**President’s Report**  Jessica J. Tang

“Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you.”

A news of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s passing dominated the weekend of Rosh Hashanah, it was easy to fall into despair during a time when, those of Jewish faith, were supposed to be celebrating a new year. As we mourned both the loss of an incredible justice who was integral to so much of who we as social justice educators stand for and also a symbol of justice and progress critical to the tenuous balance on the Supreme Court, it was hard not to feel at a loss.

However, it is Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s words herself that must give us solace and the strength to keep going. “Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you.”

In remembrance of her, and in honoring her legacy and everything she continues to stand for, we must keep fighting and fight in a way that we will continue to build power and bring others in to join us.

We cannot just mourn, we must continue to organize, fight and win. This means not only for educational justice, but for the social, racial and economic justice issues that impact both our ability to teach well with the resources we need and those that impact our students, families and BTU members livelihoods and wellbeing. This means that in the new few days, we have a responsibility to do all we can do right the balance of justice.

Women’s rights, labor rights, student rights, and our public education system are now in peril if Donald Trump appoints a new Supreme Court Justice before the people have a say in who our next President will be. We must defeat Donald Trump and take back the U.S. Senate, and the BTU is All-In to make that a reality. Now, more than ever we need all of our members to do their part.

The BTU will be supporting the national efforts of our affiliate, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) primarily by focusing on New England, which means ensuring that Joe Biden wins New Hampshire and Maine as well as electing Sara Gideon to the U.S. Senate to replace Senator Susan Collins in Maine.

Our power as a union comes from our ability to mobilize thousands of members, so we ask that you think about your capacity in the next few weeks and do everything in your power to help us win this election. Here are ways that you can help us to organize and fight back today:

- Sign up for the BTU Political Activist list
- Join the BTU Electoral Action Team (BEAT) to:
  - Help us recruit volunteers at your school or worksite.
  - Organize the members in your neighborhood or community.
- After you have recruited members to participate, ask them to recruit more people. Every volunteer makes a difference.
- Please call or email our new BTU Political Organizer Roberto Jimenez to learn more about how to get involved (603-260-9448, rjimenez@btu.org)
- If you feel comfortable doing socially distant in-person canvassing or literature drops (leaving printed materials on doors) in Maine or New Hampshire, please also contact Roberto. He is working full time on all 2020 election effort and is here to assist all of our members in organizing and getting involved.

In addition, we will be setting up BTU-specific phone banks a few times a week where anyone can join and make phone calls. These calls will mainly be to other AFT households, or to other union families. If you want to do get involved in a way that is not on this list, please call or email Johnny McInnis and Roberto Jimenez, and we will help you make a difference.

Again, this is the time not just to mourn, but to organize. If we heed Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s words, we must begin by having the one to one conversations that are critical to bringing in others to join us.

To get involved today, please contact:
- Johnny McInnis, BTU Political Director: jmcinnis@btu.org or 617-433-0488
- Roberto Jimenez, BTU Political Organizer: rjimenez@btu.org or 603-260-9448
The BTU Hits the Campaign Trail!
What are Some of the Health Measures Contained in the BTU/BPS Memorandum of Understanding?

BPS will provide publicly available weekly reports on incidents of infectious disease at school.

The BTU partners with the BPHC (Boston Public Health Commission) who will monitor key data metrics so the BPS can plan and respond appropriately to public health issues that arise. Critical metrics are measured citywide & by neighborhood as a 7-day trailing moving average which will include daily number of positive tests, daily percent of positive tests, and daily visits to emergency rooms with COVID-19-like symptoms. BPHC will post these metrics on its public-facing website twice a week. BPS will link from its website to BPHC metrics. BPS will provide sufficient translated directions on BPS website to ensure BPHC metrics are readily understandable by BPS community.

If citywide COVID-19 positivity rate rises above 4.5% citywide, BPS will transition to full remote learning for all students. BTU bargaining unit members will have the option to be remote as well. When BPHC or another City/State authority determines BPS can reopen, BTU members will be expected to return to BPS buildings.

Free COVID-19 tests are available at sites around Boston. If the COVID-19 positivity rate is at or above 8% (double the citywide metric) in any neighborhood identified by the BPHC, at the same time that the citywide positivity rate remains below 4%, BPS will offer free COVID-19 testing weekly up to 5% of BTU bargaining unit members. Testing will be random, with oversampling drawn from staff working at school sites in neighborhoods with positivity rates measuring at or above 8%. If no neighborhood exceeds 8% positivity rate, BPS will provide up to 5% of BTU members with such testing, but with oversampling of BTU members whose work regularly place them in close physical proximity to students who require physical support, such as hand-over-hand support & modeling, feeding, toileting, physical restraint, etc. Teachers will not be eligible for testing at school sites of this nature within 14 days of a prior test. Testing will only be available for members physically reporting to school buildings with students. Test results will be available to tested person & BPHC within 48 hours.

