Heath Crisis Sweeps Country
COVID-19 Causes Major Disruptions Nationwide

Mass Senior Action Council knows that the evolving and ever-changing news about Coronavirus COVID-19 is causing growing concerns for many. We want you to know that MSAC is working with statewide agencies to ensure Massachusetts seniors receive needed services, and to protect not only their health but also the health of the agency workers who provide services.

The State has mandated certain protocols to stop the spread of the virus which include closing senior centers and food distribution sites also known as ‘brown bag’ locations. In most areas, the senior services agencies known as ASAPs are filling in the food gaps with delivery to homes. If you are having trouble accessing food or other basic needs, please call 1-844-422-6277 to find out what is being offered in your local area.

As of March 16, Mass Senior Action suspended all meetings including monthly chapter and board meetings to adhere to the advice of the professionals to limit social gatherings and we encourage members and others to follow the advice from the Center For Disease Control (CDC).

MSAC staff will be in regular communication with our members to hear what their experience has been during this health crisis. Please look on the following page for information about the virus and what you can do to keep yourself and others safe.

continued on pg. 2

EMERGENCY SNAP SUPPLEMENTS
FOR ALL SNAP BENEFICIARIES
All SNAP beneficiaries who get less than the maximum benefit for their household size will automatically get a supplement up to the maximum benefit.

1 PERSON HOUSEHOLDS WILL GET $194
2 PERSON HOUSEHOLDS WILL GET $355

Example: John receives the minimum SNAP benefit of $16 each month. With the COVID-19 emergency supplement John will automatically receive an additional supplement benefit of $178/mo to bring his total benefit up to $194.

IF YOU ALREADY RECEIVE SNAP BENEFITS YOU WILL GET THIS ADDED BENEFIT AUTOMATICALLY
IF YOU ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SNAP BUT NOT ENROLLED YOU CAN STILL APPLY.
CALL PROJECT BREAD FOR ASSISTANCE 1-800-645-8333

COVID-19 Facts......................3
President’s Message...............5
Housing Fight......................6
MSP Benefits Begin.............8
Springfield Transit Fight.......10
People Power.....................11
Census 2020.....................12
Meet The Members.............15
Stimulus Check Info........16
MSAC is in contact with the MA Executive Office of Elder Affairs and we are following their guidance as well as the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended best practices. We are also in close communication with our extensive network of in-home service provider agencies and our community partners to deliver services in a safe and effective manner.

The Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak is a rapidly changing situation and we are committed to keeping you informed.

Helpful Phone Numbers:

General Info and Referral: 2-1-1
Mass Options (Connections to services for elders and individuals with disabilities):1-844-422-6277
Project Bread food Hotline 1-800-645-8333

Thousands in Massachusetts to Keep Food Stamps Benefits After Court Blocks Administration Cut

Citing the COVID-19 pandemic impacting the nation, a federal judge recently blocked a Trump administration rule that could have eliminated food stamps benefits for thousands of Massachusetts residents.

The Administration rule would have implemented tighter work requirements as eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, potentially impacting 700,000 people across the country and more than 10,000 in Massachusetts.

About one in nine people in the commonwealth benefit from SNAP, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Workers who currently receive SNAP benefits must work at least 20 hours per week for more than three months over a period of three years. Nevertheless, states often waive that requirement, which helps workers in high unemployment areas.

The US Department of Agriculture’s new rule restricts those waivers to areas with more than double the unemployment rate of Massachusetts. The rule would have gone into effect in April and impacted people between the ages of 18 and 49 who are childless and not disabled.

Democratic attorney generals from 19 states including Massachusetts, who sued the federal government over the proposal, received a win Friday, March 13, when Washington, D.C. District Court Chief Judge Beryl A. Howell granted a preliminary injunction, blocking the new rules from going into effect while the court case continues.

In a memorandum opinion, Howell wrote, “Especially now, as a global pandemic poses widespread health risks, guaranteeing that government officials at both the federal and state levels have flexibility to address the nutritional needs of residents and ensure their well-being through programs like SNAP, is essential.”

Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey called the judge’s memorandum “a huge win for more than 16,000 people in Massachusetts who rely on SNAP benefits. This program provides basic food assistance for Americans and we will fight to protect it from inhumane actions.”

Contributed by By Benjamin Kail | bkail@masslive.com
SHARE FACTS ABOUT COVID-19

Know the facts about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and help stop the spread of rumors.

