



Winter Update 2008

Leading the Way for Maine Retirees

MAR REGIONAL MEETING DATES & LOCATIONS FOR 2008

We hope to see all of you at the MAR regional meeting in your area. Please note the date and location below and **mark your calendar**. Also, to make your entry into the regional meeting go more quickly and smoothly, please send us a note telling us which meeting you will be attending, how many people will be attending, and send us a check or money order for \$2.00 for each attendee in your party. **Why not do it today?** The speaker at the regional meetings this year will be Rayna Leibowitz, from Maine Emergency Management Agency, State of Maine. She is very

knowledgeable, and personable. She will help us prepare for emergency situations and/or possible disasters. I know you will learn a lot from her, and that you will enjoy having her at our meetings. We have some nice...and interesting "giveaways" for the meetings. Please, come and enjoy!

This year: Registration starts at 9:00 a.m.; the meeting starts at 10:00 a.m.; lunch is still at noontime; and the regional meeting ends after lunch (as usual). We expect to have presenters at tables to offer you free hearing exams, financial information, handouts, etc. Come early (9:00 a.m.) to register and see what we have set-up for you.

| | | | |
|----------------|--------------|------------|---|
| April 1, 2008 | Bangor | Region II | Spectacular Events Center 395 Griffin Road Bangor, ME |
| April 2, 2008 | Presque Isle | Region I | No. ME Community College Presque Isle, ME |
| April 22, 2008 | Portland | Region V | Keeley the Katerer 178 Warren Avenue Portland, ME |
| April 24, 2008 | Augusta | Region III | Augusta Elks Lodge Civic Center Drive Augusta, ME |
| April 29, 2008 | Lewiston | Region IV | Lewiston Lodge of Elks 1675 Lisbon Road Lewiston, ME |

(Reminder, the Board of Directors Meeting will be held before the Regional Meeting (9:00 a.m.) at the Elks Lodge in Augusta on April 24, 2008)

WINTER UPDATE

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Maine Association of Retirees, Inc.
280 Maine Avenue
Farmingdale, ME 04344
Telephone: (207) 582-1960
1-800-535-6555
FAX (207) 582-4764

Office Hours:

7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Monday-Friday

Email:

Mgorten@roadrunner.com

Web Site

www.maineretirees.org

MAR STAFF

Florence Hoover Johnson
Executive Director (& Editor)

John Wakefield
Legislative & Financial Program Mgr.

Maxine Gorten
Membership Coordinator

Carol Cochran
Membership Assistant

Erica Ouellette
Administrative Assistant

Sheila Jackson
Staff Assistant

TOTAL MAR MEMBERSHIP
15,010

Delta Dental Participants
4,065

TAX ASSISTANCE

Do you need tax counseling and/or tax preparation assistance? AARP Tax-Aide provides FREE services and can answer most of the tax issues faced by middle and low income taxpayers, with special attention to those aged 60 and older. To locate a site near you, call their toll-free number at 1-888-227-7669 or visit their website at www.aarp.org/taxaide.

WHAT ABOUT MEDICARE ADVANTAGE PLANS?

(Released by Employee Health & Benefits, State of Maine)

Many retirees have been receiving information about Medicare Advantage plans. These plans are being offered by many insurers in Maine. Retirees are asking if a Medicare Advantage plan makes sense for them.

The State Employee Health Commission's retiree members, Dick Hodgdon and Freeman Wood, have asked that we set the record straight.

As a retiree member of the State employee health plan, there are a few things you should remember. First, the State pays for the premium for retirees enrolled in the Medicare group companion plan. The State only pays the premium for the group plan offered by the State Employee Health Commission. If a State retiree enrolls in a private Medicare Advantage plan, the retiree will pay the full premium for that plan. If the State is currently paying your retiree health insurance premium, you should continue that coverage.

If you are a surviving spouse paying the full premium, you may want to look at the Medicare Advantage plans as an option. Please remember that, as a surviving spouse, if you drop your coverage sponsored by the State of Maine, you will not be eligible to re-enroll in the State plan at a later date.

What about the Medicare Part B premium? Regardless of whether you are enrolled in the State group companion plan or a Medicare Advantage plan, you will still pay the monthly Part B premium.

