



July 1, 2009

Honorable Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Third Furlough Day

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

It pains me greatly to see a third furlough day implemented unilaterally on state scientists and all state employees. It pains me mostly because we simply can't afford it. We have commitments for the things that fuel this economy and have us living under solid roofs, not canvas tents: mortgages, rent, water, gas and electricity, food, car payments, tuition, etc. With few exceptions, we are not prepared to take a 14 percent financial hit out of the blue. Many of my colleagues will be forced to eat up what little savings they have, borrow from friends and relatives, and/or declare bankruptcy. A good portion of the state work force will be relegated to the ranks of the working poor. This is unprecedented and unwarranted.

State scientists continue to work long hours to get the important work done for the people of California. We do this work primarily for the love of it, but OUR bills must be paid too. Last Friday, you announced the possibility of a third day of furlough unless state lawmakers passed your version of a state budget. This pretty clearly makes state scientists collateral damage in a battle in which we have no control. In fact many state lawmakers would have you cut our salaries even more because they are committed to strangling government no matter what. They WANT you to hurt us. This is unfair to the dedicated civil servants that work for you, and a misread of the political landscape. This "beat down" of state scientists and all state employees feeds into the pitchfork and torch mentality that would blame public employees for California's fiscal problems.

Our members work long hours to process Swine Flu specimens. They make important contributions to greener living in California, including curbs on the emissions that fuel global warming. Scientists safeguard our food and water, protect threatened and endangered species in California and in our coastal waters, we identify and protect our state's cultural and archeological treasures, among many other things. Our members do this work because they are committed, career public servants.

We have also regularly contributed to the budget solutions when the state has fallen into economic hard times. These "hard times" have occurred with increasing frequency in recent years. But your approach puts an undue burden on state scientists and all state employees. You subject us to repeated pay cuts – which we believe to be illegal – you ignore the collective bargaining process, and you seek to radically restructure the compensation program for state scientists in a way that will make it increasingly difficult to hire and retain the next generation of career state scientists.

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We urge you to reconsider your actions here, and to consider the undue financial impact your mandates are having on the lives of our members, real people who serve California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patty Velez", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Patty Velez
President