

Educators for a Democratic Union

Guide to the Massachusetts Teachers Association Annual Meeting – May 3rd & 4th, 2019

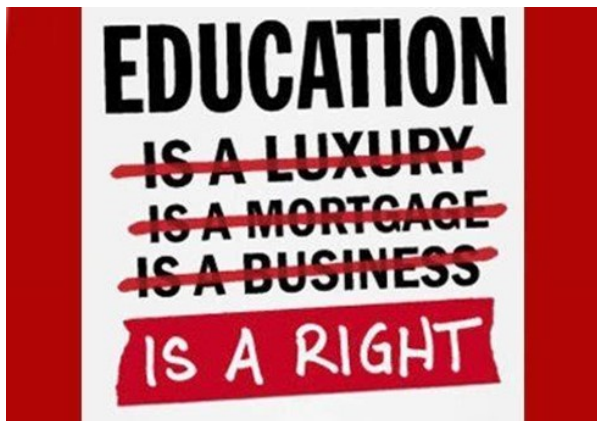
Red state! Blue state! Your state? Our state!

by Barbara Madeloni

Last spring, as we met for the MTA annual meeting, we witnessed a wave of red state militancy as educators from West Virginia to Arizona talked to each other, built networks, made plans, and accessed our most powerful leverage - the strike - to win demands for themselves, their students, and their communities. The #redfored strike wave continued this fall into blue states - 17 Washington State locals struck for their fair share of a state education reimbursement – and the United Teachers of Los Angeles had a game changing win after 34,000 educators struck for 9 days with broad and deep community support. Oakland and Denver followed - and walkouts are being planned from South Carolina to Oregon as we go to press.

There are differences between red and blue state strikes. Red state strikes were organized and led by rank and file members, often in the face of hostility from elected leadership. The red states had no collective bargaining rights and the strikes were illegal. Strike demands were made to the legislature and required statewide action. Blue state strikes in Washington and California were all local strikes relative to contract demands, were supported by local elected leadership, and were legal.

While strategic thinking requires we understand the different contexts of these strikes, it also matters that we understand the similarities. Number one: all of the strikes were effective. Strikes work.



The strikes have other things in common that belie the red state/blue state divide. Public education is under attack everywhere – Democrats and Republicans have all been actively dismantling public schools and colleges through underfunding, high stakes standardized testing, charter schools and relentless attacks on educators. From West Virginia to Oregon, educators are being told to make do with fewer resources while being underpaid, micromanaged, and overworked, all while supporting students and communities reeling from economic and racial injustice.

In order to understand the similarities and differences, let's look at the two most powerful examples: West Virginia and Los Angeles.

In West Virginia last spring, educators from three different unions – and some who had not yet joined the union – began communicating with each other about the realities of their dismal pay and the increases in health insurance costs (which included reductions in premiums for wearing an insurance company monitored Fitbit). These communications - online, by phone, and in person, grew a statewide network that then coordinated actions to grow solidarity and educate each other and the community about underfunded public schools and underpaid educators. Educators organized walk-ins, distributed fliers to the community, met with parents and community members to explain under-funding and why action was needed. None of this was sanctioned by the state associations, which tried to curtail the organizing efforts by promising that inside the statehouse deals could be won. When the state association's leadership took a strike vote, it was because the strike was already brewing with Mingo County - home of the 1920 Battle of Matewan - ready to go out first. The divide between leadership and the rank and file persisted through the strike. When state leadership announced a settlement that provided 5% raises for educators but 3% for other public employees, the educators refused to go back to work until all public employees won the same increase.

Continued on Page 11

EDUCATORS FOR A DEMOCRATIC UNION: 2019 CAUCUS MEETINGS

Hynes Convention Center Room

Friday: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Saturday: 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

What is EDU?

Educators for a Democratic Union (EDU) is part of a national movement that stands up for all students and educators, and fights for racial, economic, and social justice in our communities.

Who We Are

Although some EDU members hold elected offices within the MTA, we are a rank-and-file caucus of MTA members who share similar progressive values. Membership is open to any MTA member who agrees with our principles and wants to join the movement.

Since our founding in 2012, we've worked together to elect EDU members to the MTA Board of Directors and as local presidents. In 2014, and again in 2016, delegates to the Annual Meeting elected one of our members, Barbara Madeloni, as MTA President. In 2018, EDU held forums around the state and held a primary to determine its candidates for MTA President and Vice President. This led to EDU members Merrie Najimy and Max Page being elected as the current MTA President and Vice President. These electoral successes are signs that more members are embracing EDU's vision of a union based in the collective action of rank-and-file members and firmly committed to fighting for social justice.



Yet the central aim of EDU isn't electing our members to union office, as important as that is. The heart of our work is helping each other become more effective organizers in our workplaces, and pushing our locals and the MTA as a whole to take strong stands – and action in promoting social justice in our communities and in the Commonwealth. If you are looking for support in beating back a bully principal, winning a better deal for ESPs or adjuncts, taking action to fully fund our schools, or fighting to protect your most vulnerable students, EDU is the place for you!

What We Stand For

EDU rejects the top-down, “business model” of unionism that had resulted in the steady erosion of our rights and benefits, allowed high stakes testing to be linked to teacher evaluations, weakened our healthcare benefits and autonomy, and starved our education budgets. Instead, we have a vision of a member-driven, democratic union that stands up to the forces massed against us instead of compromising away our values and livelihood in backroom deals.

We believe in a vibrant democratic culture within the MTA. With the growth of EDU over the last several years, the days of uncontested elections in the MTA are over, replaced by debates about the direction of the union. This development should be celebrated. By openly discussing our differences we can foster a truly participatory and inclusive union.

We believe that MTA members can win respect and dignity in their workplaces by coming together, identifying common problems, and taking collective action to address them. We want all MTA members to feel that they *are* the union, and to discover the power we have when we act together.

We believe that if the MTA is going to continue to thrive, we must stand in solidarity with our natural allies: other labor unions, progressive community organizations, and most importantly, the students and parents we serve. We can win the schools our communities deserve and a better world – but we can't do it alone. Solidarity with our coalition partners and allies in our communities is a critical component of any strategy to win. We believe that our real power as a union comes from rank-and-file members organizing together in their workplaces, communities, and statewide.

Glimpse of a Stronger MTA

EDU's progressive vision is rapidly spreading throughout our union, and around the country. Rank-and-file educators in West Virginia, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Arizona, California and Colorado are proving that organized member power can win against deep-pocketed private interests. When we organize and fight, we can win, even against huge odds. Join us in building our union and our power, and in fighting for the schools our students and communities deserve!