What is the Basic Roles of the School Site Council (SSC) and the SSC Personnel Subcommittee?

The School Site Council (SSC) is the central governing body of the school under the school-based management/ shared decision-making model. The contract stipulates: “Elections for new SSC members shall be conducted as early in the school year as possible (by October 15), and a first meeting of the new council shall be held no later than October 31st.” At the first meeting, a monthly calendar should be agreed upon by the SSC members for the entire school year and be made public through distribution to all staff and parents. Any change must be approved by the SSC, with at least one week’s notice to all staff & Parents. SSC Meetings should be at times convenient for all members & never alternate to meet this goal.

Phone Numbers

The Boston Union Teacher is published ten times a year September - July, inclusive.

President JESSICA J. JANG Vice President ERIK K. BERG Secretary-Treasurer BETSY DRINAN

Michael J. Maguire Garret Virchick

Editorial Board Caren Carew Betsy Drinan Tim Maher Johnny McInnis Anne Slater Richard Stutman

BOSTON UNION TEACHER October-November, 2020 3

When are School Site Council Elections & Meetings Held?

The School Site Council (SSC) is the central governing body of the school under the school-based management/ shared decision-making model. The contract stipulates: “Elections for new SSC members shall be conducted as early in the school year as possible (by October 15), and a first meeting of the new council shall be held no later than October 31st.” At the first meeting, a monthly calendar should be agreed upon by the SSC members for the entire school year and be made public through distribution to all staff and parents. Any change must be approved by the SSC, with at least one week’s notice to all staff & Parents. SSC Meetings should be at times convenient for all members & never alternate to meet this goal.

审批者

审校 & reach to request daily absences at or before a full day of instruction. Employees shall receive their full pay & benefits as provided in the CBA (Collective Bargaining Agreement/ BTU contract) & as adjusted by this MOU.

During the time of COVID-19, each staff member will record their attendance/absence electronically at or before the start of the work day as instructed by BPS. BTU members will enter their absences into the Substitute Online database and receive their full pay & benefits as provided in the CBA (Collective Bargaining Agreement/ BTU contract) & as adjusted by this MOU.

All teachers will be required to use Google Classroom and/or Schoology for each of their classes, unless BPS recommends use of any improved program. Google Classroom will be available for all teachers, grades K-12 & 12See2will be available for teachers of students in grades K-6.

BTU members are expected to report all facility concerns directly & immediately to the school principal/HM/director (Please do so in writing and make sure the BTU Reps maintain this list to be able to report it to the BTU).

All staff must wear a mask/face covering while on school property unless provided with an individual accommodation due to disability and/or health consideration, as approved by the BPS Office of Human Capital.

Staff bathrooms will be limited to one adult occupant at a time. Teachers should clean their personal space & personal work area, including their desk. Teachers are responsible for instructing students to clean desks and other student specific surfaces.

What is Entailed in the MOU Under Home Health Screening?

Before entering the building each day, each building shall have a health checklist developed by the BPS. Employees who are diagnosed with COVID-19 shall report the diagnosis to the Office of Human Capital immediately. Students will be required to Self-check temperatures & other symptoms of illness before coming to school.

In the event students behave in a way that jeopardizes public health & safety, the BPS will enforce the Code of Conduct. Safety protocols will be clearly defined for students & parents prior to students entering the school. Student adjustments may include:

• Teacher redirection and/or reminder as needed;
• Removal of student from the classroom & notification of parent;

Alternative instruction provided in a safe environment.

When are School Site Council Elections & Meetings Held?

The School Site Council (SSC) is the central governing body of the school under the school-based management/ shared decision-making model. The contract stipulates: “Elections for new SSC members shall be conducted as early in the school year as possible (by October 15), and a first meeting of the new council shall be held no later than October 31st.” At the first meeting, a monthly calendar should be agreed upon by the SSC members for the entire school year and be made public through distribution to all staff and parents. Any change must be approved by the SSC, with at least one week’s notice to all staff & Parents. SSC Meetings should be at times convenient for all members & never alternate to meet this goal.

