

CAPSule

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ICE HAS NO AGENDA -- IT JUST MELTS

That's the statement on a placard from one of the many climate scientists who held a protest outside the December 13 meeting of the American Geophysical Union Conference at the Moscone Center in San Francisco. The scientists' rally called on President-elect Donald Trump to acknowledge and continue the fight against climate change. This conference is one of the largest meetings of climate scientists in the world. It is also the first gathering of climate scientists since the presidential election. Governor Jerry Brown spoke at the conference. Here is the statement he later released, extrapolated from remarks he made from the podium:

"The time has never been more urgent or your work never more important. It'll be up to you as truth tellers, truth seekers to mobilize all your efforts to fight back. We've got a lot of firepower. We've got the scientists, we've got the universities, we have the national labs and we have the political clout and sophistication for the battle – and we will persevere. Have no doubt about that we will pursue a path of collaboration in bold political advancement – whatever they do in Washington – and eventually the truth will prevail. This is not a battle of one day

or one election. This is a long-term slog into the future and you are there, the foot soldiers of change in understanding and scientific collaboration."

Governor Brown also responded to fears that Trump appointees will erase climate data from federal archives and turn off the ongoing collection of such data with federally owned satellites: ***"...if Trump turns off the satellites, California will launch its own damn satellite...we're going to collect that data."*** Brown vowed to use his political clout as chair of the University of California's Board of Regents to prevent the Trump Administration from "messing with" renowned science facilities such as the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

Concerns over a rollback on the climate change policies of President Obama result from statements made by Mr. Trump on the campaign trail ("...climate change is a hoax by China to secure an unfair trade advantage," and his threat to withdraw from the Paris Climate Change Accord). Mr. Trump has also appointed several high profile climate change deniers to key cabinet level positions.



California State Scientists ... Knowledge, Innovation, Protection

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CalPERS Responds to Pension Attack

(Editor's Note: The small NorCal Sierra mountain town of Loyalton withdrew from CalPERS in 2013. Loyalton council members acted because its last covered member had retired and the town had always paid its required annual contributions. But what it didn't count on was the \$1.6 million fee required by CalPERS to cover unfunded liabilities for its retirees.)

Chuck Reed's December 7 column in the San Diego Union-Tribune, "[Loyalton's pension default is a wake up call](#)," is full of exaggerations that have little merit. In twisting facts to square with his anti-pension beliefs, he fails to point out the key element behind the Loyalton story: Local agencies determine the benefits for public employees, not CalPERS.

As administrators of the plan, it's our job to pay the benefits workers have been promised. We're committed to protecting public employees, not throwing them overboard as Reed carelessly writes.

Blaming pensions for the troubles in Vallejo, San Bernardino, and Stockton is equally false. Officials in those cities have long been clear that their troubles run much deeper than the benefits offered to employees.

Pension obligations are a shared responsibility between employer and employee. CalPERS will continue to take bold steps to protect members' benefits and chart a course that addresses the real issues and not what critics want readers to believe.

(This Letter to the Editor went to the San Diego Union-Tribune in response to the San Jose Mercury News article, "[Former San Jose mayor highlights tiny town's pension plight](#).")

Q&A About Pensions

Courtesy of Californians for Retirement Security
www.letstalkpensions.com

Is state spending for pensions soaring?

Pensions are one of the smallest percentages of state spending – and increases for pensions have been slower than the overall increase in state spending. Pension costs represent about 3.2 percent of total state spending for the Fiscal Year 2016-17 budget. In comparison, 30 percent of the total state budget is earmarked for public education, 8.5 percent for higher education, and 6.2 percent is for corrections.

Are pension costs "squeezing out" other services at the local and state level?

No. Over the long term pension costs have not increased dramatically as a percentage of budgets for the majority of public agencies. State and local government pension contributions constitute a small percentage of spending. Pension contributions as a percentage of direct expenditures for California state and local governments ranged from 3.1 percent in 1994 to 4.4 percent in 2012, with a low of 1.7 percent in 2002. Pension contributions combined with salary and wages accounted for 31 percent of direct California expenditures in 2012.

For MORE Questions and Answers regarding public pensions in California: www.capsscintists.org.

EnCAPsulations



The SEIU Agreement according to SEIU. The recently completed MOU negotiated by SEIU on behalf of the nine state employee bargaining units it represents can be viewed on the SEIU webpage: <http://www.seiu1000.org/tacomp>. The general salary increases provided during the MOU's four year term is 11.5%, starting with the first increase July 1, 2017. The total "OPEB" amount (employee contribution for retiree health benefits) is 3.5%, not the 2.3% referenced in their summary (the last 1.2% takes effect immediately after the MOU expires). Also notable is a \$2,500 "bonus" that isn't built into base pay. This apparently makes up partially for the loss of any general salary increase during the 2016–17 fiscal year. The MOU also provides for several special salary adjustments for individual classifications, presumably to remedy recruitment and retention problems. A summary provided by CalHR should have more detailed information when it is sent to the legislature for evaluation. That agreement is still subject to legislative approval. You can see a comparison between the SEIU and CAPS agreement on the CAPS webpage.