**FACT 1**
Diseases can make anyone sick regardless of their race or ethnicity.

Fear and anxiety about COVID-19 can cause people to avoid or reject others even though they are not at risk for spreading the virus.

**FACT 2**
For most people, the immediate risk of becoming seriously ill from the virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to be low.

Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for more serious complications from COVID-19.

**FACT 3**
Someone who has completed quarantine or has been released from isolation does not pose a risk of infection to other people.

For up-to-date information, visit CDC’s coronavirus disease 2019 web page.

**FACT 4**
There are simple things you can do to help keep yourself and others healthy.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

**FACT 5**
You can help stop COVID-19 by knowing the signs and symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Seek medical advice if you develop symptoms AND

- Have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or if you live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19.

[cdc.gov/COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID-19)
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Enclosed are membership dues for:

☐ $10 1-year individual  ☐ $15 1-year couple  ☐ $50 individual lifetime  ☐ $75 couple lifetime

NAME(s): __________________________________________________________________

ADDRESS: ______________________________________________________ APT #:_____

CITY: ___________________________________ STATE:________ ZIP:_____________

PHONE: __________________________ EMAIL: ___________________________________

☐ Yes, I would like all notices sent by email, instead of postal mail, including this quarterly newsletter.

Make checks payable to: MSAC
Mail to: Mass Senior Action, 108 Myrtle Street, Suite 112, Quincy, MA 02171

Contact Information:
Main Office/Eastern MA
108 Myrtle St. Suite 112
Quincy, MA 02171
617-284-1234
www.MassSeniorAction.org

Executive Director: Carolyn Villers
Cvillers@MassSeniorAction.org

Social Media:
Twitter: @SeniorActionMA
Facebook: www.facebook.com/MassSeniorAction

CONTRIBUTORS:
Edna Pruce - MSAC President
Carolyn Villers - MSAC Executive Director
Pam Edwards - MSAC Organizing Director
Zach Boyer - MSAC Organizer
Tracey Carpenter - MSAC Organizer
Brandon Gibbs - MSAC Outreach Specialist
Claudia Pérez - MSAC Organizer
Netanya Perluss - MSAC Organizer
Josie Hatuey - MSAC Organizer

STATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Edna Pruce, President
Kathy Paul, 1st Vice President
Linda Moore, 2nd Vice President
Rosa Bentley, Treasurer
John Ratliff, Secretary
Karen Lynch, Membership Coordinator

Chapter Meeting Information:

BOSTON CHAPTER
When: 2nd Thursday of the month at 11:30 pm
Location: Charles St. AME Church
551 Warren Street, Dorchester

CAMBRIDGE/ SOMERVILLE CHAPTER
When: 3rd Friday of the month at 11:30 pm
Location: Cambridge Senior Center
806 Mass Avenue, Cambridge

NORTH SHORE CHAPTER
When: 3rd Wednesday of the month at 10:30 am
Location: 10 Church Street, Lynn

METRO NORTH CHAPTER
When: 4th Wednesday of the month at 1:30 pm
Location: Malden Senior Community Center
7 Washington Street, Malden

GREATER SPRINGFIELD CHAPTER
When: 4th Wednesday of the month at 1:00 pm
Location: Springfield Hobby Club
309 Chestnut Street, Springfield

BRISTOL COUNTY CHAPTER
When: 4th Thursday of the month at 1:00 pm
Location: Greenwood Terrace,
Westport Housing Authority
666 State Road, Westport

NORTH SEACOAST AFFILIATE
Meetings paused. Members will receive monthly updates.
Hello Brothers and Sisters and The Social Justice Warriors:

Our quarterly newsletter comes to you at an unprecedented time in our history. The pandemic sweeping the country is the focus for us and our government officials.

As such, we must be vigilant to adhere to the warnings and follow the precautions set in place. I ask you all to be safe, stay at home as much as possible, and as always wash your hands.

The extraordinary MSAC staff will contact each MSAC member to hear what you are experiencing during this difficult time. We want to know how the social distancing is affecting you and if your basic needs are being met.

MSAC and our partners are working with state service providers to address any unmet needs.

As much as our focus is on this health crisis, I would be negligent in my role as your President if I did not bring your attention to The U.S. Federal Census which has begun.

Every ten years, the federal government takes a count of all residents. The result of this count determines the funding each state receives for the very services we fight for at MSAC.

