

CAPS Resumes Traditional Bargaining

CAPS met 20 times with state negotiators using the collaborative process to reach agreement on a new labor contract. That process involved a third party “mediator” to explore solutions to mutually held interests. The process broke down when the state could not or would not fund intermediate salary increases to close well documented salary lags for most state scientists.

The CAPS Bargaining Team last met with state negotiators on Friday, October 31. CAPS made 20 written proposals, including salary parity for all state scientists. CAPS proposed reasonable increases and business and travel expenses, equal health plan contributions by the state for all state scientists, and elimination of the “defined contribution” alternative retirement program for newly hired state scientists. For a complete list of proposals made by CAPS, go to the CAPS webpage: www.capsscscientists.org.

CAPS' Proposals at a Glance:

- CAPS is proposing an increase in the amount the state can reimburse a state scientist for membership in a job related professional society.
- CAPS is proposing an incentive of up to \$300 a month for scientists who obtain a Master's or Doctoral degree not required as a condition of their employment.
- CAPS has proposed that scientists employed in urban areas receive a 10 percent geographic pay differential.
- In order to stem the rising tide of retirements, and in recognition that there are too few scientists being hired, CAPS is proposing a modest longevity bonus to reward those who choose to continue working.

The CAPS Bargaining Team also objected to the state's neglect of essential programs that protect the environment, public health and many other areas vital to the health and safety of all Californians. State negotiators were told that they have ignored state scientists for far too long. Now California is in the midst of a financial calamity that could hasten the retirement of scientists, as they see little hope of salary growth in the coming years. In fact, the prospect of a pay cut could prompt a wave of retirements and actually increase costs to the state for cashing out large banks of unused leave credits.

The state's negotiators had no substantive response to CAPS' proposals.

The next bargaining session is November 24. CAPS remains committed to protecting the jobs of state scientists and to ensure a living wage and reliable benefits. CAPS will also entertain proposals from the state to cut its expenses in light of the latest bad financial news. CAPS will strongly oppose the Governor's unilateral efforts to impose unpaid furloughs and loss of benefits.



Good Science Returns to the White House

Editor's Note: President Elect Barack Obama recently wrote to a union president pledging to support sound science. This is his verbatim October 20, 2008 letter:



"I am writing to share my views with you regarding the importance of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in an Obama Administration."

"The mission of the EPA is to protect the environment of the nation. In recent years, however, the pursuit of this goal has slowed, and in some cases, has been jeopardized outright. This is due to the failed leadership of the past eight years, despite the strong and ongoing commitment of the career individuals throughout this agency. During the same period, inadequate funding for the EPA has resulted in the ineffective allocation of resources, thus weakening enforcement and oversight of many environmental laws and regulations that protect the American people."

"That's why I am committed to pursuing greater funding for the EPA so that its responsibilities are carried out. Clean water, land and air, and ensuring the health and safety of our citizens, especially children, will be high priorities in an Obama Administration."

"In addition, EPA was established to be the nation's leader in environmental science, research, and education – yet these are the three fields which have been damaged by politics and ideology. I strongly oppose attempts by the Bush Administration to thwart publication of EPA researcher's scientific findings, as well as the attempt to eliminate the agency's library system. In an Obama Administration, the principle of scientific integrity will be an absolute, and I will never sanction any attempt to subvert the work of scientists."

"Thank you for all you and your members do for America, and for the protection of our environment."

Barack Obama

CalPERS 2008 Member Statements Online

Active and inactive members of the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) receive their 2008 annual member statements this month in the mail, but they can also view the statements online on the CalPERS Online Web site: www.calpers.ca.gov.

CalPERS annual member statements contain information related to the status of a member's retirement account such as the amount of accrued CalPERS retirement service credit from current and past CalPERS-covered employers, the retirement benefit formula of current and past CalPERS employers and the amount of total member contributions, including interest.