What is the Basic Roles of the School Site Council (SSC) and the SSC Personnel Subcommittee?

The School Site Council (SSC) is the central governing body of the school under the school-based management/ shared decision-making model, & is required to exist in all public schools by state law. SSC are composed of the Principal, a set number of elected by secret ballot (by Oct 15) BTU members determined by the School Site Council, & an elected number of BTU members who work more than 50% of their work week at the school, parents of children at the school elected through the Parent Council, and members who work with oversampling drawn from staff working at school sites in neighborhoods with positivity rates measuring at or above 8%. If no neighborhood exceeds 8% positivity rate, BPS will provide up to 5% of BTU members with such testing, but with oversampling of BTU members whose work regularly place them in close physical proximity to students who require physical support, such as hand-over-hand support & modeling, feeding, toileting, physical restraint, etc. Teachers will not be eligible for testing at school sites of this nature within 14 days of a prior test. Testing will only be available for members physically reporting to school buildings with students. Test results will be available to tested person & BPHC within 48 hours.

What are Some of the Employee Expectations Contained in the BTU/BPS MOU?

Where ever the MOU is silent, the BTU/BPS contract is in place concerning employee/employer expectations, work conditions, schedules, and so forth.

All BTU Staff will work their regular, contractual hours. All BTU staff will work their regular contractual hours every Wednesday, whether remote or in buildings. Wednesdays will include synchronous & asynchronous learning opportunities for students that require sufficient time on learning to account for a full day of instruction. Employees shall receive their full pay & benefits as provided in the CBA (Collective Bargaining Agreement/ BTU contract) & as adjusted by this MOU.

Phone Numbers

The Boston Union Teacher is published ten times a year September - July, inclusive.

President JESSICA J. JANG Vice President ERIK K. BERG Secretary-Treasurer BETSY DRINAN

Michael J. Maguire Garret Virchick

Editorial Board Caren Carew Betsy Drinan Tim Maher Johnny McInnis Anne Slater Richard Stutman

BOSTON UNION TEACHER October-November, 2020 3
Election night 2020. Trump declares victory. Ballots still to be counted. The 
ballots still to be counted, emboldened by a 
false narratives of millions of “fraudulent” 
mail-in ballots. He also falsely claims 
that radical violent extractions are taking 
place on the streets in the wake of the Black 
Lives Matter protests, despite the fact that 
the vast number of protests have been 
peaceful, 
and that the violence being incited by 
militarized police forces, white supremac- 
ist militias, and troops dispatched from 
Homeland Security by Attorney General 
William Barr.

Combine this with what seems to be a 
recurring theme, Republican controlled 
states moving to “simplify” the vote-by-mail process, 
and we have suppress the vote and disen- 
franchise millions of voters. The ultra- 
conservative Judicial Watch has filed 
lawsuits in six states claiming voter 
rolls are not being maintained and they 
should be purged of ineligible votes. The 
American Federation of Teachers and 
the Black Lives Matters have said that if the 
Affordable Care Act is gutted, or outright 
ruled “unconstitutional”, Trump’s law and 
order rhetoric will continue to embolden 
forces as more Black lives are lost to excessive force. And 
the already well-armed white militias will 
continue to organize as Trump refuses to 
speak out against what is a very large part 
of his political base.

Voting this election, however, is just 
the start of the conversation. We all have 
reason to be concerned about our vote, 
and we should all be volunteering some of 
our time to convince others to vote for Joe 
Biden and defeat Donald Trump. The 
American Federation of Teachers is 
organizing phone banking. Go to 
https:// 
www.mobilevote.us/. Sign up for as 
many sessions as you can do. Sign up to 
be a BTU Parent Volunteers, which is 
political-action-fm-btuparents.mijrne. 
-streams-political-action-help. Join the 
BTU Electoral Action Team by contact- 
ing BTU Organizer Roberto Jimenez 
(603-260-9448, rjimenez@btu.org).

In addition, we need to be thinking 
about the election Trump said on Fox News, 
“We should act quickly. This is an 
election we need to win.” But if it’s 
we have already lost over 200,000 people 
suffering and loss, just to cling to past 
honor of his political base. 

I help plant won’t reach fruition until 
the issue. What kind of role-modelling 
function of imparting my curriculum 
eters, poorly ventilated, small rooms, 
thrives and spreads well in high-den- 
sity conditions. Students 
are over these successful approaches. 

But I would be forced to use my accrued sick-
days to safeguard myself and loved ones. 
Honesty, I see no other choice: during 
month’s ago the title of this article 
my loved ones at home. If I were called in 
for work, I would be forced to use my 
accrued sick-days to safeguard myself and loved ones.