MAR NEEDS YOU AS A COMMITTEE MEMBER AND/OR REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

MAR is seeking volunteers to serve on organizational committees. Voting for new and renewing members of all committees will be done by members attending the Annual Meeting on May 14, 2008. This is a tremendous opportunity for you to participate in the decision making for MAR.

MAR is seeking volunteers to serve on the Executive, By-Laws, Membership, and Legislative Committees – AND – to serve as Regional Director or Alternate for the area you live. As a Committee member, you participate at the first-line in initiating and developing creative new avenues for MAR to follow as an organization. As a Regional Director, you also become a member of the Board of Directors and participate in decision making at one of the highest levels of the organization.

There is very little time involved in serving on any of the committees or as Regional Director/Alternate. There may be a few meetings throughout the year, and your input would be valued. You would receive a stipend of \$25 and travel expenses each time a meeting was called by the President, and held. Refreshments are also usually served.

If interested in any of these opportunities to serve the other members of MAR, please contact MAR office staff at our toll-free telephone number: 1-800-535-6555.

IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR DELTA DENTAL MEMBERS

As you may know, your dental cards do not show your full Social Security number as it did in the past. Delta Dental has taken further steps to protect your privacy by implementing new cards that will have randomly-assigned 14 digit numbers. These numbers will be used for the submission of claims by your dentist. Delta Dental will, however, keep your actual Social Security number for coding purposes only.

As most of you know, it has been a very long time since monthly premium rates have changed for your dental insurance. However, as of February 1, 2008, Northeast Delta Dental will make a slight rate change to all three types of policies offered. Those changes are outlined below.

| Current | New |
|------------------------|---------|
| One Person: \$32.23 | \$33.16 |
| Two Persons: \$58.74 | \$60.44 |
| Three or more: \$91.73 | \$94.39 |

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the MAR office and speak with Erica.

ARE YOU RECEIVING MAR BENEFIT: REDUCED COST SAM'S CLUB MEMBERSHIP?

MAR has partnered with Sam's Club to bring our members the benefits of having and using a Sam's Club Card at a greatly reduced group rate (individual Sam's Club membership rate is \$40, and a MAR sponsored Sam's Club group rate is only \$30 – a **\$10 savings to you**. Current Sam's Club card holders can renew their Sam's Club Membership for \$30 now, and the additional 12 months will be added to your existing Sam's Club Membership term!

Sam's Club is the nation's largest members-only warehouse that provides Members exceptional value on name-brand merchandise for both business and personal use.

In addition to warehouse savings, Sam's Club membership also offers these highly beneficial services for you, your family and your home:

- SAM'S CLUB Pharmacy
- Auto Finance & Refinance Program
- Life Insurance
- Entertainment Tickets
- Rental Car

- Check Printing
- AT&T Pre-Paid Phone Cards
- SAM'S CLUB DISCOVER Member Miles
- Auto, Boat & RV Program
- Auto & Home Insurance
- Vacations/Cruises
- Hotel & Airline Reservations
- Roadside Assistance
- Service Agreements
- SAM'S CLUB DISCOVER Plus

Sam's Club Group Membership rates are: **Level I:** \$30 rate if group consists of 50-999 members and **Level II:** \$25 rate if group consists of 1000 or more members (Sam's Club best group rate).

If at least 1,000 MAR members sign up for a new or renewed Sam's Club card, the cost of each card will drop to \$25 – and the \$5 difference will be mailed back to you with your card.

If you are interested in receiving a reduced-cost Sam's Club card, please complete the Sam's Club Application form below, and send the completed form and \$30 check/money order to MAR (280 Maine Avenue, Farmingdale, ME 04344) today.

SAM'S CLUB GROUP MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM (FOR MAR MEMBERS)

- Yes, I would like to participate – I am NOT a current Sam's Club Member.
- Yes, I would like to participate – I AM a current Sam's Club Member. My membership #: _____
- I would also like a complimentary (free) card for _____, who is my spouse or other adult who resides with me.

GROUP NAME: **Maine Association of Retirees (MAR)**

My First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Home Phone #: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Personal e-mail address: _____

If you have questions, please contact the staff at MAR (toll-free 1-800-535-6555).

Please respond as soon as you get this notice, so that this new MAR organizational benefit can be available for you and your significant other to use, and save at a Sam's Club close to you.

