

# 7 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR TALKING ABOUT CAPS MEMBERSHIP

FEBRUARY ISSUE: #21-2  
www.capsscientists.org  
caps@capsscientists.org

   
@capsscientists

 YouTube  
www.YouTube.com/  
capsscientists



## 7 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR TALKING ABOUT CAPS MEMBERSHIP

As CAPS President Margarita Gordus highlights in her column this month, our union's strength comes from the commitment of members statewide who support competitive pay, guaranteed pensions, superior health benefits, and secure jobs for California State Scientists in Bargaining Unit 10.

Perhaps you have considered approaching a colleague to join, but you're concerned they may have questions and you're not sure what to say.

Here are answers to questions non-members frequently ask when approached about joining CAPS. And remember, any time a State Scientist joins CAPS and puts your name in the application's "referred by" field, you receive \$50 – and CAPS becomes stronger!

### ***Q: If I'm not a member, do I still receive union benefits?***

**A:** Non-members do not receive CAPS [benefits](#), including workplace and legal representation, the right to vote in CAPS' elections and on contract ratifications, union communications, free life insurance, consumer discounts, and access to professional grants and dependent scholarships. To receive the benefits of CAPS membership, you must join.

### ***Q: How do I join?***

**A:** There are two ways to join. [This link](#) opens a page on CAPS' website with an electronic application. [This link](#) opens a downloadable file that you can print out and mail. Members named in the "referred by" field of either form receive a \$50 referral bonus from CAPS.

### ***Q: Why are PLPs better than furloughs?***

**A:** PLP 2020 provides flexible paid leave in exchange for a temporary cut in take-home pay. The agreement also provides that the 640-hour vacation and annual leave caps will increase by the equivalent number of PLP 2020 hours that Unit 10 employees have been subjected to under the program. By raising the caps, Unit 10 members can significantly build and bank their vacation and annual leave. Furloughs are a mandatory reduction in hours, which reduces take-home pay, and are not bargained with unions. Furloughs do not have the flexibility of PLP 2020, nor the additional bargained offsets.

CAPS agreed to two PLP days for up to two years, which adds up to a 9.23% temporary reduction in pay. This allowed the State to achieve the budgeted cost savings it demanded from us. The PLPs could end early should California receive federal funding or if the State declares the budget has improved.

But due to CAPS' bargaining efforts, your take-home pay doesn't go down by 9.23%. That's because the CAPS Bargaining Team (CAPS Team) convinced the State to suspend your 2.8% contribution for retiree health care and reduce your payment into your CalPERS pension account by 0.5%. In other words, CAPS found a solution that mitigated the impact of PLPs to approximately a 6% income reduction.

### ***Q: Why didn't CAPS do more to combat furloughs?***

**A:** The PLP 2020 provision in the CAPS Side Letter was negotiated under challenging circumstances. The pandemic put millions of Californians out of work. State economists projected (incorrectly, it turned out) an immediate \$54 billion state budget deficit triggered by the once-in-a-century public health crisis. In May, the Governor asked CAPS and all state employee groups to come to the table to reduce employee compensation costs by 10% or face two unpaid furlough days a month.

► **Continued on page 4...**

# CALPERS BOARD RE-ELECTS JONES AS PRESIDENT, TAYLOR AS VP



CalPERS Board of Administration recently re-elected **Henry Jones** as President and **Theresa Taylor** as Vice President of the system. CalPERS controls roughly **\$440 billion** in assets that pay for public employees’ retirement benefits. It also negotiates and administers health benefits for active and retired state and local civil servants.

CalPERS Board Member **David Miller**, who also sits on CAPS’ Board of Directors, seconded the motion to re-elect Jones as President. The CalPERS Board **voted unanimously** to re-elect Jones and Taylor to the top leadership positions, which both carry one-year terms.

CalPERS’ retiree members elected Jones to the Board in 2008. He is serving his fourth four-year term on the Board and his second one-year term as President. Jones retired in 1998 from the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) as its chief financial officer.

Taylor, who represents state employees, is serving her second four-year term on the CalPERS Board and her third one-year term as its Vice President. A principal compliance representative at the Franchise Tax Board in Sacramento, Taylor has worked for the State of California for 26 years.

CAPS congratulates President Jones and Vice President Taylor and looks forward to working with them to protect CalPERS the pensions and retirement benefits of our members.