Bargaining for the Common Good: Housing

by Matthew J. Bach

What could *bargaining for the common good* look like in your local? Right now for millions of teachers, students, and their families throughout the country, safe, affordable housing is an urgent necessity. While the rising real estate bubble is excluding families from suburban districts, the predatory financialization of housing in urban working class communities - especially communities of color- continues to displace residents by way of gentrification, speculation, and private equity schemes seeking to remake our cities into corporate cash havens.

For instance, the recent 2017 tax “reform” legislation has created tax avoidance schemes such as “Opportunity Zones,” which allow speculative capital to accumulate housing stock, and then receive tax credits which deplete the public coffers of needed revenue for basic services like quality public education.

Community groups and tenants associations such as *City Life/Vida Urbana*, *Springfield No One Leaves/Nadie Se Mude*, and *Right to the City Boston* have long fought displacement and housing insecurity in Massachusetts, but has the time come for labor (including teachers unions) to join this struggle for the common good?

How can we engage the forces of this housing crisis, whether they are public or private employers like universities, hospitals, or municipalities that have vast property interests, control of pension funds, or other influential connections to property acquisition? Where do we start in our locals to develop concrete housing bargaining demands to help create stronger labor and community coalitions willing to fight for fair contracts as well as the common good?

I have recently been working with MTA leadership to connect with a few locals to begin bringing educators into the important work around these questions. If you are interested and wish to open up spaces in your local for bargaining for the common good, contact Max Page, vice president of the MTA (mpage@massteacher.org) or Matt Bach, Executive Committee, Region F (bachmj@hotmail.com).

Sunrise at Annual Meeting

by Ferd Wulkan

Some of the most active and creative people in the climate movement are young people - including many of our current and recent students. We had high expectations for them when they were in our classrooms. Now they have high expectations of us about the kind of world we are leaving to them. One of the most visible and creative groups has been *The Sunrise Movement*. Their activism is what’s put the Green New Deal on the map, showing a possible route toward averting the worst effects of global warming, and doing so in a way that increases equity in our society. We are fortunate that ***Sunrise is here at Annual Meeting!*** They have a booth, and it would be worth your while to check it out, chat with them, and generate ideas about how MTA and Sunrise -- educators and students -- can work together to save our planet.



For many of us in the labor movement it seems like high time that we connect our union work with climate activism. Annual Meeting passed a resolution a couple of years ago putting MTA on record urging the state pension fund to divest from fossil fuels. We will hopefully pass proposed revised Resolution B-11 with new language demanding that “*the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and cities and towns actively pursue and promote the use of alternate energy resources and shift to entirely carbon-free, renewable energy as quickly as possible.*” But resolutions have to lead to action, and an alliance between educators and students could be just what we need. Learn more at www.sunrisemovement.org and visit the ***Sunrise*** booth outside the main hall.

Beginner's Guide to the 2019 MTA Annual Meeting

Annual meeting is a wonderful event, the most democratic part of the MTA, and the one involving the most members. Typically, 1500 MTA members come together to debate the best direction for the MTA, and any delegate may speak to the issues raised on the floor.

Annual Meeting: Schedule

The formal meeting begins around noon on Friday. Annual Meeting contains a mix of from-the-podium speeches, staff presentations, and delegate debate on MTA policy for the coming year. On Friday, delegates debate and vote on changes to bylaws.

On both Friday and Saturday mornings, caucuses meet before the official start time and those caucus meetings may be among the best chances to meet with people who share your interests and perspectives. (*EDU will meet Friday from 10 a.m. to noon in Hynes Room 305 and on Saturday from 7 to 9 am, same room*).

Annual Meeting: Elections

This year, there are no union-wide elections, but some Annual Meeting delegates have the opportunity to vote for their regional Board of Director and/or Executive Committee member (terms are staggered). For these seats, the top vote getter is elected, even if they do not receive a majority; there is no run-off.

Annual Meeting: NBIs

A very important part of the meeting is debating the issues put forward by members, typically in the form of a New Business Item (NBI). The NBIs that have implications for the budget have to be voted on before adopting the budget. An NBI with budgetary implications might include funding a major organizing campaign or funding a coalition. Once all NBI's with budgetary implications have been voted on, the budget is debated, often at length. Delegates will make motions to add expenditures for specific causes or to set money aside for an upcoming campaign. On Saturday, we debate items without budgetary implications (e.g. in 2017, delegates endorsed legislation to provide LGBTQ relevant health and sexuality education to all students in Massachusetts).

Any delegate can submit New Business Items, and that can be done up to the end of the day Friday (if the item does not contain budgetary implications). The later you submit your NBI, the later it will appear in the agenda. Due to time constraints, there is no guarantee that all NBIs will be debated.

Annual Meeting: Debate

Annual Meeting is conducted using Robert's Rules of Order. Although there are a number of good reasons why the MTA uses Robert's Rules, the process can be extremely confusing for those unfamiliar with it. Given that the MTA parliamentarian will correct anyone who speaks out of order, the procedures can feel downright intimidating. Luckily, the Robert's Rules website offers an excellent "cheat sheet" [goo.gl/ub4y8] to help you find your way.



If you want to speak on an issue, you simply go to any microphone and take the appropriate color-coded sign, which rests in a box next to the microphone. You may have to queue at a microphone but since delegates are not assigned specific microphones, you can always choose a microphone without a line.

In regards to the color-coded signs, green means you want to support a motion, red that you oppose it, and a yellow sign is to ask a question or raise a point of order. When debate is in progress the chair alternates between those with red and green signs, so that both sides can be heard. When your turn comes, the chair will call on "Microphone X." Your microphone will turn on and your face will be projected on the screen. You have 3 minutes to make your point (you will receive a warning before time runs out). If someone has a yellow sign, they jump to the front of the line. In theory you are only to ask a question or raise a point-of-order when holding a yellow card but historically delegates often try to make a speech for or against an issue, in the form of a thinly disguised question. You may speak on a yellow card for one minute. For most of us, speaking at Annual Meeting is the first time we will have addressed a thousand people. But we strongly encourage you to take the plunge: these are your friends and colleagues, fellow educators and fellow union members. This is the largest gathering of educators in the state. It represents a real chance to influence your fellow MTA members.

Continued on Page 5

Beginner's Guide (Continued from Page 4)

Annual Meeting: Voting

Debate can be closed at any time when a delegate calls for a vote (or in Robert's Rules of Order, they "move the previous question"). The motion to close discussion must be approved by the assembly. The chair will then call for a vote on the NBI. Normally, delegates will respond "aye" to vote in favor of a motion or "nay" to vote against it. For particularly close votes, the chair may ask delegates to stand up or raise their hands. For extremely close votes, delegates may also call for "division" which requires a roll-call vote (where each individual vote is counted).