Maine Public Employees Retirement System Benefit Payments Schedule for 2008

Check Date and Delivery to US Post Office in Augusta:

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| January 30, 2008 | July 30, 2008 |
| February 28, 2008 | August 29, 2008 |
| March 28, 2008 | September 29, 2008 |
| April 29, 2008 | October 30, 2008 |
| May 30, 2008 | November 26, 2008 |
| June 27, 2008 | December 30, 2008 |

NOTE: As a general rule, Maine PERS issues benefit payments on the next to the last day of the month. When the next to the last day is a Saturday, Sunday, or a holiday, payments are delivered on the previous business day. *(This information taken off the MPERS website)*

IF YOU SUSPECT A SCAM...

The Office of Securities is Maine's "cop on the beat" when it comes to protecting Maine investors from investment abuse and fraud. The Office of Securities brings enforcement actions against con artists and unscrupulous financial professionals, licenses stock brokers and investment advisers, and registers investment products.

Consumers can reach the Office of Securities through its web site at www.investors.maine.gov, by calling its toll-free number at 1-877-624-8551, or by writing the Maine Office of Securities, 121 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333-0121. All inquiries are welcome.

We Must NOT Stop Pushing For Social Security Offset Repeal

The Social Security Fairness Act of 2007 is still pending in the US Legislature. A hearing on HR 82 was held in mid-January 2008. Bills HR 82 and S 206 are bills proposed to amend Title II of the Social Security Act to repeal the government pension offset (GPO) and windfall elimination provisions (WEP). Please call AND write Maine's US Legislators (see the MAR web site www.maineretirees.org for names and addresses) to thank them

for their sponsorship of this legislation and strongly encourage them to push these bills through committee and get them passed into law this session.

We have never been so close to success in getting the repeal(s) passed into law. We have tremendous support from Legislators; but, the legislation is still pending – not yet passed. Please take the time to call AND write your local legislators, call AND write Maine's US Legislators, and e-mail Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (CA) at <http://speaker.house.gov/contact/> to let them know that this issue will not go away and that the repeal(s) must be passed.

YOUR PERSONAL INVITATION

TO: The Maine Association of Retirees (MAR)
Annual Meeting

Come join us for music, food, drinks, prize presentations, social interaction, and discussions at the upcoming MAR Annual Meeting. Attendees, last year, raved about the nice time they had at the event. This year, it'll be better than ever!!

WHEN: May 14, 2008

WHERE: Civic Center Auditorium
Augusta, ME 04330

TIME: Registration begins at 8:00 a.m.
The meeting starts at 9:00 a.m.

The meeting usually ends at 2:00 p.m.

COST: \$2.00 per attendee. You may pre-register and send the check/money to MAR before May 2, 2008

GUEST SPEAKER: Steven Rowe, Attorney General
for the State of Maine

MARK YOUR CALENDAR – PLAN TO ATTEND

NOTICE OF NAME ADDRESS CHANGE

Name: _____

Address: (Former) _____

New: _____

Tel _____

E-MAIL: _____

Note: If you plan to be away any time during the year, please notify us so that we can send the UPDATE to the proper address.

Approximate Time Away: From Date: _____ To Date: _____

RETIRED TEACHERS' HEALTH INSURANCE INCLUDED IN GOVERNOR'S BUDGET

Governor Baldacci's proposed Supplemental Budget authorizes the Governor's Office of Health Policy and Finance to establish a joint purchasing pool for the purpose of rebate negotiation, collection and dispute resolution for prescription drugs in order to reduce pharmaceutical costs for public employees and dependents receiving prescription drug coverage through the State of Maine, the University of Maine System and the Maine Education Association.

The State shall amend current contracts as needed to implement the joint purchasing pool and to achieve savings for the State and participating parties. The State shall fund the administrative costs associated with the administration of the joint purchasing pool from the rebates realized as a result of this initiative. Fifty percent of net savings realized as a result of the participation of public school employees in the joint purchasing pool shall be set aside in another special revenue account and be used to increase the State's contribution to the Retired Teachers Health Insurance Program in fiscal years 2009-10 and 2010-11. Fifty percent of net savings realized as a result of the participation of public school employees in the joint purchasing pool shall be credited as undedicated revenue to the General Fund.

LEGISLATURE BACK IN SESSION

The Second Regular Session of the 123rd Maine Legislature has convened.