I encourage you to fill out your Census. You can go to page 12-13 to find more information including an option to fill out the Census over the phone, on your computer or smartphone. Do not be worried about sharing this information. You are only asked your address and your birthday. This is to ensure people are not counted twice but that everyone is counted.

The MSAC staff is available to help you over the phone to assist you in entering the information for you. It will take approximately 2 minutes. It is just that easy.

Please be rest assured you are not in this alone. Our MSAC family will weather this storm together and our history shows that together we can overcome!

---

Staff Contact Info
For Assistance or More Information Please Call Us

Carolyn Villers .................................................................................... (617) 435-1926
Pam Edwards ..................................................................................... (781) 864-2596
Zach Boyer ......................................................................................... (508) 858-8167
Tracey Carpenter............................................................................... (413) 328-4659
Brandon Gibbs ................................................................................... (857) 212-2320
Josie Hatuey (Habla Español) ........................................................... (617) 413-0460
Claudia Pérez (Habla Español) ......................................................... (857) 236-5719
Netanya Perluss ................................................................................. (617) 501-7490

MISSION: As a democratic, grassroots, senior-run organization, Massachusetts Senior Action is committed to empowering seniors and others to act collectively to promote the rights and well-being of all people, but particularly vulnerable seniors.
As the nation braced itself for the full economic and social impact of the coronavirus pandemic, lawmakers and activists across the state and country have called for an immediate moratorium on evictions and foreclosures. Since many workers have faced reduced hours due to slower than usual business, forced closures, and unpaid sick leave, hourly and low-wage workers are worried about being able to pay all their bills at the end of the month, including rent or mortgage payments.

On Thursday, March 12th, US Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and US Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR) wrote a letter to President Trump urging him to issue an immediate, nationwide moratorium on all foreclosures and evictions from properties owned or insured by Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), Veterans Affairs (VA), or the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Housing Service (RHS), amid growing concerns of the economic ramifications of the novel coronavirus pandemic.

“A national moratorium is urgently needed to mitigate the hardship confronting many American workers who have already seen or will soon experience an unexpected and significant drop in income due to reduced consumer spending on tourism, travel, hospitality, entertainment, and many other service sectors where jobs cannot be easily performed in isolation or with a teleworking accommodation,” the senators wrote.

“Foreclosure and eviction moratoriums have previously been implemented in response to a variety of natural disasters including hurricanes, floods, and tornados,” the senators continued. “Considering that Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) has already proven to be equally or more disruptive, deadly, and widespread, the precedent for weather related natural disasters should inform our decision to restrict foreclosures and evictions in response to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) public health pandemic.”

At the state level, on March 13th the Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Housing Court ordered a delay of most non-emergency proceedings until April 22nd, a move that will postpone most eviction hearings. Following the court’s announcement, several major landlords and real estate groups in Boston have agreed to halt most evictions during the coronavirus emergency, a move which could last longer than the Housing Court order.

Seeking a more full moratorium for the duration of the crisis, State Rep. Mike Connolly and Rep. Kevin Honan filed legislation on March 13 to halt evictions and foreclosures in Massachusetts for the duration of the COVID-19 emergency. The bill number is HD.4935, and it is titled An Act Providing for a Moratorium on Evictions and Foreclosures During the COVID-19 Emergency. The legislation has been supported by many of MSAC’s coalition partners including City Life/Vida Urbana and Greater Boston Legal Services.

Members of tenants right organization City Life/Vida Urbana calling for all evictions to be postponed until the coronavirus pandemic passes.
Bridging the Gap Begins: Call For Your Application

From the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs & MassHealth

Medicare Savings Programs

Want to save money on your Medicare Coverage?

A new state law in Massachusetts is expanding several Medicare Savings Programs (also known as "MassHealth Buy-in" programs). These programs help older residents and people living with disabilities save money on their Medicare coverage.

If you are a Massachusetts resident with limited income and assets, who is eligible for Medicare, you may qualify for a Medicare Savings Program that will pay your monthly Medicare Part B premium, which is now deducted from your Social Security benefit. In certain cases, a Medicare Savings Program may also pay your out-of-pocket Medicare Part A and Part B costs and your Part A premium (if you have one).

Starting January 1, 2020 the income and asset limits for the Medicare Savings Programs are increasing, meaning more people will be able to get help paying for Medicare.

If you qualify for a Medicare Savings Program, you will also automatically qualify for Extra Help, a program that will help pay for your prescription drugs under Medicare.