The voting and debates are important. It's impressive that a thousand members are there and that so many speak during the debates. But annual meeting is also a chance to meet MTA members from other locals, to make new friends, and to share ideas and experiences.

Our *Red for Ed* Moment: Winning the *Promise Act* (S.238/H.586) and the *Cherish Act* (S.741/H.1214)

By Kerri Scott

Just before April vacation I attended an Education Roundtable organized by the office of Jason Lewis, Senate chair of the Massachusetts Joint Committee on Education. It was well attended by educators, school committee members, superintendents, students, and parents, and nearly everyone in the room was saying the same thing - we are stretching ourselves to the limit, but our students are still suffering the consequences of years of underfunding. Superintendents and school committee members spoke of unfunded mandates and pleaded for the funds to do what is required without adding any more accountability, while educators spoke of crowded classrooms, lack of resources...you can add your own list of needs.

After I spoke, Senator Lewis thanked me for my comments and talked about the importance of teacher voices in the conversation. I reminded him that, unfortunately, no teachers would be present in the conference committee when the final negotiations happen and asked if he would be our voice. His non-answer was disappointing, but not surprising.

I am not sure how Lewis could have left that meeting with any message other than "Fund our Future - No Strings Attached!" but I do not trust that he will have the interests of students and educators in mind when he meets in the conference committee. We need to send a strong and clear message to Lewis and all of our legislators. They will not be able to ignore massive rallies May 16 on Beacon Hill and in Springfield. It is time for all of us to speak up for and with our students and our communities and force our legislators to do the right thing.

We could sit back and do nothing and still see increased funding for education. Everyone, even Charlie Baker, is proposing additional funds, but we need to demand that it come with no school takeovers, no decrease of local control, no threats of withholding funds, and no new accountability measures. Baker's bill proposes less than half the funding of the PROMISE act and would give the Commissioner of Education even more power to punish districts with low test scores, while barely addressing the underfunding of public Higher Ed. We have to remind our legislators that this is not "new" money -- it is money that is owed to our communities and students.

There is no doubt that some funding legislation will be passed and that it will determine how our schools are funded for the next generation or more. We have an opportunity to make sure it is the **PROMISE** and **CHERISH** acts that get passed with no compromises. It will not happen because the legislators want to do what is right for our students. It will only happen if we use our voices and our power and demand action. This is *our* Red for Ed moment, a chance to make history by holding our legislators accountable to our students and the future of education in Massachusetts.

Be there at the State House or in Springfield on May 16th to demand that the state "**Fund our Future**" and pass the PROMISE and CHERISH acts -- with "No Strings Attached!" adding over \$1.5 billion dollars into our schools from Pre-K to Higher Ed. Bring your colleagues, your children, your neighbors and even your superintendent and school committee members. Don't let this moment pass you by.

District R: Retired MTA Members

By Dale LaBonte

Annual Meeting is the time when retired members of the MTA are most visible. The Retired District is made up of all retirees who pay dues - some pay annually, others have paid for lifetime membership. They are eligible for representation on the Retired Members Committee and on the MTA Board. They elect delegates to the Annual Meeting of Delegates (AMD) as well as to the NEA-RA.

Historically the focus of the retired committee - and consequently the MTA staff - has been on “retiree” issues. Two efforts involve lobbying at the state level. The MTA regularly supports the bills filed to raise the base amount used to calculate cost of living increases. Another ongoing effort, with union coalition partners, works to preserve post-retirement medical benefits because the GIC and local districts annually threaten to raise costs or limit eligibility. At the federal level, retired members lobby representatives and senators to reverse the Social Security penalties of GPO and WEP.

MTA’s Retired Members Committee has in the past been composed of former statewide leaders who continued to network socially. They meet periodically to plan forums and share information with the retired membership. They work on campaigns to elect local and state representatives and take advantage of relatively free schedules to engage in lobbying efforts to support public education. In 2018 three EDU members were elected to the committee.

In years when the MTA president and vice-president are elected, self-nominations for delegate seats to the Annual Meeting swell. Retired members can vie for over 200 delegate seats. These delegates are the people who can then vote for union leaders, and for candidates for the Retired Members Committee, as well as for Board seats designated for retired members. In 2019 there are four committee seats and two Board seats on the ballot for District R.



Eleven members are elected as retired delegates to the NEA RA. Traditionally they help with the fundraising in the state caucuses and bring historical perspective to the discussions. Before the RA, delegates meet at a national convening of retired delegates from other states.

Get involved: Ensure that newly retired members continue their membership in the MTA, into District R, support active members, advocate for retiree interests, and open up communications within our ranks. EDU retired members can connect at spring brunches held at five regional locations - or plan a meet-up at the Summer Conference. Looking further ahead, the membership year starts in August, we can network at the two-day conference on the Cape in September. Delegate self-nominations to Annual Meeting close in early January, and candidates for committee or Board seats need to submit their names by March.

Connect with: EDUCATORSFORADEMOCRATICUNION.COM

 Tweet @massedunion and follow our live coverage throughout the 2019 Annual Meeting

 Sign up for the Educators for a Democratic Union Facebook group for updates and discussion

 Write educatorsforademocraticunion@gmail.com and receive our weekly email newsletter

UNDERSTANDING OUR UNION: A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE MTA

INTRODUCTION

The entire *EDU Guide to Annual Meeting* is intended to help democratize the MTA, letting newcomers and ordinary delegates find out at least part of what long time activists and annual meeting attendees already know.

The Massachusetts Teachers Association has a complicated structure, and most members have only a vague understanding of how it works. We believe this does not serve the interests of democracy or our members. *If the only way you can understand what's happening is to have been part of the inner circle for 10 years, then old timers can trip up and frustrate efforts at change.* We offer here a very brief and incomplete guide to the MTA; it doesn't cover everything, but we hope it gives you a sense of how things work.

MEMBERSHIP

The MTA has 110,000 members divided into close to 400 locals, and it has about 150 paid staff. The vast majority of MTA members work in K-12, but the MTA is also the largest union in our public colleges and universities. Locals vary tremendously in size: Worcester has over 2,500 members, but some locals have a dozen or fewer members. In theory, each local has an elected local president, officers, and an executive board. Most locals also have building level representatives (who might or might not be on the local's board). Most local officers are working educators; some get a few hours a week of "release time" so they work less and can focus on their union duties, while a few large locals have "full time release" presidents.

LEADERSHIP: PRESIDENT

Within the MTA, there is an elected statewide leadership: the president, vice-president, the Executive Committee, and the MTA Board of Directors. For most MTA members, the president is the most visible figure in the organization. The president's job is to make policy recommendations, execute policy initiatives legislated by the Annual Meeting of Delegates and the Board of Directors, and act as the public voice of the MTA. Over the past five years, members got a closer look at what the president does on a day-to-day basis as former president Barbara Madeloni and current president Merrie Najimy sent weekly emails to the membership letting them know the positions they took publicly and the work they and others were currently doing.

