

# CAPSule

E-Mail CAPS at: [caps@capsscientists.org](mailto:caps@capsscientists.org)

Website: [www.capsscientists.org](http://www.capsscientists.org)

October 2012, Issue #12-10

## 2012 Outstanding Young Scientist

On September 21 CAPS recognized three of California's Outstanding Young Scientists at an awards luncheon in Sacramento. Vista del Lago High School Senior Shyamal Buch of Folsom took top honors. Buch's project, titled "Beyond The Nanostructure in Solar Cells" studied new ways to make improved solar cells by analyzing their inner mechanisms. Several commercial patents are pending on this project.

The other finalists were Anjini Karthik, a freshman at Saint Francis High School in Sunnyvale, and Aradhana Sinha, a senior at Salinas High School. The CAPS leaders and members who judged the contestants were amazed at the high level of knowledge, work ethic and presentation skills displayed by each of the young scientists. Judging results were announced after the three finalists presented their projects to a group of CAPS directors and staff, and their parents.

As CAPS' Outstanding Young Scientist for 2012, Mr. Buch received a \$1,000 scholarship. Ms. Karthik and Ms. Sinha each received a \$500 scholarship. All finalists also received a memento from CAPS. The awards were presented by CAPS Public Relations Chair Valerie Chenoweth-Brown.



Pictured (left to right) are CAPS Director Marty Berbach, 2012 Outstanding Young Scientist Shyamal Buch, runners-up Anjini Karthik and Aradhana Sinha, CAPS Director Valerie Chenoweth-Brown and President David Miller

## Air Time Evaporates 2013

Assembly Bill 340 was signed into law by Governor Brown on September 12. It changes retirement law for all California public employees, with many provisions applying just to new hires. Some of the more



significant changes include a maximum pension amount for new hires based on social security (this year \$110,100). Minimum and maximum retirement age for new hires is increased. Retirement formulas are reduced for new hires as well. Calculation of retirement is based on the three highest years of compensation rather than the single highest year—again, for new hires only. Perhaps most significantly, it requires ALL employees to contribute fully half of the "normal" cost of their retirement. Most of these "reforms" have already been adopted for state employees via collective bargaining. The three year average was adopted for state scientists in 2007, for example.

AB 340 addresses what's called "spiking." This is a practice that has enabled some public employees — usually high paid executives and managers — to increase their compensation during their final years of service in order to artificially inflate their retirement annuity payment. This practice is unethical but difficult to stop for those determined to game the system. CalPERS outlawed spiking for state employees long ago.

AB 340 includes the purchase of service credit ("Air Time") as a form of spiking and makes it illegal starting January 2013. Air Time is time that is not actually worked, but rather purchased at a rate that is established by actuaries to be cost neutral for taxpayers. Nevertheless, many critics view Air Time as a means to get a lifetime benefit at taxpayers' expense. But what is illegal after January 2013 is available

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## AIR TIME EVAPORATES 2013

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until then. So if any state scientist is considering the purchase of up to five years of Air Time, that application must be submitted to CalPERS on or before December 31, 2012. The application does not obligate the actual purchase of Air Time, but it does preserve the right to do so.

Online applications produce an estimate with use of an online calculator. This helps the purchaser make an informed decision based on a cost/benefit analysis. If a member request is date stamped at CalPERS on or prior to December 31, 2012, that request will be honored. CalPERS promises to acknowledge requests promptly, and to produce a cost estimate by May 2013. One aspect of the Air Time benefit is to allow employees with "Tier II" retirement time to convert this to a "Tier I" benefit. Such requests must also be submitted by year's end. All cost estimates and details must be provided directly from CalPERS.

## Life Insurance Age Adjustment



CAPS offers members a variety of optional low cost insurance coverage, including group term life insurance. Premiums are adjusted for age every five years. If you see an increase in your CAPS life insurance premium in your October paycheck, it will be because you had a birthday divisible by 5 in the last year, NOT because the rates have gone up. The premiums have remained stable for many years. If you want more information on CAPS' insurance coverage, please go online to <http://www.capsscientists.org/Benefits/Insurance.htm> or call CAPS at (415) 956-1344.

## LTC Premium Increase



CalPERS members who purchased long term care insurance will see a premium increase of up to 85 percent over two years starting in 2015. Policyholders can limit the increase to 79

percent, but only if they agree to take the financial hit in one year. According to figures from the state, over 100 state scientists purchased this group insurance, and presumably would be subject to the increase. The CalPERS governing board voted unanimously to adopt the increase on October 17.

Long term care insurance pays for skilled nursing and convalescent homes. The CalPERS program is plagued with higher than expected expenses and insufficient revenues. Because the benefit is age rated, the impact on each individual will differ. And unlike the CalPERS health and retirement plans, which are supplemented by employer contributions, the entire LTC premium hike must be absorbed by policy holders. CalPERS claims that without this

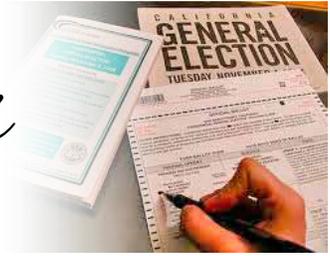
premium increase the plan will eventually run out of money, with no assets remaining to cover future retirees.

