Legislature's Joint Committee on Education held a hearing in September on S.293/H.612, *An Act Expanding Opportunities to Demonstrate Academic Achievement*.

What the MCAS really measures, Najimy explained, is inequality.

"The question of MCAS is one of racial inequality and racial justice," Najimy said. "MCAS scores mostly measure the impact of structural racism in the form of underfunding of public schools and public health, along with housing, food and income insecurity — conditions students bring to their learning environment. The pandemic has caused unprecedented change in our public schools, and its impacts will continue to shape them in the years to come."

Najimy also dismissed the relevance of the MCAS scores released in the fall, saying, "The results — and the false interpretations being put on them by groups favoring privatization and other ways to disrupt public education — disregard the deep crisis in which our students and their families have been living since the pandemic closed school buildings in March 2020."

MTA leaders emphasized that educators are willing to evaluate student work and progress, and they reminded legislators that educators assess their students every day.

But the narrow focus of the MCAS and its high-stakes nature make it a deeply flawed tool. Massachusetts is among few states that use standardized tests with such punitive impacts, among them preventing young people from graduating from high school. Only 11 states use standardized exams as a graduation requirement. Massachusetts also places "failing" labels on schools and school districts based on MCAS scores.

MTA members and leaders have been working with UMass Lowell associate professor Jack Schneider and his team of researchers to create community-driven ways to authentically assess and determine school quality. Schneider and his team have worked with MTA members in Andover, Haverhill and Northampton to develop, through community- and school-based conversations, more assessment tools.

"The results of these community discussions have revealed the richness of what we hope for from our schools and the poverty of the destructive high-stakes testing regime," said Page.

The proposed state law that would expand options for assessment "takes us in a new direction," Page said. "It will offer new pathways for providing competency for a diploma. It would implement a plan for a new system that is based on a fuller understanding of what constitutes school quality."

State Representative James Hawkins, a retired Attleboro educator, sponsored the House version of the bill. Hawkins has long argued that the MCAS tests do not produce meaningful results and take too much time away from true learning.

Standardized exams, which are developed by private companies, limit what educators can work on with their students, he said, and lead some students who struggle with them to believe they are "failures."

"My experience as an educator tells me that we have many other ways of getting students to show what they know," Hawkins said. "In Attleboro, there is a lot of enthusiasm when educators, administrators and school committee members collaborate on ways to assess students' work."

"We end up with something that is much better than anything developed by someone sitting in a cubicle at Pearson," Hawkins added.



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# MTA BENEFITS FINANCIAL PLANNING PROGRAM

The right idea, suggestion or timely bit of information can sometimes make a transformative difference in one's financial well-being—and in one's financial future and outlook. Whether it is exploring investment or insurance choices; examining the quality, suitability and risks of an investment portfolio; or simply a “wellness checkup” to confirm the soundness of one's financial affairs and plans, almost everyone can benefit from objective information and independent advice. A professionally reviewed, thoughtful plan can make all the difference.

Stacey Braun Associates, Inc., has recently been endorsed by MTA Benefits. The firm has provided financial planning services to educators for more than 20 years.

For an annual fee of \$140 (renewed solely at the member's discretion), up to three (3) hours of annual videoconferencing and/or telephone time can be arranged to suit any schedule.

Topics could include:

- Saving for a specific purpose, such as for a home or for college
- Retirement Planning
- Life Insurance
- Investment Theory and Asset Allocation
- Budgeting

To learn more, call **888.949.1925** or visit [www.mtabenefits.com/staceybraun](http://www.mtabenefits.com/staceybraun).

*Stacey Braun Associates, Inc., will not sell any investment, insurance, or other products. The firm is not affiliated with any 403(b) or 457(b) providers.*

## Innovative approaches bring success

Continued from Page 11

leaders accountable for their actions in making the Springfield schools more equitable and racially just.

The SEA's commitment to building strategic alliances has resulted in a commitment on the part of the schools to hire more educators of color, assess curriculum to ensure that it is inclusive, and review policies and procedures that may have a disproportionately negative impact on students of color.

Expanding bargaining teams — so that union negotiating groups are not limited in size — continues to be a popular tactic for engaging members and upending management's desire to confine talks to a small group of people working behind closed doors.

In response to a case in Belmont, the state has upheld the right for a union to have silent bargaining representatives at negotiations.

The Massachusetts State College Association credits its expanded bargaining team for changing the tenor of bargaining that had become negative or was floundering.

"Members seeing management's

bad behavior at the table changed everything," MSCA Vice President Maria Hegbloom told participants during a higher ed workshop.