LEADERSHIP: THE BOARD

The board is comprised of "district directors" (often just called "board members"), each of whom represents about 2,000 MTA members. In some cases that means a board member is representing one large local (e.g. Springfield), but in other cases a board member is representing ten or more small locals. The board meets six times a year, typically beginning with dinner on Friday, running until 10 pm or later, and then resuming on Saturday and continuing until sometime in the afternoon. Board members don't get paid, but the MTA covers the expenses of board meetings (hotel, food, travel). Board members are elected to three-year terms, with one-third of the board elected each year. The board prides itself on being the voice of the membership statewide. In the past, elections were rarely contested, but contested elections are now far more common. The board also includes NEA directors and statewide directors for Ethnic Minority members and for Education Support Professionals (ESPs).

Many members – heck, many annual meeting delegates, even many local presidents – have only the vaguest notion of the board's actions or process. When that's true, it's a sign of a breakdown in democratic procedures. Board members should be regularly communicating about what is happening at the board; even more so, they should be consulting with members and local leaders and getting their ideas and views about the issues coming before MTA (or which should be coming forward, but aren't).

LEADERSHIP: EXCOMM

There's one more layer above board members (that is, above district directors): the Executive Committee (often abbreviated to ExComm). Each ExComm member represents one region (A through G are K-12 based on geography; H is all of higher ed; and then there is also a "region" for retired members), and each region has a number of district directors grouped under that ExComm member. The ExComm meets in the months when the board does not meet, so ExComm members have a meeting every month (since they also sit on the board).

Continued on Page 8

Understanding Our Union (Continued from Page 7)

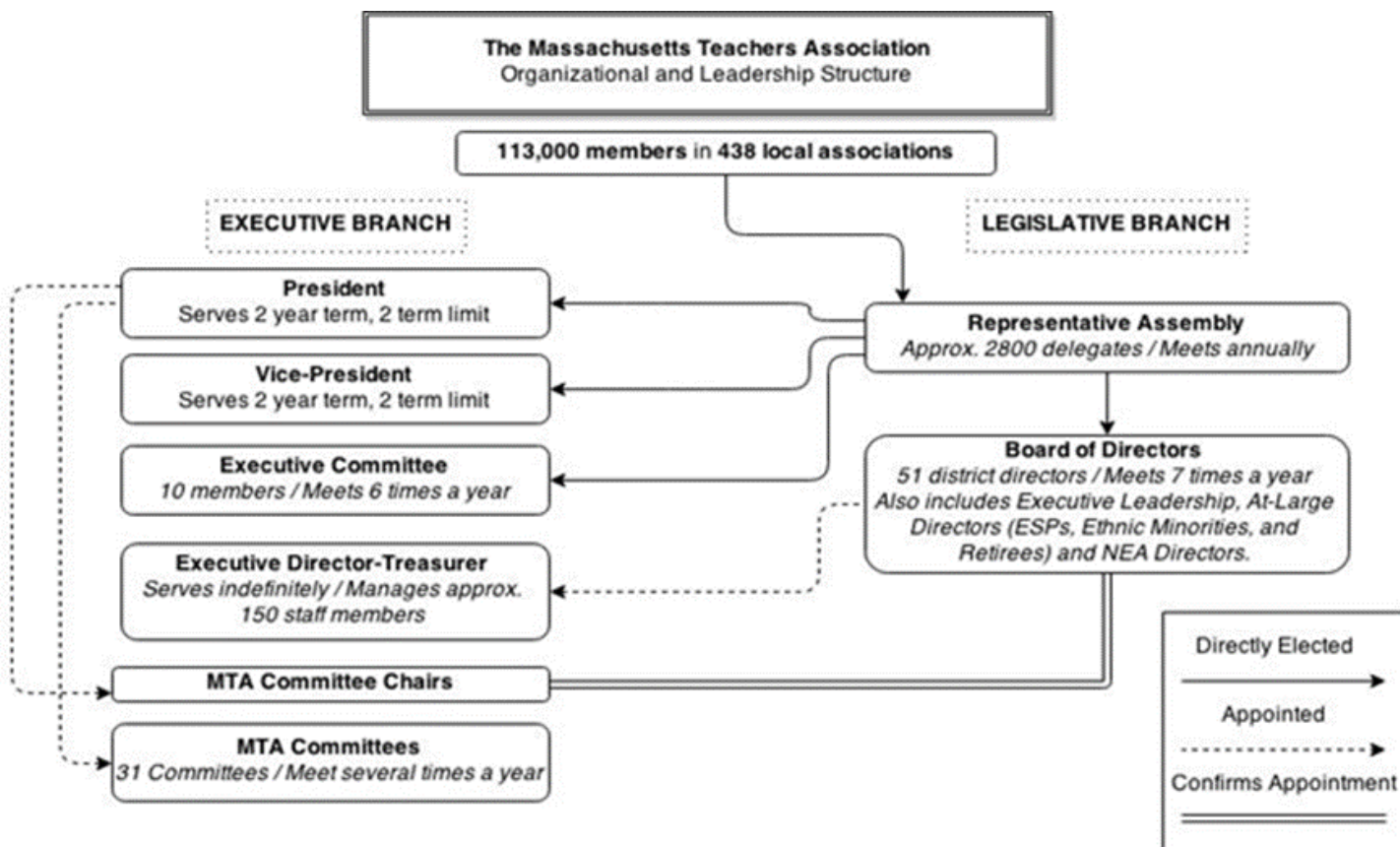
ANNUAL MEETING

Annual Meeting delegates are elected by each local. The total number of elected delegates could be as many as 2,800, but in practice, the actual number of delegates attending is far fewer than that, and few locals (although more recently) have contested elections. Annual Meeting is the highest decision-making body of the MTA, setting policy for the Board and ExComm. Annual Meeting delegates also elect the President, the Vice-President, the Board of Directors, and the Executive Committee.

COMMITTEES & STAFF

Two more pieces will conclude this simplified overview of the MTA. First, the MTA has about 31 committees, typically with 9 members, appointed by the MTA president. These committees deal with a wide range of issues: what legislation MTA should support, how we train new members (and leaders), LGBTQ, ethnic minority, or ESP concerns, educational policy, vocational education, and lots more. If you are interested in serving on a committee, let the MTA President know; obviously, there aren't always openings, but there might well be spots available.