The Ballot and the Fight for Democracy

Commentary Garret Virchick

Why Do We Support Universal Education?

M onths ago the title of this article 
may have appeared as educational 
blasphemy, but today I ask it in all ear-
nestness. What is the purpose of active 
in-person instruction? The 
COVID-19 pandemic has torn through our society and exposed funda- 
mentals. Prior to this period, I assumed 
that others held my core views. However, this past year has revealed their 
true values. Hypocrisy, discon- 
nect, and duplicy have all been blatantly 
exposed bare in the face of actual mortal 
suffering and loss, just to cling to past 
honor of his political base. 

I help plant won’t reach fruition until 
the issue. What kind of role-modelling 
function of imparting my curriculum 
eters, poorly ventilated, small rooms, 
thrives and spreads well in high-den- 
sity conditions. Students 
are over these successful approaches. 

But I would be forced to use my accrued sick-
days to safeguard myself and loved ones. 
Honesty, I see no other choice: during 
month’s ago the title of this article 
my loved ones at home. If I were called in 
for work, I would be forced to use my 
accrued sick-days to safeguard myself and loved ones.

The Ballot and the Fight for Democracy

Commentary Garret Virchick

Why Do We Support Universal Education?

M onths ago the title of this article 
may have appeared as educational 
blasphemy, but today I ask it in all ear-
nestness. What is the purpose of active 
in-person instruction? The 
COVID-19 pandemic has torn through our society and exposed funda- 
mentals. Prior to this period, I assumed 
that others held my core views. However, this past year has revealed their 
true values. Hypocrisy, discon- 
nect, and duplicy have all been blatantly 
exposed bare in the face of actual mortal 
suffering and loss, just to cling to past 
honor of his political base. 

I help plant won’t reach fruition until 
the issue. What kind of role-modelling 
function of imparting my curriculum 
eters, poorly ventilated, small rooms, 
thrives and spreads well in high-den- 
sity conditions. Students 
are over these successful approaches. 

But I would be forced to use my accrued sick-
days to safeguard myself and loved ones. 
Honesty, I see no other choice: during 
month’s ago the title of this article 
my loved ones at home. If I were called in 
for work, I would be forced to use my 
accrued sick-days to safeguard myself and loved ones.
Remembering the Delayed Liberation of Black People in America, Advocating for Black Lives, and a Call for the End of Systemic Racism in America

by Joel Richards
(From a speech Joel Richards made in Dorchester commemorating Juneteenth)

Why Are We Here?

Let’s be honest, we shouldn’t be here. In 1865 when the Union soldiers showed up in Texas and announced the end of the Civil War, that should have been the end of terrorism and slavery for black people. We should have been emancipated, however systemic white supremacy took new forms, under the new names of apprenticeship programs, prisoner loan out, and lynching. Black people in the spirit of Juneteenth advocated, marched and in the end overcame that form of slavery and oppressions.

Then other forms of systemic racial control were born: Jim Crow laws and the “separate but equal” Supreme Court ruling. Separate but equal was code for oppressed and vulnerable. It was code for sitting in the back of the bus or giving up your seat, 2nd class citizenship, voter suppression, or the inability to enter public buildings or colleges.

In the spirit of Juneteenth — even though we were not allowed in courtrooms, or colleges, or board rooms — we overcame that and passed legislation protecting us from the systemic rage of white supremacy. It was 1983 before white and black workers were paid equally in the White House. As progress was made a new code words for systemic oppressions were created, super predators and the war on drugs. These were codes for mass incarceration, choke holds, no knock warrants, and “I had to shoot I feared for my life.”

The destruction of our communities have many code words: redlining, gerrymandering, imminent domain, vagrancy statutes, mandatory minimum sentencing guidelines, loss of voting rights due to felony convictions, 3 strike laws, shit whole countries.

I ask how has nobody ever thought instead of more police let’s split the schools in half and send more teachers to better serve, and educate? Instead of more police, what about more scholarships for college? Instead of more police, what about more jobs and better economic investment in home ownership? Why are we here after 400 years? The whole world has finally spoken and have said enough is enough! No more code names, no more systemic racism, no more systems of control. Give black people the country they deserved in 1868.

