

CAPSule

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Governor Brown's Proposed State Budget

Jerry Brown unveiled his final budget proposal as Governor on January 10. This is the fiscal document that will determine how state programs are funded, how much is set aside in reserve, and how much is allotted for State Scientist salaries, among many other things. Expect a revision to the proposal to come from the Legislature during its deliberations starting soon. Expect more from Governor Brown during mid-May as part of the traditional "May Revision." A final version is likely to be adopted by the state Legislature on June 15, the constitutional deadline, and to be signed by Governor Brown by July 1. The good news is that a surplus is projected, and that additional funding for scientific programs in many state departments is being proposed. **The CAPS Bargaining Team will urge use of this surplus to implement Salary Equity For ALL State Scientists!**

State Employee Compensation. The Budget includes \$1.2 billion (\$589.5 million General Fund) for increased employee compensation, health care costs for active state employees, and retiree health care prefunding for active employees. Included in these costs are collectively bargained salaries and benefit increases as a result of **past** contract negotiations and pay increases. Funding is also included for 2019 calendar year increases in health care premiums and enrollment. The item **doesn't** account for collective bargaining negotiations with four of the state's 21 bargaining units, whose contracts with the state will expire in late June or early July 2018.

Civil Service Reform. The proposal would make additional statutory changes to the state's civil service system focusing on consolidating the state's job classifications and thus streamlining the state's civil service. CAPS has in the past opposed Administration changes to civil service rules (such as longer probationary periods), but encouraged and supported restructuring state scientific classifications. CAPS will be looking closely at the Governor's need for "... **additional statutory changes to make the civil service system more efficient and transparent.**"

Active State Scientists' Health Care. The proposal conforms to the CAPS MOU. It maintains the average 80/80 percent contribution formula established for State Scientists. Under this formula, the state averages the premiums of the four health benefit plans with the largest state enrollment in order to calculate the maximum amount the state contributes towards retiree health benefits. The state also contributes 80% of this average towards the health benefit costs of each active state scientist, and 80% to the health plan of each of the employee's dependents. Vesting schedules and employer contributions vary depending on the employee's date of hire, as determined by the CAPS MOU.

Retiree Healthcare. The proposal maintains the average 100/90% contribution formula for fully vested retirees. Under this formula, the state averages the premiums of the four health benefit plans with the largest state enrollment, then contributes that amount towards the health plan selected by the retiree. The state also contributes 90% of this average towards the health benefit costs of each of the retiree's dependents.

Support for State Scientific Programs. For the most part, state scientific programs and positions continue with few cuts. Many such departments will see increases, in some instances substantial. The largest employer of State Scientists is the Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Governor's budget proposal for the CDFW would fund an additional 20 environmental scientist positions, one Research Scientist III, 30 Senior Environmental Scientist Specialists and 17 Senior Environmental Scientist Supervisors. CAPS will support this.

CAPS Wants to Know! The proposed state budget is a long, complicated document. Any member who finds something in the proposed budget that they believe CAPS should know, please forward the tip: caps@capsscientists.org

Science Matters. California State Scientists

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California State Scientist: Dr. Maureen Lee-Dutra, Veterinarian

Maureen joined the Department of Food and Agriculture's Animal Health Branch in Tulare six years ago. Working from a mobile office trailer on the outskirts of the city, she is one of about 20 CDFA veterinarians statewide who form California's line of defense against livestock and poultry diseases that could threaten public health or lay waste to the Golden State's multibillion livestock industries.

Last year, Maureen and several colleagues from her office participated in CAPS' media program. They gained permission from a local dairy for CAPS staff to video how state scientists



perform surveillance testing – but only after donning hockey-like gear to protect themselves from a potentially injurious kick from an uncooperative patient. Later, Maureen and her supervisor, Dr. Greg Ledbetter, suited-up in tyveks to simulate

disease surveillance testing in poultry.

Maureen and her colleagues' work shaped an informative, interesting video that shows how highly educated, highly experienced



state professionals protect public health and animal well-being. The mini-documentary is part of CAPS' larger media and public-relations effort that aimed last year to educate the public with audio and video messages broadcast statewide via radio, streaming news websites, social media, email and targeted mobile device ads. See the video on CAPS' YouTube Page: www.YouTube.com/capsscscientists

Those messages build support for the valuable work of California state scientists. Now, with contract talks looming, CAPS' Bargaining Team is preparing the program's next phase: **strengthening the case for Salary Equity for ALL State Scientists.**

Appellate Ruling Affirms Vested Pension Rights

A Court of Appeals decision has reaffirmed the importance of vested pension rights in a case brought by the Alameda County Deputy Sheriffs Association. The case resulted from a decision of the Alameda County Retirement Board to remove various pay categories from final compensation. The California Supreme Court has been waiting for this ruling before reviewing arguments in a pending case from Marin County. That case would change the California Rule, which prevents public employers from rolling back pension protections for employees once hired. This latest ruling in Alameda should remind the California Supreme Court that an individualized balancing test should determine if it is reasonable to make a change to a vested pension right.

