

TOWN OF MIDDLEBORO RETIREES INSURANCE GROUP (MRIG)
MIDDLEBORO.RETIREES.INS.GROUP@GMAIL.COM
AUGUST 2011

SPECIAL ELECTION – TUESDAY - AUGUST 23, 2011

URGENT – Election to Fill State Representative Canessa’s 12th Bristol District Vacant Seat

12th Bristol District (Middleboro precincts 2 and 4; Lakeville precincts 2 and 3; Freetown precinct 3; New Bedford precincts F and G of ward 1, precincts A-E of ward 3, and precincts D and E of ward 4; Taunton precinct A of ward 4)

As you probably know, Representative Canessa resigned his seat abruptly in June, triggering the need for a special primary election to be held August 23, 2011. This will be followed by the special election on September 20, 2011 with the selected Democratic and Republican candidates vying to fill his seat.

The election of a replacement state representative supportive of municipal collective bargaining rights and protection of municipal retirees is of vital interest to our members as evidenced by the recent battle over the new Municipal Health Insurance law passed by the Massachusetts State Legislature in July.

Many of you are eligible to vote in the Aug. 23 and Sept 20 elections. As this is an “off season” election, there is likely to be a smaller than usual voter turnout and YOUR vote will count even more heavily than usual. Absentee ballots are available at the Town Clerk’s office the day before the election for anyone who cannot vote on Tuesday.

Not sure if you live in the 12th Bristol District? Click the following link
<http://www.wheredoivotema.com/bal/myelectioninfo.php>

If you are eligible, PLEASE VOTE on August 23rd and September 20th.

Candidates and their websites

Democrat

Roger Brunelle, Jr. www.votebrunelle2011.com

Allin Frawley www.allinfrawley.com

Nancy Yeatts website unknown, Email: eaglelady@comcast.net

Republican

Derek Maksy www.maksy2011.com

Keiko Orrall www.orrall2011.com

Background information: Roger Brunelle, Jr. has been endorsed by the Massachusetts Teachers Association, many other unions and State Senator Marc Pacheco .

Voting Record for Selectman Allin Frawley

The Middleboro Board of Selectmen took a vote on the municipal health care law when it was in its final stages, choosing to support the House version which stripped out collective bargaining rights and left retirees unprotected and opposing the Senate version which kept some collective bargaining rights, protected retirees and included them in future local decision making.

Mr. Frawley's support of the House version in that vote is outlined in the draft minutes of the June 27th BOS meeting:

"Health Insurance Reform

Upon motion by Selectman McKinnon and seconded by Selectman Allin Frawley, Board voted unanimously to approve sending letter to State House and Senate Committees on Ways & Means asking them to support the House version of health insurance reform and oppose several sections added by the Senate on the last night of budget debate."

Clearly, Mr. Frawley voted in *opposition* to the protections for retirees that the Senate added to their version of the bill giving retirees legal input and representation into their health insurance issues. His vote was inconsistent with the position stated in his response to MRIG's March 2011 questionnaire to selectman candidates: *"Regarding your second concern, reducing the benefits for employees already retired (current retirees)? While not required by law to be present during negotiations, I believe a representative of the MRIG should be present, at the very least, when discussions regarding your benefits are taking place. I understand that at the last contract labor counsel said they could legally exclude your group during negotiations. And as I've said before, 'Just because it is legal doesn't make it right'."*

LEGAL ISSUES UPDATE

The joint hearing for the MTA and MRIG legal cases scheduled for July 28, 2011 was abruptly cancelled when the judge who had been hearing the issue at each stage became unavailable at the last minute. Rather than present the legal arguments before a new judge unfamiliar with the extensive research conducted at the direction of the original judge, our attorneys wisely opted to request a rescheduled hearing date before the original judge. When that date is known, we will notify our members.

NEW **MEDICARE ENROLLMENT NOW STATE LAW**

In addition to changing the manner in which local health insurance plans are bargained and designed, the recently passed Municipal Health Insurance Reform Law (Chapter 60, Acts of 2011) also mandates statewide Medicare enrollment for eligible retirees and survivors.