BTU Members Join March on Washington 2020

BTU member Vanessa Laroque organized a bus, filled with a handful of teens, a number of local labor unionists including several BTU members to attend the August March on Washington. It was a moving and historical event filled with many teachable moments for the young adults. Various leaders: Denise Berkeley, Retired Teacher and Union member, Mothers Against Violence; Carla Ramsey, SEI members, School students from Brookline High, Brighton High, and Adm. Sonie Felix of Charlestown High.
I started late in my teaching career as previously I owned a greeting card business and was an accountant. I started teaching English in a Houston Catholic school to middle schools. It was in a rude awakening of how professional and "human" I needed to be at the same time. NBCT was the professional development that I needed to help me learn how to become an effective teacher.

How Has Becoming a NBCT Helped Your Teaching Profession?

A few years after becoming a NBCT I was hired as a dean of a large comprehensive school in another district. I was told that being a NBCT helped me attain that job. In the teaching profession educators respect the National Board.

Can You Explain Now This Process Has Made a Positive Impact on Student Learning?

believe that one of the most important aspects of teaching is to communicate and reflect with self, with students, and with family. To that end, I certified. I learned how to question my pedagogy and curriculum by asking myself, "Am I teaching this subject in the most effective way for all of my students?" I also learned that all families care deeply about their children. I ask families, "What can I do to help your child and your family?" I ask students, "What did you think of the last lesson?" I ask colleagues - the collaborative component of the work cannot be understated. The reality is that our faculty has always been driven by a certain part of your practice ends up showing you how much you need to improve. It's simply a matter of numbers - when you have several teachers on your staff of 3 or fewer years, you have to focus on them. You have to put the needs of the students first, and you need to focus on the teachers who have the greatest needs. The NBCT process enabled me the opportunity and impetus to push and not simply rely on what level I had already attained. As a veteran teacher, I am pushed into positions as lead, mentor, new teacher developer but find it at the price of not pushing myself. National Board helped me to focus on my teaching practice.

How Has Becoming a NBCT Helped Your Teaching Profession?

I wanted career advancement. I already have 2 advanced degrees, and didn't want more online classes where I didn't learn anything. I also wanted potential opportunities for leadership.

Can You Explain Now This Process Has Made a Positive Impact on Student Learning?

I teach at The English High School English Language Arts (ELA). I've taught remedial reading for 9th through AP.

What is Your Certificate Area?

When Did You Certify?

I earned my National Board certificate area in ELA/Adolescence and Young Adulthood in 2010. I had also held MA DESE licenses in French and ESL. I certified over 20 years ago in ELA and French and added ESL and Special Ed 7-10 years ago.

What Inspired You to Become a NBCT?

I started late in my teaching career as previously I owned a greeting card business and was an accountant. I started teaching English in a Houston Catholic school to middle schools. It was in a rude awakening of how professional and "human" I needed to be at the same time. NBCT was the professional development that I needed to help me learn how to become an effective teacher.

How Has Becoming a NBCT Helped Your Teaching Profession?

I wanted career advancement. I already have 2 advanced degrees, and didn't want more online classes where I didn't learn anything. I also wanted potential opportunities for leadership.

Can You Explain Now This Process Has Made a Positive Impact on Student Learning?

I teach at The English High School English Language Arts (ELA). I've taught remedial reading for 9th through AP.

What is Your Certificate Area?

When Did You Certify?

I earned my National Board certificate area in ELA/Adolescence and Young Adulthood in 2010. I had also held MA DESE licenses in French and ESL. I certified over 20 years ago in ELA and French and added ESL and Special Ed 7-10 years ago.

What Inspired You to Become a NBCT?

I started late in my teaching career as previously I owned a greeting card business and was an accountant. I started teaching English in a Houston Catholic school to middle schools. It was in a rude awakening of how professional and "human" I needed to be at the same time. NBCT was the professional development that I needed to help me learn how to become an effective teacher.

How Has Becoming a NBCT Helped Your Teaching Profession?

I wanted career advancement. I already have 2 advanced degrees, and didn't want more online classes where I didn't learn anything. I also wanted potential opportunities for leadership.

Can You Explain Now This Process Has Made a Positive Impact on Student Learning?

I teach at The English High School English Language Arts (ELA). I've taught remedial reading for 9th through AP.

What is Your Certificate Area?

When Did You Certify?

I earned my National Board certificate area in ELA/Adolescence and Young Adulthood in 2010. I had also held MA DESE licenses in French and ESL. I certified over 20 years ago in ELA and French and added ESL and Special Ed 7-10 years ago.

What Inspired You to Become a NBCT?

