

CAPSule

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Science Competitions Produce Future Scientists

CAPS has for many years promoted science education through its Outstanding Young Scientist Competition. This starts with CAPS volunteers selecting a winner from each of the 14 regional fairs statewide. Each winner competes to become the CAPS Outstanding Young Scientist for the year.

One of these regional fairs is cosponsored by CAPS, the Sacramento Regional Science and Engineering Fair, held this year on March 26 and 27 at Rosemont High School in Sacramento.

Davis High School senior Madeline Sides won first place at the Sacramento Fair. Sides' winning project, "A Multipronged Investigation of the Amphibian Pathogen *Batrachochytrium Dendrobatidis*," investigates this emerging infectious disease so that the spread can be slowed and species of threatened amphibians can be saved. Sides has been accepted to Stanford and other top universities.

Angela Yeung, a senior at Davis High School, was named the second place winner for her project titled "Distributed Learning for Dynamic Spectrum Sharing in Cognitive Radio Networks" which investigates interactions between distributed secondary users in a spatially heterogeneous environment to develop high-performance networking policies with low complexity. Yeung will attend Stanford next year.

Shyamal Buch, a freshman at Vista Del Lago High School, was named the third place winner for his project titled "Nanowire Solar Cells" in which he built new, low cost, environmentally friendly solar cells and designed an instrument to measure them.

The top team award went to Folsom High School juniors Rohit Talreja and Mark Rupasinghe for their project titled "Using Algae as a Bio-Fuel" which was to test whether a combustible bio-fuel could be created from algae.



Davis High School Senior Madeline Sides, (right) with 2010 SRSEF Awards Ceremony Emcee Adrienne Bankert

The second place team award went to Anshum Sood, Naman Gupta and Anuhya Ghorakavi, seniors at Folsom High School. Their project titled "Remote Ischemic Preconditioning" evaluated the effect of RIPC on bleeding time and platelet aggregation in human subjects over a seven day time course as alterations in coagulation state may influence stroke risk/outcome.

These top winners now advance to the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair in San Jose, California the week of May 8-14, 2010.

The Fair's organizing sponsors include CAPS, the Intel Corporation, PEGG, Liberty Mutual, Aerojet, SMUD and many others.

California State Scientists ... Knowledge, Innovation, Protection

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Retirement Under ATTACK



Retirement benefits for public employees are being challenged and criticized seemingly from every quarter. Local government is busy negotiating new lower "second tier" formulas for new hires, and conservative commentators nationwide are criticizing what they consider to be overly generous retirement benefits, and the entire concept of retirement based on a defined "benefit." Blown budgets up and down the state are being blamed on "greedy" public employees.

One thing is certain: the California Supreme Court in the past has set the precedent that once earned, retirement is a property right that can't be taken away without providing another benefit of equal value. In other words, the current retirement formula for current employees is about as secure as any financial promise can be.

These days, all such promises seem to be transparent, but not this one. The retirement formula for a CalPERS member is about as good as it gets. Even the Governor recognizes this,

because his proposal would apply only to new hires. CAPS is opposing the Governor's unilateral changes through the budget process, and instead continues to insist that change proposals be made at the bargaining table. Governor Schwarzenegger seems to figure that his chances are better dealing directly with the State Legislature, and he may be right. After all, he got his way during the interim budget deal during February 2008 when the legislature agreed to eliminate two holidays (Lincoln's Birthday and Columbus Day), and to change the formula for calculating overtime.

CAPS and other groups are urging state lawmakers to reject another end run of the collective bargaining process. So far, Democratic leaders have agreed and told the Governor to take his proposals to the bargaining table. Of course the critical time comes when the pressures of a budget settlement comes to bear. That won't be until this summer.

CAPS is working hard now, and will remain vigilant throughout the budget process. Stay tuned, because CAPS will keep all members informed, and, at some point, ask for your help.



State Scientist Day Set for May 19

For the last 21 years, CAPS has sponsored State Scientist Day on the west steps of the State Capitol. This year is no different, with booths and hands-on demonstrations from dozens of state departments. The supporting cast consists of state scientists and other supportive employees. Crowding the grounds are thousands of students from grade schools near and far, all excited for a fun-filled field trip to the State Capitol. State scientists don't disappoint, with kid-friendly interactive displays showcasing the essential work of state scientists.



to participate in the event. It's not only good public relations, but an important part of promoting state scientists with key decision makers. Best of all, it's lots of fun for the kids and everyone involved!

Thanks to the many departments which year after year have supported State Scientist Day with time and materials from their scientific staff. The departments scheduled to participate this year include the following: ARB, Cal EPA, CCC, CDF, CDFA, CDPH, CDPR, DFG, DOC, DTSC, OEHHA, Parks, CalRecycle, SCIF, SLC, and SWRCB.



CAPS organizes the whole thing, and typically brings state lawmakers and other public officials

MINIMUM WAGE OUTRAGE

by *Patty Velez, President*



Is this some kind of cruel joke?

After 18 months of mandatory furloughs, and a 15% pay cut, Governor Schwarzenegger is working hard to ensure that all state employees receive no more than federal minimum wage in the event there isn't a budget deal in place on July 1. That's \$7.25 per hour!

We have seen it coming, a distant train light in the darkness. CAPS has been working to avoid the collision for eight years. We've sponsored legislation each of the last four sessions, sometimes repeatedly, to ensure that state scientists and all state employees get a full and timely paycheck.

