

# RI CHAPTER 94 NEWS, JANUARY 2023

## CHAPTER 94 HONORS OUR NEIGHBORS

At our annual Holiday Party, I was pleased to present the John H. Slaven, Jr. Award to Ed Keefe and Barbara Mann, AFSCME retirees and leaders of Retiree Chapter 93. This award recognizes activists for their life long work on behalf of retirees or labor. In the past, we have honored union leaders, senior and retiree advocates, public officials, and even members of Chapter 94. The award keeps the memory of John Slaven alive. He was a founding member of both Chapter 94 and the national retiree program at AFSCME, our national union.



When Ed started his career as a heavy equipment operator for the City of Boston, I'm sure he did not expect, 30 years later, to be president of the Retiree Chapter 93 in Massachusetts.

And, I can say the same for Barbara. Personal circumstances thrust her into a leadership role at Chapter 93 and placed her in the forefront of the efforts to repeal two punitive programs that reduce or eliminate Social Security benefits, the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and WEP, the Windfall Elimination Provision.

Both Barbara and Ed are part of a national coalition supporting HR 82, a bill in Congress that eliminates both programs. It's part of a plan to make Social Security fair. About 14,000 Rhode Islanders are affected by WEP, GPO, or both. Ed and Barbara are worthy recipients of the Slaven Award.

I was surprised when Russ Marsocci presented me with the 2022 Bronstein Gillis Award. As you know, I had a cardiac episode that put me out of commission for a while. Russ and Ron, our vice presidents, filled in admirably, allowing me to focus on regaining my health. Please accept my heartfelt thanks for this honor. *In solidarity, Mike Connolly*

**Can't attend in person? Join us via Zoom. Attend our meetings online. Email Ron Pepin to receive a Zoom invitation and log in instructions.**

**Next Chapter Meeting**  
Tuesday, January 10 @ 1 pm  
RI Council 94, Ames Hall, Lower Level  
1179 Charles Street, No. Providence, RI

**Special Guest, Invited**  
**State Representative Rebecca Kislak**

**Questions?**  
Contact Chapter 94 Vice Presidents  
Russ Marsocci and Ron Pepin

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Slaven Award Winners Ed Keefe and Barbara Mann with Chapter 94 President Mike Connolly

### **STATE REPORT & MORE, RON PEPIN**

Two years ago, we created the Bronstein Gillis Award to recognize the work of members on behalf of the Chapter. The late Milton Bronstein and Jim Gillis were beloved leaders of Chapter 94. Under their watch, the Chapter became a formidable voice for retirees. We don't have to look outside of Chapter 94 to see who is doing good work on our behalf. This award allows us to salute one of our own.

Our first honoree, Marion Parker, was recognized for her tenure as Chapter 94 treasurer. Last year, we presented the Bronstein Gillis Award to the West Warwick PERC, for the near decade long struggle to make the Town pension system viable.

This December we saluted Mike Connolly, our Chapter President. As you know, Mike suffered a cardiac event earlier this year and has been, since the summer, committed to regaining his health. In Mike's absence, State Vice President Russ Marsocci and I picked up the slack. It took two of us to share the leadership role that Mike performed alone. As Russ and I filled in, we appreciated Mike and his work to make our Chapter viable. Congratulations to Mike, our 2022 Bronstein Gillis honoree.

I want to acknowledge all involved in organizing our 2022 Holiday Party, with special kudos to Cindy Leblanc, our office manager, for leading this effort. With more than 200 members attending, we enjoyed good food and music, and a raffle for grocery store gift cards. Michelle Ricci got an early Christmas present when she won the 50/50 raffle.

We upped our game in 2022. Our summer outing at Wright's Farm proved to be very popular. We're set to do it again next July. We put our monthly meetings on Zoom, meaning members could participate from home. We supported many non-profits, the RI Community Food Bank, the London-Riley Scholarship Fund, EcoRI News, and hosted meetings of RIPERC, the coalition of public sector retirees.

With your help we raised \$1,669 for the RI Community Food Bank, a nice way to end 2022. More and more Rhode Island families depend on the Food Bank. I'm glad that Chapter 94 is part of community-wide effort to end food insecurity in our State.

Let me end by saying Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all members, their families and our friends and allies. We're expecting another great year in 2023 and I encourage all members to come along with us. *RP*

### **MUNI REPORT & MORE, RUSS MARSOCCI**

I hope everyone enjoyed our annual Holiday Party. I did, seeing old friends and greeting new members.

Our Executive Board is exploring ways to boost meeting attendance. We're about to launch an organizing drive to reach soon-to-be-retired workers. We're thinking about awarding prizes to members who recruit new retirees. Please contact me or Ron Pepin if you have ideas on how we can attract new members and want to help with this organizing drive.

Here's my brief municipal update: We're finalizing depositions for our retiree health care lawsuit against the West Warwick Public Schools. We plan to schedule a meeting with all participants in January. Nearly completed is the West Warwick transition to MERS. Members with questions can contact me directly. Also, visit the retiree link on the newly designed ERSI website, <https://www.ersri.org/>

This is a great time, as the end of the year is full of celebrations: Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza, Festivus and Winter Solstice. I'll just say Happy Holidays and Happy New Year to all. *RM*

### **WORK IT, by DOLORES BRESSETTE**

I've been asked to write an article on what union members do when we retire. A couple of issues ago, Russ Marsocci mentioned working the polls during the primary and general elections. Well, I did in November of 2022. In fact, I've been a poll worker in Johnston for many elections, too many to count. Although the new RI law allows for early voting, many voters were eager to cast ballots in person on Election Day. About 700 people voted at my assigned polling place.

Being a poll worker is an exciting and important way to fulfill a civic duty while getting a first hand look at what's involved in conducting an election. If you're reliable, organized, and able to handle a sometimes fast-paced environment, working the polls is a good gig. Plus, it beats sitting at home watching *Law and Order* reruns. *DB*