



MSRB



Retiree eNews Bulletin

FEBRUARY 2021

2020 IRS Form 1099-R's Mailed

The 2020 Form 1099-R's were mailed at the end of January and are viewable on your [PayInfo](#) account.

Please allow plenty of time for your Form 1099-R to be delivered to you via the United States Postal Service (USPS).

If you don't receive your Form 1099-R by the end of February, or if you may have forgotten to update your mailing address, you can call our office at 617-367-7770.

For more information about your Form 1099-R, please visit our Understanding your Form 1099-R webpage:

[Understanding your Form 1099-R](#)

2020 Benefit Verification Nearly Complete

State law mandates that the Retirement Board conduct a verification every two years to ensure members are still eligible (not deceased) to receive a pension. If a benefit recipient has passed away, please immediately notify the Board. Thank you to all members who completed and returned their BVF. Staff continues to follow up with those who have not yet responded. Anyone who has not yet submitted their 2020 BVF

State Pension Fund Returns Soar

The PRIT Fund recently reported performance data through December 31, 2020. Notably PRIM's total assets stood at a record of over \$86.9b, of which \$32.4b represented assets of the Massachusetts State Employees' Retirement System and \$172.3m represented assets of the former Massachusetts Turnpike Authority Employees Retirement System. Calendar year 2020 returns stood at 12.53% gross of fees.

For more information, visit PRIM's website <https://www.mapension.com/>.

Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) Impact Report Updated

On February 1, 2021, the Congressional Research Service issued an updated report on the status and impacts of the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP).

As of December 2020, about 1.9 million people (or about 3% of all Social Security beneficiaries) were affected by the WEP. This number is up by almost 50,000 since December 2018. These workers mainly include state and local government employees covered by retirement systems as well as most permanent civilian federal

should contact the Board at 617-367-7770 as soon as possible.

As mandated by state regulations, the next benefit verification process will occur in 2022.

Program for All-inclusive Care (PACE) for the Elderly

MassHealth provides many different resources for individuals in the Commonwealth. One of these is the Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), which is co-administered by Medicare. PACE is a service that provides a variety of medical, social, recreational, and wellness services for eligible participants.

PACE is modeled on the idea that most elders, the disabled and their families would choose to receive care in their homes as opposed to a nursing home or facility if they were given the choice to do so.

Individuals do not need to be enrolled in MassHealth to enroll in PACE, however MassHealth membership may pay for PACE premiums. PACE has Medicare Part-D prescription drug coverage, an Interdisciplinary Team of caregivers, and covers preventative care. An individual must meet certain criteria in order to be eligible, such as being 55 or older or being certified by the state as eligible for nursing home care. You can read more about eligibility here:

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/who-is-eligible-for-pace>.

To learn more about PACE and what it has to offer, be sure to visit their website:

<https://www.mass.gov/hhs/PACE>.

employees hired before January 1, 1984, who are covered by the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS).

In Massachusetts, 83,156 current Social Security payees are affected by WEP, which is the 6th highest state group impacted. This is up from 76,608 reported as of December 2018.

The most common arguments against the WEP include that it is unfair because it substantially reduces a benefit that workers may have in their retirement plans. Others criticize how the provision works, and the windfall elimination formula is arbitrary and an imprecise way to determine any advantage when applied to individual cases.

In addition to measures introduced in the last congressional session to modify or repeal the WEP, H.R. 82 (the Social Security Fairness Act of 2021) was introduced by Representative Rodney Davis of Illinois on January 4, 2021. The legislation would repeal the WEP and the government pension offset (GPO), which reduces the Social Security benefits paid to spouses and widow(er)s of insured workers if the spouse or widow(er) also receives a pension based on government employment not covered by Social Security. The elimination of the WEP and GPO would apply to benefits payable for months after December 2021.

Additionally, Massachusetts Congressman Richard Neal is reportedly in the process of refiling The Public Servants Protection and Fairness Act, previously known as H.R. 4540. Once the bill is refiled, a new number will be assigned for the 2021-22 Session. As soon as there is an update, we will report it to you. In the meantime, you can learn more about WEP & GPO legislation at the web site for the Massachusetts Retirees Association www.MassRetirees.org.

How to Combat Loneliness and Isolation

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, people have dealt with the serious issue of loneliness and isolation. While it is important to social distance, due to the nature of the illness, loneliness can exacerbate some mental health symptoms. The Department of Mental Health recently put together some [suggestions on how to manage isolation and loneliness](#).

