



NEA Vice President Becky Pringle, left, congratulates Honor Our Own recipient Louise Gaskins. Pringle delivered the keynote address at the MTA Retired Gathering.

RETIREED GATHERING CELEBRATES ACTIVISM

Scott McLennan

NEA Vice President Becky Pringle championed the value that retired educators bring to the MTA and to the fight for a more equitable society during her keynote address at the 2019 MTA Retired Gathering.

In an interview before her speech on the first evening of the two-day event, Pringle said that retired educators are upending stereotypes.

“Instead of golfing, they are out there fighting,” Pringle said. “They are fighting for students and members and schools. They are in meetings making decisions that strengthen our organization and strengthen our communities.”

Pringle’s words rang true throughout the gathering, which was held on Sept. 24 and 25 at the Hilton Boston-Woburn Hotel, as MTA Retired members attended workshops devoted to issues such as institutional racism, climate change and funding for public education.

Of course, educators do not become activists just when they retire. Rather, the conference reflected how activism carries over from one’s career into retirement. That point was made most clearly with the annual Honor Our Own award, presented this year to Louise Gaskins.

During her long career, Gaskins worked tirelessly on civil rights issues and efforts to expand the power of ethnic minority educators in public education through their unions.

At the state level, her work helped lead to the establishment of the MTA Human Relations Committee, which created an annual award in her name, and the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee. Over the decades, she has remained an MTA and NEA activist, playing key roles on countless committees and working groups.

» *continued on page 4*

RETIREED MEMBERS COMMITTEE 2019-2020

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Robin Smith, *Springfield****

Robert Travers, Jr., *South Dennis***

Anne Wass, *Carver*

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Jacqueline Gorrie



MTA Retired Members Committee
Chair Jacqueline Gorrie

How would you like to see the base salary on which our cost-of-living adjustment is calculated raised before our next COLA increase?

How would you like to see your health insurance premium splits frozen at the percentage they were at when you retired?

How about capping the annual out-of-pocket cost for non-Medicare-eligible retirees for health care?

How would you like to see the *Promise Act*, now known as the *Student Opportunity Act*, become law?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, then I have a way that you can help make that happen. You can say “yes” to the following training opportunity.

Sign up and participate in one of our three Retired Regional Lobby Day Trainings: November 13 at MTA Headquarters in Quincy, December 4 at the MTA Regional Service Center in Holyoke, or December 11 at the MTA Regional Service Center in Auburn.

The trainings will be from 10 AM to 2 PM. Your mileage to and from the training that is most convenient for you will be reimbursed, and breakfast and lunch will be provided. Most importantly, you will become more conversant about our *Omnibus Retiree Bill*, the *Student Opportunity Act*, and understand how your needs and your personal stories fit into our legislation. **More information about how to become an MTA Retired Activist is on Page 6.**

As RMC Chair, it is a personal goal of mine to reach out to our regions and encourage more participation by our members. So, sign up for a training, because that goal is attainable and these trainings are a major way that we, together, can get some movement on our legislation.

Thank you, and see you there! ■

SAY YES TO TRAVEL INSURANCE PROTECTION

On September 23, Thomas Cook Airlines announced the cancellation of all flights due to bankruptcy. It's prompted many of us to rethink the decision about purchasing travel insurance. Not only that, it's important for us to know exactly what is covered under any plan we have or intend to purchase.

There are a few common reasons why travelers question the need for travel protection. Do these sound familiar to you?

I don't need it because there is no way I'm canceling. Unfortunately, we don't have control over everything that happens in our life — or in the world.

My personal health insurance will cover any costs. The truth is, many health insurance plans do not cover medical expenses outside the U.S.

I have coverage with my credit card. It's true, there may be some travel insurance benefits, but credit card coverage is often more limited than a stand-alone plan.

I just want the carrier's protection plan because it's cheaper. Warning! Know what you're paying for. Initial savings often don't mean savings in the long term!

