

# MCCC NEWS

208

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## Union Endorses O'Brien, Gabrieli

By Joseph T. LeBlanc, MCCC Vice-President

The Massachusetts Community College Council unanimously endorsed Shannon O'Brien and Chris Gabrieli at its Sept. 20 Board of Directors meeting. It is the first such endorsement the union has made in several statewide elections.

"The choice is very clear," said MCCC President Rick Doud. "The MCCC must endorse Shannon O'Brien for Governor. MCCC unit members, as well as all of organized labor must get involved in her campaign. I urge everyone to call the O'Brien campaign. Volunteer to hold signs, work a phone bank, distribute flyers, whatever you can do. Identify yourself as an MCCC unit member, and give a few hours in an election that will certainly directly affect your working conditions for the next four years."

MCCC Treasurer Phil Mahler praises O'Brien's experience as a manager of a large state agency.

"We have faith in her management expertise and ability to bring financial stability to the Commonwealth," he said. "We feel she is the best candidate to effectively lead Massachusetts out of the financial

crisis. She will also support public higher ed. as the single best way the Commonwealth has to improve the quality of life for its citizens."

The state Treasurer has and will continue to articulate a forward-looking, responsible, progressive vision for Massachusetts and all its citizens. The Boston Globe says O'Brien has already "attracted some of the best policy minds in the state, suggesting she will be able to reverse the brain drain on Beacon Hill." Her staff has detailed impressive policy plans for health care, clean air, crime and public safety, smart growth, housing, prescription drugs, sets families," Chesloff writes.

In the last several years, our public colleges and universities have been able to expand program and course offerings and create innovative programs all while cutting state tuition and fees. Since the economic downturn, however, the legislature has targeted public higher ed. for a series of severe cuts with more likely to follow this fall.

O'Brien has pledged to stop this "boom-bust" budget cycle.

"We must ensure that higher education and other important items and programs in the state budget are not disproportionately cut during fiscal crunches," Chesloff writes. "That is why Shannon has proposed a plan to reform the budget process to try to prevent the "boom-bust" budgeting that results in cuts to areas of the budget such as higher education."

O'Brien's budget reform blueprint will encourage the Commonwealth and its agencies to engage in better long-term planning. While difficult times surely lay ahead for Massachusetts, O'Brien's executive experience, political acumen and strength of character all promise to provide us with the right leader for these times.

At presstime, late breaking news releases indicate O'Brien will lobby to reinstate the Superfund polluter tax to pay for environmental clean-up projects at 31 sites in Massachusetts and 1238 sites in the United States. The \$3.8 billion fund has been spent down to \$38 million, and the Bush administration is balking at reauthorizing it. Republican gubernatorial nominee Mitt Romney is still

*Continued on Page 4*

## Board OK's MCCC Political Action Committee

PAC to begin fundraising this month  
By Joseph T. LeBlanc

The MCCC's PAC is off and running just in time for the final election. Acting on the recommendation of both the Strategic Action Committee and Executive Committee, the Board of Directors approved the Political Action Committee at its September meeting. The PAC will be chaired by Thelma Halberstadt, retired nursing professor from Northern Essex Community College. Phil Kennedy, MCCC Operations Manager, will serve as treasurer.

In starting the PAC, the union joins more than 300 other organizations with registered Political Action Committees. Halberstadt and Kennedy say they are eager to begin fundraising, which will allow PAC to make contributions to political candidates during this election cycle.

Francis J. Leary, business professor at Northern Essex, says he hopes to see more retired unit members and other volunteers get involved with PAC activities in the next few years.

"I can see where the PAC might work to promote an agenda which benefits both

*Continued on Page 4*

## MCCC Fall Leadership Conference

Participants in this year's Fall Leadership Conference, Monday, September 23<sup>rd</sup> braved "hell and high water" to attend.

Sandy Cutler, Co-chair of the Strategic Action Committee, determined to arrive in a timely fashion to present at this year's MCCC Fall Leadership Conference found herself straddling a fence in a skirt to meet that commitment. Her bushwacking adventure was one of several shared as participants at this year's meeting straggled in to this year's meeting at the Best Western Royal Plaza, Marlboro. Road workers in the westbound lane of Route 9, near Route 495 hit a water pipe about 3 p.m., then ruptured a gas line in attempting to repair the first mess. The gas line rupture led to an evacuation of hotels and businesses in the immediate vicinity, a delay in the starting time, and complicated and unmarked detour routes for those 75 or so participants who persevered to arrive at the Meeting.

The meeting was opened a bit late with a welcome from MCCC President Rick Doud. Before dinner a very informative presentation on the Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset laws was made by Vicki Zwerdling, Deputy Chief of Staff for Congressman James McGovern of Worcester. A dinner (chicken or pasta) followed. After dinner MTA President Cathy Boudreau, MTA Vice President Anne Wass, MCCC MTA Board Member Thomas Parsons and MTA Attorney Priscilla Lyons formed a panel to address MCCC questions regarding MTA's role in serving its Higher Education constituents.

Participants received a newly minted MCCC pen and MCCC notepads.

### The WEP and GPO

As more MCCC members, MTA members, and State employees hired in the modern era approach retirement age, the apparently inequitable and seemingly discriminatory nature of the Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset laws is looming on the radar screen of countless of those individuals and their spouses.

These laws significantly reduce Social Security benefits to government employees and spouses receiving government held

pensions in 15 states. Though arrangements in each state may vary, Massachusetts government employees were described by Fall Leadership Meeting presenter Vicki Zwerdling, an aide to Congressman James McGovern of Worcester, as "profoundly impacted by these laws." She said that, to date, McGovern's office "receives more calls on this issue than on Iraq."

The Social Security statements received by those who will ultimately be affected do not take into account these laws. State-

*Continued on Page 2*



MTA President Cathy Boudreau, MTA Vice President Anne Wass, MTA Director Thomas Parsons of MBCC, MTA Director of Higher Education Priscilla Lyons

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