It was the Howard Jarvis Taxpayer's Association that first sued to prevent state employees from getting paid at all during the budget stalemate. A lower court ruled in that case that state employees would be considered "volunteers" if the legislature failed to adopt a timely budget, and not paid at ALL. The state Supreme Court overruled, finding that state employees WOULD get paid, but the amount would be limited to the federal minimum wage, currently \$7.25 per hour. The Supreme Court also ruled employees would receive their full wages once the budget is passed.

That started CAPS on a long campaign to have compensation for state scientists and all state employees budgeted as a continuous appropriation. This would guarantee full and on-time paycheck irrespective of budget status. Unfortunately, the journey has taken much longer than we would like, and it's still not over.

Democrats, long our allies on many budget issues, didn't support the continuous appropriation. They wanted state scientists in the same boat as all others who depend on having a timely state budget adopted. This,

they say, helps bring maximum pressure to bear for a budget settlement—they like the idea of everyone screaming loudly for an end to the budget pain. Yet this logic ignores the obvious. Budget stalemates can drag on for months no matter whose ox is getting gored, and state employees should be paid for work performed. Failing to pay is irresponsible and immoral. It also risks financial ruin for tens of thousands of working families.

It wasn't until earlier this year that Democratic leaders—Assembly Speaker Karen Bass and Senate Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg—finally made a priority of passage of CAPS' continuous appropriation for employee compensation. So far, our legislation, AB 790 (Hernandez D—Los Angeles), hasn't passed the Senate floor because Republicans now won't vote for it. Like everything else, this urgent bill has become cannon fodder in the partisan bickering typical of the state capitol.

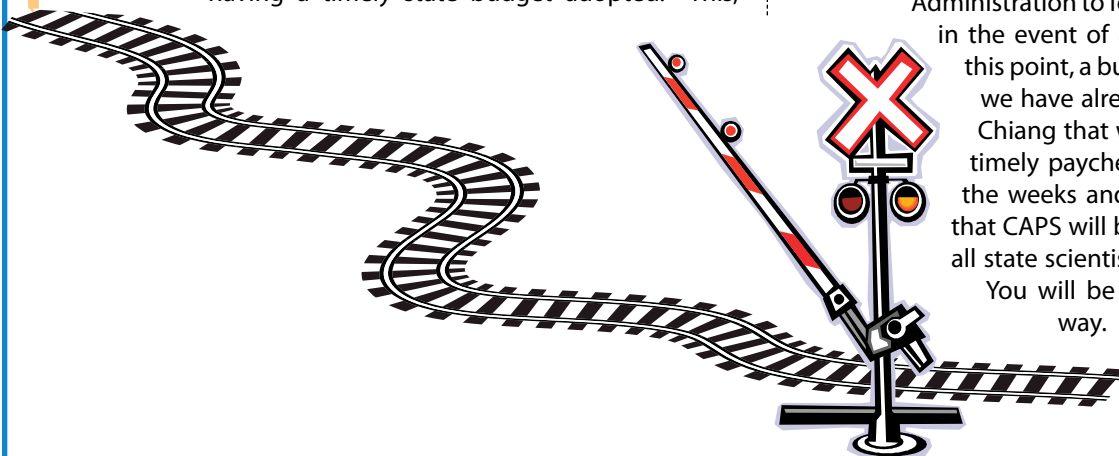
Our motto has long been "Paychecks In Full and On Time." That's what we expect and that's what we deserve. Our paychecks should NOT be held hostage by the governor or the legislature because THEY can't reach agreement. What's more, state lawmakers and the Governor risk shutting down state government, because at minimum wage levels, many state employees will finally have enough incentive to stay home rather than come to work.

The State Controller has been a pivotal player in this unfolding drama: Gray Davis, Kathleen Connell and now John Chiang. All of them have issued full paychecks during the budget crisis, contending the state's computer does not allow them to readily reduce pay checks to minimum wage levels.

Current Controller John Chiang—a good friend to CAPS—is under a recent court order brought by the Schwarzenegger Administration to force him to pay minimum wage

in the event of another budget stalemate. At this point, a budget stalemate looks likely. Yet we have already made it clear to Controller Chiang that we expect him to issue full and timely paychecks. As this drama unfolds in the weeks and months to come, be assured that CAPS will be there fighting to ensure that all state scientists are paid in full and on time.

You will be kept well informed along the way.



In This Issue

- *Science Competitions Produce Future Scientists*
- *Retirement Benefits Under Attack*
- *State Scientist Day Set for May 19*
- *Minimum Wage Outrage, by Patty Velez, President*

More CAPS Grants

During these difficult economic times, CAPS continues to fund a quarterly grants program which promotes professional development among its members. Four state scientists are randomly selected each quarter to receive a \$400 grant to fund professional development. "Professional development" typically involves travel to a professional conference or involvement in some other activity that enhances a scientist in his or her field of expertise. Below are the winners for the first quarter of 2010. You can apply for a CAPS grant too. Simply download an application from the CAPS webpage.



Staff Toxicologist Kimberly Day of the Department of Toxic Substances Control in Sacramento will use her grant to offset expenses to attend the Society of Toxicology conference in Baltimore Maryland and make a team poster presentation in March 2010.



Staff Environmental Scientist Leah Gardner of the Department of Conservation in Sacramento will use her grant to offset expenses in attending the Desert Revegetation workshop at the annual conference of the Society for Ecological Resources in Mammoth Lakes during May 2010.



Environmental Scientist Chris Carr of the Water Resources Control Board in Sacramento will apply his grant to costs associated with obtaining his Master of Science degree from Sacramento State University.



Associate Health Physicist Shelley Cole will use her grant to attend the annual meeting of the Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors in Newport, Rhode Island held in April 2010.

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