In order to view statements online, members must have a "myCalPERS" account. If a member is not yet registered, they

can do so by going to the CalPERS Online home page and selecting "Access my CalPERS." Once registered, members can view and print statements for the last three years. They also can choose to "Go Green" and opt out of receiving future statements by mail.

State Alternate Retirement Program (ARP) members do not receive a CalPERS annual member statement until they have completed 24 months of employment and begin making CalPERS retirement contributions. For ARP members, annual statements are posted online in the first November following the date the member completes 24 months of employment.



Arnold's "Hair Cut"

By Patty Velez, President

First there was the hair cut for President Bill Clinton on a Los Angeles tarmac that snarled air traffic for hours.

Then there was the \$400 hair cut for John Edwards that cost him dearly in his run for the presidency.

Now Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger wants all of **US** to get a hair cut. This one involves eliminating two state holidays and requiring state employees to take an unpaid day of leave every month through June 2010. Arnold says these take-backs are necessary "under the auspices of everyone getting a little hair cut."

In keeping with his rather awkward metaphor (I don't go to a barber), state scientists have endured repeated hair cuts over the last several years, and we haven't liked any of them -- increased work loads, inadequate salary increases, high turnover, and poor morale.

Just a couple of months ago the legislature finally passed a budget everyone knew was a sham, and Governor Schwarzenegger signed it! In fact, the Legislative Analyst is now projecting the state's General Fund deficit will be nearly \$28 billion over the next 20 months! The Analyst says that "...the state's revenue collapse is so dramatic and the underlying economic factors are so weak that we forecast huge budget shortfalls through 2013-14 absent corrective action. From 2010-11 through 2013-14, we project annual shortfalls that are consistently in the range of \$22 billion."

Ouch! This is a very serious situation indeed. Yet CAPS must oppose another "hair cut" for several reasons.

First, not everyone is getting one. Convenient targets include educators, the aged, the blind, disabled and, of course, state employees. We are easy, convenient and symbolic targets. But most other government employees, including those working for the universities and local government, will apparently be keeping all of their hair.



The governor has been generous to some.

While the hair of state scientists has consistently been cropped very close, Governor Schwarzenegger has delivered sizable salary increases to other state employee groups, including those in public safety and engineering.

There isn't any real savings.

State scientists represent a small part of state government. We are almost entirely funded out of Special Funds. Imposing unpaid furloughs and making other cuts generates virtually no savings to the budget. This is pure symbolism, reminiscent of the "psychic rewards" that

former Governor Jerry Brown said state employees should be happy with. I don't need hair cuts or psychic rewards from my employer. What I need is a fair wage for an honest day's work.

***"I don't need hair cuts
or psychic rewards
from my employer."***

The Governor must negotiate.

Collective bargaining hasn't done much for us lately, but at least it requires the governor to meet and negotiate before imposing unpaid furloughs or eliminating holidays. After all, we have been in negotiations with Governor Schwarzenegger for over eight

months without any mention of cuts.

I'm certainly not anxious to jump in the barber's chair now.

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Fourth Quarter CAPS Grants



CAPS awards four \$300 grants each quarter to deserving state scientists. These grants help advance professional development, especially when state funding is so limited. You can apply for a quarterly grant on the CAPS webpage: www.capsscientists.org.



Staff Toxicologist Kimiko Klein, Ph. D. of the Department of Toxic Substances Control in Sacramento used her grant to attend the 28th International Symposium on Halogenated Persistent Organic Pollutants that was held in Birmingham, England during August 2008.



Research Scientist III David J. Reynen of the Department of Public Health in Sacramento used his grant to attend the 136th Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association in San Diego during October.



Staff Toxicologist Beckye Stanton of the Department of Fish and Game Office of Spill Prevention and Response used her grant to help cover expenses in attending the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry North America meeting in Tampa Bay, Florida during November 2008. Ms. Stanton submitted a poster abstract on cadmium toxicity to birds.



Industrial Hygiene Consultant Tuan Nguyen of the State Compensation Insurance Fund used the CAPS grant to attend the 2008 American Industrial Hygiene Conference in Minneapolis last summer.

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