Since the Federal government becomes the primary insurer for Medicare Part A & B enrollees, mandating enrollment is a big cost savings to municipalities. Instead of having to provide full insurance plans, Medicare enrollees require supplement plans only, which are substantially less expensive to the Towns.

The Town must offer Medicare supplement plans, and municipalities are legally required to cover the cost of federal penalties imposed for late enrollment into Medicare.

The next Medicare open enrollment period is in January of 2012, but we do not know when the Town will require all retirees to enroll in Medicare.

The obvious drawback is the premium amount that Medicare Part B will charge, currently \$115.40, and each retiree will have to pay that plus an amount for the Medicare supplement plan currently offered by the Town (ranging from a low of \$106.54 to a high of \$244.78 per person depending on whether you are a retiree or a survivor). There will definitely be a considerable increase in costs for health insurance for most of our members.

Because of the uncertainty involved with the implementation of the new law we are advising our membership that if anyone is currently planning to switch to Medicare that they may want to hold off as the new legislation contains language that says the Town shall pay any penalties incurred for late enrollment into the Medicare system, this could save them those penalties.

The new Health Care Reform act also states that the Town shall set up a PEC (Public Employee Committee) of which one member shall be a representative of the retirees and named by the Retired State, County and Municipal Employees Assoc. of Mass. The Executive Committee will submit names to Mass. Retirees requesting appointment to this Committee as required by law. Gene Turney has worked with Bill Rehrey of Mass Retirees on several of our issues and we would expect his cooperation.

We hope to work with the Town on passing some of their savings by forcing retirees to Medicare to supplement Part B coverage for retirees.

A copy of the new regulations for Chapter 69 can be downloaded her:

http://www.massretirees.com/images/stories/muni_health_draft_regsposted8-2-11clean.pdf

HEART MATTERS – HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

MRIG recently received the following letter from:

Tricia Silverman, RD, LDN, MBA - Registered Dietitian and Professional Speaker
Nutrition and Business Consultant - NuTricia's Lifestyles
www.nutrilifestyles.com 781-449-1468

asking us if we would include this in our next newsletter for any retirees who might be interested.

ATTENTION MIIA SUBSCRIBER RETIREES!

The Town of Middleborough is pleased to announce an outstanding opportunity to improve your health. **Heart Matters, a free and confidential health improvement program**, is sponsored by the MIIA Health Benefits Trust and will be offered to Middleboro employees and retirees in the fall. MIIA/Blue Cross Blue Shield subscribers in the HMO Blue NE Options and PPO Options Health Plans are invited to attend.

The Heart Matters Program includes free on-site before and after program measurements (blood pressure, body weight, body mass index) as part of a series of 11 free classroom workshops to assist and support you in making key changes in nutrition, exercise, and stress reduction.

Many chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, obesity, high cholesterol levels, and diabetes can be prevented with lifestyle changes. This comprehensive program run by a medical doctor, registered dietitian, exercise and stress specialists can help you live a healthier and happier life. Positive outcomes may include weight loss, lowered blood pressure, a modified cholesterol level, increased energy, better sleep pattern, less stress and more!

11 Classroom Sessions

Mondays
September 19th – December 5th
Skipping Columbus Day
4:00 – 5:30 p.m.
Selectmen's Meeting Room, Town Hall
10 Nickerson Avenue, Middleborough, MA 02346

Registration is required and seats are limited. Early – bird registration deadline is June 17.

A free gift for those who register by this date will be given out at the first class.

Please register with Mary Harrington:

mharrington@mma.org; 617-426-7272 ext 278

If seats are still available after the early bird deadline, MIIA subscriber retirees will receive additional notification about this program in a letter sent directly to them in August.

DUES / CONTACT INFORMATION

If you are still receiving this newsletter via the U.S. Postal Service and have an e-mail address please share it with us as we can't produce notices and mail them as rapidly as we can e-mail information.

In case you need to change any information or you don't know whether or not your dues 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.