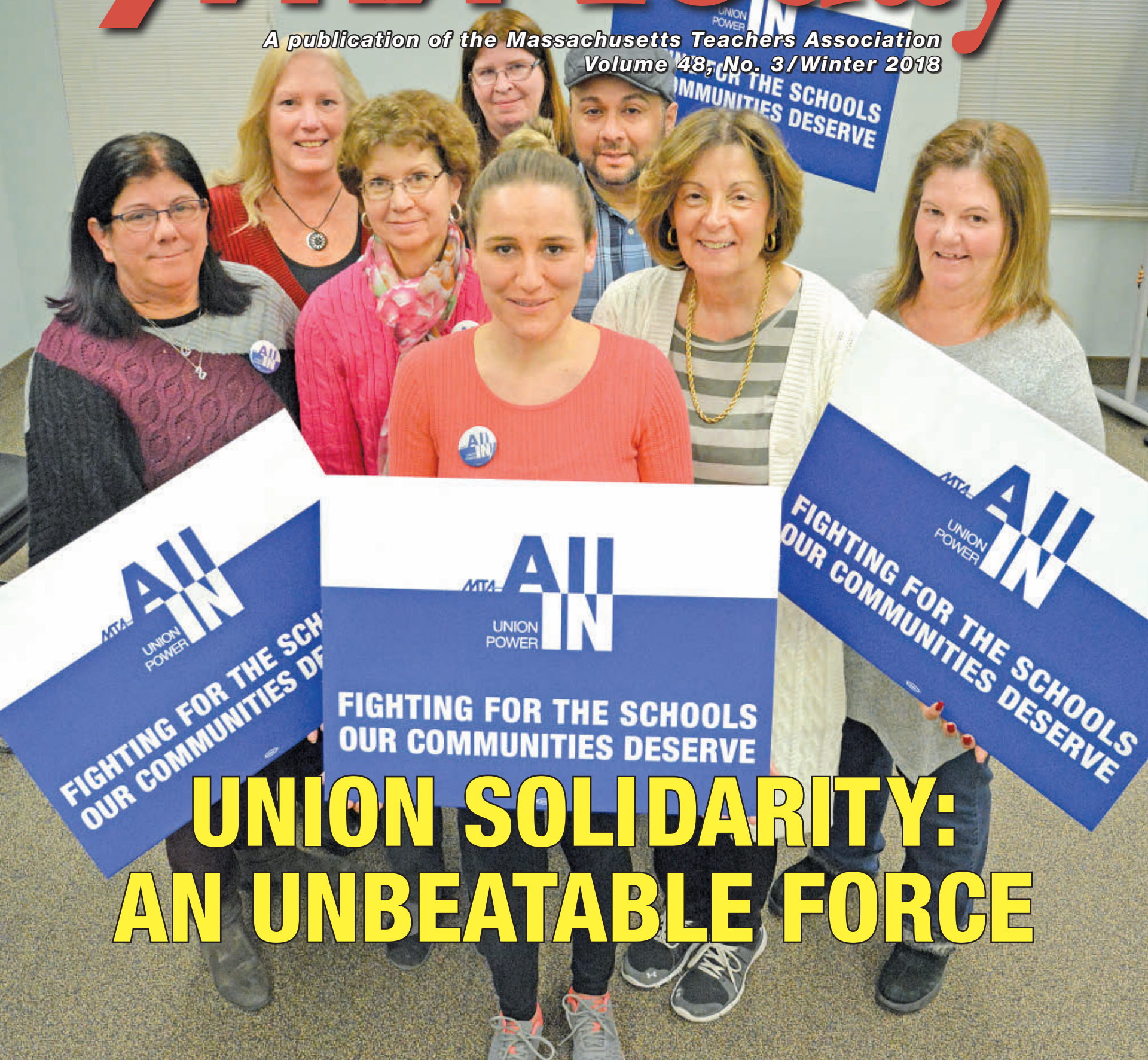


MEMBER ACTION WINS HEALTH CARE REVERSAL



MTA Today

A publication of the Massachusetts Teachers Association
Volume 48, No. 3/Winter 2018



**UNION SOLIDARITY:
AN UNBEATABLE FORCE**

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MTA Today

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

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.

MTA President
Barbara Madeloni

MTA Vice President
Erik J. Champy

Executive Director-Treasurer
Ann Clarke

Publisher
Ann Clarke

Communications Director/Editor
James Sacks

Staff Assistant
Janice Morrissey

Graphic Designer
Joshua Degregorio

ON THE COVER

Union solidarity is at the center of the MTA's *All In* membership effort. Members of the Educational Association of Worcester's Instructional Assistants Negotiating Team used key elements of the campaign during their long and ultimately successful contract fight. Pictured from left to right are Teresa Kirdulis, Cindy Brownell, Chris Pescheta, Kathy Lucey (standing in back), Jackie Hackett (standing in front), Saul Ramos, Theresa LaPriore and Deborah Young. Team member Lorraine Gibbs is not pictured. Coverage of the *All In* campaign begins on Page 6. In another recent victory, public-sector union members won reversal of the Group Insurance Commission's decision to eliminate health care options. Please see Page 3 for a story on the GIC situation, which will call for continued action in the days ahead.



Cover photos by Chris Christo and Sarah Nathan
Cover design by Joshua Degregorio



The Massachusetts Teachers Association
2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor
Quincy, MA 02171-2119
800.392.6175 or 617.878.8000
FAX: 617.742.7046
www.massteacher.org



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Quote-Unquote

"Overturning *Aboud* would disrupt the reasonable expectation of millions of public-sector employees that they can obtain the basic economic opportunities provided by union representation."

**— Emily Martin, general counsel and vice president
for education and workplace justice
at the National Women's Law Center**

GIC reverses course after uproar

Action by members leads to health care victory — but the fight continues

By Scott McLennan

Intense pressure applied by members of the MTA and other public-sector unions has forced the Group Insurance Commission to reverse its recent decision to eliminate most of the insurance carriers currently available to active and retired employees.

The GIC voted on Feb. 1 to retain three carriers that it had voted to eliminate for active employees: Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, Fallon Health and Tufts Health Plan.

“This is what union power is all about,” said MTA President Barbara Madeloni. “We still have work to do to make the GIC’s process more democratic and transparent. And we still must prevent harmful cost-shifting to members as the GIC works on plan designs and rates. But because so many members attended hearings and our rally or made calls to elected officials, we were able to undo a terrible decision that would have compromised the health care of hundreds of thousands of people.”

Some retirees will still need to shift carriers under the GIC’s revised scenario if their existing carrier did not bid to cover the particular insurance pool to which they belong or failed to meet the parameters of the bid.

On Jan. 18, the GIC, which includes several members appointed by Governor Charlie Baker, voted 8-5 to eliminate more than half of the insurance carriers used by the 440,000 active and retired public employees who receive health care benefits through the commission and to shift the bulk of the business to Indiana-based UniCare. The five labor representatives on the commission all voted against the plan. They voiced anger over the fact that they had received packets of information only hours before the vote and did not have sufficient time to study the impact of such a drastic change.

Public-sector unions immediately assailed the decision. Both active and retired employees flooded Baker’s office and the GIC with phone calls and e-mails calling out the attack on working families.

The GIC attempted to explain the decimation of benefit options at a series of public hearings, but outrage grew as participating members learned that those hearings were often being held when most people were working — and that the hearings were taking place at venues that quickly filled to capacity, leaving hundreds locked out.

The MTA and other public-sector unions held an emergency rally on Jan. 30 at the Boston Teachers Union Hall, where hundreds of members demanded action. More than a dozen elected officials attended the coalition event, and the message to them was clear: The process by which public employee health care benefits are set is deeply flawed and must be changed.

MTA members shared their health care stories at the rally, describing the negative impact they would



Above, hundreds of union members packed into the Boston Teachers Union Hall on Jan. 30 for a rally against the Group Insurance Commission’s plan to eliminate health care carriers. At left, Roxbury Community College professor Kimberly Stieglitz was one of those who energized the crowd. “This is what we need to do in 2018 — fight for our rights,” she said. Outraged members also flooded both the governor’s office and the GIC with calls and e-mails. Union power prevailed, and the GIC voted on Feb. 1 to undo its initial decision.

Photos by Sarah Nathan and Laura Barrett

face if forced to change insurance carriers — or, worse, lose their doctors and access to the places where they now receive care.

“The GIC’s decision can affect people in a number of ways, none of them positive,” said Bonnie Player, a member of the Framingham Teachers Association who is undergoing cancer treatments.

Andrew Baker, president of the Lexington Education Association, described the plight of his best friend, a fellow educator whose daughter requires intensive ongoing care.

“The history of the GIC is one of broken promises,” Baker said, noting that his friend is considering a move from Lexington to a school district that does not use the GIC to provide insurance to its educators. “If this downward trend continues, municipalities will be the losers in the end.”

Julia Monteiro Johnson, a member of the MTA Retired Members Committee, said that retirees simply no longer trust the GIC. “We are fighting mad, and we are fighting back,” she said.

Madeloni framed the boundaries of that fight through the actions that took place before the GIC

reversed course. In her remarks at the rally and in testimony at a Senate oversight hearing held on Jan. 31, she criticized the lack of labor representation on the GIC and the agency’s existing process of holding separate votes to determine carriers, plans and rates.

“This is absolutely outrageous,” she said. “Why do we have to fight for quality health care that we can afford?”

The MTA supports passage of legislation that would increase the number of labor seats on the commission to balance the say of gubernatorial appointees.

Timothy Sullivan, the MTA’s representative on the commission, forcefully made the point at the Feb. 1 GIC meeting that the commission must change its process to allow for greater public input and a sensible decision-making process.

Upcoming decisions by the GIC to set plan designs and rates are of immediate concern. The commission was scheduled to take up those issues within days as *MTA Today* went to press.

“This is no time to let up the pressure,” Madeloni said.

There are no certainties in this struggle

“The labor movement was the principal force that turned misery and despair into hope and progress.”
— *The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

I am writing this on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Across the country, schools are closed and memorial services are being held to honor Dr. King and his legacy.

Yet even as I write, President Trump continues his racist policies and rants. Schools are more segregated, and students in black, brown and poor communities are faced with underfunding and narrow curriculums that are based on high-stakes standardized tests. Public higher education becomes more expensive and further out of reach by the day, and the gap between the richest and the rest grows wider.



Barbara Madeloni
MTA President

I find myself thinking: “What does it mean to honor Dr. King and his work? What does he teach us about our identity as unionists?”

Dr. King was assassinated in Memphis, where he was supporting striking sanitation

workers. His analysis of the struggle for freedom included naming the “giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism and militarism.”

He condemned those who kept silent in the face of oppression, holding a special outrage for the “white moderate” — “who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice.”

His was a call to know and act from “the fierce urgency of now.” He warned against the “tranquilizing drug of gradualism.” Dr. King was emphatic about “the interrelatedness of all communities and states” and the need to prepare for and take direct action.

Our fierce urgency today includes continuing assaults on workers’ rights to organize, racism embedded in our institutions, economic injustice, the exploitation of working people, and attacks on the public good — on public education in particular. We live in a time of unjust government action against immigrants and the imposition of tax policy designed to make the rich richer and the poor poorer.

So how will we respond?

Dr. King teaches me that these attacks are connected and that our response must grow from our interrelatedness. Our struggles are the struggles of our communities — and their struggles are ours.

That is why the MTA is a member of coalitions such as Raise Up Massachusetts, working to win a \$15 minimum wage, paid family and medical leave and the Fair Share Amendment, which will enshrine funding for public education in our state Constitution. It is also why unions and parent and student groups are working together in the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance to win the schools our communities deserve. It is why the MTA supports groups such as Jobs With Justice and the Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts — because they bring together broad coalitions organizing for the world we want to win.

