

President's Column

Margarita Gordus



THE BUDGET AND BARGAINING

Governor Gavin Newsom released his much-anticipated May Budget Revision on May 14, and as expected, the document underscores that California is beyond flush with money. The State anticipates a \$75.7 billion surplus for the 2021-22 fiscal year that starts July 1. And that doesn't include \$26 billion in federal COVID-19 stimulus funding that the State has not yet received.

On the upside, the surplus has allowed the Governor to propose significant funding increases to science programs that improve public health, protect the environment, secure state food supplies, and much more.

Yet CAPS leaders remain keenly aware that the sacrifices State Scientists bargained last year helped build that record surplus. We agreed to those sacrifices – including deferring a 5% General Salary Increase (GSI) scheduled for July 1, 2020, and accepting a Personal Leave Program (PLP 2020) that reduced wages – because the State projected a \$54 billion budget deficit and threatened state-employee furloughs to help close it.

Ultimately, your CAPS Bargaining Team (CAPS Team) came up with creative “give-backs” that, unlike regular furloughs, reduced the impact of the unpaid time off on take-home pay and allowed PLP 2020 hours to be accrued similar to vacation or Annual Leave.

As we all know, the State's dire budget scenario never happened. Over time, as media reports made clear the State was in much better financial condition than forecast, the CAPS Team pressed the California Department of Human Resources (CalHR) and the Department of Finance (DOF) to explain what the news meant for State Scientists. Their answers were vague and non-committal. In April, after news outlets reported that California was enjoying a record-setting revenue windfall, the CAPS Team officially proposed the State end PLP 2020 for Unit 10 employees on May 1 and retroactively fund the 5% GSI needlessly deferred on July 1, 2020.

CalHR, representing the Governor in bargaining, took the proposal under advisement. As I write this, they have yet to respond.

As the CAPS Team's Chair, I can assure you we remain committed to bargaining, although all of us – like CAPS' membership – are frustrated with the Administration's delayed response. There's no financial justification for State Scientists to endure reduced compensation another day. Yet, our government bargaining partners do not appear to share our urgency to make our members whole.

Delay merely harms State Scientists, the State's science programs, and, ultimately, the public we serve. The Governor's publicly proposed [timeline](#) to restore full hours and wages starting July 1 takes advantage of State Scientists' commitment to public service and our goodwill. It harms recruiting and retention.

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CAPS MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Scott Coffin, Research Scientist III, Water Resources Control Board

Scott Coffin talks to visitors at an "America Recycles Day" hosted at the CalEPA headquarters, where he presented to colleagues and the public what is known about microplastics impacts on people and the environment.

CAPS Members use science to protect public health, the environment, our food supply, and California's vast natural resources. But much of that work happens out of public view, and State Scientists' experience, expertise, and public service go unnoticed. That's why CAPSule routinely highlights members whose comments in the news media highlight State Scientists' talent, skill, knowledge, and service.

This month we applaud member Dr. Scott Coffin, a Research Scientist III at the State Water Resources Control Board, who CalMatters quoted extensively in "Premature or precautionary? California is first to tackle microplastics in drinking water."

The March 15 report observes, "California is poised to issue the world's first guidelines for microplastics in drinking water," and Scott is among the scientists blazing the trail.

"It will be the world's first health-based guidance value of any sort for microplastics formally recommended by a working group or government agency," he told CalMatters reporter Rachel Becker. "This will carry a lot of authority, even if it is just a preliminary guidance level."

News outlets throughout the country picked up the CalMatters report. Among the California media that published the microplastics story with Scott's remarks: [San Diego CBS 8](#), the [Napa Valley Register](#), the [Palm Springs Desert Sun](#), the [Paso Robles Daily News](#), [Capital Public Radio](#), and [The Lost Coast Outpost](#) in Eureka. TV station websites, a newspaper, and a food industry news publication picked up the story for readers in [Maine](#), [Colorado](#), and [New York City](#). And Gannett News national flagship [USA Today](#) linked to the report on the CalMatters site.

CAPS salutes Scott Coffin for promoting a positive image of California State Scientists in the media.

