If you haven’t already, please vote by November 3rd, whether by dropbox or in person. And as you consider filling out your ballot, please take a moment to review CAPS’ 2020 Legislative Candidate Endorsements, which lists both incumbents and challengers who have been vetted by CAPS’ Political Action Committee (PAC) and endorsed by the CAPS Board of Directors.

CAPS does not endorse candidates based on political parties. Instead, CAPS supports candidates who show they share State Scientists’ priorities: protecting and improving members’ pay, pensions, healthcare benefits, and enhancing any other terms and conditions of employment.

Of course, CAPS respects our members’ differences, including our political diversity. Generally, CAPS does not take a position on issues or candidates not pertinent to members’ terms and conditions of employment or CAPS’ legislative objectives.

Please vote. And if you have already voted, CAPS applauds your participation in our nation’s vibrant democracy.
PLANNING TO USE MENTORING LEAVE? BE CAREFUL

As schools slowly reopen and the end of the year approaches, you may be thinking about taking mentoring leave. The benefit is still available under the terms of CAPS' 2019-20 MOU, which remains in effect until a successor agreement has been bargained and ratified.

Unit 10 employees can receive up to 40 hours of mentoring leave credits per calendar year. You receive the credits upon donating your time. To be eligible, you must pass probation, have made an annual appointment and commit to mentoring for a minimum of one school year. The mentoring program is an organization that meets quality assurance standards per the Governor’s Mentoring Partnership.

Involvement with STEM fairs also qualifies. For more details, please see Section 3.16 and 3.30 of CAPS’ MOU.

As a State Scientist, you know the risks of exposure to the novel coronavirus that triggers COVID-19, but CAPS would be remiss if this went unstated: Be careful. Practice all the social distancing, hygiene, and masking protocols of federal, state, and local public health officials. And if you find yourself in an unsafe situation, leave.

CAPS Bargaining Update MEMBERS’ LETTER EXPLAINS HOW SALARY LAG HAMPERS PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM

The CAPS Bargaining Team (CAPS Team), the departments of Human Resources (CalHR) and Finance (DOF), have reached the most difficult point in bargaining talks for a new Unit 10 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The disparity between State Scientists’ salaries and the salaries of Unit 10 supervisors, managers, colleagues within State service who perform the same work for significantly more pay, and our Federal government and academic counterparts who also are paid significantly more.

As explained in the September CAPSule and in Bargaining Update emails to members, the CAPS Team and the State agreed to Interest-Based Bargaining (IBB) to find a solution. Unlike conventional labor negotiation that assumes a meeting of adversaries bent on winning at the other party’s expense, IBB seeks collaboration to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. But for that to occur, each side must understand their counterpart’s “story,” namely, the reasons that underpin each side’s perspectives on the issues being bargained.

The CAPS Team has presented the salary story in various ways. Subject matter experts from the CAPS membership have made presentations during bargaining sessions. CAPS Team members have rehearsed the 15-year history of Unit 10 salary relationships, and how pay inequities have damaged morale and compromised the State’s ability to hire and hold on to scientists for vital programs that protect public health and the environment, secure California’s food supplies, and provide clean water.

Concerned CAPS members have written cautionary testimonials about what they have experienced personally and witnessed in the workplace. This opens a powerful example of such a letter coauthored by State Scientists working in the Department of Toxic Substance Control’s Safer Consumer Products Program. It was provided to CalHR during a recent bargaining session.

The State’s story can be summarized in a word: Money. CalHR, with DOF present, says the State is in the midst of a budget crisis and can’t provide the salary increases the CAPS Team has suggested would close the vertical and horizontal pay gaps. In fact, at the time of this writing, CalHR has not acknowledged a salary lag exists because it relies on salary survey data (The Total Compensation Report) that the CAPS Team maintains is deeply flawed, as detailed in the October 13 Bargaining Update to members.

Still, bargaining has produced some modest understandings. Although CalHR does not acknowledge a salary lag exists, it recognizes that historical salary relationships among classes in Unit 10 have been disrupted. The CAPS Team will continue to bargain with the State for a new MOU. Look for Bargaining Updates in your email as events unfold.

President’s Column Margarita Gordes

CAPS BARGAINING TEAM: DIVERSE, DEDICATED, DETERMINED

As President of CAPS, I have the privilege to work with our Board of Directors, 11 of the most committed leaders in all of California public service. They volunteer their time and talents to oversee CAPS’ operations: permanent appointment and commit to mentoring for a minimum of one school year. The mentoring program is an organization that meets quality assurance standards per the Governor’s Mentoring Partnership.

