



RETIRED STATE, COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION OF MASSACHUSETTS

THE VOICE

OF THE RETIRED PUBLIC EMPLOYEE

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NOVEMBER 2026

MASS RETIREES ENDORSES MAURA HEALEY FOR GOVERNOR

Since the election of Bill Weld in 1990, Massachusetts has elected seven governors over a 36-year span. Each has brought their own focus and style to the corner office, which has both benefited and harmed our members.

Without a doubt, Maura Healey is the first governor in nearly four decades to actively seek to partner with our Association for the benefit of public retirees. For this reason, we proudly endorse her candidacy for election as Governor of the



GOVERNOR MAURA HEALEY WITH CEO SHAWN DUHAMEL & PRESIDENT FRANK VALERI

Commonwealth.

Prior to her election as Attorney General in 2014, Healey sought to craft a strong working relationship with our Association. During her

tenure as AG, she intervened on behalf of public retirees and employees when the GIC attempted to implement draconian plan design changes that arguably had not been properly vetted under the open meeting law.

As she was weighing a run for governor, Maura Healey asked to meet with our Association's leadership to develop a deeper understanding of the issues of direct importance to our members. Without the presence of staff, she spent over

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STATE EXPLORING PRICE CAPS ON HOSPITAL COSTS

GIC Evaluating Medicare Reference Based Pricing

When the state's Group Insurance Commission (GIC) met in September, one item that was of specific interest to public retirees was a presentation by GIC staff on Medicare Reference Based Pricing for inpatient & outpatient hospital services. At the request of the 17-member Commission, GIC staff have been evaluating and modeling data on what such a price cap policy would look like for the GIC.

Such policies are growing in popularity around the country, with the model presented to the Commission in September closely resembling the

current Medicare Reference Based Pricing model used in Oregon for their state and teachers' health insurance system. Several other states, including Indiana and Vermont, have implemented similar hospital price cap systems.

Just last month, NPR's Marketplace ran a full report on this growing price control trend.

To be clear, the GIC is currently evaluating how such a system would work here in Massachusetts. No decisions have been made at this time beyond instructions from the Commission to continue the

evaluation process.

Similarly, *Mass Retirees* has not taken a position on the issue. However, as we have publicly stated for over the past three years, we believe that a healthcare affordability crisis is underway. Retirees and employees can no longer absorb annual cost increases that run into double digits. Something must change!

The information contained in the report on the initial modeling analysis appears to demonstrate the value of Medicare Referenced Based

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FIRST IN A SERIES

SOCIAL SECURITY INSOLVENCY

Increased Focus on a Looming Issue

By now, most members are aware that a broad reform of Social Security is likely to take place in the coming years. According to the 2026 Social Security Trustees Report, without Congressional intervention, Social Security retirement will become insolvent in late 2032 – just six years from now. We should note that the Trustees file an Annual Report each year, which contains the latest analysis on Social Security. The solvency dates may change based on demographic changes and the information contained in future reports.

However, as of now the Social Security Trust Fund will be able to pay just 82% of the benefits owed to retirees in the 4th quarter of 2032. This fact is what is now driving increased focus on reforming the program – something that will likely take place during the next presidential administration. This means that Social Security Reform could be a main factor in the 2028 election for president and Congress.

While serious Congressional work has yet to begin on potential reform proposals, policy experts and think-tanks have begun to flesh out ideas – two of which spell bad news for our public retirement systems and public retirees from non-Social Security states like Massachusetts.

RETURN OF WEP/GPO?

Let's start by saying that we do not believe there to be any serious discussions or plans to reinstate either the Social Security Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) or Government Pension Offset (GPO) for existing retirees (those either

collecting or eligible to collect a Social Security benefit). We do not want to frighten anyone that your existing Social Security benefit might be reduced or taken away – that is VERY unlikely to happen.

What we are concerned about is having WEP/GPO or similar type laws imposed on future public retirees.

We know that there are some Republican members of Congress, as well as policy experts from conservative think-tanks, who publicly opposed the passage of the Fairness Act and have not let the issue go. The recently published report on the Fairness Act by the highly respected and non-partisan Congressional Research Service (CRS) contained detailed information on alternatives to WEP/GPO repeal.

It is the continued focus on alternatives to the Fairness Act, combined with the news for widespread reform of Social Security, that gives us reason for concern.

During the leadup to the passage of the Fairness Act, and during both the House and Senate floor debates, fiscally conservative Republicans argued that full repeal of WEP/GPO would grant some retirees with benefits they did not earn. Testimony to this point was provided to the House Ways and Means Committee during a public hearing on WEP/GPO in April 2024. We reported extensively on those points at that time.

Obviously, we adamantly disagree with those who argue these points. WEP/GPO were very unfair laws that should never again see the light of day. This is exactly why we are speaking out now.

In fact, *Mass Retirees* was amongst the first groups to speak

out when WEP/GPO were created in 1983 and were leaders on the national stage to bring an end to WEP/GPO for 41 years. We have come too far and fought too hard to go backwards!

Again, we do not foresee an attempt to change the Social Security benefits of existing retirees. This is about preventing the same mistake that took place in the late 1970s with the GPO law and then by the creation of the WEP in 1983. We will not silently sit by while some plot to unfairly change Social Security benefits for any public retiree – current or future!

MANDATORY SOCIAL SECURITY

A separate but related issue that we are closely monitoring is a policy known as Mandatory Social Security. This applies to workers who do not participate in Social Security.

Mandatory Social Security means just that – participation in Social Security would become mandatory under federal law, either for everyone or just new employees entering a retirement system that now operates outside of Social Security.

To be clear, individual employees do not get to choose which system to participate in or to opt out of the federal program. Under the original Social Security law passed in 1935, employees participating in a public, railroad, or postal pension plan were legally excluded from also participating in Social Security.

At that time, all Massachusetts public employees already

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UPCOMING IN-PERSON AREA MEETINGS

ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH



10.22.26
Pittsfield, MA
1:00 PM

10.23.26
West Springfield, MA
11:00 AM

10.30.26
Auburn, MA
11:00 AM

1.15.27
Tewksbury, MA
11:00 AM

CLOSING OUT 2026

Mass Retirees will be closing out this year with three area in-person meetings: two for our Western Mass. members and one for those in Central Mass. Please note that while our meetings typically begin at 11:00 AM, the Pittsfield meeting will begin at 1:00 PM.

WHEN: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2026, 1:00PM
WHERE: HOLIDAY INN & SUITES BERKSHIRE
ONE WEST STREET, PITTSFIELD, MA 01201

WHEN: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2026, 11:00AM
WHERE: STORROWTON TAVERN & CARRIAGE HOUSE
1305 MEMORIAL DRIVE, W SPRINGFIELD, MA 01089

WHEN: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2026, 11:00AM
WHERE: AUBURN ELKS LODGE 2118
(TO AVOID CONGESTION, PLEASE USE HANDICAPPED ENTRANCE)
754 SOUTHBRIDGE STREET, AUBURN, MA 01501

AND LAUNCHING INTO 2027

WHEN: FRIDAY, JANUARY 15, 2027, 11:00AM
WHERE: TEWKSBURY/WILMINGTON ELKS LODGE #2070
777 SOUTH STREET, TEWKSBURY, MA 01876

Remember that we will be conducting in-person meetings in all regions across the Commonwealth throughout 2027 and posting them on Page 3 of *The Voice*. Please stay tuned for a future meeting in your area.