MTA Benefits has two partners that provide solutions for travel protection. Travel Insured International offers multiple travel insurance plans and it's easy to get a quote. Details can be found by visiting www.mtabenefits.com/benefits/travel/travel-insurance. In addition, the Medical Air Services Association (MASA) covers worldwide air and ground ambulance transportation services for members when they are at home, at work or traveling the world. This includes emergency and nonemergency travel. Learn more at www.mtabenefits.com/benefits/health-wellness/medical-transport-solutions.

It's important to realize that not every travel protection plan is created equal. Research and careful consideration could save you a lot of angst ... and money. ■

MTA BOARD REPORT – OCTOBER 18, 2019

Gerry Ruane



Gerry Ruane, MTA Retired Members Committee

President Merrie Najimy opened the meeting at 6:10 PM.

The MTA Board took up the question of charging non-members for services in matters of collective bargaining. The Board voted to direct locals not to charge non-members until such time that the question can be studied and a report given to the Board of Directors by June 2020.

Tim Dwyer, Dedham Education Association president, addressed the Board concerning DEA contract negotiations. The Board passed a motion to support the DEA in its contract negotiations.

Najimy addressed the Annual Meeting Survey. She said that it would go out to presidents and be reported on in December.

Jessica Hiemenz updated the Board on plans for Annual Meeting in Springfield. Delegates will be in eight different hotels. Parking is still being worked out. Please consider being a delegate to Annual Meeting. We need you!

After much discussion, the Board voted to support the *ROE Act (S.1209 – An Act to Remove Obstacles and Expand Abortion Access)*.

The president and vice president gave a presentation on the Fund Our Future campaign. Senator Pat Jehlen introduced MTA's amendment, which changed the ability of the commissioner to veto a district plan to the ability to review and make suggestions. The bill is intended to correct the funding formula. It also needs to be passed in the House. There is a "Take Action" link on the MTA website that will allow you to email your representative and urge her/him to pass the *Student Opportunity Act* with the MTA amendments.

The Board discussed the following New Business Items, carried over from the 2019 Annual Meeting:

1. NBI 14 – The Board voted to explore the possibility of a ballot question that would require local approval of all new charter schools and expansions.
2. NBI 15 – The NBI presented a new dues system but it was ruled out of order, as it was a bylaw proposal.
3. NBI 16 – Amended to read: "That the MTA with its allies in the FOF coalition and the MassBudget and Policy Center develop a fair and equitable funding formula for our colleges and universities in all three sectors of public higher education as we continue to

fight for passage of the *Cherish Act*.

The Board took up the following New Business Items:

1. Called for the MTA to assess existing professional development and training opportunities for higher education locals and devise next steps for additional training. The Board so voted.
2. Called for the MTA to endorse two congressional resolutions: the Green New Deal and the Climate Emergency Declaration. The Board so voted.
3. Called for the MTA to celebrate Indigenous People's Day (as opposed to Columbus Day) and to publish acknowledgment of said change wherever possible, on its website and in its periodicals. The Board so voted.

Sue Doherty from Needham gave a report of the MTA School Library Task Force. She talked about the problems librarians face in terms of job loss and being replaced by unqualified personnel. The task force is developing resources for locals on the importance of librarians. The site is available on the MTA website.

Beverly Miyares, director of MTA's Center for Education Policy and Practice, gave a presentation on alternative licensure. She spoke of the difficulty recruiting and retaining educators of color. She reported that students of color who have had at least one teacher of color tend to do better in school, and that about 40 percent of all schools in Massachusetts have no teachers of color. The MTA Task Force on Alternative Paths to Licensure recommends that the state eliminate the Communication and Literacy MTEL. The task force recommends that an alternative be developed.

The MTA Board voted to support striking Chicago teachers and Battery Hotel workers.

Audrey Murph-Brown and Tammy Johnson reported that they are in the process of hiring consultants for the Equal Opportunity Council to help the MTA recruit and retain a diverse staff.

