

TOWN OF MIDDLEBORO RETIREES INSURANCE GROUP (MRIG)
MIDDLEBORO.RETIREES.INS.GROUP@GMAIL.COM
OCTOBER 2010

MTA LAWSUIT HEARING

The legal action in which MTA is representing its retired members seeking to enforce the strongly favorable (2 to 1) Special Town Meeting vote of May 26, 2009 “grandfathering” retirees’ percentage health insurance contribution is progressing. Atty. Lee Weissinger has been promoted to acting Director of MTA Legal Services (responsible for 100,000 members) requiring the reassignment of her cases. MTA Atty. Sandra Quinn took over the assignment and has been hard at work. The judge required extensive research be conducted by the attorneys in the matter and this involved surveying the Town Clerks of all the Massachusetts cities and towns. The summary judgment motions are to be filed by the parties on 12/30/10. After we submit our materials, the court clerk will set up oral argument. After that, the judge will issue a decision.

MRIG LAWSUIT HEARING

Our attorneys have advised us that there is no change at this time and are waiting for a court date.

STATE ELECTION

It is not the policy of your Executive Committee to endorse any particular candidate. However, your Executive Committee did send the following letter to the listed candidates for State Representative and for State Senator:

To: Candidate for Senator in General Court – 1st Plymouth & Bristol District
 Sen. Marc Pacheco
 David W. Pottier
 Candidate for Representative in General Court – 12th Plymouth District
 Rep. Thomas Calter, III
 Joseph M. Truschelli
 Candidate for Representative in General Court – 12th Bristol District
 Rep. Stephen Canessa
 Candidate for Representative in General Court – 10th Bristol District
 Rep. William Straus
 Peter F. Winters

From: Middleboro Retirees Insurance Group (MRIG)

Date: September 23, 2010

Subject: Candidate’s Questionnaire

The Middleboro Retirees Insurance Group represents approximately 400 retired employees of the Town of Middleborough. We advocate for retirees’ insurance benefits and our goal is to keep all retirees informed of any and all changes they could expect in their health insurance now and in the future.

As you are a candidate for public office, we are looking for a written statement of your position on the following questions:

1. What is your position on maintaining (“grandfathering”) retiree health insurance benefits to the premium percentage contribution rate they had when they retired (similar to the State system regarding retiree health insurance)?
2. What is your position on maintaining municipal employee collective bargaining rights for health insurance?
3. What is your position on increasing the COLA base for all retirees from the current \$12,000?

We will be sending out our quarterly newsletter near the end of October and will include candidate responses in that newsletter. Please respond to our email address MIDDLEBORO.RETIREEES.INS.GROUP@GMAIL.COM or mail to MRIG, c/o Gene Turney, 4 Pearl Street, Middleboro, MA 02346 for receipt by October 15th to insure inclusion in the newsletter.

Thanking you in advance for your attention to this questionnaire.

Executive Committee for MRIG,

Gene Turney	Barbara Hadsell	Mary Cook	Sue McCusker
Charles Armanetti	Tom Rogers	Jim Farrah	Betty Wainwright
Lynn Leary	George Chace	Gail Twomey	

We received the following three responses to our questionnaire and we hope you will consider their position when casting your ballots.

Senator Marc R. Pacheco

Responses to MRIG Candidate’s Questionnaire

September 28, 2010

Dear MRIG:

Please find below my responses to the MRIG Candidate’s Questionnaire. Thank you for your interest in my positions.

Sincerely,
Marc R. Pacheco
State Senator

What is your position on maintaining (“grandfathering”) retiree health insurance benefits to the premium percentage contribution rate they had when they retired (similar to the State system regarding retiree health insurance)?

I am in favor of maintaining the benefits that retirees were promised upon retirement. While working, these retirees were promised a specific set of benefits that were agreed upon by all relevant parties. As a result, those workers made important life decisions based on the perfectly legitimate expectation that they would receive the benefits they were promised. To make unilateral changes to these agreed-upon benefits after-the-fact would be totally unfair.

What is your position on maintaining municipal employee collective bargaining rights for health insurance?

I am a strong advocate for the right to collectively bargain. Bargaining agreements are contracts, and I strongly oppose allowing one party in any contract to break its side of the agreement. As it applies to health care, I think a municipality should follow through on the obligations to which it agreed or seek changes to the collective bargaining agreement at the bargaining table.