Your CAPS Consultation

USE 2020-21 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS BEFORE THEY DISAPPEAR

Question:

Can I bank my two annual Professional Development Days (PDD) like some other forms of paid leave?

The short answer:

No. You should use PDD on or before the State's fiscal year-end on June 30. The hours do not roll over from one year to the next.

The slightly longer answer:

For rank-and-file State Scientists, the CAPS MOU provides two paid days off "for activities such as, continuing education training, professional association activities, professional development seminars, etc. ... at the employee's discretion. ... Such time shall not be accumulated." State policy allows the same for Unit 10

supervisory employees, with the requirement that, "PDD must be used within the fiscal year or calendar year it is granted and not accumulated or cashed out."

But here's the tricky part:

State pay warrants show hours for PDD used, not hours available. So if you haven't taken PDD, your warrant will show zero (0.0) for that line item. Check your latest pay statement, and if it shows less than 16.0 hours of PDD leave used, make arrangements right away to take that time off before it disappears after June 30.

Your CAPS Consultation highlights timely issues that come to the attention of CAPS' labor-relations consultants and attorneys. Our seasoned, knowledgeable professionals assist CAPS Members – and only members – on matters concerning the Unit 10 MOU, supervisory/managerial disputes, state labor law, and civil service rules and regulations.

Talking Points

HOW TO EXPLAIN THE BENEFITS OF CAPS MEMBERSHIP TO A ‘FUTURE MEMBER’

Talking Points features practical tips intended to help you tell coworkers about the many benefits of joining CAPS.

What if someone I’m telling about CAPS says membership is too expensive?



Let them know that at a flat \$59 per month, CAPS’ membership dues are some of the most cost-effective among California’s state-employee unions. Some other unions in state service charge a percentage of their members’ pay up to about \$100 per month.



Explain that CAPS is the lone, united voice for Unit 10 State Scientists, whether rank-and-file or supervisory/managerial. That’s why a robust membership boosts CAPS’ leverage at the bargaining table, during meet-and-confer talks, with the Legislature, and – when necessary – in the courts.



Collective representation on wages, hours, and other terms of employment always works best for a powerful collective, but it has to be built and maintained one member at a time. Joining CAPS is an investment in our union – and the future member’s personal success.



Show them the lengthy list of members-only benefits, which you can find [here](#). Talk about one or two of your favorites.



Describe membership as a sort of insurance for their job: First, CAPS has professional consultants and attorneys on staff who stand with members – and only members – if an issue arises at work. Second, CAPS fights to keep State Scientists in charge of State scientific programs instead of outsourcing the work to the private sector.



Share your story. Why did you join? How has CAPS helped you? Who helped you understand the importance CAPS’ membership? What have you heard from colleagues who benefited from their memberships?

CAPS Members are the best messengers for telling our union’s story and convincing colleagues to join, especially those new to state service. CAPS is so committed to the principle that you earn a \$50 incentive bonus for each Unit 10 rank-and-file employee or supervisor who signs up and puts your name in the [member application’s](#) “referred by” field – and CAPS gains strength!

CHOOSE UNITY. CHOOSE STRENGTH. CHOOSE CAPS!

\$400 CAPS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS AVAILABLE: APPLY NOW!