NEA Directors reviewed the NEA's process for endorsement in the upcoming 2020 presidential election. The NEA is focusing on ideas rather than candidates. It is important for members to get out and vote for the candidate of their choice. It is imperative to get people registered and vote their principles. In December, the Board will have an Issues Forum to discuss the preferred method of developing a platform for MTA's presidential recommendation. If you have any issues that you want us to include, email me at gpruane@gmail.com. ■



RETIRED GATHERING CELEBRATES ACTIVISM *CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1*

At the national level, Gaskins fought for change as an NEA director and as a delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly, which she has attended many times.

MTA Retired Members Committee Chair Jacqueline Gorrie and committee member Anne Wass nominated Gaskins for the Honor Our Own award. Once her name was introduced, the committee chose her by acclamation.

"I'm just happy to be recognized in such a way for the work that I have done over the years," Gaskins told the crowd. "The MTA and NEA came into my life at a special time, when I was looking to do more."

Pringle was among many educators at the gathering who praised Gaskins and congratulated her on the award.

"Louise has always been a leader," Pringle said. "She has led formally and informally."

Pringle's keynote speech touched upon the same issues of social justice that were covered in many of the workshops at the gathering. Unionized educators are the best hope for creating a just and equitable society in which all families

are treated with dignity and all students have access to an excellent public education, she told the crowd.

"We need to keep doing what is right for our children," Pringle said. "As educators, that responsibility does not end when you retire."

Many who attended the event were more than willing to take on that responsibility.

"It's exciting to see MTA retirees struggle with the difficult issues of the day," said committee member Andrei Joseph.

The gathering retained many popular workshops on the legal and financial considerations that retirees face. There were also educational workshops on genealogy, art, history and politics.

"It's a member-driven event, so you get a nice variety of workshops," said retiree Marilyn Bemis. "Some want to get a better understanding of finances; others want to plug in to social justice actions. We have a cross-section of activities."



Scenes from the 2019 MTA Retired Gathering, held Sept. 24 and 25 at the Hilton Boston-Woburn Hotel.

Alice Reilly described the gathering as a way for retirees like her to stay connected with the union.

“This is where I come to meet up with friends and stay active with the MTA,” she said.

MTA President Merrie Najimy and Vice President Max Page gave overviews of the MTA’s role in the fight to dramatically increase funding for public education in the state, from prekindergarten to higher education. Najimy and MTA Executive Director-Treasurer Lisa Gallatin also led a Wednesday morning plenary session that opened up discussions on how retirees can stay active in their locals.

Najimy and Gallatin emphasized the important mentoring role that retirees can play, particularly in helping new educators better understand how their involvement with the union can be used to create the kinds of learning environments and working conditions they want.

Some aspects of the gathering change from year to year, but some traditions remain. MTA Benefits showcased many of its partners and supplied a wide range of giveaway

prizes. And retirees contributed hundreds of dollars to VOTE, which supports political activity that benefits public education.

As always, the generosity of the retirees toward students was on display as a mountain of school supplies was collected for donation to the Woburn Public Schools. Woburn Teachers Association President Barbara Locke gratefully accepted the donated items, which ranged from pencil sharpeners to playground toys — all requested by members when told that the retirees would be making the donation.

Gerry Ruane, a member of the Retired Members Committee, remarked that once the state Legislature passes MTA-backed public education funding bills, “we will not have to do this, because the teachers and students will have everything that they need.”! ■



Become an **MTA RETIRED ACTIVIST**

Have you ever wanted to feel more comfortable and confident when advocating for issues of interest with our Legislature? MTA Retired Regional Lobby Day Trainings are designed to demystify the advocacy process so that the next time you have the opportunity to lobby on an important issue at the State House, you will have the knowledge and confidence to commit without reservation. Join your fellow retired colleagues at one of the MTA's new **Retired Regional Lobby Day Trainings** and become an "MTA Retired Activist."

The trainings will be focused around advocating for a bill currently in the Legislature, MTA's Omnibus Retiree Bill - S.1499/H.2232.