It took time to refine the use of the silent representatives so they could function as more than observers, Hegbloom said. The MSCA's Contract Action Team developed a way for the silent reps to communicate via text and to then prepare strategies once the negotiators broke into caucuses.

"We learned to capitalize on the model," Hegbloom said. "The more you know what bargaining is, the more integrated you become into the fuller life of the union."

As the summit began, MTA Vice President Max Page reminded participants that the work of revolutionizing a local's approach to bargaining is not something that happens quickly. And not all locals attending the summit are in the same position when it comes to such work.

"Nobody is born a union leader," Page said. "Our union power comes from members working together and supporting each other like we are doing today."

## Climate action is key MTA focus

Continued from Page 3

And the material can be anxiety-provoking.

But young people, Kozuch noted, seem to grasp a theme about climate that evades a lot of adults: Bold action must be implemented — and not by 2050, but now.

"It's a hard thing to teach because it's so emotional, and I need to pick kids back up and say: 'There's still time. The window is closing, but there is still time,'" he said. "It's really important for us to help our students cope and understand what science is and how they can be active in protecting the future."

"This issue, to me, is the biggest challenge facing humanity and of our time," he added. "If we, as educators, don't help society understand this and take action on it, we're not doing our jobs."

Grande said a broadly taught curriculum on climate science and social change could energize students.

"While climate change is not the only issue where students can become empowered, become more vocal and amplify their voice, it is the issue that is going to pull together a lot of the other forefront issues like race and gender-equity issues, which are also central to climate change," he said.

Young people's advocacy is a motivating force for educators, Kozuch noted.

"This incredible groundswell of activity over the last two or three years — where students have become so engaged on a mass scale — it's inspiring," he said.

*For more information about the MTA Climate Action Network, please visit [massteacher.org/mtacan](http://massteacher.org/mtacan).*

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DT251221

## Retirees honor two of their own

Continued from Page 13

said that retirees continue to make a difference and will keep up their advocacy. But he credited others for their persistence.

“I would not be here if not for those who led the charge to make our voices heard,” Liston said.

Slatin, a retired professor of public health at UMass Lowell, thanked the Retired Members Committee for the honor.

In accepting the award, Slatin said retired members remain active in their advocacy for their communities and their students.

“Though our members have been battered by the pandemic, in their personal lives as well as in their schools, I believe that they are ready for action,” he said. “The MTA is not a sleeping giant. It is awake and dynamic, and its influence can grow exponentially as we continue to create strategies that move us to greater social justice action. It’s been a wonderful ride. I’m touched deeply by receiving an award from my union.”

## Classifieds

### TRAVEL/STUDY

STUDY AND TRAVEL: Berlin, Germany, April 15-23, 2022 (Mass. school vacation). Join the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Salem State University for a week in Berlin on the topic “Teaching the Holocaust.” \$2,399 includes airfare. Graduate credit or PDPs available. Email Chris Mauriello at [cmauriello@salemstate.edu](mailto:cmauriello@salemstate.edu) or call 978-542-7129.

## Cap is raised on allowable work hours

By Mary MacDonald

For the first time in decades, Massachusetts has increased the annual limit on work hours for public-sector retirees with pensions who want — or need — to continue working.

In September, the Legislature overrode a veto by Governor Charlie Baker and approved a new yearly cap of 1,200 hours.

The action is expected to open more opportunities for affected retirees.

Many people work in retirement out of necessity.

Even as the pandemic has resulted in inflation, the state budget provided only a 3 percent cost-of-living increase for public-sector

retirees, which is limited to the first \$13,000 of their pension — a maximum of \$390 per year.

Retired public-sector employees, including city and state retirees, for years were restricted to working 960 hours a year in public-sector jobs. Baker wanted to increase that limit by 15 hours.

The new flexibility, retroactive to July 1, will not affect previously earned pensions. And no cap applies to retirees who go on to work for a private employer.

For more information, members are advised to read the notice at <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-state-retirement-board>. Further information on the changes is also available at <https://mtrs.state.ma.us>.