Dr. King teaches me that we must be ready to act collectively and take risks to secure justice. The movement is not about individuals accessing power — it is about groups acting together.

Dr. King reminds me that there are no certainties in this struggle. There is no perfect timing. There is preparation and there is the building of solidarity and trust, all directed toward taking action.

In your local, this can mean escalating contract campaigns, organizing for professional autonomy or working with parents to end the abuses of high-stakes testing. It can mean allying with the community to support and protect immigrants or holding forums to develop a vision of public education.

Dr. King teaches me that we have to be willing to be unsettled and to unsettle.

When we organize, we have tremendous power. When we act in coalitions, that power grows exponentially.

Justice is not achieved with smiles and pleasantries but through demands and conviction. When we feel and use our power, the people who are used to holding power — superintendents, principals, governors and corporate bosses — will get angry, push back, and accuse us of being disruptive and impolite.

That is to be expected and is a sign of our effectiveness. We cannot be dissuaded from our values because they make people accustomed to holding power uncomfortable.

We must remember that Dr. King was murdered while supporting public-sector union members.

The people and institutions in power, including the FBI, were afraid of Dr. King precisely because he understood labor power, coalitions and the intersection of racial and economic injustice — and because he was bringing groups together in shared struggle. That same fear of labor and community power is behind the assault on unions that is the *Janus* case. It underlies the fierce attempts to privatize the public sector.

The MTA is the largest labor union in Massachusetts. When we organize, we have tremendous power. When we act in coalitions, that power grows exponentially.

We have it within our grasp to build a better world. We are doing it local by local, community by community, and across the state. That is why the right wing is coming after us — and why we must fully participate in the *All In* campaign, deepen our coalitions, and fight to win.

Solidarity,
Barbara

Baker’s budget proposal shortchanges public education

By Laura Barrett

Despite a strong economy and healthy anticipated revenues, Governor Charlie Baker’s fiscal 2019 budget proposal shortchanges public schools and public higher education.

Public higher education was especially shortchanged in the proposal, which was released on Jan. 24.

A new analysis by the MTA shows that state spending on higher education is down 40 percent from its peak in 2001, taking inflation and changes in enrollment into consideration. Students are

shouldering more of the costs of college while the state is doing less.

Baker’s budget would do nothing to reverse that trend. It includes a 0.5 percent average increase for higher education operating budgets over FY18. Community college funding would be cut by 0.1 percent, or \$275,000; spending for the University of Massachusetts and state universities would be increased about 1 percent.

Public schools fared only a little better. Baker’s plan keeps all districts at foundation budget levels but does not provide them with the increases needed to develop innovative programs and comprehensive services for all students.

Chapter 70 funding would be increased by \$103.6 million, or 2.2 percent — about the rate of inflation. This is inadequate in light of the Foundation Budget

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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 e-mail it to mtatodayletters@massteacher.org. For additional information, please refer to the guidelines posted on www.massteacher.org.

LOOK Act provides needed flexibility

By Laura Barrett

A 15-year-old law governing how English learners are taught in Massachusetts schools was repealed last November and replaced with a measure that gives school districts more flexibility to create programs that meet the needs of their students and provides parents with more power to ask for alternative language acquisition programs.

The MTA strongly supported the new law — called the Language Opportunity for Our Kids Act — which was sponsored by Sen. Sal DiDomenico (D-Everett). Approved nearly unanimously by both the House and Senate, it opens the door for changes in how more than 90,000 English learners in Massachusetts are educated.

“Passage of the LOOK Act will not only create new opportunities for our students; it also honors the contributions of our immigrant communities,” said MTA President Barbara Madelon. “It recognizes there is great value to all students becoming bilingual and bicultural.”

The LOOK Act does not require districts to change their instructional strategies. Rather, it allows them to do so without having to jump through the hoops required under the old law. It also creates a new Seal of Biliteracy to recognize high school graduates who speak, read and write in two languages.

The former Sheltered English Immersion law was controversial from the start. It was brought to Massachusetts by Ron Unz, a millionaire software developer who had run unsuccessfully for governor of California in 1994.

Unz strongly objected to transitional bilingual education, the default program at the time, under which EL students were taught using a mix of their native language and English, with increasing amounts of English over time. Unz and his supporters claimed that this form of education was holding EL students back and that they would benefit from being immersed in English right away, regardless of their age, education level or background.

Unz successfully promoted an English-only initiative in California in 1998 and then won passage of laws in Arizona in 2000 and Massachusetts in 2002. As described in the Massachusetts



Above, Maria Quiñones Peralta is taught in Spanish for half of the day and in English for the other half. More programs like the dual language program at the George School in Brockton may be developed under the new LOOK Act. At left, Brockton bilingual education K-8 department head Vula Roumis talks to Anthony Xique-Najera and Aileen Dominguez, fourth-graders in the program.

Photos by Laura Barrett

ballot initiative summary, “This proposed law would replace the current state law providing for transitional bilingual education in public schools with a law requiring that, with limited exceptions, all public school children must be taught English by being taught all subjects in English and being placed in English language classrooms.”

After the law was passed, some districts created separate SEI classrooms. Others assigned English learners to regular classrooms while providing them with additional English as a Second Language instruction. The programs varied, but the mandate was clear: Languages other than English were to be used sparingly for purposes of clarification, not for instruction.

Many ESL and bilingual education teachers, as well as regular classroom teachers, had expressed concerns for years that the restrictive English-only model didn’t serve all students well.

more teachers had English learners in their classes. The number of EL students in the state has doubled since 2002; EL students now make up 9.5 percent of the student population.

Vula Roumis, a bilingual education department head in Brockton, said she has seen benefits from the RETELL program.

“I’ve seen there is a common language between ESL teachers and content-area teachers,” said Roumis, who is president of MATSOL, an association of educators of English learners. “They can understand foundational things going on and why teaching content should include additional strategies.”

She and Kellie Jones, director of bilingual education in Brockton, believe that more needs to be done. Teachers who were not required to take the course — such as specialists, counselors and librarians — also need to know strategies for communicating with and educating EL students, they said.

But better SEI instruction isn’t the only solution. Jones, Roumis and bilingual educators across the state made the case to the Legislature that districts need more flexibility to design programs that meet the needs of their students.

The Rappaport study gave that argument a boost. The authors concluded, “Overall, there is likely no one-size-fits-all approach that serves all [limited-English-proficient] students equally well. What works in one district, school, or classroom may not necessarily be effective in another.”

In the end, the case for change won the day. Districts that have only implemented SEI programs may now want to look to places like Brockton and Framingham, which took advantage of the waiver opportunities in the SEI law to develop alternatives. Brockton has more than 4,100 EL students who speak languages ranging from Creole to Yoruba. The district has a variety of programs for students and staff who meet with parents to discuss options after a student’s language skills and needs are assessed.

Among other services, there is a transitional bilingual education program at the middle and high schools and an academy for EL students whose education was interrupted.

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All In campaign builds solidarity

By Scott McLennan

The recent upheaval in state political circles generated by public employees outraged over a plan to drastically alter their health care coverage served as a shining example of union power at work.

Governor Charlie Baker's Group Insurance Commission was forced to backpedal on a decision to take away insurance carriers from public employees — including many active and retired educators — and the reversal generated headlines for days.

But just as important as such big wins are the countless daily victories that educators can chalk up to having a well-organized union.

Building power for both the large challenges and the ones that occur from day to day is the intent of the MTA's *All In* campaign.

One key goal of the effort, which is off to a strong start across the state, is to get members thinking about playing offense when it comes to fighting for their vision of public education.

"Our union and others are under constant assault because our opponents don't want power in the hands of the people doing the work," said MTA President Barbara Madeloni. "That means we need to do far more than just play defense. We need to seize the moment and act collectively and decisively to achieve our goals."

Within months, the U.S. Supreme Court is expected to rule against public-sector unions in a case known as *Janus v. AFSCME*. The decision is viewed as certain to make it illegal to collect fair-share fees — also known as agency fees — from bargaining unit members who choose not to join unions but nonetheless benefit from the contracts negotiated on their behalf.

The *All In* campaign is a way to get out ahead of the attacks that will follow the decision. But that is far from its only impact.

Across the state, MTA members are already using *All In* tools and resources in struggles ranging from the action against the GIC decision to contract efforts, overrides and other crucial fights for schools, colleges and communities. They are taking collective action, holding one-to-one conversations, and building strong communication systems within their districts and on their campuses.

The power of collective bargaining agreements cannot be overemphasized, noted Sara McNulty, a fifth-grade teacher who serves as treasurer of the Pembroke Teachers Association.

Prior to working in the Pembroke Public Schools, McNulty taught at a charter school in Boston for five years. She regularly saw unequal treatment of her colleagues at the charter — and a lack of any mechanism for educators to address their concerns. A low point came when the superintendent called a meeting where he displayed MCAS scores and berated the teachers whose students did not meet his expectations.



MTA Field Representative Beth Kaake, at left in the photo above, stood with members of the EAW Instructional Assistants Negotiating Team. From left, they are Teresa Kirdulis, Co-Chairs Cindy Brownell and Chris Pescheta, Kathy Lucey, Jackie Hackett, Saul Ramos, Theresa LaPriore and Deborah Young. Team member Lorraine Gibbs is not pictured. UMass Lowell professor Sue Kim, pictured at far left, says that at her previous job in Alabama, the faculty had no real power. Pembroke Teachers Association Treasurer Sara McNulty, immediate left, says she saw unequal treatment of colleagues when she worked at a charter school.

But because teachers only had "agreements" for employment, as opposed to a contract, they were afraid to speak out against such treatment. McNulty said that before coming to Pembroke, she "had no idea there was a difference."

"Then I realized how much more of a voice teachers could have in their work," she said, citing issues such as ensuring prep-time periods.

McNulty went on to take a leadership role in her local, saying it is her way to have a "piece of power" in determining not only what goes on in her school but also in her country.

The power of a union is part of what drew Sue Kim from the University of Alabama in Birmingham to a professorship at UMass Lowell, where she is now chair of the English Department and co-director of the Center for Asian American Studies.

In Alabama, campus governance gave faculty no real power.

"I was on the Faculty Senate, but without collective bargaining, it was toothless," Kim said.

Faculty could not challenge decisions about curriculum changes made by administrators, who would implement disruptive plans and then move on

to a different job. Educators also could not address the poor wages they were receiving.

"The lowest dean was making five times what the average associate professor was making," Kim said.

After arriving, Kim became active in her local, the Massachusetts Society of Professors Lowell. With collective bargaining, faculty members have been able to ensure that salary review and workload monitoring are ongoing processes. And faculty members have far more control over the curriculum.

"People don't understand what a difference it makes across the board to have a say in salaries, benefits and policies," Kim said. "Without a union, there is no mechanism for addressing any concerns in those areas."

But members need to recognize that they power the union — not the other way around.

Officials representing the Worcester Public Schools learned that lesson when they tried to resist offering a fair contract to the district's instructional assistants.

"They went up against the wrong people," said Cindy Brownell, co-chair of the bargaining team

Continued on next page

Screenings expose privatization effort

By Scott McLennan and Laura Barrett

The film “Backpack Full of Cash” has become a featured attraction at events across Massachusetts that are engaging union members and raising public awareness about the threat of privatizing public education.

Before the movie was put into wide release, MTA members attending the 2017 Summer Conference were among the earliest viewers of the documentary — a cautionary tale about how privatization is undermining public education.

Back then, “Backpack” helped frame the issues connected to the No on 2 campaign to keep the cap on charter schools.

Now locals are pairing the film, narrated by actor Matt Damon, with forums that help educate community members about the assault on public education and unions.