**PLEASE
JOIN US!**

WESTPORT: MEMBERS HEAR FROM SEN. MIKE RODRIGUES & REP. CAROLE FIOLO



SEN. MIKE RODRIGUES
SENATE W & M CHAIRMAN



REP. CAROLE FIOLO
HOUSE CHAIR
JOINT ECONOMIC DEV &
EMERGING TECH. COMMITTEE

At the Association's recent Westport meeting, members heard from guest speakers, Senator and W&M Chairman Mike Rodrigues and Rep. Carole Fiola who is House chair of the Joint Economic Development & Emerging Technologies Committee. *Mass Retirees* has endorsed both the Senator and Representative for reelection this November 3rd (see

pages 6&7).

As members know from earlier *Voice* editions, Senator Rodrigues worked closely with his House W&M counterpart, Rep. Aaron Michlewitz (see page 13), to ensure that COLA Reform proceeded to Governor Healey's desk for her signature. The

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GOVERNOR HEALEY'S HEALTH CARE AFFORDABILITY WORKING GROUP

Issues “Road-Map” Targeting Cost Drivers

If you're a long-time *Mass Retirees* member, you know that we began to ring the bell on healthcare affordability concerns nearly four years ago. As the country emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost of healthcare, like most other costs, began to sharply rise.

Association members also know that a major focus of our work is fighting to maintain the right to high quality and affordable insurance for retired Massachusetts public employees. Thankfully, we have not been alone!

This past January, Governor Maura Healey established a Health Care Affordability Working Group comprised of state officials and senior leaders from across our state's health care system and business sectors. Their mandate is to develop actionable recommendations to “lower health care system costs across Massachusetts to help patients, families, providers and businesses.”

This August, the Task Force released 12 initial recommendations providing “a roadmap to target some of the biggest drivers of health care costs, including out-of-network charges, prescription drug prices, workforce shortages, barriers to primary care, administrative costs and preventable hospitalizations.” Further details and implementation plans will be announced in the coming weeks and months.

Included within the recommendations are two areas that would directly impact the state's Group

Insurance Commission (GIC). One would have state agencies work together to lower prescription drug costs under state insurance programs. The second would have the GIC set standards regarding hospital pricing. See related article on page 1.

Group's 12 Recommendations: Brief Outline

Since its establishment in January, the Working Group has met regularly over the past nine months in private discussions. Starting with the two items that may have an immediate impact on public retirees, the following 12 initial recommendations fall under 5 main categories. Here is a summary of the Group's recommendations.

STATE LEADERSHIP.

Reduce Prescription Drug Costs:

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), the Health Connector, Group Insurance Commission (GIC), and Health Policy Commission (HPC) will work together to develop a coordinated state strategy to leverage the state's purchasing power to lower drug costs and improve access to medications.

Manage GIC Prices: The state's GIC can help lower costs by setting standards for fair prices for some services without limiting where members receive care. For more on the Association's reaction to this recommendation, again please refer to the related article on page 1.

HELPING PEOPLE AND SMALL BUSINESSES.

Reduce Out-of-Network Costs:

Governor Healey is directing the Division of Insurance (DOI) to establish default out-of-network payment rates. This reform will protect against surprise billing and reduce overall costs across the market. DOI will convene listening sessions to inform new regulations.

Stabilize the Health Insurance

Market: Health insurance premiums continue to rise for individuals and small businesses, making coverage harder to afford and increasing costs across the health care system. Governor Healey is directing the Department of Insurance (DOI) to evaluate bold, new strategies to strengthen competition and reduce premium costs in the merged market.

RIGHT CARE AT THE RIGHT TIME IN THE RIGHT PLACE.

Innovative Health Care Models:

The Healey-Driscoll Administration is tasking state agencies to work with health care providers, health plans, and experts to design and execute a coordinated, comprehensive strategy to support the accelerated adoption of innovative healthcare models can support patients in staying out of the hospital and other high-cost settings.

Transitions of Care: The Mass. Health Policy Commission (HPC) recently announced funding for seven hospital-to-home pilot programs that help streamline discharges of individuals from acute

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MASS RETIREES LEGISLATIVE UPDATE WORK CONTINUES TO ADVANCE ASSOCIATION INITIATIVES

Although there has been limited movement on our legislative package since our September newsletter, *Mass Retirees* continues to actively pursue the bills that remain before the Legislature during the informal session period.

The conclusion of formal sessions this summer brought several important accomplishments for public retirees. The FY27 state budget included the annual 3% COLA for members of the State and Teachers' Retirement Systems, continued the Commonwealth's pension funding schedule, fully funded the Group Insurance Commission (GIC), and increased the post-retirement public employment earnings limit by \$10,000 beginning in calendar year 2026.

At the same time, several bills within the Association's legislative package advanced during formal sessions and remain active. These include our proposal providing prospective relief for retirees who retired prior to July 2004 under Options (b) and (c), as well as

legislation protecting local retirees from increases in their health insurance contribution percentage after retirement. Our municipal health insurance transparency bill also remains active after advancing to House Third Reading.

Other priorities continue to work their way through the legislative process. These include proposals to increase the minimum Option (d) survivor pension, establish a minimum ordinary disability pension, require a minimum 50% municipal contribution toward survivor health insurance premiums, and increase the annual veterans' retirement bonus from \$300 to \$1,000. We are also continuing to pursue legislation that would expand eligibility for the veterans' bonus to certain retirees who retired prior to the 2004 change in the definition of veteran.

While the pace of legislative activity typically slows once formal sessions conclude, bills can and do continue to advance during informal sessions. The fact that several of our proposals reached the House or Senate Ways and Means

Committees, House Third Reading, or Senate Rules before the end of formal sessions provides opportunities for continued action.

"Our legislative team remains in regular contact with bill sponsors, legislative leadership, committee staff, and our coalition partners as we work to advance these proposals before the 2025–2026 legislative session concludes," adds Legislative Chairman Tom Bonarrigo.



TOM BONARRIGO
LEGISLATIVE CHAIRMAN

"As always, we will keep members informed as meaningful developments occur. In the meantime, members should know that these bills remain active and that our advocacy on their behalf continues."

QUICK REFERENCE: BILL STATUS

H2787 RELIEF FOR PRE-JULY 2004 OPTIONS (b) & (c) RETIREES: House Ways & Means

-Rep. Tackey Chan

Recalculates, with the updated mortality table, the pensions of those who retired prior to 7/1/04, when the updated table was implemented and chose Options (b) & (c) and adjusts their pensions prospectively.

S1848/H2799 LOCAL RETIREE INSURANCE PROTECTION: Senate

Rules /House Third Reading

-Sen. Paul Feeney/Rep. Mike Day

Requires that increases in the retiree premium percentage be applied prospectively to retirees who retire on or after the increase is implemented.

H2890 TRANSPARENCY IN MUNICIPAL HEALTH INSURANCE:

House Third Reading

-Rep. John Lawn

Delineates the responsibilities of consultants and brokers, mandates

the disclosure of fees and commissions, and bars consultants from performing brokerage services within the same municipality.