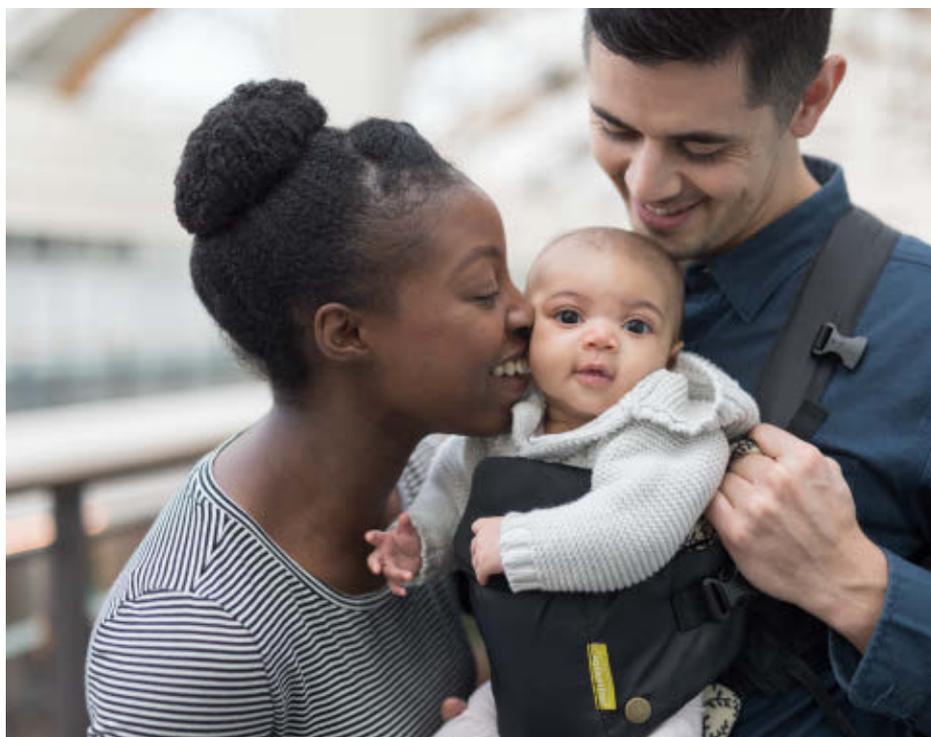
### Call for nominations: 2023 NEA Foundation Awards for Teaching Excellence

Nominations are open for the 2023 NEA Foundation Awards for Teaching Excellence. All current members of an NEA local affiliate or bargaining unit are eligible, including teachers, Education Support Professionals, and higher education faculty and staff. The MTA Executive Committee will choose the MTA nominee. Awardees are honored each year at the NEA Foundation’s Salute to Excellence in Education Gala. Applicants should email [mtagovernance@massteacher.org](mailto:mtagovernance@massteacher.org) for information and application materials.



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## Obituaries

**Richard G. Atkinson, 88**, of Amherst. Taught mathematics for over 40 years at Southwick High School. Sept. 13.

**Anita L. Bangs, 78**, of Sandwich. Taught physical education for 20 years in the Sandwich Public Schools. July 23.

**Catherine M. Bettencourt, 82**, of Raynham and Jamestown, Rhode Island. Was an elementary teacher in the Middleborough and Raynham Public Schools. Sept. 30.

**Nadine F. Bishop, 89**, formerly of Carlisle and Groton. Was an elementary educator in the Carlisle Public Schools for nearly 25 years. Aug. 24.

**Carol A. Brennan, 76**, of Westfield. Taught in the Chicopee and Agawam school systems for over 16 years. Sept. 12.

**Walter N. Brown, 74**, of Laurinburg, North Carolina, formerly of Springfield. Taught mathematics for over 50 years at Central High School, the Roger L. Putnam Vocational Technical Academy, and Forest Park Middle School in Springfield. July 15.

**Robert L. Casey, Sr., 89**, of Dedham and Centerville. Was an educator for 42 years in the Brockton Public Schools, serving as principal in several schools, including 27 years at the Downey Elementary School. Aug. 17.

**Louise H. Coggeshall, 71**, of Acushnet. Was an elementary teacher for 37 years at John B. DeValles Elementary School in New Bedford. Oct. 4.

**Dolores F. Conlon, 93**, of Franklin. Was a music teacher in the Arlington school system before her retirement. Sept. 2.

**Mark Conry, 72**, of Dedham. Taught fifth and sixth grade for over 30 years at the Amos S. Lawrence School in Brookline. Sept. 14.

**John J. Devine, 69**, of Springfield. Was an adjustment counselor for 32

years at Longmeadow High School. He was also a girls track and field coach. July 4.

**Howard T. Dimmick, 82**, of Holden. Was a program supervisor of secondary science and taught Earth science and biology in the Stoneham Public Schools for 40 years. He also worked at Simmons College and Northeastern University. July 28.

**Joseph H. Enright, III, 74**, of Easthampton. Taught in the Granby and Westfield school systems and at Westfield State University. Aug. 27.