CalPERS will also offer a "second tier" option that will cost less and offer fewer benefits. One key feature will be to offer to replace the current lifetime benefit feature to one that is limited to 10 years. The need for long term care rarely lasts for more than 10 years, according to CalPERS. The private sector insurance industry offers a variety of long term care plan options. These are almost always individually underwritten, which means, among other things, that those covered are not part of a group and thus premiums are not subject to change. Any member considering this coverage should shop it thoroughly because coverage and prices are age-rated and can vary widely.



# VOTING Matters

by David Miller, President



The November 6 election will settle many critical contests and issues. For starters, it's a presidential election, and a heated one. Election issues affecting just California are equally lively, with races pivotal at the federal, state and local levels.

For CAPS, all this is strictly non-partisan. We support candidates who tend to support us. Those tend to run more Democrat than Republican, but we don't play favorites. If they like us, we like them. This also reflects political reality, where the platform of one party has been to criticize our pay as excessive, our retirement benefits is too generous and our performance lack luster. CAPS limits its involvement on election issues to matters that have a direct impact on state scientists' pay and benefits. We endorse candidates for state office, and these can be seen on the CAPS webpage: [www.capsscientists.org](http://www.capsscientists.org).

CAPS also reviews all statewide ballot measures. There are 11 on this ballot.

Three are of particular interest to CAPS, based on the impact they likely would have on the employment and professional lives of state scientists.

**No on 32!** This measure has been widely described by many news editorial boards and impartial evaluators as one-sided and fraudulent. It was written to create a special exemption for billionaires, large corporations and Super PACs to influence public policy while freezing out labor unions. The business community and wealthy individuals already outspend labor unions on election and policy issues many times over. Proposition 32 would make this the law in the future so that working people, through their unions, have even less to say about the issues of the day. The key feature of Prop. 32 would forbid unions from using payroll deduction to generate political contributions. Because these prohibitions are applied equally to unions and corporations, the proponents call it balanced. Yet, it is only the unions that raise money this way. Corporations and wealthy individuals simply write checks. **Vote No!**



**Yes on Prop. 30!** This is Governor Brown's temporary revenue increase. It calls for a temporary tax increase to fund education and public safety. Most importantly, it takes some of the pressure off the General Fund which has been mired in red ink for years. The salary and benefits of state scientists are paid for mostly from Special Funds. Ironically, many of these Special Funds are borrowed against in order to cover those General Fund deficits. So Proposition 30, if passed, should provide welcome financial relief to the state's General and Special Funds as the economy recovers. Going into bargaining next spring makes this measure increasingly important. **Vote Yes!**

**No on 31!** This "sleeper" is simply another power grab. It amends the State Constitution to give the Governor wide ranging authority to cut expenditures unilaterally during a fiscal emergency. An initiative similar to this was floated in 2005 and voters rejected it convincingly. Proposition 31 this year is much longer and more complex. It shifts power and revenue to local government when the State Legislature fails to act, something that is fairly common. It seems clear that the real losers in the event of the first fiscal emergency are the people who depend on the minimum guarantees of a state budget passed by the State Legislature—not one that is reconfigured by the Governor. We know where most governors first choose to cut — state employee compensation. We prefer to subject those cuts to the collective bargaining process, not the whimsy of the incumbent Governor. **Vote No!**



The best source for impartial information on these measures is the Attorney's General Title and Summary: go to [www.ss.ca.gov](http://www.ss.ca.gov) and click on "Ballot Measures."

Your vote could make a pivotal difference, so PLEASE cast your ballot, whether it's by absentee or in person, on Tuesday, November 6. Urge family and friends to vote as well.

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## CAPS Grants Awarded

CAPS helps promote the professional development of state scientists in many ways. Most recently, CAPS negotiated a new provision via contract bargaining (Section 15.3.G) that makes two days of “professional training” available to every state scientist. CAPS has also for many years awarded four \$300 cash grants every quarter to each of four state scientist members. CAPS does this because far too many state departments fail to adequately support the professional development of their scientists. Here are the 4th quarter recipients.

 **Energy Specialist II Devorah Eden** of the Energy Commission in Sacramento will use the grant to attend one day GreenBuild 2012 in San Francisco. This annual conference brings together internationally many proponents of energy efficiency, renewable energy, water conservation, waste reduction, recycling, improved air quality, low pollutants in building materials and sustainable building practices.

 **Research Scientist Susan Payne** of the Department of Public Health in Richmond will use her grant to attend the American Public Health Association’s annual conference in San Francisco during October.

 **Staff Environmental Scientist Melanie Gogol-Prokurat** of Fish and Game in Sacramento will use her grant to offset expenses in attending the International Association of Vegetation Science Conference in Mokpo, South Korea during July 2012. She spoke in a special session: “Understanding Plant Distribution Under Climate Change.”

 **Supervising Chemist Rosalinda Lomboy** of the Department of Public Health in Glendale will use the grant to offset the expenses of technical training in microbiology in Southern California during September 2012.

You can apply for a CAPS grant via the CAPS webpage: [www.capsscientists.org](http://www.capsscientists.org).

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