3 Easy Steps To See If You Qualify

1. **Learn about the new income and asset limits:**
   - If your income and assets are at or below the amounts listed here, you may qualify for help from one of several Medicare Savings Programs.
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You are</th>
<th>Your income is at or below</th>
<th>And your assets are at or below</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Individual</td>
<td>$1,774/month</td>
<td>$15,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married Couple</td>
<td>$2,390/month</td>
<td>$23,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   *Note that these amounts reflect an increase from prior to 3/1/20

2. **Call MassHealth’s Customer Service Center by phone at 1-800-841-2900, or TTY at 1-800-497-4648, and request a simple, 2-page, “MassHealth Buy-In” application, or download one from: https://tinyurl.com/MassMSP**

3. **Apply: On or after January 1, 2020** submit your completed application to MassHealth to see if you qualify.

For more information see frequently asked questions on the back of the flyer, or call MassHealth’s Customer Service Center by phone at 1-800-841-2900, or TTY at 1-800-497-4648
We remain resolved to finish the bridge we started to affordable healthcare for Massachusetts seniors. In 2019, the legislature took a tremendous step forward to address the issue that 61% of Mass. elders living alone struggle to afford basic healthcare costs and are forced to make sacrifices elsewhere to get by (according to the The Massachusetts Elder Economic Security Index). That is why the goal of our 20/20 Vision is to leave no senior behind!

The sustained efforts of MSAC members have raised awareness to thousands of Mass seniors facing economic insecurity. MSAC mailed out hundreds of applications for the new Medicare Savings Program (MSP) and people are already seeing the savings. Boston member Sarah Blakeney shared at her chapter meeting, “The application is only 2 pages and is so easy to fill out. I am thrilled all of the efforts are paying off. This is really going to make a difference in my life and the life of so many seniors like me. We cannot stop here. We need to expand it further so others do not suffer from high healthcare costs.”

On January 29th, MSAC members held a statewide advocacy effort at the State House to voice our 2020 New Year’s resolution to make healthcare affordable for 56,000 more seniors by leveraging new federal money for Massachusetts and to expand the Medicare Savings Program (MSP) to 200%.

MSAC Springfield members met with Senator James Welch to discuss ways to partner locally to bring greater awareness to the new January 1, 2020 MSP expansion. The chapter is planning to host local events to acknowledge the state legislators’ support of the MSP expansion once they are able to do public events. Until then, MSAC staff will be contacting all MSAC members and service providers to make sure everyone who does qualify is receiving the new benefit.

At the meeting with Senator Welch, MSAC member Donna G. Seymour, a retired social worker for the state of 32 years, informed the Senator “as the cost of healthcare continues to increase, urgent measures are needed to be put in place to lessen the burden of those rising costs for seniors. Why do we have systemic qualification differences in social safety nets?” Donna, at age 75, faces extremely high medical costs with NO way to address the affordability issue. All seniors should be able to qualify for affordable healthcare.

Prior to the pandemic crisis, the Greater Springfield chapter continued its Vision 20/20 kick off campaign with a February 14th meeting with Senator Eric Lesser in his district. Senator Lesser assured the members that they have his support of the MSP expansion and that senior health care is also a priority in the State House. continued on pg. 9
He responded with great energy and enthusiasm that MSAC has his public support of MSAC’s Bridge the Gap legislation and vowed to help with local efforts to publicize the MSP expansion. These in-person meetings and personal stories are the keys to winning this expansion. If you think you might qualify for the Medicare Savings Plan, please call MSAC for an application at: (617) 284-1234.

Newly Qualified Members Already See Savings from Medicare Savings Program
Short Application Makes Applying Easier

Our very own Bristol County chapter president Fran Hutchinson recently qualified for the Medicare Savings Program. In total, Fran says she will save about $250 a month from her Medicare part B ($144.60) and part D (~$100) prescription savings. Before she qualified for the Medicare Savings Program, she would spend over $125 a month on her Medicare part D prescription copays, now her monthly cost is about $30.

Fran applied for the Medicare Savings Program immediately when the applications were made available at the beginning of the new year. The 1 page front-and-back form took about 5 minutes to fill out, and in 2 weeks she received notice that her Medicare part D was covered. Although the Medicare part B notice took about 6 weeks to reach her, she got paid retroactively from the time that she applied. She said her best advice for those who pay Medicare costs but do not qualify for Medicaid/Masshealth, “Do the math on what you’d save”.