In Marshfield, more than 70 educators from about a dozen South Shore locals met in the high school cafeteria two days before Thanksgiving for a pre-screening discussion about why unions are essential to high-quality schools. A short video made by Wisconsin educators about the



Furnace Brook Middle School science teacher Edward Boudreau was among the South Shore educators who attended a screening of the film “Backpack Full of Cash” in Marshfield. During the event, participants filled a backpack with enlarged “dollar bills” listing ideas for what public schools could do with increased funding.

Photo by Scott McLennan

decimation of workers’ rights in that state in 2011 sparked further conversation.

Hull Teachers Association President Deborah McCarthy pointed out that collective action by unionized educators is essential to fighting for funding and policies that give students access to

high-quality public schools where teachers — rather than standardized tests — set the classroom agenda.

The South Shore educators concluded their forum by creating their own “backpack full of cash.” They wrote on oversized “dollar bills”

Please turn to **‘Backpack’**/Page 12

‘The more people we have involved, the better it is’

Continued from previous page

that negotiated the contract ratified in January by the assistants, who are members of the Educational Association of Worcester.

When the IAs began contract negotiations in 2016, they were determined to improve their pay and working conditions. But those goals could not be met until the bargaining unit better organized itself.

It achieved that in part by using its ability to dig into school finances and show that concessions the IAs had made on health insurance could fund pay raises the city was claiming it could not afford. The information helped motivate members into action — and in September, the local formed a contract action team, or CAT, to support the work of the negotiators. The team drew nearly 50 people, with every school building represented.

“About 30 of them I hadn’t seen before,” Brownell said. “These were people who were new to union work.”

The CAT and negotiators organized member appearances at School Committee meetings where IAs bravely shared personal stories about the struggles they face while doing a job they love and trying to live on low pay.

“I think the public and the School Committee found the stories eye-opening,” Brownell said. “When they heard about a member living in his car, people realized that shouldn’t be happening.”

The IAs eventually negotiated a tentative agreement that increased their pay and improved working conditions in various ways. But the CAT and negotiators were not done. Before ratification of the



Photo by Dena Fleno

Nearly 100 educators attended a meeting of the Reading Board of Selectmen on Jan. 30 to support an override that would restore funding for the community’s public schools.

contract, they set up several meetings for members to learn about the new agreement’s terms.

These meetings became recruiting opportunities for the EAW as members stepped forward to become delegates on the local’s governing board and to join committees.

“The more people we have involved, the better it is,” Brownell said.

Educators in Reading have also strengthened their lines of communication to build union power. But in their case, it was political action rather than a contract crisis that provided the catalyst for organizing.

In the fall, educators learned that budget projections showed the district cutting 11 teaching positions and eliminating foreign language instruction at the middle school. “That kicked people into high gear,” said Eric Goldstein, president of the Reading Teachers Association.

Up to that point, Goldstein and leaders in the local were working with members to become key communicators in their respective buildings. The project was moving at a slow pace. Then news of the cuts arrived and inspired action: The local aimed at having one member become responsible for getting news to about 10 colleagues via face-to-face conversations.

“When I was just using e-mail to communicate with members, I would maybe get a 50 percent open rate,” Goldstein said.

But with a network set up to deliver news in person, bolstered by a new Facebook group for members, the association was able to turn out more than 100 educators to a School Committee meeting and nearly that many to a meeting of the Board of Selectmen. That helped pave the way for the elected officials to include an override question on the town’s spring ballot to save the teaching jobs.

Winning the override remains a challenge. But the local’s organizing is already showing results.

“We never would have seen 100 people come to anything over the last couple of years,” Goldstein said.

For more information on the All In campaign, please visit massteacher.org/allin.

'Being silent just isn't an option ...'

EMAC Conference focuses on building trust and breaking through fear

By Jean Conley

Building relationships of trust, breaking through fear in order to bring about change and actively resisting attempts to turn back the clock on immigrants' rights were themes that ran through the 2017 Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee Conference.

The two-day event, titled "Getting Real About Race," was held Dec. 1 and 2 in Framingham. It featured speeches, discussion and workshops on helping students and their families cope during a time of open racism and hostility toward ethnic minorities and other groups.

EMAC Chair Yan Yii opened the conference with a charge to stand up to racism. "Being silent just isn't an option anymore, so I implore each and every one of you here to get involved, get talking and get woke," she said.



Yan Yii

Yii told the crowd that workshops and discussion topics were chosen by the committee to "help us all get real about race, diversity and public education." "We hope that this will inspire you to bring these conversations back to your communities," she added.

As MTA President Barbara Madeloni welcomed participants to a dinner on Friday night, she recalled that during the 2016 EMAC Conference, many in attendance were in a state of shock about the recent national election. One year later, she said, many of the fears expressed had come true.

"We are in a dangerous moment — a moment in which the racism and violence that people of color in this country have experienced for hundreds of years are now not only out there for all of us to see every day, but are being promoted and fed by our president," Madeloni said.

She congratulated the committee, the presenters and the participants for being willing to speak bluntly about racial issues.

"Use the time this weekend to ready yourself for the work we need to do — and to build relationships of trust that are going to carry us through these hard times," she urged those in the crowd.

Noting that the 2017 conference marked EMAC's 38th year, MTA Vice President Erik J. Champy recalled the names of many of the ethnic minority pioneers in the association, including longtime activist Louise Gaskins, who was in attendance.

"I believe that our commitment to ethnic minority affairs is commendable," Champy said.

But challenges persist, he noted. "We still have so much more work to do: increasing resources, improving curricula to build greater understanding of ethnic minority history and issues, and organizing



Above, Massachusetts Community College Council member Sharmese Gunn made a point during a "world café" discussion centering on the impact of white privilege on the classroom and the community. At left, members of the Boston-based cultural arts group OrigiNation entertained participants during dinner on Dec. 1.

Photos by Jean Conley

and identifying ethnic minority members for leadership positions within the MTA," Champy said.

"I am confident that we will embrace these efforts and the many incredible individuals who make our community so rich," he added.

The six workshops at the conference and a "world café" discussion centered on matters of equity and racial and social justice.

Sharron Burrowes, who works at the Galvin Middle School in Canton, said this year's intriguing workshop titles persuaded her to attend her first EMAC Conference. Burrowes, who is African American, said she has worked in special education for about 15 years and is currently an applied-behavioral analysis tutor.

She attended two workshops — "Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Should It Be Part of the Curriculum in Urban Schools?" and "Creating Diversity Change Agents through Community-Based Learning and the Arts" — and said she appreciated being able to go to sessions that were germane to

her work and at the same time focused on social and economic justice.

Though the workshops were very different in approach, they shared a common theme: "investing in children and learning who they are — and not stereotyping," she said.

"Having that mind and heart, to take the time to invest in the kids instead of prejudging them — that was powerful," Burrowes added.

Rocio Inclán, director of the National Education Association's Center for Social Justice, presented one of two keynote addresses.

As a child, Inclán would get up at 3 a.m. and wait for more than two hours each day with her mother and siblings to cross the border from Mexico so the children could attend school in Arizona. Inclán said the hard work her family did to make a life in the United States was built on her mother's dream of providing all of her children with a great public education.

Continued on next page

Diverse books are at heart of reading celebration

By Jean Conley

Educators throughout the country are at the forefront of a growing call for more diverse books for children and young adults.

Not long ago, the National Education Association kicked off the 20th year of its Read Across America program by highlighting the opportunity to celebrate “a nation of diverse readers.” The NEA has produced a calendar and resource materials that provide educators with information about numerous books and authors reflecting the nation’s diversity of culture, history and experience.

MTA member Carrie Tucker, the librarian at East Bridgewater Junior-Senior High School, said that Read Across America Day — set for March 2 — is a perfect time for educators to introduce their students to more diverse literature.

“We have a fairly homogenous population here in East Bridgewater,” said Tucker, who is



Photo by Bob Duffy

East Bridgewater Junior-Senior High School librarian Carrie Tucker looked over books with English teacher Greg Shea.

currently serving as president of the Massachusetts School Library Association. “So any opportunity to broaden horizons is welcome and benefits the kids.”

Tucker worked with two of her MTA colleagues, eighth-grade English teachers Greg Shea and Amy Ronayne, to come up with

selections of diverse young adult literature this year. Because the town’s schools are part of the area’s library network, the three educators — all members of the East Bridgewater Education Association — were able to get books on their list from nearby libraries. They let the students choose from among almost 80 books celebrating diversity based on race, economic or religious background, sexual orientation, geography and abilities.

The students are now incorporating the books they chose into the curriculum in their English classes, Tucker said.

East Bridgewater is not unusual, she added.

“Many school districts are doing this,” she said. “There is always room for the classics, but we’re doing our students a disservice if we don’t get out of our comfort zone and explore some of this excellent new literature with our students. Especially for the older students, this opens up a wider world.”

Please turn to **Diverse**/Page 23

‘As educators, we represent the first line of defense’

Continued from previous page

Inclán’s own dream was to “lift up others” by becoming an educator. She also saw teaching as a way to right some of the wrongs she had experienced at a time when immigrant students were routinely told to speak only English in school.

She said her childhood prepared her for “especially hard” political times.

“We didn’t create these times,” she told the audience. “We didn’t create a time when racism is the champion in many places. But we are the solution. We educators — education support professionals, teachers, counselors — together we are here because we are needed. We are the resistance.”

She also asked for educators’ assistance in the fight to pass the DREAM Act. “Every day, 122 kids are losing their DACA status,” she said, referring to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

Her message was reiterated on Saturday by Kent Wong, who offered the second keynote address. Wong has been the director of the UCLA Labor Center for the past 25 years. He is a longtime labor leader and an author.

“When we wake up every day amid the barrage of hate speech,” he said, “this is the time we need to appreciate the power of ourselves, resistance, and the necessity of gathering at conferences like this one — to plan our work to build the resistance and to advance the broader fight for social and economic justice.”

Wong got his start in the labor movement as a boycott organizer for the United Farm Workers of America under Cesar Chavez.

“I saw firsthand how this movement of poor undocumented immigrant workers in the fields of California captured the warmth and enthusiasm of



Photo by Jean Conley

Kent Wong, director of the UCLA Labor Center, spoke about the DACA program and the fight to “make sure all can live with dignity and justice — and without fear.”

millions of people throughout this country,” Wong said. “And to this day, millions of people think about it every time they see table grapes.”

He said that a centerpiece of President Donald Trump’s agenda has been bashing immigrants. “So it is no accident that we are witnessing a huge attack on the rights of immigrants as we speak, and in particular the rights of immigrant students,” Wong said. “As educators, we represent the first line of defense. We need to tell our immigrant students that they are not alone in this.”

He said the hard part for educators and students is often “breaking through the fear.” But “that’s what finally happened with the farm workers,” he

continued. “That’s what happened during the civil rights era, and that same trajectory is happening as we speak with immigrant youth, who are now proclaiming that they are undocumented and unafraid. This is a sign of resistance, a sign of courage and a sign that they have been able to break through the fear.”

He offered personal stories about young immigrants who have stepped up to become heroes of the movement. Educators and “everyone with a conscience” must stand with them, he concluded. “We must stand with students and their families to make sure all can live with dignity and justice — and without fear.”

MTA calls on DESE to monitor building safety

The MTA has called on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to carefully monitor health and safety conditions in all buildings used to educate children in the Commonwealth — and to keep the public informed about issues that are found.

“Any building that is used to educate children needs to be free of health and safety hazards, but many public schools in our Commonwealth are filled with significant risks to students and educators — including unsafe drinking water and poor air quality,” MTA President Barbara Madeloni and Vice President Erik J. Champy wrote in a Jan. 25 letter to Jeff Wulfson, acting commissioner of the DESE.

“Rather than waiting for a student or an educator to become ill or injured due to the condition of a building,” they added, “the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education needs to actively monitor the quality of our public schools. Where issues are found, they must be resolved on an urgent basis.”