Maine Association of Retirees has retained the governmental relations firm of Howe and Cahill Company to provide full legislative and lobbyist services for the upcoming legislative session.

MAR will be carefully monitoring the Governor's Supplemental Budget to assure that retiree health insurance, pension exemption, and other benefits are protected.

MAR will also be following LD 1693 An Act to Restore Equity to the Maine State Retirement System. This bill addresses one of the major benefit reductions imposed on employees with less than ten years of service on July 1, 1993, by reducing the penalty for retiring earlier than 62 years of age from 6% to 3% per year. The estimated cost of restoring this benefit is approximately \$90 million.

Another bill, LD 1996 An Act to Allow Changes of Beneficiaries Under the Maine Public Employees Retirement System would allow a retiree to change a previously designated beneficiary more than once. Current law allows a retiree to make a one-time change of the retiree's previously designated beneficiary for retirement benefits without the permission of the beneficiary if the beneficiary is not the spouse or former spouse of the retiree.

A REMINDER: DON'T FORGET YOUR PENSION DEDUCTION

Every year we continue to hear from retirees who have overlooked Maine's \$6,000 pension income deduction. You and your spouse may each deduct up to \$6,000 of eligible pension income on your Maine Income Tax return; however, except for a surviving spouse, "eligible pension income doesn't include pension income earned by another person."

Retirees receiving disability retirement are also eligible for the \$6,000 pension exemption only if they have reached the normal retirement age. The normal retirement age for MPERS retirees is 60, if you had at least ten years of service before July 1, 1993, or had reached age 60 before July 1, 1993, and had at least a year of service credit immediately prior to reaching 60. If you don't meet either of these criteria, your minimum retirement age is 62.

Except for military pension benefits, the \$6,000 exemption must be reduced by any social security and railroad retirement benefits received. For example, if you are receiving both a MPERS pension of \$12,000 per year and a social security benefit of \$2,000 per year, you would be entitled to exemption of \$4,000 (\$6,000 minus \$2,000 of Social Security = \$4,000.)

You can claim your pension exemption on either the Short Form 1040S-ME or the Long Form 1040-ME. The pension exemption deduction is on Line 14 of the Short Form and is on Schedule 1, Line 2D of the Long Form.

Retirees who retired after 1988 can also deduct pick-up contributions on Schedule 1, Line 2G of the Long Form. To calculate the amount of your deduction, subtract the State taxable gross amount of your MPERS pension from the federal taxable gross amount as shown on the last (December) stub of your pension check for 2006. You can also use your 1099R from MPERS to calculate your deduction by subtracting the amount in Box 12 from the amount in Box 2A.

If you have questions regarding the pension exemption, please feel free to call John Wakefield at 1-800-535-6555 or e-mail johndwakefield@roadrunner.com. If you did miss the pension income deduction, you can file an amended Maine Tax Form (1040X-ME Amended) within three years after the date of the original return.



From the President's Desk

Greetings to all!

And another year comes to an end. Time for my New Years resolutions. Who was it that said; "A New Years resolution is something that goes in one year and out the other"? My husband Ron has made his annual resolution – To make me a better person! And now for the news:

- The US Senate Finance Committee sub committee on Social Security had a hearing on legislation to repeal the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision. A similar hearing has been promised in The House of Representatives for 2008. The issue is finally on the map in Washington D.C.
- Arrangements have been finalized for the MAR regional meetings to be held around the state in April. Rayna Leibowitz of Maine's Emergency Management Agency will discuss emergency preparedness at the individual and community level.
- And with a promise that our snowy winter will fly by, please mark your calendars for May 14th and the MAR annual meeting at the Augusta Civic Center. Attorney General Steven Rowe will speak on palliative and end of life care. This meeting will also elect new Officers and Directors.

And now on behalf of staff and members of the Executive Committee and the Board, I wish you a happy, safe and prosperous New Year.

Isabella Thurston, President

MAR Executive Committee: Isabella Thurston, President; Edwin H. Pert, 1st Vice-President; Peter Ezzy, 2nd Vice-President; Hilary Fleming, Treasurer; Margaret Ross, Secretary; Charles Andrews, Immediate Past President; Mary Richard, Member-at-Large; John Wakefield and Florence Hoover (non-voting).

DRIVE CAREFULLY. WEAR YOUR SEATBELT. STAY ALERT & AWARE.

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Farmington, Maine 04344



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