S1867 INCREASE IN OPTION (d) MINIMUM PENSION (6/25/2025)

-Sen. Cindy Friedman

Increases the Option (d) minimum from \$500 to \$750 monthly for state/teacher survivors, with an option for local systems to do the same.

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2026 MASSACHUSETTS



M A S S R E T I R E E S

Since the Association's founding in 1968, political involvement has been a key aspect of our work on behalf of retired public employees. This includes supporting those candidates for public office who have demonstrated their support for public retirees and the issues of direct importance to our Association.

Our straightforward and simple criteria in determining whom to support has remained unchanged for the past 58 years: Has the candidate demonstrated a willingness to work with our Association in support of public retirees

and have a record of doing so? This includes prioritizing the issues of direct importance to our members by sponsoring or cosponsoring Association bills and amendments.

Political party and records on unrelated issues are not considerations. Our focus is strictly on public retirement.

At times we have endorsed candidates for the US House and US Senate, but our primary focus is on state and local offices here in Massachusetts. In addition, our Retired Public Employees Political Action Committee (PAC) is a state-only PAC and cannot be used for

federal elections.

Finally, traditionally we do not endorse candidates running in uncompetitive or uncontested elections. It is also rare for us to oppose incumbents, unless they have taken positions that are adverse to public retirees.

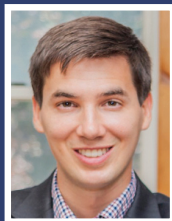
Every candidate we have endorsed for the 2026 General Election are people we have worked directly with on behalf of public retirees. Members are always free to choose whom to vote for based on your own criteria. However, each has earned our support and your vote through their actions.

STATE SENATE CANDIDATES



**JAMIE
ELDRIDGE**

MARLBOROUGH
MIDDLESEX &
WORCESTER



**DYLAN
FERNANDES**

FALMOUTH
PLYMOUTH &
BARNSTABLE



**BARRY
FINEGOLD**

ANDOVER
2ND ESSEX & MID-
DLESEX



**MIKE
RODRIGUES**

WESTPORT
1ST BRISTOL &
PLYMOUTH



VOTE TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3

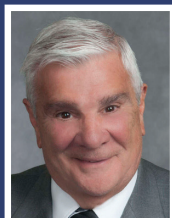


HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CANDIDATES



**MIKE
DAY**

STONEHAM
31ST MIDDLESEX



**PAUL
DONATO**

MEDFORD
35TH MIDDLESEX



**LISA
FIELD**

TAUNTON
3RD BRISTOL



**CAROLE
FIOLA**

FALL RIVER
6TH BRISTOL



**PAUL
FROST**

AUBURN
7TH WORCESTER



**DENNIS
GALLAGHER**

BRIDGEWATER
8TH PLYMOUTH



**RYAN
HAMILTON**

METHUEN
15TH ESSEX



**SARAH
HEWINS**

CARVER
2ND PLYMOUTH

GENERAL ELECTIONS

ENDORSEMENTS

REELECT GOLDBERG STATE TREASURER



DEB GOLDBERG
STATE TREASURER

Our Association's close relationship with **Deb Goldberg** dates to 1998, during her tenure as a member of Brookline's Select Board. With the newly passed Municipal COLA Reform law on the verge of being rejected by the town, Goldberg personally intervened and helped successfully usher the law across the

finish line.

Dubbed by former President and *Mass Retirees* founder Ralph White as the "COLA Queen", Goldberg has steadfastly maintained her support for the critical retiree benefit throughout her tenure as State Treasurer and Receiver General. This year, Goldberg lent her support to our Association's quest to pass COLA Reform into law. For these

CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS RECEIVING OUR ENDORSEMENT



WILLIAM GALVIN
SECRETARY OF STATE



ANDREA CAMPBELL
ATTORNEY GENERAL

reasons and more, we are honored to endorse Deb Goldberg for reelection.

Serving as State Treasurer since 2015, Goldberg has brought stability and continuity to an important office that, too often, had served as a stepping stone for those seeking higher office. In doing so, she has grown

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVE CANDIDATES (CONT')



NATALIE HIGGINS
LEOMINSTER
4TH WORCESTER



KRISTIN KASSNER
IPSWICH
2ND ESSEX



MEG KILCOYNE
CLINTON
12TH WORCESTER



KATHY LANATRA
KINGSTON
12TH PLYMOUTH



JOHN MARSI
DUDLEY
6TH WORCESTER



STEVEN OUELLETTE
WESTPORT
8TH BRISTOL



BRIDGET PLOUFFE
BROCKTON
9TH PLYMOUTH



MARGARET SCARSDALE
PEPPERELL
1ST MIDDLESEX



MARK SYLVIA
FALL RIVER
10TH BRISTOL



ANDREW TARR
GLOUCESTER
5TH ESSEX



MARCUS VAUGHN
WRENTHAM
9TH NORFOLK

Healey

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90 minutes in our Beacon Hill office discussing pension funding, retiree health insurance, and – of course – COLA benefits. She asked great questions and took detailed notes.

Except for State Treasurer Deb Goldberg, Healey is the first candidate for statewide office in modern times to have sought out our Association for a deep dive into public retirement issues.

As governor, Maura Healey has maintained her close relationship with Association officials while also embracing the issues of top importance to our members.

Within months of becoming governor, she signed into law legislation increasing post-retirement public sector work hours from 960 to 1,200 hours annually – legislation previously vetoed by former Governor Charlie Baker. This past July, Healey approved a \$10,000 increase in the post-retirement earnings limit.

In 2024, she supported and

signed into law the first increase in the state's Basic Life Insurance benefit since 1985, increasing the state retiree and employee death benefit to \$10,000. During her tenure, there have been no major changes in GIC plan design nor increases in out-of-pocket costs – despite significant increases in the cost of healthcare.

When we sat down with Maura Healey in 2021, a major focus of the conversation was on the COLA and our hope to create an Enhanced Benefit for long-term retirees. We also talked at length about pension funding, as well as the need to begin earmarking a portion of excess pension investment returns to fund COLA improvements.

Largely based on that conversation, in 2024 Healey initiated the Special COLA Commission which then led to the COLA Reform law she approved this past July. To be clear, without the direct support of Maura Healey the new COLA Reform Law would not have gotten off the ground.

Not only has Maura Healey been

true to her word when it comes to supporting public retirees, but she has also not deviated from the decades-long commitment by the Commonwealth to fully fund the State and Teachers' Retirement Systems within the coming decade.

Additionally, she is the first governor since Paul Cellucci to not veto Association-backed legislation nor seek to unfairly "reform" public retirement benefits, undermine our defined benefit pension plan, or make adverse changes to retiree health insurance.

Throughout their tenure, both Governor Healey and Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll have remained accessible to Association leaders. This enables us to make our case on your behalf directly to the governor and her senior staff.

For these reasons, we believe Maura Healey and Kim Driscoll have earned our endorsement and support for reelection. We hope that you will grant them every consideration for your vote in the November 3rd Election.

GIC

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Pricing. The initial modeling analysis highlighted both the significant variation in hospital prices and the potential savings that could result from tying certain hospital reimbursement rates to a percentage of Medicare rates.