At the 2017 MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates, educators overwhelmingly approved a new business item directing the organization to demand from the DESE a list of all buildings used to educate students and the conditions that prevail in each one.

To meet that goal, the association called on the DESE to assess each school and determine whether there are health and safety concerns related, among other areas, to:

- ▶ Quality of drinking water, including lead content
- ▶ Quality of air in classrooms and other locations
- ▶ Presence of asbestos
- ▶ Presence of PCBs and other known carcinogens
- ▶ Presence of mold
- ▶ Presence of radon
- ▶ Presence of infestation by rodents or other pests
- ▶ Presence of devices to monitor carbon monoxide
- ▶ Use of approved cleaning materials and protocols

Madeloni and Champy wrote that once the assessment is completed, the DESE should compile a list accessible to the public that clearly specifies health and safety conditions.

Writing that educators, parents and other residents have regularly shared their concerns with the MTA’s Health and Safety Committee, they pointed out a number of examples of school buildings posing significant health risks, including the following:

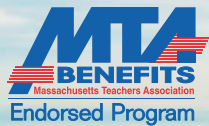
■ Officials in the Worcester Public Schools are closely monitoring the presence of PCBs in schools built during a time when construction materials contained that carcinogen.

■ The state Department of Environmental Protection found unsafe levels of lead in drinking water in over half of the 1,000-plus schools tested.

■ Kindergarten students in Douglas fell ill and were taken to a nearby hospital because of undetected carbon monoxide exposure when a furnace failed in the municipal building that housed their classroom.

“The 110,000 members of the Massachusetts Teachers Association believe that there are no compromises or shortcuts when it comes to addressing environmental hazards in school buildings,” Madeloni and Champy wrote. “No one attending a public school or working in one should have to worry about becoming ill or injured because of unhealthy or unsafe conditions.”

They concluded, “Preparing a comprehensive list should be a first step toward urgent action on the DESE’s part to ensure that every Massachusetts student has a healthy and safe place to learn. We call on you to take that step without delay.”



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A great opportunity to learn and network

By Jean Conley

Hundreds of Education Support Professionals will converge on Cape Cod early this spring for a weekend of learning, inspiration and networking.

The annual MTA ESP Conference will be held on April 6 and 7 at the Sea Crest Beach Hotel in Falmouth.

Leslie Marsland, chair of the ESP Committee, said the committee has invited speakers and presenters who will inspire participants and offer workshops that will empower ESPs from across the state — all in a beautiful oceanfront setting.

“ESPs are critically important to the school community,” Marsland said. “This conference provides a wonderful opportunity for them to enhance their leadership skills, become more active, and get the tools they need to effectively advocate for colleagues and public education.”

MTA ESP
CONFERENCE

April 6-7
Sea Crest Beach Hotel
Falmouth



Workshops were still being planned as *MTA Today* went to press, but topics to be covered include building technology skills, contract bargaining, the legal rights of ESPs, health and wellness, and recognizing unconscious bias.

Another highly anticipated feature — presentation of the annual MTA ESP of the Year award — will take place during dinner on Friday evening.

The award honors an ESP at the state level who has been nominated by his or her local association as one who stands up for workers' rights and stands out for making a difference in the lives of students.

MTA President Barbara Madeloni, Vice President Erik J. Champy and the winner of the 2018 MTA ESP of the Year award will address the crowd during the conference.

On Saturday, a breakfast buffet will be followed by two sessions of workshops and a luncheon for all participants before the conference concludes at about 3 p.m.

A full listing of workshops and other activities can be found at massteacher.org/esp. Early bird registration ends on Friday, March 2. Discounted hotel room rates are available until March 7, and the final date to register for the conference is March 23. If your school district or local association does not pay or reimburse your conference costs, you may be eligible to apply for a grant. For more information on costs, hotel charges and registration, please visit massteacher.org/esp. Other questions can be e-mailed to Jessica Parlon in the MTA Division of Training and Professional Learning at jparlon@massteacher.org. Her phone number is 617.878.8153.

ESP Leadership Weekends: Strong leaders, strong locals

By Jean Conley

MTA's 2018 ESP Leadership Weekends launched on Jan. 19 with the message that building strong ESP leaders helps build strong students, locals and communities.

The course teaches leadership strategies and helps participants strengthen interpersonal skills and build resilience as attacks on unions intensify.

Participants dug in right away, delving into topics such as embracing change, building confidence in their ability to lead, overcoming fear and developing assertiveness.

Roylene Hunte, a classroom paraeducator at the Pierce School in Brookline, said that attending her first MTA ESP Conference last year opened her eyes.

“I was just so inspired,” she said. “It made me want to take on a leadership role at my school.”

The leadership program, which runs through April 7, requires a three-weekend commitment. But participants said the prospect of learning how to become leaders at such a crucial time for unions — while forging strong bonds with their fellow ESPs — was a strong motivator.

Janice McKeown, a special education paraeducator at the Runkle School in Brookline,



Photo by Jean Conley

Shannon Smith, third from left, made a point during a workshop at the first ESP Leadership Weekend. With Smith are participants Susan Markievitz, far left, and Elsa Trinidad, right. ESP Committee member Shaleah Rather, second from left, served as a facilitator.

said she looked forward to building camaraderie with her fellow ESPs and spreading the message that membership is a means of building power.

“Being an ESP is absolutely a career,” she said. “We need to share our stories.”

Susan Markievitz, a paraeducator at Haverhill High School, is new to MTA union activism. She said she was drawn to sign up for the leadership

program because she wanted “to find out more, get my foot in the door — and do my best to help out.”

Shannon Smith, a special education paraeducator at the Gates Lane School in Worcester, said that as he has become more involved in his union, he has looked for more opportunities to build his comfort level so that he could “step in and rectify situations” at his school.

JOBS AT THE MTA

The Massachusetts Teachers Association is hiring. To view available job opportunities, please visit massteacher.org/jobs.

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'Backpack' screenings expose campaign to privatize education

Continued from Page 7

what they would like to see in their own public schools — if they had sufficient funding. Their wishes included more field trips, experience-based learning, upgraded technology, after-school programs, and better pay for paraeducators.

Participants then marched together into the high school auditorium and joined approximately 50 residents of area communities to watch "Backpack."

"We made a strong union presence when we walked in, and after the movie, there was a lot of discussion about why unions matter," said Marshfield Education Association Co-President Chris Galvin. "There were a few politicians and their representatives there as well, taking notes."

In Arlington, educators flipped the script, first showing "Backpack" and then holding a community forum.

Members from MTA locals in Arlington, Burlington, Lexington and

Belmont organized the Jan. 8 event and worked with the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance and First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington to promote the screening and discussion.

As was the case in Marshfield, the conversation turned toward the impact of having too little to spend on the needs of students and educators.

Lisa Guisbond, executive director of Citizens for Public Schools, encouraged school committees, educators and community activists to make the need for more funding known.

She offered a scenario that educators had previously used for union organizing and community building.

"The resolutions against charter school expansion that school committees passed during the No on 2 campaign were very influential," Guisbond said. "We need to do it again for school funding. It's worth fighting for."

Higher ed advocacy day set for March 5

MTA members, students, parents and other community members will gather at the State House for Public Higher Education Advocacy Day on Monday, March 5.

The event will begin in the Great Hall at 9:30 a.m. with a speaking program and preparation for visits to legislators. Participants will advocate for increased funding, better pay and working conditions for faculty and staff, and a high-quality, debt-free public higher education system that serves students and working families.

The advocacy day is being organized by the Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts. PHENOM Executive Director Zac Bears said that no lobbying experience is required. Participants will be trained in effective advocacy using their own stories.

A lunch and debriefing session will be held in the Great Hall after late-morning visits to legislators' offices, and the event is expected to wrap up at about 2 p.m.

MTA President Barbara Madeloni urged as many MTA members as possible to attend.

"State spending on public higher education is down 40 percent since 2001," Madeloni said. "Much of the cost of a college education has shifted to students and their families, so many people simply cannot afford to pursue a degree."

She added that many students who are able to graduate "are hobbled by loan payments just as they are trying to work their way into society."

"We owe our young people more," she said. "And we owe more to those doing the work of educating our college students."

To learn more and register, please visit phenomonline.org.

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REGIONAL RETIREMENT CONSULTATIONS AVAILABLE

The MTA provides individual retirement consultations throughout the state 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.***

PLEASE NOTE:

All consultations are now by appointment only during the hours listed.

AUBURN — Edward Nelson: first Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Central Office, 48 Sword St., Auburn; 508.791.2121, or at home, 774.239.7823.

QUINCY — Harold Crowley: 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.

CAPE COD — Lawrence Abbruzzi: second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Barnstable Teachers Association (BTA), 100 West Main St., Suite #7, Hyannis; 508.775.8625, or at home, 508.824.9194.

FITCHBURG — Karen Melanson: second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Fitchburg Teachers Association office, 245 River St., Fitchburg; Call 978.355.6963.

HOLYOKE — Ron Lech: third Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Western Office, 55

Bobala Road, Suite 3, Holyoke; 413.537.2335, or at home, 413.893.9173.

LYNNFIELD — Mary Parry: third Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Northeast Office, 50 Salem St., Building B, Lynnfield; call 978.372.2031. Barbara Callaghan: fourth Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Northeast Office, 50 Salem St., Building B, Lynnfield; call 978.456.9997.

PITTSFIELD — Ward F. Johnson: second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Berkshire Office, 188 East St., Pittsfield; 413.499.0257, or at home, 413.443.1722.

RAYNHAM — Raymond Thompson: third Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Southeast Office, 756 Orchard Street, third floor, Raynham; Call Thompson at 617.347.4425.

HIGHER EDUCATION AT-LARGE — Edward McCourt, 781.325.2553.

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.

Winter conference builds skills and bonds

By Scott McLennan

Hundreds of MTA members gathered recently for a conference devoted to union-building and professional development, generating a wealth of ideas as they interacted with colleagues and staff. Educators from preK through higher education braved frigid temperatures to participate, with most arriving as members of teams.

The inaugural Union Skills Winter Conference was held on Jan. 6 at the Sheraton Framingham Hotel and Conference Center. Conceived as a one-day version of the MTA's multi-day Summer Conference, the event proved attractive to many educators who have had difficulty attending the longer event.

"It was a lot easier to get our members here," said Katie Schmitt, treasurer of the Fitchburg Education Association.

Schmitt connected with her colleagues working in community colleges and state universities for a discussion on Governor Charlie Baker's controversial plan to increase public high school and college "co-enrollment."

"I was glad I went to the roundtable conversation with K-12 and higher ed members. It was a great conversation and one that we need to have more often," she said.

Educators attended workshops on policy, bargaining and maintenance of contracts, political



Photo by Bob Duffy

A lunch break during the Union Skills Winter Conference provided educators with a chance to network and share information. The event was held on Jan. 6 in Framingham.

action, legal issues, communications skills and the *All In* membership campaign, in addition to taking part in professional development.

Members said the conference enabled them to connect their work as educators to union activism. David Beebe, a member of the Belmont Education Association, was inspired to think of ways to develop grassroots organizing to advocate for the

types of professional development that educators in his district want.

The conversations he had also made him consider how many of his colleagues interact with their local association.

"For me, being in the union is simply the thing that you do," Beebe said. "But is that the same

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Statements by candidates for NEA Director seats

The MTA is holding an election for three seats on the NEA Board of Directors.

The Massachusetts seats will be filled by a vote of the active membership in March and April, in tandem with NEA state and regional delegate elections. Two seats are for three-year terms beginning Sept. 1, 2018, and expiring Aug. 31,

2021, in accordance with the NEA's fiscal year.

The third seat is for one year to fill an unexpired term beginning Sept. 1, 2018, and expiring Aug. 31, 2019. Ballots will be provided to all MTA/NEA active members who are eligible to vote.

