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Your 4-Minute CAPS Consultation

PLP 2020 AFFECTS HOW YOU TAKE LEAVE

As the weather warms up, vaccinations drive COVID-19 infection rates down, and society slowly reopens, your thoughts may turn to time off from work.

Not just “staycationing.” *Real* time off. Decompression time off.

CAPS’ Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) provides one of the nation’s most generous government-leave programs. Your CAPS Bargaining Team (CAPS Team) also won provisions in the [2020 Side Letter Agreement](#) that allow State Scientists to bank Personal Leave Program 2020 (PLP 2020) hours. You should understand those terms before you plan your R&R.

First, a friendly reminder: California and the nation are still dealing with a public health crisis. Whatever you do – whether visiting family in Southern California for the first time in a year or taking a quick trip to the store for milk – remember the virus is lurking. Please continue taking all steps necessary by public health officials to protect yourself and your loved ones.

As you plan some well-deserved leave, remember that you must take PLP 2020 hours before taking other types of *paid* leave, such as Annual Leave or Vacation Leave. The 2020 Side Letter Agreement between CAPS and the State makes exceptions for Personal Development Days (which expire annually if unused) and Sick Leave. However, you can choose to use PLP 2020 hours instead of Sick Leave.

The CAPS Team won a PLP 2020 provision that allows State Scientists the flexibility to accrue the program’s monthly 16 hours of unpaid leave, just like Vacation or Annual Leave. The CAPS Team also convinced the State to incrementally increase its 640-hour limits on accumulated leave to accommodate PLP 2020. (See the table on this page.)

The Side Letter also resets the Vacation and Annual Leave caps to 640 hours on July 1, 2025. But until then, you should use PLP 2020 first while you continue to accrue Vacation or Annual Leave.

Unpaid time off through the Voluntary Personal Leave Program is not subject to the PLP 2020-use rules.

Unfortunately, your supervisor or manager can deny any kind of non-medical leave request for “operational need.” So there is no guarantee that you can take PLP 2020 Leave – or any other leave – when you request it, but your department should have a valid reason for denying the time off.

And management may be more motivated to approve PLP 2020. The Newsom Administration doesn’t want employees to separate from service with those hours on the books because the State would have to cash them out. To that end, the side letter says, “Whenever practicable, employees should use all leave earned under PLP 2020 prior to voluntary separation.”

As with other matters that involve your wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment, CAPS is here to help with PLP 2020. If you encounter resistance securing leave, please contact your closest CAPS office or email caps@capsscientists.org.

PLP 2020 terms bargained by CAPS allow State Scientists to accrue 16 hours of leave each month while the program is active and increases the State’s leave caps by a corresponding amount. PLP 2020 must be used before Annual Leave or Vacation Leave. The program will end no later than June 30, 2022 – hopefully sooner, subject to bargaining. Here is the leave-cap schedule for the first six months of this year.

2021						
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June
Leave Cap	752	768	784	800	816	832

MEMBERS LAUNCH PAY PETITIONS, AIM TO SUBMIT APRIL 1

CAPS Members approached CAPS leadership with a request to share the following statement and petitions:

We have reached the time in Bargaining where member action and support are crucial. The Governor is having conversations with his Agency Secretaries right now regarding the budget and, relatedly, employee compensation. It is imperative that we clearly demonstrate to the Administration that the CAPS membership is united and active in our quest to resolve our salary issues. Please sign all of the below petitions, and share with all your colleagues immediately. If the Secretaries advocate on our behalf to the Governor the Bargaining Team's chances of convincing CalHR to provide fair pay to all State Scientists will be increased. We are aiming for 1,500 signatures by the end of March, so the petitions can be sent on April 1.

You can find a link to the CalEPA petition [here](#), the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) petition [here](#), and the petition to the Governor [here](#).

CAPS GRANTS AVAILABLE – APPLY NOW!

Every quarter the CAPS Member Benefits Committee awards Professional Development Grants of up to \$400 to support scientific research and professional development not fully funded by the State. The quarterly deadlines for applying are March 31, June 30, September 30, and December 31. Members may apply retroactively for funds. Certain criteria and restrictions apply, so please see the pertinent details and a downloadable application at <https://capsscientists.org/application/benefits/grant/>.



QUESTIONS ABOUT RETIREE BENEFITS? CALPERS HAS ANSWERS

CalPERS pension and retiree health-care benefits are the keys to living comfortably when your public service for the State of California is over. So, whether you're just starting your career, nearing retirement, or somewhere in between, it is crucial to understand your post-employment benefits.

To educate its members, CalPERS hosts live monthly webinars that focus on specific topics of interest. The sessions convene mid-month on Wednesdays at 11 a.m. and last from 15 minutes to 45 minutes, depending on the subject. Scheduled subjects include “Your Retirement Calculation” (April 14), “Your Online Service Retirement Application” (May 12), and “Working After Retirement” (June 16).

The webinars are free for all CalPERS members, but registration is required. For more details and to reserve your spot, please click [here](#).



CAPS Bargaining Update PLEASE KEEP THOSE LETTERS COMING!

Several months ago, the CAPS Bargaining Team (CAPS Team) asked members to write letters explaining how inadequate salaries damage their personal lives and hinder science-based State programs. The member letters help the CAPS Team show their State bargaining counterparts the real-world harms – to employees and employers – that arise from paying State Scientists inequitably.

Recent accounts included one from a State Scientist at the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. The member described buying “nearly everything we own second-hand,” working “side gigs,” and deciding to wait on having children because State pay doesn't cover the cost of living in the San Francisco Bay Area. A Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist) at the Department of Water Resources (DWR) worries about the “adverse impacts to our program in terms of hiring, morale, and retention” because colleagues in another bargaining unit are paid far more for doing the same work.