Although Fran did not qualify for the Senior Buy-In option (< $1,374 monthly income), which would have put her prescription costs even lower, she did qualify for the regular Buy-In (< $1,738). Fran feared that she may lose other benefits such as SNAP coverage, but saw no change in her other benefits.

The savings that Fran has received from the Medicare Savings Program have allowed her to go see specialists that she was previously unable to afford, such as the rheumatologist, dentist, etc. When asked about expanding the Medicare Savings Program from 165% of the Federal Poverty Level to 200%, she said “The Medicare Savings Program is a great legislative public investment, for each dollar that the state spends on this program, they receive seven dollars in return, not a cost, but an investment; it helps keep people healthy and is worth investing into the expansion.”

Bristol County President Fran Hutchinson testifies before the Healthcare Finance Committee at the State House - Expand MSP- leave no senior behind!
Springfield Members Continue Transportation Fight
Access For All is The Goal

The MSAC Greater Springfield chapter announced the city would begin limited transportation to the new Raymond A. Jordan Senior Cen. This transit plan came after two years of MSAC activists pushing the city to meet the transport needs once the city closed neighborhood senior centers after opening the new citywide center.

At the present, Springfield seniors can be picked up at their homes to attend the Raymond A. Jordan Senior Center on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. However, seating is limited and available on a first come, first serve basis by reservation. To secure and schedule a ride two to three days in advance--one must call the reservation line at: (413) 575-0443.

Springfield Chapter President, Mattie Lacewell, feels this is a great first step towards addressing the need for an affordable option for Springfield seniors but it does not fully address the entire commuting issue. She has found many in the community who are unaware that limited transport is even available. President Lacewell explained, “While we are very happy with the city’s initial transportation option, we want all Springfield seniors who want to attend to be able to access the center.”

Our goal remains and we will not be satisfied until ALL Springfield seniors have a reliable yet affordable means to get to the center. There are many seniors in the City who need assistance and right now the current pilot program does not address them, leaving many with the costly PVTA senior van as their only option for movement from point A to point B.

The Coronavirus crisis has interrupted our transportation advocacy at the present. Nevertheless, during this pandemic, we will continue to work with city leaders to ensure that the community’s basic needs are met and we will not stop our efforts until all Springfield seniors are able to access the new center.

MSAC members outside of Springfield City Hall demanding affordable transportation or seniors.

Consumer Protection Information and Contact Numbers

2. Department of Public Health Division of Health Care Quality Complaint Line: 800-462-5540
4. Division of Insurance, Consumer Service Unit: 617-521-7794
People Power is Needed More Now Than Ever

It has been 10 years since the United States Supreme Court ruled that corporations and unions can spend unlimited amounts of money on elections so long as they are not in direct contact with campaigns. The Citizens United VS FEC ruling has flooded election gates with dark money. Under the disguise of free speech, wealthy donors and dubious characters can hide their contributions to candidates through political action committees (PACs).

According to a recent article published in The Hill, a non-partisan news website, during the 2018 election the top 100 individual donors like the Koch Brothers accounted for 662 million dollars of super PAC donations, whereas corporations accounted for 7% or 71 million and unions accounted for 8%.

Moreover, due to weak campaign finance laws, these action committees are not required to be honest in how they interact with the public. PACS are free to portray candidates however they like, as long as they do not tell people how to vote. Unsurprisingly, the amount of negative advertisements have spiked since the Citizens United ruling. What is most troubling is that party leaders like Mitch McConnell often coordinate with political actions committees, giving more power to party leaders and the wealthy but less to everyday voters.

It is a sinking feeling to know that our elected leaders can be brought and integrity is not valued. Despite this, all is not lost. Across the country people are recognizing the threat of excess money in our elections and are fighting back. In 2015, the people of Seattle pushed and passed a ballot initiative which gives every voter $100 to support the candidate of their choosing so as to level the playing field against big money donors. The following year, Sen. Bernie Sanders eschewed PAC money for grassroots donations and nearly became the Democratic nominee for president. Progressive candidates like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Ayanna Pressley toppled deeply funded and long-standing incumbents with grassroot campaigns in by part promising campaign finance reforms. Here in Massachusetts, voters forced a ballot initiative commissioning a constitutional amendment study on campaign finance reform.

