

CAPS JULY

CAPS MEMBERS Share Vital Work Details for Bargaining



CAPS' Bargaining Team has resumed meetings with the Department of Human Resources (CalHR) for a new Memorandum of Understanding. Part of the agenda makes time for Subject Matter Experts, members chosen by the Bargaining Team, to make thorough and thoughtful presentations to CalHR. Each presentation explains the value of State Scientists' service and why fair pay is essential to recruiting and retaining skilled and knowledgeable scientists who perform vital services for California's betterment.

The Bargaining Team thanks the many CAPS members who submitted photos, like those on this page, to illustrate the breadth of our meaningful work.

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1. Desal Plant

Scientists with the State Water Resources Control Board inspect the Carlsbad Desalination Plant.

2. Munk with Ram

Fish & Wildlife Veterinarian Brandon Munk, who works in the Wildlife Investigations Laboratory, holds a rare Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep.

3. Sonoma Floods

State Scientists from the Department of Toxic Substances Control work through piles of waste collected from flooded areas in a Sonoma County.

4. Maureen Lee-Dutra

Maureen Lee-Dutra (top), a Veterinarian with the California Department of Food & Agriculture's Animal Health Branch, examines a specimen with Veterinary Pathologist Robert Moeller at the California Animal Health and Food Safety Lab in Tulare.

5. Mendes with Meat Inspector

Dr. Everardo Mendes (right) trains a meat inspector about postmortem inspection in custom slaughterhouses.

REGULATION COVERS STATE EMPLOYERS' DUTY TO PROTECT EMPLOYEES FROM SMOKE

California has just reached the peak of the fire season — but wildfires across the State have already burned a record 4 million acres that blanketed the skies with smoke for days on end. As of *CAPSule* publication, firefighters are still battling to contain major fires statewide.

As always, CAPS members are called to assess burned sites for toxic-substance contamination, care for injured and displaced animals, perform site cleanup, monitor water quality, provide safe drinking water, and other vital scientific services. But what is an employer's obligation to protect State Scientists (and all state employees) from hazardous air quality at worksites?

California Code of Regulations §5141.1 answers that question in detail. With few exceptions, employers must communicate, educate, and train employees about smoke hazards and how to stay safe. Departments must also control harmful exposures, including "control by respiratory protective equipment" for voluntary use, when necessary.

The welfare of our members at work is CAPS' highest concern. If you encounter safety issues at a worksite and your employer fails to address them — even after being notified — please immediately contact CAPS at caps@capsscscientists.org.

*Photo credit (above):
International Space Station photo of wildfires
burning north of the Bay Area. Courtesy NASA.*

What You Need to Know About ... 2021 HEALTH BENEFITS

The calendar is winding down on CalPERS Open Enrollment for active members to make health plan changes that will take effect on January 1, 2021. There are 15 plans from which to choose before the October 16 deadline.

Selecting health coverage can be a daunting challenge that requires you to estimate your likely medical needs for the coming year and then pick a plan that you think will provide good care at a reasonable out-of-pocket cost. Fortunately, CAPS has done the math for our members: Please click [here](#) for a table that compares monthly premium costs for Unit 10 state employees after the State pays its share. The table also includes the 2020 premiums for each plan for comparison purposes.

Besides selecting a different health plan, during Open Enrollment you can:

- Add eligible dependents,
- Remove dependents,
- Cancel your CalPERS health coverage, and/or
- Enroll in a CalPERS health plan if you don't have coverage.

Of course, if you aren't making changes to your coverage, no action is needed. Your plan will simply roll over into the next calendar year.

However, CalPERS recommends you log in to your [myCalPERS](#) account for information about:

- Specific health benefits changes that may impact you in the coming year,
- Your current 2020 monthly premium and 2021 monthly premium if you do not change your health plan,
- 2021 health plans and monthly premiums available based on your home or workplace ZIP code,
- Which health plans your doctors or specialists participate in (Basic plans only),
- Your enrolled dependents,
- All CalPERS Open Enrollment information, or
- Your 2020 Health Plan Statement.

MORE INFO FOR SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS ABOUT 2021 HEALTH BENEFITS

State supervisors and managers receive a monthly CoBen allowance to offset their health and dental plan costs instead of the State paying a percentage of premiums directly to an insurance provider. Last month's *CAPSule* did not include the 2021 CoBen allowance because CalHR released those figures after our September edition was published. The figures are now available:

Year	Employee Only	Two-Party	Families
2021	\$693	\$1,340	\$1,723
2020	\$695	\$1,347	\$1,741

This year, the allowance dropped slightly because PERS Select displaced PERS Choice as one of the four plans with the most enrollees in 2020. CalPERS uses the weighted-average monthly premiums of the four most-utilized plans to calculate employer contributions for active state civil service employees in the coming year. Unfortunately, the PERS Select premiums are significantly lower than those for PERS Choice — which resulted in a lower overall reimbursement rate for all active state employees. You can find state employee vision plan and dental plan rates on [CalHR's website](#).