Candidates were given the opportunity to submit biographical statements and photos. Submissions

received in compliance with the MTA's deadlines are printed on this page and Page 15.

For further information, please contact John Connelly of the Division of Governance and Administration by calling 617.878.8305 or e-mailing jconnelly@massteacher.org.

Candidate for three-year term

Ginger Armstrong — Lee Education Association

As an art teacher and a current NEA Director living and working in Berkshire County, I am honored to bring the voices of Massachusetts students and educators to the state and federal levels. I advocate for all educators, preK through higher ed, and work to unite members across the state, as well as the country, for the purpose of preparing our students to succeed in an ever-changing world through public education.



Ginger Armstrong

My experience:

- Local treasurer and president
- Negotiations Committee
- Grievance Committee
- MTA Board
- MTA Executive Committee
- Berkshire Educator Action Network
- Berkshire County Education Task Force
- Northeast Organizing Institute
- NEA Board training, racial justice training and legislative agenda

As an MTA Board member from Berkshire County I have worked with educators from Pittsfield, one of the original Gateway Cities, as well as rural areas from Florida to Sheffield. I have the experience to understand the issues surrounding the small districts that struggle with finances as a result of businesses leaving the area. Lower enrollments, levy

caps and communities closing schools due to charter schools are just some of our issues that I bring to the MTA and NEA.

As a teacher of middle and high school graphic arts, I understand the struggles our schools have keeping programs alive. All teachers have the same needs, including effective mentoring programs, professional development and collaborative planning. Educators need college debt reduction, protected teaching time and limited time on standardized testing.

The most important work is listening to the stories of local members from across the state and representing those members at the MTA Board and in Washington, uniting those voices to build a stronger union, fighting for students and educators at the heart of our communities and our future. Please consider Ginger Armstrong, NEA Director.

Candidate for three-year term

Ryan Hoyt — Waltham Educators Association

Three years ago you sent a fifth-grade teacher to Washington to be a voice for NEA, to promote progressive legislation and to protect collective bargaining rights. Thank you for putting your faith in me to be your representative. I respectfully ask you to send me back so that I may continue doing this noble, challenging work on your behalf.



Ryan Hoyt

As your NEA Director I regularly meet with Senators Warren and Markey and our nine Congressional representatives to fight for increased public school funding; better wages, benefits, and professional development for ESPs; ending institutional racism; protecting LGBT and Dreamer students and colleagues; overturning No Child Left Behind; demanding equal pay for higher education members (and getting a fair higher ed bill passed); and repealing the harmful GPO-WEP.

When anti-public-school groups, the chair of the Massachusetts Board of Education, and even our own governor wished to lift the cap on charter schools, I stood with our five other Massachusetts NEA Directors and asked for \$5.4 million to help

us defeat Question 2. This, combined with our canvassing, sign holding, phone banking, and social media presence, led to a wonderful win for us that left our enemies speechless and envious of our organizing prowess. Amazing things happen when our unions work together!

With a president who constantly attacks the working class, a secretary of education who wishes to dismantle public education, and a Supreme Court that is poised to rule against union membership, you need someone strong to be your voice in Washington. I have the experience, the dedication, and the time to stand up and fight for you, your families, and your students. I ask that you vote for me, Ryan Hoyt, so that I may continue the work that I have begun as your NEA Director. Thank you.

Candidate for three-year term

Alexizendria (Zena) Link — Educational Association of Worcester

Being an educator today is complex. Now more than ever our voices need to be heard. Our profession requires us to continuously make decisions which allow for teaching and learning that is responsive to a diverse population of student needs and working conditions. As a result, educators need support creating environments conducive for



Alexizendria (Zena) Link

every child to learn. Supported environments achieved in fully funded schools allow students to take academic risks through heightened rigor attained by utilizing techniques which incorporate movement, culturally relevant dialogue, and hands-on activities promoting the intersection of intellect and creativity.

I advocate for culturally relevant education aligned with critical pedagogy. In addition to culturally diverse curriculum, a pedagogy relinquishing more power to students increases learning outcomes and self-advocacy. I strive for socially just schools within equally just school systems.

I am a high school English educator who has served as a delegate for MTA Annual Meetings and

NEA Representative Assemblies. Furthermore, I currently serve as a Legislative and Political Action Team representative and with these organizations: Educators for a Democratic Union (EDU), New Member Committee for EAW and MTA, Greater Boston Chapter A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI), and Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance. I am an NEA Teacher Leadership Institute (TLI) fellow. I am advocating for partnerships to improve school policy and conditions for students, educators and communities.

“... to teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin.” (Bell Hooks, 1994).

Statements by candidates for NEA Director seats

Candidate for three-year term

Manes Pierre — Holyoke Teachers Association

Manes Pierre for NEA Director 2018. I am Manes Pierre, history teacher for the Holyoke Public Schools. I have a passion for public education and a vision for its future. A native of Haiti, I became a United States citizen in 1994 and have since devoted my life to making a contribution to public education from a wide spectrum (K-12 and college



Manes
Pierre

professor, Miami-Dade and University of Phoenix).

My platform is innovative and dynamic, focusing on moving education forward for all students with the following four pillars: (1) restore dignity in the classroom by creating a climate for success for students, parents and educators; (2) promote professional autonomy and the need for administrators to trust and support educators; (3) encourage more public funding for public schools; (4) create schools that our students deserve through community partnerships.

I have taught ESL for 16 years. However, I have stepped in to teach seventh- and eighth-grade ethnic studies for the Holyoke Public Schools for the past two years. Among other things, I am currently part of the 2017-2018 NEA Teacher Leadership program,

and have recently completed two years on the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation as a teacher advisor. I have also served on the Climate and Culture Committee at Kelly School, as well as on the district committee.

My most recent novel, *The Clash of the Gods and Their Zombies*, has been a great success and is being used by several colleges as supplementary reading for diversity, culture, Caribbean and Haitian history courses. After conducting a listening tour to connect with other educators, ESPs, and PTA leaders, I have decided to run for NEA Director. Finally, I kindly ask for your vote in this upcoming election!

Manes Pierre for NEA Director, 603.461.4821, manes.pierre@gmail.com

Candidate for one-year term

Betsy Preval — Cambridge Education Association

As a sixth-year educator in Cambridge, I've worked as a paraprofessional and currently as a seventh-grade English language arts teacher. In my school, I'm a cultural proficiency facilitator and a union building representative,



Betsy
Preval

serving on the Cambridge Education Association's Executive Board. Within my local, I'm a member of the Unit A/B Collective Bargaining Team and on the Political Action Committee. In previous years, I have also served on the Superintendent's Advisory Council.

I have learned so much about union work and activism through engaging in healthy discourse with fellow educators in my district, across Massachusetts, and nationally.

I have come to understand what it means to be "union strong" through routinely attending MTA Annual Meetings, participating as a

Massachusetts delegate at the 2017 NEA Representative Assembly, door knocking for the No on 2 Campaign, and testifying at the State House in support of the Fair Share Amendment.

I'm an advocate for social justice education, promoting systemically equitable policies and social-emotional learning, and will always stand up for the rights of educators, students, families and the community.

It would be an absolute honor and privilege to serve on the NEA's Board of Directors. I truly value and appreciate your vote.

Candidate for one-year term

Nicole Prevost — Quincy Education Association

My name is Nicole Prevost, and I am running for NEA Board of Directors. I am currently a third-grade teacher in Quincy Public Schools. I have served on the MTA Board of Directors for four years and currently serve on the Quincy Education Association Executive Committee as membership chair.



Nicole
Prevost

Serving on many MTA committees over the years and as a 14-year classroom teacher and local activist, I have seen the challenges facing our members. I have spoken out against using DDMs in educator evaluations. I have kept a careful eye on the budget, making sure MTA has the reserves needed to stay strong. As a Director, I kept in contact with the locals I represented in order to understand their issues and fully represent all members. As an NEA Director, I will work with all members to make sure I am representing them to the best of my ability.

As we enter this difficult time with the *Janus* decision on the horizon, we need to stay united. As a membership chair, I understand the impact this decision will have at the local, state, and national

levels. In order to keep our members engaged, locals need resources to help them in their conversations and their work with members. National and state leadership needs to ensure locals have what they need to help members understand why union membership is so important and how being unified makes us so much stronger.

We were able to see this united power with our NO on 2 victory. This collective power will allow us to continue fighting for the schools our communities deserve.

I have the experience, passion, and commitment to represent your voices at the national level, which is why I am running for NEA Board of Directors. Thank you for your vote!



Make your voice heard! Join your colleagues, representatives of the MTA Retired Members Committee and guest speakers for the 2018 MTA Retired spring luncheons. Learn about issues of interest to retirees, including upcoming state and federal elections, the state budget, MTA-backed legislation and the *All In* membership campaign.

Registration begins soon at massteacher.org/retired

A visiting student finds a warm welcome in Worcester

By Laura Barrett

English learners who arrive in Massachusetts in the middle of the school year after a disaster at home need more than language instruction and academics. They need new friends and support from school staff.

Nirvan Serrano, 12, found both at the Sullivan Middle School in Worcester.

Nirvan and his older sister were sent to the U.S. in October to live with their aunt and uncle. Their school in Arecibo, Puerto Rico, was closed after Hurricane Maria due to a lack of water and electricity, and their parents had to stay behind.

Stories like Nirvan's are repeated throughout the state, with schools welcoming more than 2,300 students since the hurricane.

When he arrived, Nirvan spoke only Spanish. Two months later, he was asked how his English was coming along.

"I know a little bit," he said. "You speak to me in English, I know what you say, but I can't explain in English."

When he first arrived, he experienced culture shock.

"Everything was different," he said. "It's so cold. I like that. In Puerto Rico it's hot. The lockers and the lunch are strange for me." He explained with



Photo by Laura Barrett

Nirvan Serrano received a warm welcome from students and staff when he came to Worcester's Sullivan Middle School from Puerto Rico. Paraeducator Yahaira Rodriguez helped Nirvan and other visiting students adjust.

the help of hand gestures that in Puerto Rico, the school schedule remains the same every day, while at Sullivan the schedule rotates.

Paraeducator Yahaira Rodriguez, assigned to the seventh-grade classes that took in the newcomers, said, "At first they were always lost in school. I was going into the hallway trying to find them because they were often on a different floor. And then they couldn't talk to everybody because they didn't have the language."

By mid-December, the hurricane refugees were hearing lessons in English, but they still needed help with translation.

After Nirvan's history and social studies teacher, David Thompson, explained the next steps in their project on Egypt, Rodriguez went over the instructions again in Spanish.

Thompson had also painstakingly recreated texts about the Egyptian gods and the Nile River in Spanish using Google Translate so the newcomers could keep up. While the recently repealed Sheltered English Immersion law envisioned nearly all instruction taking place in English, districts had to take advantage of the proviso that a student's native language can be used for clarification.

Asked what went through his mind when his teacher spoke, Nirvan said, "When he speaks English, in my head I try to translate into Spanish. If I don't know something, I ask Limbert or Ms. Rodriguez."

Limbert is Limbert Lavandier, the secret weapon of the class. A cheerful, helpful student who is fully bilingual, Limbert arrived in the U.S. when he was in first grade.

He picked up the language quickly.

"I was little, so I was like a little sponge," he said with a grin. "I remember I would learn how to

Please turn to **Happiness**/Page 26

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FOR A CONSTANTLY CHANGING WORLD

New law returns flexibility to EL instruction

Continued from Page 5

The district also has a very popular two-way Spanish/English program housed in the Manthala George Jr. Elementary School and a brand new Portuguese immersion program. The district plans to launch a French immersion program in the fall, mainly appealing to students who have relatives from French-speaking Caribbean islands and Africa, as well as English-speaking families who want their children to know more than one language.