**Evelyn J. Grinnell, 85**, of Waltham. Was an elementary special education teacher in the Waltham Public Schools. Sept. 10.

**Jane E. Guimares, 73**, of Fitchburg. Was a high school AP biology and general science teacher in Fitchburg, Avon and Middleborough for over 30 years. Aug. 2.

**Richard A. Hargreaves, 77**, of Mansfield. Taught mathematics at Westwood High School for 38 years. Sept. 3.

**Barry C. Hutchinson, 73**, of Boxford. Was a school psychologist, guidance counselor and special education administrator in the Salisbury and Methuen school systems. June 4, 2020.

**Anastasia Kefalas, 86**, of Osterville. Was an English teacher at Waltham High School for 32 years. Sept. 8.

**Walter E. Kochanek, Jr., 92**, of Needham. Was a science teacher in the Needham Public Schools. Sept. 8.

**Jean C. Lyons, 73**, of Somerset. Was an elementary art teacher in the Somerset Public Schools for over 30 years. Sept. 5.

**Bryan Magliocca, Sr., 73**, of Dedham. Was a coordinator in the Arlington school system for 11 years and a Watertown teacher for 38 years. Oct. 10.

**Edward G. Martin, 77**, of Hampstead, New Hampshire, formerly of Haverhill. Was a teacher of social

studies and English for 40 years at the Helen R. Donaghue Elementary School in Merrimac. June 28.

**Nancy J. Monahan, 74**, of Marshfield. Was an elementary art teacher in Scituate and Marshfield. Aug. 2.

**Janice Dykhuizen Mudgett, 89**, of Hudson, formerly of Harvard. Was an elementary teacher in Concord, Harvard and Littleton, as well as in Burlington, Vermont. Oct. 16.

**Mary J. O'Malley, 78**, of Lunenburg. Was a business teacher at Athol High School. Sept. 24.

**Sara Omartian, 88**, of Springfield. Was an elementary teacher at the Converse Street School in Longmeadow and the Armory Street School in Springfield. Sept. 15.

**Anthony M. Reynolds, 85**, of North Andover. Was an English teacher at North Andover High School for over 30 years, later serving as the head of the English Department. Sept. 29.

**Richard A. Rose, 84**, of Derry, New Hampshire, formerly of North

Reading. Taught carpentry at Greater Lowell Regional Vocational High School for 30 years. July 11.

**Lois Palken Rudnick, 76**, of Santa Fe, New Mexico, formerly of Boston. Was an emeritus professor of American Studies and chaired the program at UMass Boston. June 11.

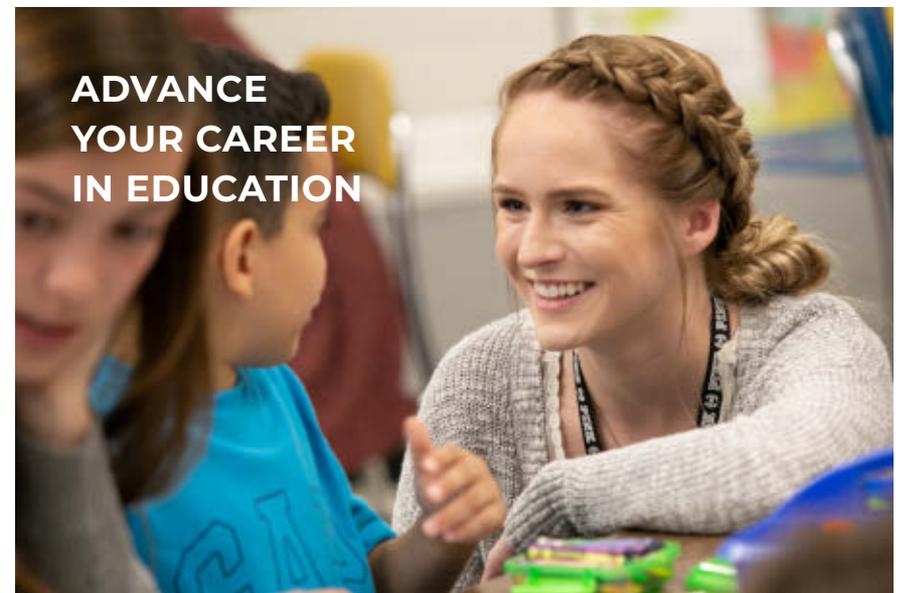
**Gretchen R. Schofield, 84**, of Haverhill. Was an elementary teacher at the Tilton, Moody, and Bartlett schools in Haverhill for many years, retiring in 1997. Oct. 7.