President's Column

Margarita Gordus



CAPS AND STATE TAKE NEW APPROACH TO BARGAINING

Have you ever noticed how much we bargain in our daily lives? “Where do we want to live?” “What car should we buy?” Ideally, the answers follow honest input from all interested parties and meet their desires to the greatest extent possible.

We also negotiate our way through life with these questions. “How much for the house?” “What is your best price on the car?” The questions and their answers emerge from unstated-but-understood positions: The buyer wants to pay as little as possible; the seller wants to receive the most money possible. One side usually fares better than the other.

The State of California and its employee unions have traditionally talked about wages, benefits, and other terms and conditions of employment like they are negotiating a car price. This method, called “positional bargaining” in the labor-relations world, pits the parties against each other based on *what* they want (their position). An agreement – a Memorandum of Understanding, or MOU – comes through positional tradeoffs to meet somewhere in the middle. Often, all sides are unsatisfied with the outcome, since for every perceived “win” there is a perceived “loss.”

This year, after thorough research and training, your CAPS Bargaining Team (CAPS Team) asked the Department of Human Resources (CalHR, which represents the Governor) to take a different approach to Unit 10 MOU discussions: interest-based bargaining, or IBB.

IBB assumes that both sides have something to gain from bargaining and that collaboration can produce win-win solutions. Therefore, it asks each side to disclose not only *what* it wants, but *why* – in other words, the interests underpinning its position. And IBB expects all parties will carefully listen to those disclosures and weigh them during bargaining.

CalHR agreed to IBB. Equitable pay for State Scientists remains the CAPS Team’s top priority, and we believe that IBB will encourage an honest conversation on that topic with CalHR. A total of three bargaining sessions in September and October are devoted to presentations by members who are serving as subject-matter experts. They will explain the important and vital work they do and why State Scientists need equitable pay to continue providing vital science-based services to Californians.

As you might imagine, IBB is a time-consuming process. It requires honesty, trust, research, and creativity. The CAPS Team asks for your patience as we go through this process. And remember, although CAPS’ MOU expired July 1, California law keeps the provisions of that agreement in effect until a successor MOU is in place.

Meanwhile, CAPS is bargaining with the State to collaborate on solutions for wage inequity and other topics. We are hopeful because, as we know from our daily experiences, *how* we talk to each other can be just as important as *what* we talk about.

THE MANY BENEFITS OF CAPS MEMBERSHIP

Your CAPS membership supports the vital work of the only officially recognized representative of State Scientists, including the current bargaining for a new Unit 10 Memorandum of Understanding. No other group advocates for competitive pay for State Scientists, protects your quality health care, fends off attacks on your pensions, and fights for preserving your job and state science-based government programs.

And there are many other professional and personal benefits that go with your CAPS membership:

- Expert representation on employment and professional matters in the workplace, in the Legislature, and, if necessary, in the courts.
- Exclusive rights to vote on labor contracts bargained with the State and to seek leadership positions in CAPS.
- Receive regular, member-only communications such as CAPSule and weekly emails, and admittance to online or workplace meetings with CAPS leaders and staff.
- Participate in the CAPS Referral Program, which provides a \$50 incentive payment to any CAPS member who signs up a new member, rank-and-file or supervisory.
- Eligibility to apply for one of four \$400 Professional Development Grants awarded quarterly by CAPS Member Benefits Committee.
- Free term life insurance of \$5,000 and \$5,000 of accidental death and dismemberment insurance from The Standard, with the option to purchase additional coverage at CAPS' special group-discount rates.
- Discounted auto and homeowner insurance through Liberty Mutual.
- Medical, security, legal, and travel assistance through Assist America.

The capsscientist.org website has the complete list of members-only benefits, and CAPS is always looking for more. So check in regularly to stay updated on current offers. And thank you for supporting CAPS!

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CALPERS TAKES ITS POPULAR EDUCATION EVENTS ONLINE

In October, CalPERS will launch a series of free monthly webinars for members about their state benefits and financial planning options. Upcoming online sessions focus on special power of attorney (October 14), service credit purchases (November 11), and how Medicare and CalPERS health benefits work together (December 16).

All the online sessions start at 11 a.m. and generally run between 15 minutes and 30 minutes, depending on the subject. CalPERS invites all state employees to participate, whether new to state service, mid-career, or approaching retirement. Please see the [CalPERS Webinar](#) page for more details about each session and to register for online access to these free educational events.