

# CAPSULE

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## CAPS LEGISLATIVE YEAR IN REVIEW: PART 1

CAPS' legislative representatives promote your professional interests with lawmakers and other leaders in Sacramento. This year, CAPS legislative efforts added jobs, fended off an attack on health benefits, and preserved environmental standards for the cannabis industry.

This is the first of a two-part summary of some of CAPS' legislative successes this year.

### ADDED POSITIONS

The adopted State Budget included approximately 180 new state scientific positions scattered throughout various agencies and departments. CAPS' legislative advocates testified in support of the new positions when the items were heard in budget subcommittees throughout the legislative year. In some instances, our lobbyists convinced the Legislature to make limited-term positions permanent.

### LEGISLATION

The Legislature adjourned for the year on August 31, 2022. Your advocates worked hard lobbying bills and interacting with legislators and their staff members to advance, amend, and/or stop bills on which the CAPS Board and CAPS Governmental Affairs Committee took positions. Among them:

**SCR 89** – State Scientist Resolution. Authored by Senator Newman, the Senate Resolution paid “tribute to the dedication and professionalism of the state scientists who work on behalf of all the residents of California.”

**AB 2782** – The bill would have ended state health benefits for anyone eligible to enroll in Medicare Part A and Part B. CAPS joined others to oppose the measure. It never received a hearing.

**SB 1148** – This bill would have exempted commercial cannabis license applicants from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) if the applicant complied with all local ordinances that regulate commercial

cannabis activity and certain other conditions.

CAPS legislative advocates met with the author's staff to voice opposition to weakening CEQA. They argued that the measure would set dire precedents for the law's future in regulating non-cannabis projects during unprecedented drought, rampant wildfires, and more and more species on the brink of ecological collapse or extinction.

CAPS' advocates also noted SB 1148 undercuts other legislative amendments that allow for state-issued “provisional licenses” exempt from CEQA to be in effect until January 1, 2026 – a 10-year delay for cannabis cultivation licenses to come into CEQA compliance. For this reason, as a condition of a carefully negotiated compromise involving many stakeholders, the 2021 cannabis trailer bill includes the following express language: Additional exemptions from the California Environmental Quality Act shall not be adopted with respect to licenses issued under this division. (Business and Professions Code Section 26050.2(q))

CAPS legislative advocates built a coalition of environmental groups to oppose the proposed legislation. They recommended holding SB 1148 or amending it to apply to only retail, distribution, and testing license types to provide environmentally low-risk businesses some regulatory relief. CAPS member Lindsay Raines, Licensing Program Manager at the California Department of Food and Agriculture, participated in a call with our legislative advocates and environmental groups. The group explained how CEQA review works at the Department of Cannabis Control (DCC) and their collective opposition to the bill. With the help of the Resources Legacy Fund, Trout Unlimited, California Native Plant Society, California Trout, Defenders of Wildlife, and The Nature Conservancy, CAPS was able to have the bill held on the Assembly suspense file until the 2021-2022 Legislative Session ended.

# CAPS NAMES 3<sup>RD</sup> QUARTER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT WINNERS!

## CAPS SEEKING MEMBERS FOR MEDIA INTERVIEWS ABOUT PAY AND PROGRAMS

In a few short months, CAPS will be back at the bargaining table to fight for pay equity for State Scientists. To help those efforts, we are seeking members willing to talk to the media about the impact of substandard salaries on State Scientists' personal lives and programs.

A link to an online application for members interested in participating in the Media Response Program is available at <https://airtable.com/shrxDVRXitNtux1Jp>. Those selected may be made available to reporters seeking comments for news reports, including coverage of State Scientists' salaries. Participants will speak publicly with the understanding that they are speaking only for themselves, not their employer or the union. However, CAPS will provide media training to all participants, and Media Relations staff will help prepare for specific interviews.

Questions? Please email them to [caps@capsscscientists.org](mailto:caps@capsscscientists.org).



Four times during the year, CAPS' Member Benefits Committee awards up to four Professional Development Grants of \$400 each to support members' scientific research and professional development activities that the State does not fully fund. The Committee recently awarded four 3rd quarter grants to these deserving CAPS members:

**Josephine DeGuzman** recently started work on a Master of Public Health degree to position herself for promotional opportunities within the Department of Public Health. *"I would love to further my career ... as I feel my experience and skill set would be beneficial in more impactful positions,"* she explained in her grant application. *"This grant can help with the cost of tuition."* Josephine is a Research Scientist II based in Richmond's Environment Health Laboratory Branch.