**Janet A. Spring, 75**, of West Columbia, South Carolina. Taught for 27 years, most of them at Falmouth High School. July 18.

**Nancy Anne Urban, 80**, of Arlington, formerly of North Chelmsford. Taught English and history at Arlington High School and also worked at Pentucket Regional High School. July 17.

**Phyllis M. Wolfe, 76**, of Peabody, formerly of Danvers. Taught in the Gloucester school system for 35 years. Sept. 24.

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## Activism building for Fair Share Amendment

By Mary MacDonald

In virtual forums and in-person gatherings, labor partners supporting the Fair Share Amendment are sharing a single message: Let's work together to explain what its approval could mean for public education and transportation.

The amendment proposes a change to the state Constitution that would dedicate as much as \$2 billion annually, in perpetuity, for public education and transportation needs. It will be on the ballot next November.

For the last several months, MTA members have participated in forums and small gatherings, including local union meetings, where members have envisioned what such dedicated revenue could mean for their public schools and college campuses.

The MTA is part of a grassroots coalition of union, faith-based and community organizations that make up Raise Up Massachusetts. The organizations are working together — and ramping up their activities — to support approval of the ballot measure.

Since September, MTA members have held or participated in more than 100 meetings to advance the campaign, including standalone events and a variety of local gatherings.

About 60 meetings with locals have taken place that included MTA leaders. In recent weeks, educators' unions in Marion, Framingham, Watertown and Easthampton, among others, have talked about the amendment.

And more than 3,000 MTA members have signed digital or physical pledge cards to support the amendment. Activists who agree to back the campaign are asked initially to have simple conversations with family members and friends, explaining what the amendment is and what it will — and won't — mean for state residents.

Massachusetts has a flat income tax of 5 percent. The amendment would add 4 percentage points — 4 cents on the dollar — to the tax on the portion of annual income above \$1 million.

The estimated \$2 billion that the FSA would generate each year to help public schools, colleges



Since September, MTA members have held or participated in more than 100 meetings to advance the campaign, including standalone events and a variety of local gatherings.

and universities, as well as transportation, would represent a major and reliable funding stream.

On Nov. 15, the Western Massachusetts Area Labor Federation, a coalition of unions in four counties, hosted a virtual meeting on the amendment that included MTA President Merrie Najimy and Vice President Max Page as panelists.

More than 35 people attended the forum.

Panelist Richard Wolff, a retired professor of economics at UMass Amherst and a visiting professor at The New School, a university in New York City, spoke about the systemic inequities in the federal tax structure. It wasn't always this way, he noted.

During World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt proposed, and the Congress adopted, a top tax bracket with a 94 percent tax on income over \$25,000, or the equivalent of about \$400,000 in today's dollars, Wolff explained.

"Don't let anyone tell you we can't have higher tax rates than we do now; we have," Wolff said. Throughout the 1950s and the early 1960s, top brackets were in the 90 percent range. Under President Ronald Reagan, Wolff said, "they came down to the 30 to 39 percent range — a dramatic gift to the richest people in our society."

Lydia Wood, the labor federation's executive director, said coalition members will need to mount a strong outreach effort.

All coalition partners are encouraging their members to fill out the pledge cards, in which they promise to vote for the amendment next November. Those who can are encouraged to volunteer for the campaign.

"Going door to door is a great way to talk to people about this," Wood said, adding that she has "had some really great conversations with people across the political spectrum on this."

Over the summer, the Legislature gave final approval to putting the amendment before voters on Nov. 8, 2022.

Because it would tax only income above \$1 million, the amendment will apply to a small percentage of taxpayers. The Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, in a recent report, found that most small-business owners will be unaffected. Only 2.6 percent of tax filers who receive pass-through income, including from businesses, have taxable incomes exceeding \$1 million, the center found.

Najimy, speaking at the labor forum, said the Fair Share Amendment was named intentionally by the Raise Up Massachusetts coalition.

"As unions, we fight for the common good agenda, which means fundamentally we are working for shared prosperity," she said. "The fairness equates with justice. And sharing really equates with shared prosperity."

Coalition members will have to counter misconceptions, Page said, including a false argument that millionaires will leave for states that have lower or no taxes on personal income. The data shows the opposite. "States with higher taxes on millionaires had higher growth than low-tax states," he said.

For more information, visit [massteacher.org/fairshare](https://www.massteacher.org/fairshare) and [raiseupma.org](https://www.raiseupma.org).