I...
Statement of AFT President Randi Weingarten

American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten issued the following statement in response to the news of the death of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg:

Justice Ginsburg was an icon. She leaves behind a legacy as a brilliant, hardworking jurist and a trailblazing feminist; her loss is incalculable. Rather than simply cancel the Full Business meeting, the Retired Teachers Chapter held its very first Zoom business meeting.

Over 50 members participated in the meeting, sharing experiences during this year including their participating in BTU actions, political activities and keeping in touch with friends and colleagues while social distancing and isolating.

Do You Want to Help BPS Candidates Through the National Board Process?

effectively – I would like to both inform and support the candidates at my school through the process. I believe it makes people better educators at the class level and collaboratively in schools or across your school’s certificated area. It increases collective capacity. It is a lot of work but I feel confident in my work to support colleagues. If you are interested in attaining your National Board certification, please contact the BPS/BPS NBCT LT by emailing nationalboard@bostonpublicschools.org. You can also visit our website

Retired Teachers Chapter

Marilyn Marion, RTC Chair & Joan Devlin, RTC Secretary

RTC Holds Virtual Business Meeting

September 17, 2020 marked another year in this year of pandemic firsts. Rather than simply cancel the Full Business meeting, the Retired Teachers Chapter held its very first Zoom business meeting.

Over 50 members participated in the meeting, sharing experiences during this year including their participating in BTU actions, political activities and keeping in touch with friends and colleagues while social distancing and isolating.

Shaun Duhamel, CEO of the Massachusetts Retirees, was the first speaker. He updated the membership on what is happening at both the state and federal level that affects us.

Duhamel praised Charlie Johnson for his work representing retirees on the joint union committee negotiating health benefits for Boston Retirees. He also urged members to vote for the two union representatives on the Boston Retirement Board Michael McLaughlin of the BTU and Michael O’Reilly of the Boston Firefighters local 718. He said both members demonstrate their knowledge and dedication to the retired union members across the City.

Mass Retirees filed legislation that tries to improve the current COLA base issue by the Massachusetts Retirees Retirement systems. As redrafted, S2798, the Senior COLA Enhancement contains the following key features: With each Basic COLA increase, an additional annual COLA benefit of $100 would be paid to retirees who satisfy the following eligibility criteria:

1. A retired career employees with at least 20 years of creditable service, retired for at least 15 years, and receiving a pension amount less than the average pension being paid by the retirement system. Once retired for 20 years, the additional annual benefit for these “eligible” retirees would be increased to $300 annually with each Basic COLA increase. Surviving spouses would be eligible if the deceased retiree would otherwise be eligible. Enhanced benefit becomes a permanent part of the pension allowance. If enacted, the Enhanced benefit becomes automatic for the State/Teachers Systems and under a Local Option provision, must be accepted by local retirement boards and their respective legislative body.

Larry Connelly, Co-Chair of the RTC Legislative Committee noted that the RTC developed a similar proposal for the City of Boston, but it had a much higher impact on the BPS Teacher Retirement system. Duhamel acknowledged the problem of not including Boston teacher retirees, but pointed out that thousands of other participants in the State Teacher Retirement system would benefit. Boston has a higher average benefit level than the state average.

At the federal level, efforts to change the Windfall Elimination Provision continue. Duhamel noted that the BTU/RTC had been very helpful in bringing other states into the fight to get WEP changed, but more are needed. While this legislation will not eliminate WEP and completely restore all social security money, it will begin to restore some money to people who lost social security due to this provision. Congressman Neal wants to tie the WEP legislation to a larger bill to help seniors receive their passage.

The RTC Legislative Committee agreed that we would continue to work cooperatively with the Mass Retirees in seeking legislation that benefits all retirees.

Information and a Warning

The second presentation concerned the health benefits that we receive. Barbara Deveau, Director of the City of Boston’s Health and Insurance Division covered general information about Medicare and warned that marketers selling other supplemental plans could cause you to lose your group coverage.

Applying for Medicare before your 65th birthday is required. If you are eligible you must take Medicare Part A, B and D coverage. If you are not eligible you may stay on your non-Medicare plan. You can receive help from this division to apply for Medicare.

The base price for Medicare Part B is $144.60. If you have a higher income, then you pay according to a schedule that is based on the amount you earned from your tax filing two years ago. The City reimburses 50% of your cost for Part B. If you paid more because you had a higher part B payment, you can file the form you receive from Social Security showing your payment for Part B, and the City reimburses 50% of that amount.