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Why I wanted to be on the CAPS Team

I joined the Unit 10 bargaining team after years of watching the Unit 10 salary issue go unresolved. Fixing the Unit 10 salary issue is personal for me, as ensuring it has a positive effect on all State Scientists and employees that work within the departments and programs in which I work.

As a fourth-generation union member, I’ve seen the frustration of highly dedicated professional State Scientists and their families. I’ve seen how pay inequities have damaged morale and compromised the State’s ability to hire and hold on to scientists for vital programs that protect public health and the environment, secure California’s food supplies, and provide clean water.

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YOUR 2-MINUTE CAPS CONSULTATION

When do I qualify for overtime? According to CAPS’ last Memorandum of Understanding and the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (or FLSA), if you are in Work Week Group 2, the overtime clock starts after you have worked 40 hours at any time during the workweek. Your workweek lasts seven calendar days, and the clock resets to zero once a new workweek begins. A common misconception is that overtime starts after 8 hours in a workday.

Unit 10 supervisors, managers, or employees whose jobs are “exempt” from the FLSA (or are in Work Week Group E) do not qualify for overtime. (Licensed veterinarians, including CDFA and CDFW licensed Veterinarian Specialists and Staff Toxicologists, can qualify for OT when assigned to an Incident Command Structure response, such as the inter-governmental fight against virulent Newcastle disease in California.)

Consultant’s Tip: Give your personnel file a checkup at least once every three years. The State keeps an official personnel file that can travel with you from job to job throughout your career. The file contains your performance evaluations, notes on your conduct, counseling memos, disciplinary actions, and qualifications for employment, promotions, additional pay, and the like.

Nothing in the file should surprise you. CAPS’ MOU and civil service regulations require your employer to present all materials for your review before they become part of the record. The MOU also provides you the right to access your file and to add your written responses and supplemental materials to any negative documents it contains.

Departments can specify how long documents remain in the file. HOWEVER, you can request a purge of all negative documentation that has been in the file for at least three years. (One exception: formal adverse actions.)

So, if it has been three years or longer since your file has had a checkup, make an appointment with your HR department to review the documents – and keep your career healthy.

CAPS AWARDS $400 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

As one of the many benefits of membership, CAPS’ Professional Development Grant Program provides up to four quarterly $400 awards to support scientific research and professional development activities that are not fully funded by the State. The Member Benefits Committee is pleased to announce grants for these four deserving members:

Scott Monday, an Environmental Scientist based in the Fortuna office of the Department of Fish & Wildlife, will spend his grant funds on waterproof time-lapse cameras. He needs the equipment to observe streamflow conditions in hard-to-access areas that affect coho salmon on the Mendocino Coast. The information Scott gathers will assist his work to restore the habitat of the endangered fish.

Environmental Scientist Michael Turgeon, who works for CalRecyle in Sacramento, is using his grant to offset tuition costs for classes in the Public Policy and Administration Program at Sacramento State. He wants to earn a Masters Degree, he wrote in his application, to further his career “as a policy-oriented State Scientist.”

Thaddeus Hunt, a State Water Resources Control Board Environmental Scientist in Sacramento, is applying his award to offset some of the tuition costs for UC Irvine’s Emergency Management and Disaster Recovery Program. Work on the Camp Fire recovery project and COVID-19 contact-tracing duties have inspired Thaddeus to enroll in the program as part of a shift in career focus to emergency management and disaster recovery, fortified by his science education and experience.

The final winner, Veterinarian Megan Mott, is based in Redding, where she works for the Department of Food and Agriculture. Megan applied for a grant to partially cover the costs for the online Geographic Information Systems Specialization Program offered by UC Davis. “After being a responder in the recent Newcastle Disease Incident,” she wrote, “I developed an interest in specializing as a veterinary epidemiologist within CDFA.” The five-course program offers a certificate of proficiency in Geographic Information Systems, which is fundamental knowledge for epidemiologists in disease response.

The Member Benefits Committee prefers disbursing awards among members in various state departments and agencies, to the extent possible. Four award recipients are chosen each January, April, July, and October for the prior quarter. More details about the members-only grant program and a downloadable application are available online at capsscientists.org/application/benefits/grant.