The "Alameda" decision is posted on the CAPS Web Page: <http://capsscscientists.org/retirement/>

Membership Matters!

by Patty Velez, President

Thank you! I am repeating this once again to every CAPS member who signed a card – hard copy or online – that pledges membership in CAPS. If it wasn't for our dues-paying members, the essential work that your volunteer leaders and staff professionals perform on your behalf simply wouldn't get done. We would all be worse off for it. So thank you for your commitment.

Thank you to Future Members! If you aren't yet a full member of CAPS, I strongly urge you to join. You can sign up easily at www.capsscientists.org Still not sure if you're a full member? Check your paystub, if it says "CAPS-FS," you're not.

Achieving Success Requires Membership

Support. Your 12 CAPS officers and directors are elected every two years to represent *YOUR* employment and professional interests. We listen carefully so that our goals and objectives reflect your needs - no one else's. We depend on you to tell us what's important, and we use every penny we receive from dues and fees to achieve success based on what you tell us. Success at the bargaining table, in the legislature, and at the worksite requires membership support.

Unions Are Under Attack. There is no shortage of union critics. Many are extremely well-funded and focused on watering down or eliminating collective bargaining rights, reducing union funding, and generally preventing rank-and-file employees from engaging in legal, collective representation. This effort has largely succeeded in the private sector, where unions, once at their zenith in the 1950s, have diminished in size and influence. Plant closures, relocations to foreign countries, "right to work" laws, and relentless bashing from the right has substantially reduced the influence of unions in the private sector. Now our well-funded critics are after public sector unionization.

What would things look like without CAPS? The unions – CAPS and others — are the **ONLY** groups dedicated to pushing for competitive wages, first tier benefits, and a sustainable retirement. Without CAPS you're dependent on the altruism of the Governor and the state legislature. We know what

that looks like because that's how things operated before collective bargaining. So if you think things are tough now, consider how things would work without the hard work of CAPS and other unions. I don't trust any Governor or any state legislature to put my employment interests before others. You shouldn't either.

Lower Dues, or None At All? Many people wish for this very thing. They should carefully consider what they wish for. State employees are unionized because our predecessors saw the importance of having the legal right to organize, to select an exclusive representative to speak for us on pay and benefits, and to gain access to the state's payroll system to voluntarily fund union activities.

The dues charged by unions can vary – CAPS dues remain among the lowest – but all unions are responsible for representing their members' employment interests with the Governor.

What Has CAPS Done For Me Lately?

It starts with giving you, all State Scientists, a strong collective voice with the Governor at the bargaining table, with state lawmakers in the legislature, in the courts, where we have important litigation still pending, and with the media to promote the important work being done by State Scientists.

I'm now in my 27th year as a state scientist, and in my 22nd year as an elected CAPS leader. I have been through too many battles to recount, starting with Governor Pete Wilson in the 1990s. As I near the midpoint of my last term as your CAPS President, I look forward to handing off a healthy, vibrant union to future leaders. And there are many outstanding State Scientists among your current CAPS officers and directors, all of whom are well-equipped to carry on this important fight for competitive wages, quality benefits and a sustainable retirement.

CAPS is the only reliable voice we have on salaries, benefits and working conditions. Please support us in that effort. Retain your membership. If you aren't yet a full member, please join.

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2018 First Quarter CAPS Grants

The CAPS Benefits Committee proudly awards FOUR \$400 professional development grants to CAPS members each quarter. This practice started many years ago because state departments don't adequately fund State Scientists' professional development. Grants awarded for the first quarter of 2018 are listed below. **ANY** CAPS member can apply for a CAPS grant via the CAPS webpage: www.capsscientists.org

Environmental Scientist Robin Fallscheer of the Department of Fish and Wildlife in Redding will use her grant to offset the costs of attending a meeting of the California Native Plant Society in Los Angeles during February.

Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist) Leah Gardner of the Department of Conservation in Sacramento will use her grant to offset the cost of attending the annual meeting of the Society for Ecological Restoration conference in San Diego during May 2018.

Environmental Scientists Steve Reineke of CDFW in San Luis Obispo will use his grant to offset costs in attending the American Fisheries Society annual conference for the Cal – Neva Chapter during February 2018.

Environmental Scientist Kathryn Meyer of the Department of Fish and Wildlife in Eureka will use her grant to offset the costs associated with attending the Western Groundfish Conference in Seattle during February 2018.