Medicare supplement plans offered by the city vary in how Part D drug costs are paid. In some plans the price of drugs is included in the plan. Harvard Pilgrim recently changed its plan to Silver Scripts for drug coverage and the result was an increase in the price of the Harvard Pilgrim plan.

Members were warned about the confusion created by marketing companies for supplemental Medicare plans. Medicare open enrollment occurs from October-December. This is not for the City of Boston retirees. Many of these plans offer things like eyeglasses or rides to medical appointments included in the cost of these plans. But here’s the catch. You can only be covered by one Medicare plan. If you choose a supplemental coverage outside of the City’s plan you lose your coverage and become responsible for the total cost. You have the freedom to elect other coverages but they cannot compete with the benefits and cost of the City’s group plan.

Mariani Gill of the city’s Health and Insurance Division shared with mem-

Keep in touch with colleagues, par-

BOSTON UNION TEACHER | October-November, 2020 7
The Boston Teachers Union endorses candidates for elected offices. Members often ask about the process we use to endorse candidates. Here’s what happens:

Every two years there is an election process for Boston City elected offices. We engage in endorsing candidates for Boston City Council and we have endorsed candidates who campaign for Mayor, whose election cycle is every four years. The following year we engage in endorsing candidates for Massachusetts state legislative offices. This election cycle occurs every two years. Candidates for state offices campaign for re-election if they are an incumbent or to be newly elected if a candidate is challenging an incumbent or campaigning for an open seat for an elected office.

During the election cycle, both incumbents (those who are currently in office) and new candidates will reach out to the Boston Teachers Union, requesting an endorsement. The BTU responds to this request by sending a questionnaire with issues that are important to our members. After a completed questionnaire is returned, the COPE committee (Committee on Political Education) will review it to decide if the candidate should be interviewed for a recommendation to the executive board (also known as the E-Board).

The decision to make a recommendation to the E-Board is made by a 2/3 vote by the COPE Committee members. Next, the E-Board receives the recommendation and reviews information about the candidates. A vote is then held by the E-Board members to decide whether the candidate should be recommended to the membership. Again a 2/3 vote is required. Lastly, a vote is held at BTU monthly membership meetings during which members have the chance to approve or oppose candidates. A 2/3 vote is again required to pass.

Once the BTU endorsement is approved through this process, the true work begins. The Political Director will contact the candidates to discuss their campaign. The BTU will hold member-to-member phone banks on behalf of the candidate, allowing members the opportunity to get involved with the campaign of an endorsed candidate.

If any members are interested in assisting with phone banking, they can contact the Political Director for this stipend opportunity. Members can also volunteer to support a campaign by door knocking and handing out flyers. Unfortunately during COVID, campaigns have not been able to reach constituents by holding gatherings or other types of in-person events. Candidates have had to resort to online events to talk about their campaigns and fund-raising. Some candidates have chosen to leave door hangers with information about their campaign and talk to constituents socially distanced when encountered at the doors.

BEAT (BTU Electoral Action Team) is the group we use to engage our members in the election process. Ideally, we like to have at least five members from each school on this team. They have an opportunity to participate with how we interact with candidates both during and after elections. Because even after a candidate is elected, it is still important to make sure they are supporting what matters. When participating with other political action, members are requested to do so only outside of school hours. If you are interested in participating with the BEAT please contact Political Director, Johnny McInnis at jmcinnis@btu.org or Political Organizer, Roberto Jimenez at rjimenez@btu.org.

The September Primary saw more people voting statewide in many years. There were three ways to vote: mail in ballot, early voting or in person. The same thing will be true for the November election. If you choose to vote by mail, you can request a ballot by going to the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts website for an application. Once you receive your ballot, members are encouraged by the BTU to mail it back as soon as possible. This is important because if your ballot is not received prior to election day it will not be counted. Early voting occurs at designated locations around the state within your municipal city.

BTU began to encourage BTU members to vote in every election. All elections are important including those that do not occur during the regular election cycle (for example if a seat is vacated by an elected official). Primary elections are important when multiple candidates of the same party are campaigning for the same elected position. After the Primary, the official November election will take place. This November we will vote on who will be President of the United States. BTU members are encouraged to take a photo when they vote and upload it to the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts website under the #BTUVotes hashtag. No matter which process you choose to vote, upload your photo to support the importance of voting.

If you would like more information or would like to help with anything mentioned in this article please, please contact Political Director, Johnny McInnis at jmcinnis@btu.org or Political Organizer, Roberto Jimenez at rjimenez@btu.org.