With the strong caveat that the model was largely for demonstration purposes only and that the highly nuanced details are very much subject to change, GIC staff presented an analysis based on Oregon's Medicare Reference Based Pricing. The program uses 200% of Medicare's pricing (reimbursement rate) for hospital inpatient and outpatient services. Primary care and mental health services are not included. These specific areas of care are unlikely to be included in

any price cap plan.

With the assistance of the Health Policy Commission (HPC), the GIC applied the model to the actual hospital costs incurred by the GIC in FY 2025. While no specific health systems or individual hospitals were disclosed, the results of the analysis indicated that such a price cap system would have resulted in significant savings to the GIC and its non-Medicare enrollees had such a policy been in place.

This work is also connected to the recommendations of Governor Healey's Health Care Affordability Working Group, which called for giving the GIC additional tools to better manage hospital prices (See page 4). Taken together with the Commission's request for additional analysis following its May discussion of Medicare reference-based pricing, the Group's recommendation will help frame the GIC's

ongoing examination of hospital reimbursement and price variation.

It's important to note that Medicare enrollees are already subject to Medicare's approved pricing.

Another portion of the analysis prepared by the HPC focused on the immunotherapy drug used to treat many types of cancer, Keytruda, which is administered in a hospital setting and billed accordingly. Based on 2023 data, the Medicare approved price of Keytruda was just over \$11,000 per dose. However, the price charged to commercial insurance (non-Medicare) plans by some prominent Boston hospitals was nearly double that of the Medicare rate – with no discernable difference in patient care.

With specialty drugs such as Keytruda representing a driving factor in the rapidly growing cost of

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COLA REFORM



SESSION

As we've been reporting on COLA Reform and most recently announced its enactment as Chapter 137, members have naturally been contacting us with their questions about it. We decided that it might be helpful to outline the most frequently asked questions and provide our answers to them. To that end, here's our Q&A Session on COLA Reform.

FREQUENT MEMBER QUESTIONS ABOUT COLA REFORM

QUES. #1: I'm a state retiree and qualify for the Enhanced COLA. When can I expect to receive my first payment?

The earliest that the Enhanced COLA could be paid for the State & Teachers' or a local retirement system that adopts the Enhanced COLA is July 1, 2027. That's because funding for the new benefit is directly tied to the investment performance of each respective retirement system – starting with 2026 investment returns. We will not know the full scope of the 2026 returns until early in 2027.

QUES. #2: I retired 5 years ago, in 2021. Will I qualify for the Enhanced COLA?

Unfortunately you won't qualify. **You must have retired, either on a regular or disability pension, before July 1, 2020 to be eligible.**

QUES. #3: I retired in 2015 after 25 years of public service. Will I be eligible for the Enhanced COLA?

You will be eligible if you satisfy the four (4) basic preconditions for eligibility: (1) retired before July 1, 2020; (2) retired for at least 10 years; (3) have a minimum 20 years of public service; and (4) your pension is less than 80% of the average employee salary.

QUES. #4: If I'm eligible for the Enhanced COLA, do I remain eligible for the basic (3%) COLA that I've been receiving every July 1?

Yes, the Enhanced COLA is an additional benefit that will be paid along with the basic COLA that you've been receiving.

QUES. #5: Will I receive the Enhanced COLA in one check?

No, it will be paid monthly with your pension.

QUES. #6: I am a local retiree who retired in 2009 - some 17 years ago. Since I've been out more than 15 years, will I receive the \$200 Enhanced COLA (in the 2nd

tier of benefits)?

You could receive the \$200 Enhanced COLA only if your retirement system adopted the \$200 Enhanced COLA, with the approval of its local legislative body. (For example, for a town retirement system, the town meeting is the local legislative body.) **Remember at the local level, a retirement system can adopt one, two or all three of the Enhanced COLA tiers - \$100, \$200 or \$300.**



PERAC EXAMINES NEW LAW IN-DEPTH

With this Q&A and our earlier reports, *Mass Retirees* is seeking to provide members with the information needed to best understand how the new COLA Reform law directly impacts them. And, we will continue to do just that.

As members know, we have been recognizing the important contributions by others in passing COLA Reform, including the Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission (PERAC). With the passage of Chapter 137, PERAC has now assumed its important role of educating the 104 retirement boards on the new law.

To achieve that end, PERAC will be implementing several approaches. One has been completed by way of an in-depth memorandum (2026 PERAC Memo #23) to all the boards. According to PERAC: "This memo will explain the COLA Reserve Fund and Enhanced COLA and detail how each provision is to be adopted and implemented. There is also an attachment that spells out the timeline and cycle of events related to the use of the COLA Reserve Fund and Enhanced COLA at both the state and local levels."

If you're interested in learning more, in detail, about what your retirement board must do to implement the COLA Reserve Fund and Enhanced COLA, you can access Memo #23 at: www.mass.gov/perac.

WHICH RETIREMENT SY



HERE IS HELP WITH

With 104 public retirement systems operating in Massachusetts, it can be more than a little confusing as to which retirement system you belong. The situation becomes even more bewildering when pension benefits (including COLA increases) come from the retirement system, but insurance benefits come from another entity all together.

With the passage of the COLA Reform law, it is a good time to review the structure of our public

retirement systems to help members better understand how the new law will apply to you.

A key aspect of the COLA Reform law is the creation of a new Enhanced COLA benefit, which will automatically take effect for members of the State and Teachers' Retirement Systems once funding for the benefit is achieved within the state's COLA Reserve Fund. However, the benefit is a local option for each of the 102 local retirement systems. Under Proposition 2 1/12, the Commonwealth cannot legally mandate new costs on municipal

governments.

The concept of local option is why the COLA base varies across the 104 retirement systems. For a COLA base increase to be approved or for the Enhanced COLA to be adopted locally, both the 5-member retirement board AND the local legislative body must approve the benefit increase. However, once approved the decision to pay the annual COLA rest exclusively with each respective local retirement board.

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MA State Employees' Retirement System (MSERS)

Anyone who retired from or works for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is a member of the MA State Employees' Retirement System AKA "State Retirement System". This includes all state workers, State Police, correction officers, county sheriff's department employees, and Higher Ed. employees & faculty. If you retired from a job with the state government, you are a member of the State Retirement System. This includes retirees from county correctional facilities (sheriffs) and district attorneys, as well as retirees from the Mass. Turnpike Authority.

Again, the State Retirement System is funded by the state government and is an independent agency under the State Treasurer. The State Retirement System is

governed by a five-member board, on which *Mass Retirees* President Frank Valeri serves as one of two elected members. State Treasurer Deb Goldberg chairs the Board.

All members of the State Retirement System are eligible to receive insurance benefits from the state's Group Insurance Commission.

Mass. Teachers' Retirement System (MTRS)

With the exception of the City of Boston, all public school teachers and school administrators are members of the Mass. Teachers' Retirement System. Boston teachers belong to the City of Boston Retirement System and receive the same COLA benefits as all other Boston retirees. All other retired teachers belong to the state-run MTRS.

The MTRS dates back over 100

years and is state funded and governed in the same manner as the State Retirement System. Local school systems or municipal governments are not involved whatsoever in the funding or governance of the MTRS. Unlike the other 103 systems, the MTRS is governed by a 7-member Board.