Second, a subject worthy of its own extended discussion, the MTA employs about 150 staff. The most visible to members are the field staff - also called field reps, consultants, UNISERV consultants, etc. – who work with locals, help with bargaining and grievances, and so on. Each of these field reps, like each board member, works with something like 2000 MTA members (although field rep districts and board districts are not identical). In addition there are lots of people working in headquarters: legal, government relations, education policy and practice, communications, and so on. And of course there are managers heading up each of these units, and an Executive Director-Treasurer (recently hired Lisa Gallatin) who supervises the staff.



Proposed Bylaw Amendment #5: Statewide Electronic Voting

Proposed Bylaw Amendment #5 has caused a significant amount of discussion among the Bylaws and Rules Committee, Board of Directors, and EDU. On first glance, this looks to further democratic principles by allowing all MTA members a vote in election of MTA officers, executive committee members, board of directors, and candidate recommendation committee members. Expanding democracy and participation are core to EDU, but the amendment as proposed is a slipshod approach to reach these ends.

The first concern is that the proposed change would put it into conflict with Standing Rules #3, 9, and 11 as well as Policy #70. This would increase the likelihood of the democratic process getting bogged down with rules conflicts, objections and arguments. When we are arguing rules, we are not debating issues and we alienate members. This would hinder democracy at Annual Meeting and Board of Director Meetings.

A larger concern is that there would be a drop in Annual Meeting attendance as these elections are a central draw of Annual Meeting. Past records of MTA Annual Meetings show that uncontested election years saw much lower attendance. Being a delegate at Annual Meeting provides invaluable experience as participants in the democratic process debating and voting on NBIs, amendments, and the budget. Annual Meeting also helps give delegates a broader view of state and national issues in education, whereas the broader membership is often focused on local issues.

A drop in Annual Meeting attendance would also cause issues as this proposed bylaw amendment only concerns voting for statewide candidates. Voting on bylaws changes, standing rules, and new business items would still occur at Annual Meeting. Thus a decrease in attendance at Annual Meeting would lead to a smaller representative group deciding on the governance of the MTA. In locals that have electronic voting, there are procedures that allow for all members to be informed of both pro and con arguments made concerning such issues. Any proposed bylaw amendment to improve democratic principles within the MTA should have language to encourage discussion and debate about the range of issues relevant to the membership and the governance of the MTA, rather than granting votes only for elections.

With more than 110,000 members in the MTA, some EDU members voiced concern that this proposal will result in more uninformed voters. During Annual Meeting and pre-convention meetings, delegates have opportunities to hear from candidates and learn more about the issues that are being debated. It has been shown that, without an informed voter base, incumbents have a significant advantage. Caucuses help to balance this by representing specific points of view, minority interests, etc. However, MTA Policy 40.05 states that the MTA does not officially recognize caucuses, which implies that if the bylaw amendment passes, incumbency rates will grow regardless of popular opinion, counter to democratic principles.



If the elections are statewide, candidates will have to reach 115,000 voters instead of 1,500 delegates at pre-convention meetings and Annual Meeting. This would require a significant amount of funding and lead to a plethora of issues. Questions raised about this issue include: What kind of complex oversight of campaign spending would be needed? How would we assure that outside funders would not

direct and impact the election? Without knowing what outside groups are spending on MTA campaigns, would the validity of elections be challenged? Do we want our campaigns to be determined by the candidates with the most money to reach the most voters through superficial communications systems? Who is likely to be excluded from this system because of the cost of running a campaign?

While some have compared annual meeting delegates to the electoral college, this is a flawed comparison. If a region has more than a full contingent of members wishing to be delegates, the candidates for delegates must campaign there and convince members that they will represent the interests and views of the district at Annual Meeting. This fosters democracy at the local level, while simultaneously raising awareness to non-delegates of issues that will be discussed at Annual Meeting.

Continued on Page 10

Proposed Electronic Voting (Continued from Page 9)

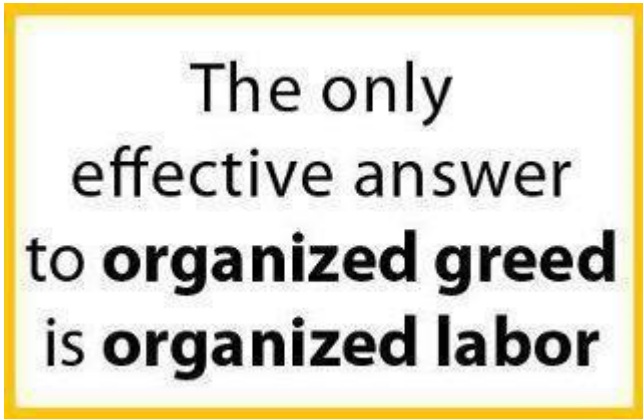
Therefore, EDU is against the passing of Proposed By-law Amendment #5 as it only has a facade of increased democracy. In practice, it is likely to consolidate power and reduce involvement in the democratic process. EDU stands for democratic principles in practice and is supportive of a movement towards democratic representation in the MTA; however this proposed amendment does not move us in that direction.

We take the demand for more transparent and democratic processes seriously. Some ideas that might begin to lead us in that direction include:

** A bylaw amendment to foster democratic principles might instead mandate at least nine (including retirees) MTA sponsored regional debates, one for each region. This would encourage active dialogue between candidates and their constituents by having yet another venue for members to assemble. If these events are funded by the MTA, it would help ensure that a candidate’s finances plays less of a role in the election.

** Additionally, all members should be contacted directly, whether through mailing or email, about their rights to run as a delegate and, further, we should assure, through oversight, a consistent process across locals for voting for delegates to MTA Annual Meeting. It is vital for any functioning democratic organization for voters to be aware of their rights and election procedures. UTLA and UFT-NYC are able to effectively provide each of their members the opportunity to vote by having a clear and consistent voting process.

** Finally, MTA stipends for all locals with fewer than 4 or 5 delegates outside a certain radius of the annual meeting location would encourage attendance at Annual Meeting. This provides another way of keeping money out of politics, by allowing smaller locals the assistance needed to support active member engagement in the MTA.



All Students Need (But Too Many Don't Have) School Libraries and Librarians

By Sue Doherty

Do your students have access to a school library with up-to-date materials and an on-site, full-time licensed teacher-librarian? According to the preliminary findings of an MTA task force on school libraries, if you can answer yes to this question your students are among a privileged minority in our state, which has no regulations or statutes requiring schools to maintain libraries or employ licensed teacher-librarians. Not surprisingly, this lack of regulations has led to gross inequities, with about 90% of the schools in our wealthiest communities providing professionally-staffed, well-resourced libraries for their students while only about 10% of schools located in lower-income communities of color do.