Range Change Winner! A long-time State Scientist recently asked CAPS for help in correcting what he always thought was a mistake in assigning his initial salary range. **Eleven years ago.** CAPS looked and agreed that his job experience outside of state service should have been counted as well as his time as a scientific aid in state service. Unfortunately, state management and

the State Personnel Board continue to view scientific aid experience as non-qualifying for placement in a higher range for Environmental Scientist. In this case, however, this member had 17 months of service credit from positions he held before he came to work for the State. With CAPS' intervention, state management **agreed** that he should have been placed in Range B four months after his date of hire due to this credit. Thus, his range correction has been backdated to January 2005. That's **11 years** of credit and a check for back pay coming. Merry Christmas, courtesy of CAPS!



CAPS Focuses On Vehicle Safety. CAPS is concerned that the state fleet is riddled with vehicles that are too old and/or too run down to be considered safe and is therefore taking both a broad and narrow look at the problem. For example, CAPS has requested and received detailed information from the Department and Fish & Wildlife regarding the age and mileage of **all** of its vehicles. A preliminary review reveals that many of its vehicles are older than ten years and have more than 125,000 miles. We are also looking at specific instances where Scientists are required to operate vehicles when they feel the vehicle is unsafe due to either age, accident history and/or mechanical issues. CAPS will be filing a Health and Safety grievance for a member who is being asked to drive a vehicle that is fifteen years old, has nearly 150,000 miles, and has had previous serious mechanical failures. If **YOU** have similar concerns, please contact a CAPS office to discuss options. Please be prepared to provide us the make, model, year and age of the vehicle.

REAR View

By Patty Velez, President



This is the time of year I like to look back and assess what we have accomplished. There's always more to do, but I find it useful and gratifying to take a few moments and reflect on the many blessings for which we have to be thankful.

San Bernardino Attack. I'm grateful for my good health and peace in my life. Last year about this time, on December 2, 2015, we all got a dose of what is becoming increasingly frequent worldwide. The terrorist attack in San Bernardino left 14 people dead and 22 injured. What made this tragedy hit so close to home is that these were California public health workers enjoying a holiday party. The vast majority of them were public health professionals trained in scientific disciplines. Their contemporaries in state government are scientists headquartered primarily out of the Richmond Campus. I wished the survivors well at the time, and my heart still goes out to them. I hope we can all avoid a calamity like that during the 2017.

The CAPS MOU. I am supremely aware of what our MOU *doesn't* provide -- salary equity. But with the benefit of hindsight, we should *all* be able to see the many benefits it *does* provide -- significant salary growth, protection of our many leaves and benefit programs, and stability to plan for the future. Relative to any of the contracts negotiated on behalf of other state employees, the CAPS agreement is easily the best. This should be readily apparent when compared with the recent agreement reached by SEIU. We received significantly more in general salary increases, we received them sooner, and our contribution to guaranteed post-retirement health benefits is less. Several other bargaining units haven't been able to reach agreement, primarily because they want what we achieved. I wish all of them well, because salary inequities are epidemic in state service.

CAPS' Representation. Over the past 12 months, hundreds of state scientists counted on CAPS to represent them on work-related disputes -- conflicts with supervisors, disciplinary actions, salary disputes, classification questions,

workload and overtime issues. CAPS remains the one place every CAPS member can count on to receive a sympathetic ear and expert representation. That tradition will continue as long as I'm a CAPS leader.

Retirement Security. We've beaten back efforts to degrade public sector retirement plans in California, but they continue. After a life of hard work, everyone deserves a secure, reasonable retirement based on a formula they were promised when hired. To have that rug yanked out from under you *AFTER* retirement -- presumably after your budget is set for the rest of your life -- is a monumental failure by those on whom we rely. It's simply unconscionable. We have done everything possible to strengthen our sustainable defined-benefit retirement plan: lowered benefits for new hires; increased contributions for those still working; lowered the assumed rate of return by the retirement fund; eliminated scams by those who would pad their retirement at the expense of the system; and successfully fought efforts to terminate our plan in the State Legislature and at the ballot box. NOTHING is more important than ensuring a secure, known retirement annuity promised after a career of dedicated public service.

The Election of Donald J. Trump. I wrote last month about my concerns regarding Mr. Trump's views on climate change. His actions since then concern me even more -- appointment of a climate change denier as head of the US EPA, Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt, and Pruitt's efforts since then to identify and presumably target the scientists who have worked to reduce this country's carbon footprint. As scientists, our work is much easier if it's without undue pressure or political influence. Mr. Trump has received wise counsel on climate change and in many other important areas. I hope he listens to sensible people and acts accordingly.

Thank You! Finally, I'd like to thank **YOU** for supporting your Board of Directors and Bargaining Team during these trying times. There is so much more to accomplish. Working together, we will succeed!

“THERE IS SO MUCH MORE TO ACCOMPLISH. WORKING TOGETHER, WE WILL SUCCEED!”



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In This Issue

- * ICE HAS NO AGENDA, IT JUST MELTS
- * Q&A ABOUT PENSIONS
- * REAR VIEW, BY PATTY VELEZ, PRESIDENT

CAPS WISHES
YOU AND YOURS
A HAPPY
HOLIDAY SEASON
AND A HEALTHY AND
SUCCESSFUL 2017!