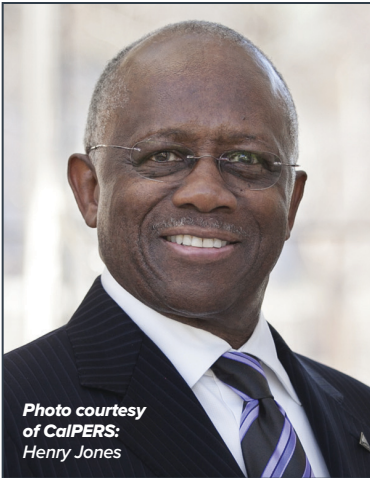


Photo courtesy  
of CalPERS:  
Henry Jones



Photo courtesy  
of CalPERS:  
Theresa Taylor

## President’s Column

Margarita Gordus



### TRUE SOLIDARITY

You will often hear it when you call CAPS offices. You’ll read it in CAPS emails. In some fashion, I’ve said it in each of the 15 columns I’ve had the privilege to write as CAPS President.

“Thank you for supporting CAPS.”

For this column, I want to add what often goes unspoken: “Thank you for supporting CAPS – even when you disagree with a decision we have made.”

Human beings differ all the time, from what to make for dinner and where to vacation to how to raise kids and the meaning of life. Now apply that to over 4,000 California State Scientists, our differing workplace challenges, varied career concerns, and individual opinions about how to address them. But we are bound together because our common interests outweigh our individual differences. We are stronger collectively than when we act alone.

And yet unions need constructive dissent. Why? Because innovation won’t happen if the organization discourages questioning the status quo. Because the abrasion that comes from honest, vigorous communication produces the sharpest ideas and the best decisions. And because – and I say this as your union President – leaders need to hear from our members and engage with new ideas. Otherwise, we can drift from the concerns of the members we represent.

Of course, how we express dissent matters, too. There’s no room on either side, from leaders or members, for hostility or personal attacks. We must disagree civilly. And dissent shrouded in secrecy, rumors, and factionalism hinders unity, weakens our collective power, and undermines CAPS’ role as the official representative for Unit 10.

CAPS welcomes healthy dissent. Every member of our Board of Directors can be reached by [email](#). Before telework took over, we spoke with members face-to-face all the time. When COVID-19 changed that, we initiated virtual worksite meetings to give members a forum to hear from leaders and ask questions. We also started convening Board Meetings online, and we made sure the proceedings remained available to members via Zoom.

Bargaining often prompts a degree of dissent. It’s understandable. Unions exist to bargain wages, benefits, and other terms and conditions of employment. Despite previous CAPS Bargaining Teams’ (CAPS Team) success negotiating several years of 5% General Salary Increases (the highest in State Service under Governor Brown), large salary inequities continue. State Scientists must continue to collectively bargain with the State for the necessary, appropriate pay adjustments that would put us on par with the wages of other state employees who perform similar work.

Anyone who volunteers to bargain with the State knows the job entails criticism. Sometimes it’s hard to hear, but we would much rather know our members’ opinions in order to properly represent State Scientists in bargaining.

While criticism is hard to hear, the personal stories the CAPS Team hears are even more challenging. I remember talking to a member who expressed their anger and frustration about our salary lags, and how the member was unable to make ends meet. They had to go to a food bank so they could eat. This is unacceptable.

In many parts of California, State Scientists simply can’t live where they work. Members tell us that they have deferred starting a family due to financial concerns. Members tell us of their second jobs, secured to make ends meet. And members tell us that if the salary inequities remain, they will have to leave. That, too, is unacceptable.

These stories fuel the CAPS Team’s resolve to find solutions through bargaining. We’ve brought an unprecedented degree of creativity and transparency to the process since talks with the Newsom Administration for a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) started more than a year ago.

On the creative side, the CAPS Team convinced the State to use Interest-Based Bargaining (IBB), which seeks agreement through collaboration. (For more about the significance of this approach, you can click [here](#) and scroll down to the June 9, 2020 entry.) The CAPS Team has also presented an unprecedented array of supporting data and information, from salary comparisons, Government Codes, and Legislative Analyst’s Office reports to stakeholder reports and Agency Secretary letters.

We have worked hard to bring to the bargaining table many impactful presentations by members who serve as subject-matter experts. They explain how inequitable pay harms the State of California’s vital scientific programs and the ability of the departments where scientists work to meet their missions. The CAPS Team has solicited members to write letters that detail how salary inequity is harming them personally and professionally, and we have shared those powerful letters with the Governor’s negotiators during bargaining meetings. It’s clear that the State representatives are following up on the information and statements in member letters. Please continue to share your stories.

Whatever comes from bargaining, I can assure you the CAPS Team has heard, debated, and acted on members’ constructive criticism and suggestions. You keep us flexible and accountable. We all thank you for that.