Roumis was particularly enthusiastic about the promise of two-way bilingual programs. The Spanish/English program always has a long waiting list.

On a recent morning, students in Leticia Roseman's fourth-grade classroom at the George School were reading books and answering questions posed by their teacher in Spanish. They made speaking the language look effortless. In a classroom across the hall, another group of students was doing the same, except in English.

"We have over 40 years of bilingual and responsive programming for students," says Kellie Jones, Brockton's director of bilingual education.



For half the day, the students learn math, science and social studies in Spanish, and for the other half they learn those subjects in English.

It's a 50/50 program in all respects. Half of the students speak English as their native language; the other half speak Spanish. Each class is made up of equal numbers of students from the two language backgrounds. In a few short years, all of the students are fluent in two languages — something most adults in the U.S. never achieve.

Studies show that students in dual language programs typically outperform their peers by several measures, including flexibility in

thinking and tenacity as well as more traditional test-score results.

A 2012 study by researchers Wayne Thomas and Virginia Collier for the Joint National Committee for Languages concluded, "Dual language learning has been found to be the only method of second language acquisition to facilitate the full closure of the achievement gap between English learners and English speakers in primary and secondary education."

In 2015, Houston decided to greatly expand its dual language programs after a Rice University study found that students in the two-way programs had the best Spanish and English skills.

Will more dual language programs and other alternatives to SEI be developed across the state now that the Legislature has passed the LOOK Act?

Roumis and Jones hope so, especially in communities where parents want their children to have the opportunity to be bilingual, bicultural and biliterate.

"Brockton was the first community in Massachusetts to have bilingual programs for students," said Jones, a past president of MATSOL. "We have over 40 years of bilingual and responsive programming for students. Part of that history and the activism of our community influence how we responded to [the Unz law] and how we work even to this day."

Roumis added, "Brockton's nickname is the City of Champions, and you might say the schools are real champions for the community. I always remember what Kellie said once: 'We are a Gateway City, but we should be called a Language Gateway City for all the offerings we have here.'"

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What is umbrella insurance?

If you earn a paycheck, you should have umbrella insurance. It is that simple. In today's litigious society — where an estimated 15 million civil lawsuits are filed each year — an umbrella policy kicks in where your homeowners and auto policies leave off. An umbrella policy can provide you with extra protection and peace of mind if a claim or lawsuit is filed against you.

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How umbrella insurance works

If your homeowners insurance has a liability limit of \$300,000, you may add an umbrella policy with an additional \$1 million of coverage, giving you a total of \$1.3 million of protection if someone is injured on your property.

An umbrella also builds on the liability coverage of your auto policy. If you are sued, your home or auto policy kicks in first and your umbrella policy covers the excess.

If a visitor slips and falls on your icy driveway and can't work, for example, you could potentially be liable for that person's medical payments, rehabilitation and time away from work. If your car skids on a snowy road and causes an accident, you would potentially be liable for property damage and injury to anyone involved.

Winter, spring, summer and fall, most of us participate in activities that put us at risk. Here are some activities that indicate you should carry an umbrella policy:

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- Entertaining family and friends at your home
- Using social media or having a child who

does

■ Allowing your children's friends at your house

■ Owning a recreational vehicle such as a boat, motorcycle, personal watercraft or golf cart

■ Owning a swimming pool or trampoline

■ Employing a housecleaner

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■ Having packages delivered regularly to your home

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Preconvention meetings to be held in April

Regional preconvention meetings have been set for elected delegates to the 2018 MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates. At these preconventions, the delegates will receive information and materials critical to their decision-making on organizational matters.

Each meeting is scheduled to begin at 4:30 p.m., with registration starting at 3:30 p.m.

The following is a list of locations and dates for the preconventions:

- **Monday, April 2:** Central Region, Hilton Garden Inn, Marlborough
- **Wednesday, April 4:** Northeast and Metro Regions, Four Points by Sheraton, Wakefield
- **Tuesday, April 10:** Western Region, Hadley Farms Meeting House, Hadley
- **Wednesday, April 11:** Southeast Region, Holiday Inn Taunton-Foxboro Area, Taunton
- **Thursday, April 12:** Cape Cod and Islands Region, Cape Codder Resort, Hyannis

The Annual Meeting of Delegates will be held May 4 and 5 at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston. Further information will be provided to delegates as it becomes available.

MTA advocates for bills guaranteeing recess as governor introduces budget proposal

Continued from Page 4

Review Commission's findings. Senator Sonia Chang-Díaz (D-Boston), co-chair of the commission, said the commission determined that "the way the state calculates a district's foundation budget — the starting point in Massachusetts K-12 school financing — understates the cost of educating students to the tune of at least \$1 billion per year."

Chang-Díaz called the governor's fiscal 2019 school funding proposal "just plain inadequate."

Noah Berger, director of the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, told *The Boston Globe* that there are some "bright spots" in the governor's budget overall, but "we're in about the best economic times that we've had in a long time, so this is the kind of time when you'd like to see real progress on things that improve the lives of ordinary working people."

One area of the education budget did see a substantial increase: MCAS testing. The MCAS line item received a \$5.1 million boost in the governor's budget — a 19 percent hike — for developing new tests.

"This budget looks like a plan to test kids more and educate them less," said MTA President Barbara Madeloni. "We will be fighting the governor's education funding priorities as the budget moves through the Legislature."

The House and Senate will develop their own spending proposals before voting on a final budget before the new fiscal year begins on July 1.

Meanwhile, on the same day Baker released his budget, the MTA moved to advance one of its own key priorities on Beacon Hill.

The association hosted an informational briefing on legislation to guarantee every student in kindergarten through fifth grade at least 20 minutes a day of unstructured free-play recess.

The provision is included in two MTA-backed bills — H.235, filed by Rep. Marjorie Decker (D-Cambridge), and S.308, filed by Sen. Michael Rush (D-Boston).

Decker kicked off the briefing with opening remarks before Madeloni moderated a panel discussion on the crucial role that recess plays in education and child development. The panel included Dr. Claire McCarthy, a pediatrician at Boston Children's Hospital; Deborah McCarthy, president of the Hull Teachers Association; and Stephanie Gray, an education advocate and member of the Massachusetts PTA Board of Directors.

For details on the governor's budget, please go to massteacher.org/bakerbudget. To read about the MTA's legislative priorities, please go to massteacher.org/legislation.

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Rev: 12/21/17

Event builds union skills

Continued from Page 13

experience for everyone? How do we engage the longtime member who isn't very active as well as get the new members involved in the union?"

In the framework of the *All In* campaign, such questions provided opportunities for members to engage in one-to-one conversations with colleagues and develop goals and strategies for maximizing union power.

During a midday break, MTA President Barbara Madeloni told the participants that their organizing work is leading to better day-to-day learning conditions for students and working conditions for educators.

And she reminded members that organizing around passage of the Fair Share Amendment and other issues will strengthen Massachusetts public schools and colleges for years to come. "This is the time to be pushing our agenda and not just defending ourselves," she said.

Madeloni noted that the event drew many new faces and said that was an excellent sign that locals are working hard to engage more members.

But even veteran union members were impressed. Mary Lampron-Shepherd, a member of the Wachusett Regional Education Association, said that she was pleased with what she took away from the conference. "It added depth to my knowledge," she said.

Riley chosen to serve as commissioner

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted 8-3 on Jan. 29 in favor of Jeffrey Riley being chosen as the next Massachusetts commissioner of education.

Following the initial vote, the board voted unanimously to ask BESE Chair Paul Sagan to recommend Riley for the post. Secretary of Education James Peyser, who voted for Riley on the board, has final say on the appointment and has said he plans to move it forward.



Jeffrey Riley

Angélica Infante-Green, a deputy commissioner of education in New York, received three votes for the post. A third candidate, Penny Schwinn, deputy commissioner of academics at the Texas Education Agency, did not receive any.

Riley has served as the state-appointed receiver of the Lawrence Public Schools for the past six years. He announced in November that he would be stepping down from that role at the end of the current school year. He will be filling a vacancy created by the death of Commissioner Mitchell Chester last June.

MTA President Barbara Madeloni issued the following statement on the selection of Riley as the new commissioner:

Our values and priorities don't change, regardless of who serves as commissioner. We hope that Jeff Riley has learned from his

Riley has served as the state-appointed receiver of the Lawrence Public Schools for the past six years.

experience in Lawrence about the importance of respecting the professional knowledge, experiences and voices of educators and the unions that represent them.

It is the job of the commissioner to prioritize supporting and advocating for the district public schools that serve more than 90 percent of our students, not to devote disproportionate energy and resources to charter schools and other privatization efforts that deprive educators of their collective bargaining rights and disempower democratically elected school committees.

We remain committed to putting an end to the state's high-stakes testing regimen and will want to work with the new commissioner to focus on supporting students, schools and districts rather than on punishing them.

We expect the commissioner to identify the effects of economic injustice on student learning. That means publicly supporting progressive policies to reduce poverty and advocating for state spending to guarantee that students in low-income districts, most of whom are students of color, receive the same level of services as students in our affluent suburbs.

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Chorus to perform at Annual Meeting

The MTA Chorus will perform at the 2018 MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates, which will be held May 4 and 5 at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston.

MTA Retired member Bob Lague is the choral director. Rehearsals will be held at his home at 9 Cronin Way in Woburn on three Monday evenings — March 19, April 9 and April 30.

A dress rehearsal and sound check will be held on the morning of May 4 in the convention hall. If you are interested in joining the chorus, please notify Lague by calling him at 781.983.6151 or e-mailing NEAorgan@aol.com.

Please indicate whether you are a new or returning chorus member, identify your district, and state whether you sing soprano, alto, tenor or bass.

Returning members should bring folders from past performances to rehearsals.

Diverse books at center of RAA

Continued from Page 9

The city of Melrose got ahead of the curve last year, thanks in part to MTA member Andrea Razi-Thomas.

Razi-Thomas, an Arlington High School intervention coordinator, remembered that when she considered moving to Melrose years ago, she saw stickers and signs that expressed the city's commitment to inclusivity. That sent an important signal, helping her decide to raise a family there.

"I believe in people being aware," said Razi-Thomas. "Being a gay parent, I want kids to know that all types of families exist."

Last year, she worked to introduce a diverse reading list in her children's school library. Razi-Thomas said the school principal, Mary Beth Maranto, Superintendent Cyndy Taymore and Assistant Superintendent Margaret Adams "got immediately on board" with the project. The group eventually included Marianne Stanton, the head of children's services for the Melrose City Library, which adopted the list in all of its branches.

Erin Hogan was among the first group of teachers to use the diversity booklist. Hogan, a Melrose Education Association building representative at the Roosevelt Elementary School, said the experience has been a big hit with students.

"We chose books where the kids were of similar ages to the main characters," she said. This helped

them identify with and build up empathy for the characters and opened the students up to new and different experiences.

"We began and ended each class talking about how diversity was represented in the books," Hogan noted. Since the students were engaged by the content and enjoyed the format of the lessons, she said, "the books helped us to introduce quote analysis, something students would need for the next year."

Hogan and Razi-Thomas said that Adams, the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning, deserves credit for working hard to align the books with the curriculum in all of the city's elementary school classrooms.

Razi-Thomas said the initiative was conducted in a spirit of respect for educators' precious time, as well as the fact that the city's five elementary school libraries are parent-run rather than having staff librarians.

"We assumed that teachers didn't have a lot of time to set this program up," Razi-Thomas said. "We did not want this to be a hassle for the educators, but a resource."

To see the Diversity Book List for Melrose, go to <http://www.melrosepubliclibrary.org/diversity-book-list-for-children/>. To download the 2017-2018 NEA Read Across America calendar and poster, go to <http://www.nea.org/grants/57760.htm>.