Campaign finance reform is within reach. We have already elected the most diverse and progressive Congress to date. At the state and local levels, people are demanding more from their governments because those with money should not be able to dictate our lives. People power will prevail but only if we fight for our democracy. Contact your local Mass Senior Action organizer to learn what MSAC is doing to fight against big money and how you can get involved. When we fight, we win!
WHAT Is it? A count of Us!
The census is a count of everyone living in the United States. This mandatory count is required by the United States Constitution.

WHO Should be counted? Everyone!
The population of the United States must be counted. This includes people of all ages, races, ethnic groups, citizens, and non-citizens. The Census Bureau is bound by Title 13 of the United States Code, which means federal law protects the personal information you provide during the census.

WHEN does it begin? Now!
The federal census is conducted every 10 years. You will receive census information prior to Census Day April 1, 2020. The federal census is different than your annual street listing, which is sent every year by the city or town in which you reside.

WHY should I be counted?
It is important!
The data collected during the federal census determines federal funding for your community, your community’s representation in Congress, and planning decisions made in your community. The last census calculations granted Massachusetts $22,849,016,142. These funds help our Senior Centers, Medicaid Health and Food Assistance Programs, as well as our Education just to name a few.

HOW can I be counted?
Online, phone, or mail – it is easy or call MSAC (see box for numbers)
The U.S. Census Bureau will send a letter inviting you to go online and complete your census form if you can. Do not worry if you do not have internet access – you can respond by phone or mail, too. It takes approximately 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The online questionnaire will be available in 13 non-English languages (Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic, Tagalog, Polish, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese and Japanese). Help will also be available by phone in some of these languages.

IS CENSUS DATA CONFIDENTIAL? ABSOLUTELY!
Your answers are protected by law (Title 13 of the U.S. Code, Section 9) and are strictly confidential. It is illegal for the Census Bureau, or its employees, to share your personal information with any other government agency, including: local law enforcement, IRS, Health and Human Services (HHS), FBI, ICE, etc.
Not even the President of the United States can access your individual responses.

Data from the Census determine OVER $16 BILLION in federal funding to Massachusetts every year for Medicare, Medicaid, education, housing, public transportation, and more.

Data from the 2020 Census will determine CRITICAL DECISIONS on voting districts, political representation, and civil rights laws.

For every person not counted in the Census, Massachusetts loses $2,372 PER YEAR in federal funding.
**How Does the Census Affect Me?**

**Census Affects Funding in Your Community** • Census data directly affects how more than $675 billion per year in federal and state funding is allocated to communities for neighborhood improvements, public health, education, transportation, and much more. Spending just a few minutes to fill out your census form will help ensure your community gets its fair share of federal and state funding.

**Census Affects Your Voice in Congress** • The number of representatives in Congress is determined by the number of residents in Massachusetts in relation to the number of residents in the United States. Currently, we have 9 U.S. Representatives – in order to preserve our representation, we must ensure that everyone is counted so Massachusetts maintains its strong voice in Congress.

**Census Affects Your Power in the Electoral College** • The population count, as determined by census data, affects how many votes Massachusetts has in the Electoral College.

**Census Affects Your Representation in State and Local Government** • Federal census data is used to define legislative districts, school district assignment areas and other important areas of government.

**The Census Provides Important Information Used for Local Decision-Making** • The census is a snapshot that helps define who we are as a nation. Data about changes in your community are crucial to many planning decisions, such as where to provide services for the elderly, where to build new roads and schools, or where to locate job training centers.

---

**The 2020 Census can be completed online and over the phone when invitations go out. The traditional paper form will still be distributed, but only after a household has failed to respond via internet or phone. Here are some important things to remember:**

- The Census Bureau will never ask for your Social Security number, a bank account, or payment of any kind. Do not be fooled by anyone threatening you for money or personal information via mail, phone, text, email, etc.
- Your information is safe and secure – over the internet, by phone, or by paper. The Census Bureau will never release your personalized information to any government agency by the U.S. Title XIII Code.
- You will eventually receive a regular paper form. The initial Census mailing will direct you to fill out your form online or over the phone, as this is more cost-effective than sending out mailings. Eventually you will be sent a paper form, which you can fill out and send back if you are more comfortable responding by mail.
- The information on your census form will not affect your insurance or tax standing. It is purely for demographic/statistical data.
- If you live in a vacation or winter home part of the year, you must fill out your census form where you reside most of the time.
Seniors in Action!