Like the State Retirement System, COLA benefits for members of the MTRS are set by the governor and state legislature, with the MTRS Board playing no formal role. COLA benefit levels for MTRS members are the same as those received by retirees of the State Retirement System. This is why we frequently refer jointly to the State and Teachers' Retirement Systems when speaking about the COLA base.

Again, unless you are a teacher retired from the City of Boston,

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SYSTEM YOU BELONG TO

THAT QUESTION

Payment of the COLA for members of the State and Teachers' Retirement Systems is authorized within the annual state budget.

When looking at the organizational structure of our public retirement systems, we must keep in mind that our Massachusetts retirement law (MGL Chapter 32) was crafted more than 100 years ago. And while Chapter 32 is routinely amended, the last major comprehensive rewrite of the statute took place in the late 1940s.

Confusion regarding the retirement system to which you belong seems to stem from the fact that

Massachusetts has 104 public retirement systems that do not necessarily coincide with the job from which you retired. While all public retirement benefits are governed by state law and there is portability amongst retirement systems, the administration of each system is governed by each individual retirement board.

This fact is particularly important when it comes to benefits like the annual COLA, the payment of which can depend on the decision of the local retirement board. COLA benefits for retirees who belong to the State or Teachers'

Retirement Systems are set and approved annually by the legislature and governor, with the State and Teachers' Retirement Boards playing no formal role in the process.

At the risk of confusing matters further, allow us to attempt to offer a general description of how retirement system membership is designed. A rule of thumb is that you are a member of the retirement system to which the job you retired from is covered.

all MA public school teachers are members of the MTRS, not the 102 local retirement systems. Payment of your pension benefit, and COLA, come from the state NOT the community or district from which you retired.

Another point of confusion for members of the MTRS is the fact that retired teachers receive health insurance benefits from a different entity than the Teachers' Retirement System. The entity from which a teacher retired from determines the source of their insurance benefits – with some systems opting to provide benefits locally, while others can choose enrollment in the state's Group Insurance Commission or a local joint purchasing agreement.

102 Local Retirement Systems

City, town, county/regional, authority, and district systems are

legally independent entities that are governed by 5-member retirement boards. Two members are elected by the retirees and employees of the system, two members represent the local government, and an independent fifth member is appointed by the other four members. The fifth member cannot be a member of the retirement system on which they serve.

Municipal governments have the legal autonomy to decide whether to maintain their own retirement system or belong to a regional system within the county. Decisions regarding the type of retirement system to enroll in were made generations ago, with many MA public systems pre-dating the establishment of Social Security in 1935.

Quasi-public agencies like MassPort, MWRA, Mass. Housing, etc. have their own retirement systems established by state law. Each

of these systems is also governed by a 5-member board.

City Retirement Systems

With few, if any exceptions, each city maintains its own independent retirement system.

Town Retirement Systems

Many larger towns maintain their own retirement systems. Examples are Belmont, Falmouth, and Plymouth.

County / Regional Retirement Systems

Apart from Nantucket and Suffolk Counties, all Mass. counties maintain their own county or regional retirement systems. These

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14 ►

Social Security

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2 ►

participated in a public pension plan and were therefore excluded from Social Security. Across the country, some 70% of public teachers and 60% of police and firefighters continue to operate outside of Social Security.

To this day, the entire public sector workforce here in Massachusetts operates outside of Social Security.

The ability for public sector employees, railroad and postal workers to join Social Security began in the 1950s as the country's workforce surged in the aftermath of World War II. Many entities, like Massachusetts, opted to remain outside of Social Security to maintain pension benefit levels. It would be unaffordable for employees and state/local governments to pay into both programs at the current levels.

Since the passage of the 1983

Social Security Reform Act there are some who have advocated for all workers to be required to participate in the federal program. Our Association has long been part of a national coalition of non-Social Security states that have opposed such a move.

The Coalition to Preserve Retirement Security (CPRS), which is led by Association member and longtime federal advisor Tom Lussier, recently commissioned a detailed report detailing the detrimental impact of Mandatory Social Security on public retirement systems. The report, conducted by Segal, also includes information on how such a move would also be detrimental to the long-term finances of Social Security.

Our specific opposition to Mandatory Social Security stems from the fact that such a move would be financially disastrous to our public retirement systems.

Neither employees nor their government employers would be able to afford to pay both the 6.2% Social Security contribution and the pension appropriation – which now averages over 10% for active employees. Employees and employers simply cannot afford to pay both contributions at current levels.

This would lead to a restructuring of pension benefits, which would imperil future COLA benefits.

Again, we do not envision these issues to be seriously considered by Congress until 2029 at the earliest. While this affords us time, we must begin to actively oppose these bad ideas now. Waiting until legislation is filed and Congress starts its debate could prove to be too late.

Look for us to continue to update members on these issues, as well as provide detailed explanations on how Social Security functions and the various reform ideas beginning to take shape.

Working Group

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4 ►

care hospitals to their homes and communities and additional work will be done in the coming months to support the use of these innovative healthcare models. The Healey-Driscoll Administration will explore actions to modernize surrogate decision-making and health care proxy laws.

Low-Value Care: The HPC will oversee a new clinical expert committee to identify low-value or inappropriate services so the system can focus on treatments that help patients. In the coming months, the committee will develop measurable goals, reporting requirements, and accountability mechanisms for reducing identified services, along with payment incentives to discourage inappropriate and costly care.

INVESTING IN WORKFORCE:

Targeted Nursing & Workforce Investments: Investing in nursing

faculty recruitment and retention will allow schools to train more nurses and expand the pipeline, improve access to care, and reduce reliance on expensive temporary staff. The Healey-Driscoll Administration is evaluating additional actions that can be taken to support faculty recruitment and retention and other approaches to lowering the financial barriers to nurses becoming and staying nursing faculty.

Education Investments: The Healey-Driscoll Administration will build on investments in training the healthcare workers communities need, including primary care providers, nurses, long-term care staff, behavioral health workers, and community health workers.

Strengthening Primary Care: Massachusetts should pass primary care reform legislation aligned with the key principles recommended by the Primary Care Access, Delivery, and Payment Task Force.

HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY:

Data Exchange: Massachusetts

should enhance its existing health information exchange system and processes so additional health information can move securely between hospitals, doctors and insurers, with further support for smaller health care practices. The working group will convene health care data and technology experts to develop a proposed data exchange framework and roadmap.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): Massachusetts should establish clear rules and transparency around how AI is used in the health care process so decisions are fair, accountable, and do not cause errors, unfair denials, or delays in care. The working group will continue to collaborate through the end of the year to finalize additional actions.

Mass Retirees will continue to closely monitor the situation as these recommendations are developed and refined. Please stay tuned for further information here, the weekly email/video, hotline and our other media outlets as it becomes available.



MASS RETIREES 2026 ANNUAL MEETING

MEMBERS TURN OUT IN FORCE-OVER 300 STRONG COLA REFORM TAKES CENTER STAGE



During the *Mass Retirees* Annual Meeting this September, Association officials, as well as members, took the opportunity to thank our key-note speaker, Representative and W&M Chairman Aaron Michlewitz,

for his pivotal role in enacting the COLA Reform law. Over 300 strong in attendance, members turned out in force to the meeting where COLA Reform took center stage.