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Obituaries

James J. Babineau Jr., 64, of Reading, formerly of Melrose. Was a math teacher at Melrose High School and Melrose Junior High School for 35 years before retiring. He was also an adjunct professor of math at North Shore Community College. He served as treasurer and president of the Melrose Education Association. Dec. 16.

Mary R. Bemis, 87, of Salem. Was an elementary school teacher in Beverly before becoming a chemistry teacher at Classical High School in Lynn, where she served as the director of the science department and as a guidance counselor. Oct. 13.

Robert A. Bombard, 85, of Boylston. Taught woodworking at Natick High School and Worcester Technical High School for many years before he retired. Dec. 30.

David R. Braley, 77, of Ware and Holden. Taught in the Worcester Public Schools for 39 years, serving as the principal of several schools. He retired as the principal of the Harlow Street Elementary School. Nov. 15.

Bruce S. Burgess, 83, of Marshfield and Norwell. Was a teacher in the Weymouth Public Schools for 12 years. He was a longtime office manager for the Massachusetts Teachers Association

until his retirement in 1992. Nov. 3.

Christine M. Farnsworth, 85, of Westwood. Taught at Dorchester High School for one year before teaching at Watertown High School for more than 30 years. Nov. 19.

John Flannery, 76, of Spencer. Was a science teacher at Southbridge High School for 35 years, retiring in 2002. Nov. 5.

Harold E. LeBlanc, 90, of Palm Desert, California, formerly of Norwood and Walpole. Was an elementary school teacher for many years and served as a principal in Walpole for 26 years. Nov. 1.

C. Carvill Moore, 84, of Leicester.

Was an English teacher for the Leicester Public Schools until he retired in 1995. Nov. 12.

Mary C. Murphy, 86, of Worcester. Was a kindergarten teacher in the Worcester Public Schools, teaching at the Thorndyke Road School for 30 years. She retired in 1995. Nov. 29.

Anne Marie Seybold, 78, of West Springfield. Was an elementary school teacher for 40 years, mostly in the Chicopee Public Schools. Oct. 24.

Carol A. Swain, 81, of North Adams. Taught first grade at Greylock Elementary School for many years. Nov. 25.



Massachusetts Teachers Association

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Purchase	Frequency	Typical savings per purchase	Purchases per year	Yearly savings
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Dining - Dinner	2 meals/mo	\$5.50	24	\$132.00
Pizza	2 purchases/mo	\$8.00	24	\$192.00
EVERYDAY NEEDS & SERVICES				
Apparel	8 items/yr	\$14.75	8	\$118.00
Home Improvement	2 purchases/yr	\$50.00	2	\$100.00
Carpet Cleaning	1 purchase/yr	\$20.00	1	\$20.00
Misc. Shopping	8 purchases/yr	\$12.50	8	\$100.00
Flowers/Gifts	2 purchases/yr	\$6.50	2	\$13.00
Oil Changes	4 oil changes/yr	\$6.00	4	\$24.00
Cell Phone Service	12 payments/yr	\$8.25	12	\$99.00
Auto Parts	2 purchases/yr	\$15.25	2	\$30.50
ENTERTAINMENT				
Bowling/Laser tag/Mini golf	4 purchases/yr	\$6.25	4	\$25.00
Theme Park Visits	4 passes/yr	\$34.00	4	\$136.00
Concerts/Sports/Event Tickets	4 tickets/yr	\$27.00	4	\$108.00
Movies	6 tickets/yr	\$6.00	6	\$36.00
Golf	4 rounds/yr	\$18.00	4	\$72.00
TRAVEL				
Hotel Stays	7 nights/yr	\$13.50	7	\$94.50
Car Rental	5 days/yr	\$16.25	5	\$81.25
Cruise	1 cruise for two/yr	\$35.00	2	\$70.00
Ski Vacation	1 day pass/yr	\$15.00	1	\$15.00
TOTAL SAVINGS				\$1,802.25

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Classifieds

BOOK SALE

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Happiness and sadness mix as Nirvan returns to Puerto Rico

Continued from Page 16

say 'bicycle' and I would run to my mom and say, 'Mom, I know how to say 'bicycle' in English!' I mean, it was hard. At first you think it's Chinese. But then you learn."

In the first week of December, Nirvan learned that his school in Arecibo was going to reopen and that

he would be returning home. He was happy he would be seeing his family again, but sad to be leaving his new friends.

For Nirvan's last day at school on Dec. 15, Rodriguez organized a farewell party for him and invited his closest friends. They had pizza and potato chips and talked about

what they were going to miss about Nirvan.

Rodriguez played a video she had made of the class wishing him well. It ended with a loud chorus of shouts of "goodbye."

Nirvan looked down and rubbed his eyes. His classmates surrounded him and moved in close.

"It's OK to cry, guys," said Rodriguez, wiping away her own tears. "We all miss our friends."

Nirvan said something to her in Spanish, and she laughed and translated, "He says, 'I'm not crying, I'm sweating through my eyes.'"

The group burst out laughing and gave their new friend a goodbye hug.

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OPEN ENROLLMENT IS MARCH 5 – MAY 11

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- Helps supplement sick days

Call 888.646.1972, ext. 104, to find out if you're eligible.

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Nearly 90% of disabilities aren't work-related and therefore don't qualify for workers' compensation benefits.¹

3/10
AMERICANS

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EVERY 10 MINUTES,
700 Americans suffer an injury requiring medical attention.

10%

OF AMERICANS

More than 10% of Americans between the ages of 18 and 64 have a disability.²

Teachers in Massachusetts are not eligible to collect Social Security disability benefits.

Endorsed Program

Underwritten by Unum Life Insurance Company of America
¹ National Safety Council, Injury Facts, 2008 edition
² U.S. Census Bureau, Selected Social Characteristics in the United States, 2009



At Educators Insurance *Members Matter*

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Raise Up Massachusetts initiatives advance

By Scott McLennan and Jean Conley

A crowd of activists gathered on Beacon Hill in early December to celebrate another step forward for Raise Up Massachusetts — the collection of 274,652 signatures on initiative petitions seeking a higher minimum wage and paid family and medical leave.

As a band played, representatives from the many organizations that had volunteered to collect the signatures assembled outside the Secretary of the Commonwealth's office before the boxes of petitions were turned in.

Petitions seeking to raise the minimum wage incrementally to \$15 per hour by 2022 drew 139,055 signatures, while petitions to establish paid family and medical leave for all workers garnered a total of 135,597.

Since then, the secretary has accepted well in excess of the 64,750 signatures required by law for each initiative to move both to the next step in the process.

The signature drives by Raise Up — which includes labor, community and religious groups — are just the latest among a number of vital campaigns the coalition has conducted over the last few years to improve the lives of working families in Massachusetts. The MTA is a key member of the group, and public educators played an active role in circulating the petitions, as they did in the campaign for the Fair Share Amendment, which would raise taxes on annual income over \$1 million and will be on the ballot in November.

"These initiatives support Massachusetts families and will improve the lives of countless students in our public schools, which is why MTA educators are joining the fight to raise the minimum wage and to make paid family and medical leave available to more workers," said MTA President Barbara Madeloni.

The paid leave and minimum wage signature campaigns are part of a two-pronged effort by the coalition, which is also supporting bills that would satisfy the criteria outlined in the ballot initiatives.

Two measures currently before the Legislature



Photo by Scott McLennan

Supporters of a higher minimum wage and paid family and medical leave for all workers held a festive gathering before submitting signatures to the Secretary of the Commonwealth to get initiatives promoting those issues on the ballot this November.

Petitions seeking to raise the minimum wage incrementally to \$15 per hour by 2022 drew 139,055 signatures, while petitions to establish paid family and medical leave for all workers garnered a total of 135,597.

— House 2365 and Senate 1004 — would increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2021.

Two other bills backed by Raise Up, House 2172 and Senate 1048, would make employees eligible for job-protected paid leave so they could recover from a serious illness or injury, care for a seriously ill or injured family member, or care for a new child.

The Legislature has until the end of June to enact the laws. If lawmakers do not pass legislation by then, Raise Up Massachusetts will gather a second round of signatures by mid-June to qualify the initiatives for the 2018 ballot.

Last year, the Fair Share Amendment won a spot on the 2018 Massachusetts ballot after legislators passed it in two successive constitutional conventions. The amendment would create an additional tax of 4 percentage points on annual income over \$1 million, generating roughly \$2 billion annually for public education and transportation.

The constitutionality of the proposed amendment is being challenged in the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, but Raise Up Massachusetts has said it feels confident that the ballot question will survive the legal proceeding and reach the ballot.

THE MTA Advantage

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

Diabetes and Oral Health

We know that MTA members are interested in dental health based on the number of calls we get every day regarding dental insurance. But what members may not be aware of is the relationship between diabetes and oral health. More than 29 million people in the United States have diabetes. If you're one of them — or you know someone who is diabetic — you'll find the following information helpful.

In managing diabetes, it is important to pay attention to diet, physical activity, medications, blood sugar and oral health. Poorly controlled diabetes can lead to problems such as gum disease, and untreated gum disease can contribute to the progression of diabetes.

Diabetes decreases the body's ability to fight and resist infection. This can cause gum disease to be more severe. If untreated, gum disease (called gingivitis in its early stage) can progress to a serious infection called periodontitis. As the disease worsens, it can destroy the gum tissue and bone that hold the teeth in place, eventually causing tooth loss. Periodontitis may in turn

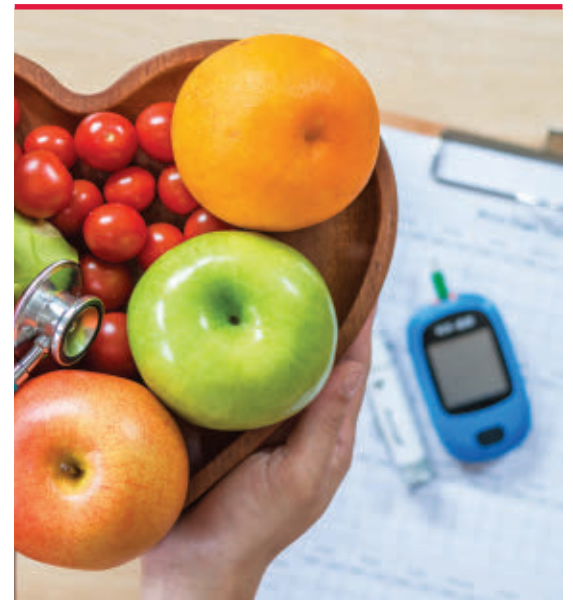
affect the body's ability to control blood glucose (sugar) levels, thus making diabetes more difficult to control.

So it's particularly important for diabetics to include good oral care as part of their diabetes management. People with diabetes may need more frequent cleanings and exams.

If you have diabetes, you can prevent or manage gum disease if you:

- Keep your mouth, teeth and gums clean and healthy; brush and floss every day and visit the dentist regularly.
- Follow your physician's guidelines for managing diabetes to control your blood sugar levels.
- Put your dentist in touch with your physician so they can work together to provide you with the best overall care.
- Avoid sugary snacks and beverages.

Do you have dental coverage? Does it cover what you need covered? Is it affordable? MTA Benefits offers a dental insurance plan through United



Concordia with **annual** premiums ranging from \$584 to \$1,627. The plan can also cover implants. For more information, visit the insurance section of mtabenefits.com or call 800.382.1352 and mention that you are an MTA member.

To learn more about the connection between oral health and chronic medical conditions, visit United Concordia's Dental Health Center.

Follow us on social media ...



Do you follow MTA Benefits on social media? We have

hundreds of discount offers and many incredible benefit programs for our members. There's a lot to remember, so we're here to remind you about everything for which you're eligible. Following us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram is the best way to be reminded about our great discounts and learn of any additions or changes to discount offers. You'll also find surprise giveaways, special events from discount vendors and last-minute ticket offers from the Boston Celtics, the Boston Bruins and more!