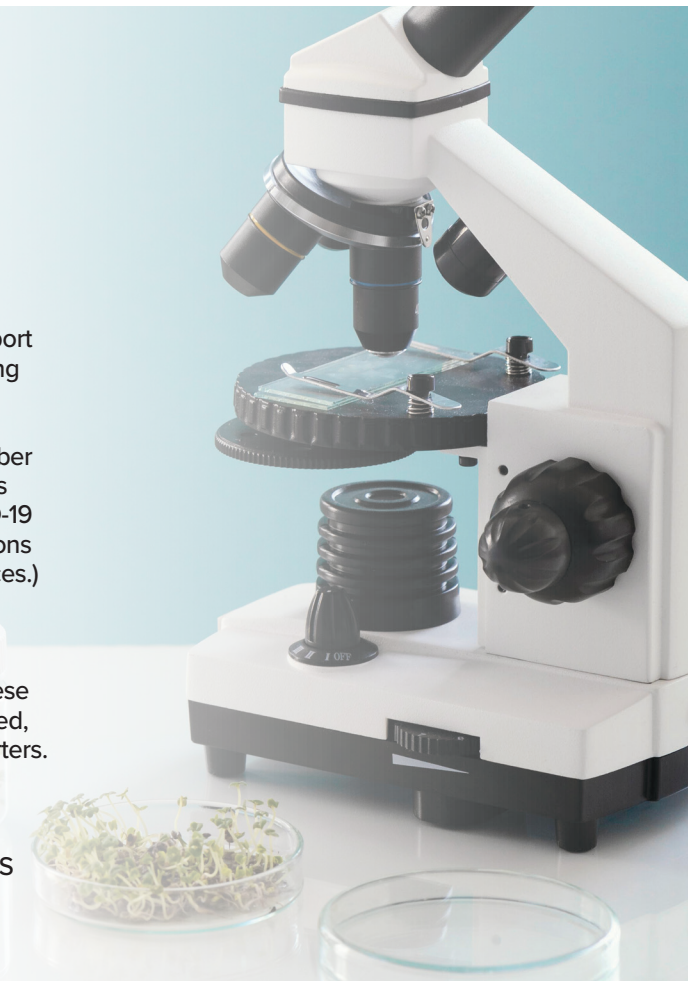


CAPS strongly urges you to apply now for one of four **\$400 Professional Development Grants** awarded each quarter to support members' scientific research, education, or other career-enhancing activities that the State does not fully fund.

The next deadline to apply is June 30 for grants the CAPS' Member Benefits Committee will award in July. Applicants may seek funds for upcoming costs or expenses already incurred. (Due to COVID-19 concerns, at this time, the Committee is not considering applications to facilitate attending scheduled in-person meetings or conferences.)

CAPS makes a total of \$1,600 in grants available to deserving members each quarter. Recipients are chosen in January, April, July, and October, so applications should be submitted before these months to be eligible for the subsequent selection. Once submitted, applications remain eligible for consideration for at least two quarters.

For more details about CAPS' Professional Development Grants and how to apply for this members-only benefit, please go to capsscienstists.org/application/benefits/grant. Please contact CAPS staff with questions at caps@capsscienstists.org or by calling your nearest CAPS office. **Don't wait!**



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This raises a difficult question: If this is how the State treats state employees over merely restoring the compensation status quo and honoring a previously bargained pay increase when there's more than enough funding available, what does it signal for bargaining successor Memoranda of Understanding (MOU)? What does it say about the Administration's attitude about pay equity for State Scientists? Only time will tell, but we'll keep bargaining in good faith, as required by the [Dills' Act](#).

The CAPS Team is very concerned our bargaining partners will not consider State Scientists' wage issues from anything more than a financial perspective – which is how the State has approached bargaining in the past – despite the broader view required by the Interest-Based Bargaining method both sides agreed to use. It would be ironic, to say the least, for the Governor's budget proposal to substantially increase many State science programs' budgets while the Administration fails to make necessary salary adjustments for the scientists who run those programs.

As we begin discussions to end PLP 2020, retroactively fund our 2020 GSI, and bargain a new MOU with the necessary adjustments to State

Scientists' wages, CAPS will continue informing members. Look for our Bargaining Update and CAPS News emails, which are member-only communications.

We also need your help.

Please continue sending letters to caps@capsscienstists.org describing how inadequate pay impacts your personal life and the state programs for which you work.

Soon, we will launch a new social media project to fortify our work at the bargaining table. You can help amplify those messages by [signing up](#) for a Twitter account, following [@capsscienstists](#), and retweeting our posts.

And if you know a State Scientist who isn't yet a CAPS member, please talk to them about joining. You'll find a few tips on Page 3 of this edition of *CAPSule*. Together we are stronger, but we build that strength one member at a time.

CAPS is determined to find fair and equitable solutions to the employment challenges that confront our members. CAPS leaders thank you for your support.