Included in his remarks, Rep. Michlewitz described the challenges

that needed to be overcome to make COLA reform a reality. He also recognized the outstanding advocacy by the Association's legislative team in this achievement – work that spanned many years.

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SPEAKERS



CEO SHAWN DUHAMEL



PRES. FRANK VALERI



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

REP. AARON MICHEWITZ
W & M CHAIRMAN



DIR. HEALTHCARE & RET. ADVOCACY
NANCY MCGOVERN



TREASURER JOE CONNORTON

GUESTS



WELLPOINT'S LYNNE DURGIN, MICHAEL VAZQUEZ
& GEN. MANAGER DAVID MORALES



LEG CHR TOM BONARRIGO AT CENTER WITH REP. AARON
MICHEWITZ, FLANKED BY OTHER GUESTS IDENTIFIED ELSEWHERE



BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD'S STEVE DION & MARK THOMAS



SEN. BRENDAN CRIGHTON



TOM BONARRIGO W/REP. ELECT LEILA
MIGLIORELLI & REP. MIKE DAY



REP. JOE MCGONAGLE



REP. KRISTIN KASSNER

FACES IN THE CROWD



MEMBERS

FOR MEMBER PHOTOS & MORE, PLEASE VISIT THE ASSOCIATION WEBSITE AT: WWW.MASSRETIREES.COM & CLICK "EVENTS"



MEDICARE DRUG PRICE NEGOTIATIONS

Cycle #3 Well Underway

Under the Medicare Drug Price Negotiation Program, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) directly negotiates with drug companies over the prices of certain high expenditure, single source drugs that have no competition from a generic or biosimilar

medication (highly similar to the original medication).

As we've been reporting since 2023, CMS selected 10, 15 and 16 prescription drugs respectively for the first three cycles of drug price negotiations with the goal of establishing an agreed-upon drug price, known as a maximum fair price

(MFP). For the Cycle #1 drugs, the 10 MFPs took effect this past January and for the 15 drugs in Cycle #2, this coming January. For details on the first two cycles, see January *Voice*.

As for the drugs in Cycle #3 listed here, price negotiations between CMS and drug manufacturers, are well underway.

Anoro Ellipta
Cosentyx
Lenvima
Trulicity

Biktarvy
Entyvio
Orencia
Verzenio

Botox, Botox Cosmetic
Erleada
Rexulti
Xeljanz, Xeljanz XR

Cimzia
Kisqali
Tradjenta
Xolair

For details on the Cycle #3 drugs, see July *Voice*.

During this summer, CMS and drug companies exchanged offers and counteroffers with negotiations having ended in mid-September. If no agreement had been reached, CMS sent final MFP offer to the company by September 30.

A drug company can accept or reject a final MFP offer from CMS by October 30. While there is no

explicit "penalty" for rejecting an MFP offer, the practical effect is that the company forfeits the chance to participate in future negotiations, may lose Medicare's cost-saving benefits, and could face exclusion from the program entirely.

Also, a company can face long-term financial and market impacts, especially for high-cost,

single-source drugs. With these potential negative consequences, all the MFPs in the first and second cycles have been agreed upon.

On November 30, CMS will publish any agreed-upon MFPs from the third cycle of negotiations. Any agreed-upon MFP from Cycle #3 will take effect on January 1, 2028.

Retirement

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11 ►

systems are made up of the smaller towns within the county, as well as county employees and employees of the various authorities or districts that operate within the county. Mosquito control and fire districts are two examples. Several county retirement systems, such as Bristol, have led the way when it comes to local COLA policy and overall pension system funding.

It should be noted that where you happen to live has no bearing

on which retirement system you belong to or your pension benefits. Everything is dependent upon where you worked and retired from, which strictly determines the retirement system to which you belong. If you happened to work for multiple communities or public employers, the retirement system to which you belong, and the insurance benefits you are eligible for are determined by your last place of public employment prior to retiring.

For instance, if you worked for Braintree, Quincy and then the state prior to retiring from the state, you are a member of the State Retirement

System and eligible to receive insurance benefits from the GIC.

If it is still unclear which system you are a member of, there are a couple of ways to quickly find out.

The easiest is to look at your direct deposit or pension check stub. The retirement system information should be shown there. For instance, Commonwealth of Massachusetts would indicate that your pension payment comes from the state government (State or Teachers' Retirement System).

Your annual 1099 or benefit verification form also include the name and address of the retirement system.



ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE BOARD ELECTED AT ANNUAL MEETING

New Officer & Members Introduced



Under the Association's by-laws, the Executive Board members are elected bi-annually by the membership attending that particular annual meeting. Such bi-annual election was conducted at this September meeting.

Members unanimously elected the slate of officers put forward by the Association's Nominating Committee. They are shown on page 20 (back) of this *Voice* and will

be serving until September 2028.

There are three notable changes to the Board composition. With Judith Langone not seeking reelection, **Anne Wass**, who has been serving on the Executive Board, was elected the Association Secretary. Replacing Anne Wass on the Board is **Erika Glaster**, the retired Executive Director of the Teachers' Retirement System who most recently served with President Frank Valeri on the Special COLA Study Commission. Also, with the

unfortunate passing of Jim Vieira, **Brian Curtin**, retired Burlington Housing Authority Treasurer who currently serves on the Middlesex County Retirement Board, was elected as the Middlesex District Vice President.

"We thank Anne, Erika and Brian for agreeing to serve in their new roles," adds President Frank Valeri. "To all the Executive Board members, I'm looking forward to working with you and offer my congratulations!"

Annual Mtg.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13 ►

Members not only heard from Rep. Michlewitz but also from Association officers, including President Frank Valeri, CEO Shawn

Duhamel and Director Healthcare & Retirement Advocacy Nancy McGovern, on a wide range of pension, health care and federal (Social Security, Medicare) issues of importance to public retirees.

Among the many guests were representatives from Wellpoint and

Blue Cross Blue Shield, the leading health insurance carriers for public retirees at the state and local levels respectively, who met with members to answer their questions. Several area legislators also attended. *Mass Retirees* thanks them all for their participation.

Westport

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Senator interacted with members, answering their questions at the podium and again after the meeting ended, being one of the last to leave.

Representative Fiola also worked with W&M Means Chairman

Michlewitz and the House leadership for passage of COLA Reform. The Representative arrived early and was able to spend time with members before the meeting began.

Joining us at the meeting were Representatives Lisa Field, Mark Sylvia and Steven Ouellette, all of whom have received *Mass Retirees'*

endorsement for reelection to the House (see pages 6&7). Also in attendance were representatives from Blue Cross Blue Shield,, who helped members with their insurance questions.

FOR MORE PHOTOS, Visit the Association Website at: www.mass-retirees.com and Click EVENTS.



Leg. Update

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5 ►

H2801 SURVIVOR INSURANCE:

Extension Order Healthcare Finance

-Rep. Marjorie Decker

(a) Minimum Contribution by Local Governments: Requires local governments to pay at least 50% of insurance premium. (b) Retention of Coverage: Allows survivors to remarry and continue their coverage if certain conditions are satisfied.