# THE MTA Advantage

The MTA Advantage is a publication of MTA Benefits, a subsidiary of the Massachusetts Teachers Association

## Phantom debt collection is on the rise. How to spot scammers.

Phantom debt will rise in the United States as the number of debts entering default increases due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Arm yourself with information about fake collection attempts and the reasons why many of them are illegal. It could save you a lot of cash.

The term “phantom debt” has several meanings. It could be debt already written off by major lenders like JPMorgan Chase or Bank of America. Often that debt is sold for pennies on the dollar to collection firms that launch new efforts to collect the funds. In other instances, the caller claims you owe debt from a payday loan in your name or owe money to a major company.

### Statute of limitations and other legal issues

State laws limit how long a lender or debt collector can attempt to collect a debt. These protections vary by state and often by agreement type. The time duration for collections, known as the statute of limitations, also changes based on whether the agreement is written or oral. During this period, you’re legally liable for the debt.

Don’t restart the clock. Maybe the civil limit in your state is five years and seven years have passed since the debt was deemed to be in default. Do not make any payments or claim the debt. Even one dollar paid could reset the clock on the statute’s limit or be considered acknowledgment that you owe the money.

Ask for details of the alleged debt in writing. By law, legitimate collectors must comply with federal rules, according to the Federal Trade Commission. The agency takes swift action on debt collection cases, which constitute the largest category of complaints<sup>1</sup> it receives each year.

“By law, debt collectors have to send you a validation notice in writing, within five days of contacting you. If they don’t, that’s a red flag. And if a debt collector threatens, harasses, or intimidates you to pay a debt, that’s illegal, too,” the FTC notes.



### Legal actions succeed

In March 2021, the FTC banned two firms for attempting to collect made-up debt or amounts that already had been paid off.<sup>2</sup>

In 2015, the agency and the state of New York announced they had “charged a group of defendants known as Delaware Solutions with collecting on debts that they knew were bogus.” The FTC later issued refunds totaling \$184,000 to consumers when that case was settled in 2018.

The FTC also battles “debt parking,” the collection practice of improperly placing debts on a consumer’s credit report to coerce payment. Last fall, the agency filed a complaint against Midwest Recovery, alleging that the group had parked an incorrect amount on one consumer’s report.

“A consumer was told when applying for a mortgage that an outstanding \$1,500 medical debt placed on his credit report by Midwest Recovery had lowered his credit score and jeopardized his purchase. The consumer contacted the hospital to [which] the debt was owed, [which] told him that he only owed an \$80 copay. Despite that, Midwest refused to remove the \$1,500 debt and threatened the consumer with a lawsuit if he didn’t pay<sup>3</sup>,” the FTC stated.

(continued on page 4)



## Zebit: A better way to buy now and pay over time

The ability to buy an item now — whether a large purchase or smaller item — and pay for it over six months is valuable for a variety of reasons. Whether your refrigerator broke and you don’t have enough saved to buy a new one right away or you’re short on being able to purchase a gift that you’ve had your eye on for a loved one, the shopping program through Zebit can help members get what they need when they need it.

(continued on page 4)

# Homeowners Insurance

## What type of homeowners insurance do you have?

### HO3 versus HO5: Know the difference

When it comes to homeowners insurance, there's a small but important difference to note between an HO3 and HO5 policy.

COVERAGE	HO3	HO5
House	Open peril	Open peril
Personal property	Named peril	Open peril

A "peril" is a specific cause of damage, such as fire, wind or theft.

### What's the difference?

The HO3 and HO5 policies both cover a policyholder's house on an open-peril basis. The difference is in how each protects personal property.

**Named peril:** Coverage for all perils that must be listed by the policy.

**Open peril:** Coverage for all perils unless specifically excluded by the policy.

With a named-peril approach, the HO3 policy states exactly which perils are covered. If the peril is listed, the policyholder is covered.

The open-peril language on the HO5 policy form is broader by not itemizing which perils are covered. Instead, it identifies which types of damage are excluded under the policy. If the peril is not listed specifically under the exclusions, the policyholder is covered.

### What does 'personal property' include?

Since the HO3 only covers personal property on a named-peril basis, it is important to know what type of property this involves. Personal property may include items such as furniture, electronics and clothing. If a policyholder under an HO3 form experiences a loss that is not a listed peril, while the dwelling itself may be covered, any damage to personal contents would be excluded. This would result in the homeowner having to replace the damaged contents out of pocket.

### Check your policy form

If you reference your most recent homeowners policy, the declarations page should list which form your specific policy includes ("*HO3 Special Form*" or "*HO5 Comprehensive Form*"). If you notice that your policy is insured on an HO3 form, call your insurance agent to discuss the benefits of upgrading to the HO5 form.