What is your position on increasing the COLA base for all retirees from the current \$12,000?

I am definitely in favor of raising the COLA base. The current base of \$12,000 is outdated and obsolete. There have been pieces of legislation that have proposed significant increases in the base, and I wholeheartedly supported those efforts. I would absolutely support any future attempts to increase the base.

**BILL STRAUS
STATE REPRESENTATIVE**

October 15, 2010

Middleboro Retirees Insurance Group (MRIG)
Candidate Questionnaire of September 23, 2010

Response of Representative Bill Straus (10th Bristol District)

Thank you for contacting me with regard to your concerns. Below are my responses in the order in which you asked them.

1. Grandfathering of Retiree Health Insurance Benefits

I support this idea as it reflects giving retirees the ‘benefit of the bargain’ for the conditions of employment they bargained for and received leading up to the time of retirement. It is consistent with the concept of the pension calculation on which a future retiree relies when they make a decision to retire from active employment.

2. Maintenance of Collective Bargaining Rights for Health Care

I oppose the plan design approach proposed by the MMA. The typical public employee bargaining history reflects contract concessions in return for health benefit schedules in many communities. This is different from the state system where there is not the same historic bargaining to include health benefits.

3. Increasing COLA base

I have voted to increase the base previously and would do so again.

**BILL STRAUS
STATE REPRESENTATIVE**

**THOMAS J. CALTER
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
12TH PLYMOUTH DISTRICT**

October 4, 2010

MRIG
C/o Gene Turney
4 Pearl Street
Middleboro, MA 02346

Dear Middleboro retirees,

I am in receipt of your letter dated September 23, 2010 requesting my response to three very important questions impacting your membership. I am happy to submit the following response:

- 1. What is your position on maintaining (“grandfathering”) retiree health insurance benefits to the premium percentage contribution rate they had when they retired (similar to the State system regarding retiree health insurance)?**

Retirees made many sacrifices in wages in return for retirement benefits. The only way to ensure a fair exchange of value is to grandfather retiree health insurance benefits, including the premium percentage contribution rate they had when they retired. This is an issue of fairness.

- 2. What is your position on maintaining municipal employee collective bargaining rights for health insurance?**

I support collective bargained rights. It is clear however, that the MMA and union leaders must strike a compromise on plan design if the program is to remain sustainable. I will not agree to a change in plan design if the union doesn't have a seat at the negotiating table.

- 3. What is your position on increasing the COLA base for all retirees from the current \$12,000?**

I have been and will remain in full support of annual increases to the COLA base.

I have heard from many retirees expressing their concern on the above issues so I understand how important they are to all of you. I appreciate the opportunity to share my view on them. I wish you all the best and thank you very much for your past service to the Town of Middleboro.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Calter
State Representative

The fact that four of the candidates did not bother to respond to our questions would make one question their support for retiree issues. The four who did not respond are: David W. Pottier, Joseph M. Truschelli, Peter F. Winters and Representative Stephen Canessa.

Your executive committee would strongly suggest that it is in your best interest to know where each candidate stands on the issues, especially when it comes to senior citizens' concerns before you give them your vote.

THANK YOU

We want to extend a thank you to Sue Powers of the Treasurer's Office for her assistance to us over the past few years. Our new contact in the Treasurer's office is Brenda Levesque.

HEALTH REIMBURSEMENTS

Everyone should have received their reimbursement information regarding how to apply for reimbursements. If you have any questions contact Brenda Levesque in the Treasurer's Office at 508-946-2420.

DUES / CONTACT INFORMATION

If you are receiving this newsletter in paper format via the U.S. mail but have an e-mail address, please take a moment now to share that e-mail address with us, this saves on postage and printing as well as providing you with quicker information and more frequent updates than can be accomplished by our periodic paper mailings. In case you need to change any information, or haven't paid your dues we have again included a dues form. If you don't know whether or not you are paid please contact our Treasurer, Mary Cook, at richard.cook2@verizon.net or 508-821-2112 and she will verify the information for you.

TOWN OF MIDDLEBORO RETIREES INSURANCE GROUP (MRIG) **MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION – 2010 - \$5.00**

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
CITY/TOWN: _____ ZIP: _____
E-MAIL: _____
TELEPHONE: _____

(This information is confidential and will not be shared with any other person or organization.)

Make checks payable to: MRIG
c/o Mary Cook
130 Scadding Street
Taunton, MA 02780