S1810 ORDINARY DISABILITY

MINIMUM: Senate Ways & Means

-Sen. Brendan Crighton

Establishes a minimum amount of benefits for ordinary (non-work related) disability retirees equal to the disability benefits paid to a Massachusetts resident under the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Program.

S1918/H2834 VETERANS' BONUS:

Senate & House Ways & Means

-Sen. John Velis/Rep. Dennis Gallagher

Increases the Annual Vets Bonus from \$300 to \$1,000.

S1917 EXTEND DEFINITION OF VETERAN FOR VETS BONUS:

Senate Ways & Means

-Sen. John Velis

Extends the expanded definition

of veteran to those, with the requisite non-wartime or certain National Guard duty and retired on a superannuation retirement before 8/26/04, in order to receive the veterans' bonus prospectively – Local Option. Pending Further Legislative Action

H1150 LOCAL WITHDRAWAL FROM GIC

-Rep. Rodney Elliott

Extends from December 1 to March 1 the date by which a local government must notify the GIC that it will be withdrawing from the state insurance program on the upcoming June 30.

H2907 GIC OUT-OF-POCKET MAXIMUM

-Rep. John Mahoney

Establishes a \$2,000 out-of-pocket maximum on all non-Medicare prescription drug plans provided by the GIC.

H2874 GIC MEDICARE BUY-IN PROGRAM

-Rep. Brad Jones

Requires the GIC to transfer its retiree enrollees who are 65 or over and not Medicare eligible, into Medicare by July 1, 2026.

H2854 EXTEND VOTE TO SURVIVORS IN BOARD ELECTIONS

-Rep. Danielle Gregoire

Extends the right to vote in retirement board elections to

surviving spouses who are receiving a pension.

H2888 INSURANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

-Rep. Kathleen LaNatra

Updates the composition of the municipal insurance advisory committee (IAC) to align with that of the public employee committee. The retiree representative would be appointed by the *Mass Retirees* Association.

S1808/H2794 STATE & TEACHERS' COLA BASE & COLA ENHANCEMENT FOR LONG-TERM "CAREER" RETIREES

-Sen. Brendan Crighton/Rep.

Mark Cusack

Increases the State/Teachers' COLA Base from \$13,000 to \$18,000 and creates an increase of \$100 or \$200 the annual COLA for retirees who satisfy certain thresholds regarding their years of retirement, 15 & 20 yrs, and creditable service, at least 20 yrs, and pension amount below average pension.

H2835 MINIMUM EMPLOYER PENSION SYSTEM APPROPRIATION

-Rep. Dennis Gallagher

Mandates a minimum appropriation for their respective pension system upon reaching full funding.

OPEB: LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

Most Communities Invest Their Funds

In our last *Voice*, we reported on the Commonwealth's OPEB (Other Post Employment Benefits) fund, known as the State Retiree Benefits Trust (SRBT) Fund, that also invests the OPEB funds for several local governments including 53 cities and towns. While some have invested with the SRBT Fund, most municipalities and other public entities manage and invest their OPEB funds.

It's noteworthy that communities were creating trusts for future retiree healthcare costs even before GASB finalized its OPEB Rule 45 in 2004 (see September *Voice*). Among them were the towns of Arlington, Bedford, Brookline, Hingham, Lexington, Needham, Quincy, Waltham, Wellesley and Winchester.

Back then, each of these communities successfully enacted special legislation that authorized them to establish OPEB trusts for future healthcare costs. "That changed in 2008 when *Mass Retirees* succeeded in enacting its initiative (Chapter 479) that allowed for local OPEB trusts without the need for special legislation," according to Legislative Chairman Tom Bonarrigo.

"Another significant change occurred 3 years later when in 2011 communities were allowed to have their OPEB funds invested by the SRBT. However, state law still didn't allow communities to have their own retirement board manage and invest OPEB funds.

"That change didn't occur until some 7 years later when in 2018 the state law was changed to allow OPEB funds to be invested by retirement boards. But, in the meantime a community had to resort to special legislation in order to utilize the services of its retirement board, and that's precisely what the Town of Plymouth did."

Plymouth: Revisiting 5 Years Later

Members may recall that in our September 2021 *Voice*, we reported that in 2013 Plymouth had successfully enacted a special law, Chapter 113, that had the town's retirement board in charge of its OPEB Trust. "When it comes to its pension fund and health insurance program, our town is committed to maintaining local control," according to Plymouth Retirement Board Chairman Tom Kelley, retired police officer and a longstanding Association member.

"We manage and invest our pension funds and don't participate in the state PRIT (Pension Reserves Investment Trust) Fund. And to that end, we take pride in the fact that since the inception of pension funding here, the return on investments has exceeded our assumed rate of investment return by almost 2%, with a 10.91% return in 2025.

"So, when we created our OPEB Trust back in 2013, we didn't adopt the state local option (Chapter 479) since it didn't allow local retirement boards to invest our OPEB funds.

We successfully enacted Chapter 113, that has our retirement board in charge of the town's OPEB Trust." In our 2021 *Voice* report, the Plymouth Retirement Board was managing almost \$9 Million in the OPEB Trust. And, as Kelley noted then, "The Board has the same money manager for OPEB that we have for our pension funds. And we're pleased to report that RhumbLine has performed exceptionally well, producing excellent returns for us on both (pension & OPEB) accounts."

Now, let's revisit Plymouth five years later and take an updated look at its OPEB fund. According to Kelley, "Our OPEB fund has more than doubled since 2021, with a current value exceeding \$22 Million.

"And, we expect that once our retirement system reaches fully funded status, we'll be able to do even more."



TOM KELLEY
PLYMOUTH RET. BD. CHAIR

How is My City or Town Doing?

When it comes to OPEB, we expect that members may be wondering: How's my city or town doing? Here's one reliable resource for an answer to that question.

State law (Chapter 32B, Section 20A) requires that when a governmental unit (city, town or other political subdivision) obtains an actuarial valuation report containing statements of the liabilities of the unit for healthcare and other post-employment benefits (OPEB) for its retired employees and their dependents, it must submit a copy to the Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission (PERAC). A summary of the reports has been released by PERAC, about every 5 years.

This past May, PERAC released its latest summary of the reports from the Commonwealth, cities and towns that is available on its website at www.mass.gov/perac. If you want to see how your city, town or the Commonwealth are doing, we suggest you visit the site.

RETIREMENT BOARDS

ELECTIONS & APPOINTMENTS

Arlington – Retired Police Lieutenant **Kenneth Hughes*** and retired Fire Chief **Robert Johnson** were both reelected to the **Arlington Retirement Board** without opposition.



KENNETH HUGHES
ARLINGTON

Ken was elected to his seventh term and Robert was elected to his fourth term on the Board. The other Board members unanimously declaring the election were **Richard Keshian Esq.**, **Ida Cody**, and **Alfred Fantini**, who also serves on the Cambridge School Committee. The retirement administrator is **Rich Greco**.

Danvers – The Select Board named **Conor MacCorkle** as their new town accountant, who will also serve as the **Danvers Retirement Board's** first member. MacCorkle is the former Gloucester treasurer. The other members making the appointment were **Rodney Conley**, **Dana Hagan**, **Joseph Collins*** and **Vincent Malgeri, Esq.** The retirement administrator is **Cory Grace**.