**Kent Laudon**, a Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist) for the Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) in Redding, specializes in wolf biology. He recently used his \$400 grant for travel expenses incurred attending the Conflict Reduction Consortium (CRC) in Cody, Wyoming. The event brought together experts seeking to resolve human/wildlife conflicts *"to support wildlife and economic resilience of working landscapes,"* Kent explained in his application. *"This is an opportunity for me to continue to learn from other ongoing conflicts and creative resolutions."*

**Dr. Laura Rogers-Bennett** is using her grant funds to help study the impact of kelp forest die-off on the Northern California coast and aquatic life, particularly urchin and red abalone fisheries. *"Our work will describe survey results in the heart of the former kelp forest in Sonoma and Mendocino counties looking to quantify areas with some remnant red abalone resources and limited numbers of sea urchins,"* she explained to the Member Benefits Committee. Dr. Rogers-Bennett works for CDFW as a Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist) based in Bodega Bay.

Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist) **Allen Tsao** plans to use his grant to attend the Annual Training Conference of the California Hazardous Materials Investigators Association in April. *"It will benefit me a great deal because I just made a brand new career switch,"* he explained in his grant application. Allen works for the Department of Toxic Substances Control in Sacramento.

The next Professional Development Grant application quarterly deadline is December 31. Members may apply for expenses already incurred. Certain criteria and restrictions apply to this program, so please see the pertinent details and downloadable application at [capsscscientists.org/application/benefits/grant](https://capsscscientists.org/application/benefits/grant).

## President's Column

Margarita Gordus

# WHY CAPS CO-FOUNDED CALIFORNIANS FOR RETIREMENT SECURITY & STILL SUPPORTS IT TODAY

An uncertain economy. Rising interest rates and falling markets. Less-than-forecast state revenues. Talk of state budget cuts.

Now, prepare for what's next: A new political attack on your retirement benefits.

You should also know this: CAPS is a co-founding member of a vast public employee organization, [Californians for Retirement Security \(CRS\)](#), that is always guarding the pension benefits you have been promised.

For decades, CalPERS pensions have come under periodic assaults, especially when the economy hits a cyclical downturn. During a 1990s recession, Governor Pete Wilson tried to [close the state budget deficit](#) by raiding CalPERS assets and exerting more control over CalPERS' leadership structure. Unions vigorously fought back and successfully lobbied for measures that gave CalPERS' assets and board more independence.

However, the experience inspired CAPS and other government labor organizations to do what they do best – organize. So CAPS and a few other unions formed Californians for Health Care and Retirement Security, later renamed Californians for Retirement Security. Today the coalition of nearly 36 organizations represents more than 1.6 million state and local public employees and retirees.

Through polling, lobbying, public protests, and carefully crafted online and traditional media messaging, CRS has effectively resisted pension attacks since its inception. For example, after dealing with CRS, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger lost the appetite for putting a measure on the 2005 ballot that would have made [defined-benefit public pensions](#) more

like defined-contribution 401(k) plans. Governor Jerry Brown, who returned to office in 2011 during a recession, floated the same 401(k) idea, and CRS successfully fought it off.

Along the way, CRS also put down a half-dozen attempts to put ballot measures before voters that would lay waste to public pensions. Those efforts were usually timed to exploit economic downturns and make specious claims that overly generous public pensions are not sustainable, steal funds from other public programs, and are both the root and the flower of government dysfunction.

California is entering that kind of environment now, as state revenues are falling below forecasts, dragged down by falling investment returns that squeeze income taxes. In pension politics, unlike financial investments, the past indicates what you can expect in the future. So buckle up.

There's no need to worry about your retirement's viability – CalPERS invests for the long term and builds economic cycles into its investments. (CAPS Legislative Representative and CRS Chair Ted Toppin wrote a Capitol Weekly op-ed earlier this year that addressed this issue. I recommend you read it at <https://capitolweekly.net/amid-roiled-market-public-pension-funds-declines-not-unexpected/>.) However, the economic conditions are aligned for another pension attack, and we're ready.

CRS is an example of CAPS' leadership and relentless focus on improving members' pay and benefits while protecting pensions and job security. I wish the coalition didn't need to exist, but I'm glad it does, and I'm proud that we are a co-founding member.



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## CAPS MEMBERS QUALIFY FOR LOWER-COST INSURANCE WITH LIBERTY MUTUAL

Through a partnership with Liberty Mutual Insurance, CAPS members qualify for significant savings on auto, home, and pet insurance with premiums paid via payroll deduction. For more information about personal insurance (including homeowners, renters, or auto insurance), please go to [https://www.libertymutual.com/caps?src=aff\\_4wpb\\_m\\_0001335\\_caps](https://www.libertymutual.com/caps?src=aff_4wpb_m_0001335_caps). To learn more about the pet insurance program, please go to [pet.libertymutual.com/CAPS#/lm/start](https://pet.libertymutual.com/CAPS#/lm/start).



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