Car rental discounts

MTA members love car rental discounts. If you want to make your vacation more affordable, take advantage of MTAB's discount with Hertz. Members can get everyday savings of up to 20 percent when they book using the MTA discount code. The MTA Hertz discount, unlike many others, can be combined with other special offers from Hertz, allowing you to save the most money possible! Specials* currently running include:

- An additional \$25 off the base rate for a weekly reservation.
- Rent for seven days but pay for six.
- A savings of \$5 per day, up to \$15 off a weekend rental.

If you like these savings, you'll love the Hertz Gold Plus Rewards® membership! This free program lets you earn free days more quickly on every rental and enjoy expedited service. There's no more waiting at the counter or completing paperwork. With Hertz's Carfirmation™ you get up-to-the-minute mobile alerts to let you know which car you'll be driving and where it's parked!



Saving time and money is a winning combination. Click on Benefits and choose Travel at mtabenefits.com to book your next rental.

*Taxes and fees excluded. Terms apply.

How many sick days do you have?

A bank of sick days serves as a cushion in the unfortunate event that you're unable to work for weeks or months. What do you do when sick days run out? Can you be paid for sick days from your local association's sick bank? If you're a new member and haven't accumulated sick days yet, can you pay your bills without a paycheck for an extended period?

These are questions you should get answers to now, *before* you experience an accident or illness. That's where the MTA Disability Plan can help. Both short- and long-term disability insurance provide you with a source of income when sick pay and sick banks aren't enough to cover the full duration of a disability. You must have your policy in force prior to the date your accident or illness occurs.

The most common question our benefit enrollers are asked is, "How is maternity leave covered?" The standard benefit for both a normal vaginal delivery and cesarean section is six weeks. The elimination period is 30 days. That is the length of time you must wait before you become eligible to receive benefits. Complications of pregnancy, childbirth and maternity could extend benefits either prior to or after delivery. Many women enroll in the MTA Disability Plan because of the maternity benefits. However, please be aware that pregnancy must begin after the effective date of coverage to be eligible for maternity benefits.

Features of the disability plan include:

- Guaranteed coverage during enrollment
- Tax-free payments equal to 60 percent of your salary
- Benefit payments that are not offset by sick pay or sick bank
- Group rates for MTA members
- An annual open enrollment period
- Payroll slot and bank draft options



Open enrollment begins on March 5 and ends on May 11. If your school district participates in the disability program, you may enroll in the plan. Call MTAB at 800.336.0990 to find out if you're eligible.

Locals that don't currently offer the insurance in their districts can find out in just a few minutes how easy it would be to provide interested members with the opportunity to obtain coverage. Call Tom Colbert at 774.551.0013, Ext. 104.

Don't leave your greatest asset unprotected. Life can change quickly. Make this year one that provides you with some financial peace of mind.

Gift cards galore



Remaining giveaways for this year have one thing in common. They're all gift cards! Electronics, groceries, toys – there's something for everyone, and the winner could be YOU. Enter once per giveaway and keep your fingers crossed.

DATE	GIVEAWAY PRIZE	# OF WINNERS
3/12 - 3/19	\$200 BJ's gift card	2
4/16 - 4/23	\$200 Stop & Shop gift card	2
5/14 - 5/21	\$500 American Express gift card	2
6/11 - 6/18	\$250 Toys R Us gift card	1



Editor: Elizabeth A. Bejoian
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2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor, Quincy, MA 02171-2119
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No dues dollars are ever used to market MTA Benefits programs.

Tip Sheet

All discounts listed in the Tip Sheet
can be found at mtabenefits.com.

Have you had your fill of cold, snowy weather this year?

Plan your next trip using the MTA Vacation Center and you'll be heading to your choice of sunshine-filled destinations at a great price.

Aruba



What makes the perfect vacation destination? If your answer is that you want a place that has one of the best beaches in the world, bountiful water activities, a child-friendly atmosphere and unique cuisine and culture, Aruba should be next on your travel list.

The white sand and turquoise water of Eagle Beach, one of TripAdvisor's 10 best beaches in the world, creates the perfect location to relax. Child-friendly resorts are abundant throughout the island, and there are plenty of activities to keep the young ones entertained. For inexperienced swimmers, the perfect spot is Baby Beach, a lagoon where the water is calm and only about five feet deep. If there are animal lovers in the family, don't miss the Butterfly Farm, Bubali Bird Sanctuary and the Donkey Sanctuary.

Dutch, South American and Caribbean influences combine to create Aruba's unique architecture, culture and food. You'll find mouthwatering dining choices at resorts, but make sure to visit local restaurants for a true taste of Aruba.

The island has some of the best snorkeling and scuba diving in the Caribbean thanks to coral reefs, shipwrecks and gentle trade winds. The Palm Pleasure Snorkel Adventure is a great way to see it all. Aboard a catamaran, you'll sail to deep blue waters. Upon arrival, grab your snorkel and fins and dive right in. You can explore the Antilla shipwreck, the largest in the Caribbean, as well as Boca Catalina and the Arashi Reef.



Travel Tip

The island sits outside the hurricane belt and gets very little rainfall.

With average temperatures between 80 and 84 degrees, perfect weather is practically guaranteed.

To learn more about fun-in-the-sun getaways, check out TNT Vacations powered by Funjet at mtabenefits.com. Click on Benefits and choose Travel.

Mexico



Los Cabos

Did you know that the destination known as Los Cabos is actually two destinations in one? The two towns, Cabo San Lucas and San José del Cabo, are physically close but vastly different. Cabo San Lucas is a lively town that attracts travelers who like to explore all day and stay up late into the night. San José del Cabo is more laid back, allowing you to relax, recharge and reconnect. Both towns offer mountain views, delicious food, some of Mexico's best golf courses and plenty of sunshine.

The Land's End Arch is one of the most recognizable structures in Cabo San Lucas. This beautiful rock formation is found near Playa del Amor. Most beaches in Los Cabos are too rocky for swimming, so gear up for water sports instead! Deep-sea fishing in the Sea of Cortez is popular, and you can do some whale watching in La Paz Bay, where the magnificent humpback whales are visible all winter.

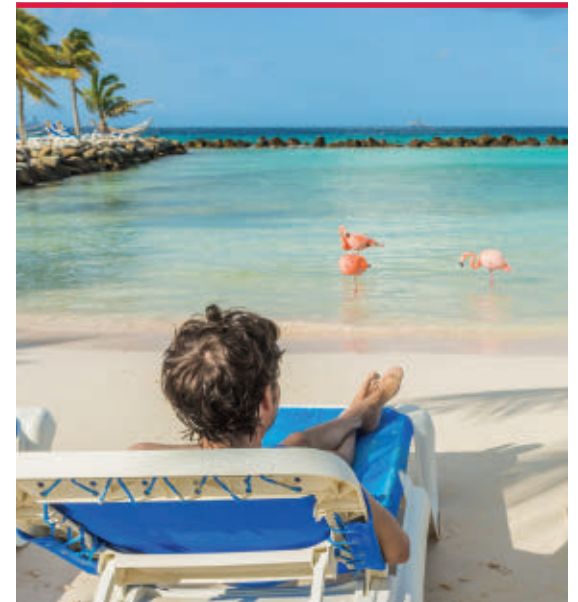


Los Cabos is also a spot for professional golf courses. With names like Jack Nicklaus, Greg Norman and Tom Weiskopf, you know the courses will be of championship quality. The course at Cabo Real, designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr., takes you up a mountainside and back down to sea level over the course of 18 holes — with the last one overlooking Land's End.



Travel Tip

Close out a day in Cabo with an evening cruise so you can watch the sunset in one of the more dramatic settings Mother Nature has to offer.



Mazatlán

This is one of Mexico's best-kept secrets. Here you'll find a blend of five centuries of Spanish influence along with New World wonders — a beautiful combination that provides a stunning backdrop for the area's culture and history. Located east of the Baja California Peninsula and lined with some of the most beautiful beaches in Mexico, Mazatlán is known as the "Pearl of the Pacific." You'll experience music, culture and gourmet Mexican cuisine. The city's local beaches are perfect for relaxing, water sports and surfing. You'll find surfers at all skill levels catching waves along the beaches.

You'll find a variety of fresh seafood along Mazatlán's 12-mile stretch of beach. Try different flavors of the rice-based drink *horchata* to find one that suits your palate. The sweetest types have more cinnamon and coconut, while a blander type has more ground seeds and nuts.

You'll see how indigenous cultures have made their mark on the area over the past 1,500 years. Check out *Las Labradas*, an outdoor museum of archaeological carvings and sculptures. In the historic center of Mazatlán you'll find *Teatro Angela Peralta*, where you can take in an opera, ballet or any number of theatrical performances.



Travel Tip

Check out two beaches, Sabalo and Cerritos, where the waves are tame and the view is picturesque.

Continued on page 4

The pros and cons of a credit security freeze

Whenever a data breach hits the news, it is quickly followed by advice to place a credit security freeze. Before blindly following that advice, however, make sure you understand what a freeze will accomplish and that if a data breach is the problem, then a credit security freeze is not the entire answer.

A freeze is a protective measure taken to minimize the threat of credit-related identity theft. It blocks access to your credit file so only the creditors and other businesses with whom you have a current relationship will have access to your reports (with certain exceptions).

What you can't do is place a freeze and think that no identity theft of any kind can take place. Freezes do not reduce your chance of falling victim to other types of identity theft or fraud, such as account takeover, which can affect your existing bank accounts and credit cards.

Here's an overview of the value — and limits — of what a credit freeze can provide.

Pros

- A freeze can minimize the risk of an identity thief successfully opening most types of new credit accounts in your name.
- In most cases, for victims of identity theft, there is no charge to place, temporarily lift or remove a freeze.
- The freeze does not affect your credit score.

Cons

- A freeze is not effective if it is not placed with all three credit reporting agencies (Experian, TransUnion and Equifax).
- A freeze does not prevent fraud involving your existing bank or credit accounts.
- It can be costly unless you are a proven victim of identity theft.
- You must lift the freeze when you want your credit report to be available for review by a creditor, potential employer, etc.
- A freeze can take up to three business days to be lifted. Only a few states have passed laws requiring the freeze to be lifted within 15 minutes of the request. This may be an issue in an emergency situation where credit is needed immediately.

MTA Benefits has partnered with LegalShield to provide members with discounts for identity theft protection and legal services. Visit the financial section of MTA's website, mtabenefits.com, for more information and to sign up for LegalShield programs.



Tip Sheet

Continued from page 3



Orlando Vacation

Is there a trip to see Mickey, Minnie and the whole Disney World family on your list? The cost of a trip like this can be high, but MTA members save on lodging, theme park tickets and dinner shows with Orlando Vacation.

A hotel room might provide just the convenience you need, but if you're part of a large group or are looking for some extra space, renting a vacation home or condo might be what you're looking for. Whichever is best for you, Orlando Vacation boasts the best nightly rates.

One of the most expensive parts of the trip can be the theme parks — so check out the Base, Park Hopper and Water Park discount tickets for Disney World. The longer your visit, the more you save. Discounts are also available for Universal Studios Florida, Islands of Adventure and Volcano Bay, so you'll want to leave plenty of time for The Wizarding World of Harry Potter, The Incredible Hulk roller-coaster and Shrek 4-D. You can also save at LEGOLAND Florida Resort, Ripley's Believe It or Not! and the Kennedy Space Center, as well as at performances of Cirque du Soleil. And don't forget the dinner shows! Tickets are available at a discount for Medieval Times Orlando, Sleuths Mystery Dinner Show and dinner shows at WonderWorks.



Travel Tip

Schedule delivery of your park tickets to your hotel or vacation rental. That's one less thing to worry about while packing!