Fitchburg – Retired City Clerk **Anna Farrell** was reelected to her third term on the Board, as she was the only qualified nomination. Also serving on the Board is retired Wachusett teacher, **Mary Cringan**, **Jacquelyn Cronin**, retired Deputy Fire Chief **Thomas Dateo Jr.***, and retired Wilmington Fire Lieutenant and Vice President of MACRS **John Brown**. The board administrator is **Steffani Santiago**.

Gloucester – Police Detective **Edward Hardy** was elected without opposition to replace **Doug MacArthur**. In addition, **James Hannon, Jr.** was reelected without opposition to his third term on the **Gloucester Retirement Board**. The

other members serving on the Board are retired Concord Retirement Board Director **Linda Boucher***, **Kelly Dolan**, and **Kenny Costa**. The new executive director is **Meaghan McLaughlin**, who was the asst. director at the Beverly Retirement Board.

Lynn – **Bob "Moona" Mullins**, retired firefighter and former Local 739 Secretary/Treasurer, was reelected without opposition to the **Lynn Retirement Board** for his



BOB MULLINS
LYNN

second term. The other board members are retired firefighter, **Richard Biagiotti, CFA**, **Michael Marks, Esq.***, Comptroller **Stephen Spencer** and *Mass Retirees* President **Frank Valeri**. The executive director of the Board is **Gary Brenner**.

Maynard – The Maynard Select Board appointed Assistant Town Clerk **James Alexander** as their representative to the **Maynard Retirement Board**. The other Board members are **Kevin Petersen**, **Kyle Brainard**, **Sandra Baltazar*** and Fall River Retirement Board Executive Director **Michael Pasternak**. The executive director is **Kenneth DeMars**.

North Attleboro – Police Officer **Craig Chapman*** received 202 votes was reelected to his 5th term. In the same election, retired Retirement Board Director **Deb Bush** received 205 votes and was also elected as the other elected member of the **North Attleboro Retirement Board**. The other Board members include, retired Town Administrator **Michael Gallagher**, **Stacy Blaisdell** and Plymouth County Retirement Board Executive Director **Lauren Durham**. The Board's recently appointed

executive director is **Nathaniel Chen**.

Northampton – Administrative Assistant to Police Chief & Captains **Tammy Suprenant** was reelected without opposition to her second term on the **Northampton Retirement Board**. The other Board members declaring **Suprenant** elected were **Kala Fisher**, **Charlene Nardi***, **Thomas Sullivan** and **Karen LaFleche**. The Board's executive director is **David Shipka**.

Norwood – The **Norwood Retirement Board** declared retired Police Officer **Thomas O'Toole** reelected to his seventh term on the Board, as he was the only candidate nominated. The Board members making the election declaration were **Jeffrey O'Neill**, **Ted Mulvehill***, **Eileen Hickey** and **Thomas Rorrie**. The Board's executive director is **Debra Wilkes**.

Taunton – The only candidate to file nomination papers for the **Taunton Retirement Board** election was retired Police Officer **Dennis Smith***. It will be Dennis' fourth term on the Board. The Board members declaring the election were **Ian Fortes**, **Patrick DelloRusso, Jr.**, retired Fire Lieutenant **Thomas Bernier** and **Edward Spellman, Jr.** The Board's executive director is **Paul Silivinski**.

Worcester Regional – **Worcester Regional Retirement Board** members appointed retired Shrewsbury Treasurer **Charles Patterson** as its 5th member on the Board. The other members on the Board making the appointment were Advisory Board representative and Dudley Treasurer **Richard Caringnani, Jr.**, **Kevin Blanchette***, **June Hubbard-Ward** and retired County Treasurer **Michael Donoghue**. The executive director for the Board is **Rachel Grimaldi**.

**denotes chair*

Goldberg

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7 ►

the scope of the treasure's role and brought a new level of professionalism to the state offices that she oversees.

While the Abandoned Property Division and Lottery receive much public attention, it is the State and Teachers' Retirement Boards along with the Pension Reserves Investment Management (PRIM) Board which are of most importance to public retirees.

Goldberg chairs both the State Retirement and PRIM Boards and holds a seat on the Teachers' Retirement Board. As an elected member of the State Retirement Board, Association President Frank

Valeri has worked closely with Goldberg for nearly a decade. Together they continue to work to decrease wait times for new retirees, while streamlining operations to increase efficiency.

Association Treasurer Joe Connarton is a newly elected member of the PRIM Board.

As chair of PRIM, Goldberg has overseen a fund that has more than doubled in size over the past 11 years – from a balance of \$60.7 billion as of 12/31/2014 to \$123.6 billion as of 12/31/2025. From 2016-2025 the fund produced an outstanding return of 9.37%. The fund is now more than 75% funded and well on track to be fully funded by the 2039 deadline.

While the fund grew and

produced historic returns, Goldberg supported efforts by PRIM's expert staff to better diversify the fund and reduce downside risk.

Goldberg's leadership helped set the stage for the passage of the new COLA Reform law, which will now draw on excess investment gains as an earmark to fund future COLA benefit improvements and the Enhanced COLA for State and Teacher Retirees.

As is the case with our other endorsed candidates, we believe Deb Goldberg has earned our endorsement, as well as the vote of public retirees. We respectfully ask our members to please grant her every consideration when you vote in the November 3rd Election.

GIC

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8 ►

prescription drugs, the disparities in prices charged by different hospitals and to different types of health insurance plans, were certainly eye catching.

GIC CONTINUING ITS ANALYSIS

The Commission has asked GIC staff to continue their analysis of Medicare Reference Based Pricing and present additional information at the Commission's next meeting on

October 15th.

As of press time in late September, the GIC plans to seek public input at a listening session on the topic scheduled for Tuesday, October 6, at 2:00 PM. *Mass Retirees* plans to participate in the forum and offer our initial thoughts. If the GIC does opt to implement any price caps, it must be done with sufficient patient protections in place that prevent Massachusetts providers from not accepting GIC enrollees as patients.

Currently there is no indication that there is a threat of such a practice by providers. We are also unaware of

this taking place in the states where reference based pricing has already been implemented. However, our members' access to quality health-care must be guaranteed.

It is also important to note that Massachusetts already bans balance billing of GIC enrollees – a law our Association was instrumental in passing in 1995.

We will continue to monitor all developments and share that information with members as it becomes available.

COLA Q & A

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9 ►

For the State & Teachers' systems, all three tiers have been automatically adopted. If your retirement system adopted only the \$100 Enhanced COLA, and not the

\$200 or \$300 tiers, then you would receive the \$100 Enhanced COLA.

Ques. #7: Does my local retirement system have to create a COLA Reserve Fund before it can pay the Enhanced Benefit?

Yes, a local retirement system must create a COLA Reserve

Fund from which the Enhanced COLA will be paid.

Ques. #8: Once I start to receive the Enhanced COLA, can it be stopped?

No, it's permanent and can't be revoked.



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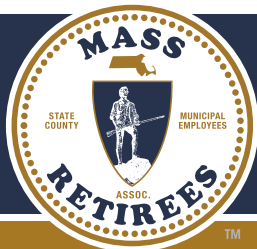
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THE VOICE
November 2026



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