The delegates to last year’s Annual Meeting unanimously approved NBI #5, which formed the MTA Task Force on Equity in PreK-12 School Libraries. We have spent the past year diving into and analyzing existing data about school libraries, primarily

looking at staffing issues, with a focus on inequities along socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial lines. In this year’s delegate materials, you will find an Issue Brief the task force put together, and we will also have a toolkit on the MTA website with more information.

We believe that all students need and deserve access to school libraries run by licensed teacher-librarians, and we hope MTA locals will join in an effort to rebuild school libraries for all of our students. We will have this opportunity when we win more funding, but we will need to fight to direct the funding to the places where it is most needed, such as our libraries.



If you are interested in more information, please fill out the form found at bit.ly/mtaslffc19 or contact sueadoherty@gmail.com.

Red States, Blue States (Continued from Page 1)

United Teachers of Los Angeles, serving the second largest district in the country, struck for 9 days in January to win the schools Los Angeles deserves. UTLA took four years to prepare for the strike – developing contract action teams in every school (with a parent representative on the teams), meeting with the students, parents and educators in order to develop demands, holding rallies and faculty meeting boycotts to test the strength of solidarity, and finally- winning the strike authorization vote. The scale of the strike made it momentous. Fifty thousand people in the streets for three days of rallies; packed, joyful, musical picket lines; and deep community support and knowledge of the purpose and necessity of the fight. I was in LA for the strike - and everywhere I went regular people were supporting the educators in the fight against privatization. The community understood that the fight was with billionaires looking to expand charters, undermine public education and bust the union.

UTLA won – and won big - around issues that the district had initially refused to bargain: smaller class sizes; more nurses and librarians; green space on campuses (which would impact the possibility of charters sharing school space); and more union representation and decision input around a range of issues.

Whether organized by rank and file members or led by elected leadership, both of these strikes included:

- educating members and the community about the political and economic structures attacking public education;
- active participation and leadership by rank and file members;
- coalitions with community and labor;
- fierce solidarity;
- and shared understanding that our power is in withholding our labor.



Meanwhile, strikes in higher education – or credible threats of strikes – have also been winning this year. Wright State University faculty were out for 20 days and won concessions on health insurance, workload and timelines for non-tenure track faculty hires – most of which the university had originally refused to bargain. The University of Illinois Faculty Union mounted a credible strike threat to win significant base salary increases for non-tenure faculty. Their strike threat was made more real to the university because their authorization vote came in the midst of a well-supported graduate student union strike.

But the big win this spring in higher education is the recently settled Rutgers faculty contract that the union won without going out - but riding a 98% strike authorization. They won equal pay for equal work language, significant increases in pay for graduate student employees (in the same unit), protections and longer contracts for non-tenure track faculty, and an extension of academic freedom to include social media.

The simple and true story is that strikes (and credible strike threats) work. The more complicated story is that it takes ground up organizing in which members lead and the community is included - in which political education and the big picture of unions, public education and a vision for a better world is integral to why we strike – and in which power is assessed and members understand the leverage of work action as the way to win.

We've been convinced that our leverage is persuading elected officials to support us. But in both West Virginia and Los Angeles, we saw the power of the strike being greater than that of elections.

In the spring of 2017, billionaires spent 15 million dollars to pack the Los Angeles school committee with pro-charter candidates - and won. But, the strike turned that victory upside-down. The settlement included that the LA school committee would write a letter to the state government calling for a charter moratorium.

Red States, Blue States (Continued from Page 1)

In West Virginia, legislators responded to the successful spring of 2018 strike with retaliatory legislation in the 2019 session. The legislation would have brought charters to West Virginia for the first time and limited unions’ ability to collect fees, as well as other union busting and public school attacking efforts. The same group of rank and file members produced fliers, power points and memes, handed out fliers to parents, spoke at community meetings and once again led the leadership in demanding strike readiness. When they struck, the legislation was pulled before the end of the day.

None of these strikes won everything – some were more successful than others. Context matters. Timing matters. Time to build networks and solidarity matters. Leadership – whether elected or rank and file – matters. And the corporate powers are not going to give in easily. This is a long struggle. But the excitement of this moment is that educators – and other workers (yay UFCW Stop ’n Shop workers!) – are rediscovering our real power – and using the power of the strike – legal or illegal – to advance the movement for public education, for workers and for a better world. That is why when we fight, we win!

Springtime Means Budget Cuts: The Impact of Underfunding

By Kerri Scott

In our data-obsessed educational climate, one major piece of statewide data that is missing is the impact of underfunding on students. We need to share and publicize the devastating effects of consistently underfunded schools.

As districts' school budgets are being proposed and finalized this spring, please share cuts to personnel, programs, and services as well as other losses to your school and/or district due to lack of funding or reallocation of funding.

Please fill out this brief form, <http://bit.ly/CutsSurvey>, or e-mail your information to kerristar13@gmail.com. We will be sharing this information so people across the state can see how all of our students are being shortchanged by the failure of our lawmakers to fully fund public education.



The EDU Annual Meeting Glossary

Given the scope of debate at Annual Meeting, it can sometimes feel like you need to be a public policy expert to make an informed decision. New delegates will find that there are terms or references that more veteran members will use as if they were widely understood concepts.

The following glossary is intended to provide new delegates with a basic introduction to the vocabulary of Annual Meeting. More veteran delegates should also find parts useful, particularly for our members who do not work in K-12 bargaining units.

Adjunct faculty: Also known as part-time or contingent faculty, adjuncts teach a majority of classes in higher education institutions nationwide and in our community colleges. Adjuncts often lack the job protections offered to full time faculty and rarely receive health or retirement benefits. Most adjunct faculty in Massachusetts public colleges and universities are members of the MTA.

AFT (American Federation of Teachers): The AFT is the second largest teachers union in the U.S. with about 1.6 million members concentrated largely in urban areas (such as Boston, New York, Chicago). Over 100 years old, the AFT is part of the AFL-CIO.

Agency fee: no longer allowed in the public sector; see *JANUS*.

Charter school: Charter schools are publicly funded schools that are privately operated with no local oversight. Proponents (wrongly) believe charters offer a more flexible model of education but the MTA argues “they hurt students who attend public schools by siphoning hundreds of millions of dollars from Massachusetts school districts. They also create separate and unequal conditions for success by failing to serve as many high-need students as their host districts.”

Common Core: Introduced in 2010, the Common Core standards outline benchmarks for student achievement in math and English. In an effort to incentivize adoption, President Obama offered states federal funding (called *Race to the Top* grants) if they adopted the new Common Core standards. The Common Core has generated a good deal of controversy. Critics worry that private education corporations like Pearson played a central role in designing the standards and stand to profit from adoption.

Many also worry that the standards further narrow the curriculum and increase the reliance on high-stakes standardized testing to measure student learning.