### Contact EIA for a free consultation

Educators Insurance Agency is a local agency based in Worcester. Experienced and licensed agents work with MTA members every day to help serve their auto and home insurance needs. EIA partners with various insurance carriers to offer comprehensive coverages that meet an individual's specific needs. The EIA team will also review your account to determine which discounts you may be eligible for, such as the MTA group discount.

To start your free insurance consultation, send a copy of your current homeowners or auto policy to EIA by following the instructions using the QR code to the right. EIA's agents will review the policy and seek quotes that best fit your needs.



You can also visit [www.educatorsinsuranceagency.com](http://www.educatorsinsuranceagency.com) to request a quote or find more information. Or call us at 888.908.6822. We would be happy to speak with you!



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# Tip Sheet

All discounts listed in the Tip Sheet can be found at [mtabenefits.com](http://mtabenefits.com).

## Holiday Shopping

It's that time of year again — the time for holiday shopping. As an MTA member, you receive discounts from hundreds of retailers when using the MTA Benefits Discount Directory.

With a wide variety of discount offers to choose from, it's easy to find a gift for even the pickiest person. Save 15 percent on a variety of assortments from **1800baskets.com** or **1800flowers.com** — whether loved ones are near or far. Additionally, members save 25 percent at **fromyouflowers.com** and 10 percent at **Hillside Florist & Gifts** in Woburn.



Looking for the perfect piece of jewelry? MTA Benefits has you covered with options from **Gold World** jewelers in East Wareham, offering a 10 percent discount, or **Marcou Jewelers** in Waltham, which offers a 20 percent discount as well as free jewelry cleaning. Members save 25 percent and receive free jewelry cleaning at **Pacheco Jewelers** in Cambridge.

A new book is always a great option as a gift for a loved one (or for yourself!). Visit **Booklovers' Gourmet** in Webster and save 10 percent on new paperbacks and all used books and get 20 percent off on new hardcovers. Be sure to stop at **Broadside Bookshop** in Northampton. Members get a 10 percent discount on books without a previous discount listed. Did you know that **Brattle Book Shop** in Boston is one of America's oldest and largest bookshops? Browse three floors of books as well as an outside lot. Members receive a 20 percent discount on all inside stock. Then head down to **Books by the Sea** in Centerville, where MTA members save 15 percent with a current MTA card.

## Winter Activities

Longing for an escape? Plan a classic ski adventure in Henniker, New Hampshire, at **Pats Peak Ski Area**, where MTA members receive a \$5 discount on weekends and holidays and \$10 off on non-holidays or weekdays. Head to **Maple Corner Farm Cross Country Ski Center** in Granville and get a \$1 discount on a cross-country skiing or snowshoe pass.

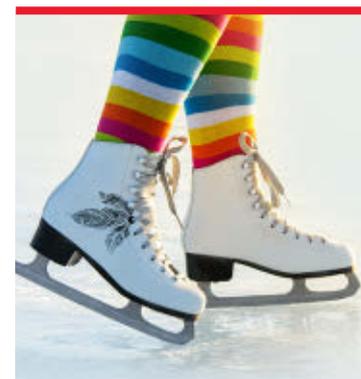
There are many options for museum lovers as well. **Centerville Historical Museum** is offering a \$1 discount for MTA members. The museum, founded in 1952, is dedicated to preserving and sharing the history of Centerville and Cape Cod, where the past and present meet the future. Or visit the **Children's**

**Museum at Holyoke**, where admission is half-price for members. Features include participatory exhibits that invite interaction and programs that promote learning and self-discovery. For a unique experience, head to the **Edward Gorey House** and save \$5 on admission; the house, in Yarmouth, celebrates and preserves the life and works of the American author, illustrator, playwright, and set and costume designer.

If you're considering attending a show in Boston, save on tickets to a performance that's perfect for a date night or family outing. From Dec. 7 to Dec. 19, *A Christmas Story, The Musical* will be at the **Boch Center**; save up to 20 percent on this show. Or try the **Boston Ballet**, where you can save \$20 on tickets to *The Nutcracker*. The **American Repertory Theater** in Cambridge offers MTA members and family members a \$5 discount on a full-price ticket. Some restrictions may apply. The **TD Garden** offers discounts throughout the year on a variety of shows. Check the MTA Benefits website for the most up-to-date performance information.