POLITICS IN EDUCATION
Johnny McInnis
Campaigning with the BTU

Johnny McInnis
BTU Political Director

U.S. PRESIDENT
Joe Biden

U.S. VICE PRESIDENT
Kamala Harris

U.S. SENATOR - MASSACHUSETTS
Edward Markey

MA 2nd Congressional - James McGovern
MA 3rd Congressional - Lori Trahan
MA 4th Congressional - Katherine Clark
MA 7th Congressional - Ayanna Pressley
MA 9th Congressional - William Keating

MASSACHUSETTS STATE SENATE INCUMBENTS
State Senator Julian Cyr, Cape and Islands
State Senator Patricia Jehlen, Second Middlesex
State Senator Mike Brady, Second Plymouth and Bristol
State Senator Marc Pacheco, First Plymouth and Bristol
State Senator Patrick O’Connor, Plymouth and Norfolk
State Senator Nick Collins, First Suffolk
State Senator Rebecca Rausch, Norfolk, Bristol and Middlesex
State Senator Karen Spilka, Second Middlesex and Norfolk
State Senator Walter Timilty, Norfolk, Bristol and Plymouth

MASSACHUSETTS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES INCUMBENTS
State Representative Thomas Vitolo, 15th Norfolk
State Representative Christine Barber, 34th Middlesex
State Representative Liz Miranda, 5th Suffolk
State Representative Jon Santiago, 9th Suffolk
State Representative Nika Elugardo, 15th Suffolk
State Representative Kevin Honan, 17th Suffolk
State Representative David Rogers, 24th Middlesex
State Representative Daniel Ryan, 2nd Suffolk

NON-INCUMBENTS FOR MASSACHUSETTS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Erika Uyterhoeven, 27th Middlesex
Brandy Fluker-Oakley, 12th Suffolk
Rob Consalvo, 14th Suffolk
Emmanuel Dockter, 5th Plymouth

#BTUVotes

Vote Yes on 2 – Ranked Choice Voting

YES on 2 began as a grassroots-driven movement to build awareness around an improvement to our elections known as Ranked Choice Voting (RCV). RCV helps reduce the issues of vote-splitting and so-called “spoiler” candidates – common problems which often put pressure on candidates to drop out, and which prevent fresh, diverse voices from running for office in the first place.

RCV levels the playing field – giving more choice, and guaranteeing a stronger voice for every voter. It eliminates worries about casting a “wasted” vote, regardless of whether or not your favorite candidate is deemed the most “electable,” or whether they have the biggest bank account, or whether they drop out before election day after you’ve voted early. RCV encourages candidates to run: more positive and issue-based campaigns, and it ensures that candidates win with over 50% support from their district. For a short 1-minute primer on how RCV works, check out the video on the YES on 2 website.

This year, YES on 2 volunteers certified 128,780 signatures with the Secretary of the Commonwealth, placing Ranked Choice Voting on the November 3, 2020 ballot. Now, with only a handful of weeks left, each of us must answer the call to get this initiative over the finish line.

Here’s another example of an election which really could have used Ranked Choice Voting. This is the democratic primary from the 3rd Congressional District.

There were so many candidates in this race that the winner received only 22% support. Lori Trahan is now one of the biggest advocates in support for RCV because she was in this crazy 10-way race.

The 1st and 2nd place finishers were separated by only 137 votes. Now imagine you were a voter for one of the losing candidates and it came down to such a close race between the top 2. If you voted for any of the other 8 candidates, you didn't get a say at all.

How RCV Helps

With RCV, voters get backup choices. If you supported an underdog candidate and they were eliminated, your vote would count for your 2nd choice instead. Your vote can never be wasted and your voice is always heard.

Example: 3rd Congressional District
Democratic Primary, 2018

78% of voters did not choose the winner.

83% of voters preferred RCV.

This means that many voters preferred RCV but the winner was not decided with RCV.

If voters had a backup choice, those 78% could have voted for RCV.

The 1st and 2nd place finishers were separated by only 137 votes. Now imagine you were a voter for one of the losing candidates and it came down to such a close race between the top 2. If you voted for any of the other 8 candidates, you didn't get a say at all.

How RCV Helps

With RCV, voters get backup choices. If you supported an underdog candidate and they were eliminated, your vote would count for your 2nd choice instead. Your vote can never be wasted and your voice is always heard.

This article is written by John Ohn Millin and published in the BOSTON UNION TEACHER. October-November, 2020.

8 | BOSTON UNION TEACHER | October-November, 2020