CTU (Chicago Teachers Union): The CTU, an affiliate of the AFT, led its members on an eight-day strike in 2012. Prior to the strike, the CTU built deep connections within the community and they enjoyed popular support throughout the work stoppage. In addition to bread and butter issues, the CTU demanded that their settlement must provide better learning conditions for their students. CTU continues to be a powerful rank and file union with a social conscience that has inspired EDU and other progressive caucuses.

DESE (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education): DESE is the main statewide institution responsible for managing licensure, continuing (debatable) education reform efforts, implementing the teacher evaluation system, and “turning around” so-called low performing districts. Needless to say, the MTA and DESE often disagree. Critics of DESE believe its hyper focus on high-stakes testing, support for charter schools, and emphasis on narrow accountability measures do not benefit MA students and communities.

ESP (Education Support Professionals): ESPs serve many different roles within a school building but all ESPs provide important support to students. ESPs include para-professionals, health aides, library aides, clerical staff and school monitors.

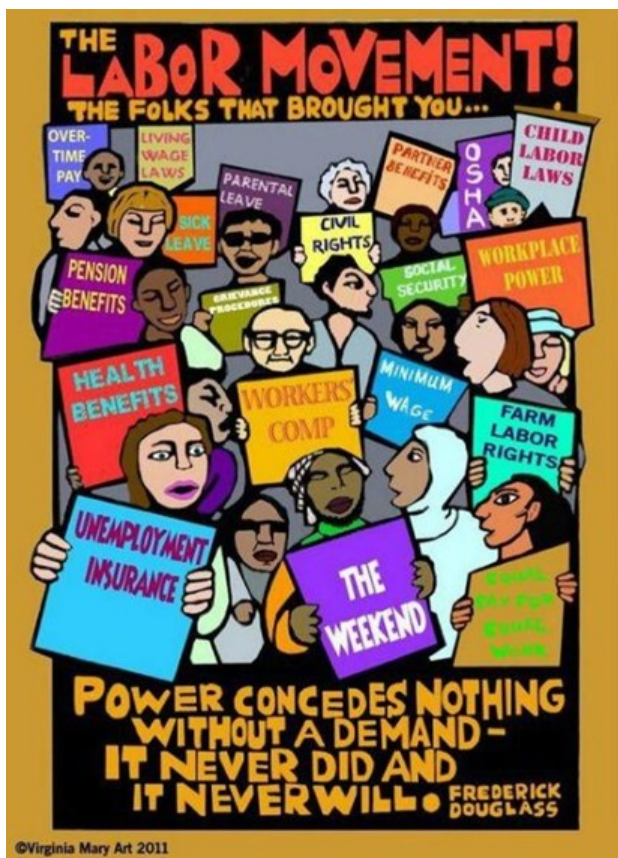
Fair Share Amendment: Also known as the “millionaires tax”, this proposed ballot question would have amended the Massachusetts Constitution to allow a four percent tax increase on any person’s annual income over one million dollars, with the \$2 billion in additional revenue going towards public education and transportation. Struck down by the State Supreme Court before voters could vote on it, it is currently being pursued through the Legislature.

Field staff: Also known as field reps, UNISERV reps, or MTA reps. Field Staff provide operational support to MTA locals. This includes assisting locals in organizing efforts, helping with collective bargaining, supporting chapter leaders, and providing a conduit between statewide leadership and local leadership. Field staff are generally assigned to multiple districts. The MTA and the NEA jointly fund the Field Staff program.

The EDU Annual Meeting Glossary (Cont.)

Gateway city: In Massachusetts, this generally refers to urban centers that once housed a large, upwardly mobile working class but have experienced economic stagnation and rising poverty with the decline in manufacturing industries over the last 30 years. The Massachusetts Legislature designates the following 26 communities as gateway cities: Attleboro, Barnstable, Brockton, Chelsea, Chicopee, Everett, Fall River, Fitchburg, Haverhill, Holyoke, Lawrence, Leominster, Lowell, Lynn, Malden, Methuen, New Bedford, Peabody, Pittsfield, Quincy, Revere, Salem, Springfield, Taunton, Westfield, and Worcester.

JANUS case (Janus vs. AFSCME): The U.S. Supreme Court decision in Mark Janus' suit against AFSCME (Illinois) arguing that he should not be obligated to pay dues or an agency fee to his union. He was heavily backed by national right-wing and anti-labor forces. Since the Supreme Court ruling, public sector workers represented by a union have the choice to become "free riders", i.e. they can work under the terms of a union contract but they are not required to pay dues to the union that bargained it. MTA budgeted for a 10% loss in membership at last year's annual meeting, but our members have been smarter than we expected. We have suffered almost no loss, and in many locals have *gained* members.



JwJ (Jobs with Justice): JwJ is a national organization that advocates for a living wage, better working conditions and benefits, and the right to collectively bargain for all workers. JwJ focuses heavily on organizing and developing strong support networks within marginalized communities. The MTA is a partner organization with MA JwJ.

Level 4/5 designation: Based on a number of measures, DESE rates each school district in Massachusetts. Ratings heavily prioritize student achievement on high-stakes standardized tests. Districts rated Level 4 and 5 fail to meet DESE's debatable benchmarks and can be placed into receivership (where the state assigns an individual or organization to manage the district). Critics of receivership argue that it is undemocratic, overly punitive, and fails to offer real solutions to impoverished communities.

MEJA (Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance): A coalition of teacher unions and public education advocacy groups. MTA is a coalition member.

NEA (National Education Association): The NEA is the largest union in the United States with roughly 3 million members spread across the country. Over 150 years old, the NEA started as a professional association (not a union) but by the 1960s, the NEA actively encouraged its affiliates (like MTA) to collectively bargain and be more like a union.

OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits): OPEB refers to any benefits that an employee receives during retirement, excluding pension payments (hence the *other*). Most important to MTA members, OPEB includes retiree healthcare benefits. In the past few years, several legislative initiatives have surfaced that would limit OPEB eligibility for current and future Massachusetts municipal employees.

Open bargaining: A form of collective bargaining where, in contrast to typical closed sessions, negotiations take place in a public forum open to members of the bargaining unit and the broader community.

Opt-out: Opting-out refers to a student's refusal to take or a teacher's refusal to administer, a high-stakes standardized test (e.g. MCAS or PARCC). Opt-out campaigns have been successful in several states around the country. Although there is still some debate about the legality of opting-out in MA, advocates believe that families have the right to opt their student out of testing.