Three **Retired Regional Lobby Day Trainings** have been scheduled for 2019:

Wednesday, November 13

10 am – 2 pm

MTA Quincy Headquarters

Wednesday, December 4

10 am – 2 pm

MTA Holyoke Office

Wednesday, December 11

10 am – 2 pm

MTA Auburn Office

Sign up today by emailing Robert Whalen, Retired Member/Student Member Organizer, at rwhalen@massteacher.org or calling at 617.878.8206.

A detailed agenda will be available very soon. Hope to see you there!



Jacqueline Gorrie



Dennis Naughton

MTRS BOARD ELECTION 2019

Anne Wass

The MTA Board of Directors voted to endorse the re-election of Jackie Gorrie and Dennis Naughton to the Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement Board in the 2019 election. Both candidates have been leaders in their locals and at the state level. The skills and knowledge they bring from their MTA union experience make them strong leaders on the MTRS board. They both work tirelessly, have a passion for retiree issues, and advocate strongly to preserve, protect and improve upon retired members' benefits.

Ballots will be out in early November. They must be RECEIVED at MTRS by DECEMBER 10, 2019.

Please vote for these two outstanding candidates so they can continue working for you.

VOTE and RETURN Ballot Before December 10, 2019

SOCIAL SECURITY WEP UPDATE

U.S. Representative Richard Neal (D-MA) has filed a bill that partially addresses the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), although unfortunately it does not touch the Government Pension Offset (GPO). Below are some bullet points provided by the NEA, which has officially come out in support of the proposal. Please share this information. For additional information about the bill, please contact Robert Whalen, MTA Retired Member/ Student Member Organizer, at rwhalen@massteacher.org or 617.878.8206. The NEA also has an action alert posted that allows members to contact their representatives on the legislation: <https://educationvotes.nea.org/action/support-h-r-4540-to-ensure-public-employees-get-the-social-security-benefits-they-have-earned/>

The NEA supports the **Public Servants Protection and Fairness Act (H.R. 4540)**, introduced by House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard Neal (D-MA), which starts to fix problems caused by the WEP but does not address the GPO.

- Nearly 2 million retired educators and other public employees subject to the WEP would get some financial relief.
- Current retirees would get an extra \$150 a month and future retirees would receive an extra \$75 a month, on average; no one would get less.
- NEA continues to advocate for full repeal of both the WEP and the GPO. ■

RETIREES LOBBY LEGISLATORS FOR FAIR HEALTH & PENSION BENEFITS

Sarah Nathan

MTA retirees are using their “teacher voices” to speak out in support of legislation that would protect health insurance and pension benefits for public employees.

A delegation of MTA retirees testified in favor of the *Act to Provide Fair and Affordable Retirement Benefits* (S.1499/H.2232), which seeks to provide modest economic security for retired public employees, at a State House hearing on Monday, Oct. 21. The bill is sponsored by Sen. Julian Cyr (D-Truro) and Rep. Daniel Donahue (D-Worcester).

“We have a moral obligation to both honor the promises that were made to our retirees, and to provide current employees with the prospect of a secure retirement so that we may continue to attract and retain quality people,” said MTA President Merrie Najimy, who asked retirees to stand with her as she delivered her testimony to the members of the Joint Committee on Public Service.

The bill would:

- Ensure that pension benefits are better able to keep pace with inflation.
- Provide municipal retirees increased stability in health insurance premium payments.
- Protects retired public employees who are not eligible for Medicare.



Retired Arlington educator Ann Tierney was among the MTA retirees to share their own stories.

“Today, I find myself being treated, for purposes of health insurance, as if I were presently teaching,” said Tierney. “The difference is ... I live on a salary that I received in 2006, 13 years ago. And that amount is a lot less than a teacher makes in 2019.”

Tierney explained how many public employees who began their careers before 1986 are not eligible for Medicare and, therefore, burdened with higher premiums.

A summary of the bill is posted at <https://massteacher.org/retireebill>. More photos are posted on Facebook at <https://masstea.ch/2MXA0Uk>. ■



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