## Your 1-Minute CAPS Consultation PROBATION REPORT

*I’m on probation as a new State Scientist. My supervisor wrote my first probation report, but not the second one. Is this a problem? Is there something I should do?*

Probation with the State of California can entail up to three evaluations from your supervisor. You don’t need to remind them to write the second report (or the third report, for that matter). You can pass probation, regardless.

Of course, if you have a question about something on a probationary report, please contact your local CAPS office immediately!



## CAPS MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Krysta Rogers,  
Senior Environmental Scientist,  
California Department  
of Fish and Wildlife

CAPS celebrates members who contribute to positive media reports about State Scientists. This month, we recognize Krysta Rogers, a California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Senior Environmental Scientist in the Wildlife Investigations Laboratory, and the statewide lead for avian mortality investigations.

[TV](#), [radio](#), and [newspapers](#) across California recently quoted Krysta in stories about a statewide salmonella outbreak in songbird populations. She expertly explained the disease, its consequences, and how the public could help contain the epidemic. In every report, Krysta exemplified the high level of knowledge and skill required for the vital work performed by State Scientists.

CAPS thanks Krysta for positively representing our profession and Unit 10 State Scientists’ service to California and its residents.

Photo courtesy of California Department of Fish and Wildlife: Krysta Rogers



► **...Continued from page 1**

CAPS' MOU— which remains in effect until a successor agreement is bargained and ratified — contains “no furloughs” language, but the Legislature made plain in May that it would reduce funding for employee compensation by 10% and give Governor Newsom authority to make cuts. The Legislature and the Governor have a statutory and constitutional right to ensure a balanced budget. Every other state-employee union bargained the compensation reduction. None, including those with “no furloughs” MOU language, have filed lawsuits.

The CAPS Team held out at the bargaining table as long as possible to make sure that there was no better alternative, then put the agreement to a vote by members. Because PLP 2020 was bargained as a “Side Letter Agreement” and not part of a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), CAPS could have legally accepted the terms without a membership vote. CAPS was the only state-employee union to seek rank-and-file ratification because it sent a clear message to CalHR: Without members' approval, there would be no Side Letter Agreement.

**Q: So what is CAPS doing about PLP 2020 now?**

**A:** The PLP bargained with the Governor includes a provision for terminating the program early under certain circumstances, such as a State Budget recovery. Because the State's revenues did not slump as expected, the CAPS Team has informed the Newsom Administration that they wish to reopen the Side Letter Agreement bargaining as soon as possible.

**Q: Why didn't we get the pay raise we were due on July 1?**

**A:** Due to the budget concerns prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Legislature last year did not approve funding for the 5% General Salary Increase (GSI) scheduled for July 1, 2020. This was also true for every other state employee union's scheduled GSI. No matter what CAPS or any union did, the salary increase suspension was a fait accompli. However, in bargaining the Side Letter Agreement that deferred the GSI, the CAPS Team won the right to reopen talks about the raise, as soon as possible. With the State's budget picture in far better condition than anticipated last year, the CAPS Team has told the State they wish to revisit the issue.

**Q: How much are union dues?**

**A:** CAPS' monthly membership dues are among the lowest in state service. For just \$59, you can be a member in support of our collective goals, with access to all of CAPS' member benefits.

## NEW BENEFIT FOR CAPS MEMBERS

### Discounted Pet Insurance

While your benefits are among the best in State service — and CAPS vigilantly protects and seeks to expand them — your union always looks for opportunities to add value to your CAPS membership. With that in mind, **CAPS and Liberty Mutual Insurance are pleased to announce a new benefit for members: customized, affordable pet insurance.**

CAPS Members receive a special **10% discount on every pet insurance policy paid via payroll deduction**, with options to choose the right level of reimbursement, deductibles, and annual maximums to fit your pet's needs and your budget. **Certain terms and conditions apply**, so please learn more about the program by [clicking here](#).

Our relationship with Liberty Mutual also includes low-cost auto and homeowner insurance with premiums paid via payroll deduction. For more information about how to **sign up and save** with those programs, please [click here](#).



## WHAT'S INSIDE?

7 Questions and Answers for Talking About CAPS Membership  
CalPERS Board Re-Elects Jones as President, Taylor as VP  
Your 1-Minute CAPS Consultation: Probation Report  
CAPS Member Spotlight: Krysta Rogers  
President's Column: True Solidarity  
New Benefit for CAPS Members: Discounted Pet Insurance

## CONTACT US

### SACRAMENTO

455 Capitol Mall, Suite 500  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 441-2629

### LOS ANGELES

215 N. Marengo Avenue, Suite 185  
Pasadena, CA 91101  
(818) 246-0629

### SAN FRANCISCO

100 Pine Street, Suite 750  
San Francisco, CA 94111  
(415) 861-6343

### CAPS INSURANCE

(415) 958-1344