The CAPS Team thanks everyone who has contributed their stories. Please continue sharing your personal and professional experiences and observations. You can read the member letters shared so far and find out how to submit your own by clicking this [link](#). And look for regularly emailed bargaining updates from the CAPS Team and posted on this members-only [webpage](#). (Please email caps@capsscientists.org if you need the password.)



President's Column

Margarita Gordus



BETTER TIMES AHEAD

A year ago, a microscopic threat plunged our world into uncertainty and changed everything about the way we live and work. It also forced CAPS to adapt how we conducted our business, which is representing you.

We're still dealing with COVID-19, but science is leading the way out of the gloom. In mere months, U.S. public health officials have approved three vaccines. A generation ago, developing and testing just one vaccine would have taken much longer, to say nothing of mass inoculations.

More and more State Scientists are becoming eligible for the vaccine. I'm looking forward to the day we can collaborate with colleagues face-to-face, have in-person game nights with friends, and visit family we have not seen in over a year. It's coming.

From Governor Newsom on down, this crisis forced the State to recognize that many state employees can effectively and efficiently work from home. Last year, Governor Newsom ordered telework for the vast majority of the state workforce. His administration has made it clear that distance work will remain a prominent feature of state employment after pandemic restrictions lift.

Of course, the duties of some Unit 10 members can't be performed from home. Many State Scientists continue to report to their offices or labs, conduct inspections or perform other fieldwork during the pandemic. Telework has also brought other challenges: Not all employees have the capacity for permanent remote work. Some would simply rather return to the office.

And how will state workplaces change to accommodate the new post-COVID world? The Sacramento Bee recently said the new Natural Resources headquarters under construction in Downtown Sacramento "will serve as a laboratory of sorts for the state's foray into permanent, post-pandemic teleworking" when it opens.

CAPS will be vigilant as these workplace changes occur. While we have long supported telework and scheduling flexibility for members who want it, we will oppose policies that place unreasonable terms or conditions of employment on Unit 10 rank and file or supervisors and managers under the guise of "progress."

A year ago, COVID-19 temporarily upended bargaining for a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with CalHR. Now we are in the midst of regular, intense bargaining sessions for a new, improved MOU. The CAPS Bargaining Team is pushing the Newsom Administration to end PLP 2020 this fiscal year, provide funding for the pay raise that was deferred last summer, and finally to provide State Scientists equitable salaries.

When a high-ranking Newsom official signaled to the press that the Governor would not speed up restoring state employees' pay, CAPS District-at-Large Director Dr. Jimmy Spearow responded with a well-worded letter published by the Sacramento Bee. You can read it on Page 4 of this *CAPSule*.

More changes are coming, but they always are. COVID-19 just sped them up or slowed them down. What has not changed is CAPS' commitment to members and members' commitment to CAPS. Thank you for your support during tough times that I believe, finally, are getting better.

BOARD MEMBER SPEAKS OUT ON STATE SCIENTISTS' PAY

CAPS Board Member Jimmy Spearow, who also serves on the CAPS Bargaining Team, wrote the following letter to the Sacramento Bee. His letter responded to a March 1 [report](#) that state employees continue to bear PLP 2020 pay cuts, despite the State's budget surplus.

From the story: "Newsom credited state employee unions with 'stepping up' by agreeing to accept pay cuts last year when California was projecting a \$54 billion deficit. 'We're going to work with them in a collaborative spirit, great respect and admiration on restoring workers' pay, Newsom said'".

The Bee printed Jimmy's letter on March 14 and posted it online the next day.

"Will Gov. Newsom end state worker pay cuts with tax revenue soaring?"

As a Ph.D. state scientist, I welcome Gov. Gavin Newsom's pledge to collaborate with unions on restoring state worker's pay. After the pandemic struck, I was very willing to help out by taking a pay cut. However, suspending previously bargained raises further damaged the morale of state scientists who have been subjected to egregious pay discrepancies for 15 years (in some cases, making 50% less than colleagues doing the same job).

State scientists play vital roles protecting the people, environment, food and drinking water of California from toxic chemicals, environmental disasters and disease, including COVID-19. With the state's \$10 billion surplus, Newsom should ensure that state scientists' salaries are restored in an equitable manner that complies with state wage laws and policies.

Jimmy Spearow, Ph.D.
Sacramento

RECRUIT MEMBERS. STRENGTHEN CAPS. EARN CASH.

State Scientists in 1984 formed CAPS as the official representative for Unit 10 State Scientists – rank and file, supervisors, and managers. They understood that strength comes from working together to advocate for better pay, guaranteed pensions, amazing health benefits, and job security.

To keep CAPS strong, adding newly hired scientists to our union is crucial, particularly because so many long-time members are retiring from State service.

CAPS pays a \$50 incentive bonus to members for each Unit 10 rank-and-file employee or supervisor who signs up. Any time a State Scientist joins CAPS and puts your name in the member application's "referred by" field, you receive \$50 – and CAPS gets stronger!

To become a trained recruiter and regularly receive lists of new Unit 10 hires, please contact CAPS staff at caps@capsscscientists.org. The training session lasts about one hour and will give you tools to effectively explain the value of CAPS' membership and answer basic questions about our union.

Choose Strength! Choose Unity! Choose CAPS!

CAPS MEMBERS QUALIFY FOR INSURANCE DISCOUNTS

Looking for significant savings on insurance? CAPS' partnership with Liberty Mutual provides members-only discounts for auto, renter's, and homeowner's insurance that you can learn about by clicking [here](#). We recently added discounted insurance for pets. "Fetch" a quote by clicking [here](#). For your convenience, Liberty Mutual's insurance premiums can be paid via payroll deduction.

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