Below are a few suggestions they provided:

1) Check in with loved ones: Contact neighbors or friends to check in on how they are. Even if it's something like sending over a text message or an email.

2) Schedule a virtual "hangout": Organize a virtual setting for your friends or loved ones using an online video system such as Google Hangouts. [DMH provides a link to a useful step-by-step resource on how to use the technology](#).

3) Go for a walk: While the weather has been cold, getting fresh air may help. You may want to visit the Office of Travel and Tourism to find some great locations to do some walking: <https://www.visitma.com/>.

4) Lend a helping hand: DMH's website mentions that "helping others can help us feel connected" and suggests that as long as you maintain proper social distancing, it's perfectly fine to offer to help others where they may need it.

5) Use social media wisely: Social media can be overwhelming and too much exposure can be problematic, it's important to manage your time on it and prevent from being overexposed to content that may be distressing.

Along with these helpful items, they also suggest utilizing Mass 2-1-1 for reaching out if you have any questions about finding

Vaccine Appointment Booking Expansion

On Wednesday, February 17, 2021, in a release from the Baker-Polito Administration, it was announced that beginning on Feb. 18th, individuals aged 65 and over and those with 2 or more medical conditions (such as Asthma) can start booking appointments via the website, www.mass.gov/covidvaccine.

Due to the high demand for appointments and limited vaccine supply it could take more than a month for all eligible individuals to secure an available appointment.

The website www.mass.gov/COVIDVaccineMap, provides a location map for individuals to find nearby vaccination locations. You can also utilize the [VaxFinder](#) tool to find vaccination locations and other information such as available appointments, site instructions, and directions. If an individual needs to take public transit, it also offers an MBTA Trip Planner to assist you in getting to your appointment location. To utilize the tool, you can visit this website <https://vaxfinder.mass.gov/>. For more information visit: <https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-announces-vaccine-appointment-booking-for-individuals-ages-65>.

IRS, Summit Partners Issue Urgent EFIN Scam Alert to Tax Professionals

Tax season is upon us once again and scammers are working hard to peddle their scams. The Internal Revenue Service, state tax agencies and tax industry recently warned tax professionals of a new scam email that impersonates the IRS and attempts to steal Electronic Filing

essential community services:
<https://mass211.org/>.

Need to Contact the GIC?

If you have questions about your GIC (Group Insurance Commission) health and other insurance benefits or premiums, please contact them direct at 617-727-2310 and select option # 2 or complete their online [Contact the GIC](#) request form. Thank you.

Did you receive this **Retiree eNews Bulletin** as a forwarded email from a friend? If you are an MSERS retiree and would like to receive your own monthly **Retiree eNews Bulletin**, send your email address to us at MSRBCommunications@tre.state.ma.us. Note: Please include your full name and either your MSRB I.D. or the last four digits of your Social Security Number, and request that we add it to our distribution list.

Is there something you would like us to communicate in an upcoming **Retiree eNews Bulletin**? If so, let us know!

Please e-mail your request or comments to MSRBCommunications@tre.state.ma.us. We look forward to hearing from you!

Past issues of our newsletter publications can be found on our [website](#).

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www.mass.gov/retirement

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Identification Numbers (EFINs).

According to the IRS and their partners, the latest scam email says it is from “IRS Tax E-Filing” and carries the subject line “Verifying your EFIN before e-filing.”

Like all phishing email scams, it attempts to bait the receiver to take action (opening a link or attachment) with a consequence for failing to do so (disabling the account). The links or attachment may be set up to steal information or to download malware onto the tax professional’s computer.

A timely reminder for us all to be cautious as we conduct our daily lives. If it smells like a skunk, it probably is a skunk. Trust your gut feeling! [Click here to read the full IRS News Alert!](#)

Have you, or are you, planning to move? If so, be sure to notify the Board of your address change! Retirees who already have summer and winter addresses on file with the Board can call us to request the address update. Otherwise, you’ll need to notify the Board in writing. You can download our Change of Address form [here!](#)

Contact us:

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Downtown Crossing
One Winter Street, 8th Floor
Boston, MA 02108

Tel: 617-367-7770

Note: Our offices remain closed to the public. MSRB phones are answered Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. If you call our office outside of these hours, you will be prompted to leave a message. Board staff will return your call as soon as possible, and thanks you for your patience.