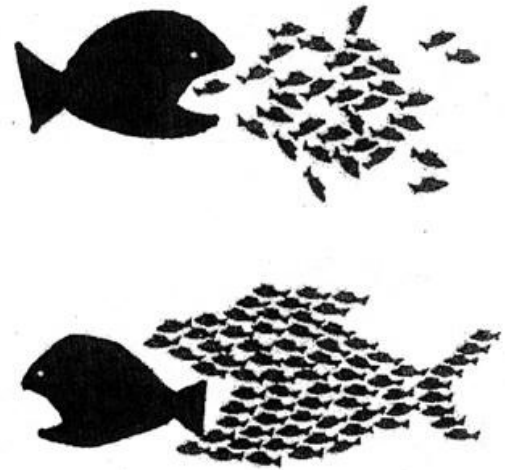
The EDU Annual Meeting Glossary (Cont.)

PHENOM: The Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts was formed in early 2006 by MTA members and students to increase funding, affordability and access to public colleges and universities in Massachusetts. It has been a staunch ally of the MTA, mobilizing in support of the No on 2 campaign, and now is part of the Fund our Future coalition.

Privatization: Privatization is the process by which publicly-owned and administered properties (schools, public transit, etc.) are transferred to private ownership and administration. Critics argue privatization is anti-democratic and reduces the public’s unfettered access to institutions once considered universal. For many teacher unionists, the rise of charter schools, the increasing reliance on corporate-style accountability measures, and the influence of for-profit publishing companies signal a move towards the privatization of our public school system.

Question 2: In 2016, Great Schools Massachusetts collected enough signatures to place the expansion of Commonwealth charter schools on the November ballot. A coalition of public school defenders, Save Our Public Schools (of which MTA is a member), led a massive grassroots effort (#No on 2) to oppose the measure and defeat it, 62% to 38%.

Raise Up Massachusetts (RUM): A coalition of labor unions and community organizations dedicated to winning a fair economy for all working people in Massachusetts. The MTA is a coalition member. RUM has successfully campaigned for increases in the state’s minimum wage, earned sick time for all workers, and guaranteed family medical leave. RUM was the coalition that pushed the Fair Share amendment.



RETELL: A 2011 US Department of Justice investigation declared that Massachusetts Public Schools failed to provide equitable education opportunities for English Language Learners (ELLs). As a result, DESE adopted the Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners (RETELL) initiative that requires all educators to receive a Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) endorsement in order to renew their license. Critics of the RETELL initiative argue the coursework is often too laborious or disorganized. Even worse, districts were not able to accommodate demand for the course and some educators risked losing their licensure simply because they couldn’t enroll in a SEI course.

Robert’s Rules of Order: A system of parliamentary procedure used by many organizations, including the MTA to run their large meetings. Robert’s Rules offers a concise, organized method for managing discussion and decision-making but it can be confusing for people unfamiliar with the procedures. The MTA should provide you with a short introduction to Robert’s Rules in your registration materials. Alternatively, this online “cheat sheet” is quite helpful: [goo.gl/ub4y8].

SDC (Senate District Coordinators): Formerly known as LPATs, SDCs encourage MTA members to participate in local election campaigns, lobby their legislators, and advocate for the MTA’s Legislative Action Plan. Each SDC is assigned to one Senate legislative district.

EDU’s Summer Reading List

Red State Revolt; the Teachers Strike Wave and Working Class Politics, Eric Blanc, 2019, Verso Books. Red State Revolt is a compelling analysis of the emergence and development of this historic strike wave, with an eye to extracting its main strategic lessons for educators, labor organizers, and radicals across the country. Eric, who embedded himself into the rank-and-file leaderships of the walkouts, plans to speak at this year’s MTA Summer Conference, so don’t miss the opportunity to hear him.

Secrets of a Successful Organizer, Alexandra Bradbury, Mark Brenner, Jane Slaughter, 2016, Labor Notes. This book offers real-life stories, practical tips, handout templates, and training exercises to begin organizing your co-workers to take on a variety of issues, from confronting an aggressive supervisor to building a successful contract campaign.

No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age, Jane McAlevey, 2018, Oxford University Press. McAlevey, an experienced community, electoral, and labor organizer, presents a dozen case studies of unions and social movements seeking to effect change in the twenty-first century, in each case identifying the reasons for the movement’s success or failure. Then she lays out a way forward for the progressive movement.

Teaching for Black Lives, edited By Dyan Watson, Jesse Hagopian, Wayne Au, 2018, Rethinking Schools. The editors and authors provide resources and demonstrate how teachers connect curriculum to young people's lives and root their concerns and daily experiences in what is taught and how classrooms are set up. They also highlight the hope and beauty of student activism and collective action.

The Testing Charade: Pretending to Make Schools Better, Daniel Koretz, 2017, University of Chicago Press. Daniel Koretz, one of the nation’s foremost experts on educational testing, argues that the whole idea of test-based accountability has failed—it has increasingly become an end in itself, harming students and corrupting the very ideals of teaching.

Democracy in Chains: the Deep History of the Radical Right’s Stealth Plan for America, Nancy Maclean, 2017, Penguin Random House. An explosive exposé of the right’s relentless campaign to eliminate unions, suppress voting, privatize public education, stop action on climate change, and alter the Constitution.

Word Search

O S E I R A R B I L L O O H C S T G S S
 T J N H L E H D O O G N O M M O C L E A
 Z V F G G Z L T C A E S I M O R P E L V
 K S U G R J S I W Y O R N G L H N J E D
 X U N O E V U F F E E T N C W K W G G E
 K H D J E V N A A D S L S D H D N E N R
 L A O O N Z R A D L N T L T Z I B N A O
 R Y U Z C O I N Q Q U A V O N J J O S F
 I E R S A P S G G F Q U K I W S V L O D
 J W F C R T E H Y I N K A N R C W V L E
 A G U Z D O M Y A U I G T N A G A M B R
 A M T A H U O W S P R X A O S R I R E K
 K K U L Q T V J J A Z K T I C Y X N D G
 E E R D J V E G B P T L H T O H C A I W
 O W E R C O M N V N Q V L U Q O B G Y A
 X A K A W W E D D E N I I L M F H M R G
 I L I C T P N M I N G O C O U N T Y G J
 Y K R D O K T G W B X E Y S H L N E P C
 V I T E K R D T S W N B F E S H T U L L
 S N S R Q Y H T C A H S I R E H C Y H I

CHERISHACT
 COMMONGOOD
 FUNDOURFUTURE
 GREENCARD
 LOSANGELES
 MINGOCOUNTY
 NBI
 OPENBARGAINING
 OPTOUT
 PROMISEACT
 RANKANDFILE
 REDCARD
 REDFORD
 RESOLUTION
 SCHOOLLIBRARIES
 STRIKE
 SUNRISEMOVEMENT
 WALKIN
 WESTVIRGINIA
 YELLOWCARD