For some indoor physical activity, **Carousel Family Fun Center** in Whitman offers members two-for-one skating admission, not valid on Friday or Saturday evenings. **Interskate 91 South** in Wilbraham also offers one free admission with one paid admission, good for any morning or afternoon regular public skating session. If you're looking for a unique activity, visit **Rittners School of Floral Design** in Boston. Enjoy the Fun With Flowers class, a hands-on stress-reducing recreational workshop where you'll have fun creating lovely floral art. Impress your family and friends with the neat art that you'll make and bring home! MTA members get a 25 percent discount on the full price on any of the one-session programs.



Visit [mtabenefits.com](http://mtabenefits.com) for a full list of discounts.

# Phantom debt collection is on the rise. How to spot scammers.

(continued from page 1)

## Scammed again

Whenever you complete an online loan application — for refinancing a home or obtaining a payday loan, for example — you provide data to a source that could be masquerading as a lender; the odds are it's a "lead generator" instead. These lead collectors sell your data to a range of entities that then inundate you with calls and emails hawking loan products. In some cases, calls begin 10 seconds after you hit the submit button.

Lead generation is one way that your data circulates in places scammers frequent. Recent data breaches provide another information leak. If the scammer calls and claims to be a loan collector but you don't recognize the debt, it's probably phantom debt collection. They owe you some proof.

## Shield yourself

Always request written proof of debt. That's your right. Do it whether or not you recognize the alleged sum owed. If documents can't be provided, the debt can't be collected.

Do not panic. Callers are incredibly convincing, and their threats might include garnishing wages, contacting your employer or telling any references you provided that you're a deadbeat. Don't respond; you could take actions you'll later regret. Investigate first.

Many of these practices are illegal. Report illegal fraud tactics to the FTC directly and brush up on your debt-collection rights. With IDShield, you can talk to a credit specialist and get advice on the steps that you need to take next.

IDShield delivers credit monitoring services that can track much of your personally identifiable information. It does it 24/7 so you can sleep more soundly. It provides 30-day free trials if you'd like to experience all offerings today. MTA members save on an IDShield membership. The cost for an individual is \$8.95 per month, or you can purchase a family plan for \$18.95 per month.

Visit [www.legalshield.com/info/mtabenefits](http://www.legalshield.com/info/mtabenefits) for more information.



*IDShield is a product of Pre-Paid Legal Services, Inc., d/b/a LegalShield ("LegalShield"). LegalShield provides access to identity theft protection and restoration services. For complete terms, coverage, and conditions, please see an identity theft plan. All Licensed Private Investigators are licensed in the state of Oklahoma. This article is meant to provide general information and is not intended to provide legal advice, render an opinion, or provide any specific recommendations.*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/media-resources/consumer-finance/debt-collection>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog/2017/06/company-kept-collecting-debts-it-knew-were-phony>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/press-releases/2020/11/ftc-stops-debt-collectors-alleged-debt-parking-scheme-requires-it>

## Zebit: A better way to buy now and pay over time

(continued from page 1)

Zebit is on a mission to put financial control back into the hands of hardworking Americans. Zebit believes everyone deserves access to affordable credit. It provides MTA members with up to \$2,500 in interest-free credit to shop for millions of name-brand products that can be repaid over time without interest, fees or credit checks. Zebit has a two-step underwriting process that verifies your identity, income and/or employment to allocate an initial spending limit as conditional credit for you to shop. Then Zebit underwrites every purchase attempt at checkout. Most approved customers receive \$1,000 to \$2,500 for an initial spending limit.

Zebit has many categories to choose from, including electronics, kitchen appliances, furniture, home goods and jewelry. Shop for some of your favorite brands — such as Apple, Samsung, Nintendo, Whirlpool and KitchenAid — and repay over time. Like most retailers, Zebit sources

goods at wholesale prices and then sells them at competitive retail rates. Zebit is committed to keeping its prices competitive and offering 0 percent APR to every member.

What's the catch? There isn't one. Zebit is unlike other financing methods that charge penalties and fees or increase interest rates over time. Zebit does not believe in financing "gotchas" or bait-and-switch tactics. When Zebit says no interest and no fees, it means it.

What about a credit score? Zebit does not perform a credit check when you register. Consistent on-time repayment history and positive account status may reflect positively on your credit report and may help raise your credit score.

Shopping from the Zebit Marketplace is quick and easy. Because it includes more than 90,000 products, you're sure to find what you're looking for. Within minutes you can complete the application, get approved and shop for your favorite brands and everyday essentials. All you need to do is make a down payment at checkout and pay off the remainder over six months.

**Shop today!**

All program and pricing information was current at the time of publication (November 2021) and is subject to change without notice. To find out what may have changed, please call MTA Benefits at 800.336.0990.