Above: After winning back the funding for the senior center, North Shore members met with Lynn Mayor Tom McGee and Lynn City Councilors Chakoutis and Starbard to discuss plans for the new center including location and services. Our Center! Our Taxes!

Two above: The newly elected chapter boards of MSAC gathered in Quincy at the end of February for an officer training where they connected with members from across the state.

MSAC members from the six chapters met to strategize next steps to expand MSP.

Boston member Sarah Blakeney speaking at the MSP kick-off event in Roxbury.

Newly elected chapter secretaries and treasurers participate in a workshop with MSAC staff organizer Tracey Carpenter.
**Meet The Members**

*Mary Napolitano, Cambridge/Somerville Chapter*

Since joining Mass Senior Action two and half years ago, Mary Napolitano has been a fixture at MSAC. Mary has attended countless rallies, strategy sessions and chapter meetings. Recently, Mary decided to step up and run for the Cambridge/Somerville vice president slot after being asked by chapter members who noticed her dedication in the fight for social justice.

Mary represents the take charge attitude that defines Senior Action. After retiring from the North Suffolk Mental Health Association as a Senior Residential Counselor, Mary attended the MSAC Senior Health forum at St. Joseph’s Church in Somerville. There she discovered she would fall off the senior healthcare cliff when she turned 65 if nothing was done, because she would be over the income limit for state assistance. Instead of accepting higher deductibles and higher premiums that come with age, Mary took charge. She testified at hearings, zig-zagged across the statehouse sharing her story with lawmakers and encouraged others to speak out. Thanks to Mary and MSAC members like her, 40,000 seniors across the commonwealth are now eligible for extended Medicare Savings Program (MSP) benefits. As soon as Mary turned 65, she knew she would have to jump through hoops to get her benefits. Armed with the information and tools she learned at her MSAC meetings and workshops, Mary made the necessary calls and scuttled past hospital stays. Her efforts allowed her to get her benefits. During this time, her involvement with MSAC did not waver. She participated in actions at the statehouse for the MSP extension, stood in solidarity with members as they testified to increase SNAP access, and is sharing her involvement at outreaches to build membership so more issues can be tackled. Mary summed up why MSAC members are so successful at making positive change, “Why depend on others to change when I can be part of it?” Mary encourages all of you to add your voice and “Do not take it, Take charge!”

---

**Intergenerational Organizing**

MSAC members and teens from the Boston Student Advisory Council met and brainstormed strategies for achieving greater transit justice.
Most Americans, Including Social Security Recipients, Eligible for $1200 Stimulus Check

Federal lawmakers enacted a $2 trillion economic stimulus package Friday that will send most Americans checks of up to $1,200, as a way to put money directly in the pockets of families struggling to manage the economic fallout of the coronavirus pandemic.

The legislation will give single adults who reported adjusted gross income of $75,000 or less on their 2019 tax returns a one-time check for $1,200, according to draft legislation. Married couples who filed jointly will receive $2,400. Families will get an additional $500 for each child.

Advocates worked to ensure that individuals who are collecting Social Security benefits for retirement, disability or Supplemental Security Income will be eligible for the stimulus checks, based on their tax returns or Social Security Administration data.

If you are receiving Social Security benefits but didn’t file taxes in 2018 or 2019, you will be eligible to receive a stimulus check without a tax return based on data available to the IRS from your annual Social Security benefits statement. The government will send you a direct deposit or check using the information from your Form SSA-1099 Social Security Benefit Statement or your Form RRB-1099 Social Security Equivalent Benefit Statement. You will not have to file a 2019 tax return to get a stimulus check.

Who qualifies for a stimulus check?

The size of the check will decrease based on income for individuals who earned more than $75,000 based on their tax return for last year (or their 2018 return if they have not filed yet). The rebate check for individuals will shrink by $5 for every $100 earned over $75,000.

For couples who filed jointly, the reduction will start once they earn more than $150,000; for heads of household, at $112,500.

Individuals who earned more than $99,000 and couples who earned more than $198,000 jointly will not receive checks.

According to the law, people who do not receive Social Security benefits and also do not typically file taxes because their income is very low will need to file a 2019 tax return in order to receive a stimulus check. That may be a challenge for some, however, because many services that help low-income taxpayers file tax returns for free have suspended in-person operations to deter the spread of the coronavirus. Most low-income taxpayers are eligible to file tax returns online for free through the IRS Free File program.